



## **THE INAUGURAL MEETING OF THE MEMBERS STEERING GROUP FOR THE REVISED LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

**An Introduction to the Revised Local Development Plan preparation process and the role of the Members Steering Group within it.**

### **REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF PROSPERITY & DEVELOPMENT**

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#### **1.0 Introduction**

1.1 This paper has been prepared to inform the first and introductory meeting of the Members Steering Group for the Revised Local Development Plan (RLDP). It will firstly set out the background of the LDP process in general, before setting out the key stages of the RLDP preparation. It will then go on to outline the role of the group in the initial, Preferred Strategy stage of the RLDP, and the associated topics of consideration therein. It then raises the topics and areas that were not as prevalent during the preparation of the current LDP.

1.2 It is intended that this paper will form the topics of conversation in the inaugural meeting. It is not intended that the inaugural meeting will play the role of a formal Visioning event, more of an introduction to the process that is ahead.

#### **2.0 LDP Background**

2.1 Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council are required by law to prepare and maintain a Local Development Plan (LDP), with its current LDP (2006 – 2021) having been adopted in 2011.

2.2 An LDP provides the County Borough with an overarching land-use and development strategy, along with a policy framework and site specific allocations for a range of development types. The LDP, alongside National Plans and Policy, guide decisions on planning applications in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

#### **LDP Review Report**

2.3 A formal Review of the LDP (2006 – 2021) was undertaken in 2019 in accordance with the regulatory requirements, with Council agreeing the final Review Report (RR) on the 27<sup>th</sup> November 2019. Its primary conclusion was to prepare a Revised LDP.



2.4 Other matters were identified through the RR process. Firstly, since the production of the current LDP, there have been multiple changes in many social, economic and environmental aspects of society. Aligned with this are the major changes that have taken place in national legislation and national planning policy during this time.

2.5 The findings of the 8 published Annual Monitoring Reports of the LDP have shown that considerable development has taken place in all the LDP topic areas over the plan period. However, this is not on the scale that was planned for, nor on all the site allocations. Furthermore, the planning department have received numerous planning applications outside LDP settlement boundaries, which are more difficult to determine in a consistent manner.

### **RLDP Delivery Agreement**

2.6 A Draft Delivery Agreement (DA) was also approved by Council in November 2019, which set out a timetable to begin the process of RLDP in June 2020. This was not achievable due to the Coronavirus pandemic. On 29<sup>th</sup> July 2020, Council approved an amended RLDP (2020 – 2030) DA, with a start date of September 2020. This and the Review Report were then approved by Welsh Government on 14<sup>th</sup> September to allow preparation to formally commence.

2.7 The DA sets out a 3.5 year process to adoption in March 2024, with a plan end date of December 31st 2030. The stages of this DA, and their expected dates of preparation and completion are as follows;

<b>Key Stage</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
<b>Definitive</b>	
Delivery Agreement	Submission to Welsh Government - August 2020
Commence Pre-deposit Preparation	September 2020
Preferred Strategy (Pre-Deposit) Consultation	November/December 2021
Deposit LDP Consultation	October/November 2022
<b>Indicative</b>	
Submit Revised LDP to the Welsh Government	April 2023
Independent Examination	August/September 2023
Adoption	March 2024

2.8 The DA also sets out a detailed Community Involvement Scheme (CIS). The CIS sets out the Local Authority's principles, intentions and mechanisms for early, continuous and broad stakeholder involvement in the preparation of the RLDP. This will include, but certainly not be restricted to, Council Members, Council officers, the



general public, community groups, commercial developers, public service bodies and private service providers alike.

2.9 The Review Report and Delivery Agreement are available on the Council's website at the following location;

<https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Resident/PlanningandBuildingControl/RevisedLocalDevelopmentPlan20202030/RevisedLocalDevelopmentPlan20202030.aspx>

### **3.0 The Key Stages of the RLDP Preparation**

3.1 As indicated above, there are several formal stages of RLDP preparation.

#### **Revision of the Preferred Strategy**

3.2 This includes the identification of the current Issues and Trends that affect RCT and their connection to the LDP. These are informed by the ongoing Annual Monitoring of the LDP and analysis of social, economic and environmental contextual changes. The formal Integrated Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report (discussed further below) also gathers and identifies further facts and issues, whilst it is necessary to prepare an updated evidence base for all LDP topics and through RLDP Stakeholder consultation i.e. forums such as this.

