

Integrated Sustainability Appraisal (ISA) for the 2nd Replacement Local Development Plan

Initial ISA Report

Caerphilly County Borough Council

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Quality information

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Introduction

1. Introduction

Background

- 1.1 AECOM is commissioned to lead on Integrated Sustainability Appraisal (ISA) in support of Caerphilly County Borough Council's (CCBC) 2nd Replacement Local Development Plan (2RLDP). ISA fulfils the requirements and duties for Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA), Health Impact Assessment (HIA), Welsh Language Impact Assessment (WLIA) and Well-being of Future Generations (WBFNG).

ISA Explained

- 1.2 ISA is a mechanism for considering and communicating the likely effects of an emerging plan, and alternatives in terms of key sustainability issues. The aim of ISA is to inform and influence the plan-making process with a view to avoiding and mitigating negative impacts and maximising positive impacts. Through this approach, the ISA for the 2RLDP seeks to maximise the developing plan's contribution to sustainable development.
- 1.3 As identified above, the ISA seeks to fulfil the requirements and duties for SA, SEA, EqIA, HIA, WLIA and WBFNG. The approach is to fully integrate these components to provide a single assessment process to inform the development of the 2RLDP. A description of each of the various components and their purposes is provided below.

Sustainability Appraisal (SA)

- 1.4 SA is undertaken to address the procedures prescribed by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes (Wales) Regulations 2004 (the SEA Regulations) which transpose into national law the EU Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive¹. It also widens the scope of the assessment from focusing largely on environmental issues to further consider social and economic issues. SA is a legal requirement for Local Development Plans under Section 19(5) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
- 1.5 In line with the requirements of the SEA Directive, the two key steps in SA are that:
 1. When deciding on 'the scope and level of detail of the information' which must be included in the SA Report there is a consultation with nationally designated authorities concerned with environmental issues; and
 2. A report (the 'SA Report') is published for consultation alongside the Draft Plan that presents an assessment of the Draft Plan (i.e. discusses 'likely significant effects' that would result from plan implementation) and reasonable alternatives.

¹ Directive 2001/42/EC

- 1.6 The LDP Manual Edition 3 (2020) states that SA, incorporating SEA, plays an important part in demonstrating that the LDP is sound by ensuring that it reflects the legislative requirements and achieves sustainable development.

Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA)

- 1.7 As a public-sector organisation, Caerphilly County Borough Council has a duty under the Equality Act 2010² and associated Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) to ensure that the objectives and policy options within the 2RLDP avoid unlawful discrimination (direct and indirect), as well as advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations between those with protected characteristics³ and all others.
- 1.8 In March 2021 the Socio-economic Duty commenced, which compliments the Equalities Act and PSED by further contributing towards the country's long term well-being goals, in particular "A more equal Wales" and "A Wales of cohesive communities", further strengthening social partnership arrangements and advancing fair work ambitions.⁴
- 1.9 An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) is often used by public sector organisations to demonstrate how this duty has been met.

Health Impact Assessment (HIA)

- 1.10 The Public Health (Wales) Act 2017 contains a provision to require a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) to be carried out to assess the likely effect of the proposed development plan on health and mental well-being and inequality. The HIA process provides a systematic yet flexible and practical framework that can be used to consider the wider effects of 2RLDP policies and how they, in turn, may affect people's health.

Welsh Language Impact Assessment (WLIA)

- 1.11 The Welsh Government is committed to supporting the Welsh language so that it can thrive and grow across Wales. The Welsh language must be considered from the outset of the development plan process. It is a legislative requirement that the SA must include an assessment of the likely effects of the plan on the use of the Welsh language (The Planning (Wales) Act 2015 (Section 11)).
- 1.12 Planning Policy Wales (PPW) (2021) sets the policy requirements for the Welsh language. Technical Advice Note 20: Planning and the Welsh Language provides guidance on the consideration of the Welsh language as part of the development plan process. The TAN provides advice on incorporating the Welsh language in development plans through the SA and the policy approach to anticipated windfall development. In summary, planning authorities must consider the likely effects of their development plans as part of the SA process and include a statement within the Deposit Plan on how this has been considered and/or addressed within the development plan. The ISA process is the mechanism for considering how the scale and location of growth, the vision,

² UK Government (2010): 'Equality Act 2010', [online] available to access via [this link](#)

³ Protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 include age, sex, marital status, disability, gender reassignment, ethnicity, religion, pregnancy and maternity, sexual orientation and deprived/disadvantaged groups.

⁴ Welsh Government (2020): 'A more equal Wales: strengthening social partnership white paper', [online] available to access via [this link](#)

objectives, policies and proposals individually and in combination, impact on the Welsh language. Where evidence indicates a detrimental impact on the use of the Welsh language the LPA can assess whether the strategy should be amended, or mitigation measures should be identified.

Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

1.13 The Planning (Wales) Act 2015 sets out the definition of sustainable development for the planning system in Wales, mirroring the definition in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (WBFGA).

“Sustainable development means the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the well-being goals”.

1.14 The WBFGA sets seven well-being goals which all public bodies are required to achieve:

- A prosperous Wales.
- A resilient Wales.
- A healthier Wales.
- A more equal Wales.
- A Wales of cohesive communities.
- A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language; and
- A globally responsible Wales.

1.15 The Act also identifies five ways of working which public bodies need to demonstrate they have carried out when undertaking their duty to achieve sustainable development. These are: involvement, collaboration, integration, prevention and long-term factors. The well-being goals and the five ways of working can be used to inform and structure the ISA framework.

The Initial ISA Report

1.16 This Initial ISA Report⁵ is published alongside the Preferred Strategy. Any representations received will be considered and a revised ISA Report will be published subsequently alongside the Deposit Plan.

⁵ See **Appendix I** for further explanation of the regulatory basis for answering certain questions within the SA Report; and a 'checklist' explaining more precisely the regulatory basis for presenting certain information.

2. What is the Preferred Strategy seeking to achieve?

2.1 CCBC is currently in the process of preparing a 2RLDP for the County Borough. The 2RLDP will cover the period 2020 to 2035 and will be the statutory land use plan which will set out the Council's land-use strategy to deliver sustainable development and build strong, resilient communities that improve the well-being of current and future generations. The 2RLDP will set out land use development proposals for the County Borough and will identify where and how much new development will take place over the plan period. It will also identify areas to be protected from development and provide policies against which future planning applications will be assessed. Once adopted, the 2RLDP will supersede the current LDP which has been in place since 2010.

Key issues and opportunities

2.2 An understanding of the key issues facing the County Borough is an essential element of the preparation of the 2RLDP, and the policy framework will need to be developed to address these issues. A total of 37 key issues, which fall under five themes, were identified. A summary of the key issues for the 2RLDP to address are set out below:

- **National and regional issues** – climate change (NR1), the impacts of Covid-19, Brexit and the war in Ukraine on the economy (NR2), decarbonisation (NR3), the housing shortage (NR4), delivery of the South Wales Metro (NR5), delivery of the 21st Century Schools programme (NR6), and growth within the Cardiff, Newport and the Valleys national growth area designation (NR7).
- **Economic issues** – economic inactivity, educational attainment and deprivation (EC1), employment land shortage (EC2), employment diversification (EC3), projected decrease in the economic population (EC4), maximising opportunities for employment in town and retail centres (EC5), tourism (EC6), out-commuting (EC7), and digital connectivity (EC8).
- **Social issues** – death/ birth ratio (SO1), limiting long-term illness and life expectancy (SO2), changing needs of town and retail centres (SO3), green space and sport and recreational facilities (SO4), delivery of community infrastructure (SO5), placemaking (SO6), and deprivation (SO7).
- **Environmental issues** – decarbonisation (EN1), air quality (EN2), delivery of the South Wales Metro (EN3), blue and green infrastructure (EN4), utilisation of brownfield land (EN5), priority habitats (EN6), the waste hierarchy (EN7), landscape sensitivity (EN8), and minerals (EN9).
- **Cultural issues** – development and use of the Welsh language (CU1), heritage assets (CU2), resilience of heritage assets (CU3), adaptive reuse of heritage assets (CU4), placemaking (CU5), and heritage tourism (CU6).

2.3 The key opportunities to realising some of the issues are set out below.

Cardiff Capital Region City Deal

2.4 The overarching economic objectives of the Cardiff Capital Region (CCR) City Deal are to create 25,000 new jobs and leverage £4 billion in private sector investment across the region. Key themes have been identified to focus the approach: Connecting the Region; Regeneration and Infrastructure; Skills and Employment. These strategic themes have implications for the 2RLDP, including:

- Connecting the Region - Digital Strategy: this aims to create a smart region, driving innovation and solutions to attract private sector partnership and investment, including Welsh and regional connectivity, mobile 5G access and maximising open data.
- Metro - the South Wales Metro project provides much needed opportunities to increase train service frequency, improve inter-modal connectivity and coordination, streamline ticketing and improve bus services.
- Regeneration and Infrastructure - the Housing and Investment Fund has been proposed to support the need for more homes to be built across the region. This will include assistance in stimulating the SME sector across the region by providing loan development finance and launching a Customer Build Scheme releasing smaller plots of public sector land with a full package of support for SMEs to deliver new homes.
- Skills and Employment - the Skills for the Future project provides region-wide school engagement with pupils and parents to offer careers advice and guidance, support for businesses to address barriers of participation, including a skills investment fund and a commitment to support delivery of over 10,000 additional apprenticeships, graduate internships and upskilled employees in the private sector.

South Wales Metro

2.5 The South Wales 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 which 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 Local Development Plans (LDPs) to plan for growth that will maximise the benefit of the Metro funding.

2.6 Two phases of Metro improvements have taken place so far, including track and station improvements to accommodate longer and more frequent trains along the Rhymney line, which includes the provision of new trains for the line expected in 2023.

2.7 Whilst the first two phases of improvements have exhausted most of the funding for the Metro, there are many 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 several schemes in Caerphilly have been proposed.

Vision

2.8 The Vision, Aims and Objectives for the 2RLDP have been the subject of discussion and consideration through the LDP Engagement process via the seminar series. These discussions and considerations are set out in detail in the Council's Evidence Base Document 'Pre-Deposit Engagement'. The LDP Focus Group considered the discussions from the engagement process and recommended to Council that the following vision be adopted for the 2RLDP.

The Vision for the 2RLDP

The Development Strategy for Caerphilly County Borough will capitalise on our strategic location at the heart of the Cardiff Capital Region. It will deliver sustainable development that will enhance the well-being of those that live, work, play in and visit the County Borough. By the end of the plan period the strategy will have:

- **Addressed the economic and social challenges raised by Covid 19, Brexit and changes in employment and retailing patterns, facilitated an increased number of jobs, sustained economic growth, exploited existing strengths in manufacturing and the foundational economy and created vibrant town centres with diverse uses.**
- **Developed and enhanced the blue and green infrastructure across the County Borough by incorporating it in the design of development and promoting the protection and enhancement of important areas for both nature conservation and the health and well-being of residents.**
- **Addressed the housing crisis through the provision of affordable and market housing, developed a wide range and choice of housing and ensured that all residents have access to a good quality home in the right locations.**
- **Built on the diverse and distinct character of the towns and villages in the County Borough, having put placemaking principles at the heart of design and encouraged cultural richness and diversity.**
- **Enhanced the strategic network of recreation, leisure, education and community facilities, strengthened communities and engendered a better quality of life for all.**

All of these will be based on greener attitudes that include:

- **Increased use of sustainable public transport and electric vehicles, including charging infrastructure.**
- **Increased accessibility through improvements to the active travel network; and**
- **Increased generation and use of renewable energy in the County Borough.**

Objectives

2.9 To deliver the Vision through the 2RLDP, a series of Aims, which identify broad areas for action and Objectives, which set out detailed actions to deliver elements of the overall Vision, are set out. The Aims and Objectives will inform future detailed policy development associated with the Deposit 2RLDP.

2.10 The key aims for the 2RLDP are to:

- a. Address the causes of and mitigate and build resilience to the effects of, climate change.
- b. Underpin all development with the principles of placemaking, sustainable development and good design.
- c. Ensure equal opportunities and access for all to proposed and existing homes, jobs, facilities and services within the County Borough.
- d. Enhance the vibrancy, diversity and character of local communities through the use of sound placemaking principles for the health and well-being of residents and engender social cohesion.
- e. Protecting and enhancing the County Borough's blue and green infrastructure whilst balancing the need for development through balancing the environmental, social, cultural and economic impacts to deliver sustainable development.
- f. Promote Caerphilly County Borough as an area with a distinctive identity and as an area in its own right within the Cardiff Capital Region, whilst working together for the benefit of the region.
- g. Establish a sustainable economic and population structure that will support our communities and our economy.
- h. Address the economic challenges facing the County Borough through the provision of sustainably located land to increase the number of jobs, promote the circular economy and engender economic growth in the County Borough, whilst promoting diverse town centres with a range of employment opportunities and delivering the waste hierarchy.
- i. Facilitate the development of affordable and market housing, in sustainable locations, to provide a range and choice of housing that will afford everyone the opportunity of a quality home in the right place.
- j. Support the development and further expansion of the South Wales Metro by identifying opportunities for enhancing accessibility and the existing transport infrastructure to facilitate a shift to public transport and electric vehicles, whilst increasing the potential for active travel for local and leisure trips.
- k. Support and facilitate the development of modern education facilities to upskill the population tailored to the County Borough's future needs.
- l. Positively encourage renewable energy generation and use in the County Borough to assist in reducing emissions and mitigate against the effects of climate change.
- m. Facilitate the creation of quality places through developments that are based on good design and ensure all developments minimise the potential for crime and anti-social behaviour.

- n. Facilitate the protection, regeneration and enhancement of the historic fabric of the County Borough for the benefit its rich culture and diversity brings to the communities in the County Borough.
- o. Contribute to improving public health through the facilitation of land use developments that contribute to healthy lifestyles and mental well-being.

2.11 The key objectives for the 2RLDP are to:

1. Accommodate sustainable levels of population growth that accords with the County Borough's status within the National Growth Area (G, H, I).
2. Manage, preserve, and enhance the quality of valuable open space and landscape and safeguard them from inappropriate forms of development (D, M).
3. Deliver the biodiversity duty through identifying new and protecting and enhancing existing green and blue infrastructure and biodiversity assets (E).
4. Ensure that the environmental impact of all new development is minimised (E).
5. Ensure that development proposals fully address climate change adaptation and mitigation measures in accordance with the energy hierarchy (A, B, E).
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 (A, L).
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 (H).
8. Encourage the re-use and / or reclamation of appropriate brownfield and contaminated land and prevent the incidence of further contamination and dereliction (E).
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 (J).
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 (I).
11. Ensure all new development meets the requirements of good 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 (A, M).
12. Manage, protect and enhance the quality and quantity of the water environment and reduce water consumption (D, E).
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. (E)
14. Reduce the need to travel by promoting a mix of land use allocations in sustainable locations and provide improved digital infrastructure (E, J).
 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 (J).
 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 (F).
 17. Provide and protect a diverse portfolio of 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 (H, K).
 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 (H).
 19. Promote an integrated and sustainable public transport system (J).
 20. Ensure provision of ultra-low emission vehicle charging infrastructure (J).
 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 (B, C, D, O).
 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 (H).
 23. Protect, conserve, and increase the value of the historic environment by promoting heritage as an asset and encouraging adaptive reuse, sustainability, placemaking and regeneration (B, N).
 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 (B, H, N).
 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 (B, D, E, M, O).

3. What is the scope of the ISA?

Introduction

- 3.1 The aim here is to introduce the reader to the scope of the ISA, i.e. the sustainability issues/ objectives that should be a focus of (and provide a broad methodological framework for) the ISA.

Consultation on the scope

- 3.2 The Regulations require that “*When deciding on the scope and level of detail of the information that must be included in the Environmental Report [i.e. the SA scope], the responsible authority shall consult the consultation bodies*”. In Wales, the consultation bodies are Natural Resources Wales and Cadw.⁶ A Scoping Report was sent to the statutory consultees for comment from Wednesday 23rd March to Wednesday 27th April 2022. The responses received were considered and amendments made to the baseline information and draft ISA Objectives where necessary. Since that time, the ISA scope has evolved as new evidence has emerged and there have been some minor refinements to the ISA objectives - however, the scope remains fundamentally the one agreed through the dedicated scoping consultation in 2022.
- 3.3 Further information on the scope of the ISA - i.e. a more detailed review of sustainability issues/ objectives as highlighted through a review of the sustainability ‘context’ and ‘baseline’ – is available to view separately via the Council’s website. This is given the iterative nature of the process, and these documents will be updated as necessary.

SA Objectives

- 3.4 **Table 3.1** presents the ISA objectives - grouped under ten topic headings - established through scoping, i.e. considering context/baseline review, identified key issues and responses from statutory consultees.
- 3.5 Taken together, the ISA topics and objectives presented in **Table 3.1** provide a methodological ‘framework’ for appraisal.

Table 3.1 ISA framework

ISA topic	ISA objective
Economy and employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support a strong, diverse and resilient economy, with innovative responses to changing conditions and support for a strong future workforce.
Population and communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide enough good quality market and affordable homes, and community infrastructure, in sustainable locations to meet identified needs. To enhance design quality to create places for people that maintain and enhance community and settlement identity.
Health and wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To improve the health and wellbeing of residents within Caerphilly.

⁶ In accordance with Article 6(3).of the SEA Directive, these consultation bodies were selected because ‘by reason of their specific environmental responsibilities, [they] are likely to be concerned by the environmental effects of implementing plans and programmes.’

ISA topic	ISA objective
Equality, diversity and inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To reduce poverty and inequality; tackle social exclusion and promote community cohesion.
Transport and movement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase sustainable transport use and reduce the need to travel.
Natural resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To identify and pursue any opportunities to reduce, or at least, minimise population exposure to air pollution. To make the best use of previously developed land and existing buildings to minimise pressure for greenfield development and protecting, where possible, higher grade agricultural land. To support waste management/ reduction. To conserve, protect and enhance the water environment, water quality and water resources.
Biodiversity and geodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protect and enhance biodiversity within and surrounding the plan area.
Historic environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preserve and enhance Caerphilly's heritage resource, including its historic environment and archaeological assets. Promote understanding of Caerphilly's cultural heritage.
Landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To protect and enhance the quality and character of Caerphilly's landscape and townscape.
Climate change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the resilience of the Caerphilly Area to the potential effects of climate change, including flooding from fluvial, coastal and surface water sources. Reduce Caerphilly's contribution to climate change from activities which result in greenhouse gas emissions.

Part 1: What has Plan Preparation/ ISA involved up to this point?

4. Introduction (to Part 1)

4.1 Formal preparation of the 2RLDP has been underway since June 2021, with a wide range of evidence produced to inform its development. **Table 4.1** sets out the key 2RLDP and SA Documents published along with dates for consultation. The 2RLDP documents and the evidence base (including the ISA Reports) can be viewed and downloaded on the Council's website.

Table 4.1 2RLDP and SA stages

RLDP Documents and Consultation	ISA Documents and Consultation
Adopted Local Development Plan Up to 2021 Review Report (June 2021)	
	ISA Scoping Report (February 2022, sent to statutory consultees for consultation from 23 rd March to 27 th April 2022)
Population and Housing Growth Options Evidence Base Paper	
LDP Focus Group Meeting – Alternative and Preferred Strategies (March 2022)	
Pre-Deposit Plan (Preferred Strategy) (June 2022)	Initial ISA Report (August 2022)

4.2 This part of the Initial ISA Report sets out the work undertaken from 2020 to 2022 that led to the development of the Preferred Strategy document that is currently the focus of appraisal (see **Part 2**, below) and currently published for consultation. Specifically, in-line with regulatory requirements (Schedule 2 of the SEA Regulations), there is a need to explain how work was undertaken to develop and then appraise reasonable alternatives, and how the Council then considered appraisal findings when finalising the draft plan for publication.

4.3 This part of the report presents information regarding the consideration of reasonable alternatives. This information is important given regulatory requirements.⁷

Structure of this part of the report

4.4 This part of the report is structured as follows:

- **Chapter 5** – explains the context and work undertaken to develop reasonable alternatives at this stage.
- **Chapter 6** – presents an appraisal of the reasonable alternatives; and
- **Chapter 7** – explains reasons for selecting the Preferred Strategy.

⁷ There is a requirement for the SA Report to present an appraisal of 'reasonable alternatives' and 'an outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with'. Whilst this report is not the SA Report, it is appropriate to present this information nonetheless for the benefit of stakeholders.

5. Establishing the Reasonable Alternatives

Introduction

5.1 This chapter explains the evidence and work carried out at this stage to identify strategic options. To deliver the vision and objectives identified in **Chapter 2**, the Council explored how much growth (housing and employment) is required over the plan period (2020 to 2035) and where this growth could be located within the County Borough. Each of these issues are discussed in turn below.

Level of growth

5.2 Several alternative growth options have been assessed to consider the implications of the changes not only in population levels, but also in the population structure for the County Borough. Population change is comprised of a mixture of two factors, natural change (the difference between the numbers of births and deaths in a year) and migration rates (the difference between those who move into the County Borough and those who move out). Options for population change are projected using altered information or assumptions in respect of one, or both, of natural change and migration rates.

5.3 Overall, 11 population options were considered for the 2RLDP strategy, three based on the 2018 Welsh Government population projections, four based on migration assumptions, two based on housebuilding rates, one based on economic population, and one employment based. These options are presented in **Table 5.1** overleaf. Regarding the 2018 Welsh Government population projections, for the first time, a higher number of deaths than births is projected, which results in negative natural change, i.e. population loss. This has not happened previously in the County Borough's history, with all previous years seeing positive natural change contributing to population growth.

5.4 Despite this, the projection identifies an increase in population due to migration over the plan period of just over 1,800 people, representing a 1% increase. However, analysis of the population structure at the start and end of the plan period identifies that the economic population (working aged people) would decline by nearly 2,900 people, and the comparison also identifies a decline in the number of children (0 to 15) over the plan period of approximately 2,700. The loss of economic population and of the child age population would have very significant implications for the economy of the County Borough, with a reduced workforce and fewer younger people coming through to employment age.

5.5 Caerphilly County Borough is located within the Cardiff Capital Region (CCR) which, through its City Deal, is seeking to increase the number of jobs in the region by 25,000. In addition, it is also located within the National Growth Area identified in Future Wales, which seeks a commensurate level of growth to be catered for in this area. A fundamental part of any strategy that seeks to satisfy these requirements is a population that exhibits growth, with growth in the economic population being particularly important. Consequently, a strategy will

only meet the requirements of CCR and Future Wales aspirations if it identifies an appropriate level of growth in population (including economic population).

5.6 The expectation arising from Caerphilly's inclusion within Future Wales's National Growth Area designation and the economic aspiration of CCR mean that any strategy proposed for 2RLDP will need to ensure a viable and sustainable economic population and demonstrate growth. Therefore, only four of the options have been considered as reasonable or realistic for the 2RLDP strategy. These are outlined below and highlighted in **Table 5.1** overleaf.

- **Option A** – WG 2018-based principal projection.
- **Option H** – Continuation of adopted LDP.
- **Option I** – Long-term housebuilding rates; and
- **Option J** – CCR growth in working age population.

5.7 Given that the growth option chosen for the emerging plan must address the CCR aspirations for economic growth, the plan must make provisions to accommodate a sufficient level of growth from an employment perspective. The Council commissioned two studies which identify a requirement for the provision of an additional 39.6 hectares of employment land to be allocated to meet the employment requirements. However, an additional 4.9 hectares of land is being identified to address the shortage of available land in the south of the County Borough. Therefore, a total of 44.5 hectares of land are identified to meet the overall employment requirement for the County Borough.

Table 5.1 Summary of the outcomes of the Growth Options considered for 2RLDP

Scenarios (incorporation membership rate adjustments and adjusted for latest MYEs)	Population Change 2020 to 2035	% Population Change 2020 to 2035	HH Change 2020 to 2035	% HH Change 2020 to 2035	Total Dwellings	Dwellings per annum	Change in working age population
A WG 2018-based principal projection	1,881	1.0	2,862	3.7	2,966	198	-2,868
B WG 2018-based high population	5,499	3.0	4,241	5.5	4,395	293	-1,842
C WG 2018-based low population	-3,313	-1.8	1,026	1.3	1,064	71	-3,938
D Zero net migration	-2,789	-1.5	884	1.1	917	61	-6,413
E Long-term average migration (19 Year)	-1,002	-0.6	1,695	2.2	1,756	117	-5,380
F Long-term average migration (10 Year)	-1,137	-0.6	1,636	2.1	1,696	113	-5,443
G South-East Wales average migration	5,212	2.9	4,195	5.4	4,348	290	-756
H Continuation of adopted LDP	15,058	8.3	8,323	10.8	8,622	575	7,668
I Long-term housebuilding rates	7,990	4.4	5,399	7.0	5,595	373	1,944
J CCR growth in working age population	10,685	5.9	6,513	8.4	6,750	450	4,126
K Oxford Economic employment forecast scenario	-8,805	-4.8	-2,031	-2.6	0	0	-11,231

Location of growth

5.8 Having identified growth options, the next step was to consider how the level of growth could be appropriately distributed throughout the County Borough. A total of six alternative strategy options have been considered as part of the process, reflecting the issues facing the County Borough and the national and regional policy framework. The consideration and assessment of the strategy options is set out in the evidence base document “*Strategy Options Assessment*”. The six strategy options considered were:

- **Strategy Option 1: Continuation of the LDP Strategy** – This would see the continuation of the strategy currently contained within the Adopted LDP, which guides development within a broad strategic framework underpinning the principles of sustainable development. The County Borough was divided into three strategic areas, each with their own strategic development policies, which are the Heads of the Valleys Regeneration Area (HoVRA), Northern Connections Corridor (NCC), and the Southern Connections Corridor (SCC).
- **Strategic Option 2: Heads of the Valleys Regeneration Area Focus** – This strategy seeks to maximise development opportunities in the Heads of the Valleys Regeneration Area to promote economic growth, broaden the range and choice of housing and to maximise the benefits from the major investment and improvement in the Metro and the A465.
- **Strategic Option 3: Key Strategic Site** – This strategy option would see the allocation of a strategic site at Maesycwmmer 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 the most appropriate and sustainable sites that are well related to the rail network and public transport interchanges.
- **Strategic Option 4: Metro Investment Focus** – This strategy option would see the allocation of land aimed at maximising the benefits arising from the significant investment in the South Wales Metro, maximising opportunities arising in and around key public transport nodes including the rail stations along the Rhymney and Ebbw Rail Lines and the major bus stations at Blackwood and Nelson.
- **Strategic Option 5: Town Centre First** – 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 development sites.
- **Strategic Option 6: Caerphilly Basin Focus** – This strategy seeks to maximise development opportunities in the Southern Connections Corridor to promote economic growth and maximise the benefits of the significant investment in the regeneration of Caerphilly town.

Strategic growth areas

- 5.9 When looking for strategic growth areas, the draft 2RLDP prioritised areas located close to sustainable transport links, primarily the major bus and rail stations across the County Borough, and areas within and close to existing towns and cities across the region. For the County Borough, these are the Principal Town Centres and Local Centres.
- 5.10 The Principal Town Centres and the Local Centres all have rail or major bus stations, except for Bedwas, which is near Caerphilly, and therefore, there is a need to identify new growth and development in proximity to those centres. Normally, the plan would identify strategy areas within which certain levels of growth and development would be expected. However, the linear nature of the metro stations and the distribution of the Principal Town Centres and Local Centres do not lend themselves to forming cohesive strategic growth areas. As a result, the 2RLDP does not identify strategic growth areas within Caerphilly.
- 5.11 In the absence of defined strategic growth areas, the distribution of new development will be defined around the Principal Town Centres and Local Centres, which are identified in the Settlement Hierarchy:
- **Principal Centres** – Bargoed, Blackwood, Ystrad Mynach, Risca/ Pontymister and Caerphilly; and
 - **Local Centres** – Rhymney, Nelson, Newbridge and Bedwas.
- 5.12 The next issue is to consider whether the strategy should identify a strategic site, i.e. a site that, because of its size, would be essential to the delivery of the strategy and any failure in delivery would undermine the delivery of the strategy. Only one site of significance has been submitted to the Council for consideration under the Candidate Sites process, and that is the Parc Gwernau site at Maesycwmmmer. The site is comprised of 212 hectares of land to the south of the existing settlement of Maesycwmmmer and can accommodate approximately 2,700 dwellings with ancillary infrastructure and community facilities. The key element of the site is the provision of a new access road that will also provide a strategic highway improvement to alleviate congestion issues on the A472 through Maesycwmmmer.
- 5.13 The draft 2RLDP concludes that the best approach for the site is to deliver as much of the development as is reasonable during the plan period. As such, the Plan sets out that Maesycwmmmer will be a housing-led site that will deliver 1,200 of a total of 2,700 dwellings during the plan period. The location of the strategic site at Maesycwmmmer is shown in **Figure 5.1** overleaf.

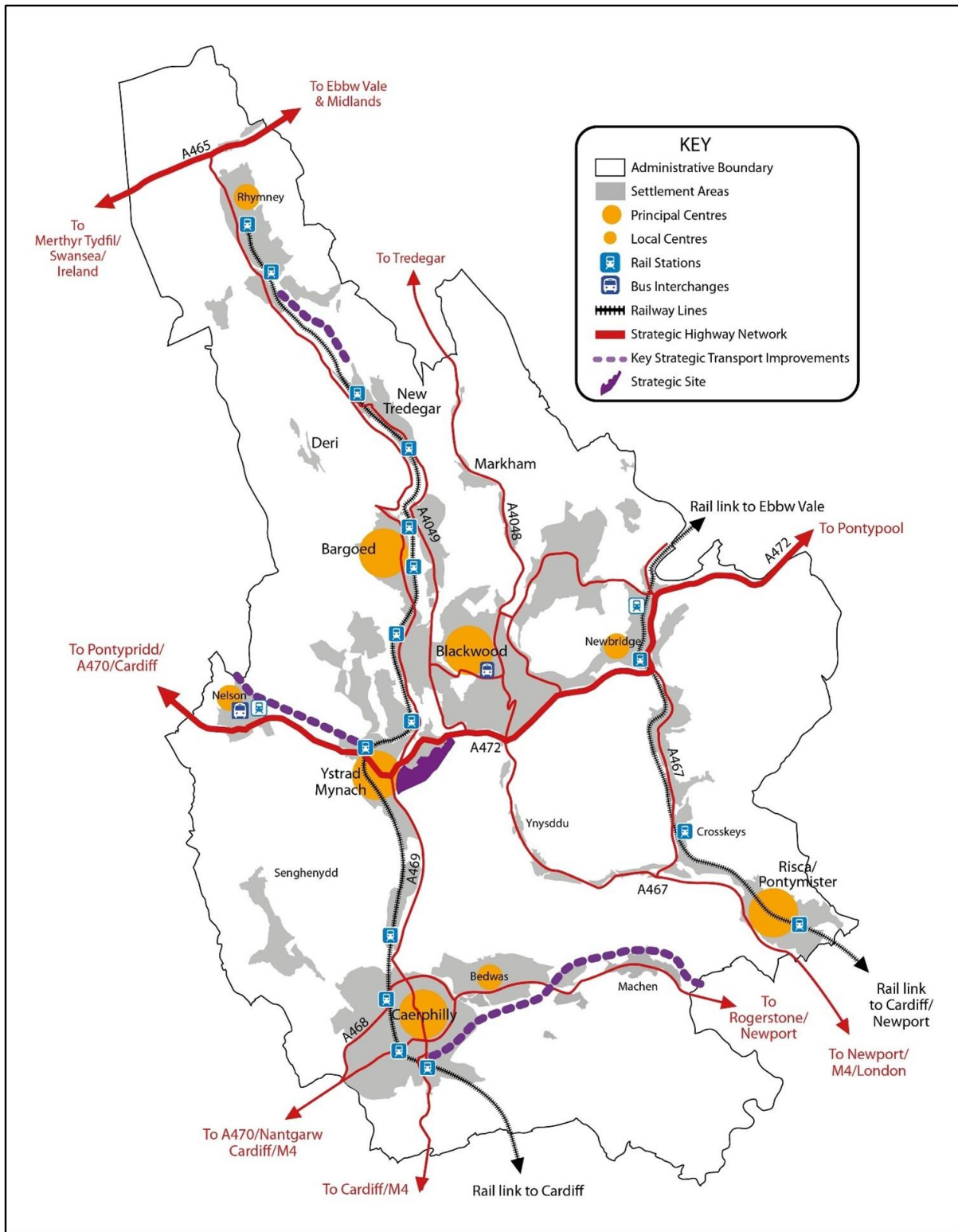


Figure 5.1 Caerphilly Preferred Strategy key diagram

6. Appraising the Reasonable Alternatives

Introduction

6.1 This chapter presents the summary findings of the appraisal of the draft 2RLDP.

Method

- 6.2 The strategic options identified in **Chapter 5** were subject to a comparative appraisal under each ISA topic and the detailed findings are presented in **Appendix II**.
- 6.3 For each of the strategic options, the assessment examined likely significant effects on the baseline, drawing on the sustainability objectives and topics identified through scoping (see **Table 3.1**) as a methodological framework.
- 6.4 Every effort is made to predict effects accurately; however, this is inherently challenging given the high-level nature of the options under consideration. The ability to predict effects accurately is also limited by understanding of the baseline (now and in the future under a 'no plan' scenario). Considering this, there is a need to make considerable assumptions regarding how scenarios will be implemented 'on the ground' and what the effect on receptors would be. Where there is a need to rely on assumptions to reach a conclusion on a 'significant effect' this is made explicit in the appraisal text.
- 6.5 It is important to note that effects are predicted considering the criteria presented within the Regulations. So, for example, account is taken of the duration, frequency and reversibility of effects. Cumulative effects are also considered (i.e. the effects of the plan in combination with the effects of other planned or on-going activity that is outside the control of Caerphilly County Borough Council).
- 6.6 Based on the evidence available a judgement is made if there is likely to be a significant effect. Where it is not possible to predict likely significant effects based on reasonable assumptions, efforts are made to comment on the relative merits of the alternatives in more general terms and to indicate a rank of preference. The number indicates the rank and does not have any bearing on likely significant effects. This is helpful, as it enables a distinction to be made between the alternatives even where it is not possible to distinguish between them in terms of 'significant effects'. For example, if an option is ranked as 1 then it is judged to perform better against that ISA topic compared to an option that is ranked 2.

