Caerphilly County Borough
2nd Replacement Local Development Plan 2020-2035

EB1: Strategy Options Assessment

January 2025

CAERPHILLY
COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
CYNGOR BWRDEISTREF SIROL
CAERFFILI

2nd Replacement

Caerphilly County Borough

Local Development Plan

2020-2035

EB1 Revised Strategy Options Assessment

January 2025

1. Introduction

1.1 This Evidence Base Document on the 'Strategy Options Assessment' is one of a number of background documents prepared as part of the evidence base to support the 2nd Replacement Local Development Plan (2RLDP) Pre-Deposit consultation process.

1.2 This paper has been prepared to provide background information on the spatial strategy options considered for the 2RLDP. The level of growth that the plan should accommodate is set out within the Population and Housing Growth Options Evidence Paper (EB4), which provides the evidence to support a housing requirement of 6,750 new dwellings over the plan period (450 dwellings per annum) and the Employment Background Evidence Paper (EB15), which identifies a requirement for approximately 45 Ha of new employment land to be allocated over the plan period. The spatial options for the distribution of this growth are considered within this background paper.

1.3 Section 2 of this paper sets out the policy context and key considerations when determining realistic spatial options for the 2RLDP.

1.4 Section 3 identifies six spatial options that have been considered, having regard for the strategic policy fit of each of these options and how realistic they are. The six Spatial Options are as follows:

- Spatial Option 1: Continuation of the Adopted LDP Strategy
- Spatial Option 2: Heads of the Valleys Focus
- Spatial Option 3: Key Strategic Site
- Spatial Option 4: Metro Investment Focus

- Spatial Option 5: Town Centre Focus
- Spatial Option 6: Caerphilly Basin Focus

1.5 The six alternative spatial options provide clearly different spatial development scenarios in respect of future new housing and employment development; each of which will have different environmental, social and economic outcomes for Caerphilly County Borough up to 2035.

1.6 The six options have been considered by a range of stakeholders and the views of stakeholders on each of these options are set out as part of the analysis of each option.

1.7 The final section of the paper concludes by identifying the key components of the strategy options that should be taken forward into a Preferred Strategy.

2. Policy Context

2.1 A detailed analysis of the national, regional and local policies that influence the development of the Preferred Strategy are identified in the Preferred Strategy document. However, the following documents should be recognised as influencing the development of strategy options.

Planning Policy Wales (Edition 12)

2.2 Planning Policy Wales (PPW) requires development plans to include a spatial strategy for the lifetime of the plan. This should consider the number of homes provided, expected job opportunities and the services needed for the expectant levels of growth. It should also seek to minimise the need to travel, reducing reliance on the private car and increasing walking, cycling and use of public transport.

2.3 In the development of spatial strategies, priority must be given to the use of suitable and sustainable previously developed land and/or underutilised land for all types of development.

2.4 Spatial strategies should be consistent with the key planning principles and contribute towards the National Sustainable Placemaking Outcomes.

Development Plans Manual (Edition 3)

2.5 The Development Plans Manual (DPM) states that the spatial strategy in LDPs “must clearly communicate where future development will be located, why and how it will deliver the vision, key issues and objectives.” The spatial strategy must be informed by a robust understanding of the role and function of places. A role and functional analysis (EB3 – Settlement Role, Function and Sustainability Analysis) has been undertaken, which examines how the principal towns, local centres and residential settlements function, including a consideration of the role of these areas within the wider Cardiff Capital Region.

2.6 The DPM states that the Local Planning Authority (LPA) must consider and assess a number of realistic options for the distribution of development across their area. The starting point for any assessment is the adopted development plan and the options considered as part of that, together with a consideration of robust evidence

that would support alternative options. The DPM identifies a number of factors that should be considered when assessing spatial options, including:

- Aspirations of the plan (areas for regeneration, wider regional context etc.).
- Availability and suitability of brownfield land in preference to greenfield land and land of high agricultural, ecological or landscape value.
- Minimise the need to travel, especially by private vehicles, through the Sustainable Transport Hierarchy and Active Travel Plans.
- Capacity of existing and potential infrastructure.
- Scale and location of market and affordable housing required.
- Scale and location of employment opportunities.
- Environmental implications, e.g. energy consumption, greenhouse gas emissions, flood risk, biodiversity, green infrastructure, mineral resources and ground conditions, including mine gas.
- Social and cultural factors, including consideration of the Welsh language.
- Accessibility to jobs, shops and services.
- Understanding how different market areas can affect the viability of delivering private and affordable housing as well as associated infrastructure to support the level of development proposed.
- Deliverability of key sites and overall strategy.
- National strategies and priorities, such as decarbonisation and health.

Future Wales – The National Plan 2040

2.7 Future Wales sets out the 20-year spatial framework for land use in Wales, providing a context for the provision of new infrastructure and growth. Future Wales is the highest tier of development plan in Wales and is focused on solutions to issues and challenges at a national scale. Future Wales sets out where nationally important growth and infrastructure is needed and how the planning system at a national, regional and local level can deliver it. It provides direction for Strategic Development Plans (SDPs) and Local Development Plans (LDPs) and supports the determination of Developments of National Significance. Future Wales sits alongside PPW11.

2.8 Policy 1 of Future Wales identifies three National Growth Areas, one of which is ‘Cardiff, Newport and the Valleys’, which includes the whole of Caerphilly County Borough. This is supplemented by Policy 33, which specifically relates to the ‘Cardiff, Newport and the Valleys National Growth Area’. The Policy states that LDPs should recognise the National Growth Area as the focus for strategic economic and housing growth; essential services and facilities; advanced manufacturing; transport and digital infrastructure.

2.9 Policy 2 on ‘Shaping Urban Growth and Regeneration – Strategic Placemaking’ sets out the key placemaking principles that should be considered when determining the location of new development. This includes creating a mix of uses and variety of house types and tenures, building places at a walkable scale with

homes, local facilities and public transport within walking distance and ensuring development is built at appropriate densities with green infrastructure incorporated.

2.10 Future Wales also identifies a 'Town Centre First' approach in Policy 6, where significant new commercial, retail, education, health, leisure and public service facilities must be located within town and city centres. The supporting text for the policy also indicates that town centres are appropriate locations for new homes.

2.11 Policy 7 – 'Delivering Affordable Homes' – identifies that LDPs should develop strong evidence-based policy frameworks to deliver affordable housing. Local Authorities should explore all opportunities to increase the supply of affordable housing.

2.12 Policy 8 on 'Flooding' recognises that flood risk is a constraining factor to development and there are parts of the National Growth Areas that are susceptible to flooding. Places that are not at risk of flooding should be prioritised within National Growth Areas

2.13 The identification of 'Ecological Networks and Green Infrastructure' that should be safeguarded is set out in Policy 9. LPAs should include these areas and other opportunities in their development plan strategies and policies in order to promote and safeguard the functions and opportunities they provide.

2.14 Policy 12 on 'Regional Connectivity' states that LPAs must maximise opportunities arising from the investment in public transport when planning for growth and regeneration.

2.15 The 'South East Metro' is addressed in Policy 36, with a requirement for LDPs to "plan growth and regeneration to maximise the opportunities arising from better regional connectivity, including identifying opportunities for higher density, mixed use and car free development around new and improved metro stations." The supporting text references Caerphilly town as a "strategically important location on the South East Metro where regeneration and sustainable, inclusive economic growth is supported.

Cardiff Capital Region

2.16 The Cardiff Capital Region (CCR) comprises the ten local authorities across the South-East Wales region, including Caerphilly CBC. These local authorities are working collaboratively on projects and plans for the area that seek to tackle issues affecting the whole of the region, such as worklessness and poor transportation links. The authorities forming the CCR have entered into a City Deal to fund projects aimed at boosting the competitiveness of the region over the next 20 years. The CCR City Deal will help boost economic growth by improving transport links, increasing skills, helping people into work and giving businesses the support they need to grow.

