

MERTHYR TYDFIL LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2006-2021

**ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT
For the period
1st April 2014 – 31st March 2015**

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**Miss J. Jones
Head of Town Planning
Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council
Unit 5
Triangle Business Park
Pentrebach
Merthyr Tydfil
CF48 4TQ**

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Merthyr Tydfil Local Development Plan 2006-2021 was formally adopted by Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council on 25th May 2011.
- 1.2 Under the provisions of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, all Councils have a duty to produce an LDP Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) which must be submitted to the Welsh Government at the end of October each year.
- 1.3 This report represents the fourth AMR of the Merthyr Tydfil LDP and is based on the period 1st April 2014 – 31st March 2015 with referrals to earlier parts of the plan period where indicators dictate this to be necessary. The Report has two primary roles – the first is to consider whether the policies identified in the monitoring framework are being implemented, and secondly, to consider whether the plan as a whole is working successfully, and if not, whether a partial or complete review is necessary.

The requirement for LDP monitoring

- 1.4 In order to monitor performance consistently, the plan needs to be considered against a standard set of monitoring targets and indicators. Chapter 6 of the LDP sets out the monitoring targets and indicators that will be used as a basis for this AMR and reflect the information that is required to be included by LDP Regulation 37. In this context, the AMR is required to:
- Identify policies that are not being implemented, and for each such policy
 - identify reasons why the policy is not being implemented
 - identify steps that can be taken to enable the policy to be implemented
 - explore whether a revision to the plan is required.
 - Specify the housing land supply from the current Housing Land Availability Report for that year, and for the full period since the adoption of the plan,
 - Specify the number of net additional affordable and general market dwellings built in the LPA area for that year, and for the full period since the adoption of the plan.
- 1.5 The LDP Manual supplements the above requirement by setting out additional factors that should be assessed in the AMR, namely:
- Whether the basic strategy remains sound (if not, a full plan review may be needed);
 - What impact the policies are having globally, nationally, regionally and locally;
 - Whether the policies need changing to reflect changes in national policy;
 - Whether policies and related targets in the LDP have been met or progress is being made towards meeting them, including publication of relevant supplementary planning guidance (SPG);
 - Where progress has not been made, the reasons for this and what knock-on effects it may have;

- What aspects, if any, of the LDP need adjusting or replacing because they are not working as intended or are not achieving the objectives of the strategy and/or sustainable development objectives; and
- If policies or proposals need changing, what suggested actions are required to achieve this.

1.6 Monitoring the LDP also accords with the requirements for monitoring the sustainability performance of the plan through the Strategic Environmental Assessment / Sustainability Appraisal (SEA/SA). There is, inherently, a cross over between the information used to inform the SEA/SA monitoring and that used to monitor the plan directly.

Format and content of the Annual Monitoring Report

1.7 The AMR has been designed as much as possible to be a succinct and easily accessible document that can be used as a convenient point of reference to ascertain the Plan's performance over the period under review.

1.8 Inevitably, the monitoring process involves the collection and interpretation of significant amounts of data, but the Council considers that the inclusion of this more detailed information within the AMR would lead to the report being overly long and cumbersome to use. Content has therefore been restricted to the pertinent results.

- Sections 2 and 3 consider the extent to which each of the LDP's strategic objectives is being realised with reference to **policy performance** and relevant **policy assessments**. As part of this consideration, the report also examines any contextual changes that have occurred during the period under review.
- Section 4 reports on the implementation of the **Community Infrastructure Levy** during the monitoring period.
- Sections 5 and 6 consider **sustainability performance** through the **assessment of sustainability indicators** and outline the principal findings of monitoring against the indicators identified in the SEA/SA, identifying the main effects and whether a review of the plan is necessary on sustainability grounds.
- Section 7 contains the **conclusions** and **recommendations** with reference to the analysis made in the preceding sections.
- **Appendix 1** sets out a quick-reference summary to policy achievements based on the template for the full monitoring framework included at Chapter 6 of the LDP Written Statement.