Summary appraisal findings for strategic options

Level of growth

- 6.7 The four options for the level of growth identified in **Chapter 5** were subject to a comparative appraisal under each ISA topic. The detailed findings are presented in **Appendix B** and summary findings provided overleaf.

Table 6.1 ISA summary findings for the growth options

ISA topic	Rank/ significant effect	Option A	Option H	Option I	Option J
Economy and employment	Rank	3	1	2	1
	Significant effect?	Yes – negative	Yes – positive	No	Yes – positive
Population and communities	Rank	3	1	2	1
	Significant effect?	Yes – negative	Yes – positive	Yes – positive	Yes – positive
Health and wellbeing	Rank	2	1	1	1
	Significant effect?	Yes – negative	No	No	No
Equality, diversity and inclusion	Rank	3	1	2	1
	Significant effect?	Yes – negative	No	Uncertain	No
Transport and movement	Rank	2	1	1	1
	Significant effect?	No	No	No	No
Natural resources (air, land, minerals and waste)	Rank	1	4	2	3
	Significant effect?	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain
Biodiversity and geodiversity	Rank	1	4	2	3
	Significant effect?	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain
Historic environment	Rank	1	4	2	3
	Significant effect?	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain
Landscape	Rank	1	4	2	3
	Significant effect?	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain
Climate change (mitigation and adaptation)	Rank	4	1	3	2
	Significant effect?	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain

- 6.8 In relation to the ISA topics of natural resources, biodiversity and geodiversity, the historic environment and landscape, the nature and significance of effects will be dependent on where growth is located and how development is designed/ implemented. As the level of growth increases so does the likelihood that impacts will occur, and negative effects will arise. Residual effects in this respect are uncertain and will be better informed by consideration of the location of growth, the sensitivity of receptors, and the potential mitigation measures available. Lower growth options are ranked more favourably in respect of the potential environmental impacts, though it is also recognised that higher levels of development have further potential to deliver environmental enhancements/ improvements that could lead to positive effects.
- 6.9 Similarly, for the climate change ISA topic, uncertainty is noted as specific opportunities that would help to significantly reduce per capita GHG emissions or deliver new low carbon or renewable energy have not been confirmed. However, this ISA topic sees the reverse trend in terms of rankings, as higher growth options have greater potential to support infrastructure upgrades that reduce congestion and improve accessibility, supporting a transition to lower emission/ carbon neutral economy. They also have greater potential to contribute to improved ecological connectivity, green infrastructure networks, open spaces and urban greening measures, which support climate resilience.
- 6.10 Regarding the transport and movement ISA topic, options proposing a higher level of growth are more likely to result in impacts on the local highway network through increased traffic and congestion; however, no evidence suggests impacts are likely to be of significance. Recent increases in homeworking, as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, are considered likely to prevail as a longer-term trend which will continue to support reduced congestion. Furthermore, the higher growth levels are considered for their potential to deliver accessibility and infrastructure improvements and result in more self-contained communities, reduced levels of out commuting and modal shift, the importance of which have all been highlighted during the pandemic. As a result, higher growth options are ranked more favourably overall.
- 6.11 Option A is considered likely to result in significant negative effects for the ISA topics of economy and employment, population and communities, health and wellbeing, and equalities, diversity and social inclusion. This is predominantly due to limited growth severely restricting opportunities to address a likely resultant demographic imbalance and economic decline. Under this option, a decline in younger age groups, particularly the working age group, is likely to result in job losses, and a decline in economic and local centres exacerbating rural isolation. This is particularly relevant to certain groups with protected characteristics, such as the young, older people and disabled, who tend to be disproportionately affected by accessibility issues and the negative effects of transport infrastructure. Furthermore, a lack of future development may not only severely limit opportunities to address changing housing needs in terms of types and tenures but is also likely to drive up house prices and exacerbate affordability issues.
- 6.12 The higher growth options (Options H and J, but particularly H) are identified as performing better against these ISA topics, as the additional growth provides an opportunity to deliver a greater range of new housing, employment opportunities, and community infrastructure to meet the needs of the County

Borough. Significant positive effects are predicted for Options H and J under the economy and employment ISA topic, and significant positive effects are predicted for Options, H, I and J under the population and communities ISA topic.

Spatial strategy

- 6.13 Each of the six spatial strategies identified in **Chapter 5** were subject to a comparative appraisal under each ISA topic. The detailed findings are presented in **Appendix B** and summary findings provided overleaf.

Table 6.2 Summary appraisal findings for the spatial strategy

ISA topic	Rank/ significant effect	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4	Option 5	Option 6
Economy and employment	Rank	3	2	1	1	1	2
	Significant effect?	Yes – negative	Uncertain	Yes – positive	Yes – positive	Yes – positive	Uncertain
Population and communities	Rank	4	3	1	1	1	2
	Significant effect?	No	No	Yes – positive	Yes – positive	Yes – positive	Uncertain
Health and wellbeing	Rank	2	2	1	1	1	2
	Significant effect?	Yes – positive	Yes – positive	Yes – positive	Yes – positive	Yes – positive	Yes – positive
Equality, diversity and inclusion	Rank	3	2	1	1	1	2
	Significant effect?	No	Uncertain	Yes – positive	Yes – positive	Yes – positive	Uncertain
Transport and movement	Rank	4	4	2	1	2	3
	Significant effect?	No	No	Yes – positive	Yes – positive	Yes – positive	Uncertain
Natural resources (air, land, minerals and waste)	Rank	1	2	1	1	1	2
	Significant effect?	Uncertain	Yes – negative	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Yes – negative
Biodiversity and geodiversity	Rank	1	2	3	1	1	2
	Significant effect?	Uncertain	Uncertain	Yes – negative	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain
Historic environment	Rank	=	=	=	=	=	=
	Significant effect?	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain
Landscape	Rank	1	3	1	1	1	2
	Significant effect?	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain
Climate change (mitigation and adaptation)	Rank	2	2	1	1	1	3
	Significant effect?	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Yes – negative

- 6.14 Options 3, 4 and 5 perform well across the economy and employment, population and communities, health and wellbeing, equality diversity and inclusion, and transport and movement ISA topics. These three options are considered likely to lead to significant positive effects regarding these ISA topics, focusing growth in the most sustainable locations, where there is better access to public transport, existing employment opportunities, and facilities and services. Although there are some small differences between these options in terms of how growth is distributed during the plan period, they are not significant enough to warrant one option being ranked higher or lower than the other. Across these ISA topics, significant negative effects are only predicted for Option 1 under economy and employment, as it restricts growth in Caerphilly town and is predicted to fall short of the identified housing need.
- 6.15 Options 1, 2 and 6 also perform well regarding the health and wellbeing ISA topic, although only minor positive effects are predicted. This is because Options 2 and 6 focus growth in only one half of the County Borough, whilst Option 1 delivers a low level of growth when compared to the other options. In this respect, these options have less potential to deliver substantial benefits in terms of health and wellbeing across the wider County Borough.
- 6.16 At present, there is little to differentiate between the options regarding the historic environment ISA topic, given that all options have the potential to result in negative effects by directing development to areas that are sensitive in terms of heritage constraints, albeit in different areas of the County Borough. However, it is recognised that mitigation could be provided, and that development also has the potential to deliver positive effects through improvement/ enhancement measures secured at the pre-application stage, enabling the relevant processes to reflect on historic environment concerns. Hence, the nature and significance of effects will be dependent on the precise scale and location of development, which is currently unknown.
- 6.17 Whilst similar conclusions can also be drawn in relation to the biodiversity and geodiversity ISA topic (given the presence of international, national and local designations throughout the County Borough), significant negative effects can be predicted for Option 3. This is because the strategic site it delivers in Maescwmmer is located close to Aberbargoed Grasslands SAC (a site designated under the EU Habitats Directive), and even closer to nationally designated sites Penllwyn Grasslands SSSI and Memorial Park Meadows Pontllanfraith SSSI.
- 6.18 In terms of the landscape and climate change ISA topics, Option 3, 4 and 5 direct growth to the most sustainable areas, which are also less sensitive in landscape terms, and are therefore considered to perform more strongly than other options. The remaining options direct growth to less sustainable locations with high flood risk (though it is anticipated that high flood risk areas will be avoided in line with national policy and sequential testing), and are constrained by landscape designations, which is reflected by their ranks. Option 6 is predicted to lead to significant negative effects with regard to the climate change ISA topic, as it directs growth to an area of high flood risk. However, given that the precise location of development is currently unknown, uncertainty is noted for all of the options with regard to these two ISA topics.
- 6.19 Regarding the natural resources ISA topic, while it is difficult to identify any significant differences between the options in terms of natural resources,

Options 1, 3, 4 and 5 are ranked more favourably than Options 2 and 6 as they have fewer constraints. Specifically, constraints for Option 2 concern Coal Mining Development High Risk Areas and water availability, whilst constraints for Option 6 concern AQMAs, the loss of productive agricultural land and aggregate extraction sites. Due to these constraints, Options 2 and 6 are considered likely to lead to significant negative effects.

6.20 Overall, **Options 3, 4 and 5** perform most favourably, leading to **significant positive effects** for half of the ISA topics assessed. Option 3 is the only option that leads to significant negative effects for one ISA topic – biodiversity and geodiversity – however, it is likely that these effects can be mitigated through site design/ layout. In terms of the best performing option, **Option 4** has a slight edge on the other two options, however all three options are still deemed to perform extremely well. Conversely, **Options 1, 2 and 6** perform least favourably, and it is difficult to differentiate between them as they all have a relatively equal number of downfalls across the ISA topics. However, significant negative effects are only concluded under one ISA topic for Options 1 and 6, therefore **Option 2** has a slight edge.

Strategic growth areas

6.21 The potential strategic growth option identified in **Chapter 5** was subject to an appraisal under each ISA topic. The detailed findings are presented in **Appendix B** and summary findings provided below.

Table 6.3 Summary appraisal findings for the strategic site

ISA topic	Significant effect?
Economy and employment	Yes – positive
Population and communities	Yes – positive
Health and wellbeing	Yes – positive
Equality, diversity and inclusion	Uncertain
Transport and movement	Yes – positive
Natural resources (air, land, minerals and waste)	Uncertain
Biodiversity and geodiversity	Uncertain
Historic environment	Uncertain
Landscape	Yes – negative
Climate change (mitigation and adaptation)	No

6.22 Overall, significant positive effects are considered likely for the economy and employment, population and communities and health and wellbeing ISA topics as the site promotes economic and population growth in a sustainable location, near Principal Centre and key transport node Ystrad Mynach, whilst delivering improvements to active travel and green infrastructure, and connections to the wider countryside and the Brecon Beacons National Park.

6.23 Although it performs well, uncertainty is noted for the equality, diversity and inclusion ISA topic as although the provision of affordable housing and local jobs will help support equality and inclusion, it may be more difficult to encourage diversity in the north of the County Borough, where existing diversity is low compared to Wales as a whole.

6.24 Uncertainty is also noted for the transport and movement, natural resources, biodiversity and geodiversity, and historic environment ISA topics. This is because the site is highly dependent on the delivery of the Maesycwmmmer Bypass. There are constraints concerning air, land and minerals, potential impacts on several designated sites, as well as notable habitats and species, and the proximity of the site to several Grade II* and Grade II listed buildings.

6.25 Significant negative effects are predicted for the landscape ISA topic, due to likely negative impacts on surrounding settlements as a result of the size and position of the strategic site within the wider landscape. However, it is noted that the design/ layout of the site will largely affect the site's overall impact on the landscape, and therefore a degree of uncertainty is noted.

6.26 Finally, no significant effects are considered likely for the climate change ISA topic, which is due to the global nature of this topic, as well as the potential for the strategic site to deliver on site mitigation measures. Moreover, the flood risk associated with the site is low, and it is considered that adaptation measures, such as SuDS, will appropriately address any residual surface water

flood risk. There is even potential for minor positive effects, given the site's sustainable location close to an existing public transport hub, and potential to deliver a low/ zero carbon development.

6.27 Overall, the strategic site at Maesycwmmer performs relatively well, and the only real drawback concerns the landscape ISA topic.

7. Developing the Preferred Strategy

Introduction

7.1 This Chapter presents the Council's response to the alternatives appraisal and the Council's reasons for selecting its preferred approach in light of the alternatives appraisal and other factors.

The Council's outline reasons for choosing the Preferred Strategy

7.2 It should be noted that the Council's reasons for progressing or rejecting growth and spatial options are presented in the 'Population and Housing Growth Options' evidence base paper, and the report of the LDP Focus Group Meeting – 14th March 2022, which summarises the process of developing the alternative strategy and makes a recommendation in respect of the Preferred Strategy. These are set out in **Tables 7.1** and **Table 7.2** below.

Level of growth

Table 7.1 Outline reasons for choosing the preferred growth option

Option	Outline reasons
Option A – WG 2018-based principal projection	This scenario is proposing a very low level of population growth (1%) over the next 15 years, as a result of negative natural change (higher deaths and lower births). Population growth is entirely due to migration. This scenario would result in a significant decline in both the 0 to 15 and working age population, and a significant increase in the older population (67+). The resultant households based on this population projection are also low (3.2%). This equates to a housing requirement of 170 dwellings a year or 198 dwellings in the adjusted membership rate scenario, which is well below past build rates.
Option H – Continuation of adopted LDP	This scenario projects an increase in population of 8.8%, or 8.3% in the membership adjusted scenario. This is higher than the population growth that has been experienced in recent years and would require a level of migration that is significantly higher than has been experienced when compared with long-term trends. However, this option would reverse the projected decline in the working age population by providing a stronger economically active population to support jobs growth in the County Borough. There will be an increase in the older population above what the principal projection indicates, but due to the profile of migrants, proportionately the growth of this group when compared to the principal projection would not be as significant as for the working age population, helping to support a more balanced population. It would also reduce the extent to which the school age population is projected to decline.

In housebuilding terms, whilst 575 dwellings is the annual housing requirement in the adopted LDP, this level of housebuilding has not been met since 2008 and one of the consistent conclusions of successive Annual Monitoring Reports (AMRs) is that the housing requirements in the LDP have not been met. As the past delivery of housing has been lower than 575 per annum, it would need to be demonstrated that the figure of 575 would be deliverable.

Option	Outline reasons
Option I – Long-term housebuilding rates	The long-term housebuilding scenario clearly reflects a realistic level of housebuilding, given that it is what has been achieved over a long period, although it is ambitious when compared to shorter term trends. Overall, this dwelling led scenario would result in a positive increase in population (4.9% or 4.4% in the membership adjusted scenario) which is considered ambitious but deliverable. It will help to achieve a population structure where the economically active population can grow and help to support the provision of new jobs. However, it is questioned whether this level of growth is sufficiently ambitious to reflect Caerphilly's position within a National Growth Area, and the economic aspirations of CCR.
Option J – CCR growth in working age population	The level of growth proposed in this scenario would support regional growth aspirations in that there will be an appropriate labour force available to support future job creation in the region. The scenario would require an increase in migration to a level that is higher than long-term trends but is considered achievable. The dwelling requirement of 450 dwellings per annum is higher than long-term past trends but is at a level that is ambitious but deliverable.

- 7.3 Stakeholders were asked to complete a survey identifying which of the options they considered to be most appropriate for the 2RLDP. If respondents did not support any of the four shortlisted scenarios, the opportunity was available for them to indicate which other scenarios they considered to be appropriate. Over half of respondents (51%) expressed support for Scenario J (CCR growth in working age population) as the preferred scenario, with 29% supporting Scenario I (Long-term housebuilding rates), 16% supporting Option A (WG 2018-based principal projection), and 4% supporting Option H (Continuation of the adopted LDP).
- 7.4 Several advantages and disadvantages were identified for each of the options, which helped reach the conclusion that Option J (CCR growth in working age population) should be used as the base projection for the 2RLDP.

Location of growth

Table 7.2 Outline reasons for choosing a preferred spatial option

Option	Outline reasons
Option 1 – Continuation of the adopted LDP strategy	There are many issues arising from this option, but the key issue is the parameters set out in the strategy for new development, i.e. within settlement boundaries and on brownfield land only in the southern connections corridor. Given these restrictions, there are very few sites that could be brought forward to meet this strategy and, as a result, there are insufficient sites available to deliver this strategy. For this reason, it is considered that this strategy is not appropriate for the emerging 2RLDP.
Option 2 – Heads of the Valleys Regeneration Area Focus	It is a Council aim to regenerate the Heads of the Valleys (HoV) area of the County Borough 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 plan, the Council will need to demonstrate that the sites allocated to meet the 2RLDP housing and employment land requirements are viable and can be delivered in the plan period.

Option

Outline reasons

Unfortunately, the HoV area is an area that has low land values and low house values as well. Because of this, it is extremely difficult to demonstrate that any sites in this area are viable and can be delivered within the plan period. Consequently, only a very small number, if any sites, could be identified to meet the 2RLDP requirements, which does not reflect the purpose of the strategy option to identify a significant amount of the 2RLDP requirement in the area. Given these issues, this option is not appropriate to be considered for the emerging 2RLDP as it will not deliver the level of development in the HoV area that the strategy would require.

It should be noted, however, that whilst this option is not appropriate to be used as the 2RLDP strategy, this does not prevent the plan identifying aspirational sites (ones that could come forward, but do not count towards meeting the requirement) to try to increase development in the area.

Option 3 – Key Strategic Site

This option locates a significant proportion of the 2RLDP 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 Maesycwmmmer, which would deliver 1,200 dwelling through the plan period, with a further 1,500 dwellings in the subsequent plan period.

This option has the potential to provide significant benefits, including increasing accessibility, promoting sustainable transport, green infrastructure enhancement and addressing congestion issues around Maesycwmmmer. However, there is an inherent risk that the Council will be over-reliant on a single site which, if not delivered, will undermine the strategy.

Overall, this is a strategy option that could be taken forward as the preferred strategy of the 2RLDP.

Option 4 – Metro Investment Focus

This option seeks to focus development close to the stations on the Rhymney Valley and Ebbw Valley rail lines and to the bus stations at Blackwood and Nelson. 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, whilst increasing accessibility.

The effect of this option is to develop sites near and within existing settlements, and as such, 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 from transport nodes than less beneficial sites.

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

Option 5 – Town Centres First

This option seeks to focus new development towards the principal town centres of Caerphilly, Risca/ Pontymister, 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

Option**Outline reasons**

Centre first approach. This option is keenly aligned to placemaking and sustainable settlements.

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

Overall, this option is one that could be taken forward as the Preferred Strategy for the emerging 2RLDP.

Option 6 – Caerphilly Basin Focus

This option seeks to target new development within the Caerphilly Basin, in accordance with the Future Wales statement, which states 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 2RLDP requirement into this area.

This option would require both greenfield and brownfield development to enable sufficient land to be available to meet the 2RLDP requirements. Greenfield land release would reverse the adopted LDP strategy and would place the landscape within the Caerphilly Basin at threat from adverse impact 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 2RLDP, does come into consideration, although the starting point for any greenbelt boundary is whether sufficient land for future expansion of settlements has been allowed.

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

Despite the strong pros for this option, the potential for adverse impact to the landscape, the potential impact of the greenbelt, and the highly controversial nature of greenfield development in the Caerphilly Basin, means that it is considered unlikely that a strategy under this option would be successful in realising an adopted plan. Consequently, this option is not considered to be a realistic option for consideration for the Preferred Strategy of the emerging 2RLDP.

7.5 Due to the above reasons, Options 1, 2 and 6 were ruled out as potential options for the Preferred Strategy for the emerging 2RLDP. This leaves Options 3, 4 and 5 as the potential basis for the Preferred Strategy.

7.6 The analysis of the outcome of the polls from the seminar series also reflects this position, with most of the votes going towards Options 3, 4 and 5 across the poll. Therefore, the poll results clearly align with the Council's outline

reasons in identifying Options 3, 4 and 5 for consideration for the 2RLDP Strategy.

- 7.7 A key result is that of the first part of the poll, where the option for a hybrid between several options was the preference for most people who attended the seminars. Underneath this, the three options for consideration for the 2RLDP Strategy were identified as the most preferred options to form the hybrid option.
- 7.8 Therefore, the outcome of the seminar series indicates that a hybrid strategy should be used that is formed of a combination of Options 3, 4 and 5, which concurs with the assessment of the alternative strategies.
- 7.9 Consequently, it is proposed that the Preferred Strategy for the emerging 2RLDP should be a hybrid strategy comprised of elements from Option 3 (Key Strategic Site), Option 4 (Metro Investment Focus) and Option 5 (Town Centres First).

Part 2: What are the ISA findings at this stage?

8. Introduction (to Part 2)

8.1 The aim of this chapter is to present an appraisal of the 2RLDP Preferred Strategy.

Methodology

8.2 The appraisal identifies and evaluates 'likely significant effects' of the plan on the baseline, drawing on the ISA objectives identified through scoping (see **Table 3.1**) as a methodological framework. In total, there are ten ISA topics, as follows:

- Economy and employment.
- Population and communities.
- Health and wellbeing.
- Equalities, diversity and social inclusion.
- Transport and movement.
- Natural resources (air, land, minerals and water).
- Biodiversity and geodiversity.
- Historic environment.
- Landscape; and
- Climate change (mitigation and adaptation).

8.3 Every effort is made to predict effects accurately; however, this is inherently challenging given the high-level nature of the policies under consideration and understanding of the baseline (now and in the future under a 'no plan' scenario) that is inevitably limited. Given uncertainties there is a need to make assumptions, e.g. in relation to plan implementation and aspects of the baseline that might be impacted. Assumptions are made cautiously and explained within the text (with the aim to strike a balance between comprehensiveness and conciseness/ accessibility). In many instances, given reasonable assumptions, it is not possible to predict 'significant effects', but it is nonetheless possible and helpful to comment on merits (or otherwise) of the Plan in more general terms.

8.4 Finally, it is important to note that effects are predicted taking account of the effect of characteristics and 'significance criteria' presented within Schedules 1 and 2 of the SEA Regulations.⁸ So, for example, account is taken of the probability, duration, frequency and reversibility of effects as far as possible. Cumulative effects are also considered, i.e. the potential for the Plan to impact an aspect of the baseline when implemented alongside other plans, programmes and projects. Explicit reference is made within the appraisal as appropriate (given the need to balance the desire of systematic appraisal with a desire to ensure conciseness/ accessibility).

⁸ Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004

9. Appraisal of the Preferred Strategy

Introduction

9.1 As introduced above, the aim of this chapter is to present an appraisal of the Preferred Strategy under the ISA topics/ framework.

Overview of the Preferred Strategy

- 9.2 Policy PS1 (The Level of Growth) states that the 2RLDP will plan for an increase in population of 10,700 people, with an increase in the working age population of around 4,100 people.
- 9.3 Policy PS2 (The Preferred Strategy for the 2RLDP) outlines the hybrid strategy that the 2RLDP has chosen to adopt, which comprises elements of reasonable alternative Option 3 (Key Strategic Site), Option 4 (Metro Investment Focus) and Option 5 (Town Centre First). The distribution of growth proposed through each of these options is presented in **Table 9.1** below.
- 9.4 Policy PS5 (Strategic Site, Maesycwmmmer) outlines that Maesycwmmmer, a housing-led site, will deliver 1,200 of a total of 2,700 dwellings during the plan period with ancillary and associated infrastructure. This includes the provision of a new access road that will provide a strategic highway network improvement for the A472.
- 9.5 The proposed distribution of the remaining homes to be delivered during the plan period and beyond is set out in Policies PS3 (Settlement Hierarchy) and PS4 (Areas of Growth). Policy PS3 identifies Caerphilly's settlement hierarchy, comprising the Principal Centres (Bargoed, Blackwood, Ystrad Mynach, Risca/ Pontymister and Caerphilly), Local Centres (Rhymney, Nelson, Newbridge and Bedwas) and Residential and Rural Settlements. Policy PS4 follows on from this, outlining that growth will be targeted towards the Principal and Local Centres, and adding that development in Residential Settlements will only be allowed if it is sustainable, whilst development in Rural Settlements will not normally be permitted.
- 9.6 Notably, while provision is made for 44.5 ha of employment land, the proposed distribution of employment growth will be set out at the next stage in plan-making (Deposit 2RLDP). However, it is likely that employment growth will be consistent with the spatial strategy.

Table 9.1 Distribution of growth through the three options that make up the Preferred Strategy

	Caerphilly Basin		Central Region		HOVRA	
	No. of homes	Percentage Distribution	No. of homes	Percentage Distribution	No. of homes	Percentage Distribution
Option 3 – Key Strategic Site	770	13%	4,871	81%	399	6%
Option 4 – Metro Investment Focus	1,771	25%	4,871	69%	399	6%

	Caerphilly Basin		Central Region		HOVRA	
	No. of homes	Percentage Distribution	No. of homes	Percentage Distribution	No. of homes	Percentage Distribution
Option 5 – Town Centre First	1,618	25%	4,871	71%	371	5%

Economy and employment

Appraisal of the Preferred Strategy

- 9.7 As mentioned above, Policy PS1 (The Level of Growth) states that the 2RLDP will plan for an increase in the working age population of around 4,100 people. Whilst the proposed distribution of employment growth will be set out at the next stage in plan-making (Deposit 2RLDP), employment growth will need to be consistent with the Preferred Strategy. Hence, it can be assumed that most new employment land will be focussed around the Principal and Local Centres.
- 9.8 In this respect, the Preferred Strategy performs positively in relation to the ISA objective to ‘enhance the vitality and resilience of the town centre and retail centres’ by directing growth to the Principal and Local Centres. By doing this, in addition to directing growth to areas that will benefit from investment through the South Wales Metro, it also addresses the ISA objective to ‘support the creation of accessible new jobs’.
- 9.9 Distributing housing and employment growth across Caerphilly’s Principal and Local Centres will help ensure growth is well dispersed across the plan area. Bargoed and Rhymney serve the Heads of the Valleys and the northern extent of the plan area; Blackwood, Ystrad Mynach, Newbridge and Nelson the Mid Valleys Corridor; and Risca/ Pontymister, Caerphilly town and Bedwas serve Caerphilly Basin and the south.
- 9.10 By directing a substantial proportion of growth to Principal Centre Ystrad Mynach, the Preferred Strategy capitalises on its strong public transport links to the other parts of the County Borough. In this respect, there is potential for positive effects on the local economy. Equally, by distributing growth to Caerphilly town, which has been identified as a strategically important location for sustainable and inclusive economic growth by Future Wales, the Preferred Strategy maximises its potential to deliver economic growth, with positive effects also anticipated.
- 9.11 The Preferred Strategy is supplemented by Policy PS20 (Retailing Hierarchy), which identifies a hierarchy for retail centres in the County Borough. In line with the Strategy, focus is placed on the Principal and Local Centres supporting the vitality and resilience of high streets in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. This will lead to long term positive effects for the local economy, supporting sustainable places for people to both live and work.
- 9.12 In terms of the availability of land for employment use, Policy PS10 (Managing Employment Growth) outlines that 44.5 hectares of land will be identified for employment use to meet the employment requirements of the plan period. This addresses the ISA objective to ‘provide sufficient land for businesses to grow’.
- 9.13 In relation to this, Policy PS11 (Managing Tourism Growth) outlines the Council’s plan to expand and enhance the tourist potential of the County Borough through a range of actions, including the identification of appropriate land for tourism related uses. Whilst this land has not yet been identified, the County Borough’s proximity to the Brecon Beacons National Park to the north presents excellent opportunities for tourism, and the strategic location of Local Centre Rhymney to the National Park could be capitalised on in this respect.

9.14 At this stage, whilst the quantum of new employment land and increase in the working age population being planned for during the plan period is known, the precise distribution of this growth is not. As such, it is difficult to reach a conclusion in terms of the significance of effects, although it is considered that any effects would be positive. The proposed distribution of employment growth will be set out at the next stage (Deposit Plan) and considered further through the ISA process.

Summary appraisal of the Preferred Strategy

9.15 The Preferred Strategy proposes the delivery of new employment land and homes to meet identified local needs and provide flexibility during the plan period. Growth is being distributed according to the settlement hierarchy, with most of the development directed towards the Principal and Local Centres where there is better access to sustainable transport modes and wider infrastructure. The Preferred Strategy looks to capitalise on Caerphilly's strategic location within the Cardiff City Region, its access to the A470 (north/south connections) and A465 (east/west connections), as well as mainline rail corridors running north to south, to take advantage of various local and regional economic opportunities.

9.16 Overall, the Preferred Strategy is predicted to lead to **significant long-term positive effects** regarding the economic and employment ISA topic. It supports the growth aspirations of the Council, whilst taking advantage of opportunities arising from Caerphilly's strategic location. As a result, it should help to assist in the Covid-19 recovery, increasing economic activity and potentially reducing out-commuting. Despite this, the County Borough's proximity to both Cardiff and Newport will likely continue to influence commuting patterns given their strong employment bases. Nevertheless, emphasis will be placed on maintaining and enabling the sustainability improvements that have arisen as a result of Covid-19, including increased levels of home working, as a catalyst for economic recovery and prosperity.

Appraisal of cumulative effects

9.17 Caerphilly's location within the Cardiff Capital Region gives it a broad regional context, and its location to the north of Cardiff and Newport places it in a strong strategic location in terms of the regional economy. In this respect, there is potential for cumulative positive effects on the regional economy resulting from proposed growth in the County Borough and vice versa.

9.18 The Cardiff Capital Region's City Deal identifies regional economic challenges and opportunities for the ten authorities which comprise the Cardiff Capital Region, including Caerphilly. Addressing economic challenges and maximising opportunities are key objectives for the City Deal, which has the potential to lead to significant positive cumulative effects for the County Borough in the long term.

9.19 Caerphilly falls within the National Growth Area of Cardiff, Newport and the Valleys, which is identified through Future Wales as the focus for growth and investment in the South East Region. Development proposals in both Cardiff and Newport are likely to be of particular significance in terms of cumulative effects for the County Borough.

- 9.20 The Cardiff LDP⁹, adopted in 2016, proposed the delivery of 41,415 dwellings and 40,000 new jobs by 2026. The LDP highlights that 9,700 people commute into Cardiff from Caerphilly each day. Caerphilly's 2RLDP focuses a level of growth to the Principal Town of Caerphilly, which is near the County Borough's border with Cardiff. This may lead to increased commuter levels between Cardiff and Caerphilly. In response to this, the Cardiff LDP proposes a range of bus corridor enhancements, including the Northern Bus Corridor, which is relevant to the A469 Caerphilly Road/ A470 Trunk Road. In combination with the South Wales Metro, this has the potential to promote a modal shift towards sustainable transport.
- 9.21 The Newport LDP¹⁰, adopted in 2015, proposes the delivery of 11,623 dwellings and 172 hectares of new employment land by 2026. Of significance to Caerphilly, the LDP seeks to protect and enhance National Cycle Route 4 (Caerphilly to Newport and Chepstow), which will lead to improved active transport connections between the County Borough and Newport. Increased rates of housebuilding in Newport could also affect the level of development in Risca/ Pontymister, which is in close proximity to the County Borough's border with Newport. While growth could increase traffic between Caerphilly and Newport, strategic infrastructure delivery such as the South Wales Metro is likely to reduce impact on the road network in the longer term.
- 9.22 The visitor economy potentially is significant in Caerphilly, which is largely due to its proximity to the Brecon Beacons National Park to the north of the County Borough. The adopted Brecon Beacons National Park LDP¹¹, adopted in 2013, proposes no significant growth during the plan period/ near its boundary with Caerphilly. However, growth within Caerphilly, particularly in Rhymney in the north of the County Borough, has the potential to capitalise on its position near the National Park, supporting the visitor economy.
- 9.23 There is also potential for cumulative effects in relation to development proposed to the east of Caerphilly, in Torfaen and Blaenau Gwent, as well as Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taf to the west. This is particularly relevant to the central northern portion of the County Borough, including Nelson, Ystrad Mynach, Pontllanfraith and Newbridge, which are located along the A472. Growth in these neighbouring authorities is likely to compliment growth in Caerphilly, improving cross-boundary connections and strengthening the South East Region as a whole.