2.17 The Metro was part of the original CCR City Deal, with over half of the City Deal total funding being committed to it. The Metro is run by Transport for Wales (TfW), the national transport operator under the Welsh Government. The Metro is an ambitious project aimed at providing an integrated network of active, bus and rail travel that will improve accessibility and make sustainable transport across and

throughout the region easier and faster. The Metro is a key element in Welsh Government policy, with Future Wales setting out the requirement for LDPs to plan for growth that will maximise the benefit of the Metro funding.

2.18 Two phases of Metro improvements have taken place that include track and station improvements to accommodate longer and more frequent trains along the Rhymney Valley line, which includes the provision of new trains for the line expected in 2023.

2.19 Whilst the 2 phases of improvements have exhausted most of the funding for the Metro, there are a large number of additional projects that have been put forward for consideration for future tranches of Metro funding, should these be made available. These projects are collectively referred to as Metro Plus schemes and a number of schemes in the County Borough have been included.

Caerphilly County Borough Housing Strategy: An Agenda for Change 2021 – 2026

2.20 The Housing Strategy sets out the intentions of the Council and its partners to meet a wide range of housing objectives. The strategy includes a long-term vision for housing in the county borough incorporating the themes of affordability, supply, quality, management, sustainability, resilience and health and wellbeing. The vision is underpinned by 5 strategic priorities:

- Creating better choices – focusing on person centred solutions;
- Creating great places to live – creating sustainable and liveable places;
- Creating healthy and vibrant communities – providing advice, support and solutions across all tenures;
- Delivering new homes – improving the delivery of new homes; and
- Supporting specialist housing needs – supporting independence and creating positive pathways.

2.21 The Housing Strategy recognises that there is an imbalance in the housing markets across the County Borough. There is a limited choice of housing in the Heads of the Valleys, where prices are more affordable, but viability is an issue that significantly affects the delivery of new homes. Conversely, the Northern and Southern Connections Corridors have been successful in attracting public and private investment, which has diversified the housing stock, but increasing house prices have impacted negatively on affordability and land is needed to build more houses.

Local Housing Market Assessment

2.22 The latest Local Housing Market Assessment (LHMA) was published by the Council in April 2018. This assessment identified a total affordable housing need of 282 units per annum over the next 5 years (inclusive of turnover for social rented units). This is broken down into:

- 169 social rented units; and

- 113 units for intermediate products (56 low cost home-ownership and 57 intermediate rent).

2.23 The 169 social rented units comprises:

- a shortfall of 25 units of accessible housing;
- a shortfall of 315 units of general needs accommodation; and
- a surplus of 171 units of older person's accommodation.

2.24 In terms of property sizes, by far the greatest need is for one bedroom accommodation, specifically for general needs.

2.25 The LHMA contains analysis of need at both ward and housing market area level. There are 4 housing market areas identified within the County Borough:

- Overall, there is a large net surplus of social rented accommodation in the Heads of the Valleys, largely due to an oversupply of 2 and 3 bed general needs properties and 1 and 2 bed older persons properties, which are largely on sheltered housing schemes. However, there is a significant shortfall in 1 bed general needs properties in the area.
- Lower Islwyn has a small net surplus of properties overall, but an identified need for 1 bed general needs properties.
- The Northern Connections Corridor has a need for adapted housing across all sizes, together with a large need for 1 bed general needs properties, and to a lesser extent, 2 and 4 bed general needs properties.
- Caerphilly Basin has the largest need for 1 bed general needs properties, together with a need for 2 and 4 bed general needs. As is the case in the other areas, there is a surplus of 3 bed general needs units.

2.26 There is also a net need for 1, 2 and 4 bed low-cost home ownership (LCHO) properties in each of the 4 housing market areas, and a net need for intermediate rental properties across all market areas, but as with LCHO the need is for 1, 2 and 4 bed properties in all market areas, and 3 bed in the Northern Connections Corridor and Lower Islwyn.

3. Spatial Options

3.1 This section sets out the key components of the six strategy options, together with an analysis of how the strategy option conforms with national policy. Many of the component parts of the spatial options will be common to each of the strategies, specifically the role and function of the principal towns and local centres and the need to ensure that the strategic infrastructure to support any new development is fit for purpose.

3.2 In addition, all strategies will need to include policies to:

- Address climate change and promote climate change mitigation and adaptation.
- Promote placemaking principles at the heart of development.

- Promote sustainable transport and modal shift.
- Maximise opportunities for green infrastructure enhancement.

Strategy Option 1 - Continuation of the Adopted Local Development Plan

3.3 This strategy option would see the continuation of the strategy currently outlined within the adopted Local Development Plan (LDP). The adopted LDP development strategy seeks to guide development within a broad strategic framework underpinning the principles of sustainable development. The County Borough is divided into three strategic areas, each with their own strategic development policies. These strategy areas are the Heads of the Valleys Regeneration Area (HOVRA), Northern Connections Corridor (NCC) and the Southern Connections Corridor (SCC).

Key Components

- HOVRA: Allow for development opportunities and target appropriate forms of growth to both brownfield and greenfield sites in response to the role and function of settlements and to address deprivation.
- NCC: Target appropriate forms of growth to both brownfield and greenfield sites that have regard for the social and economic functions of the area.
- SCC: Target appropriate forms of growth to previously developed land within defined settlement boundaries.
- Dispersal strategy that targets development across the whole County Borough in line with the role and function of settlements.
- Promote a balanced approach to managing future population and economic growth.
- Promote resource efficient settlement patterns.
- Location of new development in close proximity to sustainable transport nodes to improve connectivity and accessibility to employment opportunities throughout the County Borough and promote sustainable transport.
- Location of new development in close proximity to the principal towns and local centres to deliver sustainable development.
- Use brownfield land before greenfield land where appropriate and viable.

National Policy Fit

- This option does not accord with Future Wales as it restricts growth in Caerphilly town, which is identified as a strategically important location for sustainable and inclusive economic growth. This would not maximise the benefits of the significant investment in Caerphilly Town in terms of the Metro, the Castle and other regeneration projects.
- The option promotes growth in line with the regional targets and seeks to locate development close to key settlements in accordance with Future Wales Policies 1, 33, and 6.

- This option promotes a dispersed growth strategy which is generally in accord with Future Wales.
- This option would deliver affordable housing in accessible locations but would not maximise opportunities for increasing affordable housing supply in the area of highest need (Caerphilly Basin).
- This option seeks to put placemaking at the heart of development and to maximise opportunities to improve ecology and green infrastructure and conforms to Future Wales Policies 2 and 9.
- By locating development within close proximity to principal towns, new development will be located close to main transport nodes and will support modal shift and active travel in conformity with Future Wales Policies 12 and 36.

Advantages

- This option disperses new development throughout the County Borough, providing a more equitable spread of benefit and disbenefit.
- Promotes significant development in the HOVRA to increase the diversity of housing stock.
- Protects the countryside in the Caerphilly Basin for its intrinsic value.

Disadvantages

- There are insufficient viable and deliverable sites to realise this option, particularly in the Southern Connections Corridor.
- The house-building rates under this strategy in the existing LDP were consistently below LDP requirements and there are concerns that this may continue.
- This option places a heavy reliance on brownfield land in the SCC where there are few viable and deliverable brownfield sites.
- The NCC is likely to continue to need to accommodate significant levels of growth.
- Place greater pressure on countryside in the NCC.
- Limited development in the Caerphilly Basin does not provide the means to deliver transport infrastructure improvements.
- Reduced development in the Caerphilly Basin will not address the acute affordable housing need in this part of the County Borough.