3.3 This then informs the Vision and Objectives of the RLDP. These sub-stages then allow for strategic options to be considered for the appropriate scale and location of growth and development across the County Borough. The Preferred Strategy that is subsequently determined, will set out the most appropriate strategic framework for the RLDP, and once prepared, will go out to consultation at the end of 2021.

3.4 A summary of the outcomes of these stages in the current LDP, are set out in Chapters 1-3 and up to paragraph 4.25 of the LDP document; which may inform greater understanding of the process, and can be accessed on our website using the following address;

<https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Resident/PlanningandBuildingControl/LocalDevelopmentPlans/RelateddocumentsLDP20062021/AdoptedLocalDevelopmentPlan.pdf>

3.5 The current Preferred Strategy, with more detail, may be viewed here;

<https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Resident/PlanningandBuildingControl/LocalDevelopmentPlans/LDPEvidenceBaseLibraryandAnnualMonitoringRe/RelateddocumentsEvidenceBase/EB3.pdf>

#### **Deposit RLDP**

3.6 The Preferred Strategy framework, alongside an expanded and fully up to date evidence base will then allow for the consideration of the far more detailed planning policies, proposals and site-specific land use allocations. These may be revisions to the existing policies, new policies or some policies taken out of the plan. The site



specific allocations will be guided by the Strategy and the outcome of the Candidate Site Assessment. All this will formulate the draft Deposit RLDP, which will be put forward for public consultation at the end of 2022.

### **Submission of RLDP and Examination**

3.7 The Deposit RLDP and any appropriate representations made during consultation (and any necessary changes made after consultation) will be submitted to the WG Planning Inspector in April 2023, with the Examination in Public later that year.

3.8 If the plan is considered 'sound' by the Inspector, and again subject to necessary small changes, then the Council may adopt the plan in early 2024.

### **Other elements of the RLDP plan making process**

3.9 Alongside the key stages above, there are other major ongoing elements such as the Candidate Site process. We have recently opened the 'Call for Candidate Sites'.

3.10 An Integrated Sustainability Appraisal (ISA) of the Plan is also to be prepared. We have commissioned a company 'Land Use Consultants' to undertake the statutory requirements of a Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environment Assessment for a RLDP. Alongside this, the ISA will seek to ensure that the RLDP is meeting its broader requirements (hence the terms 'Integrated'), including;

- Health Impact Assessment (HIA),
- Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA)
- Welsh Language Assessment,
- The appropriate addressing of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act (2015) and;
- The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 (Section 6).

## **4.0 The Role of the Members Steering Group in the Preparation of the Preferred Strategy**

4.1 The Draft Terms of Reference for the Members Steering Group outlines the broad purpose, objectives and responsibilities of the group. This paper will now set out an introduction to the role of the group in the initial preparation stage of the RLDP, being the Preferred Strategy and all its component parts (as set out above).

4.2 Following this inaugural meeting, there will be a series of Visioning events organised that will seek to progress this stage, in accordance with the agreed Community Involvement Scheme. In these Visioning workshops, feedback from participants (as set out in the CIS) will be gathered on the issues that the LDP should address and a range of strategy options. It is likely that these events will be digital, whilst wider, informal views will be sought publicly.



4.3 It is proposed that the initial Visioning event will be for the Members Steering Group, to help set the scene for the other events to follow, such as the broader RLDP Forum. It may then be appropriate to have a round-up and feedback of the outcomes of all events with another Members Steering Group event.

### **Topic Areas**

4.4 The current LDP identified issues that informed draft strategic policies in its Preferred Strategy. These evolved through into Core Policies in the final LDP (Chapter 4) that covered the following topic areas;

- Development in the North
- Development in the South
- Strategic Development Sites
- Housing Requirements
- Affordable Housing
- Employment Requirements
- Retail Development
- Transportation
- Waste Management
- Minerals

4.5 The current LDP was prepared between 2006 and its adoption in March 2011, and since then several significant changes have occurred in the above areas. These range from policy and legislation changes to locally significant changes and local priorities, as well as the markets they operate in.

4.6 The major role of the Visioning events will be to reevaluate these areas and consider all the changes that have taken place within them, issues and trends associated with them and aims for their future.

4.7 Over the years, the priorities and aspirations of the Council in association with these topics have also changed; this may be in relation to individual areas, or how they are now seen as more collective elements to our functioning communities. The relationship between development and the natural environment is also continually changing.

4.8 The comprehensive LDP Review Report (weblink address above), sets out the most up to date formal analysis of these topics areas and the issues associated with them. In advance of the Visioning events, we will also share the very comprehensive ISA Scoping Report and individual Topic Papers.

