

CANDIDATE SITES METHODOLOGY

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In accordance with changes introduced by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, on 20th July 2005 the Council resolved to cease work on the Rhondda Cynon Taf Unitary Development Plan (UDP) and commence work on a new Local Development Plan (LDP).
- 1.2 This document sets out the preferred methodology for the consideration of land for development in the emerging Local Development Plan. In doing so it identifies the guiding principles for establishing potential new site allocations, consistent with national and regional planning policy and Sustainability Appraisal / Strategic Environment Assessment objectives.
- 1.3 This methodology has also been developed to reflect guidance from the Welsh Assembly Government (Local Development Plans Wales – Dec 2005), which states that *'the identification of sites should be founded on a robust and credible assessment of the suitability and availability of land for particular uses or a mix of uses and the probability that it will be developed'*.

2. THE CANDIDATE SITE PROCESS

Notification to landowners

- 2.1 The Consultation Draft Local Development Plan Manual (Consultation Draft Sept 2005) advises that early consideration should be given to engagement with developers and landowners on potential sites to be included within the new LDP system, in order to avoid substantial numbers of additional sites coming forward at the examination stage. This guidance is repeated in subsequent versions of the guidance.
- 2.2 In September 2005 the authority wrote to potential landowners, identified agents and developers giving them the opportunity to identify and promote any areas of land they considered suitable for residential or commercial development. Sites received through this process are contained in the candidate site register.
- 2.3 The deadline for the submission of sites for inclusion in the LDP process is **31st August 2006**. Sites received after this date will not be formally considered by the Council in advance of the preparation of the deposit draft LDP.

Register of Candidate Sites

- 2.4 The LDP Manual recommends the compilation of a site register to allow any interested party to view the sites that have been put forward for consideration in the

LDP. In accordance with the guidance the Council has prepared a comprehensive register of sites that are to be included in the Candidate Site Assessment process. The register will include information on each site including its location, size, and brief description of the main physical characteristics of the site. The register will be available for inspection at the Development & Regeneration Division, Valleys Innovation Centre, Navigation Park, Abercynon and also on the Rhondda Cynon Taf Website.

LDP Site Appraisal Sub Group

- 2.5 In order to ensure an expedient and efficient site assessment process the Council has established a Site Assessment Sub Group to assist in the process of site identification. The Sub Group consists of representatives of the Countryside, Highways, Development Control, Education, Corporate Estates and Development Planning sections. The Group will be responsible for the assessment of all land within the candidate sites process. Management of the process will be the responsibility of the Director of Development & Regeneration.

Land to be included in the Candidate Site Assessment Process

- 2.6 The land included within this process consists of land that is either currently contrary to existing Development Plan or that which has previously been considered

suitable for development but has not been developed. The sites that will be included in the assessment process can be categorised into four main types.

- **Sites Promoted by Private Landowners and External Agencies**

This includes sites submitted by private landowners, their agents, public and private developers.

- **Rhondda Cynon Taf Land Review Sites**

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council is one of the major landowners in the area. The Council is currently in the process of reviewing land and property in its ownership. As a result of the review process a range of sites have been submitted for consideration as part of the LDP process.

- **Undeveloped Existing Local Plan Allocations**

An essential part of the transition from Local Plans to the LDP preparation process is the consideration of those allocations within the existing Local Plans that have yet to be developed. All residential, employment or other commercial allocations that have not been developed will be reassessed to ascertain whether they can be carried forward into the LDP.

- **Sites Identified by the Council**

The Council has commissioned a range of studies over recent years for different parts of the County Borough aimed at identifying regeneration opportunities. These include studies such as the Upper and Central Rhondda Valley Urban Capacity Study, Town Centre Strategies and Employment Land Review.

Site Categorisation

- 2.7 The candidate site process will include consideration of sites ranging from less than a third of a hectare to sites up to 100 hectares. In order to ensure a consistent approach to assessing sites the Council will group sites into the following 2 categories;

- **Strategic Sites**

Strategic sites are sites of more than 20 hectares that will because of their nature, scale or location will significantly contribute to the spatial strategy of the LDP.

- **Non Strategic Sites**

Non-Strategic sites are that will accommodate local growth requirements. Whilst these sites may not be strategic in nature they will however, be of sufficient size to have an effect on the local community in terms of population and infrastructure. For the purpose of the

LDP a Non-Strategic site is defined as a site of more than 0.3 hectares.