Strategy Option 2 – Heads of the Valleys Regeneration Area Focus

3.4 This strategy seeks to maximise development opportunities in the HOVRA to promote economic growth, broaden the range and choice of housing and to maximise the benefits from the major investment in respect of improvements to the Metro and the A465.

Key Components

- Target substantial new development to HOVRA to act as a catalyst for regeneration.
- Target market housing to the HOVRA to address the need to expand the range and choice of housing.
- Target employment development to the HOVRA to maximise the opportunities and benefits arising from CCR and WG Funding initiatives.
- Allow for urban expansion of settlements, on brownfield and greenfield land, within the NCC and SCC based on the following ;:

  Location of new development on greenfield and brownfield land in close proximity to sustainable transport nodes to improve connectivity and accessibility to employment opportunities throughout the County Borough and promote sustainable transport.

  Location of new development on greenfield and brownfield land in close proximity to the principal towns and local centres to deliver sustainable development.

  Target development to reflect the role and function of individual settlements.

  Use brownfield land before greenfield land where appropriate and viable.
- Maximise recreation and tourist opportunities arising from the Valleys Regional Park.
- Provide the A465 resilience route to ensure continued accessibility to the A465.

National Policy Fit

- This option is broadly in conformity with national policy and guidance.
- The option promotes growth in line with the regional targets and seeks to locate development close to key settlements in accordance with Future Wales Policies 1, 33, and 6.
- This option delivers housing in accessible locations in accordance with Future Wales Policy 7.
- This option seeks to put placemaking at the heart of development and to maximise opportunities to improve ecology and green infrastructure and conforms to Future Wales Policies 2 and 9.
- By locating development within close proximity to key settlements new development will be located close to main transport nodes and will support modal shift and active travel in conformity with Future Wales Policies 12 and 36.

Advantages

- Promotes development in a location with excellent connectivity to South West Wales, Ireland and the Midlands.

- Maximises opportunities and economic development in this area based on the improvements to the Heads of the Valleys Road.
- Promotes development in an area that needs economic regeneration and market housing development to broaden the range and choice of housing.
- Promotes market housing in area where market housing is required.

Disadvantages

- Low land values and low house prices raise significant issues over financial viability and deliverability.
- This option is unrealistic as significant new development could not be demonstrated to be delivered to meet the LDP requirements, necessitating the NCC and SCC to accommodate most if not all new development to compensate, which is a totally different strategy.
- The need to provide market housing in the focus area means the potential for delivering affordable housing generally is diminished.
- This strategy would require the proposed A469 resilience route to be provided as an integral part of the strategy at significant cost.

Strategy Option 3 – Key Strategic Site

3.5 This strategy option would see the allocation of a strategic site at Maesycwmmer, in the Mid Valleys Corridor, to accommodate a significant proportion of new housing development, alongside the development of an access road and improved strategic transport link. Additional new development would be primarily focused on the Greater Blackwood and Greater Ystrad Mynach areas, together with the Lower Ebbw and Sirhowy Valleys, on sustainable sites that are well related to the rail network and public transport interchanges.

Key Components

- The allocation of a strategic site at Parc Gwernau, Maesycwmmer, that could accommodate a mixed-use development.
- Additional housing sites and new employment will be focussed on the Mid Valleys and the Lower Ebbw and Sirhowy Valleys based on the following:

  Location of new development on greenfield and brownfield land in close proximity to sustainable transport nodes to improve connectivity and accessibility to employment opportunities throughout the County Borough and promote sustainable transport.

  Location of new development on greenfield and brownfield land in close proximity to the principal towns and local centres to deliver sustainable development.

  Target development to reflect the role and function of individual settlements.

  Use brownfield land before greenfield land where appropriate and viable.
- Limited new development in the Caerphilly Basin focussed on previously developed and underutilised land within existing settlements

- Reduce the scale and number of new housing allocations in the Heads of the Valleys Regeneration Area to align with market activities and market demand.
- Promote regeneration opportunities across the County Borough.
- Improvement of the strategic highways network, including the creation of a strategic highways link to connect Parc Gwernau to the wider area and reduce congestion on the A472.

Strategic Site

- Mixed-use development incorporating up to 2,700 dwellings, with up to 1,200 of these dwellings being delivered in the plan period up to 2035.
- Retain Bryn Meadows Hotel and Leisure Complex.
- Within walking and cycling distance of Hengoed Station and Ystrad Mynach centre and is located on the proposed Mid-Valleys Rapid Transit Link along the A472.
- A new access road will be required to service the development and alleviate congestion.
- Within 20-minutes cycle distance of employment and leisure opportunities.

National Policy Fit

- This option generally accords with national policy and guidance.
- This option may not conform with one element of Future Wales i.e. Policy 36 that identifies Caerphilly town as a strategically important location and a focus for sustainable economic development and regeneration.
- The provision of the new access road conforms with Future Wales as it seeks to reduce congestion and journey times, identified as policy requirements under Policy 11.
- This option seeks to put placemaking at the heart of development and to maximise opportunities to improve ecology and green infrastructure and conforms to Future Wales Policies 2 and 9.
- This strategy option conforms strongly to Future Wales Policies:

  6 (town centre first) – by locating new allocations within 20-minute cycle distance from town centres,

  7 (delivering homes) by delivering market and affordable dwellings to meet need,

  12 (Regional connectivity) and the majority of policy 36 by locating new allocations within 20-minute cycle distance from rail stations.

Advantages

- Sufficient land is likely to be available to meet this strategy option, so it is considered to be realistic.

- There is market demand for development in this strategy area and it has been demonstrated through the adopted LDP that housing development is viable and deliverable in the wider area, although there are site specific challenges.
- The Parc Gwernau strategic site will facilitate the development of a strategic highways link that, in addition to providing access to the site, will facilitate road improvements to a key point of congestion on the A472 at Maesycwmmer and improve active travel and public transport links at the key A469/A472 junction.
- The allocation of additional sites across the Mid Valleys and Lower Sirhowy and Ebbw Valleys will facilitate the delivery of affordable housing in areas with high levels of need.
- As a significant proportion of new employment allocations and existing industrial estates are located in the Mid Valleys, the focus of new housing development in this area would align well with a concentration of job opportunities, minimising the need to travel.
- The identification of both a strategic site and additional housing growth in the Mid Valleys will mean that a significant proportion of the overall housing requirement will be accommodated in the mid valleys area encouraging investment that will impact the whole County Borough.
- The site selection process under this strategy option will favour sites that are well related to sustainable travel options, which will accord with the strategic placemaking principles and the sustainable transport hierarchy for planning, as set out in Future Wales.
- Protects the countryside in the Caerphilly Basin for its intrinsic value.

Disadvantages

- A significant proportion of the overall housing requirement will be delivered by a single strategic site, which will extend beyond the 2nd Replacement LDP plan period. Any significant delays in the delivery of the infrastructure and housing will have implications for the housing trajectory and overall delivery of the 2RLDP.
- Reduced development in the Caerphilly Basin will not address the acute affordable housing need in this part of the County Borough.
- The strategy approach to Caerphilly Basin will also significantly reduce opportunities for new employment in this part of the County Borough, where there is an identified need for additional employment land.
- By reducing the scale and number of housing sites within the Heads of the Valleys, this will limit the opportunity to diversify the housing stock.
- The identification of both a strategic site and additional housing growth in the Mid Valleys will mean that a significant proportion of the overall housing requirement will be accommodated in the Mid Valleys area which places greater pressure on the countryside.

Strategy Option 4 – Metro Investment Focus

3.6 In order to maximise the benefits of the investment in the Metro, this strategy option seeks to locate development in and around key public transport nodes, which include the rail stations along the Rhymney and Ebbw Rail Lines and the major bus stations at Blackwood and Nelson.

Key Components

- Target new development to within the 20-minute cycle distance of key transport nodes to:

  Reduce reliance on private cars.

  Promote modal shift to contribute to Welsh Government's target for modal shift.