4.9 However, it would be constructive to share the current strategic views of the group on these topics at the inaugural meeting.



## **5.0 Evolving Topics**

5.1 It was further considered appropriate to raise topics and areas of interest that were not fully considered or included in the current LDP. The section below gives a brief reference to these, and other contextual changes. They will certainly be matters that will be considered in depth in the Visioning process and will need to be incorporated into the strategic foundation of the RLDP.

### **Covid 19**

5.2 The outcomes of the current pandemic will undoubtedly have some effect on all aspects of plan preparation and the topics within it. We are evolving methods of engagement that can take into account the restrictions on people being able to gather in person, and this will continue to progress. How it will affect the intricate details of certain markets such as the house building industry and other employing industries, is however a considerable unknown; and an ever changing one. It will certainly be a major challenge moving forward to ensure that we can produce an evidence base for the plan with an appropriate level of certainty.

### **Brexit**

5.3 As above, the uncertainty surrounding the potential fallout from Brexit is something that needs to be heavily taken into consideration.

### **Climate Change and De-Carbonisation**

5.4 Climate change, whilst not a 'new' challenge, has become an important consideration in many sectors in recent years. The Council has established the Climate Change Cabinet Steering Group to ensure an Authority-wide approach to issues of climate change, and the Council becoming a carbon neutral organisation by 2030.

5.5 The topic has an influence on, and is heavily influence by, a number of the broader, standard LDP topics. How these connections and subsequent requirements are incorporated in the RLDP and its policies will be an important challenge.

5.6 It is widely reported by climate change experts that one of the key impacts of climate change is an increase in the frequency and severity of extreme weather events, such as flooding. In 2020, the County Borough was severely affected by flooding caused by Storm Dennis. Many rivers reached record levels, with properties flooded and many evacuated from their homes.

5.7 How we consider existing and evolving forms of renewable energy is something to consider. The need to ensure, and provide for, increased use of electric vehicles is also a challenge for the RLDP.

### **Green Infrastructure**





5.8 Since 2015, there has been a fair shift in local/national policy, guidance and legislation, as a result of the recognised climate emergency that the world is presently experiencing. As a consequence, a collective social conscience is leading to changes in behavioural and travel patterns, in an attempt to become 'cleaner and greener'. As individuals continue to take advantage of their surroundings for the benefit of their health and well-being, in addition to increasing their walking and cycling habits, it is paramount that the infrastructure to support such activities is developed and enhanced. This agenda has evolved quite considerably in recent years and this is very much evident throughout current policy, guidance and legislation.

#### Health and Well-being

5.9 Public perception of health and well-being has shifted since the adoption of the current LDP in 2011. As such, health and well-being is increasingly an important consideration for most people. This may be in part due to the introduction of the Well-being of Future Generations Act and associated changes in public sector organisations. Subsequently, physical and mental well-being is now a priority for many people. A general trend in being more health conscious has emerged since 2011.

#### Viability of Housing Sites

5.10 The issue of viability of housing sites was not as prevalent during the preparation of the LDP as it has become in recent years. In 2016, an assessment was commissioned to evaluate all undeveloped allocations, which concluded that just 24 of 41 sites had a level of viability. The reasons for this include physical site constraints, topography, contamination or market locations.

5.11 Additionally, many of the sites in the current LDP require some land reclamation to take place to allow development. Whereas at the time of writing the LDP there was significant Welsh Government Funding available for land reclamation, this has not been available since adoption of the plan. Further assessment and evidence gathering in this respect has indicated that many of the remaining undeveloped housing allocations are unviable.

#### Tourism

5.12 Tourism is an area that was not considered in much detail during the current LDP preparation. The sector has clearly evolved dramatically in this time in RCT and South Wales. The RLDP has a role in ensuring that the Tourism Strategy, once finalised, is implemented into the land use planning strategy of the RLDP, and appropriate policies are put in place to allow its expansion.

5.13 RCT received 1.6 million day visitors in 2018 and over 500,000 overnight stays. It is estimated that tourism was worth £172 million to the RCT economy in 2018 and employed more 1,400 people.



5.14 The forthcoming Zip World, which received planning permission in early 2020, is expected to contribute to a significant expansion of RCT's tourism economy.

#### Welsh Language

5.15 At the time of the 2011 Census, 27,779 people (12.3%) in RCT classed themselves as able to speak Welsh. This was a slight decrease from the 12.1% who reported as Welsh speakers in the 2001 Census and is lower than the 2011 national average of 19%. Current national planning policies, and other legislation, seeks to ensure that LDP's should play a more pro-active role in ensuring the Welsh Language is fully considered in its preparation.