Policies considered to be failing

1.9 If policies are found to be failing, clear recommendations on what needs to be done to address these failings are identified as part of Section 3.

1.10 However, just because a policy reaches one (or more) of its trigger levels, it should not be assumed that the policy is necessarily failing. There may be extraneous circumstances that are causing the poor performance which the plan has no control

over, or the policy may be failing in part due to over-achievement in other policy areas. It is the role of the AMR to consider whether the policy is failing or whether there are mitigating circumstances that could not be influenced by the Plan. Where it is found that the Monitoring Framework results are affected by factors outside the remit of the plan, amending the plan will have no effect and will not ensure the implementation of policy as required by the Regulations. In these instances, the policy cannot be construed to be failing and will not be identified as such in its consideration in the AMR.

- 1.11 Furthermore, whilst there is a significant amount of statistical information gathered and used in monitoring, the information gained through this process must be balanced against a complete consideration of the policies and issues raised. It would be inappropriate for the statistical information to solely and directly dictate when policies, or the plan as a whole, require amendment. Such a literal and rigid assessment would fail to take account of the multitude and variety of factors that influence the performance of the plan. A more measured and considered approach, that takes account of these factors, whilst acknowledging the findings of the monitoring information, provides the best approach to ensure effective monitoring of the plan.

Future Monitoring

- 1.12 The monitoring process is dependent upon a wide range of statistical information that is sourced from both local authority and external sources. Whilst the Council can control information that it supplies, it is recognised there is a risk of change in respect of external data which lies beyond the control of the Planning Authority. Even minor changes to external data have the potential to render certain existing Indicators ineffective or obsolete. As a consequence, the Council envisages that the Monitoring Framework will inevitably evolve during the course of the plan period and each Annual Monitoring Report will be used as a means of drawing attention to unavoidable change.

2.0 Policy Performance

- 2.1 This section considers the extent to which the LDP's strategy is being realised with reference to the performance of particular policies against the indicators, targets and triggers contained within the LDP monitoring framework. The structure of the section is as follows:

Strategic objective

- 2.2 This is the starting point for the monitoring process. The AMR replicates each of the 12 overarching LDP objectives from which the LDP policies flow.

Contextual changes

- 2.3 Before the performance of the policies is considered, it is important for the AMR to identify any significant contextual changes that have occurred since the LDP was prepared. Such changes are likely to be circumstantial in nature and will lie outside the remit of the Plan.
- 2.4 In identifying any relevant contextual changes, the AMR is able to consider the implications of each change and whether or not the performance of an individual policy is likely to have been affected.

Indicators

- 2.5 The LDP monitoring framework contains a variety of core and local indicators which will inform policy progress and achievement. The selection of these indicators has been guided by the need to identify output indicators which are able to measure quantifiable physical activities that are directly related to the implementation of LDP policies.
- 2.6 Several of the core indicators are either prescribed by LDP Regulation 37 or recommended by the LDP Manual for their ability to enable an assessment of the implementation of national policy. Further core indicators were identified on the basis of their ability to provide useful information on whether the delivery of the LDP strategy is progressing as anticipated.
- 2.7 The local indicators supplement the core indicators and have been selected based on the availability and quality of data and their relevance to the local area. Some local contextual indicators have also been included which cover key local characteristics against which LDP policies operate.

Targets

- 2.8 The policy indicators are associated with corresponding targets which provide a benchmark for measuring policy implementation. Given the length of the plan period, it is necessary to incorporate 'milestone' targets to determine whether the Plan is progressing towards meeting the overall strategy. The timeframe attributed to such targets primarily relates to the anticipated delivery of development. The Council will investigate any policy that fails to meet its target. The level of consideration given to

such policies within the AMR will depend on the reasons identified for the failure and the significance of the policy for the delivery of the overall plan strategy.

Triggers

- 2.9 Trigger levels have also been included for certain targets to ensure that any potential failings in policy implementation are identified at an early stage enabling an early review of the Plan if necessary. They will provide a clear indication of when policy targets are not being met, or insufficient progress is being made towards meeting them.