  Promote active travel for shorter journeys.

  Reduce congestion, contribute to decarbonisation and improve air quality.
- Target new development to sites within 20-minute cycle distance of Blackwood and Nelson bus stations.
- Explore opportunities to improve the strategic rail network to facilitate the delivery of stations at Crumlin and Nelson and also the reopening of the Cwmbargoed and Caerphilly-Newport rail lines to passenger services.
- Increase accessibility through improved active travel opportunities.
- Promote the change to ULEV vehicles through increasing accessibility to charging points.
- Address housing need in areas best served by sustainable transport.
- Promote resource efficient settlement patterns.
- This option will identify sites based on the following:

  Location of new development on greenfield and brownfield land in close proximity to sustainable transport nodes to improve connectivity and accessibility to employment opportunities throughout the County Borough and promote sustainable transport.

  Location of new development on greenfield and brownfield land in close proximity to the principal towns and local centres to deliver sustainable development.

  Target development to reflect the role and function of individual settlements

  Use brownfield land before greenfield land where appropriate and viable.

National Policy Fit

- This option generally accords with national policy and guidance.
- This option will focus new development in the Caerphilly Basin that will accord with Future Wales Policies 1 and 26. If development is restricted in Caerphilly this option may not accord with the policy that identifies Caerphilly as a strategically important location for sustainable economic growth and regeneration.

- This option is in accord with Future Wales Policy 6 as it will locate development in close proximity to principal centres.
- This option also accords with Future Wales Policy 7 delivering housing in areas of need.
- This option directly delivers Future Wales Policy 12 as it is focussed on promoting active travel, rail, bus and ULEV transport.
- This option directly delivers Future Wales Policy 36 seeking to locate development close to metro nodes to maximise the benefits of the investment in the Metro.
- This option will positively contribute towards the delivery of a 45% modal shift as set out in The Wales Transport Strategy 2021.

Advantages

- There is sufficient land available to meet this strategy option.
- There are a number of large sites in and around the key transport nodes that can deliver benefits.
- There are sites that offer the potential for higher density, mixed-use and car-free development around metro stations.
- The strategy would positively contribute to Welsh Government's modal shift target of 45%.
- The approach would increase accessibility and maximise Active Travel opportunities.
- Address housing need in areas best served by public transport.

Disadvantages

- As this approach targets key transport nodes, some communities are likely to accommodate greater levels of development than others.
- The sustainable transport focus of this option may make it difficult to address road congestion issues at Maesycwmmer and the Caerphilly Basin which affect bus and ULEV travel.
- Potential to increase pressure on important urban open spaces potentially reducing such space in existing settlements.

Strategy Option 5 – Town Centre First

3.7 This strategy option would focus new development close to the principal towns of Caerphilly, Ystrad Mynach, Blackwood Risca/Pontymister and Bargoed and the local centres of Bedwas, Newbridge, Nelson and Rhymney, the proximity to one of the centres being the principal consideration in allocating new sites.

Key Components

- This option will identify sites on greenfield and brownfield land in close proximity to the principal towns and local centres to deliver sustainable development.

- Utilising a sequential approach to site selection that will seek to:

  identify new development close to principal towns first then local centres, and

  identify new development within 20-minute walking distance to centres then within the 20-minute cycle distance.
- Address housing need in areas close to services and facilities.
- Promote resource efficient settlement patterns.
- Promote sustainable transport by:

  Maximising opportunities for modal shift to contribute towards the Welsh Government target of 45%.

  Promote active travel for short trips.

National Policy Fit

- This option is broadly in conformity with national policy and guidance.
- The option promotes growth in line with the regional targets and seeks to locate development close to key settlements in accordance with Future Wales Policies 1, 33, and 6.
- This option delivers housing in accessible locations in accordance with Future Wales Policy 7.
- This option seeks to put placemaking at the heart of development and to maximise opportunities to improve ecology and green infrastructure and conforms to Future Wales Policies 2 and 9.
- By locating development within closed proximity to key settlements new development will be located close to main transport nodes and will support modal shift and active travel in conformity with Future Wales Policies 12 and 36.

Advantages

- Creation of sustainable town centre environments containing a mix of complementary and interdependent uses, including housing, community facilities and, where appropriate, employment, as well as retail and commercial leisure.
- Reducing the need to travel through co-location of housing, infrastructure and services, and increasing the potential for realising Active Travel benefits.
- Situating development in conjunction with transport hubs where these relate to town centre locations, enabling greater use of public transport.
- Improving connectivity in relation to town centre environments, and the facilities and services contained therein.
- Reusing vacant/underutilised town centre sites and premises and undertaking redevelopment where necessary – this would require public sector intervention and public-private sector collaboration.

Disadvantages

- Town centre sites would not necessarily align with transport nodes situated elsewhere e.g. stations on the Metro network.
- Potential for sustainable sites situated elsewhere to be overlooked.
- Reuse/redevelopment of vacant/underutilised sites and premises would be likely to incur public sector costs.

Strategy Option 6 – Caerphilly Basin Focus

3.8 This strategy seeks to maximise development opportunities in the SCC to promote economic growth and maximise the benefits of the significant investment in the regeneration of Caerphilly town.

Key Components

- Target substantial new development on both brownfield and greenfield sites to the Caerphilly Basin and Lower Sirhowy and Ebbw Valleys to promote economic growth and regeneration.
- Target employment development to SCC to maximise the opportunities and benefits arising from proximity to Cardiff and Newport and CCR and WG Funding initiatives.
- Allow for urban expansion of settlements in the NCC and HOVRA, based on the following ;

  Location of new development on greenfield and brownfield land in close proximity to sustainable transport nodes to improve connectivity and accessibility to employment opportunities throughout the County Borough and promote sustainable transport.

  Location of new development on greenfield and brownfield land in close proximity to the principal towns and local centres to deliver sustainable development.

  Target development to reflect the role and function of individual settlements

  Use brownfield land before greenfield land where appropriate and viable.
- Promote the reinstatement of the Caerphilly-Machen-Newport former rail line to passenger transport;
- Exploit opportunities afforded by Caerphilly Castle and identify sites that are suitable for tourism, recreation and leisure.
- Reduce the scale and number of new housing allocations in the HOVRA to align with market activities and market demand.

National Policy Fit

- This option strongly conforms with national policy and guidance.
- The option promotes growth in line with the regional targets and seeks to locate development close to key settlements in accordance with Future Wales Policies 1, 33, and 6.

- This option promotes the growth of Caerphilly town which directly accords with the identification of Caerphilly as a strategically important location for sustainable and inclusive economic growth within Future Wales.
- This option delivers housing in accessible locations, including an area identified as a key location, in accordance with Future Wales Policy 7.
- This option seeks to put placemaking at the heart of development and to maximise opportunities to improve ecology and green infrastructure and conforms to Future Wales Policies 2 and 9.
- By locating development within close proximity to principal towns, new development will be located close to main transport nodes and will support modal shift and active travel in conformity with Future Wales Policies 12 and 36.

Advantages

- Focusses growth in an area identified as a strategic location for such growth.
- Promotes development in close proximity to the Caerphilly Interchange which is the subject of substantial investment.
- Would provide affordable housing in the area of the highest need.
- Promotes sustainable transport and modal shift through locating development close to public transport nodes.
- Relieves the development pressure on the MVC to accommodate growth.

Disadvantages

- Focuses development in an area under significant development pressure.
- The need to identify employment land in Caerphilly Basin together with housing land would increase greenfield land take in the Basin.
- Would not address the regeneration of the HOVRA.
- Would potentially have an impact on the intrinsic value of the countryside in the Caerphilly Basin.