Population and communities

Appraisal of the Preferred Strategy

- 9.24 A key consideration under the population and communities ISA topic is the provision of the right number of homes in the right places, including delivering a sufficient mix of housing types and tenures to meet different identified needs within the community.
- 9.25 Policy PS1 (The Level of Growth) states that the 2RLDP will plan for an increase in population of around 10,700 people, with an increase in the working

⁹ Cardiff Council (2016) 'Cardiff Local Development Plan', [online] available to access via [this link](#)

¹⁰ Newport City Council (2015): 'Newport Local Development Plan', [online] available to access via [this link](#)

¹¹ Brecon Beacons National Park (Authority): 'Brecon Beacons National Park Local Development Plan', [online] available to access via [this link](#)

- age population of around 4,100 people. The level of growth is based on the Cardiff Capital Region (CCR) working age population growth scenario (Option J). This is considered to be the most appropriate growth strategy for the County Borough over the plan period, as shown in **Chapter 6**. This is because it will deliver the Council's core purpose of helping to build sustainable and resilient communities that support the well-being of current and future generations. Policy PS1 sets out that 7,425 dwellings will be built over the plan period, to meet a requirement of 6,750 dwellings plus a flexibility allowance (Policy PS12 (Managing Housing Growth)). On this basis, the Preferred Strategy is considered to have a significant long-term positive effect in relation to this ISA topic, ensuring the delivery of new homes to exceed local needs.
- 9.26 In terms of the location of new housing and employment, the Preferred Strategy includes a strategic site, covered by Policy PS5 (Strategic Site, Maesycwmmmer), which will deliver 1,200 of a total of 2,700 homes during the plan period. In line with Policy PS5, the strategic site will deliver high quality development that includes a range of community infrastructure and achieves high standards in respect of the public realm and accessibility. This is anticipated to lead to positive effects against this ISA topic, addressing the ISA objective to 'promote the development of a range of high-quality, accessible community facilities'.
- 9.27 The proposed distribution of the remaining homes to be delivered during the plan period and beyond is set out in Policies PS3 (Settlement Hierarchy) and PS4 (Areas of Growth), which outline that the Principal and Local Centres and key public transport nodes, which will benefit from investment through the South Wales Metro, will be targeted for development. In this respect, the Preferred Strategy addresses the ISA objective to 'provide housing in sustainable locations that allow easy access to a range of local services and facilities'.
- 9.28 In terms of affordable housing, Policy PS13 (Affordable Housing Target) outlines the Council's aim to deliver at least 1,360 affordable homes during the plan period to contribute to balanced and sustainable communities. The supporting text of Policy PS13 highlights that the current shortfall of affordable housing is a significant issue facing residents in the County Borough. This is evidenced through the 2018 Local Housing Market Assessment (LHMA), which indicates that there is a shortfall of 282 affordable homes per annum for the period 2018 to 2023. To address this, a policy setting out thresholds for site sizes and area specific targets will be included within the Deposit Plan. This will be based on a robust assessment of viability, following the completion of an update to the Affordable Housing Viability Assessment. These actions contribute positively towards delivering the ISA objective to 'meet the identified housing needs, including affordable, for the County Borough'. This has therefore been sufficiently met by the Preferred Strategy.
- 9.29 Policy PS8 (Placemaking Principles) addresses the ISA objective to 'ensure an appropriate mix of dwelling sizes, types and tenures to meet the needs of all sectors of the community'. Specifically, it outlines that all development proposals must provide a variety of housing types and tenures.
- 9.30 It is a requirement that the Council takes account of the needs of the Gypsy and Traveller community in preparing their development plans. Gypsy and Traveller needs are addressed through Policy PS21 (Gypsy and Traveller

Accommodation), which states that land will be made available to accommodate future unmet gypsy and traveller accommodation needs if a need is identified in the updated Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment.

- 9.31 Overall, the Preferred Strategy performs positively in relation to the population and communities ISA topic, given it will deliver a mix of housing to meet, and exceed, identified local housing needs. Growth will be distributed proportionately across Caerphilly, in the most sustainable locations with a broad range of existing services and facilities and substantial active/ public transport infrastructure. This includes at the strategic site at Maesycwmmmer, which delivers a significant portion of this growth.

Summary appraisal of the Preferred Strategy

- 9.32 The Preferred Strategy delivers a level of growth which exceeds Caerphilly's identified housing need of 6,750 homes over the plan period. This is based on the CCR working age population growth scenario (Option J) and a combination of three spatial strategies (Option 3, 4 and 5) which locate development across Principal and Local Centres in close proximity to key sustainable transport nodes, as well as at a strategic site in Maesycwmmmer.
- 9.33 Focussing growth at locations which are best served by existing services, facilities and community infrastructure will help ensure that the majority of growth is located in reasonably close proximity to shops, schools, employment and healthcare whilst also providing opportunities to deliver new community infrastructure on or off site as necessary. The proportionate distribution of growth means that whilst the majority of growth is delivered at the most sustainable settlements (the Principal and Local Centres), the smaller Residential Settlements still receive some new growth and the associated benefits. This includes introducing additional housing choice for first time buyers and older rural residents who may struggle to remain in these places. The strategic site at Maesycwmmmer performs particularly well, as it contributes significantly to growth whilst enabling the delivery of community facilities on site as a result of economies of scale.
- 9.34 Overall, the Preferred Strategy is predicted to lead to **significant long-term positive effects** in relation to the population and communities ISA topic. It addresses the Council's key aims to 'ensure equal opportunities and access for all to proposed and existing homes, jobs, facilities and services within the County Borough' and 'facilitate the development of affordable and market housing, in sustainable locations, to provide a range and choice of housing that will afford everyone the opportunity of a quality home in the right place'.
- 9.35 The spatial strategy also considers the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, and the need to assist in its recovery, whilst maintaining and enabling the sustainable improvements that have arisen from the situation. The importance of this is stressed in Future Wales 2040, which emphasises creating neighbourhoods that enable residents to stay and move locally to access services and amenities through revitalised town centres, and the provision of locally accessible green spaces. This is reflected through the 2RLDP policy framework, which support self-sustaining communities, such as that which will arise from development at the strategic site in Maesycwmmmer.

Appraisal of cumulative effects

- 9.36 Development proposed within Caerphilly has the potential to lead to positive cumulative effects alongside growth proposed by neighbouring local authority areas within the Cardiff Capital Region, particularly in relation to the supply of a sufficient quantity of the new homes in sustainable locations.
- 9.37 Both the adopted and emerging LDPs of the surrounding local authority areas propose meeting or exceeding their identified housing needs. In this respect, the proposed housing delivery of the RLDP2 Preferred Strategy has the potential to contribute towards regional growth. The coordinated delivery of new homes has the potential to draw people from outside of the Cardiff Capital Region into the area, which is important given that the Preferred Strategy largely relies on migration in terms of increasing Caerphilly's working age population.
- 9.38 In this context, there are likely to be positive cumulative effects associated with region-wide growth. These will be strengthened by proposed enhancements to cross-boundary sustainable transport infrastructure proposed through the CCR City Deal. It is likely that this will improve access to existing services and facilities available at a range of Principal Settlements, including Newport and Cardiff.

Health and wellbeing

Appraisal of the Preferred Strategy

- 9.39 A key aspect of achieving positive health and wellbeing outcomes through new development is the extent to which residents are able to make healthy travel choices for accessing key services, facilities and employment. In practice this means locating development within reasonable walking or cycling distance of such facilities and linking it with suitable walking and cycling infrastructure. In relation to the strategic site, the Pre-Deposit Plan outlines that transport infrastructure will be delivered alongside housing, which will likely take advantage of the existing walking and cycling infrastructure within and near the site. In addition to this, the site is located within walking/ cycling distance of existing services and facilities nearby, including two train stations.
- 9.40 More broadly speaking, the Preferred Strategy facilitates healthy travel choices by directing growth to the Principal and Local Centres and in walking/ cycling distance of key transport nodes. As outlined through strategic growth Option 4, which forms part of the hybrid approach expressed through the Preferred Strategy, this includes the rail stations along the Rhymney and Ebbw lines and the major bus stations at Blackwood and Nelson. A key aspect of this strategy is to locate development within a 20-minute cycle distance of key transport nodes, which will promote active travel for shorter journeys. Whilst the more intricate aspects of walking and cycling connectivity will be determined by site design/ layout, in spatial terms, the Preferred Strategy will promote health and wellbeing.
- 9.41 Healthy lifestyles will be further supported through Policy PS14 (Sustainable Transport Hierarchy), which requires proposals to demonstrate that accessibility and movement reflect the sustainable transport hierarchy set out in the 2RLDP. Walking and cycling form the top of the hierarchy respectively,

which is further supported through Policy PS16 (Transport Improvements). Delivering improvements to the active travel networks and increasing local accessibility will lead to long term positive effects, supporting healthy places and reducing inequalities in this respect.

- 9.42 Consideration is also given to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the health of communities. Notably, Building Better Places (2020)¹² acknowledges the post-pandemic behavioural shift of increased cycling and walking activity, and new working from home patterns, which have reduced the overall need to travel. The 2RLDP policy framework seeks to support this modal shift and change in working patterns by promoting self-containment within the County Borough. Policy PS15 (Modal Shift) of the 2RLDP is particularly relevant in this respect.
- 9.43 Policy PS8 (Placemaking Principles) highlights that development proposals must enhance wellbeing through the protection and enhancement of the economic, social, environmental and cultural aspects of the County Borough. A list of strategic placemaking principles is provided, which includes creating a rich mix of uses, providing a variety of housing types and tenures, building places at a walkable scale, and integrating green infrastructure.
- 9.44 Also of note is Policy PS9 (Green and Blue Infrastructure), which outlines that all development proposals must protect, maintain and enhance green and blue infrastructure assets. This will be achieved by promoting a range of key functions, including greenspace provision and connectivity. The importance of public greenspaces has been highlighted through the Covid-19 pandemic, especially regarding their positive impact on physical and mental health. Hence, the 2RLDP policy framework addresses the ISA objective to ‘enhance multifunctional green infrastructure networks throughout the plan area’. This is strengthened by the strategic site at Maesycwmmmer, as landscape led masterplanning will facilitate the delivery of a connected green infrastructure network.

Summary appraisal of the Preferred Strategy

- 9.45 Locating growth according to the settlement hierarchy contributes positively to the health and wellbeing ISA topic, as it ensures that residents have better access to active/ public transport and existing services and facilities, which are largely located in the Principal and Local Centres. This will likely present opportunities to link new development with the existing walking and cycling network, in addition to green infrastructure, whilst also offering potential to secure enhancements to these networks through the development process.
- 9.46 Another key contributing factor to health and wellbeing is access to public greenspaces and recreational facilities. Whilst these are currently abundant in the Principal and Local Centres, development in these areas, particularly within settlement boundaries, will put pressure on these areas, potentially resulting in their loss or relocation. In this respect, it is important that the 2RLDP seeks to protect these areas. Notably, this is addressed in the 2RLDP through Policy PS9 (Green and Blue Infrastructure), as well as through the strategic site at

¹² Welsh Government (2020): ‘Building Better Places’, [online] available to access via [this link](#)

Maesycwmmmer, which has good potential to deliver connected green infrastructure.

- 9.47 Overall, by creating and sustaining communities and facilitating accessible and healthy environments, it is anticipated that the Preferred Strategy will lead to **significant long-term positive effects** on health and wellbeing. However, at this stage, there is a level of uncertainty as, with the exception of the strategic site, the precise location and scale of development is not currently known, which is a key influencing factor.

Appraisal of cumulative effects

- 9.48 Numerous Public Rights of Way (PRoWs) within Caerphilly provide cross-county access, as seen in the County Borough's PRoW map¹³. This is particularly true for the eastern and southern areas of Caerphilly, where there is a denser cover of PRoWs. In this respect, there are opportunities to strengthen cross boundary active travel infrastructure, delivering a coherent consolidated network with neighbouring authorities. Due to the Welsh Government's support for a modal shift to active travel, individual authorities are increasingly seeking to incentivise walking and cycling. These efforts will likely contribute towards cross-boundary working in this respect, delivering positive cumulative effects on the overall health and wellbeing of residents in the Cardiff Capital Region.
- 9.49 The Brecon Beacons National Park LDP¹⁴, adopted in 2013 reiterates the role of the National Park as a destination for accessing the natural environment. Growth within Caerphilly will enable a greater number of people to access the National Park for recreation and leisure, with associated health and wellbeing benefits. Of relevance to this is the delivery of growth in Rhymney, and the wider HOVRA, which are the most accessible locations to the National Park. Whilst growth is concentrated in the centre of the County Borough, this area, alongside the Caerphilly Basin, can access Rhymney via train, enabling wider access to the National Park. This has the potential to lead to positive effects, delivering the ISA objective to 'improve access to the countryside for recreation'.

Equalities, diversity and social inclusion

Appraisal of the Preferred Strategy

- 9.50 The focus of the equalities, diversity and social inclusion ISA topic is reducing poverty and inequality, tackling social exclusion and promoting community cohesion. Many aspects of equalities, diversity and social inclusion do not have a spatial dimension and are unlikely to be directly affected by the spatial distribution of growth through the Preferred Strategy, although the overall level of provision of land uses such as housing and employment, which is set by the Preferred Strategy, will potentially affect underlying influences such as access to employment, housing and community facilities. For example, promoting community cohesion is likely to be most directly influenced through detailed policies which have the granularity to deliver focused responses at specific locations. However, it is considered that distributing growth across the County

¹³ Caerphilly Council Borough Council (no date): 'Public Rights of Way', [online] available to access via [this link](#)

¹⁴ Ibid.

Borough in a proportionate manner will help to support and sustain a hierarchy of vibrant centres, particularly the Principal and Local Centres.

- 9.51 By locating some growth in and around Principal and Local Centres, including Bargoed and Rhymney in the north of the County Borough, the Preferred Strategy seeks to deliver growth in the most deprived part of Caerphilly. In delivering both housing and economic growth in this area, it is hoped that residents will be provided with improved employment opportunities, as well as the facilities and services they require to lead a more self-contained lifestyle, with a higher quality of life. In this respect, the Preferred Strategy addresses the ISA objective to ‘provide housing in sustainable locations that allow easy access to a range of local services and facilities’.
- 9.52 However, delivering growth in the HOVRA comes with its own challenges, particularly regarding the low land values and low house prices in this area, which raise significant issues over the financial viability and deliverability of growth in this area. In addition to this, the proportionate approach to distribution that the Preferred Strategy adopts means that growth will unlikely be at a scale which unlocks significant investment or enhancement in this area.
- 9.53 The Preferred Strategy also seeks to address issues relating to equalities, diversity and social inclusion by delivering affordable housing. Policy PS13 (Affordable Housing Target) outlines the Council’s aim to deliver at least 1,360 affordable homes during the plan period to achieve balanced and sustainable communities. This is important given the current shortfall of affordable housing in the County Borough, which is likely a significant contributing factor to deprivation in Caerphilly. In this respect, the Preferred Strategy seeks to address the ISA objective to ‘ensure an appropriate mix of dwelling sizes, types and tenures to meet the needs of all sectors of the community’.
- 9.54 There is clearly an economic and educational dimension to tackling deprivation, as providing opportunities to acquire skills, through either formal education or apprenticeships, supports access to high-quality, stable employment. This is addressed by the Pre-Deposit Plan’s key aim to ‘support and facilitate the development of modern education facilities to upskill the population tailored to the County Borough’s future needs’. However, how and where these educational facilities will be delivered is not yet clear, and in this respect, a level of uncertainty is concluded regarding this issue.
- 9.55 Notably, placemaking can play a role in tackling social exclusion by designing barrier-free environments, which can be entered and used safely by all members of the community. In relation to this, Policy PS8 (Placemaking Principles) seeks to build places at a walkable scale, establishing a permeable network of streets. However, this policy could be improved by adding a strategic placemaking principle that focuses on accessibility, giving regard to how those with disabilities will be considered through design and layout of development.
- 9.56 Regarding the Welsh language, the ISA objective to ‘promote Caerphilly’s bilingual public services and increase the use of the Welsh language in Caerphilly’ is touched on in the key issues section of the Pre-Deposit Plan. Specifically, key issue CU1 states that *“the 2RLDP should seek to give effect, insofar as it is able, to measures which foster the development and use of the*

Welsh language". In this respect, this ISA objective is likely to be addressed in more detail by the Deposit Plan.

Summary appraisal of the Preferred Strategy

- 9.57 The Preferred Strategy's proportionate distribution of growth means that settlements throughout the County Borough will see the benefits of development, including the potential for delivering affordable housing in the more deprived areas in the north. This will help tackle inequalities and deprivation within Caerphilly by ensuring residents have access to employment, education and services nearby. Whilst the Preferred Strategy has a strong focus on housing and employment growth, partially addressing the ISA objective to 'reduce inequalities and deprivation', a greater consideration for education and accessibility is needed to address this objective in full.
- 9.58 At this stage of plan preparation, details on some key aspects of tackling inequality remain uncertain, and as such, it is difficult to measure the potential effects of the Preferred Strategy on the equalities, diversity and social inclusion ISA topic. Nevertheless, **minor positive effects** are considered likely, although a degree of uncertainty is noted at this stage. This is because, beyond the strategic site at Maesycwmmmer, the exact location of development across the wider County Borough is unknown.

Appraisal of cumulative effects

- 9.59 There is a degree of crossover between this topic and other ISA topics, particularly in relation to the role of affordable housing and educational opportunities in tackling deep-rooted poverty and deprivation. In this respect, the fact that Caerphilly and its neighbouring local authority areas are all proposing to meet or exceed their identified housing needs is a positive. In short, this will likely provide the opportunity to meet complex housing needs within particularly deprived communities, particularly in the HOVRA. However, there is a degree of uncertainty until the exact location of sites for development is known.
- 9.60 Additionally, it is recognised that the proposed enhancements to regional public transport through the CCR City Deal and South Wales Metro rollout will potentially improve access to employment and training opportunities, as well as key services and facilities. Increased accessibility may lead to a reduction in social exclusion, which is a key contributor to deprivation. In this respect, the 2RLDP addresses the ISA objective to 'promote the development of a range of high-quality, accessible community facilities, including specialist services'.
- 9.61 Notably, the 2RLDP seeks to give effect, insofar as it is able, to measures which foster the development and use of the Welsh language. Alongside similar efforts from neighbouring authorities, this has the potential to help Future Wales meet its goal of reaching a million Welsh speakers, as well as increasing the percentage of people who speak Welsh daily by 10% by 2050.¹⁵
- 9.62 Overall, it is considered that cumulative effects in relation to equalities, diversity and social exclusion are likely to be minor. Whilst some aspects of this ISA topic are addressed at a local level, the collective actions of the local authority

¹⁵ Welsh Government (2021): 'Future Wales: The National Plan 2040', [online] available to access via [this link](#)

areas at a regional scale are likely to deliver similar benefits, or potentially even greater benefits, from all the investment being stimulated through the City Deal.

Transport and movement

Appraisal of the Preferred Strategy

- 9.63 By directing growth in and around key public transport nodes, and to the Principal and Local Centres, the Preferred Strategy addresses the ISA objective to 'reduce the need to travel through sustainable patterns of land use and development'. In doing so, the Preferred Strategy ensures that new residential development will be located close to the public transport links, local facilities and centres of employment, and will be connected with other regional employment hubs such as Cardiff and Newport. In respect of the strategic site at Maesycwmmmer, this is in walking/ cycling distance to Ystrad Mynach and Hegoed train stations, which provide direct connections to Rhymney in the north and Caerphilly and Cardiff in the south. The strategic site is also located near the major bus stations at Blackwood and Nelson, and will likely deliver its own transport infrastructure, connecting it to the wider network via active travel/ public transport.
- 9.64 By delivering growth in the Mid Valleys and Caerphilly Basin, the Preferred Strategy maximises opportunities to utilise and enhance existing sustainable transport infrastructure. Whilst some growth is delivered in the HOVRA, this is primarily directed to Bargoed (Principal Centre) and Rhymney (Local Centre), which are both on the Rhymney line, allowing residents to connect to the wider County Borough to meet any needs they might not be able to meet locally, such as employment opportunities which may be more prevalent in Caerphilly and Cardiff in the south. Notably, Newbridge and Risca/ Pontymister, in the east of the County Borough, are situated on the Ebbw Valley line, with direct connections to Ebbw Vale in the north and Cardiff in the south, a key employment hub.
- 9.65 The Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013¹⁶ requires all local authorities in Wales to deliver improvements to their network of active travel routes and facilities. Caerphilly's PRoW network is extensive, with a high concentration of public footpaths in the northern, eastern and southern extents of the County Borough. Although these are largely concentrated in and around the Principal and Local Centres, they also extend out into the countryside and provide connections with neighbouring local authority areas. In terms of cycle routes, there are several national cycle routes (NCN) in Caerphilly, including the Celtic Trail (running through Chepstow), Twrch Trail (near Cwmcarn), Aber Valley Cycle Route (running between Caerphilly and Senghenydd), Darren Valley (running between Bargoed and Fochriw), and Aberbargoed to New Tredegar.
- 9.66 In reference to the above, the Preferred Strategy performs well by locating development in the Principal and Local Centres, and in doing so, connecting new development to areas with the most advanced existing active transport infrastructure. Linking this infrastructure to public transport nodes will enable residents of Caerphilly to travel throughout the County Borough via active/ public transport, reducing reliance on the private car. In support of this, Policy

¹⁶ UK Government (2013): 'Active Travel (Wales) Act', [online] available to access via [this link](#)

PS14 (Sustainable Transport Hierarchy) states that all proposals must demonstrate that accessibility and movement have been based upon the sustainable transport hierarchy. The hierarchy places walking at the top of the hierarchy, followed by cycling, sustainable public transport and electric vehicles, with the private car at the bottom.

- 9.67 Adding to this, Policy PS15 (Modal Shift) outlines the Council's support for proposals that will promote a modal shift to assist in delivering the Welsh Government target of 45% of trips by sustainable modes by 2040. To help achieve this, improvements to the transport network that will be supported by the Council are outlined in Policy PS16 (Transport Improvement). These include improvements to the South Wales Metro system, a key area of investment, as well as improved access to Principal and Local Centres, increased sustainable transport provision, and upgrades to the active travel network to name a few. In this respect, the Preferred Strategy meets the ISA objectives to 'encourage a modal shift to more sustainable and active forms of travel', 'extend or improve active travel networks', and 'enable transport infrastructure improvements'.
- 9.68 The Council will protect strategic transport improvement routes from inappropriate development through Policy PS18 (Protecting Strategic Transport Improvement Routes). Specifically, this includes the A469 (resilience improvements) and the Cwmbargoed and Caerphilly/ Machen/ Newport rail lines (reinstatement of passenger services). Additionally, the routes of former railway lines that have the potential for transport related development will be safeguarded through Policy PS17 (Safeguarding Former Rail Lines), especially those that facilitate walking, cycling, rail freight or passenger movements.
- 9.69 Other relevant policies include Policy PS19 (Road Hierarchy), which outlines a road hierarchy to ensure a safe and efficient highway network, as well as Policy PS9 (Green and Blue Infrastructure), which states that all development proposals must protect, maintain and enhance green and blue infrastructure assets, which will in part be achieved by promoting improved connectivity.
- 9.70 The behavioural shift in people's commuting patterns, which has arisen due to the Covid-19 pandemic, is supported by the Preferred Strategy through its attempt to ensure the sustainable co-location of land uses within the Principal and Local Centres. In doing so, it encourages the continuation of increased cycling and walking activity and home working patterns as highlighted through Building Better Places¹⁷. The Preferred Strategy seeks to maximise opportunities to support the modal shift brought about by the pandemic through a range of policies, as mentioned above, which seek to incentivise walking and cycling. However, the 2RLDP does not give regard to the importance of improved broadband connectivity, which is vital in supporting continue home working patterns and will help address the ISA objective to 'facilitate working from home'.

Summary appraisal of the Preferred Strategy

- 9.71 The Preferred Strategy gives great weight to the active travel network and the importance of directing growth to locations which can either integrate with the existing network or enhance it by strengthening links with key services and

¹⁷ UK Government (2013): 'Active Travel (Wales) Act', [online] available to access via [this link](#)

facilities. Growth is being distributed according to the settlement hierarchy, with most development directed towards the Principal and Local Centres where there is greatest access to sustainable transport modes and wider infrastructure. This distribution of growth also enables the Preferred Strategy to take advantage of the proposed South Wales Metro rollout. Notably, the Preferred Strategy seeks to capitalise on Caerphilly's strategic location within the Cardiff Capital Region, adjacent to employment hubs Cardiff and Newport, which can be accessed via the Rhymney and Ebbw Valley lines respectively.

- 9.72 Consideration is also given to the Welsh Government's Building Better Places paper¹⁸, which highlights the role active travel and home working play in continuing sustainable behaviours that have resulted from the Covid-19 pandemic; these are encouraged through the Preferred Strategy.
- 9.73 Overall, the Preferred Strategy is predicted to lead to **long-term positive effects** regarding the transport and movement ISA topic. At the regional level, it takes advantage of opportunities arising from the CCR City Deal and the South Wales Metro, whilst at the local level it supports opportunities to enhance and extend the active travel network, placing walking and cycling at the top of its identified transport hierarchy. Notably, this will lead to positive knock-on effects for the health and wellbeing and climate change ISA topics by encouraging healthy travel choices and reducing congestion resulting from private car usage, thus reducing associated carbon emissions.

Appraisal of cumulative effects

- 9.74 There is potential for both positive and negative and cumulative effects in relation to the transport and movement ISA topic, particularly in relation to cross boundary roads and railways, which stand to be impacted by development both within Caerphilly and the wider South East Wales region.
- 9.75 Most residents in Caerphilly travel to work by car/ van (42.4%) according to data from the 2011 Census. Also, according to 2011 data, fewer residents travel to work on foot or work from home compared to the average for Wales. However, this is likely to have changed significantly since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in early 2020. Residents in Caerphilly are also less likely to use buses, minibuses, or coaches to commute to work in comparison to the average for Wales. Existing travel patterns in Caerphilly reflect a reliance on the private car to access neighbouring local authority areas. The County Borough has the second largest number of commuters out of all the local authorities in South East Wales (based on predictive travel during the Covid-19 pandemic).¹⁹
- 9.76 In respect of the above, improvements to cross-boundary public transport connections will be vital for encouraging residents to make a modal shift from the private car to use of trains and public buses. The South Wales Metro is key in this respect, with three quarters of a billion pounds currently invested in upgrading the Core Valleys Lines, including the Rhymney line. A modal shift is likely to result from delivering a reliable, easy to use and well-integrated active and public transport network across the South East Wales region, which will require collaboration across the relevant local authorities. In this respect,

¹⁸ Welsh Government (2020): 'Building Better Places: The Planning System Delivering Resilient and Brighter Futures', [online] available to access via [this link](#)

¹⁹ StatsWales (2020): 'Detailed commuting patterns in Wales by Welsh local authority', [online] available to access via [this link](#)

sustainable transport is a key theme of the neighbouring local authority area's LDPs, particularly Cardiff and Newport which are key transport hubs.

- 9.77 Notably, growth in the HOVRA, whilst likely to reduce levels of existing deprivation in this area, could lead to increased pressure on the road network, particularly the A465. In this respect, development in neighbouring Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taf is particularly relevant. The adopted LDPs²⁰²¹ for both of these local authority areas safeguard land for the A465 dualling, which will significantly increase the capacity of the strategic highway.
- 9.78 Overall, cumulative effects in relation to public transport are projected to be largely positive, particularly in response to the CCR's City Deal and the South East Metro, which will bolster cross-boundary connectivity in South East Wales.

Natural resources (air, land, minerals and water)

Appraisal of the Preferred Strategy

- 9.79 The greatest problems associated with air quality in the County Borough are caused by vehicle emissions; evidenced by the two Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs): Caerphilly Town Centre AQMA and Hafodyrynys Road AQMA (though the compulsory purchase and demolition of houses on the A472 has taken place, which, it is anticipated, will improve conditions regarding the latter). By distributing growth across the County Borough, and not concentrating it in the Caerphilly Basin where development pressure is highest, the Preferred Strategy avoids adding unnecessary pressure to this part of the County Borough. Moreover, by delivering a significant level of growth at the strategic site at Maesycwmmmer, which will support self-containment due to its sustainable location, there is further potential to reduce adverse effects on the AQMAs in Caerphilly.
- 9.80 Growth will also be located near existing sustainable transport nodes, and therefore the Preferred Strategy further reduces its likelihood of worsening air quality. Directing growth to the County Borough's most sustainable locations is considered to encourage the uptake of active/ public transport and support reduced reliance on the private vehicle. Other policies of relevance to air quality include Policy PS14 (Sustainable Transport Hierarchy), Policy PS15 (Modal Shift) and Policy PS16 (Transport Improvement), which support active travel, thereby reducing the negative effects of vehicular emissions on air quality. Hence, the Preferred Strategy performs positively in relation to the ISA objectives to 'encourage journeys to be made by sustainable means' and 'avoid any adverse effects on air quality'.
- 9.81 In respect of land resources, the urban areas in Caerphilly are unlikely to be underlain by high-quality agricultural land according to the predictive Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) assessment²². The remaining areas of the County Borough are primarily underlain by Grade 4 (around the central part of the County Borough) and Grade 5 (in the north at Rhymney) agricultural land, although there is some Grade 3a agricultural land in the Caerphilly Basin which is seen to be Best and Most Versatile (BMV). Only a small part of the

²⁰ Merthyr Tydfil (2020): 'Replacement Local Development Plan (2016 – 2031)', [online] available to access via [this link](#)

²¹ Rhondda Cynon Taf (2011): 'Local Development Plan up to 2021', [online] available to access via [this link](#)

²² Welsh Government (no date): 'Agricultural land classification: Predictive map', [online] available to access via [this link](#)

County Borough, at Draethen, is underlain by high quality Grade 2 agricultural land. However, new development at this location would not be consistent with the settlement hierarchy that underpins the Preferred Strategy. In this respect, the loss of productive agricultural land is largely avoided through the 2RLDP.

- 9.82 Key issue EN5 of the Pre-Deposit Plan outlines that *“the 2RLDP will look to utilise brownfield land before greenfield land in the first instance, though this does not mean that greenfield development should not take place where insufficient viable and deliverable brownfield sites are available to meet the County Borough requirements”*. In response to this, the Preferred Strategy seeks to prioritise the use of brownfield land where appropriate and viable, which aligns with the ISA objective to ‘encourage the use of previously development land’. Whilst the strategic site at Maesycwmmer will result in the loss of greenfield land, this is largely unavoidable due to the limited brownfield land available in the County Borough. As the exact location of development proposed through the wider strategy is currently unknown, the degree to which greenfield land will be lost as a result of the Preferred Strategy cannot yet be confirmed.
- 9.83 In terms of the County Borough’s minerals resource, most of Caerphilly lies within the South Wales Coalfield, comprising carboniferous coal measures underlain by millstone grit and carboniferous limestone. The coalfield is divided into two areas, which are referred to as Coal Mining Development High Risk and Low Risk Areas. The Coal Authority have recently (2020) published ‘Coal Mining Development High Risk Area’ data, which shows that a significant proportion of Caerphilly falls within Development High Risk Areas, particularly in and around Rhymney in the north, in the central area between Nelson and Newbridge, and in the south in and around Caerphilly and to the west of Risca. Given the extent of the County Borough’s mineral resource, it is anticipated that development proposed through the Preferred Strategy would lead to negative effects. However, this is largely unavoidable given the widespread coverage of risk areas.
- 9.84 There are several aggregate extraction sites in the County Borough. Two of these – Bryn Quarry and Machen Quarry – are currently active. Bryn Quarry is located in the centre of the County Borough, between Nelson and Gelligaer, where a considerable level of growth is directed. Machen Quarry is located in the southeast of the County Borough, between Machen and Risca. As required by national policy, buffer zones are utilised to protect permitted workings and to prevent the location of sensitive forms of development. This approach will continue.
- 9.85 In addition to these extraction sites, mineral safeguarding areas indicate are identified for sandstone, limestone and sand and gravel resources. The sandstone safeguarding area covers much of the County Borough, spanning from Abertysswg in the north to Caerphilly town in the south. The limestone safeguarding area only covers a small swath of land running between the south of Caerphilly town up to Risca. The sand and gravel safeguarding area only covers some very small areas near Nelson in the centre and Draethen in the south east. The safeguarding of primary coal resources is no longer required. Safeguarding does not indicate an acceptance of mineral working, but that the location and quality of the mineral is known and that the environmental constraints associated with extraction have been considered.