#### **Below are a small collection of other general background facts and figures of various sectors, for information and perusal;**

#### House Prices

Figure 1 below provides information regarding the performance of the house market in Rhondda Cynon Taf from the start of the plan period 2006 to the end of 2018. Housing sales and prices fell significantly during the recession around 2009, however average house prices have recently surpassed pre-recession prices. House prices between 2009 and 2013 were generally steady, ranging between £86,000 and £89,000, though there has been a notable increase in average house prices from 2013 onwards, increasing by approximately 24%.

New build sales have not been affected in the same way as second hand sales, with new build sales exceeding pre-recession figures, as early as 2013, whereas second hand sales have fallen by approximately 15% from 2007 to 2018, but have still been growing consistently for a number of years.

The 2019-2020 average house price in the County Borough was £113,747, up from £111,787 in 2018-2019. The average price of a property in Wales during 2019-2020 was £161,719<sup>1</sup>.

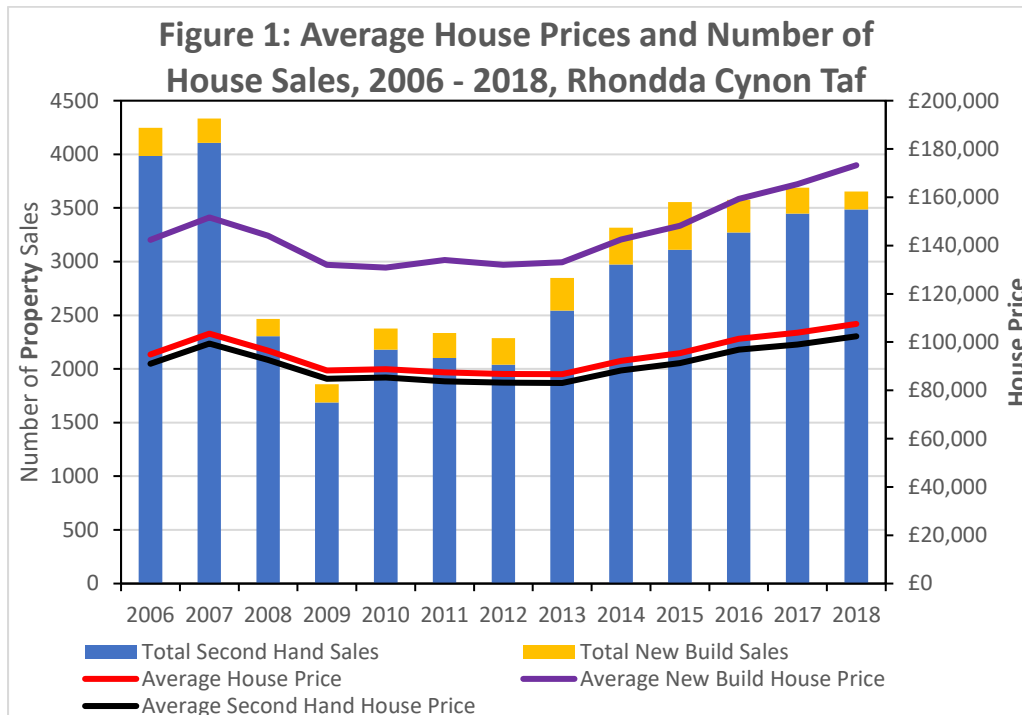
Figure 1: Average House Prices and House Sales<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Land Registry, May 2020

<sup>2</sup> Land Registry UK House Price Index





## Population

Estimates show that there has been approximately a 4.03% increase in the population of Rhondda Cynon Taf between 2001 and 2019<sup>3</sup>. In comparison, the population of Wales as a whole is estimated to have grown by approximately 8.34% between 2001-2019.

## Housing

Between 2001 and 2011, the number of households in Rhondda Cynon Taf rose by 5,110. The number of households in Rhondda Cynon Taf at the time of the 2011 Census was 99,663<sup>4</sup>.

## Education

In 2011, almost a third of RCT's population had no formal qualifications (31.77%) which is higher than the percentage of people who had level 3 or 4 qualifications (30.97%)<sup>5</sup>.

In comparison, the number of people with no formal qualifications has decreased. In 2001, 40% of the population had no educational qualifications.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> StatsWales (2020) Population estimates by local authority and year.