4. Engagement on Strategy Options

4.1 In order to inform the development of the strategy options, two sets of seminars were held. The first seminar series, held in November/December 2021, on ‘Accommodating Growth’, were designed to disseminate information and set out the broad position and issues associated with developing a strategic approach to delivering the LDP land requirements throughout the County Borough. These seminars aimed to stimulate discussion around the issues involved in the process.

4.2 The second seminar series on ‘Alternative Strategies’ was designed to build on the discussions in the ‘Accommodating Growth’ seminars. Six potential strategy options were presented to participants leading to a facilitated discussion on the advantages and disadvantages of each option and how realistic each option was.

Accommodating Growth Seminar Series

4.3 A total of 8 seminars were held with a range of internal and external stakeholders, elected members, community councillors and young people, as set out below.

Seminar Group	Number of Seminars	Seminar Dates	Attendance
Officer Group	1	6 Dec 2021	15
Stakeholder Group	2	16 Nov 2021, 23 Nov 2021	25
Elected Members and Community Councillors	4	25 Nov 2021, 1 Dec 2021, 6 Dec 2021, 14 Dec 2021	43 elected members, 4 community councillors
Youth Forum	1	17 Nov 2021	9 young people, 2 youth workers

4.4 Due to Covid-19 restrictions, the officer, stakeholder and elected member meetings were held via Microsoft Teams. As there were a smaller number of participants, the Youth Forum was held as a face-to-face workshop.

4.5 The first part of the seminar set the scene for the discussion, outlining three potential strategic options for the dispersal of sites. This included explaining the current strategy position and successes and challenges of the existing adopted LDP. The growth options, which had already been agreed following stakeholder engagement in previous seminars were explained, and the land requirements that the emerging 2RLDP would, potentially, need to accommodate were set out. The next 3 parts of the seminar were used to outline the three spatial options for potentially dispersing the LDP land requirements:

Option 1: Dispersal

4.6 This option distributes the LDP requirements equally and fairly across the County Borough so that the impacts and benefits of development are spread equally across communities.

4.7 There is more than one basis for considering how development can be fairly distributed and 2 of these options were used as examples. The first took the 5 masterplan areas and split the housing and employment land requirements equally between the areas (spatially equal distribution). The second used the same masterplan areas but pro-rata'd the LDP requirements based on the proportion of population in each area (equal impact upon people).

4.8 The key issues raised by participants were:

- Splitting development in proportion with population seems like a blunt tool as it ignores the need for getting site selection right.
- Should not oversubscribe in areas where development will not take place.

Option 2: Targeted Settlements

4.9 This approach looks to allocate land in specific locations to meet a policy aim or aspiration. Two examples were again used to illustrate this, using two policy bases derived from Future Wales policies, namely:

- Allocating sites close to key Metro points to maximise the benefit of Metro improvements (rail focussed).
- Allocating sites close to the main settlements in the settlement hierarchy to deliver development within main cities and towns and a town centre first approach.

4.10 The key implication of this option is that some settlements can be outside the scope for allocations dependent upon the policy focus chosen. In the case of the two examples, the key issue is that Blackwood is not on a railway line and so is omitted from the rail focussed approach, whereas it is included in the second one. The omission of Blackwood did give rise to discussion around getting Blackwood more directly integrated into the Metro network.

4.11 This option generated greater levels of discussion, and the key issues raised were:

- Travel links shown are north/south because they are rail-based. It would be misleading to rely only on these and ignore well-established east-west links.
- Need for provision of leisure and green infrastructure.
- Flooding is a concern.
- Need to improve transport links and develop the Heads of the Valleys.

Option 3: Strategic or Key Sites

4.12 This option looks to accommodate a significant amount of the LDP requirement on either a strategic site or a small number of very large key sites, with the remainder of the LDP requirement being dispersed across the County Borough.

4.13 The example for this option was the strategy from the withdrawn 1st Replacement LDP that identified a strategic site in Maesycwmmer, with the remaining LDP requirement accommodated on smaller sites across the County Borough.

4.14 This option generated a good level of discussion and received positive responses with a number of participants identifying the significant benefits that a large allocation could bring. The key issues raised in respect of this option were:

- There is a need for employment opportunities alongside the housing due to the scale of the site.
- Potential conflict with WG emphasis on focusing development in town centres.
- There is a lot of development close to particular centres and this option appears riskier than Option 2.
- Concern regarding the scale of the strategic site, and the fact that it was included within the Withdrawn RLDP, which did not proceed.

General Discussions

4.15 Following the debate on the options, a discussion on the three options was held and the key points arising from these were:

- A general view that the appropriate strategy option would be somewhere between options 2 and 3.
- The Plan will succeed only if the proposed growth strategy is sustainable – growth is not inherently bad.
- Dispersal strategy is not focused enough.
- LPA has a responsibility to plan positively for growth in line with Future Wales.
- Need to consider the environmental capacity of areas.
- Bus network needs to be improved as well as rail network.

Youth Forum

4.16 A workshop session was held with the Youth Forum. The current strategy of the adopted LDP was explained to the Forum, together with what that meant for new development. It was also explained that the spatial distribution of new development could be approached in a number of ways:

- dispersed around the County Borough;
- targeted to town centres and/or places with good public transport; or
- located on a small number of very large sites.

4.17 A map was provided of the County Borough showing the towns and settlements, road and rail network and existing housing and employment areas. The participants were asked to place symbols representing housing, employment, leisure, community facilities and renewable energy on a large map of the County Borough to identify where they thought different types of development should go and explain the reasons why.

4.18 The Forum went for a dispersed pattern of development. Key discussion points included:

- Target development around town centres, where there are better facilities, more services and links with public transport.
- Develop town and retail centres to be more like Merthyr and Cardiff, need for more shops, big retailers, and shops for younger people.
- Not keen on town centres becoming areas for people to live in rather than retail centres – problems with anti-social behaviour.
- Need for more employment opportunities. Lack of high paid and skilled jobs.
- Young people are leaving the borough for work and don’t have a reason to come back.
- Good universities outside of the borough, but no graduate jobs to get young people to stay in the area and start families etc.
- Houses should be located close to transport links.

- More flats for young people, these could be located closer to train stations and that would attract students and young professionals.
- Too many terraced houses, not a good enough mix of housing in the borough.
- Need housing that can adapt to different needs - elderly residents for example.

Alternative Strategies Seminar

4.19 The views of stakeholders expressed as part of the 'Accommodating Growth' seminars have informed the development of the Alternative Strategy Options. Further seminar sessions were held to discuss the strategy options in more detail. In total, 7 seminar sessions were held with a range of internal and external stakeholders, elected members, community councillors and young people. These are detailed below:

Seminars	Number of Seminars	Dates	Total Attendance
Officer Group	1	8 Feb 2022	20
Stakeholder Group	2	17 Feb 2022, 23 Feb 2022	20
Elected Members and Community Councillors	3	17 Feb 2022, 21 Feb 2022, 23 Feb 2022	22
Youth Forum	1	3 March 2022	5 young people, 2 youth workers

4.20 During the sessions, it was explained how the alternative strategies were developed. Each of the alternative strategies was outlined and an idea of the types of candidate sites that may be suitable under each of the strategy options was set out. It was caveated that the candidate sites were still in the process of being assessed and therefore, whilst in locational terms, a site may meet a specific strategy option, further assessment was required to determine if it was actually suitable for further consideration.

Option 1: Continuation of the Adopted LDP Strategy

4.21 The key issues in respect of this strategy option were:

- The house-building rates under this strategy in the existing LDP were consistently below LDP requirements and there is a significant risk that this may continue.
- This strategy does locate development where it is needed.
- Places a heavy reliance on brownfield development, with few viable brownfield sites remaining.

Option 2: Heads of the Valleys Focus

- Whilst the Heads of the Valleys has not been attractive to developers in the past, would the north of the County Borough be more attractive as a result of home-working?
- Properties in the area are selling quickly – evidence that there is demand.