- 9.86 In response to this, Policy PS22 (Minerals) outlines the Council's commitment to contribute to the regional demand for a continuous supply of minerals. This will be achieved by safeguarding known coal and mineral resources, maintaining a minimum 10-year land bank of permitted aggregate reserves, and encouraging the efficient and appropriate use of high-quality minerals, including maximising the potential for the use of secondary and recycled aggregates. Hence, the Pre-Deposit Plan seeks to address the issue of minerals provision, in line with the ISA objective to 'avoid any adverse effects on 'Coal Mining Development High Risk Areas'. However, additional resources are unlikely to be required as a result of the County Borough's surplus of existing permitted reserves of crushed rock, as set out by the Regional Technical Statement 2nd Review.
- 9.87 Policy PS23 (Sustainable Waste Management) identifies how the Plan will steer the sustainable management of waste. This will be achieved by ensuring proposals conform to the principles of the waste hierarchy and support the circular economy, amongst other things. In this respect, the Pre-Deposit Plan accords with the ISA objective to 'manage waste in accordance with the waste hierarchy'.
- 9.88 Finally, with regard to water resources, Caerphilly falls within the South East Valleys Catchment Management Abstraction Strategy (CAMS) area. Reliability of water availability in this catchment was assessed in 2016 by Natural Resources Wales; areas with higher availability (at least 50%) were found to be in the southern areas, supplying settlements such as Caerphilly town and Blackwood. In this respect, the Preferred Strategy performs favourably by directing growth to these areas of the County Borough.
- 9.89 In terms of rivers, according to the 2015 classification for overall ecological status, rivers that flow through the County Borough are of varying quality. The Rhymney River, which flows southwards from Rhymney in the north, east of Caerphilly town and into Cardiff in the south, is of good ecological quality overall, although the quality decreases further south, and some tributaries in the north are of poor overall quality. Similarly, the Sirhowy, which runs through Blackwood and Pontllanfraith, is of good ecological quality, although the Ebbw, which it flows into just north of Risca, is of moderate ecological quality. In this respect, growth proposed through the Preferred Strategy will need to ensure that potential negative effects on the ecological quality of these rivers, resulting from development, is mitigated.
- 9.90 Caerphilly falls within the South East Wales Conjunctive Use System (SEWCUS) Water Resource Zones (WRZ). The SEWCUS supplies the entire County Borough, and a significant proportion of the South East Wales Region. The total demand for water is forecast to remain relatively stable until 2030, with a decline in demand anticipated between 2030 and 2050, and then to just 10% of current demand by 2050. Notably, water companies are legally required to supply water to private consumers and businesses within their area. As set out in the Water Industry Act 1991, they must prepare and maintain a Water Resources Management Plan (WRMP) that sets out how the company intends to maintain the balance between water supply and demand. Water companies update their WRMPs every five years to take account of predicted growth and ensure that there are schemes in place to meet future demands.

9.91 Whilst water resources will be managed at a higher level through the WRMP, in terms of the Preferred Strategy, a key objective of the Pre-Deposit Plan is to “*manage, protect and enhance the quality and quantity of the water environment and reduce water consumption*”. Moreover, Policy PS6 (Climate Change) outlines that new development must maximise water efficiency, whilst minimising adverse impacts upon the quality of water resources. In this respect, it responds well to the ISA objectives to ‘reduce water consumption’ and ‘reduce the potential for contamination of waterbodies and courses’.

Summary appraisal of the Preferred Strategy

9.92 The Preferred Strategy seeks to minimise the need to travel, particularly by the private car, and capitalise upon opportunities to promote active/ public transport by directing development to the most sustainable locations. In doing so, the Preferred Strategy will help to reduce the impact of transport-based emissions, delivering improvements in air quality, and contributing towards the County Borough’s recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic. However, given the rural nature of parts of the County Borough, as well as the existing reliance on the private car for travel, there is the potential for residual adverse effects regarding air quality.

9.93 Where possible, the 2RLDP will prioritise the use of brownfield land for development, although it is recognised that such opportunities are limited in Caerphilly. Measures to prevent the loss of productive agricultural land do not feature heavily in the Pre-Deposit Plan, however, given the low-quality of agricultural land across the County Borough, this is not a key area of concern.

9.94 In terms of mineral and water resources, neutral effects are anticipated given that mineral resources are protected by safeguarding areas, and that there are no existing capacity issues regarding water resources. Moreover, the higher-level policy frameworks in place provide a greater degree of protection.

9.95 Whilst there is a need to conserve natural resources, it is recognised that the extent of growth proposed through the Preferred Strategy will result in at least a degree of loss of these resources. A key issue of concern is the loss of greenfield land; however, this is largely unavoidable given the limited availability of brownfield land in the County Borough. Nevertheless, **significant negative effects** are considered likely given the level of growth proposed through the Preferred Strategy. However, given only one strategic site has been allocated at this stage, a level of uncertainty is noted.

Appraisal of cumulative effects

9.96 Air quality in the County Borough is ultimately impacted by commuters across the wider region. Therefore, there is potential for negative cumulative effects concerning air quality. This is especially true if neighbouring local authority areas fail to reduce private car usage, which could counteract any efforts made in Caerphilly due to in-commuting. Nevertheless, all local authority LDPs within the CCR seek to improve air quality through various transport and climate change related strategies and policies. Of particular note are the City Deal and South Wales Metro, which will encourage the uptake of sustainable transport across the wider region. In this respect, negative effects are not anticipated with regard to air quality. Nevertheless, the existing reliance on private car is unlikely to disappear, and in this respect minor negative effects are possible.

- 9.97 There is the potential for a cumulative loss of greenfield land, as well as productive agricultural land in other local authority areas, as a result of development across the South East Wales region. In this respect, negative cumulative effects are considered likely regarding land resources.
- 9.98 Development proposed through the 2RLDP has the potential to interact with development proposed in other local authority areas, leading to both negative and positive cumulative effects on water resources. Notably, water resource and wastewater treatment capacity are generally managed at a catchment level, with Natural Resources Wales, Welsh Water, and wastewater service providers working closely together to monitor the situation and plan ahead to meet predicted demands. Given the total demand for water in the County Borough is forecast to remain relatively stable until 2030, with a decline in demand anticipated up until 2050, it is considered that the Preferred Strategy will not lead to significant negative cumulative effects on water resources.

Biodiversity and geodiversity

Appraisal of the Preferred Strategy

- 9.99 In terms of biodiversity and geodiversity, the impacts will ultimately be dependent on the precise location of development. There is only one European-designated site within the County Borough, which is the Aberbargoed Grasslands Special Area of Conservation (SAC) (which is also an SSSI and Nature Reserve), located 1 kilometre from Bargoed, in the centre of the County Borough. A key aspect of the Preferred Strategy is the strategic site at Maesycwmmer, which is located 3.6 kilometres to the south of Aberbargoed Grasslands. However, given the distance from the site, new development at Maesycwmmer is unlikely to lead to negative effects.
- 9.100 In terms of nationally designated sites, there are 13 SSSIs that fall wholly within the County Borough. Eight of these have been designated for their biological interest, and the remaining five for their geological interest. Spatially, the SSSIs are relatively evenly distributed across the County Borough, however, there is a greater concentration of SSSIs in the central and southern extents of Caerphilly. Ancient woodland is also prevalent throughout Caerphilly, with significant areas in the south east of the County Borough. In terms of the Preferred Strategy, the strategic site at Maesycwmmer is located 1.1 kilometres south west of Penllwyn Grasslands SSSI and Memorial Park Meadows Pontllanfraith SSSI, and therefore has potential to cause disturbance to these sites in the absence of suitable mitigation measures.
- 9.101 In terms of locally important biodiversity, there are four Local Nature Reserves (LNR) designated within the County Borough, which are Cwmllydrew Meadows, Memorial Park Meadows, Graig Goch, and Flatwoods Meadows. These are only small and dispersed across the County Borough away from focussed growth areas, and therefore the Preferred Strategy is unlikely to significantly impact these sites. There are also over 190 Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) (also known as Local Wildlife Sites [LWSs]) designated within the County Borough. Notably, Maesycwmmer Meadows SINC covers three parcels of land near the boundary of the strategic site, and the fields in the southernmost parcel of this SINC, which lie adjacent to Nant y Twyn, are high-quality grasslands, although other marshy grassland habitats

within the site are also of value for habitat connectivity. Parts of the strategic site also contain fragments of ancient woodland, and in this respect, the site has the potential to negatively impact biodiversity. However, the requirement to take account of the biodiversity duty may mitigate this to some extent, or even improve habitat connectivity regarding these habitats. Moreover, the strategic scale of the site provides opportunities to conserve and enhance biodiversity through landscape led masterplanning.

- 9.102 At the County Borough scale, ancient woodland is concentrated in the south of Caerphilly. In terms of priority habitats, these are largely concentrated in the north of the County Borough. Development is likely to be targeted to both these areas via the Principal Towns and Local Centres. However, there are smaller areas of priority habitat located throughout Caerphilly.
- 9.103 All options have the potential to result in adverse effects on biodiversity through the loss of greenfield land and priority habitats. Habitat fragmentation is a key issue for the County Borough; for example, fragmentation of hedgerows caused by development and canalised streams and rivers. As the Preferred Strategy promotes growth across the entire County Borough, there is the potential for habitat loss and fragmentation across a wide area, which could lead to negative effects.
- 9.104 Policy PS9 (Green and Blue Infrastructure) seeks to address potential negative effects in this respect, requiring that all development proposals must protect, maintain and enhance green and blue infrastructure assets by promoting a range of key functions, including biodiversity, ecosystems and habitats. Furthermore, Policy PS6 (Climate Change) outlines that development proposals should promote resilience by maximising the opportunities for enhancing green infrastructure as part of the design of the development. Similarly, Policy PS8 (Placemaking Principles) outlines that development proposals should integrate green infrastructure, informed by the Council's Green Infrastructure Assessment. The Pre-Deposit Plan is therefore considered to perform positively in terms of meeting the ISA objective to 'protect and enhance ecological networks, including those that cross administrative boundaries'.

Summary appraisal of the Preferred Strategy

- 9.105 As only one strategic site has been spatially identified through the Preferred Strategy at this stage, it is difficult to draw any definitive conclusions in relation to the nature and significance of effects on this ISA topic. Nevertheless, given its proximity to nationally designated sites Penllwyn Grasslands SSSI and Memorial Park Meadows Pontllanfraith SSSI, as well as locally important site Maesycwmmmer Meadows SINC, including ancient woodland, the strategic site at Maesycwmmmer has potential to lead to negative effects regarding biodiversity. However, landscape led design in the masterplanning stage has the potential to mitigate any negative effects, with potential to lead to positive effects as a result of improved connectivity.
- 9.106 Furthermore, by directing growth across the entire County Borough, the Preferred Strategy could result in large-scale habitat fragmentation and loss of priority habitats and/ or species, though development will be targeted towards the larger settlements. However, there is also potential for the Preferred Strategy to protect and enhance the green and blue infrastructure network

throughout the County Borough. Moreover, given the biodiversity duty set out in the Environment (Wales) Act 2016, there is also potential for the Preferred Strategy to strengthen existing wildlife corridors. In this respect, the Preferred Strategy has the potential to lead to both positive and negative effects, resulting in a degree of uncertainty. This is strengthened by core policies within the Pre-Deposit Plan which seek to protect and enhance Caerphilly's green and blue infrastructure.

- 9.107 Overall, taking the above into account, **uncertainty** is noted at this stage, particularly as the nature and significance of effects are highly dependent on the precise location and scale of growth across the County Borough.

Appraisal of cumulative effects

- 9.108 Development proposed through the Preferred Strategy has the potential to interact with growth proposed in neighbouring local authority areas and lead to cumulative effects on biodiversity and geodiversity. As the LDPs of surrounding local authority areas give consideration to biodiversity and geodiversity, including how they seek to protect and enhance it, there is potential for positive cumulative effects to arise, especially given the biodiversity duty.
- 9.109 Moving forward, a Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) will be carried out for the Deposit Plan to address the likelihood of adverse effects on the integrity of any European designated sites as a result of development proposed. Several European sites exist in the local authority areas that border Caerphilly; these include Usk Bat Sites SAC in Blaenau Gwent, the Brecon Beacons SAC in the Brecon Beacons National Park, the Cardiff Beech Woods SAC in Cardiff, the River Usk SAC in Newport, and the Severn Estuary SAC/ SPA/ Ramsar site which covers both Cardiff and Newport, but mostly the latter. In this respect, these sites, in addition to the Aberbargoed Grasslands in Caerphilly, will likely be considered through HRA screening, to determine if the 2RLDP could significantly harm a site's designated features.
- 9.110 In this respect, it will be important for local planning authorities and stakeholders, such as Natural Resources Wales and Natural England, to work closely to identify potential cross-boundary issues and opportunities, and seek to protect and enhance sites for biodiversity, as well as creating and enhancing ecological corridors / green infrastructure networks. Moreover, where possible, any strategic opportunities to deliver biodiversity net gain should be explored.

Historic environment

Appraisal of the Preferred Strategy

- 9.111 There are 411 listed buildings in the County Borough, including two Grade I, 31 Grade II* and 378 Grade II listed buildings. In addition to this, there are 47 scheduled monuments, four historic parks and gardens, and 16 conservation areas. These designated heritage assets are distributed throughout the County Borough and are largely located in the Principal and Local Centres, which are a focus for development. The Preferred Strategy has sought to outline the importance of the existing historic built environment and has noted

that adaptive re-use, rehabilitation, and regeneration should be promoted, specifically in the Principal and Local Centres. It should, therefore, prioritise the potential for town centre regeneration and as such these heritage assets should play a positive role.. However, the design/ layout of a development can strongly influence how it impacts surrounding heritage assets, and in this respect, uncertainty is noted at this stage.

- 9.112 It is worth noting that development also has the potential to deliver neutral/ positive effects by positively contributing to an area's character or appearance.
- 9.113 Regarding the strategic site at Maesycwmmmer, the south eastern extent of the site is near to 'Stable range at Tyle-gwyn', and 'Tyle-gwyn', two Grade II listed buildings. In addition to this, the eastern extent of the site is near 'Heather Cottage', 'Siloh Presbyterian Church' and 'Pair of chest tombs at Siloh Presbyterian Church'; all also Grade II listed buildings. In Maesycwmmmer itself, located to the north west of the site, is 'Tabor United Reformed Church', a Grade II* listed building. However, the impact of the proposed development will be primarily in terms of visual amenity from the listed buildings at Gelligroes, with the Siloh Presbyterian Church and Heather Cottage having the greatest impact. This will be reduced due to the proposed location of development and the natural landscape separating the boundary between Gelligroes and the proposed site. 'Tabor United Reformed Church', 'Stable range at Tyle-gwyn' and 'Tyle-gwyn' are removed from the proposed development courtesy of the geography of the landscape between the proposed development and the listed buildings.
- 9.114 Whilst the Council has highlighted that there is no overriding objection in principle to development at the site, any proposal would need to take due care and consideration of the current policy and design guidance in relation to the historic environment. It is considered that high quality masterplanning would provide an opportunity to reinforce or create a positive sense of place and local distinctiveness through design that respects the natural and historic character of the area. This has the potential to preclude development having an adverse impact upon the setting of assets.
- 9.115 In this respect, the key issues section of the Pre-Deposit Plan outlines that the 2RLDP should consider new development within the context of the heritage assets that exist within the County Borough, promote resilience and adaptation of heritage assets, maximise opportunities for adaptive reuse of heritage assets, reinforce the historic environment through placemaking, and enhance heritage tourism.
- 9.116 Subsequently, an aim of the Pre-Deposit Plan is to *“facilitate the protection, regeneration and enhancement of the historic fabric of the County Borough for the benefit its rich culture and diversity brings to the communities in the County Borough”*.
- 9.117 Following on from this are two objectives; the first seeks to *“protect, conserve, and increase the value of the historic environment by promoting heritage as an asset and encouraging adaptive reuse, sustainability, placemaking and regeneration”*, whilst the second seeks to *“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”.

- 9.118 Also of relevance to the historic environment is Policy PS11 (Managing Tourism Growth). This policy seeks to expand and enhance the tourism potential of the County Borough through the protection and enhancement of Caerphilly’s natural and historic assets that give it its unique identity. This presents opportunities to improve access to, and understanding of, heritage assets as tourism attractions, with potential to lead to positive effects.
- 9.119 The Pre-Deposit Plans seeks to address the ISA objective to ‘conserve and enhance the significance of buildings and structures of architectural or historic interest, both designated and non-designated, and their setting’. While the historic environment is only addressed in the policy framework of the Preferred Strategy in the context of tourism (though placemaking is also directly referred to in the strategic policies), it is set out as a more general consideration within the key aims and objectives underpinning the 2RLDP, thereby providing scope for policy formulation concerning the historic environment in terms of the Deposit Plan. This is particularly important given the constraints associated with the strategic site, and the issue of mitigation in relation to the setting of nearby heritage assets. A conservation strategy is currently being prepared that will inform the Deposit Plan as it relates to the promotion, retention, development and integration of the historic environment.

Summary appraisal of the Preferred Strategy

- 9.120 As only one strategic site has been identified at this stage, it is difficult to predict or draw any definitive conclusions with regards to the nature and significance of effects that are likely to arise in relation to the historic environment ISA topic. However, as there are numerous designated heritage assets within and surrounding the Principal and Local Centres, where most growth is being directed, there is potential for impacts on sensitive assets, including their settings. Nevertheless, the Preferred Strategy notes the role of the re-use and rehabilitation of the historic environment in relation to town centre redevelopment. Ultimately, the historic environment will need to be considered through the Council’s candidate site appraisal process and inform the allocation of sites in the Deposit Plan.
- 9.121 At present, policies that seek to protect and enhance the historic environment are limited, although it is set out as a more general consideration within the key aims and objectives underpinning the 2RLDP, thereby providing scope for policy formulation in terms of the Deposit Plan.
- 9.122 Until the exact location of development is clearly defined, and the 2RDLP policy framework has been established, effects on the historic environment remain **uncertain**.

Appraisal of cumulative effects

- 9.123 Development proposed through the Preferred Strategy has the potential to interact with development proposed through other plans and lead to cumulative effects on the historic environment. Interactions of greatest significance are likely to be those plans, programmes and projects that impact upon the Blaenavon Industrial Landscape World Heritage Site (WHS), which

is located in Torfaen (and along its boundary with Blaenau Gwent), to the north east of Caerphilly. In this respect, growth proposed through the Preferred Strategy alongside growth proposed through the Torfaen and Blaenau Gwent LDPs has the potential to cumulatively affect the sensitive historic site and its setting. It is recognised, however, that all LDPs will include policies which seek to protect and enhance the historic environment, in line with higher level policy requirements.

- 9.124 The Blaenavon Industrial Landscape WHS Management Plan²³ seeks to “*deliver well-being benefits through heritage management and heritage-led regeneration*”. The management plan identifies that Blaenavon has “*enjoyed a successful period of heritage-led urban and environmental regeneration*”, which has benefitted the historic landscape, delivering substantial improvements and promoting continued inward investment. In this respect, growth around the WHS has the potential to support regeneration and townscape improvements that continue to protect and enhance the designated area and its wider setting.
- 9.125 It will be important for local planning authorities and stakeholders, such as Cadw, to work closely to identify potential cross-boundary heritage issues, protecting and enhancing designated and non-designated heritage assets, particularly those that are at risk. Moreover, where possible, any strategic opportunities to deliver heritage-led regeneration, for example in line with the WHS Management Plan, should be explored.

Landscape

Appraisal of the Preferred Strategy

- 9.126 Caerphilly has a rich and diverse landscape, with the south eastern part of the County Borough falling within the Cardiff, Barry and Newport National Character Area (NCA), and the remaining part of the County Borough falling within the South Wales Valleys NCA.
- 9.127 There are currently five Special Landscape Areas (SLAs) in Caerphilly mainly, concentrated in the south and west of the County Borough. In this respect, growth delivered through the Preferred Strategy has the potential to impact these SLAs to some degree as it directs some growth to the Principal and Local Centres of the Caerphilly Basin and Mid Valleys. In addition to this, there are several Visually Important Local Landscapes (VILLs) throughout the County Borough. These include the Northern Rhymney Valley and Manmoel, located in the north of the County Borough, Abercarn, located in the east, and Rudry, located in the south. In this respect, growth through the Preferred Strategy also has potential to impact these VILLs to some degree as development is distributed across Caerphilly.
- 9.128 Regarding the strategic site at Maesycwmmmer, the site covers an SLA which spans the open landscape between Maesycwmmmer and Bedwas/ Machen in the south/ south east. Moreover, the site is very large and represents a significant intrusion into the landscape setting of Maesycwmmmer. The hillside is very prominent from the wide area, particularly from the A469 dual

²³ Chris Blandford Associates (2018): ‘Blaenavon Industrial Landscape World Heritage Site Management Plan 2018-2023’, [online] available to access via [this link](#)

carriageway. Given the size of the site and the designation present, development would likely lead to significant negative effects, including the loss of the rural character of the area, as well as key views.

- 9.129 Another consideration is the risk of coalescence, or at least loss of a robust landscape gap between Maesycwmmmer and The Bryn, Pontllanfraith, which are approximately 600 metres apart. The potential loss of settlement identity and distinctive settlement pattern again has the potential for significant negative effects on the landscape.
- 9.130 In addition to this, there are prominent landscape features, including hedgerows, hedgerow trees, individual trees, and woodland copses within the site that may be worthy of Tree Preservation Order (TPO) status. It is considered that an arboriculture survey would be required to determine age, condition and potential life span of all trees, which contribute to the character of the site. Nevertheless, development at this site also has the potential to improve tree coverage through high quality landscaping including new planting where appropriate.
- 9.131 The Brecon Beacons National Park is adjacent to the northern boundary of the County Borough. In relation to this, Planning Policy Wales²⁴ highlights that “...*planning authorities should give great weight to the statutory purposes of National Parks, which are to conserve and enhance their natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage, and to promote opportunities for public understanding and enjoyment of their special qualities*”. Notably, there is an established Local Development Plan (LDP)²⁵ in place for the Brecon Beacons National Park, which defines the National Park Authority’s approach for ensuring sustainable development is carried out. This is supported by the National Park Management Plan 2022-2027, which sets out objectives and policies to guide the implementation of the National Park’s purposes and duty.²⁶ Whilst protection is provided at the higher level, given the level of growth proposed, it is considered that the delivery of the Preferred Strategy has the potential to adversely impact upon the special landscape features, character, and setting of the National Park. Notably, there is a level of uncertainty given that the location of site allocations, except for the strategic site, is currently unknown, as are the mitigation measures that will likely be included.
- 9.132 Landscape features heavily in the key issues section of the Pre-Deposit Plan. Key issue EN4 outlines that the 2RLDP will need to protect and enhance areas of high landscape value, whilst key issue EN8 states that new development should be considered within the context of areas of landscape sensitivity. In addition to this, key objective 2 of the Pre-Deposit Plan seeks to “*manage, preserve, and enhance the quality of valuable open space and landscape and safeguard them from inappropriate forms of development*”.
- 9.133 In terms of relevant policy provision with the 2RLDP, Policy PS9 (Green and Blue Infrastructure) outlines that all development proposals must protect, maintain and enhance green and blue infrastructure assets. This will be

²⁴ Welsh Government (2021): ‘Planning Policy Wales – Edition 11’, [online] available to access via [this link](#)

²⁵ Brecon Beacons National Park Authority (2013): ‘Brecon Beacons National Park Local Development Plan’, [online] available to access via [this link](#)

²⁶ Brecon Beacons National Park (2022) Brecon Beacons National Park Management Plan Review [online] available to access via [this link](#)

achieved by promoting a range of key functions, including landscape, quality of place and greenspace provision. Notably, a green infrastructure led approach to the design of new development has the potential to enhance the character and identity of Caerphilly's settlements and the wider countryside. This in turn is likely to support healthy lifestyles, creating attractive, safe and accessible places. However, it is recognised that the achievement of this will depend largely upon identifying and understanding the local characteristics which are distinctive to the area.

- 9.134 The Pre-Deposit Plan seeks to address the ISA objective to 'ensure that Caerphilly's most valuable landscapes, townscapes and seascapes are conserved and enhanced'. Whilst it achieves this in part, the proposed delivery of 1,200 homes on greenfield land through the strategic site has the potential to lead to the deterioration of the landscape here if suitable mitigation measures are not adopted.

Summary appraisal of the Preferred Strategy

- 9.135 The Preferred Strategy distributes growth across the County Borough, and in this respect, it has significant potential to impact valued landscape features across Caerphilly. Specifically, the Preferred Strategy has the potential to lead to negative effects on SLAs, VILLS, TPOs and the Brecon Beacons National Park, which is adjacent to the northern boundary of Caerphilly. Specifically, the strategic site at Maesycwmmmer covers an SLA and has the potential to lead to the coalescence of Maesycwmmmer and The Bryn, Pontllanfraith, in addition to the loss of key landscape features.
- 9.136 In response to this, the aims and objectives of the Pre-Deposit Plan, as well as specific policies, seek to ensure that valued landscape features are protected from development, and potentially enhanced through development. In doing so, the extent and significance of effects on the landscape as a result of growth have the potential to be mitigated.
- 9.137 As the strategic site delivers 1,200 homes on greenfield land, in an area covered by a SLA, the Preferred Strategy is predicted to lead to **significant negative effects** regarding the landscape ISA topic. However, it is noted that as the precise location and scale of development is currently unknown, there is a degree of uncertainty.

Appraisal of cumulative effects

- 9.138 Development proposed through the Preferred Strategy has the potential to interact with and have cumulative effects on landscape with growth proposed in neighbouring local authority areas, especially, but not limited to, the Brecon Beacons National Park. However, as all of the LDPs of the neighbouring local authority areas include policies which seek to protect and enhance the landscape, negative cumulative effects should be minimised.
- 9.139 In terms of the National Park, the Brecon Beacons National Park Local Plan was adopted in 2013; no significant growth is proposed during the plan period or in close proximity to the Caerphilly administrative boundary. A review of the LDP is currently being carried out and a Preferred Strategy Document was published for consultation in July 2019. The level of growth proposed in the Preferred Strategy document (approximately 1,500 homes) and where it is

being focussed (primarily at Brecon, Crickhowell, Hay-on-Wye and Talgarth) during the plan period is not likely to result in any significant interactions with development being proposed or likely to come forward through the 2RLDP. However, it is noted that the Covid-19 pandemic delayed the production of the Deposit Plan in 2020, and instead an additional stage of stakeholder engagement has been set out to enable the authority to collaboratively reassess and rework the Preferred Strategy in light of shifting policy.²⁷

- 9.140 When assessing potential cumulative effects of development through the Preferred Strategy on the Brecon Beacons National Park, consideration should be given to the protections provided by the National Park's adopted Management Plan (2015)²⁸, as well as the issues and objectives of the emerging Management Plan (2021)²⁹. In addition to national policy requirements, the current Management Plan sets out, under six themes, policies and priorities for managing change in the National Park.
- 9.141 Ultimately, the nature and significance of cumulative effects will be dependent on the precise location of development, as well as the design/ layout of development and the implementation of mitigation measures. It will be important for local planning authorities to work closely with each other, as well as Natural Resources Wales, to try and plan at an appropriate scale to minimise potential impacts on the wider landscape, as well as identify opportunities to deliver improvements to the landscape where possible.

Climate change (mitigation and adaptation)

Appraisal of the Preferred Strategy

- 9.142 The climate change ISA objectives seek to both mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change by increasing resilience, minimising flood risk, and reducing energy consumption and the need to travel, amongst other things.
- 9.143 The distribution of growth proposed by the Preferred Strategy has potential to perform either positively or negatively in relation to climate change adaptation as the Strategy is not fully supported at this stage by an allocation of specific sites, which means that detailed conclusions are challenging as flood risk varies across the County Borough. Nevertheless, areas at an increased risk of flooding are largely concentrated in the centre and south of the County Borough, including Caerphilly town, Bargoed, Blackwood, Ystrad Mynach, Abercarn and Risca. Notably, these areas appear to be located along the Rhymney, Ebbw and Sirhowy Rivers. In this respect, both fluvial and surface water flood risk is largely confined to the river corridors that pass through the County Borough from north to south.
- 9.144 The strategic site at Maesycwmmmer is within Flood Zone 1, with a very low chance of flooding. In terms of surface water flood risk, data shows that parts of the site are at high risk of surface water flooding, which appear to be drains flowing into the Rhymney River to the west and the Sirhowy River to the east.

²⁷ Brecon Beacon National Park Authority (2020): 'Planning for the Brecon Beacons post Covid-19 recovery', [online] available to access via [this link](#)

²⁸ Brecon Beacons National Park Authority (2015): 'A Management Plan for the Brecon Beacons National Park 2015-2020', [online] available to access via [this link](#)

²⁹ Brecon Beacons National Park Authority (2021): 'National Park Management Plan 2021: Issues, Vision and Objectives', [online] available to access via [this link](#)

However, these are relatively isolated areas that should be easily avoided and can be mitigated through sustainable drainage systems (SuDS).

- 9.145 In terms of climate change mitigation, the Preferred Strategy performs variably. There is potential to reduce carbon emissions by focusing growth at the Principal and Local Centres, which have strong existing active/ public transport links. In doing so, the Preferred Strategy ensures that residents will be able to access regional employment hubs, particularly in Caerphilly, Cardiff and Newport, via sustainable modes of transport. However, in the absence of specific site details, with the exception of the strategic site, it is challenging to draw detailed conclusions in terms of the Preferred Strategy's ability to contribute towards climate change mitigation.
- 9.146 The strategic site at Maesycwmmer is situated in a sustainable location and will maximise opportunities for active/ public transport. As a larger scheme, the strategic site will be associated with a greater likelihood of delivering measures that ultimately support minimisation of per capita greenhouse gas emissions from the built environment. The scale of development could deliver decentralised heat/ power generation from renewable or low carbon sources and will likely deliver development to high standards of sustainable design and construction, in line with the climate change objectives of the 2RLDP.
- 9.147 The Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013³⁰ requires all local authorities in Wales to deliver improvements to their network of active travel routes and facilities. Caerphilly's PRoW network is extensive, with a high concentration of public footpaths in the northern, eastern and southern areas of the County Borough. Although these are largely concentrated in and around the Principal and Local Centres, they also extend out into the countryside and provide connections with neighbouring local authority areas. In terms of cycle routes, there are several national cycle routes (NCN) in Caerphilly. In this respect, the Preferred Strategy performs well in terms of encouraging zero-carbon forms of transport.
- 9.148 The trend of increased home working, which started due to the Covid-19 pandemic, is anticipated to continue in the long-term. In accordance with the Welsh Government's target of 30% of people working from or near home, the Preferred Strategy delivers growth in areas which are most likely to support high levels of self-containment, by providing employment, services and facilities within the Principal and Local Centres. This, amongst other requirements, will contribute positively towards reducing out-commuting, therefore reducing the carbon emissions associated with commuting, particularly by private car.
- 9.149 Of utmost relevance to this ISA topic is Policy PS6 (Climate Change), which states that all development proposals must make a positive contribution towards addressing the causes of, and adapting to the impacts of, climate change. This will be achieved by demonstrating that the design of the development has taken account of a range of features, including resource efficiency and sustainable construction techniques, energy efficiency and renewable energy, sustainable transport, climate change resilience and mitigation, decarbonisation, flood risk, and green infrastructure.

³⁰ UK Government (2013): 'Active Travel (Wales) Act', [online] available to access via [this link](#)

9.150 In addition to this, the Council will support and promote schemes for the generation of energy from renewable and zero carbon sources, as outlined through Policy PS7 (Renewable Energy Generation). Moreover, Policy PS9 (Green and Blue Infrastructure) outlines that all development proposals must protect, maintain and enhance green and blue infrastructure assets, which will in part be achieved by the inclusion of water management techniques (i.e. embedding SuDS principles into development proposals from the outset).

Summary appraisal of the Preferred Strategy

9.151 Many of the Principal Centres (Bargoed, Blackwood, Ystrad Mynach, Risca/Pontymister and Caerphilly) have an element of fluvial and surface water flood risk by virtue of their riverside locations. Bargoed, Ystrad Mynach and Caerphilly are located along the Rhymney River, whilst Blackwood and Risca/Pontymister are located along the Sirhowy/ Ebbw River. In this sense, focussing most of the growth at these settlements could lead to development in areas of risk. However, without specific site allocations, with the exception of the strategic site, it is challenging to draw detailed conclusions in this regard. Nevertheless, it is important to draw attention to higher level planning policy and guidance such as Planning Policy Wales and Technical Advice Note 15, which requires development to be directed away from the highest risk areas. In this context, it is reasonable to conclude that the Preferred Strategy will likely direct growth towards sites with a low flood risk, particularly in the context of Policy PS6 (Climate Change), which raises the issue of flood risk. Hence, **neutral effects** are anticipated in relation to climate change adaptation.

9.152 Regarding climate change mitigation, the distribution of growth to the Principal and Local Centres could theoretically maximise the potential to seek strategic scale opportunities for delivering innovative renewable energy generation, such as combined heat and power (CHP). This is particularly true for the strategic site at Maesycwmmmer, which will deliver 1,200 homes alongside significant infrastructure improvements. However, concerning the remaining growth, it is not clear whether there will be meaningful opportunities to seek such schemes. This will likely become clearer once a more definitive position is known in relation to the strategic growth areas and specific site allocations. Hence, **uncertain effects** are also anticipated in relation to climate change mitigation.

Appraisal of cumulative effects

9.153 In terms of climate change adaptation, there does not appear to be notable potential for negative cumulative effects from development in Caerphilly in combination with development in neighbouring local authority areas. Significant areas of fluvial flood risk permeate the County Borough, in alignment with the major watercourses which flow to the Severn Estuary to the south. However, there is a presumption within Planning Policy Wales against development in high-risk flood zones, which is augmented by Technical Advice Note 15 (TAN15). This will help ensure that development in Caerphilly will be part of a regional and national picture of development which is directed away from areas at high risk of flooding. Hence, cumulative effects from the Preferred Strategy in combination with surrounding authorities are likely to be neutral.

