



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL

17th JANUARY 2024

REVISED LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (RLDP) 2022 – 2037 - PREFERRED STRATEGY

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF PROSPERITY AND DEVELOPMENT IN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDER CLLR NORRIS

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Appendices; Appendix 1 – The Revised Local Development Plan (2022 – 2037) Preferred Strategy.

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 This report sets out the Preferred Strategy for the Revised Local Development Plan (RLDP) 2022 – 2037, (shown in full at Appendix 1.) and seeks Council approval to carry out statutory public consultation on the RLDP Preferred Strategy.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that;

- 2.1 The RLDP Preferred Strategy be approved for statutory public and stakeholder consultation.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The Preferred Strategy has been prepared in accordance with legislation and national planning policy. It is considered that this Preferred Strategy, otherwise known as the Pre-deposit stage of the RLDP, appropriately meets the tests of soundness required of it at this stage, in that;

- It is consistent with other plans, policies and strategies,
- It appropriately meets the needs and intentions that have been identified for RCT, and

- It is sufficiently achievable and deliverable.

4. BACKGROUND

4.1 The Revised Local Development Plan

4.2 Rhondda Cynon Taf are revising their Local Development Plan (LDP). The LDP is the statutory land-use planning document for the County Borough (excluding the area in the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park Authority). It identifies where development should take place and sets out planning policies on numerous topics, which then form the basis for decisions on planning applications.

4.3 The current LDP has a plan period of 2006 to 2021, with the Revised LDP (RLDP) for the period 2022 to 2037. However, the current LDP remains in force until the RLDP is adopted (which is timetabled for early 2026).

4.4 What is the Preferred Strategy?

4.5 The document itself forms the completion of the first formal stage of preparation of the RLDP, which is also known as the Pre-deposit stage. It sets out the key Issues, Vision, Objectives and strategy options; before presenting a 'Preferred Strategy'. At this strategic level, it will seek to address the needs of RCT by proposing levels of development growth and where this should be spatially distributed across the County Borough. The Preferred Strategy sets out a small number of strategic level planning policies to be expanded upon in subsequent stages of RLDP preparation.

5.0 The Preferred Strategy

(The full Preferred Strategy is set out in Appendix 1 of this report)

5.1 Issues, Vision and Objectives

5.2 A suite of Issues has been identified through multiple stages and wide-reaching public engagement, consultation with the LDP Forum, the Housing Stakeholder group, the RCT Members Steering group and the Council's internal officer working group. The statutory Integrated Sustainability Appraisal (ISA) scoping process also informed these issues. These Issues then informed the preparation of the following stages of the Vision, Objectives, Preferred Strategy and its Strategic Policies.

5.3 The following Vision is recommended for the RLDP and sits comfortably within the Council's Corporate Plan and National Well Being Goals:

The Vision by 2037 is for a more resilient and sustainable RCT:

An area of sustainable, cohesive communities, who are healthy, well connected and who have equal access to high quality homes, jobs, services and facilities.

An area more resilient and considerate to the challenges of climate change with protected and enhanced biodiversity and green spaces and a well-connected sustainable transport system.

An area with a diverse and healthy economy, supported by vibrant and viable town centres and a flourishing tourism sector.

A RCT that celebrates its heritage and is resilient for the future.

5.4 These are the **18 objectives** that have then been identified for the RLDP;

Objective 1:	Mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change and reduce flood risk.
Objective 2:	Provide an appropriate amount and mix of housing to meet local needs.
Objective 3:	Promote vibrant communities, with opportunities for living, working and socialising for all.
Objective 4:	Encourage healthy and safe lifestyles that promote well-being and improve overall health levels in RCT.
Objective 5:	Reduce the need to travel and promote more sustainable modes of transport.
Objective 6:	Promote, protect and enhance cultural heritage and the built environment.
Objective 7:	Promote the use of the Welsh language.
Objective 8:	Protect and enhance the quality and character of the landscape.
Objective 9:	Protect and enhance biodiversity.
Objective 10:	Protect the quality and quantity of RCT's water resources.
Objective 11:	Protect and enhance air quality and ensure appropriate soundscapes.
Objective 12:	Promote the efficient use of land, soils and minerals.
Objective 13:	Continue to minimise waste generation and promote more sustainable waste management.
Objective 14:	Provide for a sustainable economy.
Objective 15:	Provide for a diverse range of job opportunities.
Objective 16:	Promote vibrant, adaptable and resilient town centres.
Objective 17:	Address the impacts of the mining legacy in RCT.
Objective 18:	To support the growth of the tourism and leisure sector.