- The HOV area is an attractive place to live and offers potential leisure and tourism opportunities.
- The council is addressing the issue of the resilience route, this should not be a con of this option.
- General agreement that the council should be seeking greater development in this area.

Option 3: Key Strategic Site

- Focussing development in one area may preclude the provision of affordable housing elsewhere.
- Will employment provision form part of the strategic site?
- What degree of habitat protection would there be, and would it meet Future Wales policy on ecological resilience?
- How would the strategic site improve sustainable and active travel?
- Would this option be acceptable under national planning policy? There was a view that sites over 1,000 dwellings need to be promoted through an SDP and the proposal includes the provision of a new road.

Option 4: Metro Focus

- Would be dependent on a cross-valley link in the mid valleys area.
- May be difficult to realise car free developments.
- What are the key transport nodes for this strategy option?
- Issues at Maesycwmmer would continue if no strategic site is identified.

Option 5: Town Centre Focus

- 20-minute cycle distance does not make sense as it covers too large an area, should use walking distance or a set distance.
- Caerphilly Basin would be controversial because of the greenbelt.
- This option would not help the Heads of the Valleys.
- This option may mean that sites would be smaller and more sustainable.

Option 6: Caerphilly Basin Focus

- Pays little regard to regeneration elsewhere.
- Doesn’t meet WG aspirations in terms of the environment or the economy.
- Green wedges/green belt between authorities would need to be protected.
- This would increase social housing in the south and exacerbate voids in the north.
- This would renew the large-scale objections raised on the withdrawn LDP.

General Comments

- Can a hybrid strategy be pulled together from parts of these options?
- Concern that landowners have not submitted sites in the HOV.
- There is a need to ensure sites with planning permission are actually developed.
- The council can identify sites other than candidate sites e.g., council owned land.

4.22 At the end of the seminars, attendees were asked to complete a poll on which of the alternative strategies they considered to be the most appropriate for the plan and what strategy elements were most important to be included in the Preferred Strategy.

4.23 In terms of which strategy option was most appropriate for the Preferred Strategy, the hybrid option was the clear favourite registering 26 of the 48 votes cast. Option 5, with 9 votes and option 3 with 8 votes were the next preferred options. It should be noted that Options 1, 2 and 6 received no votes at all, indicating that they were clearly not preferred options.

4.24 The poll offered the opportunity for those who chose the hybrid option, to select which of the strategy options should comprise the hybrid option. Option 4 received the most votes with 19 votes, whilst Option 3, with 14 votes, and Option 5, with 13 votes were close runners up. Options 1 (3 votes), Option 2 (5 votes) and Option 6 (2 Votes) were, again, clearly not preferred options.

4.25 The poll then sought the attendees' views on what strategy elements should form part of the Preferred Strategy. In total 14 strategy elements were identified, namely:

- Addressing employment needs across the County Borough.
- Allocation of a strategic site.
- Allowing for growth in Caerphilly Basin.
- Allowing for growth in Lower Sirhowy and Ebbw Valleys.
- Allowing for growth in the Heads of the Valleys.
- Allowing for growth in the Mid Valleys.
- Delivery of affordable housing in areas of highest need.
- Facilitation of strategic highways improvement on A472.
- Focus development close to town centres.
- Focus development within close proximity to metro nodes.
- Restricting growth in Caerphilly Basin.
- Restricting growth in Lower Sirhowy and Ebbw Valleys.
- Restricting growth in the Mid Valleys.

4.26 Focussing development on Metro nodes (30 votes) and addressing employment needs (28 votes) were the highest ranked elements. Six of the elements received 11 or less votes whilst the following 6 elements received 20 or more votes:

- Allocation of a strategic site (21 Votes).
- Allowing for growth in the Heads of the Valleys (25 Votes).
- Allowing for growth in the Mid Valleys (23 Votes).
- Delivery of affordable housing in areas of highest need (25 Votes).
- Facilitation of strategic highways improvement on A472 (20 Votes).
- Focus development close to town centres (21 Votes).

Table: Which of the key strategy elements should be included in A Preferred Strategy

Key Strategy Element	Votes
Focus development in close proximity to metro nodes	30
Addressing employment needs across County Borough	28
Allowing for growth in the Heads of the Valleys	25
Delivery of affordable housing in areas of highest need	25
Allowing for growth in the Mid Valleys	23
Allocation of a strategic site	21
Focus development close to town centres	21
Facilitation of strategic highways improvement on A472	20
Restricting growth in Caerphilly Basin	11
Allowing for growth in Caerphilly Basin	10
Allowing for growth in Lower Sirhowy and Ebbw Valleys	10
Restricting growth in Lower Sirhowy and Ebbw Valleys	2
Restricting growth in the Mid Valleys	2
Restricting growth in the Heads of the Valleys	1

Youth Forum

4.27 An online meeting was held with the Youth Forum, where the options for the location of new development was explained. An online poll was held on what things were considered to be the most important when determining where new development such as homes and jobs go.

Which do you think is most important when determining where new development goes? (Select as many as you want)	Votes
Locating new homes and jobs in places close to town centres	2
Locating new homes and jobs close to train and bus stations	3
Building more affordable housing in places with the highest need	4
Providing jobs across the County Borough	4
Allocating sites that would help to help deliver road improvements	0
Allocating mixed use sites (homes, jobs and other community facilities in one location	3

4.28 Participants were asked to explain why they chose the options they did:

- They don't drive at present; roads are therefore not considered a significant issue.
- Environmental impact, although this would aid congestion it may cause damage to the environment, biodiversity, air quality etc.
- Housing crisis considered more important than new road improvements.

4.29 Participants were then asked if they thought it would be better to locate lots of houses in a single location on a key site or locate new houses on lots of smaller sites?

Do you think it would be better to locate lots of houses in a single location on a key site or locate new houses on lots of smaller sites? (Pick one)	Votes
Key site (lots of houses in one location)	1
Smaller sites (less houses in lots of locations)	1
A combination of them both	4

4.30 Finally, participants were asked which areas of the County Borough they thought new development should be located in.

Where do you think we should be locating new housing and employment? (Select as many areas as you want)	Votes
The Heads of the Valleys (Bargoed, New Tredegar up to Rhymney)	3
Greater Ystrad Mynach area (Ystrad Mynach, Nelson, Hengoed, Gelligaer)	0
Greater Blackwood area (Blackwood, Oakdale, Pontllanfraith, Maesycwmmer)	3
Caerphilly Basin (Caerphilly, Aber Valley, Bedwas, Machen, Llanbradach)	0
Newbridge Risca Corridor (Risca, Abercarn, Newbridge, Ynysddu, Cwmfelinfach)	0

5. Identification of the Preferred Strategy For the 2022 Consultation

5.1 Section 3 considers the strategic fit and advantages and disadvantages of each of the Strategy Options. If these factors are considered alongside the concerns and key issues expressed by stakeholders, some conclusions can be drawn on the suitability of each of the strategy options.

Option 1: Continuation of the LDP Strategy

5.2 This strategy option seeks to continue the strategy set out within the adopted LDP. The strategy in the SCC to consolidate development on previously developed land within defined settlement boundaries will be difficult to achieve as a number of the significant brownfield sites in the area have been developed over the previous plan period. The sites that remain are those with significant constraints and there is therefore concern about their viability and deliverability.

5.3 Furthermore, the Caerphilly Basin has a significant need for affordable housing and constraining development to brownfield sites within the existing settlement boundary will reduce the ability to address this need.

5.4 From a policy perspective, this strategy option is not considered to fit with the Future Wales strategic position for Caerphilly town.

5.5 In the NCC, development is targeted to brownfield and greenfield sites that have regard for the social and economic functions of the area. If development is targeted to sites within the existing settlement boundaries in the adopted LDP, development opportunities will be limited and overall, across the three strategy areas, there will be insufficient suitable, viable and deliverable sites available. Constraining development in the SCC will place pressure on greenfield sites in the NCC to accommodate additional growth.