- 2.8 **Sites of less than 0.3 of a hectare will not be considered as part of the site assessment process. These sites will however, be considered when the Council undertakes the process of defining residential settlement boundaries.**

3. SITE ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 It is essential that the land allocated for development in the LDP meets the objectives of the plan and is suitable for and capable of being developed. In order to ensure a clear, objective and transparent assessment process, the Council will assess all the land over 0.3 hectares included within its register of Candidate Sites by means of a two-stage assessment process. This will ensure a comprehensive and complete evaluation of all sites is undertaken before recommendations are made on future land allocations.

The First Stage

- 3.2 The first stage assessment has been developed with the assistance of Hyder Consulting, this stage will involve a wide-ranging appraisal of the unique characteristics of all candidate sites, identifying both restraints and potential for development.

3.3 All identified candidate sites will be subject to a preliminary site assessment process, which will comprise of an on-site physical assessment and the completion of a site appraisal framework. This framework will;

- Confirm the location and candidate site reference details such as unique number, area and photographic record,
- Give a general overview of the site in terms of current uses and physical condition,
- Identify the adjoining uses and possible access to the site,
- Identify the sites' proximity to any local public facilities,
- Note any possible constraints to development that are visible,
- Give an initial judgment on what would be the most suitable land use allocation on the site.
- Search the planning history of the site.

3.4 Following on from the initial assessment, a more detailed appraisal of sites will be made. The site appraisal sheet is shown in full detail in Appendix A. The appraisal sheet will be divided into sections to cover the following areas;

Economic viability – considering the location of the site with regard to market and workforce characteristics;

Accessibility and ease of movement – considering the suitability of vehicular access to the site, location of the site with regard to public transport routes, and accessibility by foot or cycle to a range of community facilities;

Environmental capital – considering whether or not the site is at risk from flooding, would there result in the loss of agricultural land, is the site considered to be greenfield or brownfield land, whether or not the site is protected by environmental designations, whether the site would present an opportunity to remove an eyesore, and whether or not the site is considered to have environmental value;

Site context and character – whether topographical characteristics of the site may present an obstacle to development, whether development would have an impact on important views/vistas, whether the site is in close proximity to existing infrastructure and whether or not there would be potential adverse impact from adjoining land uses;

Continuity and enclosure – whether development of the site would provide continuity and enclosure in respect to adjacent land uses and whether it would contribute to an active high street frontage.

Potential use - Finally, an assessment will be made as to the potential use of the site.

- 3.5 This part of the process will allow judgements to be made on the sites against a series of 18 objectives divided into the above 6 areas. It will be determined the level of impact that the proposed development will have upon each of these. The impact will be categorised into a scale ranging from undermining (U), poor (P), neutral (N), fair (F), good (G), to excellent (E).
- 3.6 At the end of this stage of assessment, in the comment section of the final objective, it will be decided whether the site is suitable to be considered further for its development potential, or should be taken out of the assessment process.

The Second Stage

- 3.7 The second stage of the process will allow the Council to assess possible future allocations against the SA/SEA framework to ensure that the sites contribute towards achieving the overall objectives of the plan. In order to do so the Council will employ the Sustainability Threshold Assessment methodology developed by environmental consultants Enfusion. The Sustainability Threshold Assessment process involves allocating one of five levels of potential impact to the candidate site, against each of the sustainability objectives identified in the Sustainability Appraisal Framework. The objectives and associated criteria in the SA/SEA Framework have been identified and compiled from the Rhondda Cynon Taf LDP Scoping procedure and cover the following areas: - Housing, Cultural Heritage,

Access, Social Inclusion, Health, Economy, Employment, Transport, Built Environment, Landscape, Biodiversity, Water, Climate Change, Energy, Land and Soils, Waste, Minerals. The SA/SEA objectives are attached as Appendix B.

- 3.8 The impacts of the candidate site and its proposed development are identified by one of five colour codes, determined against each of the objectives. The colour codes are as follows;

Blue - Development actively encouraged, as it would resolve an existing sustainability problem

Green – No sustainability constraints and development acceptable

Yellow – Potential expensive sustainability issues, mitigation and/or negotiation possible

Orange – Problematic because of sustainability constraints; mitigation or negotiation difficult and or

Red - Absolute sustainability constraints to development.