5.5 The Revised LDP Settlement Hierarchy

5.6 A key part of the RLDP process is to undertake a Settlement Assessment that informs the identification of a Settlement Hierarchy. This should ensure that the

developments are focussed in those places where they can be best accommodated and serviced, in line with the scale of the existing settlements. This hierarchy has for the most part remained unchanged from the current LDP. It is considered that the 3 Principal Settlements for growth should remain as Aberdare, Pontypridd and Llantrisant/Talbot Green but the Settlement Assessment also indicates the need for Pontyclun to now form part of the Principal Settlement of Llantrisant/Talbot Green due to the physical interrelationships and social and economic dependencies between them.

- 5.7 In addition to the Settlement Hierarchy, the Strategy also proposes a Town/Settlement Centre hierarchy (which is an evolution of the retail hierarchy in the current LDP) and by its nature is intrinsically linked to the main Settlement Hierarchy (see Strategic Policy 8 of the Preferred Strategy.)

5.8 Growth Options

- 5.9 A Demographic Evidence report has been prepared which sets out a range of growth scenarios; both demographic/housing and employment based. These have been further considered in a Growth Options Paper.

- 5.10 The preferred growth option for the RLDP/Preferred Strategy is to follow the mid-ranged Welsh Government principal projections, resulting in a new housing requirement of 564 dwellings per annum or a total of 8,450, between 2022 and 2037. This approach is considered aspirational but remains achievable and sensible, as it is a 10% increase on the past 5-year average build rate. Seeking to meet this requirement provides the best opportunity to realistically deliver high quality new housing, including affordable homes. This option will also help to continue to prevent depopulation in certain areas and associated decline.

- 5.11 The approach also accords with the growth area proposals for the South East Wales region as set out in 'Future Wales – The National Plan'.

5.12 Spatial Strategy Options

- 5.13 A series of Spatial Strategy Options have been identified, and fully considered, to determine where would be the most appropriate places to deliver the necessary levels of growth. These being:

- **Option 1: Continuation of the current LDP Strategy**
- **Option 2: Strategic Highway Network considering the Principal Settlements**
- **Option 3: Town Centre First**
- **Option 4: Southern Growth Strategy**
- **Option 5: Metro and Public Transport Nodes**
- **Option 6: Key Strategic Site in the South**
- **Option 7: Urban Containment**
- **Option 8: Local Needs Strategy**

- 5.14 Analysis of these options highlighted that there are benefits to each one. However, no single option would be appropriate on its own to meet the necessary levels of

growth, and the breadth of the Vision and Objectives of the RLDP as no single option can deliver enough land to accommodate the identified growth.

- 5.15 Ultimately, it is considered that several key elements of the current LDP strategy are sound; particularly a need to continue with the different strategy approach for the north and south of the County Borough.

5.16 The Strategy

- 5.17 A housing requirement of 8,450 new dwellings has been identified to meet the Vision and strategic Objectives of the Revised LDP. By adding in a 10% flexibility allowance around any unforeseen non-delivery of developments we will need to provide for 9,295 dwellings in the revised LDP.
- 5.18 The RCT Local Housing Market Assessment Draft Findings 2024 found that 5,672 affordable (non-open market dwellings) are needed in RCT over the plan period 2022-2037.
- 5.19 Planning for 9,295 new dwellings will allow for the provision of sufficient market housing and seek to provide as much affordable housing as possible through the RLDP, throughout the plan period.
- 5.20 The overall housing provision will be met by existing permitted 'landbank' sites, new allocations, and 'windfall' sites.
- 5.21 This level of growth should also lead to an increase in employment and job opportunities, whilst helping to maintain levels of residents of a working age.
- 5.22 A further Employment Land Review was commissioned to ascertain employment land need over the plan period to facilitate the expansion of existing businesses and provide new sites for inward investment into the County Borough.
- 5.23 A combined '**Northern Sustainable Communities and Southern Sustainable Growth Strategy**' for the distinct Northern and Southern Strategy Areas is considered to be the most appropriate Revised LDP Preferred Strategy.

5.24 Sustainable Communities in the Northern Strategy Area (NSA)

- 5.25 The primary aim of the Northern Sustainable Communities Strategy is to continue to strengthen the communities there. For the most part, the urban areas in the NSA are those in the Rhondda Fawr, Rhondda Fach and Cynon Valleys.
- 5.26 Some of the key pillars of the Sustainable Communities Strategy will be:
- **South East Wales Metro**
 - **Bringing Empty Homes Back Into Use**
 - **Tourism**
 - **Continued Flexible Settlement Boundaries**

5.27 Key Sites in the NSA

- 5.28 Two Key Sites are proposed, which by definition are seen as 'key' to delivering the Council's strategy.