Analysis

- 2.10 Having set out the results of policy performance with reference to the indicators, targets and triggers of the LDP's monitoring framework, the AMR proceeds to provide an analysis of those results and includes the identification of any policies that have reached their trigger points. This analysis also considers whether those policies require amendment taking into account any mitigating circumstances.

Recommendations

- 2.11 Following the analysis of policy performance, appropriate recommendations are put forward including a statement of any actions that are required to be taken. For instance, certain policies may need adjusting or amendments to the plan may be required to secure successful implementation overall.

Overall findings for each strategic objective

- 2.12 Finally, for each strategic objective, an overall statement of performance is provided and a conclusion made on whether that particular objective is being achieved through the combination of policies identified.

Explanation of performance criteria

- 2.13 As a visual aid in monitoring the effectiveness of individual policies, and to provide a quick reference to collective policy performance, a colour coded assessment is included based on the criteria set out below. Colour coding in certain cells may be split to reflect the fact that performance against targets may sometimes differ from performance against trigger levels.

Targets / objectives are being achieved.	Green
Targets have not been achieved but there are no concerns over the implementation of policy / objectives.	Yellow
Targets have not been achieved with resulting concern over implementation of policy / objectives.	Red

3.0 Policy Assessments

3.1 The following pages set out the policy assessments with reference to the relevant strategic objectives.

Strategic Objective SO1: To capitalise on Merthyr’s strategic position, further developing its role as the main commercial, service and employment centre in the Heads of the Valleys area by focusing development within the main Town of Merthyr Tydfil.

3.1.1 Contextual Changes

Retail

The report “Town Centres and Retail Dynamics: Towards a Revised Retail Planning Policy for Wales” (April 2014), which examined the effects of current retail planning policies on town centres, found that Wales has a negative ‘balance of trade’ and pointed to the need to refresh parts of our existing retail planning policy. Following this, The Minister for Natural Resources agreed to commence work on a review of Chapter 10 of Planning Policy Wales and Technical Advice Note 4: Retailing and Town Centres (1996) in September 2014. This is intended to ensure that Retailing and Town Centre policy is up-to-date and takes into account the needs, requirements and changing character of 21st century town and retailing centres, as shopping trends evolve. Public consultation drafts of the Chapter 10 of Planning Policy Wales and Technical Advice Note 4: Retailing and Town Centres (1996) are anticipated to be published in the next monitoring period, and accordingly, an update will be provided in the next AMR (April 2015 – March 2016).

3.1.2 Policy Monitoring

LDP Policy	Indicator	Target	Trigger Level	Performance
BW1 AS1	Number of new homes built in the primary growth area	Between 1890 and 2110 net completions by April 2016	--	1212 completions by the end of March 2015
<p><u>Analysis</u></p> <p>The data collected shows that 1212 dwellings were built in the Primary Growth Area between the start of the plan period (2006) and the end of March 2015. In terms of spatial distribution across the County Borough, this figure indicates that the correct proportion of housing has been built in the Primary Growth Area in comparison to the Secondary and Other Growth Areas of the County Borough.</p> <p>However, in order to meet the target of between 1890 and 2110 completions by 2016, over</p>				

600 completions a year will now be required in the Primary Growth Area. Delivering over 600 dwellings per annum is not considered to be achievable given that the average number of housing completions per annum over the plan period to date has been approximately 155 dwellings; significantly less than the current levels required.

Recommendations

The adopted LDP is based on an enhanced growth strategy which, amongst other things, requires ambitious levels of housing delivery. The level of housing delivery over the plan period to date has been much lower than anticipated and it appears unlikely that the housing element of the LDP strategy can be met over the remaining plan period.

The statutory review of the LDP will consider the appropriateness of the LDPs strategy, policies and allocations in respect of housing, and recommendations will be made on the extent of changes required to the LDP in a review report. The latter will set out whether partial revisions can be made to the Plan in order to secure the level of housing delivery required, or whether a complete replacement plan is required.