- 9.154 In terms of climate change mitigation, there is greater potential for cumulative effects. As noted in the discussions of the air quality and transport and movement ISA topics, positive cumulative effects are anticipated from the proposed South East Metro throughout the CCR. This includes enhanced rail connectivity between Rhymney and Cardiff, and bus rapid transit link servicing the central region of Caerphilly. This will likely contribute to a modal shift away from the private car and towards more sustainable modes of transport. However, regional growth along key strategic highways, such as the A470, A465, A4042 and M4, which enclose Caerphilly, could introduce additional road users to the County Borough and wider region. In this respect, there is also potential for negative cumulative effects to arise across the region.
- 9.155 The CCR City Deal outlines an ambition for the ten authorities in the region to come together to deliver strategic solutions, including the generation and use of renewable energy. The City Deal identifies that regional development will present opportunities to deliver “*renewable energy-led regeneration and housing programmes*”. In this context, there is potential for positive cumulative effects, particularly as larger-scale development offers a greater opportunity to incorporate low carbon energy.

10. Summary appraisal findings for the Preferred Strategy

Introduction

10.1 This chapter provides a summary of the detailed appraisal findings for the Preferred Strategy set out in the preceding chapter.

Summary appraisal findings

- 10.2 The Preferred Strategy has the potential to lead to **significant long-term positive effects** in relation to the economy and employment, and population ISA topics, whilst **long-term positive effects** are predicted for the health and wellbeing and transport and movement ISA topics. Effects of significance are considered likely for the prior two ISA topics as the Preferred strategy delivers a level of growth which exceeds the identified housing and employment need. Growth is delivered across the entire County Borough, ensuring that residents in all areas of Caerphilly benefit from the positive contributions of growth. By locating growth to the Principal and Local Centres, which are also key transport nodes, self-containment is increased, and sustainable modes of transport are available to those residents who still need to commute to access employment opportunities. In this respect, positive effects are also anticipated for transport and movement, as well as health and wellbeing due to facilitation of active travel. However, effects of significance are not anticipated for these two ISA topics as growth still has the potential to lead to increased congestion, as a result of an increased number of residents/ private cars, and in terms of health and wellbeing, further information concerning the precise location of development is required before a conclusion on significance can be reached.
- 10.3 Minor positive effects are concluded for the equalities, diversity and social inclusion ISA topic, as details on some key aspects to tackling inequality remain uncertain. Moreover, further information concerning the precise location of development is required before a conclusion can be made.
- 10.4 **Uncertainty** is noted for the biodiversity and geodiversity, climate change (mitigation) and historic environment ISA topics. Regarding the first ISA topic, again, the proximity of sites to designated biodiversity sites and protected habitats/ species will be influential in determining the significance of effects. Similarly, the degree to which the Preferred Strategy contributes to climate change mitigation is largely related to the size and location of development sites.
- 10.5 Regarding the historic environment, whilst policies that seek to protect and where possible enhance the historic environment are currently limited, consideration of the historic environment is set out as a more general consideration within the key aims and objectives underpinning the 2RLDP, thereby providing scope for policy formulation in terms of the Deposit Plan. It is recognised that the precise location of development, and its proximity to heritage assets, is currently unknown, with the exception of the strategic site at Maescwmmmer, which has the potential to impact several listed buildings near its boundary. However, it is considered that any impact on visual amenity will

be reduced due to the natural landscape separating the boundary between the listed buildings in question and the proposed site. **Uncertainty** is therefore concluded at this stage, recognising that there is the potential for residual neutral effects overall if a robust policy framework is developed at the deposit stage.

- 10.6 Whilst uncertainty is noted for climate change mitigation, **neutral effects** are predicted concerning climate change adaptation. This is because higher tier planning policy and guidance via Planning Policy Wales and Technical Advice Note 15 (TAN15) requires development to be directed away from the highest risk areas. In this respect, it is reasonable to conclude that the Preferred Strategy will likely direct growth towards sites with a low flood risk. **Long-term negative effects** are predicted regarding the landscape ISA topic. Whilst it is considered likely that the Preferred Strategy will result in the loss of a significant portion of greenfield land, the exact extent of this is currently unknown given only one site has been allocated. Moreover, there are numerous valued landscape features throughout the County Borough, and in this respect, development is likely to impact their setting to some degree.
- 10.7 **Significant negative effects** are considered likely for the natural resources ISA topic given the level of growth proposed through the Preferred Strategy. Notably, this will result in the loss of a significant amount of greenfield land. However, a degree of uncertainty is noted given the proximity of site allocations to 'Coal Mining Development High Risk Areas' as only the strategic site's location is known at this stage. While there may be an impact on the extent of mineral safeguarding areas, additional resources are unlikely to be required as a result of the County Borough's surplus of existing permitted reserves of crushed rock, as set out by the Regional Technical Statement 2nd Review.
- 10.8 **Table 10.1** overleaf sets out a summary of the appraisal findings for the Preferred Strategy 'as a whole' against each ISA topic.

Table 10.1 Summary of appraisal findings

ISA topic	Commentary	Significant effects?
Economy and employment	The Preferred Strategy performs well regarding this ISA topic, as it supports the economic growth aspirations of the Council whilst taking advantage of opportunities arising from Caerphilly's strategic location. As a result, the Preferred Strategy will assist in the Covid-19 recovery, increasing economic activity and potentially reducing out-commuting. Despite this, the County Borough's proximity to both Cardiff and Newport will likely continue to influence commuting patterns given their strong employment bases. Nevertheless, emphasis will be placed on maintaining and enabling the sustainability improvements that have arisen due to the onset of the pandemic, including increased levels of home working, as a catalyst for economic recovery and prosperity.	Yes – positive
Population and communities	The Preferred Strategy addresses several of the Council's key aims by delivering a mix of types and tenures of homes, including affordable and market housing, in sustainable locations across the County Borough. This includes the needs of gypsies and travellers. The Preferred Strategy also addresses the impacts of the pandemic, including the need to assist in its recovery whilst maintaining and enabling the sustainable improvements that have arisen from the situation. One aspect of this is allowing residents to meet their needs locally through revitalised town centres and local employment opportunities. The importance of placemaking principles is raised through the policy framework, which will help deliver a rich mix of uses, walkable neighbourhoods, permeable streets, and integrated green infrastructure networks.	Yes – positive
Health and wellbeing	By creating and sustaining communities and facilitating accessible and healthy environments, the Preferred Strategy performs well regarding this ISA topic. This includes enhancements to active travel and green infrastructure networks, the protection of public green spaces, and increased accessibility to key health facilities such as GP surgeries, dentists, pharmacies and opticians. However, at this stage, it is not possible to conclude whether effects will be of significance, as with the exception of the strategic site, the precise location and scale of development is currently unknown, which will determine the full extent the Preferred Strategy will have on the overall health and wellbeing of residents throughout and beyond the plan period.	No, but potential for positive
Equalities, diversity and social inclusion	At this stage of plan preparation, details on some key aspects of tackling inequality remain uncertain, and as such, it is difficult to measure the potential effects of the Preferred Strategy on this ISA topic. Adding to this, the precise location and scale of development is currently unknown, and this will further influence the degree to which the Preferred Strategy influences equalities, diversity and social inclusion. Notably, this includes the location and nature of affordable housing, as well as the accessibility of development sites. However, given the proposed policy framework of the 2RLDP to date, and the delivery of the strategic site at Maesycwmmmer, minor positive effects are considered likely at this stage.	Yes – positive
Transport and movement	At the regional level, the Preferred Strategy takes advantage of opportunities arising from the CCR City Deal and the South Wales Metro, whilst at the local level it supports opportunities to enhance and extend the active travel network, placing walking and cycling at the top of its identified transport hierarchy. Moreover, by	No, but potential for positive

ISA topic	Commentary	Significant effects?
	directing growth to the Principal and Local Centres, which are home to sustainable transport nodes, the Preferred Strategy encourages development in the most sustainable locations, encouraging self-containment by allowing residents to access facilities and services, and employment opportunities, on their doorstep. Where this is not possible, residents will be able to access public transport networks with ease, allowing them to reach other parts of the County Borough and beyond to meet their needs.	
Natural resources (air, land, minerals and water)	While the Preferred Strategy will continue to safeguard known minerals resources, there may be an impact on their extent, although additional resources are unlikely to be required as a result of the County Borough's surplus of existing permitted reserves of crushed rock, as set out by the Regional Technical Statement 2 nd Review. Moreover, an increase in the population of Caerphilly also has the potential to worsen air quality due to increased congestion, although the policy framework supports a modal shift to active/ public transport. A key issue of concern regarding this ISA topic is the loss of greenfield land; however, this is largely unavoidable given the limited availability of brownfield land in Caerphilly. Whilst negative effects are predicted, given only one strategic site has been allocated at this stage, a degree of uncertainty is noted at this moment in time.	Yes – negative
Biodiversity and geodiversity	Several designated sites for biodiversity/ geodiversity exist within and near the County Borough. Whilst development has the potential to impact these sites, as only one strategic site has been identified through the Preferred Strategy at this stage, it is difficult to predict or draw any definitive conclusions in relation to the nature and significance of effects that are likely to arise in relation to this ISA topic. Nevertheless, it is recognised that by directing growth across the entire County Borough, the Preferred Strategy is more likely to result in large-scale habitat fragmentation and loss of priority habitats and/ or species. However, given the biodiversity duty, there is also potential for the Preferred Strategy to strengthen existing wildlife corridors. In this respect, there is potential for both positive and negative effects.	Uncertain
Historic environment	Numerous heritage assets can be found both within and near the County Borough. However, given the extent to which the historic environment impacts the setting of the County Borough, at present, policies that seek to protect and where possible enhance the historic environment are limited, although it is set out as a more general consideration within the key aims and objectives underpinning the 2RLDP, thereby providing scope for policy formulation in terms of the Deposit Plan.. In this respect, whilst uncertainty is noted at this stage due to only one strategic site being identified so far, there is potential for residual negative effects as a result of the policy framework of the 2RLDP although the Preferred Strategy notes the role of the re-use and rehabilitation of the historic environment in relation to town centre redevelopment.	No, but potential for negative
Landscape	Valued landscape features can be found across Caerphilly, which is largely due to the rural natural of the County Borough. Whilst there is the potential for the Preferred Strategy to impact the setting of these landscape features, leading to long-term negative effects, a degree of uncertainty is noted until the precise location and scale of development is known.	Yes – negative

ISA topic	Commentary	Significant effects?
Climate change (mitigation and adaptation)	<p>In terms of climate change adaptation, many of the Principal Centres have an element of fluvial and surface water flood risk by virtue of their riverside locations. In this sense, focussing growth on these locations could lead to development in areas of flood risk. However, without specific site allocations, except for the strategic site, it is challenging to draw detailed conclusions in this regard. Nevertheless, higher tier planning policy and guidance via Planning Policy Wales and Technical Advice Note 15 (TAN15) requires development to be directed away from the highest risk areas. In this context, it is reasonable to conclude that the Preferred Strategy will likely direct growth towards sites with a low flood risk, particularly in the context of Policy PS6 (Climate Change), which deals with this issue. Hence, neutral effects are anticipated in this respect.</p> <p>Regarding climate change mitigation, the distribution of growth to the Principal and Local Centres could maximise the potential to seek strategic scale opportunities for delivering innovative renewable energy generation. This is particularly true for the strategic site at Maesycwmmmer, which will deliver 1,200 homes alongside significant infrastructure improvements. However, concerning the remaining growth, it is not clear whether there will be meaningful opportunities to seek such schemes. This will likely become clearer once a more definitive position is known in relation to the strategic growth areas and specific site allocations. Hence, uncertain effects are also anticipated in relation to climate change mitigation.</p>	No/ Uncertain

Part 3: What happens next?

11. Introduction (to Part 3)

11.1 The aim of this chapter is to explain next steps in the plan-making/ ISA process as well as monitoring.

Next steps

11.2 This Initial SA Report will accompany the Preferred Strategy for public consultation from 19th October 2022 to 30th November 2022. Any comments received will be reviewed and then considered as part of the iterative plan-making and ISA process.

11.3 The representations received along with further evidence base work, including further ISA work, will inform the development of the Deposit Plan which is scheduled to be published for consultation in early 2023. An updated ISA Report will accompany the Deposit Plan for consultation.

Monitoring

11.4 Monitoring measures will be established within the next version of the ISA Report to address the potential significant effects associated with the Deposit version of the plan.

Appendices

Appendix A Regulatory requirements

As discussed in **Chapter 1** above, Schedule 2 of the Environmental Assessment of Plans (Wales) Regulations 2004 explains the information that must be contained in the ISA Report; however, interpretation of Schedule 2 is not straightforward. **Table A1** links the structure of this report to an interpretation of Schedule 2 requirements, whilst **Table A2** explains this interpretation.

Table A1 Questions answered by the SA Report, in accordance with an interpretation of regulatory requirements

	Questions answered	As per the regulations...the SA Report must include...
Introduction	What's the plan seeking to achieve?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes
	What's the SA scope?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relevant environmental protection objectives, established at international or national level Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance
	What's the sustainability 'context'?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including those relating to any areas of particular environmental importance
	What's the sustainability 'baseline'?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key environmental problems / issues and objectives that should be a focus of (i.e. provide a 'framework' for) assessment
Part 1	What are the key issues and objectives that should be a focus?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key environmental problems / issues and objectives that should be a focus of (i.e. provide a 'framework' for) assessment
Part 1	What has plan-making / SA involved up to this point?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outline reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with (and thus an explanation of the 'reasonableness' of the approach) The likely significant effects associated with alternatives Outline reasons for selecting the preferred approach in-light of alternatives assessment / a description of how environmental objectives and considerations are reflected in the Plan
Part 2	What are the SA findings at this current stage?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The likely significant effects associated with the Submission Plan The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and offset any significant adverse effects of implementing the Submission Plan
Part 3	What happens next?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A description of the monitoring measures envisaged

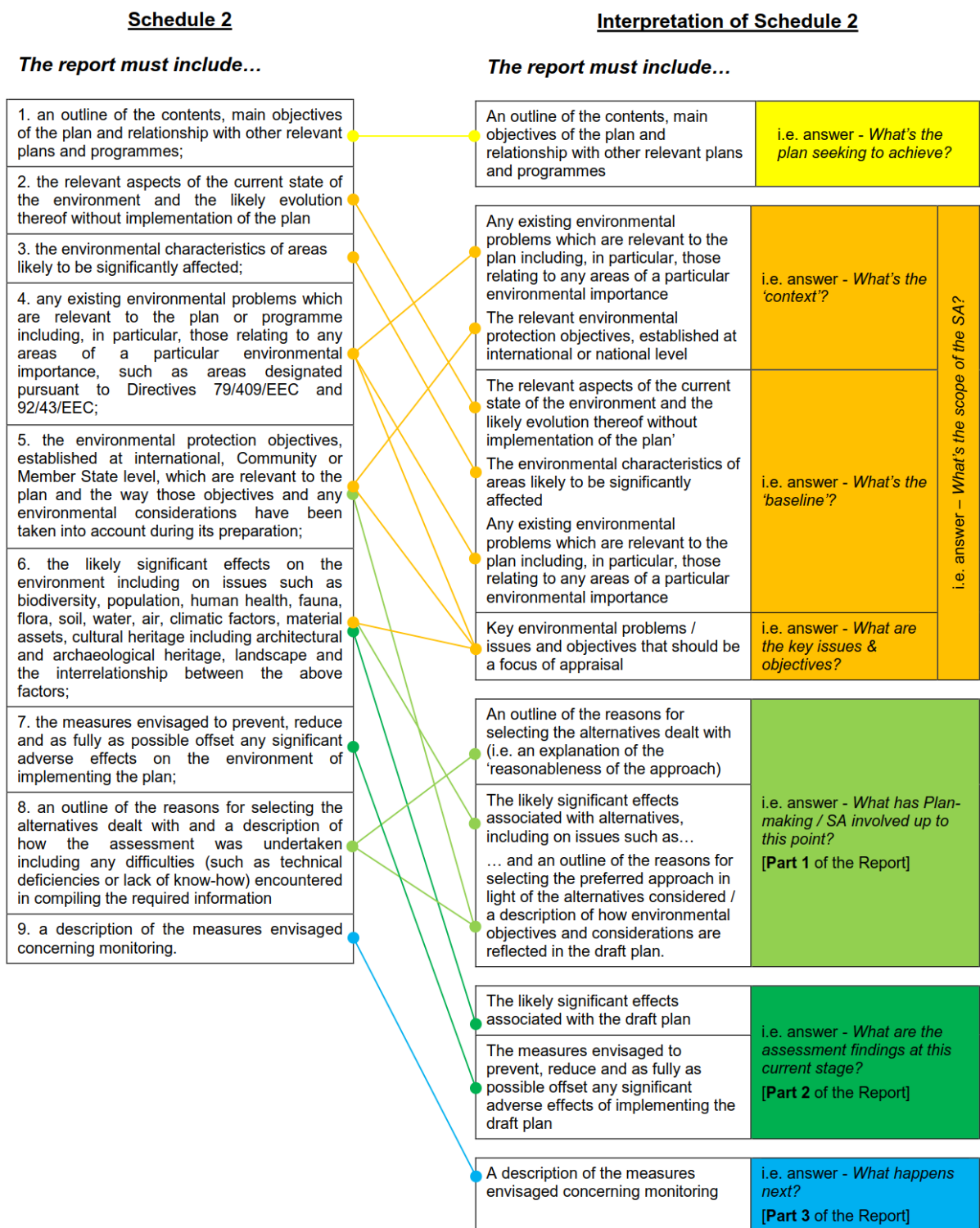


Figure A1 Questions answered by the SA Report, in accordance with regulatory requirements

Whilst **Table A1** and **Figure A1** signpost broadly how/ where this report presents the information required of the ISA Report by the Regulations, as a supplement it is also helpful to present a discussion of more precisely how/where regulatory requirements are met - see **Table A2**.

Table A2 'Checklist' of how (throughout the ISA process) and where (within this report) regulatory requirements have been, are and will be met

Regulatory requirement	Discussion of how requirement is met
Schedule 2 of the regulations lists the information to be provided within the ISA Report	
1. An outline of the contents, main objectives of the plan or programme, and relationship with other relevant plans and programmes;	Chapter 2 ('What's the Preferred Strategy seeking to achieve?') presents this information. The relationship with other plans and programmes is also available to view separately via CCBC. This is given the iterative nature of the process, and these documents will be updated as necessary.
2. The relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan or programme;	These matters were considered in detail at the scoping stage, which included consultation on a Scoping Report published in 2022.
3. The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected;	The outcome of scoping was an 'ISA Framework', and this is presented within Chapter 3 ('What's the scope of the SA').
4. Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan or programme including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance, such as areas designated pursuant to Directives 79/409/EEC and 92/43/EEC.;	More detailed messages from the Scoping Report - i.e. messages established through context and baseline review - are available to view separately via CCBC. This is given the iterative nature of the process, and these documents will be updated as necessary.
5. The environmental protection, objectives, established at international, Community or national level, which are relevant to the plan or programme and the way those objectives and any environmental, considerations have been considered during its preparation;	The Scoping Report (2022) presents a detailed context review and explains how key messages from the context review (and baseline review) were then refined in order to establish an 'ISA framework'. The context review informed the development of the ISA framework and topics, presented in Chapter 3, which provide a methodological 'framework' for appraisal. With regards to explaining "how... considerations have been taken into account" - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapters 5 explains how reasonable alternatives were established in-light of earlier consultation and evidence. • Chapter 6 sets out the summary findings of the appraisal of the reasonable alternatives, with the detailed appraisal provided in Appendix II. • Chapter 7 explains the Council's 'reasons for supporting the preferred approach', i.e. explains how/why the preferred approach is justified in-light of alternatives appraisal (and other factors). • Chapters 9 and 10 sets out the findings of the appraisal of the Preferred Strategy.

<p>6. The likely significant effects on the environment, including on issues such as biodiversity, population, human health, fauna, flora, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets, cultural heritage including architectural and archaeological heritage, landscape and the interrelationship between the above factors. (Footnote: These effects should include secondary, cumulative, synergistic, short, medium and long-term permanent and temporary, positive and negative effects);</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 6 sets out the summary findings of the appraisal of the reasonable alternatives at this stage with the detailed appraisal provided in Appendix II. • Chapters 9 presents the draft plan appraisal, and the summary findings are provided in Chapter 10. <p>As explained within the various methodology sections, as part of appraisal work, consideration has been given to the ISA scope, and the need to consider the potential for various effect characteristics/ dimensions.</p>
<p>7. The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment of implementing the plan or programme;</p>	<p>Where necessary, the appraisal of the alternatives (Appendix II and Chapter 6) and the Preferred Strategy (Chapters 9 and 10) identify avoidance and/ or mitigation measures to reduce the significance of residual negative effects or to enhance residual positive effects. These will be explored further through the ISA of candidate sites and the Deposit Plan.</p>
<p>8. An outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with, and a description of how the assessment was undertaken including any difficulties (such as technical deficiencies or lack of know-how) encountered in compiling the required information;</p>	<p>Chapter 7 explains the Council's 'reasons for selecting the preferred option' (in light of alternatives appraisal). Methodology is discussed at various places, ahead of presenting appraisal findings, and limitations/ assumptions are also discussed as part of appraisal narratives.</p>
<p>9. Description of measures envisaged concerning monitoring in accordance with Art. 10;</p>	<p>As explained in Chapter 13, monitoring measures will be set out in the ISA Report that accompanies the Deposit Plan.</p>
<p>10.A non-technical summary of the information provided under the above headings</p>	<p>The NTS is provided in a separate document.</p>
<p>The ISA Report must be published alongside the Draft Plan, in accordance with the following regulations</p>	
<p>Authorities with environmental responsibility and the public, shall be given an early and effective opportunity within appropriate time frames to express their opinion on the Draft Plan or programme and the accompanying environmental report before the adoption of the plan or programme (Art. 6.1, 6.2)</p>	<p>At the current time, this ISA Report is published alongside the Preferred Strategy Document so that representations might be made ahead of the Deposit stage.</p>
<p>The ISA Report must be considered, alongside consultation responses, when finalising the plan.</p>	
<p>The environmental report prepared pursuant to Article 5, the opinions expressed pursuant to Article 6 and the results of any transboundary consultations entered into pursuant to Article 7 shall be considered during the preparation of the plan or programme and before its adoption or submission to the legislative procedure.</p>	<p>The Council has considered the Initial ISA Report when finalising the Preferred Strategy for publication. Further SA work will be carried out to inform the development of the Deposit Plan.</p>

Appendix B Appraisal of Strategic Options

Introduction

Each of the strategic options and growth areas identified in **Chapter 5** were subject to a comparative appraisal under each ISA topic and the detailed findings are presented in this Appendix.

Method

For each of the strategic options, the assessment examines likely significant effects on the baseline, drawing on the sustainability objectives and topics identified through scoping (see **Table 3.1** in the main report) as a methodological framework.

Every effort is made to predict effects accurately; however, this is inherently challenging given the high-level nature of the options under consideration. The ability to predict effects accurately is also limited by understanding of the baseline (now and in the future under a 'no plan' scenario). In light of this, there is a need to make considerable assumptions regarding how scenarios will be implemented 'on the ground' and what the effect on particular receptors would be. Where there is a need to rely on assumptions in order to reach a conclusion on a 'significant effect' this is made explicit in the appraisal text.

It is important to note that effects are predicted considering the criteria presented within Regulations. So, for example, account is taken of the duration, frequency and reversibility of effects. Cumulative effects are also considered (i.e. effects of the plan in combination with the effects of other planned or on-going activity that are outside the control of Caerphilly County Borough Council).

Based on the evidence available a judgement is made if there is likely to be a significant effect. Where it is not possible to predict likely significant effects on the basis of reasonable assumptions, efforts are made to comment on the relative merits of the alternatives in more general terms and to indicate a rank of preference. The number indicates the rank and does not have any bearing on likely significant effects. This is helpful, as it enables a distinction to be made between the alternatives even where it is not possible to distinguish between them in terms of 'significant effects'. For example, if an option is ranked as 1 then it is judged to perform better against that ISA topic compared to an option that is ranked 2.

Appraisal of options for the level of growth

A total of 11 growth options were considered for the 2RLDP. The expectation arising from Caerphilly's inclusion within Future Wales's National Growth Area designation and the economic aspiration of CCR mean that any strategy proposed for 2RLDP will need to ensure a viable and sustainable economic population and demonstrate growth. Due to this, only four of the options have been considered for the 2RLDP strategy, which are presented in **Table B.1** overleaf.

Table B.1 Growth options

Scenarios (incorporation membership rate adjustments and adjusted for latest MYEs)	Population Change 2020 to 2035	% Population Change 2020 to 2035	HH Change 2020 to 2035	% HH Change 2020 to 2035	Total Dwellings	Dwellings per annum	Change in working age population
A WG 2018-based principal projection	1,881	1.0	2,862	3.7	2,966	198	-2,868
H Continuation of adopted LDP	15,058	8.3	8,323	10.8	8,622	575	7,668
I Long-term housebuilding rates	7,990	4.4	5,399	7.0	5,595	373	1,944
J CCR growth in working age population	10,685	5.9	6,513	8.4	6,750	450	4,126

A comparative appraisal of the options has been carried out under each ISA topic and is presented in the tables below.

ISA topic: Economy and employment

Options	Option A – WG 2018-based principal projection	Option H – Continuation of adopted LDP	Option I – Long-term housebuilding rates	Option J – CCR growth in working age population
Rank	3	1	2	1
Significant effect?	Yes – negative	Yes – positive	No	Yes – positive
Discussion	<p>Option A performs notably worse when compared to the other options, as this option would likely result in a decline in the working age population over the plan period, which will not support economic growth. In addition to this, Option A would likely result in an increase in the number of elderly people over the plan period, which is likely to exacerbate this issue as this age group are unlikely to be working. Due to this, significant negative effects are considered likely under Option A.</p> <p>Options I, J and H seek to deliver gradually increasing levels of economic growth through an increase in the working age population over the plan period. As a result, these options are expected to perform significantly better than Option A. The housing growth proposed through Options I, J and H, alongside economic development, seeks to address potential demographic imbalances with growth in the working age population. All three options are considered likely to provide opportunities to encourage a more diverse and vibrant economy, supporting and encouraging local businesses and inward investment. In addition to this, these options provide greater opportunities associated with the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal and the South East Wales Metro. Considering the increased growth from Options H and J, and its associated benefits for the economy and employment, significant positive effects are anticipated, and these options are ranked slightly more favourably than Option I. Whilst higher growth (Options H and J) will ultimately be likely to enhance the significance of effects, it can be said that Option I, by more closely aligning with past delivery rates, presents a more realistic option. Nevertheless, significant positive effects are not anticipated for Option I as it does not support housing and economic growth to the same extent as Options H and J.</p> <p>To summarise, there is an assumption that the higher the level of economic and housing growth, the greater the potential for significant positive effects. The lowest growth option (Option A), through a decline in the working age population, is considered likely to lead to significant negative effects. At the other end of the scale, Options H and J are considered likely to lead to significant positive effects. However, the assumption in relation to higher levels of growth should also consider limits to growth and reflect the need to balance growth aspirations with realistic achievability. Considering this, it is not wholly appropriate to rank Option H any higher than Option J at this stage, reflecting a marginally higher uncertainty in relation to achievability.</p>			

ISA topic: Population and communities

Options	Option A – WG 2018-based principal projection	Option H – Continuation of adopted LDP	Option I – Long-term housebuilding rates	Option J – CCR growth in working age population
Rank	3	1	2	1
Significant effect?	Yes – negative	Yes – positive	Yes – positive	Yes – positive
Discussion	<p>The County Borough Annual Monitoring Report (2021) of the adopted LDP shows that both the annual level of housing completions monitored against the Average Annual Requirement (AAR) and the total cumulative completions monitored against the cumulative requirement (Cumulative AAR) are under delivering. As such, it is considered that Option A would perform negatively in terms of contributing towards meeting and sustaining sufficient land supply for the forthcoming plan period, which could significantly impact upon the future vitality of communities. Not only will this option severely limit opportunities to address changing housing needs in terms of types and tenures, but the lack of growth is also likely to drive up house prices and exacerbate affordability issues. Option A may also result in very limited opportunities for the younger population to live and work in the County Borough and difficulties in sustaining services/ facilities across the County Borough, exacerbating rural isolation. Therefore, significant negative effects are considered likely under Option A.</p> <p>Options I, J and H deliver gradually increasing levels of growth, and it is assumed that as the level of growth increases, so does the ability to deliver a greater range/ mix of new homes to help meet the needs of all residents in the County Borough, including affordable housing. Higher levels of growth also increase the potential for accessibility improvements and other community benefits associated with development, including new and improved service and facility provision, extended green infrastructure, transport and infrastructure upgrades, new open spaces and an improved public realm. This will be particularly important in addressing potential future demographic imbalances, and modelling suggests that natural balances are more likely to be achieved with the growth levels proposed under Options H and J. Under these options, growth in younger age brackets, particularly those of working age, balance out the effects of an ageing population, and new development provides the opportunity to address the changing needs of residents in this respect.</p> <p>Whilst the high growth proposed through Options H presents the opportunity to deliver a greater level of infrastructure improvements, the option, given the scale of growth in the context of the County Borough, may place increased demand on existing infrastructure. Nevertheless, Options H, like all the options, is still predicted to result in a decrease in the number of school aged children, and therefore extra pressure is unlikely to be placed on the capacity of existing schools. Even if the number of school aged children was to increase, the level of housing delivery would provide a substantial opportunity to secure additional provision through planning gain to fund extensions and/ or new schools. Conversely, Option A would provide less scope to secure any improvements through planning gain and could lead to potential school closures.</p> <p>Taking the above into account, it is considered that as the level of growth increases, so does the likelihood for significant positive effects. As such, the options are ranked according to the level of growth they will deliver, with Option H delivering the highest level of growth and Option A the lowest. Notably, Options H, I and J would provide a greater range of new homes to meet the needs of the growing population, including affordable housing needs, and they are therefore more likely to lead to residual positive significant effects. Nevertheless, it is noted that with these options, there is a need to manage the impacts of growth on local infrastructure capacity so that it does not place unnecessary burdens on existing infrastructure.</p>			

ISA topic: Health and wellbeing

Options	Option A – WG 2018-based principal projection	Option H – Continuation of adopted LDP	Option I – Long-term housebuilding rates	Option J – CCR growth in working age population
Rank	2	1	1	1
Significant effect?	Yes – negative	No	No	No
Discussion	<p>General health in Caerphilly is below national averages. Even though most residents have ‘very good’ or ‘good’ health (74.8%), a higher proportion of residents in the County Borough (9.3%) have bad or very bad health in comparison to national averages (7.6%). Life in good health for females (63.7) is notably higher than for males (61.5) in the County Borough, though both are amongst the lowest out of all counties in the Aneurin Bevan University Health Board. Life expectancy for females (81.4) is also higher than for males (77.7), and life expectancy within the County Borough is the seventh lowest in Wales and is below the Welsh average for both females and males. Notably, there is a significant difference between life expectancy in the most deprived communities and affluent areas of Caerphilly. Premature deaths (deaths under the age of 75) are decreasing within the County Borough, but the rate has remained consistently higher than in Wales as a whole.</p> <p>Regarding the overall domain, in Caerphilly there are 69 LSOAs in the 50% most deprived LSOAS in Wales, and 11 LSOAs in the 10% most deprived. Regarding the health domain, in Caerphilly there are 77 LSOAS in the 50% most deprived LSOAS in Wales and 12 LSOAS in the 10% most deprived. The Caerphilly Sport and Active Recreation Strategy (2019- 2029) highlights that 74% of adults in the County Borough do not meet national physical activity guidelines. Additionally, the percentage of adults who are overweight or obese within the Borough is 4% higher than the average for Wales, which directly correlated with areas of high deprivation.</p> <p>Given the high-level nature of the options and uncertainties at this stage, it is difficult to highlight any significant differences between them. It could be suggested that as the level of growth increases so does the potential for a greater loss of green/ public open space; however, this is dependent on the location of development. Furthermore, the higher levels of growth under Options H, I and J could increase pressure on existing health services; and it is recognised that there is already a strain on General Practice branches in the Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, which Caerphilly falls within. Despite this, there are certain health benefits associated with growth, including the potential for new or improved community services and facilities supporting growth in the County Borough, including healthcare, open spaces, green infrastructure and retail and leisure. Furthermore, development which delivers transport and infrastructure upgrades can improve accessibility and safety for residents. The importance of improved connectivity and accessibility to local facilities and open space, in light of the Covid-19 pandemic, highlights the potential for higher growth options (Options H, I and J) to support more positive health outcomes. However, there is also a need to manage the impacts of growth on local infrastructure capacity to ensure that no unnecessary burdens are placed on existing infrastructure. Considering this, positive effects under Options H, I and J are less likely to be of significance and these options are ranked equally.</p> <p>Option A is notable for a declining work force and economic base, which has the potential to exacerbate negative health implications. This includes a lack of ability to address changing housing needs (in terms of type, access and affordability) for a significant and growing proportion of elderly residents, as well as declining town and village centres exacerbating rural isolation in areas. The recent pandemic highlights the importance of ensuring communities are balanced and socially sustainable to support more positive health outcomes, and the negative effects arising may be of significance under Option A where demographic imbalances are most acute.</p>			