Potential Key Site 1 – Penrhys Village, Tylorstown

- 5.29 Redevelopment of the 29.8 hectare site for up to 700 new houses. Around 300 of these will be replacement dwellings whilst approximately 500 dwellings are likely to be built during the plan period up to 2037. This will be alongside the replacement and improvement of public facilities and services.

Potential Key Site 2 – Land South of Hirwaun

- 5.30 Following the completion of the open cast operation at Tower, proposals for up to 15 - 20 hectares of employment, up to 30 hectares of tourism opportunities and the remaining 100 hectares for nature conservation and biodiversity enhancement, including public access.

5.31 Sustainable Growth in the Southern Strategy Area (SSA)

- 5.32 The Sustainable Growth in the SSA strategy will seek to provide the necessary growth for existing communities, with additional growth to meet the wider needs of the whole of RCT.

- 5.33 For the most part, the urban areas in the SSA are those around Pontypridd, down to Taffs Well and Church Village in the east, as well as Tonyrefail, down to the wider Llantrisant area and Llanharan in the west.

- 5.34 The Sustainable Growth Strategy will seek opportunities for its delivery via the following mechanisms:

- **The Principal Settlement of Pontypridd**
- **Set Settlement Boundaries**
- **Empty Properties**

5.35 Key Sites in the SSA

- 5.36 As with the NSA, 'Key Sites' are proposed for the SSA, which will help to deliver the strategy.

Potential Key Site 3 – Land at Llanilid, Llanharan

- 5.37 Redevelopment on the previous open cast coal site at Llanilid, Llanharan. The site totals 269 hectares and it is envisaged that the site may deliver over 3,000 houses in total; however, it is unlikely that more than 1,500 will come forward during the RLDP plan period (to 2037).

- 5.38 The proposals for this site includes a range of public services and facilities, employment uses and large areas of public open space, whilst protecting and enhancing a range of important biodiversity features.

Potential Key Site 4 - Llanilltud Faerdref, Church Village

5.39 This Key Site is made up of a number of Candidate Sites in adjoining locations on the south of the wider settlements of Llantwit Fardre and Efail Isaf. The combined 50ha site could accommodate up to 1,000 new homes, along with a range of supporting public services and facilities, to ensure sustainable growth.

5.40 Strategic Policies

5.41 The strategic policies form part of the framework for delivering and implementing the Preferred Strategy of the RLDP. The policy topics are listed below and seek to set out the Council's strategic direction for the relevant areas:

- 1. Climate Change and Carbon Reduction**
- 2. Place-making and Sustainable Communities**
- 3. Flood Risk Management**
- 4. Biodiversity and the Natural Environment**
- 5. Green Infrastructure and Open Space**
- 6. Housing**
- 7. Employment Land and the Economy**
- 8. Settlement Centres**
- 9. Tourism**

5.42 Candidate Sites

5.43 Over a thousand sites have been considered and assessed for their suitability for development through the preparation of the RLDP to date. These being from private landowners and our own Council owned land. Proactive identification of sites has also been undertaken through an Urban Capacity Study.

5.44 Over 300 of these 'Candidate Sites' have then been taken forward following an initial, first stage assessment. and are deemed as having some suitability for development. However, at this stage, this is not a definitive intention to formally allocate the sites for development.

5.45 Evidence Base

5.46 Section 2 of the Preferred Strategy document sets out a Local Evidence Base – which is a list of the many background reports and papers that have helped to inform the Preferred Strategy. These documents are referred to throughout the Preferred Strategy. Many of these were specifically prepared for the RLDP, whilst several have been prepared by departments across the Council in recent years.

5.47 Candidate Sites and Evidence Base Publication

5.48 It is necessary that the Local Evidence Base be published alongside the Preferred Strategy consultation. As these are factual background evidence base papers they need not be specifically approved by Council.

- 5.49 A formal 'Candidate Site Register' with the background details of the approximate 300 sites will also be published. The results of the first stage assessment of the suitability of these sites in accordance with the previously prepared Candidate Site Assessment Methodology, will also be published. It is however considered that these results themselves would not be subject to Council agreement at this stage.

6 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

- 6.1 The RLDP is subject to a bespoke and overarching Integrated Sustainability Appraisal (ISA). This ISA will assess each and every stage of the preparation of the LDP. There are multiple legislative facets to this, including an Equalities Impact Assessment.

7. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Another key element of the ISA is to undertake a Welsh Language Impact Assessment and at each stage of the LDP.

8. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT

- 8.1 There has been significant internal consultation with officers and appropriate external organisations.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

- 9.1 In general, the financial implication associated with this report and its proposals remain in line with those agreed at the outset of RLDP preparation in April 2022.

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 10.1 The new LDP will be prepared in accordance with The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004), the Town and Country Planning (Local Development Plan) (Wales) Regulations 2005 (as amended 2015), Planning Policy Wales 2021, the Planning (Wales) Act 2015 and the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) regulations.

11. LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT.

How the subject of the report will contribute to the delivery of the Council's Corporate Priorities?

- 11.1 The production of a Revised Local Development Plan will help to deliver the Council's three main corporate priorities of building a strong economy, promoting independence and positive lives for everyone and creating neighbourhoods where people are proud to live and work. The production of this land-use plan will help

to stimulate the local economy through market and social house building, as well as providing for employment and retail development across the County Borough. Working together to shape our communities will instil a sense of pride and allow people to live and work independently, wherever they so choose. The LDP will also help to deliver the transport infrastructure that keeps Rhondda Cynon Taf working and moving, in a sustainable way that benefits current and future generations.

How the Sustainable Development principle, i.e. the five ways of working has been considered?

11.2 The Local Development Plan will be a key project demonstrating the 5 ways of working in action:

- Integration - the preparation of the RLDP brings together all land use planning issues across the County Borough, involving our partners, residents, visitors, employers and service providers in the formulation of the Plan.
- Collaboration - the RLDP will be a key collaboration project for the region enabling stakeholders including residents to work together to form a Plan for the County Borough.
- Involvement - preparation of the RLDP will provide numerous opportunities to engage with our residents and customers, including the business community and ensuring that we are listening to a wide range of views to inform the plan and decision making process.
- Prevention - the RLDP provides an opportunity to understand the root causes of issues and preventing them by being proactive in our thinking and understanding the need to tackle problems at source for example by undertaking needs assessments to inform our priorities.
- Long-term - the RLDP will be all about planning for the future and taking a strategic approach to ensure the County Borough is sustainable and that we understand the future need and demand for sustainable development in the region and how that is best met.

How the subject of the report seeks to maximise the Council's contribution to seven national well-being goals?

11.3 The RLDP will contribute to the seven well-being goals by working together with other public services and third sector organisations to improve the well-being of everybody in Wales. This new approach seeks to improve public services in a sustainable way, for the benefit of all. The RLDP will help to ensure:

- A Prosperous Wales - the RLDP will promote a productive, creative and low-carbon society that recognises the limits of our resources and global environment, by ensuring that our finite resources are used efficiently and proportionately. It will

also help to develop a skilled, well-educated population to work within an economy that generates wealth and provides employment opportunities for all.

- A Resilient Wales - the RLDP will help to ensure that the region maintains and enhances a bio-diverse natural environment with healthy, functioning ecosystems that support social, economic and ecological resilience with the ability to adapt to change.
- A Healthier Wales - the RLDP aims to help build a society in which people's mental and physical well-being is maximised through access to green space, and helps to foster an understanding of choices and behaviours that benefit future health.
- A More Equal Wales - the RLDP will seek to enable people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances. It also aims to help communities effectively tackle the loneliness and isolation that can often exist within many of them.
- A Wales of Cohesive Communities - the RLDP, via the place-making principle, will help to foster attractive, safe, viable and well-connected communities that improve the well-being of all residents and visitors.
- A Wales of Vibrant Culture and Thriving Welsh Language - the RLDP will support a society that promotes and protects our culture, heritage and Welsh language, whilst encouraging people to participate in the arts, sport and recreation.
- A Globally Responsible Wales - the RLDP will contribute towards Wales being a nation which, when doing anything to improve our economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being; will take account of whether doing such a thing makes a positive contribution to our global well-being.

Any other national strategies the subject of the report is seeking to address.

- 11.4 The Revised Local Development Plan is also in general conformity with the aims and objectives of Future Wales – The National Plan, which sits above the RLDP in the development plan hierarchy within Wales.

12. CONCLUSION

- 12.1 To conclude, it is recommended that the RLDP Preferred Strategy be approved for public consultation.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972
AS AMENDED BY
THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

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Background Papers;

**Appendix 1 – The Revised Local Development Plan 2022 – 2037 – Preferred
Strategy.**