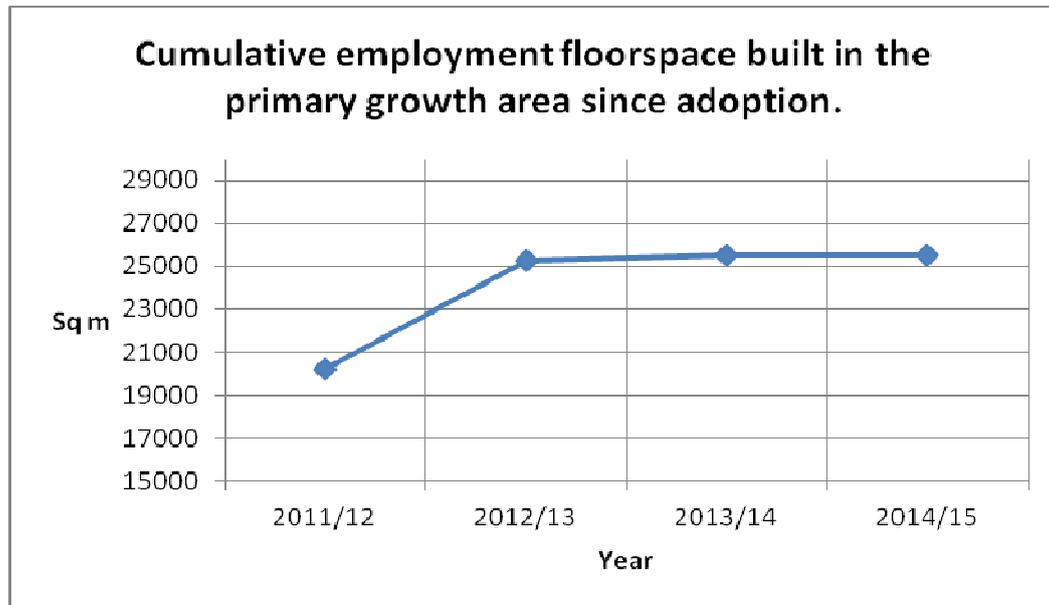
LDP Policy	Indicator	Target	Trigger Level	Performance	
BW1 AS14	New employment floorspace built in the primary growth area	Between 36,490 and 40,470 sq m net floorspace by April 2016	Greater than 14,700 sq m per annum or less than 1,834 sqm per annum for 2 consecutive years.	Current figure at end of March 2015 is 25,494 sq m	206 sqm of floorspace delivered during 2013/2014 0 sqm of floorspace delivered during 2014/2015

Analysis

The monitoring framework contains a performance indicator which relates to Policies BW1 and AS14, namely, a net target for employment floor space built in the Primary Growth Area by April 2016, and a trigger level figure.

As reported in the first AMR, the target indicator for the delivery of new employment floor space up to April 2011 (the end of the first phase of the plan) has been met. Whilst significant progress has been made towards meeting the employment floor-space target for 2016, there has been a significant slowdown in amount of employment floor-space delivered over the last two monitoring periods, with only 206 sq m delivered during 2013-2014 and 0 sq m delivered during 2014-2015 (see Graph 1 below which shows the cumulative floor-space built in the primary growth area since LDP adoption).

As a consequence, the cumulative amount of employment floor-space delivered remains at 25,494 sq m and the trigger level has now been reached as the amount of employment floor-space delivered has been less than 1834 sq m for two consecutive annual monitoring periods. If this trend continues it would appear unlikely that both the employment floor-space target for 2016 (between 36,490 and 40,470 sq m) and the longer term target for 2021 (at least 110,080 sq m) will be met.



Graph 1

Recommendations

The reduction in the amount of new employment floor-space delivered over the last two monitoring periods means that future delivery requirements will increase, and in turn, will be more difficult to achieve. Consequently, there is now less certainty over whether the employment floor-space targets for 2016 and 2021 will be met.