- 3.9 Development needs may be accommodated if there are overall majority frequencies of blue and green impacts. If not, the approach identifies what further studies or mitigation could be incorporated to allow development. Candidate sites with predominantly orange and red will

normally be excluded from further consideration. A copy of the matrix into which the identified threshold are recorded is shown in Appendix C.

4. NEXT STAGE

4.1 Following the completion of assessment process the Council will seek the views of consult with the appropriate specific consultation bodies in respect of those sites identified as suitable for future development. The specific consultation bodies to be consulted will include;

- Welsh Assembly Government
- Countryside Council for Wales
- Environment Agency Wales
- Dwr Cymru / Welsh Water
- Glamorgan - Gwent Archaeological Trust
- CADW
- The Coal Authority
- South Wales Police
- South Wales Fire Service
- Health & Safety Executive
- Transco
- Western Power Distribution

5. FURTHER INFORMATION AND ADVICE

5.1 For further information and advice please contact:-

Development Planning,
Development & Regeneration Division,
Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council,
Valleys Innovation Centre,
Navigation Park,
Abercynon
CF45 4SN

Telephone:

01443 665773 / 665784 / 665774 / 665727 / 665772

Email: LDP@rhondda-cynon-taff.gov.uk

APPENDIX A

SITE APPRAISAL FRAMEWORK

SITE ID NUMBER		SITE LOCATION						Comments		
Objective		Objective Achieved		Suitability of Site						
		YES	NO	U	P	N	F		G	E
Economic Viability										
1	Is the location of the site realistic with regard to market and workforce characteristics?									
Accessibility and Ease of Movement										
2	Is the site located within walking distance (i.e. 400m) of a public transport route (bus/train)? (please specify if steep/obstructed access route).									
3	Is the site accessible (please specify if steep/obstructed access route)?									
4	Is the site located within walking distance (i.e. 400m) of a range of community services (shops, facilities etc..)?									
Environmental Capital										
5	Is the site located near a watercourse / is there a risk of flooding?									
6	Would development on the site result in the loss of agricultural land?									
7	Is the site (or parts thereof) protected by landscape ecological or cultural designations? (if so, please specify).									
8	Does the site constitute Brownfield land? (if not, please specify if greenfield site).									

9	Is there a potential risk of contaminated land?									
10	Would development of the site present an opportunity to remove an eyesore?									
11	Does the site have environmental value?									
Site Context and Character										
12	Do the topographical characteristics of the site present an obstacle to development?									
13	Would development on the site have an impact upon important views/vistas									
14	Is the site located within close proximity (100m) of existing water, sewerage, electrical, gas and telecommunications services?									
15	Would there be any adverse impact arising from potentially conflicting adjoining land uses?									
Continuity and Enclosure										
16	Will development of the site provide continuity and enclosure in respect to adjacent uses and development?									
17	Would development of the site contribute to an active high street frontage?									
Potential Use										
18	Is the site suitable for development?									

APPENDIX B

RHONDDA CYNON TAF SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL FRAMEWORK

	SA OBJECTIVE	DECISION AIDING QUESTIONS - WILL THE POLICY...?
1	Housing	
	Provide a mix of dwelling types catering for all needs, with a mix of tenures to promote integrated and thriving communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Deliver good quality housing ▪ Promote a mix of housing size, type and tenure within each settlement? ▪ Promote housing that meets the requirements of those with special needs? ▪ Help meet affordable housing needs to allow local people to remain within communities? ▪ Protect and enhance the existing housing stock including the characteristic terraces
2	Cultural Heritage	
	Protect the Cultural Heritage including landscape, archaeology and language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Protect and enhance listed buildings ▪ Protects and enhance Scheduled Ancient Monuments ▪ Protect and enhance the historic landscape ▪ Have regard for the entire historic environment, whether protected by legislation or not. ▪ Protect and enhance RCT's mining heritage ▪ Promote the retention of the Welsh language ▪ Promote sustainable access to cultural sites, especially to promote tourism
3	Access	
	Promote a strategic and holistic approach to accessibility to meet local needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Encourage provision of community facilities and employment opportunities in accessible locations ▪ Reduce the need to travel in new developments ▪ Provide equality of access for all ▪ Given the topographical constraints, promote improvements in the transport infrastructure away from main routes where feasible ▪ Promote improvements in public transport, including for rural residents ▪ Promote more sustainable modes of transport, including safe routes for walking and cycling