ISA topic: Equalities, diversity and social inclusion

Options	Option A – WG 2018-based principal projection	Option H – Continuation of adopted LDP	Option I – Long-term housebuilding rates	Option J – CCR growth in working age population
Rank	3	1	2	1
Significant effect?	Yes – negative	No	Uncertain	No
Discussion	<p>At this stage, the location of growth is unknown, and as a result it is difficult to determine how specific communities and protected characteristics are likely to be affected by the options. As indicated through the appraisal under other topics, increased levels of growth provide an opportunity to deliver a greater mix of housing and employment to meet the needs of all members of the community. There is also the potential to deliver greater improvements to community infrastructure and the public realm, but this is uncertain at this stage. In this context, a higher level of growth could help to address areas of deprivation depending on where it is located. Furthermore, a higher level of growth could also be more likely to meet the needs of people across a wider area of the County.</p> <p>Whilst lower growth could be argued to help protect the identity of existing communities, Option A has the potential to impact negatively on the age profile of the County Borough, leading to an unbalanced demographic, with only the elderly population showing any substantial growth over the plan period. Under this option, the working age population is projected to decline, and the forecast marginal increase in population is considered likely to exacerbate the effects of rural isolation due to a reduced capacity to deliver new infrastructure. This is particularly relevant to certain groups with protected characteristics, such as the young, elderly and disabled, who tend to be disproportionately affected by accessibility issues and the negative effects of transport infrastructure, the significance of which has been particularly highlighted through the on-going pandemic. As a result, significant negative effects are considered likely under Option A.</p> <p>The higher growth Options (Options H, I and J) would likely result in a more balanced demographic with an increase in the number of elderly people living in the County Borough balanced against an increase in the working age population. This would impact upon the type of housing required and service providers across public and private sectors. These options present opportunities to improve accessibility and reduce inequalities through an appropriate spatial strategy, leading to positive outcomes in relation to this ISA topic. These will be less significant under Option I, which delivers a lower level of population and economic growth, including a less substantial increase in the working age population, compared to the other two options. Due to this, positive outcomes are regarded as more uncertain under Option I.</p> <p>Taking the above into account, Options H and J are considered to perform best overall, through the delivery of new homes, jobs and community infrastructure that strategically improves accessibility and connectivity within the County Borough. The options are considered to have the greatest potential to support diverse and inclusive communities. Nevertheless, significant effects cannot be predicted for these options without more detail on the location of growth within Caerphilly.</p>			

ISA topic: Transport and movement

Options	Option A – WG 2018-based principal projection	Option H – Continuation of adopted LDP	Option I – Long-term housebuilding rates	Option J – CCR growth in working age population
Rank	2	1	1	1
Significant effect?	No	No	No	No
Discussion	<p>At this stage, there is no evidence to suggest that the levels of growth proposed under any of the options would have a significant negative effect on the highway network. With limited growth under Option A, this option is considered likely to lead to marginal effects in terms of congestion on the existing highway network. Whilst Options H, I and J propose higher levels of growth that have greater potential for negative effects in terms of congestion, these are not considered likely to be significant. Furthermore, in light of the current pandemic, it is likely that higher levels of homeworking will prevail as a longer-term trend. The higher growth options (Options H and J) provide greater critical mass to enable more significant infrastructure improvements. This is particularly important given the wider ambitions to transition to a lower-emission infrastructure network, where development will be a key delivery vehicle for the technological and infrastructure advances which underpin this transition, such as expansion of the EV network, smart technologies, last mile deliveries and cycle route connectivity.</p> <p>The nature and significance of the effects will ultimately be dependent on where the development is located as well as the infrastructure improvements that could be provided. If growth is focused on the Principal and Local Centres, as outlined in the Pre-Deposit Plan, this will take advantage of the existing services/ facilities and employment opportunities on offer, as well as key public transport routes. As a result, there will be potential to reduce levels of out-commuting and encourage the use of sustainable transport, which could result in a modal shift. Conversely, if growth is located in the residential and rural settlements, this is likely to increase private vehicle usage and increase traffic on the highways network in the absence of significant interventions; given sustainable transport infrastructure is limited in these locations. Concerning the strategic site proposed through the Pre-Deposit Plan, Maesycwmmmer, ancillary and associated infrastructure will be delivered, including the provision of a new access road which will provide a strategic highway network improvement for the A472.</p> <p>Considering the above, whilst no significant effects are predicted, much uncertainty remains about the overall performance of the options in relation to this ISA topic until the spatial strategy is more clearly defined. However, it is duly recognised that Options H, I and J have greater potential for positive transport outcomes than the limited opportunities provided through Option A, and the ranking of options reflects this assumption.</p>			

ISA topic: Natural resources (air, land, minerals and water)

Options	Option A – WG 2018-based principal projection	Option H – Continuation of adopted LDP	Option I – Long-term housebuilding rates	Option J – CCR growth in working age population
Rank	1	4	2	3
Significant effect?	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain
Discussion	<p>As the level of growth increases so does the likelihood for negative impacts on natural resources through the potential loss of greenfield/ agricultural land and mineral resources; reduced air quality as a result of increased traffic; and increased demand for water resources.</p> <p>The urban areas in Caerphilly are unlikely to be underlain by high-quality agricultural land according to the predictive Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) assessment. Equally, the remaining areas of the County Borough are primarily underlain by Grade 4 (around the central part of the county borough) and Grade 5 (in the north at Rhymney) agricultural land, although there is some Grade 3a agricultural land in the Caerphilly Basin. Only a small part of the County Borough, at Draethen, is underlain by Grade 2 agricultural land, which is susceptible to the effects of development.</p> <p>Two areas of Caerphilly County Borough have geological interest of regional importance: the Caerphilly ridge in the south of the County Borough (an example of cross-valley glaciation) and the Nelson to Tredomen area (contains a range of linear rock types). Most of Caerphilly lies within the South Wales Coalfield, comprising carboniferous coal measures underlain by millstone grit and carboniferous limestone. The coalfield is divided into two areas, referred to as Coal Mining Development High Risk and Low Risk Areas. The Coal Authority have recently (2020) published data which shows a significant proportion of Caerphilly falling within High-Risk Areas, particularly to the south and east of the County Borough. To the south of the main coalfield, the area comprises Devonian old red sandstone, Silurian mudstones, and Triassic Mercia mud stone rocks. Alongside these areas, there are several aggregate extraction sites in the County Borough. Two of these – Bryn (near Gelligaer) and Machen Quarries – are currently active. Large-scale open casting for coal has historically taken place in the north of the County Borough where outcrops are near the surface. In addition to the extraction sites above, there are mineral safeguarding areas in Caerphilly, which protected areas of sandstone, limestone and sand and gravel resources.</p> <p>Option A does not propose significant growth, and as such, is likely to avoid significant effects in relation to this ISA topic. Furthermore, it is considered that mineral landbank obligations could be met under all options, though it is recognised that increasing levels of growth will put increasing pressure on safeguarded areas, particularly those that encroach upon settlements. The overall loss of agricultural land is uncertain at this stage, as it will be dependent on the precise location of development and whether the land is greenfield or brownfield. However, additional mineral resources are unlikely to be required as a result of the County Borough’s surplus of existing permitted reserves of crushed rock, as set out by the Regional Technical Statement 2nd Review. The quality of agricultural land will also play a role in determining the potential significance of effects, however, given the scarcity of high-quality agricultural land within Caerphilly, this is less of a concern. It is also recognised that brownfield land is sparse throughout the County Borough, and therefore most development is anticipated to take place on greenfield land. In this respect, the options that propose a lower level of growth are considered to perform better against this topic as they will require less land take, and this is reflected in the ranking of options.</p>			

Whilst air pollution is not a significant problem across the County Borough, there are two Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA) declared in Caerphilly: Caerphilly Town Centre AQMA and Hafodyrynys Road AQMA. In this respect, the significance of effects will be dependent on the location of growth and the implementation of appropriate mitigation measures. As discussed under the transportation ISA topic, it is considered that higher growth options have greater potential for negative effects in relation to congestion on the existing highways network. However, no evidence suggests this will lead to effects of significance. Ultimately, the spatial strategy should seek to reduce congestion across the highway network, including within AQMAs, and new development provides opportunities to address infrastructure upgrade requirements that support more efficient movement in the highways network. New development also provides opportunities to increase local accessibility, particularly access to employment opportunities, which can in turn support reduced levels of out-commuting and congestion and support a modal shift. A higher level of homeworking brought on by the current pandemic is also considered likely to continue to some degree as a longer-term trend supporting reduced congestion and improved air quality. Considering this, whilst no significant effects are considered likely at this stage, the overall nature and significance of the effects in relation to air quality under all options remains uncertain until the precise location of development is known.

Water is supplied to Caerphilly by Dwr Cymru/ Welsh Water (DCWW). Most of the water in the County Borough comes direct from nearby rivers and their supporting reservoirs, of which approximately half is fed into the public water supply, with a further 29% going to commercial uses and 20% to industrial use. Notably, most of the public water supply to the Caerphilly comes from reservoirs beyond the County Borough. Caerphilly falls within the South East Valleys Catchment Management Abstraction Strategy (CAMS) area. Reliability of water availability in this catchment was assessed in 2016 by Natural Resources Wales; areas with higher availability (at least 50%) were found to be in the southern areas, supplying settlements such as Caerphilly town and Blackwood. The main rivers in the South East Valleys management catchment are the Ebbw and Sirhowy, which flow into the Usk and the Rhymney, Taff and Ely, which discharge to the Severn Estuary. According to the 2015 classification for overall ecological status, rivers that flow through the County Borough are of varying quality. The Rhymney River is of good ecological quality, though decreasing further south, and some tributaries in the north are of poor overall quality and could be worsened by the effects of future development. Similarly, the Sirhowy appears to be of good quality, although the Ebbw, which it flows into, is moderate.

Water companies are legally required to supply water to private consumers and businesses within their area. As set out in the Water Industry Act 1991, they must prepare and maintain a Water Resources Management Plan (WRMP) that sets out how the company intends to maintain the balance between water supply and demand. Water companies update their WRMPs every five years to take account of predicted growth and ensure that there are schemes in place to meet future demands. As the scale of growth proposed under the options increases, so does the pressure on water resources. However, given the legal requirements in place for WRMPs, it is considered that there are no significant differences between the options in terms of effects on water resources. It is expected that development coming forward under any of the options can deliver mitigation (e.g. rainwater harvesting measures) to support reduced water use per person per day.

Options proposing a higher level of growth would place increased pressure on sewerage infrastructure, with the potential for long term negative effects. The increased growth could have impacts on water quality through increased impermeable surfaces and transfer of pollutants, but it is considered that there is suitable mitigation available at a development management level to ensure that residual effects are not significant. Taking the above into account, it is considered that there are no significant differences between the options at this stage in terms of the water environment.

ISA topic: Biodiversity and geodiversity

Options	Option A – WG 2018-based principal projection	Option H – Continuation of adopted LDP	Option I – Long-term housebuilding rates	Option J – CCR growth in working age population
Rank	1	4	2	3
Significant effect?	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain
Discussion	<p>In terms of biodiversity and geodiversity, the impacts will ultimately be dependent on the precise location of development. There is only one European site (Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Special Protections Areas (SPA) or Ramsar sites) within the County Borough, which is the Aberbargoed Grasslands SAC (which is also an SSSI and Nature Reserve), located 1 kilometre from Bargoed, in the centre of the County Borough.</p> <p>In terms of nationally designated sites, there are 13 SSSIs that fall wholly within the County Borough. Eight of these have been designated for their biological interest, and the remaining five for their geological interest. Spatially, the SSSIs are distributed relatively evenly across the County Borough. Ancient woodland is also prevalent throughout Caerphilly, with significant areas in the south east of the County Borough.</p> <p>In terms of locally important biodiversity, there are four Local Nature Reserves (LNR) designated within the County Borough, which are Cwmllydrew Meadows, Memorial Park Meadows, Graig Goch, and Flatwoods Meadows. There are also over 190 Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) (also known as Local Wildlife Sites (LWSs)) designated within the County Borough. The SINC network comprises many separate parcels of land that have been identified as supporting valuable wildlife, such as butterflies and dragonflies, white-clawed Crayfish and other aquatic invertebrates. Grassland fungi have been confirmed at several sites.</p> <p>Option A does not propose significant growth and is therefore unlikely to significantly affect biodiversity. It is assumed that none of the remaining options would result in the loss of any international, national or locally designated sites due to their protected status. However, the impacts of the remaining options on biodiversity are less certain, as the increasing level of growth under Options I, J and H respectively is likely to require increasingly more land take. This is considered likely to result in wider habitat loss and fragmentation as well as increased pressure; notably disturbance (through recreation, noise and light), atmospheric pollution, and through impacts on water quality and resources. Option H, by proposing the highest level of growth, has the greatest potential to lead to significant negative effects in this respect.</p> <p>Despite this, it is recognised that higher levels of growth could also offer greater opportunities for delivering biodiversity net gain, securing and/or enhancing green infrastructure, public open space and recreation provision through planning gain. However, this is uncertain at this stage as the exact location of development across the County Borough is unknown. The nature and significance of residual effects will ultimately be dependent on the exact location, design/ layout of development, the implementation of mitigation measures, and the sensitivity of receptors.</p> <p>Overall, the limited growth under Option A is considered unlikely to lead to significant effects. As the level of growth increases through Options I, J and H respectively, so does the potential significance of negative effects, and this is reflected in the rankings of these options. However, it must be noted that the residual effects remain uncertain at this stage, reflecting the ability to mitigate effects at the site level.</p>			

ISA topic: Historic environment

Options	Option A – WG 2018-based principal projection	Option H – Continuation of adopted LDP	Option I – Long-term housebuilding rates	Option J – CCR growth in working age population
Rank	1	4	2	3
Significant effect?	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain
Discussion	<p>In terms of the historic environment, the impacts will ultimately be dependent on the precise location and design of development. There are a total of 411 listed buildings in the County Borough, which consist of two Grade I, 31 Grade II* and 378 Grade II listed buildings. In addition to this, there are 47 scheduled monuments, four historic parks and gardens, and 16 conservation areas. There is potential for several sites across the County Borough to contain archaeological remains, however, to date, no significant investigations into these archaeological remains have been undertaken due to resource constraints. The Council does not currently keep a record of historic assets of local significance (HALS).</p> <p>It is assumed that none of the options would result in the loss of any designated heritage assets. Option A will deliver limited growth, and as such, this option is the least likely to negatively impact the historic environment. The increasing level of growth proposed under Options I, J and H respectively will ultimately increase the amount of land take, and therefore result in wider impacts on the historic environment. With Option H seeking the highest level of growth, it has the greatest potential to lead to significant negative effects on the historic environment, especially if growth is located close to or within the setting of designated heritage assets. It is also recognised that increasing levels of growth have the potential to impact on village and townscape character. However, this is uncertain at this stage as the precise location of growth is unknown, nevertheless, the ranking of options reflects these assumptions. Despite this, the higher levels of growth proposed through Options H, I and J could offer more opportunities to improve access to designated heritage assets or help to redevelop brownfield areas that are currently detracting from the historic environment. However, this is uncertain at this stage, as the nature and significance of residual effects will ultimately be dependent on the exact location, design/ layout of development and the implementation of mitigation measures.</p> <p>Overall, the limited growth under Option A is considered unlikely to lead to effects of significance on the historic environment. As the level of growth increases through Options I, J and H respectively, so too does the potential significance of negative effects, and this is reflected in the rankings of these options, although the Preferred Strategy notes the role of the re-use and rehabilitation of the historic environment in relation to town centre redevelopment. However, it must be noted that the residual effects remain uncertain at this stage, reflecting the ability to mitigate effects at the site/ project level.</p>			

ISA topic: Landscape

Options	Option A – WG 2018-based principal projection	Option H – Continuation of adopted LDP	Option I – Long-term housebuilding rates	Option J – CCR growth in working age population
Rank	1	4	2	3
Significant effect?	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain
Discussion	<p>As with a number of other ISA topics, the nature and significance of effects on landscape/ townscape impacts will ultimately be dependent on the precise location and design of development. Caerphilly has a rich and diverse landscape, with the south eastern part of the County Borough falling within the Cardiff, Barry and Newport National Character Area (NCA), and the remaining part of the County Borough falling within the South Wales Valley NCA. There are currently five Special Landscape Areas (SLAs) in Caerphilly. In addition to this, there are several Visually Important Local Landscapes (VILLs) throughout the County Borough.</p> <p>Limited growth is proposed under Option A, and as such, minimal effects in relation to landscape are anticipated under this option. The increasing levels of growth proposed under Options I, J and H respectively are likely to require increasingly more land take, placing higher pressure on greenfield land resources and resulting in wider impacts on the landscape across the County Borough. Given the limited brownfield land available, it is expected that most growth will be delivered on greenfield land on the edge of existing settlements, placing increased pressure on the County Borough’s landscape interests and rural character with the potential for long-term negative effects.</p> <p>Alongside the potential for negative effects, it is recognised that there is there is also the opportunity for growth to deliver landscape enhancements; maximising opportunities to secure and/ or improve green infrastructure, public open space and recreation provision through planning gain. The nature and significance of effects will therefore ultimately be dependent on the exact location, design/ layout of development, and the implementation of mitigation measures.</p> <p>Whilst it is likely that mitigation is available to reduce the significance of any effects, the residual effects remain uncertain at this stage until development locations are more clearly defined. Given the higher levels of growth under Options I, J and H respectively, there is greater potential for significant negative effects, which is reflected in the ranking of the options.</p>			

ISA topic: Climate change (mitigation and adaptation)

Options	Option A – WG 2018-based principal projection	Option H – Continuation of adopted LDP	Option I – Long-term housebuilding rates	Option J – CCR growth in working age population
Rank	4	1	3	2
Significant effect?	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain
Discussion	<p>In terms of climate change mitigation, a higher level of growth will ultimately lead to increased levels of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. At this stage, specific opportunities that would help to significantly reduce per capita GHG emissions or deliver new low carbon or renewable energy through a higher level of growth have not been confirmed. It is therefore assumed that development proposed under all options has the potential to incorporate renewable or low carbon energy.</p> <p>However, higher growth options are noted for their potential to support infrastructure upgrades that reduce congestion and improve accessibility (particularly in terms of sustainable transport modes), and support a transition to lower-emission, and carbon neutral economies and networks. The higher growth options are also considered for their potential to contribute to improved ecological connectivity, green infrastructure networks, open spaces and urban greening measures, which support improved climate resilience. As a result, the higher growth options are considered for potential positive outcomes, and this is reflected in the ranking of options.</p> <p>In terms of climate change adaptation, it is assumed that the increasing growth proposed under Options I, J and H respectively would be directed to areas of lower flood risk as per the sequential test. It is also assumed that there is suitable mitigation available to ensure that the additional development does not increase flood risk, for example through the delivery of sustainable drainage systems.</p>			

Table B.2 Summary findings and conclusions for growth options

ISA topic	Rank/ significant effect	Option A	Option H	Option I	Option J
Economy and employment	Rank	3	1	2	1
	Significant effect?	Yes – negative	Yes – positive	No	Yes – positive
Population and communities	Rank	3	1	2	1
	Significant effect?	Yes – negative	Yes – positive	Yes – positive	Yes – positive
Health and wellbeing	Rank	2	1	1	1
	Significant effect?	Yes – negative	No	No	No
Equality, diversity and inclusion	Rank	3	1	2	1
	Significant effect?	Yes – negative	No	Uncertain	No
Transport and movement	Rank	2	1	1	1
	Significant effect?	No	No	No	No
Natural resources (air, land, minerals and waste)	Rank	1	4	2	3
	Significant effect?	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain
Biodiversity and geodiversity	Rank	1	4	2	3
	Significant effect?	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain
Historic environment	Rank	1	4	2	3
	Significant effect?	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain
Landscape	Rank	1	4	2	3
	Significant effect?	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain
Climate change (mitigation and adaptation)	Rank	4	1	3	2
	Significant effect?	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain

In relation to the ISA topics of natural resources, biodiversity and geodiversity, the historic environment and landscape, the nature and significance of effects will be dependent on where growth is located and how development is designed/ implemented. As the level of growth increases so does the likelihood that impacts will occur, and negative effects will arise. Residual effects in this respect are uncertain and will be better informed by consideration of the location of growth, the sensitivity of receptors, and the potential mitigation measures available. Lower growth options are ranked more favourably in respect of the potential environmental impacts, though it is also recognised that higher levels of development have further potential to deliver environmental enhancements/ improvements that could lead to positive effects.

Similarly, for the climate change ISA topic, uncertainty is noted as specific opportunities that would help to significantly reduce per capita GHG emissions or deliver new low carbon or renewable energy have not been confirmed. However, this ISA topic sees the reverse trend in terms of rankings, as higher growth options have greater potential to support infrastructure upgrades that reduce congestion and improve accessibility, supporting a transition to lower emission/ carbon neutral economy. They also have greater potential to contribute to improved ecological connectivity, green infrastructure networks, open spaces and urban greening measures, which support climate resilience.

Regarding the transport and movement ISA topic, options proposing a higher level of growth are more likely to result in impacts on the local highway network through increased traffic and congestion; however, no evidence suggests impacts are likely to be of significance. Recent increases in homeworking, as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, are considered likely to prevail as a longer-term trend which will continue to support reduced congestion. Furthermore, the higher growth levels are considered for their potential to deliver accessibility and infrastructure improvements and result in more self-contained communities, reduced levels of out commuting and modal shift, the importance of which have all been highlighted during the pandemic. As a result, higher growth options are ranked more favourably overall.

Option A is considered likely to result in significant negative effects for the ISA topics of economy and employment, population and communities, health and wellbeing, and equalities, diversity and social inclusion. This is predominantly due to limited growth severely restricting opportunities to address a likely resultant demographic imbalance and economic decline. Under this option, a decline in younger age groups, particularly the working age group, is likely to result in job losses, and a decline in economic and local centres exacerbating rural isolation. This is particularly relevant to certain groups with protected characteristics, such as the young, elderly and disabled, who tend to be disproportionately affected by accessibility issues and the negative effects of transport infrastructure. Furthermore, a lack of future development may not only severely limit opportunities to address changing housing needs in terms of types and tenures but is also likely to drive up house prices and exacerbate affordability issues.

The higher growth options (Options H and J, but particularly H) are identified as performing better against these ISA topics, as the additional growth provides an opportunity to deliver a greater range of new housing, employment opportunities, and community infrastructure to meet the needs of the County Borough. Significant positive effects are predicted for Options H and J under the economy and

employment ISA topic, and significant positive effects are predicted for Options, H, I and J under the population and communities ISA topic.

Appraisal of spatial strategy options

A total of six spatial strategy options have been taken forward as realistic options and are set out in **Table A.1** below.

Table A.1 Spatial strategy options

Option	Description
1 – Continuation of the LDP Strategy	This option would see the continuation of the strategy currently contained within the adopted LDP, guiding development within a broad strategic framework underpinning the principles of sustainable development. The County Borough was divided into three strategic areas, each with their own strategic development policies. These strategic areas are the Heads of the Valleys Regeneration Area (HoVRA), Northern Connections Corridor (NCC) and the Southern Connections Corridor (SCC).
2 – Heads of the Valleys Regeneration Area Focus	This option seeks to maximise development opportunities in the Heads of the Valleys Regeneration Area to promote economic growth, broaden the range and choice of housing and to maximise the benefits from the major investment and improvement in the Metro and the A465.
3 – Key Strategic Site	This option would see the allocation of a strategic site at Maesycwmmmer 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 the most appropriate and sustainable sites that are well related to the rail network and public transport interchanges.
4 – Metro Investment Focus	This option would see the allocation of land aimed at maximising the benefits arising from the significant investment in the South-East Wales Metro, maximising opportunities arising in and around key public transport nodes, including the rail stations along the Rhymney and Ebbw Rail Lines, as well as the major bus stations at Blackwood and Nelson.
5 – Town Centre First	This 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 development sites.
6 – Caerphilly Basin Focus	This option seeks to maximise development opportunities in the Southern Connections Corridor to promote economic growth and maximise the benefits of the significant investment in the regeneration of Caerphilly town.

A comparative appraisal of the options has been carried out under each ISA topic. The appraisal assumes that each option will deliver the same quantum of growth. The findings are presented in the tables below.

ISA topic: Economy and employment

Options	Option 1 – Continuation of the LDP Strategy	Option 2 – Heads of the Valleys Regeneration Area Focus	Option 3 – Key Strategic Site	Option 4 – Metro Investment Focus	Option 5 – Town Centre First	Option 6 – Caerphilly Basin Focus
Rank	3	2	1	1	1	2
Significant effect?	Yes – negative	Uncertain	Yes – positive	Yes – positive	Yes – positive	Uncertain
Discussion	<p>It is considered that Caerphilly’s ageing population and decreasing working age population is currently limiting employment growth throughout the County Borough. This is exacerbated by limited job opportunities and public transport opportunities, particularly in rural areas, where transport is key to helping maintain access to vital amenities and services. Caerphilly has one of the lowest concentrations of jobs per working age person in comparison to other areas in South East Wales. Industrial restructuring has led to a decline in traditional heavy industries within the County Borough, in addition to a decrease in traditional manufacturing. Whilst unemployment has recently declined, there are areas within Caerphilly that are particularly affected by unemployment.</p> <p>Work commuting patterns can provide an insight into the economic activity of the County Borough. A high proportion of residents in Caerphilly commute into the neighbouring city of Newport – more so than any other area in the Gwent sub-region. Few residents commute into neighbouring Torfaen and Blaenau Gwent. However, there are reasonable commuter flows from Newport and Blaenau Gwent into Caerphilly, further supporting the local economy.</p> <p>In terms of the options, opportunities to maximise self-containment within Caerphilly are most likely to be achieved through Option 5, which focuses housing and employment growth towards Principal and Local Centres. Option 5 will strengthen the local economy by enabling people to both live and work within the County Borough’s main settlements, which in turn will support the vitality of local centres and encourage future investment. Option 5 will likely also help support the changing role of Caerphilly’s high streets, adapting to changing shopping habits, visitor needs, and increased demands for lifestyle and leisure premises. Option 5 is therefore considered likely to lead to significant long-term positive effects for this ISA topic. All other options perform well in this respect to a lesser extent, targeting development within and near Caerphilly’s Principal and Local centres.</p> <p>Option 4 is also considered likely to lead to significant long-term positive effects against this ISA topic as it capitalises on the opportunities associated with the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal and the South Wales Metro. Directing growth close to key public transport nodes, including the train stations along the Rhymney and Ebbw Rail lines and the major bus stations at Blackwood and Nelson, this option will provide residents with good access to economic opportunities throughout the region. Similarly, Option 3, which would see the allocation of a strategic site at Maescywmmer, will facilitate road improvements to a key point of congestion on the A472, whilst improving active travel and public transport links at the highly utilised A469/ A472 junction. The strategic site is also located within walking/ cycling distance of Hengoed Station, which connects to Rhymney in the north and Cardiff in the south and is on the proposed Mid-Valleys Rapid Transit Link on the A472. In this respect, Option 3 is also considered likely to lead to significant long-term positive effects by improving access to economic opportunities throughout the region, which is strengthened by the site’s central location within the County Borough.</p>					

Option 6 focuses growth to the south of the County Borough, within the Caerphilly Basin. This will promote economic growth in Caerphilly town by maximising opportunities arising from its proximity to Cardiff and Newport and capitalising on funding initiatives through the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal. Caerphilly town has been identified as a strategically important location for sustainable and inclusive economic growth within Future Wales.³¹ In this respect, directing growth to the south of the County Borough has the potential to deliver long-term positive effects against this ISA topic by increasing self-containment within Caerphilly.

Option 2 focuses growth to the north of the County Borough, capitalising upon its strategic links to the Heads of the Valleys Regeneration Area (HOVRA) and the wider Cardiff Capital Region via the A465. Targeted growth in the north of County Borough also has the potential to lead to increased levels of self-containment, supporting sustainable communities in the north of Caerphilly. Notably, the Upper Rhymney Valley (URV) local area, on which Option 2 focusses, contains a large proportion of the most deprived communities within the County Borough. Option 2 would contribute positively towards reducing deprivation in the north of the County Borough, investing in the area to support economic growth, and reducing local unemployment which is identified as a major constraint for deprived communities.

Overall, it is recognised that by concentrating growth in one area of the County Borough, both options 2 and 6 would result in limited employment opportunities outside of these areas, exacerbating levels of out-commuting. In this respect, Options 2 and 6 have the potential to limit economic growth in the wider area and exacerbate existing demographic issues. In light of positive and negative effects discussed above, there is a level of uncertainty in terms of residual effects for these options which is reflected through their rankings.

Option 1 seeks to continue the LDP strategy, which would restrict growth in Caerphilly town. This contrasts with the vision set out in Future Wales, which recognises Caerphilly as a strategically important location for economic growth. Adding to this, the adopted LDP has not yet achieved sufficient housing-building rates to meet the identified need, and it is considered that the continuation of the strategy would likely follow this trend. This would likely have a residual negative effect on the local economy and employment, Option 1 is therefore considered likely to lead to significant negative effects against ISA topic overall.

to conclude, **Options 3, 4 and 5** are likely to lead to **significant long-term positive effects** against this ISA topic by facilitating sustainable growth in accordance with the settlement hierarchy; addressing localised economic issues; and supporting a well-connected economy. There are some small differences between these options in terms of how growth is distributed during the plan period, however these differences are not significant enough to warrant one option being ranked higher or lower than the other. Comparatively, **Options 2 and 6** perform worse given that they focus growth in one area of the County Borough to the potential detriment of the other. **Option 1** is deemed the worst performing option overall, as it restricts growth in Caerphilly town and is predicted to fall short of the identified housing need, restricting the economy and leading to **long-term significant negative effects**.

³¹ Welsh Government (2021): 'Future Wales: The National Plan 2040', [online] available to access via [this link](#)

ISA topic: Population and communities

Options	Option 1 – Continuation of the LDP Strategy	Option 2 – Heads of the Valleys Regeneration Area Focus	Option 3 – Key Strategic Site	Option 4 – Metro Investment Focus	Option 5 – Town Centre First	Option 6 – Caerphilly Basin Focus
Rank	4	3	1	1	1	2
Significant effect?	No	No	Yes – positive	Yes – positive	Yes – positive	Uncertain
Discussion	<p>Caerphilly County Borough comprises 50 distinct towns and villages, many of which are linear settlements located on the valley floor. The largest town is Caerphilly, situated in the south of the County Borough, whilst other main settlements include Bargoed in the north, Blackwood, Newbridge and Ystrad Mynach in the Mid Valleys, and Risca in the south.</p> <p>Caerphilly has the third highest usual resident population in South East Wales, according to statistics from 2018³², behind Cardiff and Rhondda Cynon Taf; a trend predicted to continue up to 2030. However, Caerphilly is predicted to be the second slowest growing population, indicating that the population is not growing at a comparatively high rate for its size.³³ In terms of age structure, the 2018-based projections also highlight that the 0 to 15 age group is projected to increase until 2025, and the 16 to 64 age group until 2024, then both are predicted to decrease in the period up to 2030. Notably, population growth over the plan period will be due to an increase in the 65+ age group, reflecting the County Borough’s aging population.</p> <p>Notably, there has been a decline in the population in the northern part of Caerphilly over recent years, whilst development pressure in the southern part of Caerphilly has increased due to population growth, contributing towards increasing pressure on services and facilities in this part of the County Borough. In the centre of the County Borough, high rates of development in Blackwood over the past 5 to 10 years have resulted in a substantial population increase. In this respect, Options 2 and 3 perform well by directing growth to the north and centre of the Country Borough respectively, which will relieve pressure in the south whilst strengthening central and northern communities.</p> <p>All Options perform positively in terms of providing housing to meet the identified need of the County Borough, with Options 4, 5, and 3, respectively, delivering the highest number of houses. Options 4 and 5 would provide affordable housing throughout the settlement hierarchy, ensuring a range and choice of homes are delivered, particularly where there is a need for affordable housing, to assist in regaining a balanced population. However, the strategic site of Maesycwmmmer delivered through Option 3 would enable a significant proportion of affordable housing to be delivered alongside infrastructure improvements in the centre of the County Borough. Options 2 and 6 will result in housing primarily being delivered in the north and south of the County Borough respectively, and therefore housing needs will not be addressed evenly across Caerphilly. Additionally, there is a need to consider the potential impact on house prices arising in this context, given the delivery of affordable homes will be focussed in either the north or south. Option 1 delivers the lowest number of houses, and in this respect, performs least favourably of all the options.</p>					

³² StatsWales (2018): ‘Population projections by local authority and year’, [online] available to access via [this link](#)

³³ StatsWales (2018): ‘Population projection components of change by local authority and year’, [online] available to access via [this link](#)

In terms of addressing the wider needs of communities, Option 5 will deliver significant long-term positive effects by focussing growth in the Principal and Local Centres across the County Borough. Option 4 performs equally well by locating growth in and around key public transport nodes, several of which are located in the Principal and Local Centres. Both options recognise the role of these centres as service hubs for their rural hinterlands and contribute positively towards encouraging younger people to reside in the County Borough, whilst also addressing issues surrounding accessibility for elderly people. Through Option 3, the strategic site of Maesycwmmer would facilitate significant infrastructure delivery in the centre of the County Borough, providing new services and facilities as part of the site's strategy. Strategic masterplanning of the site will also ensure development is well connected to the wider area, maximising opportunities for residents to meet their day-to-day needs locally or elsewhere via active/ public transport connections.