Further analysis of the employment market, including site delivery and market requirements, will need to be undertaken as part of the statutory review of the LDP. In doing so, a judgement will be made on the appropriateness of the LDP's strategy, policies and allocations in respect of employment.

Notwithstanding the above, further efforts need to be made to raise awareness of available sites within the County Borough and to promote Merthyr Tydfil as a suitable location for employment. More detailed recommendations on the marketing of employment sites can be found in the policy assessment section of Strategic Objective S07, which relates specifically to economic development.

LDP Policy	Indicator	Target	Trigger Level	Performance
AS18 AS20	<u>Core</u> New retail floorspace built in the town centre (sqm)	Approximately 1,460 sqm net floorspace by the end of 2016	No application registered by the end of 2014	No applications were registered by the end of 2014.

Analysis

The monitoring framework contains a core performance indicator which relates to Policies AS18 and AS20, namely a net target retail floor space figure for the Town Centre by the end of 2016, and a trigger level figure by the end of 2014. Meeting this target primarily depends on the delivery of the Central Bus Station allocation (R1).

In view of the fact that no applications for new retail floor-space were registered in the Town Centre by the end of 2014 this policy has hit its trigger level, which implies that the retail allocation on the Central Bus Station may not come forward as anticipated.

The development of the central bus station for retail is dependent on the relocation of the bus station to Swan Street on the combined sites of the former Hollies Health Centre and the Central Police Station. In terms of progress, both community services have been relocated to other sites within the County Borough and both buildings have now been demolished. A planning application for the new 'Intermodal Transport Facility', which will include a small amount of ancillary retail floor-space, is expected to be submitted in Autumn 2015, and should planning approval be granted, target start and completion dates have been set for the of summer 2016 and 2017 respectively.

As a consequence, the Central Bus Station will not be available for redevelopment until 2017, and as such, the target for this core indicator will not be met by the end of 2016. The site will however be available for the remaining four years of the life of the Plan, and whilst the retail development won't have come forward in the timescale anticipated, there remains a reasonable prospect of new retail floor-space being delivered in the town centre to meet the retail comparison goods requirement by 2021.

Recommendations

To closely monitor the progress on delivering the new 'Intermodal Transport Facility', and to revisit Policies AS18 and AS20 as part of the wider four year LDP review, taking into account any changes to national policy and guidance.

LDP Policy	Indicator	Target	Trigger Level	Performance	
AS18	<u>Local - Town Centre Health Checks</u> i) Total annual vacant floor space in Town Centre (Vacancy rate currently at 13% - Retail, Commercial and Leisure Capacity Study, 2009)	Vacancy rate to reduce to 9% (UK average 2009)	Vacancy rate increasing for 1 year or remaining static above target for 2 consecutive years	16.7%	Increased (+2.1%)
AS19	ii) Percentage of A1 retail uses in primary shopping area	Maintain a percentage of at least 83%	Percentage less than 83%	82.3%	A1 units no change

Analysis

The monitoring framework contains two indicators which provide an insight into the health of the town centre, namely the total amount of vacant floor-space in the town centre and the percentage of A1 retail uses in the primary shopping area.

In respect of the town centre vacancy rate, the current percentage of vacant units is 16.7%, which represents an increase of 2.1% from the previous AMR therefore hitting the trigger level.

The British Retail Consortium reported that the national town centre vacancy rate in the UK was 10.4% in January 2015, which is an improvement on the vacancy rate reported for the previous year. Similarly, the Wales Retail Consortium reported that the Welsh town centre vacancy rate for January 2015 was 15.5%, which again, represents an improvement over the monitoring period. Concerns do however remain over the overall health of Welsh town centres with a reported decline in footfall rate of 4.6% in January 2015, compared to a decline of 2.8% in January 2014.

There is considerable variation between the UK and Welsh town centre vacancy rates and whilst the monitoring target is based on the UK figure, it is considered more appropriate to compare Merthyr Tydfil's vacancy rate with the Welsh figure given the closer similarity in economic circumstances. In comparison, Merthyr Tydfil's town centre vacancy rate is 1.2% higher than Welsh town centre figure, which is in contrast to the previous year when Merthyr

Tydfil's town centre vacancy rate was lower. Whilst the increase in the Merthyr Tydfil's town centre vacancy rate is a cause for concern, it is recognised that the vacancy rates have fluctuated since the adoption of the LDP, showing both increases and decreases in previous AMRs.