5.6 Within the Heads of the Valleys, this strategy would involve the targeting of development to both brownfield sites and greenfield sites. Whilst this is a laudable element of the strategy as it would seek to address the issues of deprivation in the area and help to diversify the housing stock, there are significant concerns about the viability and deliverability of sites within the area and therefore it is unrealistic to focus significant development in the HOV.

5.7 The LDP Annual Monitoring Reports have consistently indicated that insufficient housing, including affordable housing, has been delivered through this strategy and this raises real concerns about the delivery of this strategy in the future. Having regard to all these factors, it is considered that this strategy is not appropriate to be continued into the 2RLDP.

Option 2: Heads of the Valleys Focus

5.8 It is a Council aim to regenerate the HOV to address its inherent socio-economic challenges and deprivation. A strategy that seeks to focus a significant level of development into the HOV area would certainly assist with the regeneration of the area. However, in preparing the 2RLDP the Council will need to demonstrate that the sites allocated to meet the housing and employment land requirements are viable and can be delivered in the plan period.

5.9 Unfortunately, the HOV is a low viability area, with low house prices. It is extremely difficult to demonstrate that many sites in this area are viable and can be delivered within the plan period. Consequently, the contribution that sites in this area could make to the overall housing requirements is likely to be limited, which is an inherent conflict with the purpose of the strategy option to identify a significant amount of the LDP requirement in the area. Given these issues, this option is not appropriate to be considered for the 2RLDP as it will not deliver the level of development in the HOV area that the strategy would require.

5.10 It should be noted, however, that whilst this option is not appropriate to be used as the LDP strategy, this does not prevent the LDP identifying aspirational sites (ones that could come forward, but do not count towards meeting the LDP requirement) to try to increase development in the area.

Option 3: The Strategic Site

5.11 This option locates a significant proportion of the LDP requirement onto one large site to generate significant development capital and associated benefits. For this option, the Council are looking at the strategic site at Maesycwmmer that would deliver up to 1,200 dwellings through the plan period, with the remaining 1,500 dwellings being delivered in a subsequent plan period.

5.12 This option has the potential to provide significant benefits, including increasing accessibility, promoting sustainable transport, green infrastructure enhancement and addressing congestion issues around Maesycwmmer. On the converse side there is an inherent risk with a strategic site that if the strategic site does not deliver the development, then the strategy will be undermined.

5.13 Overall, this is a strategy option that could be taken forward as the preferred strategy of the LDP. The strategic site alone is insufficient to accommodate the housing requirement for the Plan, and additional sites in other parts of the County Borough would be required.

Option 4: Metro Investment Focus

5.14 This option seeks to focus development as close to the stations on the Rhymney Valley and Ebbw Valley rail lines and to the bus stations at Blackwood and Nelson as possible. This focus accords with the Future Wales ambitions to maximise the benefit of the investment in the Metro. This option can deliver significant benefits in terms of supporting and increasing sustainable transport usage, increasing accessibility and positively contributing towards the Welsh Government's targets for modal shift.

5.15 The effect of this option is to develop sites in close proximity to transport nodes within existing settlements. This option increases pressures on urban open spaces that could adversely impact the quality of life in those settlements. In addition, this option could exclude sustainably located and beneficial sites that are located further out from transport nodes than less beneficial sites.

5.16 Despite the negatives this option could be taken forward as the preferred strategy for the 2RLDP.

Option 5: Town Centre Focus

5.17 This option seeks to focus new development towards the principal town centres of Caerphilly, Risca, Ystrad Mynach, Blackwood and Bargoed and the local centres of Bedwas, Nelson, Newbridge and Rhymney. This option accords directly with the Future Wales policy advocating the Town Centre first approach. This option is keenly aligned to placemaking and sustainable settlements.

5.18 Again, this option seeks to direct new development within existing settlements that is likely to place urban open spaces under significant pressure for development, which would have disadvantages in terms of the quality of life in the settlements. In addition, this option may miss out on more sustainably located sites, particularly those that are in close proximity to transport nodes outside of the principal towns and local centres.

5.19 Overall, this option is one that could be taken forward as the Preferred Strategy for the emerging LDP.

Option 6: Caerphilly Basin Focus

5.20 This option seeks to target new development within the Southern Connections Corridor, including Caerphilly Basin, which would accord with the Future Wales Policy 33 and the statement that Caerphilly is a strategic location for sustainable economic growth and regeneration. This option would seek to maximise benefits from the significant level of regeneration investment that is going into Caerphilly town by locating a significant proportion of the LDP requirement into this area.

5.21 This option would require both greenfield and brownfield development to enable sufficient land to be available to meet the LDP requirements. Greenfield land release would be the converse of the Adopted LDP strategy and would place the landscape within the Caerphilly Basin at threat from impacts from new developments. It would also bring previously highly contentious sites into consideration as allocations, and this is likely to give rise to significant objection. The issue of the greenbelt around Caerphilly, although strictly not a matter for the LDP, does come into consideration, although the starting point for any greenbelt boundary is whether sufficient land for future expansion of settlements has been allowed.

5.22 This option would provide the opportunity to create new development in close proximity to the Caerphilly interchange and the town centre, delivering sustainable development in an area of high demand and social housing need.

5.23 Despite the strong pros for this option, this option has received little support from stakeholders due to the potential for adverse impact on the landscape of the Basin, the potential impact of the greenbelt and the highly controversial nature of greenfield development in the Caerphilly Basin. It was generally felt by stakeholders that development should be more balanced rather than be concentrated in a specific strategy area, particularly as Caerphilly Basin was perceived to have experienced significant growth in recent years, Consequently, this option is not considered desirable for the Preferred Strategy of the emerging LDP.

Analysis and Conclusions

5.24 The assessments of the strategy options have ruled out options 1, 2 and 6 as potential options for consideration to be the Preferred Strategy for the emerging LDP. That leaves Options 3, 4 and 5 as the potential basis for the Preferred Strategy.

5.25 However, it was clear from stakeholder engagement that a hybrid option containing key elements of Options 3, 4 and 5 was most favourable. The key elements of these strategies that are considered appropriate for inclusion within the Preferred Strategy are:

- Focussing development on Metro nodes.
- Addressing employment needs across the County Borough.
- Allocation of a strategic site.
- Allowing for growth in the Heads of the Valleys.

- Allowing for growth in the Mid Valleys.
- Delivery of affordable housing in areas of highest need.
- Facilitation of a strategic highways improvement on the A472.
- Focus development close to town centres.

5.26 Whilst many respondents did not consider that significant growth should be focussed on Caerphilly Basin or the Lower Sirhowy and Ebbw Valleys, the principal towns in this area (Caerphilly and Risca) would be required to accommodate an element of new housing and employment in line with the strategy elements to focus development close to town centres and also to address employment needs across the County Borough. Other residential areas that are within an appropriate walking and cycling distance of rail stations on the Rhymney Valley and Ebbw rail lines and the bus stations in Nelson and Blackwood would also be considered appropriate locations for development.

LDP Focus Group

5.27 In light of the outcome of the seminar series, which indicated that a hybrid strategy should form the basis of the Preferred Strategy, derived from a combination of Options 3, 4 and 5, a recommendation was made to the LDP Focus Group as follows:

That the Preferred Strategy used as the basis for the LDP be a hybrid strategy based on elements from Option 3: The Strategic Site, Option 4: The Metro Focus and Option 5: Town Centre Focus.

5.28 The outputs of the seminar series were considered by the LDP Focus Group at a meeting held on 14th March 2022. The LDP Focus Group voted unanimously to agree the recommendation.