4	Social Inclusion	
	Promote integrated communities, with opportunities for living, working and socialising for all	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Help reduce disparities between the northern and southern wards within RCT. ▪ Promote access to education for all ▪ Consider the needs of vulnerable groups, such as those with limiting long term illnesses ▪ Plan for sociable places, with opportunities for active citizenship ▪ Accommodate meeting places for different religious groups
5	Health	
	Promote an environment that leads to a healthy and safe lifestyle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Promote provision of and access to healthcare facilities ▪ Encourage safe provision for walking and cycling ▪ Prevent unacceptable levels of noise, light, odour and air pollution ▪ Promote healthy eating by protecting and, where possible, providing allotments, market gardens and orchards as active spaces ▪ Protect existing open spaces ▪ Promote provision of facilities for physical recreation
6	Economy	
	Provide for sustainable economic growth including the maintenance of healthy and vibrant town centres.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Accommodate Objective 1 initiatives ▪ Contribute towards a sustainable economy ▪ Encourage local growth, especially in areas of high unemployment ▪ Encourage appropriate inward investment ▪ Protect the rural economy, and enable diversification ▪ Promote good quality sustainable tourism, respectful of the receiving environment and communities ▪ Ensure the allocation of land to accommodate the needs of the population of RCT ▪ Maintain an appropriate land bank ▪ Promote healthy town centres

7	Employment	
	Provide for a diverse range of high quality job opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Help minimise unemployment ▪ Provide various opportunities for a range of skills levels ▪ Provide jobs accessible to all residents, especially those in rural areas without access to transport ▪ Accommodate training facilities to help develop a flexible skills base ▪ Promote good quality jobs within the tourism sector ▪ Minimise the out commuting from the County Borough for work ▪ Provide appropriate land for employment that will be attractive to industry
8	Transport	
	Reduce the need to travel and promote more sustainable modes of transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide alternatives to the private car, including for commuting and visitor access ▪ Improve and where feasible expand the existing road and rail network, especially to provide access to rural areas ▪ Provide for safe walking and cycling ▪ Improve public transport links within (not just into and out of) the County Borough, including community transport where buses are not commercially viable ▪ Provide for appropriate levels of car parking to serve the needs of RCT
9	Built Environment	
	Provide a high quality built environment and promote community pride	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensure high standards of design in all new development ▪ Protect and enhance local character and distinctiveness, building upon the cultural heritage of the area, while recognising the role of innovation in the built environment ▪ Protect and enhance areas and buildings of historical, archaeological or cultural importance. ▪ Promote energy efficiency in new developments
10	Landscape	
	Improve, protect and enhance the countryside, whilst increasing understanding and awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Promote the improvement of the landscape where it has been degraded as a legacy of previous industrial use ▪ Protect and enhance designated areas ▪ Increase opportunities for enjoyment of the countryside where appropriate ▪ Promote rural economic diversification and support farmers as custodians of valued landscapes

11	Biodiversity	
	Protect and enhance the diversity and abundance of wildlife habitats and native species	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Protect and enhance valuable wildlife habitats and species, both those statutorily designated and those of local value ▪ Avoid and, where possible, reverse habitat fragmentation ▪ Improve, protect and enhance the biodiversity within the water environment ▪ Integrate protection and creation of habitat into the design of new development from the outset ▪ Promote ecologically based land management
12	Water	
	Improve, protect and enhance the water environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reduce and/or avoid pollution to water ▪ Promote use of sustainable drainage systems ▪ Manage and avoid exacerbating flood risk especially along river frontages ▪ Use water efficiently ▪ Protect groundwater sources ▪ Prevent new development that will exacerbate current foul drainage problems
13	Climate Change	
	Minimise greenhouse gas emissions and manage the effects of climate change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reduce the need to travel, especially by car ▪ Manage the risk of flooding, especially in river valleys ▪ Consider the likely impacts of climate change on all types of infrastructure ▪ Provide habitat routes to allow species to adapt to the changing environment
14	Energy	
	Increase the supply of renewable energy and reduce energy consumption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Promote energy efficiency ▪ Encourage the development of renewables, including micro-generation ▪ Encourage high standards of energy efficiency in all new developments ▪ Support objectives of TAN8