With regard to percentage of A1 retail uses in the primary shopping area, the figure has remained the same as the previous AMR figure at 82.3%, which is marginally below the trigger level of less than 83%

Recommendations

Once again, the influence of the current economic situation has undoubtedly had an impact on the health of the town centre and, in particular, the failure to decrease the vacancy rates to the set target. The effectiveness of LDP Policy AS18 is therefore difficult to fully quantify.

Whilst there are concerns over the vacancy rate of Merthyr Tydfil's town centre moving above the Welsh figure for the first time since Plan adoption, it is recognised that Merthyr Tydfil's town centre vacancy rates have fluctuated since adoption of the LDP and future monitoring is necessary in order to identify whether a new trend has been established.

In addition, a further assessment of all retail related policy will be undertaken as part of the wider four year LDP review in order to identify whether any changes to policy are necessary. In particular, consideration will be given to revising the target of LDP Policy AS18 to align with the Welsh economy rather than reflect the economy of the UK.

Although the percentage of A1 retail uses in the Primary Shopping Area is marginally below the trigger level it has remained the same for the last two years and therefore does not give cause for concern over the effectiveness of LDP Policy AS19 at this point in time.

3.1.3 Overall summary on policy performance and conclusion on whether the strategic objective is being achieved

For the purposes of this annual monitoring report, the level of achievement towards Strategic Objective SO1 is based on the performance of 7 separate LDP policies as outlined above.

It is clear that the level of development in the Primary Growth Area has been lower than expected, particularly in respect of the number of new homes being constructed. There are also concerns over the slowdown in the amount of new employment floor-space delivered over the last two monitoring periods. Consequently, it currently appears unlikely that the LDP's enhanced growth strategy can be delivered without changes being made and it will be necessary for all undelivered allocated development sites to be revisited as part of the statutory four year review of the LDP.

In terms of the Town Centre, new retail floor-space has not come forward as quickly as anticipated; however, progress is being made with the relocation of the central bus

station and there remains a reasonable prospect of new retail development being delivered by 2021. Town centre vacancy rates have increased over the monitoring period and it is concerning that they are currently higher than the Welsh average. Further monitoring is however necessary in order to identify whether a new trend has been established. On a more positive note, the percentage of A1 retail uses in the primary shopping area remains broadly in line with its target.

It is therefore considered that this strategic objective is only partially being met and the issues identified above will need to be considered further as part of the wider four year LDP review.

3.2 **SO2: To focus appropriate levels of development within the County Borough's smaller valley communities to create affordable and attractive places to live with good access to jobs and services.**

3.2.1 **Contextual Changes**

No significant contextual changes relating to this strategic objective have been introduced during the monitoring period.

3.2.2 **Policy Monitoring**

LDP Policy	Indicator	Target	Trigger Level	Performance
BW2 AS2	Number of new homes built in secondary growth area	Between 280 and 320 net completions by April 2016	--	281 completions by the end of March 2015
<p><u>Analysis</u></p> <p>The monitoring data collated shows that 281 dwellings have been built in the Secondary Growth Area between the start of the Plan period and the end of March 2015. This figure indicates that the Secondary Growth Area has seen the increase in dwellings required in order to meet the target of between 280 to 320 dwellings by April 2016. This is predominantly the result of completions taking place on H48 (adjacent to the Shingrig Estate, Trelewis) which is likely to contribute a similar volume of housing over the next several years.</p> <p>As a consequence, in terms of spatial distribution, the correct proportion of housing has been built in the Secondary Growth Area in comparison to the Primary and Other Growth Areas of the County Borough.</p>				
<p><u>Recommendations</u></p> <p>This element of policy is being achieved, and as such, no action is required.</p>				