Whilst Option 2 delivers housing in Bargoed (Principal Centre) and Rhymney (Local Centre), it also delivers housing in residential settlements which are more limited in terms of services and facilities. By delivering a substantial proportion of growth to these smaller residential settlements, additional pressure may be placed on existing social infrastructure in these areas, especially health care facilities, which are already struggling with capacity. Conversely, Option 6 primarily delivers housing in Caerphilly (Principal Centre), as well as Blackwood, Bargoed, Ystrad Mynach and Risca (Principal Centres) and Newbridge, Nelson, Bedwas and Rhymney (Local Centres). In terms of ranking these two options, Option 6 is considered to perform more favourably than Option 2, through targeting Principal and Local Centres to a greater degree. Delivering the lowest level of growth, Option 1 has the least potential to meet the needs of communities within Caerphilly and performs least positively overall.

Overall, **Options 3, 4 and 5** are considered to perform best as they provide sufficient housing and employment opportunities to meet identified needs throughout the County Borough, leading to **significant long-term positive effects**. Moreover, these options distribute housing in line with the settlement hierarchy, helping to meet the needs of all communities. There are some small differences between Options 3, 4 and 5 in terms of how growth is distributed during the plan period, but these differences are not significant enough to warrant one option being ranked higher or lower than the other. Comparatively, **Option 2 and 6** perform less favourably due to their focus of growth in the north and south of the County Borough respectively. However, **Option 2** is deemed slightly more favourable than **Option 6** as it locates growth within and near a greater number of Principal and Local Centres, and in this respect, it might have the potential to deliver significant positive effects. **Option 1** is considered to perform worst overall, as it has the least potential to deliver community benefits due to the insufficient number of deliverable sites when compared to the other options.

ISA topic: Health and wellbeing

Options	Option 1 – Continuation of the LDP Strategy	Option 2 – Heads of the Valleys Regeneration Area Focus	Option 3 – Key Strategic Site	Option 4 – Metro Investment Focus	Option 5 – Town Centre First	Option 6 – Caerphilly Basin Focus
Rank	2	2	1	1	1	2
Significant effect?	Yes – positive	Yes – positive	Yes – positive	Yes – positive	Yes – positive	Yes – positive
Discussion	<p>General health in Caerphilly is overall below national averages. Even though most residents have ‘very good’ or ‘good’ health (74.8%), a higher proportion of residents in the County Borough (9.3%) have ‘bad’ or ‘very bad’ health in comparison to national averages (7.6%). There is also a relatively significant disparity in health and wellbeing across the County Borough, with the north generally experiencing worse health than the south.</p> <p>Access to open space can have benefits that are both mental and physical. Areas of deficiency may therefore result in a population that does not participate in informal physical activity, alongside other secondary effects associated with environmental inequality. In this regard, the adopted LDP has noted several formal and informal open spaces which include fields, memorial parks, greens, designated country parks, and church fields. In terms of the overall provision by ward, according to Fields in Trust (FIT) standards, there is a County Borough wide shortfall in amenity green space³⁴. In contrast, the majority of Caerphilly has excess designated pitch and equipped play provision. In terms of health facilities, there are a total of 37 General Practice (GP) branches within the County Borough, and within the Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, which Caerphilly falls within, there are approximately 631 patients per GP, which is the third highest ratio across all the seven health boards surveyed.³⁵</p> <p>In terms of improving the health and wellbeing of residents, Option 5 is anticipated to lead to significant long-term positive effects by supporting and sustaining a hierarchy of vibrant town and village centres across the County Borough. It is considered that the focus of growth in the Principal and Local Centres will ensure sustainable access to a range of community services and facilities, including health, leisure and recreation, which will contribute towards improved physical and mental health and wellbeing by encouraging healthier lifestyles, quality living environments and community cohesion. Significant long-term positive effects are also anticipated through Option 4, by locating growth in and around key public transport nodes, several of which are located in the Principal and Local Centres; and Option 3, through delivering key services and facilities, including those relevant to health and wellbeing, at the strategic site of Maesycwmmmer in the centre of the County Borough.</p> <p>Option 2 provides the opportunity to improve the health and wellbeing of residents in the HOVRA, which is a particularly deprived area when compared to the rest of the County Borough, although this may also pose challenges in terms of the limited services and facilities currently present in this area. Conversely, Option 6, which is located in the Caerphilly Basin, will maximise opportunities to utilise a range of existing health and wellbeing facilities, which are concentrated around Caerphilly town. However, these facilities are likely under increasing strain given the development pressure in the south of the County Borough, and therefore Option 6 could worsen this issue. In this respect and given that both options focus improvements to health and wellbeing in only one area of the County Borough, Options 2 and 6 are not considered favourable in terms of this ISA topic.</p>					

³⁴ Caerphilly County Borough Council (2015): ‘Deposit Replacement Caerphilly County Borough Council Local Development Plan (LDP) Background Paper (Leisure)’

³⁵ Stats for Wales, Ibid.

All options have the potential to increase opportunities for healthy living by promoting active/ sustainable travel, protecting and enhancing green infrastructure, and maximising placemaking opportunities. The value of locally accessible open/ green spaces, in terms of their contribution to health and wellbeing, has been heightened during the Covid-19 pandemic and should therefore be reflected in the growth strategies. In this respect, Options 1, 3, 4 and 5 perform most positively as growth (supported by green infrastructure provision) is delivered throughout the County Borough, aiding ecological connectivity throughout the whole of Caerphilly. Option 3 performs particularly well as a strategic site provides a blank canvas, where masterplanning can help connect the site with the wider area via green infrastructure. Comparatively, Options 2 and 6 will result in uneven growth across Caerphilly, and in this respect, some areas may suffer from poor green infrastructure provision as a result of reduced development.

Given the rural nature of the County Borough, it is considered that all options will lead to positive effects in terms of providing residents with access to the countryside surrounding settlements, although the quality of countryside differs across Caerphilly. Option 2 performs most positively in this respect, as it directs a significant level of growth to the HOVRA, which is located in close proximity to the Brecon Beacons National Park. Significant growth at this location will provide access to this nationally important natural space, supporting the mental and physical health and wellbeing of residents.

Overall, it is considered that **Options 3, 4 and 5** perform most positively in terms of supporting the health and wellbeing of Caerphilly. These options are well located in terms of access to health facilities, recreational amenities, and active travel opportunities, and also present opportunities for new provision in this respect. **Significant long-term positive effects** are therefore predicted for these options. Focussing growth in only one half of the County Borough, **Options 2 and 6** perform less favourably than **Options 3, 4 and 5**. **Option 1** also performs less positively, as the insufficient number of deliverable sites has less potential to support significant improvements to local amenities, services and facilities. Nevertheless, these options perform positively overall, promoting active/ sustainable travel, protecting and enhancing green infrastructure, and maximise placemaking opportunities.

ISA topic: Equalities, diversity and social inclusion

Options	Option 1 – Continuation of the LDP Strategy	Option 2 – Heads of the Valleys Regeneration Area Focus	Option 3 – Key Strategic Site	Option 4 – Metro Investment Focus	Option 5 – Town Centre First	Option 6 – Caerphilly Basin Focus
Rank	3	2	1	1	1	2
Significant effect?	No	Uncertain	Yes – positive	Yes – positive	Yes – positive	Uncertain
Discussion	<p>In terms of overall deprivation, in Caerphilly there are 69 LSOAs in the 50% most deprived LSOAs in Wales, and 11 LSOAs in the 10% most deprived. Notably, the most deprived areas within Caerphilly are primarily located in the northern part of the County Borough. The least deprived areas are concentrated in the central and southern part of the County Borough, around Caerphilly town, however there are areas to the north and west of Caerphilly town that are also suffering from high levels of deprivation. Pockets of deprivation identified in the County Borough include areas within Rhymney and Bargoed in the north, as well as two smaller pockets to the east of Caerphilly town in the south.</p> <p>For the year ending 30 June 2021, the Annual Population Survey reported that 29.2% of Welsh residents aged three or older were able to speak Welsh, which equates to approximately 884,300 people. In Caerphilly, 25.4% of residents are Welsh speaking, which is less than the overall figure for Wales, but on par with Cardiff (24.8%) and significantly greater than Blaenau Gwent (16.5%).³⁶</p> <p>Population densities are, as would be expected, highest in the County Borough's towns. In terms of population growth, Caerphilly and Blackwood have experienced substantial growth when compared to the rest of the County Borough. Therefore, Option 5, which seeks to focus growth towards the Principal and Local Centres, is anticipated to lead to significant long-term positive effects. This is because it provides increased opportunities, through employment and housing provision, for the working age population to live and work in Caerphilly by enhancing the service roles of these centres. The current pandemic has stressed the importance of ensuring communities are balanced and socially sustainable, particularly in terms of demography. In this respect, Options 3 and 4, in addition to Option 5, will also lead to significant long-term positive effects by reducing inequalities between rural and urban areas and supporting and sustaining a hierarchy of vibrant centres across the County Borough.</p> <p>Option 4, through capitalising upon the strategic links to the Cardiff Capital Region and the provisions of the City Deal, would likely provide opportunity to support sustainable communities and achieve infrastructure improvements/ provisions across the County Borough. Whilst Option 2 also capitalises on links to the Cardiff Capital Region, the more peripheral nature of the HOVRA leads to concerns around isolation in the settlements in this part of the County Borough. Although to a lesser extent, similar effects are anticipated through the delivery of Option 6 given that development would be located in and near the Principal and Local Centres in the south of the County Borough to capitalise on their strategic links to the wider area, particularly neighbouring Cardiff and Newport. Moreover, given that both options target one area of the County Borough, this will likely have an impact on Caerphilly's demography, potentially leading to inequality across the County Borough. Option 1, by delivering a relatively low level of growth when compared to the other options, could also worsen issues relating to peripheral isolation and social exclusion.</p>					

³⁶ StatsWales (2021): 'Annual Population Survey – Ability to speak Welsh by local authority and year', [online] available to access via [this link](#)

Caerphilly has one of the lowest Black, Asian and minority ethnic populations compared to other Welsh authorities, particularly neighbouring Cardiff and Newport, which are the most ethnically diverse of the Welsh authorities. Directing growth to the north of the County Borough through Option 2 may contribute positively towards increasing ethnic diversity within Caerphilly. However, Option 6, with its strategic links to the Cardiff Capital Region and South West England, will likely support cross-boundary community cohesion, and capitalise upon regional social infrastructure connections.

Overall, **Options 3, 4 and 5** perform most positively as they seek to support and sustain a hierarchy of vibrant centres across the County Borough. These options focus growth to the most sustainable settlements while also delivering a proportionate level of growth in residential and rural settlements. This will contribute positively towards addressing existing demographic issues, encouraging younger people to reside and work in the County Borough, with the potential for **significant long-term positive effects**. There are some small differences between these options in terms of how growth is distributed during the Plan period, but these differences are not significant enough to warrant one option being ranked higher or lower than the other.

Whilst **Options 2 and 6** may support more sustainable communities and achieve social infrastructure improvements/ provision in the north and south of Caerphilly respectively, these options perform less favourably due to the likely isolation of communities and continuation of imbalanced demographic profile across the County Borough. **Option 1** also performs less favourably due to the insufficient number of deliverable sites, which could worsen issues relating to peripheral isolation and social exclusion.

ISA topic: Transport and movement

Options	Option 1 – Continuation of the LDP Strategy	Option 2 – Heads of the Valleys Regeneration Area Focus	Option 3 – Key Strategic Site	Option 4 – Metro Investment Focus	Option 5 – Town Centre First	Option 6 – Caerphilly Basin Focus
Rank	4	4	2	1	2	3
Significant effect?	No	No	Yes – positive	Yes – positive	Yes – positive	Uncertain
Discussion	<p>According to survey data from 2020, Caerphilly has the second largest number of commuters out of all the local authorities in South East Wales (however this is based on predictive travel during the Covid-19 pandemic).³⁷</p> <p>According to data from the 2011 Census, most residents in Caerphilly travel to work by car/ van (42.4%). The 2011 Census further highlights that fewer residents travel to work on foot or work from home compared to the average for Wales, however this is likely to have changed significantly since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in early 2020. Also, according to the 2011 census, residents in Caerphilly are also less likely to use buses, minibuses, or coaches to commute to work in comparison to the average for Wales.</p> <p>Caerphilly’s regional and local road network comprise larger strategic routes and smaller access roads, which pose unique challenges for residents. Key roads comprising the strategic highway network include the A467 (Pontymister to Llanhilleth), A472 (Newbridge to Nelson), A472 (Crumlin to Hafodyrynys), A469 (Ystrad Mynach to Pwllypant), A468/ A469 (Penrhos to Pwllypant), and A4048 (Sirhowy Enterprise Way to Pentwynmawr). The Heads of the Valley Road (A465) also runs through the north of the County Borough. The A472 helps define the Mid Valleys Corridor in the centre of the County Borough, providing connections to the east and west, and connecting with other key roads to the north and south, and in this respect Option 3, which delivers 81% of its sites in this area, including a strategic site at Maesycwmmmer, performs particularly well. Options 4 and 5, which deliver 69% and 71% of their sites in the centre of the County Borough respectively, also perform well. Option 1, conversely, only delivers 53% of its sites here.</p> <p>In terms of public transport, Caerphilly is relatively well serviced with sixteen railway stations and an extensive bus network. Park and rides support reduced car use in Caerphilly’s centres, which in turn incentivise active travel uptake for residents and visitors alike. Existing active travel opportunities throughout the County Borough include the cycle network, which is expansive and offers excellent opportunities for residents to travel to services for recreational purposes. There are several national cycle routes (NCN) in Caerphilly, including the Celtic Trail (running through Chepstow), Twrch Trail (near Cwmcarn), Aber Valley Cycle Route (running between Caerphilly and Senghenydd), Darren Valley (running between Bargoed and Fochriw), and Aberbargoed to New Tredegar. More broadly speaking, active travel approved routes and designated localities are concentrated in the centre of the County Borough, as well as in the south within and around Caerphilly town. In this respect, Options 3, 4, 5 and 6 perform particularly well, as growth is directed to these areas. Conversely, Option 2 would perform less favourably in this respect through focusing growth within the HOVRA; however, this option also has the potential to improve the limited active travel options in the north of the County Borough.</p>					

³⁷ StatsWales (2020): ‘Detailed commuting patterns in Wales by Welsh local authority’, [online] available to access via [this link](#)

Option 4 focuses growth in areas that will benefit from the investment opportunities delivered through the South Wales Metro, which will provide an opportunity for alternative sustainable travel; providing faster, more frequent and joined-up services using trains, buses and light rail. Notably, the Regional Bus Rapid Transit will provide an east-west connection that will complement north-south travel connectivity provided by the railway lines, giving residents direct access to economic opportunities located throughout the County Borough. The growth proposed through Option 4 will likely capitalise upon existing transport infrastructure at these locations, further promoting active travel and integrated sustainable transport opportunities. It is considered that delivering jobs and homes here will likely support levels of self-containment, reducing reliance on the private car for access to employment. To a lesser extent, positive effects are also anticipated through Option 5, which seeks to locate growth in Principal and Local Centres, which generally support the most sustainable transport networks. Positive effects are also predicted through Option 3, which delivers a new strategic site at Maesycwmmwr. It is considered that the level of growth proposed would include a level of new and improved transport infrastructure to support the site, delivering a new sustainable community.

Notably, the more rural areas in the north of the County Borough lack sufficient sustainable transport infrastructure and connectivity, which is a contributing factor to the relatively high level of deprivation experienced in this part of Caerphilly as residents are less able to access jobs in the wider County Borough. Whilst Option 2, which focuses growth in the HOVRA, has the potential to improve transport infrastructure in the north of the County Borough, there is also a risk of promoting unsustainable travel patterns if supporting infrastructure is lacking. Option 1 also delivers a relatively high percentage (19%) of growth in the HOVRA, and in this respect, these options are considered to perform least favourably.

It is recognised that all options have the potential to contribute positively towards Welsh Government's commitment to reducing reliance on the private car. All options will support the sustainable transport hierarchy through encouraging a modal shift towards walking, cycling and public transport usage (Planning Policy Wales, Edition 11³⁸). In terms of ranking the options, **Options 4** is identified as best performing overall, and is likely to lead to **long-term significant positive effects** by directing growth to the areas in Caerphilly with the best existing sustainable transport infrastructure. It is noted that these are also the areas likely to be targeted for investment through the South Wales Metro. **Options 3 and 5** also perform well, and both are considered likely to lead to significant positive effects by promoting growth in the centre of the County Borough (**Option 3**) and Principal and Local Centres (**Option 5**). **Option 6** will contribute positively towards the use of sustainable transport due to its focus on growth in the Caerphilly Basin, which is already well served by active/ public transport; however, this option focuses growth in only one area of the County Borough. **Options 1 and 2** are worst performing overall; for **Option 1** this is due to the insufficient number of deliverable sites, and for **Option 2** this is due to existing poor active transport provisions.

³⁸ Welsh Government (2021): 'Planning Policy Wales – Edition 11', [online] available to access via [this link](#)

ISA topic: Natural resources (air, land, minerals and waste)

Options	Option 1 – Continuation of the LDP Strategy	Option 2 – Heads of the Valleys Regeneration Area Focus	Option 3 – Key Strategic Site	Option 4 – Metro Investment Focus	Option 5 – Town Centre First	Option 6 – Caerphilly Basin Focus
Rank	1	2	1	1	1	2
Significant effect?	Uncertain	Yes – negative	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Yes – negative
Discussion	<p>In terms of air quality, whilst air pollution is not a significant problem across the County Borough, there are two Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) declared in Caerphilly: Caerphilly Town Centre AQMA and Hafodyrnyys Road AQMA. Therefore, by directing growth to Caerphilly town and the surrounding areas, Option 6 has the greatest potential to exacerbate existing air quality issues by increasing the number of road users and associated congestion. However, as with all options, Option 6 will be required to deliver mitigation where possible to ensure that development does not worsen air quality in these AQMAs or result in the declaration of new ones. On the other hand, Option 4, which supports the use of sustainable transport to the greatest degree by focusing growth in and around key public transport nodes, will likely have the lowest impact on air quality. Nevertheless, all options have the potential to lead to positive effects through capitalising upon the strategic links to the Cardiff Capital Region (CCR) and the provisions of the City Deal. The CCR is committed to a low carbon future, delivering healthier and sustainable travel options, which would likely provide opportunity for building more sustainable communities and improved air quality. Furthermore, the current pandemic has resulted in higher levels of homeworking, which although not certain, is considered likely to prevail in the longer-term, reducing the number of road users and associated congestion which contributes to poor air quality.</p> <p>The urban areas in Caerphilly are unlikely to be underlain by high-quality agricultural land according to the predictive Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) assessment³⁹. Equally, the remaining areas of the County Borough are primarily underlain by Grade 4 agricultural land, and there is an area of Grade 5 agricultural land in the HOVRA. However, there are areas of Grade 3b agricultural land in the central and southern parts of the County Borough, and areas of Grade 3a agricultural land within the Caerphilly Basin. Only a small part of the County Borough, to the south of Draethen, is underlain by Grade 2 agricultural land, which is identified as high quality and best and most versatile (BMV). In this respect, Option 6 is most likely to result in the loss of productive agricultural land, whereas Option 2 is least likely to result in the loss of such land. Option 5 also performs well by directing development to the Principal and Local Centres, which are unlikely to be underlain by high-quality agricultural land due to their urban nature. Brownfield sites are also more likely to be found in and around the Principal and Local Centres.</p> <p>Most of Caerphilly lies within the South Wales Coalfield, comprising carboniferous coal measures underlain by millstone grit and carboniferous limestone. The coalfield is divided into two areas, which are referred to as 'Coal Mining Development High Risk and Low Risk Areas'. The Coal Authority has recently (2020) published 'Development High Risk Area' data, which shows that a significant proportion of Caerphilly falls within Development High Risk Areas, particularly in and around Rhymney in the north, in the central area between Nelson and Newbridge, and in the</p>					

³⁹ Welsh Government (2019): 'Predictive Agricultural Land Assessment (ALC) Map 2', [online] available to access via [this link](#)

south in and around Caerphilly and to the west of Risca.⁴⁰ Development through all options will be impacted by these areas to some extent, although Option 2 will likely be affected to the greatest degree as the Development High Risk Area in and around Rhymney covers the largest area.

There are several aggregate extraction sites in the County Borough, two of which – Bryn Quarry and Machen Quarry – are currently active. Bryn Quarry is located in the centre of the County Borough, between Nelson and Gelligaer, and Machen Quarry in the south. Of all the options, Options 3 and 6 would be impacted the most given that they direct growth to these areas of the County Borough. In addition to these extraction sites, there are three mineral safeguarding areas in Caerphilly, which protected areas of sandstone, limestone and sand and gravel resources. The sandstone safeguarding area covers much of the County Borough, spanning from Abertyswg in the north to Caerphilly town in the south. The limestone safeguarding area only covers a small swath of land running between the south of Caerphilly town up to Risca, whilst the sand and gravel safeguarding area only covers some very small areas near Nelson in the centre and Draethen in the south east. All options are therefore constrained to some degree by mineral safeguarding areas, and it is difficult to rank options in this respect although safeguarding does not indicate an acceptance of mineral working, but that the location and quality of the mineral is known.

All options are considered to lead to neutral effects in terms of waste, as all are capable of being served by appropriate waste infrastructure.

Caerphilly falls within the South East Valleys Catchment Management Abstraction Strategy (CAMS) area. Reliability of water availability in this catchment was assessed in 2016 by Natural Resources Wales; areas with higher availability (at least 50%) found in the southern areas, supplying settlements such as Caerphilly town and Blackwood. In this respect, Options 3, 4, 5 and 6 perform favourably. In terms of rivers, according to the 2015 classification for overall ecological status, rivers that flow through the County Borough are of varying quality. The Rhymney River, which flows from Rhymney in the north, through Caerphilly town and into Cardiff in the south, is of good ecological quality, although the quality decreases further south. Some tributaries in the north are of poor overall quality, which could be worsened by the effects of future development. Similarly, the Sirhowy, which runs through Blackwood and Pontllanfraith, appears to be of good ecological quality, although the Ebbw, which the Sirhowy flows into just before it reaches Risca in the south of the County Borough, is of moderate ecological quality. It is considered that all options have the ability to worsen the ecological quality of these rivers if effective mitigation measures are not put in place.

Caerphilly falls within the South East Wales Conjunctive Use System (SEWCUS) Water Resource Zones (WRZ). The SEWCUS supplies the entire County Borough, and a significant proportion of the South East Wales Region. In total, there are over 40 resources that are used to supply the SEWCUS WRZ, which include a mixture of river abstractions from the larger rivers in the east of the WRZ and relatively small upland reservoir sources with small catchment areas.⁴¹ The total demand for water is forecast to remain relatively stable until 2030, with a decline in demand anticipated between 2030 and 2050, and then to just 10% of current demands by 2050.⁴² Water companies are legally required to supply water to private consumers and businesses within their area. As set out in the Water Industry Act 1991, they must prepare and maintain a Water Resources Management Plan (WRMP) that sets out how the company intends to maintain the balance between water supply and

⁴⁰ The Coal Authority (no date): 'Interactive Map', [online] available to access via [this link](#)

⁴¹ Welsh Water (2019): 'Water Resources Management Plan 2019', [online] available to access via [this link](#)

⁴² Welsh Water (2019), *Ibid.*

demand. Water companies update their WRMPs every 5 years to take account of predicted growth and ensure that there are schemes in place to meet future demands.

All options are anticipated to deliver neutral effects in terms of impact on water resources, with no best performing option identified, given the legal requirements in place for WRMPs. It is expected that development coming forward under any of the options will be encouraged to be water efficient and may deliver mitigation (for example rainwater harvesting measures) to support reduced water use per person per day.

Overall, while it is difficult to identify any significant differences between the options in terms of natural resources, **Options 1, 3, 4 and 5** are ranked more favourably than **Options 2 and 6** as they have fewer constraints. Specifically, constraints for **Option 2** concern Development High Risk Areas and water availability, whilst constraints for **Option 6** concern AQMAs, the loss of productive agricultural land and aggregate extraction sites. Due to this, **uncertainty** is noted with regard to significant effects arising from Options 1, 3, 4 and 5, whilst **significant negative effects** are predicted for Options 2 and 6.

ISA topic: Biodiversity and geodiversity

Options	Option 1 – Continuation of the LDP Strategy	Option 2 – Heads of the Valleys Regeneration Area Focus	Option 3 – Key Strategic Site	Option 4 – Metro Investment Focus	Option 5 – Town Centre First	Option 6 – Caerphilly Basin Focus
Rank	1	2	3	1	1	2
Significant effect?	Uncertain	Uncertain	Yes – negative	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain
Discussion	<p>In terms of biodiversity and geodiversity, the impact of growth proposed through the options will ultimately be dependent on the precise location of development. There is only one internationally designated site within the County Borough, which is the Aberbargoed Grasslands SAC (which is also a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Nature Reserve), located 1 kilometre from Bargoed. Although all options contain several sites in the centre of the County Borough, Option 3 is likely to have the greatest impact on this internationally designated site as it delivers 81% of its total growth in the centre, including 1,200 homes at the strategic site in Maesycwmmmer, located 3.6 kilometres away. Whilst a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) for Caerphilly is yet to be released, the impact of development on this site is likely to relate to disturbance and/or recreational pressure.</p> <p>In terms of nationally designated sites, there are 13 SSSIs that fall wholly within the County Borough. Eight of these have been designated for their biological interest, and the remaining five for their geological interest. Spatially, the SSSIs are distributed relatively evenly across the County Borough, however there is a greater concentration of SSSIs in the central and southern areas of Caerphilly. Similarly, to the above, Option 3 is likely to have the greatest impact on these nationally designated sites, with strategic site Maesycwmmmer located only 1.1 kilometres southwest of Penllwyn Grasslands and Memorial Park Meadows Pontllanfraith SSSIs. Adding to this, Option 6, which focuses growth in the Caerphilly Basin, is also restricted by several SSSIs surrounding Caerphilly town and Risca in the south of the County Borough.</p> <p>Ancient woodland is concentrated in the south of the County Borough, and therefore Option 6 has the greatest potential for detrimental impact through disturbances associated with new development. In terms of priority habitats, these are largely concentrated in the north of the County Borough and will likely be affected the most by Option 2, however there are smaller priority habitats located throughout Caerphilly with the potential to be impacted by all options.</p> <p>In terms of locally important biodiversity, there are four Local Nature Reserves (LNR) designated within the County Borough, which are Cwmllywdrew Meadows, Memorial Park Meadows, Graig Goch, and Flatwoods Meadows. These are only small, and dispersed across the County Borough, and therefore one option is not considered more likely to impact these LNRs than another. There are also over 190 Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) (also known as Local Wildlife Sites (LWSs)) designated within the County Borough. The SINC network comprises many separate parcels of land that have been identified as supporting valuable wildlife, such as butterflies and dragonflies, white-clawed Crayfish and other aquatic invertebrates. Grassland fungi have been confirmed at several sites. Similarly, the options cannot be differentiated in respect to their impact on these SINCs as it is considered that development coming forward under any of the options could have localised impacts on these designed sites.</p>					

In addition to designated sites, all options have the potential to result in adverse effects on biodiversity through the loss of greenfield land. Habitat fragmentation is a key issue for the County Borough; for example, fragmentation of hedgerows caused by development and canalised streams and rivers. Options 1, 3, 4 and 5 are likely to result in habitat loss and fragmentation across a wider area of the County Borough, whereas Options 2 and 6 are likely to have an effect of greater significance on a more localised area.

Overall, it is considered that all options have the potential to adversely impact upon the County Borough's biodiversity resource, with the potential for significant residual negative effects. However, **Option 3** is considered most likely to lead to **significant negative effects** due to the proximity of the strategic site in Maesycwmmer to internationally designated site Aberbargoed Grasslands SAC, and nationally designated Penllwyn Grasslands and Memorial Park Meadows Pontllanfraith SSSIs. **Option 6**, although less certain, also has potential to lead to significant negative effects as there are several SSSIs concentrated in the south of the County Borough. **Options 1, 3, 4 and 5** perform most favourably, however significant effects are still uncertain at this stage as these options could still impact designated sites at a lower level. Notably, all options have the potential to deliver positive effects as a result of the biodiversity duty. However, the nature and extent of this through the various options is currently unknown, and therefore it is difficult to differentiate the options in this respect. Ultimately, the significance of effects will be dependent on the design/ layout of development as well as the implementation of mitigation measures.

ISA topic: Historic environment

Options	Option 1 – Continuation of the LDP Strategy	Option 2 – Heads of the Valleys Regeneration Area Focus	Option 3 – Key Strategic Site	Option 4 – Metro Investment Focus	Option 5 – Town Centre First	Option 6 – Caerphilly Basin Focus
Rank	=	=	=	=	=	=
Significant effect?	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain
Discussion	<p>There are a total of 411 listed buildings in the County Borough, which consist of two Grade I, 31 Grade II* and 378 Grade II listed buildings. In addition to this, there are 47 scheduled monuments, four historic parks and gardens, and 16 conservation areas. As assets are largely located in Caerphilly’s Principal and Local Centres, which are a focus for development across all options, it is difficult to differentiate between them.</p> <p>It is worth noting that development also has the potential to deliver neutral/ positive effects by positively contributing to an area’s character or appearance, as well as through regeneration, supporting understanding of and access to heritage assets. It is also noted that directing growth to one part of the County Borough will preserve the historic environment in the remainder of the County Borough, maintaining the historic landscape and setting of towns and villages, and protecting settlement identity. In this respect, Options 2 and 6 perform well by directing growth to the north and south of the County Borough respectively, as a large number of heritage assets are found in the centre of the County Borough. It is recognised that Caerphilly’s cultural assets also include the use of the Welsh language. None of the options are considered likely to have a significant effect on the Welsh language, and it is therefore not possible to distinguish between the options in this respect.</p> <p>Overall, it is difficult to rank the options according to this ISA topic. All are predicted to have a residual significant effect as they direct development to areas that are sensitive in terms of the historic environment, albeit in different areas of the County Borough. It is considered that the significance of effects will ultimately be dependent on the design/ layout of development as well as the implementation of mitigation measures. Therefore, at this stage, all options are ranked equally, and uncertainty is noted.</p>					

ISA topic: Landscape

Options	Option 1 – Continuation of the LDP Strategy	Option 2 – Heads of the Valleys Regeneration Area Focus	Option 3 – Key Strategic Site	Option 4 – Metro Investment Focus	Option 5 – Town Centre First	Option 6 – Caerphilly Basin Focus
Rank	1	3	1	1	1	2
Significant effect?	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain
Discussion	<p>Caerphilly has a rich and diverse landscape, with the south eastern part of the County Borough falling within the Cardiff, Barry and Newport National Character Area (NCA), and the remaining part of the County Borough falling within the South Wales Valley NCA. There are currently five Special Landscape Areas (SLAs) in Caerphilly, concentrated in the south and west of the County Borough. In this respect, Option 6, which directs growth to the south of the County Borough, will likely impact these SLAs to the greatest degree. In addition to this, there are several Visually Important Local Landscapes (VILLs) throughout the County Borough. VILLs include the Northern Rhymney Valley and Manmoel which are located in the north, Abercarn which is located in the east, and Rudry in the south. In this respect, all options have the potential to impact VILLs to some degree as they extend across the County Borough.</p> <p>The Brecon Beacons National Park is adjacent to the northern boundary of the County Borough. In relation to this, Planning Policy Wales⁴³ highlights that “...<i>planning authorities should give great weight to the statutory purposes of National Parks, which are to conserve and enhance their natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage, and to promote opportunities for public understanding and enjoyment of their special qualities</i>”. Notably, there is an established Local Development Plan (LDP)⁴⁴ in place for the Brecon Beacons National Park, which defines the National Park Authority’s approach for ensuring sustainable development is carried out in the National Park. Whilst a level of protection is provided through the National Park’s LDP, given the level of growth proposed through all options, development has the potential to adversely impact upon the special landscape features, character, and setting of the Brecon Beacons. Most constrained in this respect is Option 2, which directs growth to the HOVRA in the north of the County Borough, which is adjacent to the National Park. Conversely, Option 6, which directions growth to the Caerphilly Basin in the south of the County Borough, will likely reduce the potential for residual adverse effects on the National Park.</p> <p>Overall, given the many landscape assets present within the County Borough, it is difficult to differentiate between the options in relation to this ISA topic. Despite this, Option 2 is ranked least favourably given it directs growth closest to the Brecon Beacons National Park, however its potential to lead to significant effects is uncertain and will depend on the design/ layout of new development. Conversely, Option 6 directs growth furthest from the National Park, however there is a greater concentration of SLAs in the south of the County Borough, hence this option comes with its own constraints. As such, Options 1, 3, 4 and 5 are ranked more positively than both Options 2 and 6, however uncertainty is noted across these options. This is given that the precise location of growth is currently unknown, which will determine the degree to which the surrounding landscape and its setting is impacted by development.</p>					

⁴³ Welsh Government (2021): ‘Planning Policy Wales – Edition 11’, [online] available to access via [this link](#)

⁴⁴ Brecon Beacons National Park Authority (2013): ‘Brecon Beacons National Park Local Development Plan’, [online] available to access via [this link](#)

ISA topic: Climate change (mitigation and adaptation)

Options	Option 1 – Continuation of the LDP Strategy	Option 2 – Heads of the Valleys Regeneration Area Focus	Option 3 – Key Strategic Site	Option 4 – Metro Investment Focus	Option 5 – Town Centre First	Option 6 – Caerphilly Basin Focus
Rank	2	2	1	1	1	3
Significant effect?	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Yes – negative
Discussion	<p>Development proposed under any of the options has the potential to incorporate renewable or low carbon energy, EV charging and smart infrastructure which can support more resilient community infrastructure. Notably, developments with large strategic sites often have the potential to deliver a greater variety of infrastructure, including active/ public transport infrastructure in addition to the provisions mentioned above. In this respect, Option 3, which delivers 1,200 homes at a strategic site in Maesycwmmer, has the greatest potential to deliver the infrastructure needed to support a sustainable and low-carbon community. Options 4 and 5 also perform well, as they direct growth to the most sustainable locations (Principal and Local Centres with existing sustainable transport networks), contributing positively towards minimising carbon emissions.</p> <p>Due to the County Borough's location, the water catchments receive a high annual average rainfall. Thin sandy soils, the sandstone and the rocks of the coal measures do not retain large quantities of water in storage, and therefore provide little base flow support to the water courses. Consequently, the main rivers and tributaries are 'flashy' in nature, resulting in periodic flooding.</p> <p>In line with the Flood Risk Regulations (2009), the Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment (PFRA) process was carried out for Caerphilly in 2011⁴⁵ to establish the level of flood risk within the area. Afterwards, a Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (2013)⁴⁶ was produced, which sets out the findings of the PFRA. The Strategy identifies areas above the flood risk threshold, which are largely concentrated in the centre and south of the County Borough, including Caerphilly town, Bargoed, Blackwood, Ystrad Mynach, Abercarn and Risca. Notably, areas above the flood risk threshold appear to be located along the paths of the Rhymney River and Ebbw and Sirhowy Rivers. In this respect, both fluvial and surface water flood risk is largely confined to the river corridors that pass through the County Borough from north to south.</p> <p>It is considered that all new development will accord with Technical Advice Note (TAN) 15: Development and Flood risk (2004), which sets out a precautionary framework to direct new development away from those areas which are at high risk of flooding. To this effect, in accordance with national policy, information will need to be provided to demonstrate that any development proposal satisfies the tests contained in the TAN.</p> <p>Regarding the above, all options deliver growth in one or more settlements effected by fluvial/ surface water flood risk, as many of the Principal and Local Centres, where growth is focused across all options, are situated along the river corridors. However, Option 2, which primarily</p>					

⁴⁵ Caerphilly County Borough Council (2011): 'Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment Report (PFRA)', [online] available to access via [this link](#)

⁴⁶ Caerphilly County Borough Council (2013): 'Local Flood Risk Management Strategy', [online] available to access via [this link](#)

delivers growth in the north of the County Borough, where flood risk is lowest, performs most favourably. Conversely, Option 6, which primarily delivers growth in the south of the County Borough, where flood risk is highest, especially around Caerphilly town, performs least favourably.