6 The Revision to the Preferred Strategy

6.1 The Council consulted on the Pre-Deposit Plan in October and November 2022. As part of this consultation Welsh Government raised conformity objections in respect of:

- The Strategic Site allocation at Maesycwmmer,
- The regional approach and context for the proposed growth in the strategy;
- The nature-based approach in the preparation of the plan.

6.2 To move forward with the plan the three conformity objections would need to be resolved as conformity objections could result in the plan being found unsound at the examination. To this end the regional approach conformity objection has been addressed by a regional study on growth and migration that has been undertaken for the Cardiff City Region and the nature-based approach conformity objection has been addressed by the Council's green infrastructure assessment that forms part of the evidence base for the plan (EB 20).

6.3 The Strategic Site conformity objection was raised on the grounds that it did not conform with Future Wales Policies 1 – Where Wales Will Grow, 2 – Shaping

Urban Growth and Regeneration, 3. Strategic Placemaking, 6 – Town Centre First, 12 – Regional Connectivity and 36 – South East Metro on the grounds that it does not represent sustainable growth, does not reduce the need to travel by car, does not support active travel or maximise public transport and does not embed green infrastructure. Whilst the Council do not agree with the Welsh Government's reasons for the conformity objection, if the Council were to continue with a plan that maintained the strategic site allocation it is highly unlikely that the Council could end the plan process with an adopted plan, given the potential for the plan to be found unsound at the examination and the fact that Welsh Government has the powers to intervene in the process and prevent the Council from adopting a plan.

6.4 The adopted LDP, whilst still in force, has now gone past the end of its plan period and the Council needs to adopt a replacement plan as soon as possible in order to maintain an up-to-date policy framework. Given this, in conjunction with the high risk that the Council would not be able to adopt the plan with the strategic site allocation, the Council resolved to delete the strategic site allocation from the 2RLDP strategy at the Council meeting on 24 July 2024. At this meeting the Council agreed that the 2RLDP be subject of a further Pre-Deposit consultation with a strategy based on the remaining elements of the strategy, namely the Town Centre Focus and the Metro Focus for development.

Appendix 1: Assessment of Strategy Options

Assessment against 2RLDP Objectives

2RLDP Objective	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4	Option 5	Option 6
1. Accommodate sustainable levels of population growth that accords with the County Borough's status within the National Growth Area	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive
2. Manage, preserve, and enhance the quality of valuable open space and landscape and safeguard them from inappropriate forms of development	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive
3. Deliver the biodiversity duty through identifying new and protecting and enhancing existing green and blue infrastructure and biodiversity assets	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive
4. Ensure that the environmental impact of all new development is minimised	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive
5. Ensure that development proposals fully address climate	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive

change adaptation and mitigation measures in accordance with the energy hierarchy						
6. Deliver the Welsh Government's zero carbon targets and assist the Council's climate emergency by promoting the development of renewable energy generation in appropriate locations	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive
7. Ensure that all developments are underpinned by circular economy principles, prevent waste through the consideration of design choices and site treatment and make provision for sustainable waste management facilities that reflect the priority order of the waste hierarchy	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive
8. Encourage the re-use and / or reclamation of appropriate brownfield and contaminated land and prevent the incidence of further contamination and dereliction	Strong Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive
9. Ensure the location of new development facilitates easy access to sustainable transport and active travel and the proposed development accords with the role and function of settlements in line with the settlement hierarchy	Positive	Positive	Positive	Strong Positive	Positive	Positive
10. Ensure an adequate and appropriate range of housing sites are available across the County Borough in the most sustainable locations to meet the housing requirements of all sections of the population	Negative	Negative	Positive	Strong Positive	Strong Positive	Negative
11. Ensure all new development meets the requirements of good	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive

Placemaking design and sustainability as set out in the Placemaking Charter creating places with a strong sense of community, quality design, sustainability, activity, equality and to create a sense of place						
12. Manage, protect and enhance the quality and quantity of the water environment and reduce water consumption	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive
13. Reduce the impact of flooding by ensuring that highly vulnerable development is directed away from areas of medium and high risk of flooding and embedding sound SuDS principals in the design and layout of development from the outset.	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive
14. Reduce the need to travel by promoting a mix of land use allocations in sustainable locations and provide improved digital infrastructure	Positive	Positive	Strong Positive	Strong Positive	Strong Positive	Positive
15. Promote accessibility for all by prioritising walking and cycling (active travel), then public transport and finally motor vehicles thus reducing air borne pollution and the dependency on private vehicles	Positive	Positive	Positive	Strong Positive	Positive	Positive
16. Capitalise on the County Borough's position within the National Growth Area, supporting co-ordinated regeneration and investment to improve well-being, increase prosperity and address social inequality and complementing the strategic roles of Cardiff and Newport	Positive	Strong Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive
17. Provide and protect a diverse portfolio of	Positive	Positive	Positive	Strong Positive	Positive	Positive

employment land for a variety of uses in the most appropriate locations, ensuring that jobs and housing are aligned with services and sustainable transport infrastructure						
18. Significantly improve the visitor economy through the enhancement of existing, and the development of new and diverse, all-season tourist attractions and visitor accommodation and maximise the associated benefits the improvements provide	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive
19. Promote an integrated and sustainable public transport system	Positive	Positive	Positive	Strong Positive	Positive	Positive
20. Ensure provision of ultra-low emission vehicle charging infrastructure	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive
21. Provide a wide range of community facilities, which are appropriately located, easily accessible, improve health and well-being and meet the needs of the County Borough	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive
22. Promote, sustain and enhance the County Borough's retail and commercial centres as the most sustainable locations in which to live, work, shop, socialise and conduct business, in accordance with the town centre first principle and the hierarchy of centres established in the plan, and ensure their accessibility by sustainable modes of transport	Positive	Positive	Positive	Strong Positive	Strong Positive	Positive
23. Protect, conserve, and increase the value of the Historic Environment by promoting heritage as an asset and encouraging adaptive reuse, sustainability,	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive

placemaking and regeneration						
24. Promote the Historic Environment through historic places that contribute to the history of Caerphilly County Borough, while promoting and conserving the cultural heritage and historic environment, through local communities and visitor inclusivity	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive
25. Ensure the County Borough is well served by accessible public open space and accessible natural greenspace, that promotes a healthy and active lifestyle and improves overall wellbeing	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive

Assessment against Future Wales Policies

Future Wales Policy	**Option 1**	**Option 2**	**Option 3**	**Option 4**	**Option 5**	**Option 6**
1. Where Wales will grow	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive
2. Shaping Urban Growth and Regeneration – Strategic Placemaking	Positive	Positive	Strong Positive	Strong Positive	Strong Positive	Positive
3. Supporting Urban Growth and Regeneration – Public Sector Leadership	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive
4. Supporting Rural Communities	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive
5. Supporting the rural economy	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive
6. Town Centre First	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Strong Positive	Positive
7. Delivering Affordable Homes	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Strong Positive
8. Flooding	Positive	Negative	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive
9. Resilient Ecological Networks and Green Infrastructure	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive
10. International Connectivity	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral
11. National Connectivity	Positive	Positive	Positive	Strong Positive	Positive	Positive
12. Regional Connectivity	Positive	Positive	Positive	Strong Positive	Positive	Positive
13. Supporting Digital Communications	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive

14. Planning in Mobile Action Zones	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive
15. National Forest	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral
16. Heat Networks	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Positive	Positive	Strong Positive
17. Renewable and Low Carbon Energy and Associated Infrastructure	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive
18. Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Developments of National Significance	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive
19. Strategic Policies for Regional Planning	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive
33. National Growth Area – Cardiff, Newport and the Valleys	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive
34.Green Belts in the South East	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Negative
35. Valleys Regional Park	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive
36. South East Metro	Positive	Positive	Positive	Strong Positive	Positive	Strong Positive