LDP Policy	Indicator	Target	Trigger Level	Performance
BW3 AS3	Number of new homes built in other growth areas.	Between 200 and 240 net completions by April 2016	-	43 completions by the end of March 2015

<p><u>Analysis</u></p> <p>The monitoring data collated shows that 43 dwellings have been built in the Other Growth Areas between the start of the Plan period and the end of March 2015. This figure indicates that the Other Growth Areas now require a significant rise in completions in order to meet the 2016 target.</p> <p>The majority of completions in the Other Growth Areas will take place on Project Riverside, Merthyr Vale, which is currently undergoing infrastructure works, including the construction of access roads and flood defences. These infrastructure works will be completed by November 2015 and the site will immediately be available for housing development.</p> <p>Whilst housing development on the site is unlikely to make a significant contribution to the 2016 target, it is considered that the 150 anticipated dwellings can delivered on the site by 2021. It is therefore considered that achieving the longer term target of delivering 245 new dwellings by 2021 remains a reasonable possibility and a 'yellow' score has again been given accordingly.</p>				
<p><u>Recommendations</u></p> <p>Whilst the housing completion target for 2016 is unlikely to be met for the Other Growth Areas, there is no immediate concern given the progress with Project Riverside's infrastructure works and the potential to meet the longer term target of delivering 245 new dwellings by 2021.</p> <p>Close monitoring of Project Riverside should therefore continue in conjunction with the full review of the LDP where the appropriateness of the housing strategy, policies and allocations will considered in more detail.</p>				

3.2.3 Overall summary on policy performance and conclusion on whether the strategic objective is being achieved

The level of achievement towards Strategic Objective SO2 is based on the performance of 4 separate LDP policies as outlined above.

The number of homes being constructed in the LDP's Secondary Growth Area indicates that the Plan's future aspirations have a realistic prospect of being realised in this part of the County Borough. Whilst there is also a realistic prospect of delivering the required number of houses in the Other Growth areas in the longer term, this very much depends on the successful delivery of Project Riverside. On balance, it is considered that progress is being made towards achieving Strategic Objective 2, but it is essential that progress on the delivery of Project Riverside is closely monitored.

Notwithstanding the above, it must be recognised that the lower than required number of homes being constructed in the LDP's Primary Growth Area is inextricably linked to development within the Secondary and Other Growth Areas and cannot be ignored. The appropriateness of the LDP's housing strategy in terms of both levels growth and spatial distribution will therefore need to be assessed as part of the statutory review of the LDP.

3.3 ***SO3: To promote regeneration through the use of suitable and appropriate brownfield land rather than greenfield sites.***

3.3.1 **Contextual Changes**

No significant contextual changes relating to this strategic objective have been introduced during the monitoring period.

3.3.2 **Policy Monitoring**

LDP Policy	Indicator	Target	Trigger Level	Performance
-	Amount of development permitted on previously developed land as a percentage of all development permitted (N.B. this would exclude householder applications and change of use from one non-residential use to another) (ha)	Maintain a percentage of at least 80% over the plan period	Less than 80% for 2 consecutive years	2014/15 – 92% permitted on previously developed land.
<p><u>Analysis</u></p> <p>The total amount of development permitted during the monitoring period was 19.12ha with 17.61 ha of this total area permitted on previously developed land. This equates to 92% of development being permitted on previously developed land.</p>				
<p><u>Recommendations</u></p> <p>This element of policy is currently being achieved, and as such, no action is required.</p>				

LDP Policy	Indicator	Target	Trigger Level	Performance
-	Amount of greenfield land lost as a result	No land lost	1 or 2 developments permitted for 2	No greenfield land lost

	of inappropriate development on sites not allocated in the LDP		consecutive years, or, 3 or more developments permitted in 1 year	
<p><u>Analysis</u></p> <p>During the monitoring period, no inappropriate developments were permitted which resulted in the loss of greenfield land on sites not allocated in the LDP.</p> <p>It should be noted that planning permission was granted for 10 dwellings on a greenfield site, which was located outside settlement limits and within a green wedge. However, the development proposed was for affordable housing which would meet a locally identified need and accordingly, was considered not to be inappropriate development as it met the requirements of paragraph 4.8.16 of Planning Policy Wales (Edition 7 – July 2014).</p>				
<p><u>Recommendations</u></p> <p>This element of policy is currently being achieved, and as such, no action is required.</p>				