Overall, it is considered that **Options 3, 4 and 5** perform most favourably as they direct growth to the most sustainable locations, however, uncertainty is noted with regard to significant effects as the design of development, as well as supporting infrastructure is currently unknown. **Options 1 and 2** perform least favourably, as the insufficient number of deliverable sites that would be realised through **Option 1** limits its potential to deliver suitable infrastructure to enable sustainable communities, whilst **Option 2**, although in an area of low flood risk, locates growth in the most remote part of the County Borough. **Option 6** performs least favourably as it directs growth to the south of Caerphilly, where flood risk is at its highest, with the potential for **significant negative effects**.

Table B.2 Summary findings and conclusions for spatial strategy options

ISA topic	Rank/ significant effect	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4	Option 5	Option 6
Economy and employment	Rank	3	2	1	1	1	2
	Significant effect?	Yes – negative	Uncertain	Yes – positive	Yes – positive	Yes – positive	Uncertain
Population and communities	Rank	4	3	1	1	1	2
	Significant effect?	No	No	Yes – positive	Yes – positive	Yes – positive	Uncertain
Health and wellbeing	Rank	2	2	1	1	1	2
	Significant effect?	Yes – positive	Yes – positive	Yes – positive	Yes – positive	Yes – positive	Yes – positive
Equality, diversity and inclusion	Rank	3	2	1	1	1	2
	Significant effect?	No	Uncertain	Yes – positive	Yes – positive	Yes – positive	Uncertain
Transport and movement	Rank	4	4	2	1	2	3
	Significant effect?	No	No	Yes – positive	Yes – positive	Yes – positive	Uncertain
Natural resources (air, land, minerals and waste)	Rank	1	2	1	1	1	2
	Significant effect?	Uncertain	Yes – negative	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Yes – negative
Biodiversity and geodiversity	Rank	1	2	3	1	1	2
	Significant effect?	Uncertain	Uncertain	Yes – negative	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain
Historic environment	Rank	=	=	=	=	=	=
	Significant effect?	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain
Landscape	Rank	1	3	1	1	1	2
	Significant effect?	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain
Climate change (mitigation and adaptation)	Rank	2	2	1	1	1	3
	Significant effect?	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Uncertain	Yes – negative

Options 3, 4 and 5 perform well across the economy and employment, population and communities, health and wellbeing, equality diversity and inclusion, and transport and movement ISA topics. These three options are considered likely to lead to significant positive effects regarding these ISA topics, focusing growth in the most sustainable locations, where there is better access to public transport, existing employment opportunities, and facilities and services. Although there are some small differences between these options in terms of how growth is distributed during the plan period, they are not significant enough to warrant one option being ranked higher or lower than the other. Across these ISA topics, significant negative effects are only predicted for Option 1 under economy and employment, as it restricts growth in Caerphilly town and is predicted to fall short of the identified housing need.

Options 1, 2 and 6 also perform well regarding the health and wellbeing ISA topic, although only minor positive effects are predicted. This is because Options 2 and 6 focus growth in only one area of the County Borough, whilst there is an insufficient number of deliverable sites with respect to Option 1. In this respect, these options have less potential to deliver substantial benefits in terms of health and wellbeing across the wider County Borough.

At present, there is little to differentiate between the options regarding the historic environment ISA topic, given that all options have the potential to result in negative effects by directing development to areas that are sensitive in terms of heritage constraints, albeit in different areas of the County Borough. However, it is recognised that mitigation could be provided, and that development also has the potential to deliver positive effects through improvement/ enhancement measures secured at the design stage. Hence, the nature and significance of effects will be dependent on the precise scale and location of development, which is currently unknown.

Whilst similar conclusions can also be drawn in relation to the biodiversity and geodiversity ISA topic (given the presence of international, national and local designations throughout the County Borough), significant negative effects can be predicted for Option 3. This is because the strategic site it delivers in Maesycwmmer is located close to Aberbargoed Grasslands SAC (a European-designated site), and even closer to nationally designated sites Penllwyn Grasslands SSSI and Memorial Park Meadows Pontllanfraith SSSI.

In terms of the landscape and climate change ISA topics, Option 3, 4 and 5 direct growth to the most sustainable areas, which are also less sensitive in landscape terms, and are therefore considered to perform more strongly than other options. The remaining options direct growth to less sustainable locations with high flood risk (though it is anticipated that high flood risk areas will be avoided in line with national policy and sequential testing), and are constrained by landscape designations, which is reflected by their ranks. Option 6 is predicted to lead to significant negative effects with regard to the climate change ISA topic, as it directs growth to an area of high flood risk. However, given that the precise location of development is currently unknown, uncertainty is noted for all of the options with regard to these two ISA topics.

Regarding the natural resources ISA topic, while it is difficult to identify any significant differences between the options in terms of natural resources, Options 1, 3, 4 and 5 are ranked more favourably than Options 2 and 6 as they have fewer constraints. Specifically, constraints for Option 2 concern Coal Mining Development High Risk Areas and water availability, whilst constraints for Option 6 concern AQMAs, the loss

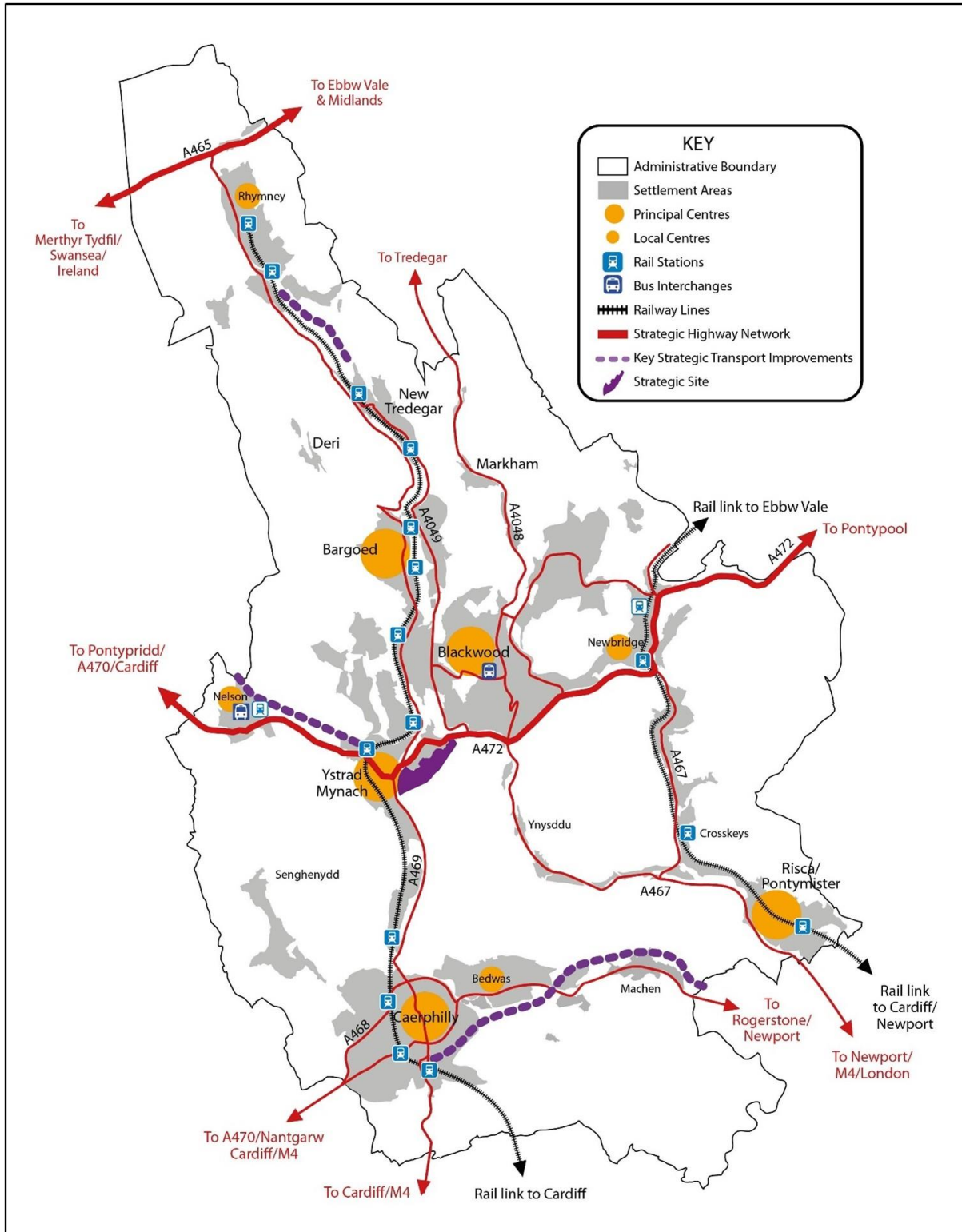
of productive agricultural land and aggregate extraction sites. Due to these constraints, Options 2 and 6 are considered likely to lead to significant negative effects.

Overall, **Options 3, 4 and 5** perform more favourably, leading to **significant positive effects** for half of the ISA topics assessed. Option 3 is the only option that leads to significant negative effects for one ISA topic – biodiversity and geodiversity – however, it is likely that these effects can be mitigated through site design/ layout. In terms of the best performing option, **Option 4** has a slight edge on the other two options, however all three options are still deemed to perform extremely well. Conversely, **Options 1, 2 and 6** perform less favourably, and it is difficult to differentiate between them as they all have a relatively equal number of negative effects across the ISA topics. However, significant negative effects are only concluded under one ISA topic for Options 1 and 6, therefore **Option 2** has a slight edge.

Appraisal of the strategic growth area

Maesycwmmmer

The location of the strategic site, Maesycwmmmer, is shown in **Figure B.1** below.



ISA topic: Economy and employment

Option	Maesycwmmmer
Significant effect?	Yes – positive
Discussion	<p>The strategic site maximises self-containment within the local area by focussing housing and employment growth near Principal Centre and key transport node, Ystrad Mynach, which is located to the west of the site. This will likely strengthen the local economy, enabling working aged people to both live and work within the County Borough, with residual positive effects for the transport and movement and climate change ISA topics. By focusing growth near an existing centre, this site supports the vitality of high streets by increasing footfall. Whilst high streets are vital to both the local economy and the sense of place of a centre, it is noted that the role of high streets is changing as consumer shopping patterns change, including an increase in online shopping, and this has been exacerbated by Covid-19.</p> <p>This site also capitalises on the opportunities associated with the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal and the South Wales Metro, directing growth close to key public transport nodes, including Hengoed and Ystrad Mynach train stations along the Rhymney line. Additionally, residents will have good access to the major bus stations at Blackwood and Nelson (although slightly further afield), connecting residents with employment opportunities throughout the region.</p> <p>The strategic site will also facilitate road improvements to a key point of congestion on the A472 at this location, whilst improving active travel and public transport links at the A469/ A472 junction. In addition to this, the site is located within walking/ cycling distance of Hengoed Station, which is on the Rhymney Valley Line and the proposed Mid-Valleys Rapid Transit Link on the A472. Accessibility is further strengthened by the site’s central location within the County Borough, allowing residents with reasonable access to all corners of Caerphilly.</p> <p>Overall, significant positive effects are predicted for this strategic site regarding the economy and employment ISA topic.</p>

ISA topic: Population and communities

Option	Maesycwmmmer
Significant effect?	Yes – positive
Discussion	<p>The delivery of 1,200 homes at the Maesycwmmmer strategic site will contribute positively towards meeting the identified housing needs of Caerphilly, including affordable housing needs. Importantly, the strategic nature of the site will enable an increased level of infrastructure delivery, likely including services and facilities, green infrastructure and transport improvements, to support new and existing communities in and around Maesycwmmmer. Moreover, the site's location near existing sustainable transport nodes will maximise opportunities for residents to meet their needs across the County Borough.</p> <p>Notably, there has been a decline in the population in the northern part of the County Borough over recent years. Conversely, significant development pressure in the southern part of the County Borough has arisen due to population growth, contributed towards increasing pressure on services and facilities in and around Caerphilly town. In this respect, this strategic site performs well by directing growth to the northern part of the Country Borough, which will relieve pressure in the south whilst strengthening communities in the north.</p> <p>Overall, significant positive effects are considered likely for this strategic site regarding the population and communities ISA topic.</p>

ISA topic: Health and wellbeing

Option	Maesycwmmmer
Significant effect?	Yes – positive
Discussion	<p>By delivering growth near Principal Centre and sustainable transport node, Ystrad Mynach, the strategic site will ensure residents have access to a range of services and facilities, including health, leisure and recreational facilities, which they can access via sustainable modes of transport. This will contribute towards improved physical and mental health and wellbeing by encouraging healthier lifestyles, quality living environments and community cohesion. Moreover, due to the size of the site, it will likely deliver public open/ green spaces and green infrastructure, and due to the creation of a new community, placemaking opportunities will be maximised by allowing streets to be designed afresh. Adding to this, development of the site will be required to comply with the biodiversity duty, further supporting green spaces/ infrastructure. Moreover, landscape led design/ strategic masterplanning will likely ensure that the green infrastructure on site is connected/ accessible to the wider network.</p> <p>Nearby train stations Hengoed and Ystrad Mynach will also allow residents of the strategic site to access the Brecon Beacons National Park from Rhymney in the north, as well as the wider countryside across the County Borough. This will lead to positive effects by supporting access to recreational/ open space, which is a priority for residents, particularly since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic which has led to lifestyle changes.</p> <p>In terms of access to health facilities, there are several GP and dental surgeries, as well as pharmacies and opticians, within walking/ cycling distance of the centre of the strategic site, particularly in Ystrad Mynach to the west, but also in Pontllanfraith to the east. In addition to this, the Ysbyty Ystrad Fawr hospital in Ystrad Mynach is located approximately 1.5 kilometres from the centre of the site. There is also potential to deliver health facilities on-site, which will be particularly important if existing nearby facilities are current near/ at full capacity.</p> <p>Overall, significant positive effects are predicted for the strategic site regarding the health and wellbeing ISA topic.</p>

ISA topic: Equality, diversity and inclusion

Option	Maesycwmmmer
Significant effect?	Uncertain
Discussion	<p>Population densities are, as would be expected, highest in the towns within the County Borough. Therefore, by delivering growth near the Principal Centre of Ystrad Mynach, the strategic site is likely to deliver positive outcomes in terms of providing increased opportunities for all, through the delivery of affordable housing and provision of local jobs.</p> <p>The location of the site benefits from the strategic links to the Cardiff Capital Region and the provisions of the City Deal, which will likely provide opportunities for building more sustainable communities and achieving infrastructure improvements/ provisions across the County Borough.</p> <p>Notably, Caerphilly has one of the lowest Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic populations compared to other Welsh authorities, particularly neighbouring Cardiff and Newport, which are the most ethnically diverse of the Welsh authorities. Therefore, by directing growth to the Mid Valleys Corridor, the strategic site may contribute positively towards increasing Caerphilly's ethnic diversity. Utilising strategic links into and within the Cardiff Capital Region will also perform positively in this respect, supporting cross-boundary community cohesion and capitalising upon regional social infrastructure connections.</p> <p>Whilst there is potential for the strategic site to deliver significant positive effects against this ISA topic, uncertainty is noted at this stage. This is given that, whilst the provision of affordable housing and local jobs will help support equality and inclusion, it may be more difficult to encourage diversity in the Mid Valleys due to its distance from more diverse areas such as Cardiff and Newport. This is because people from ethnic minorities may not wish to leave/ move far from more diverse areas, where they perhaps feel a greater sense of community.</p>

ISA topic: Transport and movement

Option	Maesycwmmmer
Significant effect?	Uncertain
Discussion	<p>Focusing growth near Principal Centre Ystrad Mynach, the strategic site will perform positively against transport objectives by supporting a degree of self-containment, i.e. a situation whereby residents' need to travel beyond the local area (where trips can often be made by walking / cycling) is minimised. The strategic site will also support good access to high quality transport infrastructure, in particular public transport infrastructure, enabling longer trips (in particular commuting trips at peak times) to be made in such a way that per capita greenhouse gas emissions and traffic congestion (with associated pollution and impacts to economic productivity) are both minimised.</p> <p>Specifically, the site capitalises on the opportunities associated with the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal and the South Wales Metro. Directing growth close to key public transport nodes, including Hengoed and Ystrad Mynach train stations along the Rhymney line, and the major bus stations at Blackwood and Nelson (although further afield), this option will provide residents with good access to the wider County Borough and further afield. This site will also facilitate road improvements to a key point of congestion on the A472 at this location, whilst improving active travel and public transport links at the A469/ A472 junction. In addition to this, the site is located within walking/ cycling distance of Hengoed Station, which is on the proposed Mid-Valleys Rapid Transit Link on the A472. Notably, all these opportunities are strengthened by the site's central location within the County Borough, allowing easy and sustainable access to all corners of Caerphilly.</p> <p>In terms of active travel routes, the National Cycle Network National Route 47 cycleway crosses the proposed link onto the A472 at the northern tie in. In addition to this, there are several PRoWs crossing the site, including footpaths and restricted byways, which should be retained and/ or enhanced where possible.</p> <p>In terms of site access, the site will be required to provide the Maesycwmmmer Bypass as development cannot proceed without the improvement that the Bypass will provide for the strategic highway network. Careful consideration needs to be given to the tie ins of the bypass on the A469 and A472 and the configuration of access points along its length. In this respect, the successful delivery of the strategic site is highly dependent on the delivery of significant transport infrastructure.</p> <p>Overall, uncertainty is noted for the transport and movement ISA topic as the strategic site has the potential to both increase active/ public transport and private car usage by facilitating both means of transport. Moreover, the site is highly dependent on the delivery of the Maesycwmmmer Bypass.</p>

ISA topic: Natural resources (air, land, minerals and water)

Option	Maesycwmmmer
Significant effect?	Uncertain
Discussion	<p>The strategic site is not located near an existing AQMA; however, it has potential to worsen congestion in the local area due to additional pressure on the existing transport infrastructure. However, new transport infrastructure will be delivered on-site, which will relieve this to some degree. Nevertheless, due to the size of the development and the air quality results currently being recorded in the Maesycwmmmer area, an Air Quality Impact Assessment will be required. It is considered that suitable mitigation will likely be delivered as a result.</p> <p>In terms of agricultural land classification, much of the land proposed for the site is underlain by Grade 3b agricultural land. In this respect, development at this site is unlikely to lead to the loss of productive agricultural land, although this is still uncertain at this stage. Nevertheless, as much of the land is greenfield, the loss of this resource will lead to negative effects against this ISA topic.</p> <p>In addition to the above points, the land has pockets of potentially contaminated parcels, linked to the old Gwernau Colliery and associated Mineral Railways. In this respect, ground investigations will be required before development can commence.</p> <p>The site is partially located within a 'Coal Mining Development High Risk Area', as well as a sandstone safeguarding area. However, given that much of the County Borough falls within these areas, this is largely unavoidable. Nevertheless, a Coal Mining Risk Assessment will be required.</p> <p>In terms of water resources, Dwr Cymru Welsh Water confirms that a water supply can be made available to service the proposed development site. However, an assessment may be required, especially for the larger densities, to understand the extent of off-site mains required. It is expected that development coming forward via the strategic site will be encouraged to be water efficient and may deliver mitigation (e.g. rainwater harvesting) to support reduced water use. Records held by the Council indicate the presence of watercourses and culverts within the proposed site, which will result in constraints on development.</p> <p>Finally, due to the size of the public sewerage system in this area, and the likely demands from the proposed development site, it is unlikely the public sewers will be adequate to accommodate the site. A hydraulic modelling assessment will be required to understand the point of connection and/ or any potential improvements required.</p> <p>Overall, uncertainty is noted for this ISA topic at this stage, given the uncertainty surrounding the aforementioned issues. Further investigation, and details on the site's design/ layout, will be required before a final conclusion can be made.</p>

ISA topic: Biodiversity and geodiversity

Option	Maesycwmmmer
Significant effect?	Uncertain
Discussion	<p>The strategic site is located 3.6 kilometres to the south of internationally designated site Aberbargoed Grasslands SAC, which is likely significantly far away as not to be impacted directly by development at Maesycwmmmer. In terms of nationally designated sites, the site is located 1.1 kilometres southwest of Penllwyn Grasslands and Memorial Park Meadows Pontllanfraith SSSIs, which have the potential to be impacted by development due to disturbance during construction, as well as increased footfall following the site’s completion.</p> <p>Maesycwmmmer Meadows SINC covers three parcels of land near the boundary of the site – the woodland surrounding the playing field, a small pond to the east of the strategic site, and a larger area on the southern boundary of the site. The fields in the southernmost parcel of the SINC, which lie adjacent to Nant y Twyn, are high-quality grasslands, although other marshy grassland habitats within the site are also of value for habitat connectivity, together with woodlands and hedgerows throughout the area. Parts of the site also contain fragments of ancient woodland, and in this respect, the site has the potential to negatively impact biodiversity. The biodiversity duty may mitigate the above to some extent, or even improve habitat connectivity regarding these habitats. Moreover, landscape led masterplanning of the site has the potential to support connectivity and strengthen pockets of habitats through the creation of a network of green spaces/ infrastructure.</p> <p>There are Great Crested Newts known to breed in the vicinity of the site, and evidence of dormice has been recorded south of the site. Moreover, the hedgerows, woodlands and scrub within/ near the site also have potential to support dormice, as well as bats, and buildings within/ near the site also have potential to support bats. There are also historical records for Marsh Fritillary Butterflies in the marshy grassland areas south of Maesycwmmmer, and the area supports a rare liverwort. Consequently, ecological surveys will need to be carried out to ensure development does not impact these species, particularly the European protected species.</p> <p>Overall, uncertainty is noted regarding the biodiversity and geodiversity ISA topic, as the strategic site has the potential to impact several designated sites, as well as notable habitats and species. In order to reach a solid conclusion, further on-site investigations will be required, i.e. work to establish how development might avoid sensitive areas and deliver habitat creation and/ or enhancement in line with strategic priorities. Hence, it is not possible to conclude on the likelihood of significant effects at this stage.</p>

ISA topic: Historic environment

Option	Maesycwmmmer
Significant effect?	Uncertain
Discussion	<p>In terms of heritage constraints, there is notably no designated conservation area in the vicinity of the strategic site, such that concerns relate mostly to avoiding impacts to the setting of sporadic Grade II* and Grade II listed buildings.</p> <p>In Maesycwmmmer itself, located approximately 400 metres to the northwest of the site, is 'Tabor United Reformed Church', a Grade II* listed building. As the site is at a higher elevation than the church, there is potential for development to impact the setting of the church. However, it is recognised that there is good potential to mitigate impacts through masterplanning and design measures.</p> <p>The south eastern extent of the strategic site is approximately 400 metres from 'Stable range at Tyle-gwyn', and 'Tyle-gwyn', two Grade II listed buildings. In addition to this, the eastern extent of the site is approximately 100 metres from 'Heather Cottage', 'Siloh Presbyterian Church' and 'Pair of chest tombs at Siloh Presbyterian Church', also Grade II listed buildings. However, the impact of the proposed development will be primarily in terms of visual amenity from the listed buildings at Gelligroes, with the Siloh Presbyterian Church and Heather Cottage having the greatest impact. This will be reduced due to the proposed location of development and the natural landscape separating the boundary between Gelligroes and the proposed site. 'Tabor United Reformed Church', 'Stable range at Tyle-gwyn' and 'Tyle-gwyn' are removed from the proposed development courtesy of the geography of the landscape between the proposed development and the listed buildings.</p> <p>Whilst the Council highlight that there is no overriding objection in principle to the development of this site for the proposed uses, any development would need to take due care and consideration of the current policy and design guidance in relation to the historic environment, to preclude any development having an adverse impact upon the setting or character of the historic environment. Notably, given the strategic scale of the site, it has a higher likelihood of impacting the setting of the historic environment.</p> <p>In this respect, uncertainty is noted with regard to the historic environment ISA topic, as the design/ layout of the site will ultimately impact how it affects the setting of the nearby Grade II* and Grade II listed buildings.</p>

ISA topic: Landscape

Option	Maesycwmmmer
Significant effect?	Yes – negative
Discussion	<p>The strategic site covers an SLA, which spans the open landscape between Maesycwmmmer in the north and Bedwas/ Machen in the south/ south east. Given the scale of the site, it is considered that development would likely lead to a significant intrusion into the landscape setting of Maesycwmmmer, fragmenting the SLA. The hillside is notably very prominent from the wider area, particularly from the A469 dual carriageway. Development therefore has the potential to impact upon important views, character and landscape setting, likely leading to significant negative effects in the long term.</p> <p>Another consideration is the risk of coalescence, or at least loss of a robust landscape gap between Maesycwmmmer and The Bryn, Pontllanfraith, which are approximately 600 metres apart. The potential loss of settlement identity and distinctive settlement pattern again has the potential for significant negative effects on the landscape.</p> <p>In addition to the above, there are prominent landscape features, including hedgerows, hedgerow trees, individual trees, and woodland copses within the site that may be worthy of Tree Preservation Order (TPO) status. It is considered that an arboriculture survey would be required to determine age, condition and potential life span of all trees, which contribute to the character of the site. Nevertheless, development at this site also has the potential to improve tree coverage through high quality landscaping including new planting where appropriate.</p> <p>Overall, significant negative effects are considered likely as a result of the scale and location of the site within the wider landscape, encroaching on the openness of the SLA. However, it is noted that further detailed work including landscape led masterplanning and detailed design will likely mitigate to some extent the site’s overall impact on the landscape.</p>

ISA topic: Climate change (mitigation and adaptation)

Option	Maesycwmmmer
Significant effect?	No
Discussion	<p>In terms of climate change mitigation, matters relating to per capita greenhouse gas emissions and sustainable transport opportunities are discussed above under the transportation ISA topic.</p> <p>The key point to note is that as a larger scheme, the strategic site will be associated with a greater likelihood of delivering measures that ultimately support minimisation of per capita greenhouse gas emissions from the built environment. The scale of development could deliver decentralised heat/ power generation from renewable or low carbon sources and will likely deliver development to high standards of sustainable design and construction, in line with the climate change objectives of the 2RLDP.</p> <p>However, there remains the need to consider scheme viability, and to factor-in site-specific considerations relating to delivery of essential ‘grey’ infrastructure, community infrastructure, affordable housing and green infrastructure before consideration can be given to delivery of low carbon infrastructure, or use of low carbon materials, design and structure.</p> <p>In terms of climate change adaptation, the site lies within Flood Zone 1, with a very low chance of fluvial flooding. In terms of surface water flood risk, a Flood Consequences Assessment is required to consider the risk of surface water flooding. However, data shows that parts of the site are at high risk of surface water flooding, which appear to be drains flowing into the Rhymney River to the west and the Sirhowy River to the east. However, these are relatively isolated areas that should be easily avoided and can be mitigated through sustainable drainage systems (SuDS).</p> <p>Overall, significant effects are not considered likely at this stage for the climate change ISA topic. However, there is potential for minor positive effects as the strategic site has potential to deliver on-site mitigation measures, such as low-carbon technologies. Moreover, the site is located in a sustainable location, maximising potential to utilise active travel and public transport. Flood risk (both fluvial and surface water) across the site is low, with only a few isolated areas of high surface water flood risk. Masterplanning could ensure these areas are avoided in terms of the location of housing, and instead used for green infrastructure.</p>

Table B.3 Summary findings and conclusions for the growth option

ISA topic	Significant effect?
Economy and employment	Yes – positive
Population and communities	Yes – positive
Health and wellbeing	Yes – positive
Equality, diversity and inclusion	Uncertain
Transport and movement	Uncertain
Natural resources (air, land, minerals and waste)	Uncertain
Biodiversity and geodiversity	Uncertain
Historic environment	Uncertain
Landscape	Yes – negative
Climate change (mitigation and adaptation)	No

Overall, significant positive effects are considered likely for the economy and employment, population and communities and health and wellbeing ISA topics as the site promotes economic and population growth in a sustainable location, near Principal Centre and key transport node Ystrad Mynach, whilst delivering improvements to active travel and green infrastructure, and connections to the wider countryside and the Brecon Beacons National Park.

Although it performs well, uncertainty is noted for the equality, diversity and inclusion ISA topic as although the provision of affordable housing and local jobs will help support equality and inclusion, it may be more difficult to encourage diversity in the Mid Valleys Corridor of the County Borough, where existing diversity is low compared to Wales.

Uncertainty is also noted for the transport and movement, natural resources, biodiversity and geodiversity, and historic environment ISA topics. This is because the site is highly dependent on the delivery of the Maesycwmmmer Bypass, constraints concerning air, land and minerals, potential impacts on several designated sites, as well as notable habitats and species, and the proximity of the site to several Grade II* and Grade II listed buildings.

Significant negative effects are predicted for the landscape ISA topic, due to likely negative impacts on surrounding settlements as a result of the size and position of the strategic site within the wider landscape. However, it is noted that the design/ layout of the site will largely impact the site's overall impact on the landscape, and therefore a degree of uncertainty is noted.

Finally, no significant effects are considered likely for the climate change ISA topic, which is due to the global nature of this topic, as well as the potential for the strategic site to deliver on site mitigation measures. Moreover, the flood risk associated with the site is low, and it is considered that adaptation measures, such as SuDS, will appropriately address any residual surface water flood risk. There is even potential for minor positive effects, given the site's sustainable location close to an existing public transport hub, and potential to deliver a low/ zero carbon development.

Overall, the strategic site at Maesycwmmmer performs relatively well, and the only real drawback concerns the landscape ISA topic.