<sup>4</sup> ONS (2012) 2011 Census

<sup>5</sup> ONS (2012) 2011 Census

<sup>6</sup> 2001 Census



## Deprivation

The Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) 2019 ranks small areas (known as Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs)) according to their relative deprivation levels across eight types of deprivation, and these are combined to produce an overall index. 71% of LSOAs in RCT are ranked as being within the 50% most deprived in Wales<sup>7</sup>. This is the third highest percentage of any Welsh local authority after Merthyr Tydfil and Blaenau Gwent.

## Environmental Changes

### Transport

The number of cars per household has risen in RCT between 2001 and 2011<sup>8</sup>.

Households with:	2001	2011
No car/van	31.6%	27.1%
1 car/vans	44.9%	42.6%
2+ cars/vans	23.5%	30.3%

## Commuting Patterns

RCT accounts a daily net outward flow of 11,948 commuters who drive a car or van (Figure 1 below), which does not include those who travel as additional passengers in those vehicles.

The areas of Cardiff (16,086 commuters), Bridgend (4,004 commuters), Caerphilly (3,336 commuters), Merthyr Tydfil (3,197 commuters) and The Vale of Glamorgan (2,350 commuters) account for the largest outflows of commuters from RCT. These areas also account for the largest numbers of people travelling from RCT for work by car or van.

The areas which account for the largest numbers of inflows of commuters to RCT are Cardiff (5,043 commuters), Caerphilly (3,615 commuters), Bridgend (2,768 commuters) and Merthyr Tydfil (2,230 commuters). The majority of commuters from these locations drive by car or by van.

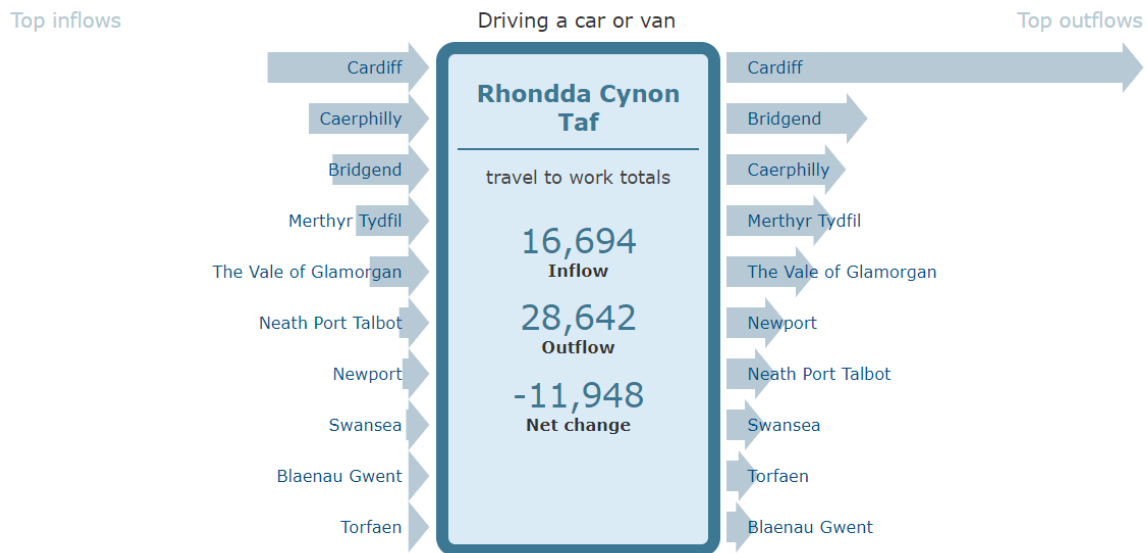
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<sup>7</sup> StatsWales (2019) WIMD 2019 – Local Authority Analysis.

<sup>8</sup> 2001 and 2011 Census



Figure 1: Commuter flows into and out of RCT (car or van)<sup>9</sup>



## Economic Changes

### **Employment**

In 2018, the main employment sector for residents of RCT was ‘public administration, defence, education and health’ (24,000 people), followed by ‘wholesale retail, transport, hotels and food’ (21,600 people) and production (11,000)<sup>10</sup>. The percentage of people employed in manufacturing fell from 22.9% to 12.56% between the 2001 and 2011 Censuses.

In 2011, 8.33% of RCT residents worked mainly from home – this percentage is likely to increase significantly as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic although it remains to be seen whether such effects will be long-term.

According to the 2001 Census, the total number of people unemployed in RCT was 5,927 (3.6%). In comparison, the 2011 Census recorded the total number of people unemployed as 8,104 (4.7%)

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/census/2011/wu03uk/chart>

<sup>10</sup> Stats Wales: Workplace employment by Welsh local areas and broad industry.