15	Land and Soils	
	Promote efficient use of land and soils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Encourage sustainable restoration of contaminated land ▪ Re-use previously developed land and buildings as a priority, where appropriate ▪ Minimise greenfield land take ▪ Promote high density development where appropriate ▪ Enable rural economic diversification ▪ Prevent and control pollution to land and soils
16	Waste	
	Minimise waste, especially waste to landfill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Further improve on good recycling performance including provision of facilities (domestic and commercial) ▪ Avoid, reduce, re-use, recycle and recover before disposal to landfill ▪ Support development of alternatives to landfill, including composting facilities and energy from waste ▪ Promote self sufficiency in terms of waste management where appropriate, and reduce imports of waste from outside the County Borough
17	Minerals	
	Promote efficient and appropriate use of minerals, recognising the importance of the industry within the County Borough	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Manage demand for minerals and aggregates ▪ Reuse and recycle aggregates on site

APPENDIX C

SUSTAINABILITY THRESHOLD ASSESSMENT MATRIX

<u>SA OBJECTIVE</u>	BOUNDARY	ISSUES	THRESHOLD (EXISTING)	MANAGEMENT OPTIONS	THRESHOLD (REVISED)	INTERACTIONS
1. Housing Provide a mix of dwelling types catering for all needs, with a mix of tenures to promote integrated and thriving communities						
2. Cultural Heritage Protect the Cultural Heritage including landscape, archaeology and language						
3. Access Promote a strategic and holistic approach to accessibility to meet local needs						

<u>SA OBJECTIVE</u>	BOUNDARY	ISSUES	THRESHOLD (EXISTING)	MANAGEMENT OPTIONS	THRESHOLD (REVISED)	INTERACTIONS
4. Social Inclusion						
Promote integrated communities, with opportunities for living, working and socialising for all						
5. Health						
Promote an environment that leads to a healthy and safe lifestyle						
6. Economy						
Provide for sustainable economic growth including the maintenance of healthy and vibrant town centres						
7. Employment						
Provide for a diverse range of high quality job opportunities						

<u>SA OBJECTIVE</u>	BOUNDARY	ISSUES	THRESHOLD (EXISTING)	MANAGEMENT OPTIONS	THRESHOLD (REVISED)	INTERACTIONS
8. Transport						
Reduce the need to travel and promote more sustainable modes of transport						
9. Built Environment						
Provide a high quality built environment and promote community pride						
10. Landscape						
Improve, protect and enhance the countryside, whilst increasing understanding and awareness						
11. Biodiversity						
Protect and enhance the diversity and abundance of wildlife habitats and native species						

<u>SA OBJECTIVE</u>	BOUNDARY	ISSUES	THRESHOLD (EXISTING)	MANAGEMENT OPTIONS	THRESHOLD (REVISED)	INTERACTIONS
12. Water						
Improve, protect and enhance the water environment						
13. Climate Change						
Minimise greenhouse gas emissions, and manage the effects of climate change						
14. Energy						
Increase the supply of renewable energy and reduce energy consumption						
15. Land and Soils						
Promote efficient use of land and soils						
16. Waste						
Minimise waste, especially waste to landfill						

<u>SA OBJECTIVE</u>	BOUNDARY	ISSUES	THRESHOLD (EXISTING)	MANAGEMENT OPTIONS	THRESHOLD (REVISED)	INTERACTIONS
17. Minerals Promote efficient and appropriate use of minerals, recognising the importance of the industry within the County Borough						

APPENDIX D

SUMMARY SUSTAINABILITY THRESHOLD ASSESSMENT MATRIX TO COMPARE OPTIONS

CRITERIA	OPTIONS									
	Option 1		Option 2		Option 3		Option 4		Option 5	
	E (EXISTING)	R (REVISED)	E	R	E	R	E	R	E	R
1. HOUSING										
2. CULTURAL HERITAGE										
3. ACCESS										
4. SOCIAL INCLUSION										
5. HEALTH										
6. ECONOMY										
7. EMPLOYMENT										
8. TRANSPORT										
9. BUILT ENVIRONMENT										
10. LANDSCAPE										
11. BIODIVERSITY										
12. WATER										
13. CLIMATE CHANGE										
14. ENERGY										
15. LAND AND SOILS										
16. WASTE										
17. MINERALS										