3.3.3. Overall summary on policy performance and conclusion on whether the strategic objective is being achieved

The level of achievement towards Strategic Objective SO3 is based on compliance with the LDP's land-use strategy, particularly the Plan's spatial priorities and development allocations.

It is considered that this strategic objective is currently being achieved and there is no requirement for action other than to continue monitoring over the next 12 months.

3.4 **SO4: To support the principle of sustainability via an energy efficient land use/transport strategy.**

3.4.1 **Contextual Changes**

The five South East Wales Valleys Local Authorities of Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taf and Torfaen jointly developed the South East Wales Valleys Local Transport Plan (LTP), which was published in January 2015. The LTP identifies the following core activities and interventions in the region:

- Developing innovative walking, cycling and smarter choices programmes;
- Continuing investment in the regional rail system;
- Improving the quality of bus services across the region;
- Developing better public transport integration; and
- Making better use of the regional road system.

In addition, the LTP sets out a short-term programme for priority transport schemes to 2020 and a longer-term programme which identifies aspirations up to 2030.

The LTP replaces the Regional Transport Plan (SEWTA, 2009) which informed the preparation of the LDP. The priority transport schemes identified in the LTP are not fully reflected in the LDP and as such, further consideration needs to be given to the policy and land use implications of such schemes in order to ensure that they are deliverable in the context of local policy. This will be undertaken as part of the statutory four year review of the LDP.

3.4.2 **Policy Monitoring**

LDP Policy	Indicator	Target	Trigger Level	Performance
BW4	Percentage of new residential development within 400m of bus stop and 600 m of primary facilities including a shop and school	Maintain a percentage of at least 80% over the plan period	Less than 80% for 2 consecutive years	95%

Analysis

Over the monitoring period, 37 new residential developments were granted planning permission with 95% located within close proximity to local facilities. It is therefore considered that Policy BW4 is functioning effectively, guiding new residential development to

sustainable locations where local facilities can be accessed by foot or bicycle.

Recommendations

This element of policy is currently being achieved, and as such, no action is required.

LDP Policy	Indicator	Target	Trigger Level	Performance
-	Percentage of new dwellings completed at:		More than 25% of new dwellings at less than 25 dph for 2 consecutive years	
	(1) less than 20 dph;	Approximately 12%		14%
	(2) 20 dph or greater and less than 25 dph;	Approximately 13%		0%
	(3) 25 dph or greater and less than 30 dph;	Approximately 25%		66%
	(4) 30 dph or greater and less than 50 dph; and	Approximately 48%		16%
	(5) 50 dph or greater	Approximately 2%		4%

Analysis

The figures collected for the monitoring period show that dwellings were constructed broadly in line with the indicator's targets and that the majority of dwellings in the County Borough are constructed at approximately 25 to 35 dwellings per hectare (dph).

The fact that over 60% of completions were between 25 and 30 dph is largely attributable to a significant proportion of dwellings being completed on LDP site allocation H48 in Trelewis which has a density of just less than 30 dph.

Recommendations

This element of policy is currently being achieved, and as such, no action is required.

LDP Policy	Indicator	Target	Trigger Level	Performance	
-	Percentage of allocated sites developed (ha)	Approximately 65% of allocations developed by the end of 2016	Less than 25% of phased delivery rate for 2 consecutive years	Approximately 32% of allocations developed by March 2015	Delivered approximately 38% (6.7ha) (Trigger level 25% / approximately 4.5 ha)

Analysis

Over the monitoring period, approximately 6.7ha of allocated development sites have been delivered. When combined with the amount of previously developed first and second phase sites, this equates to 32% of allocated development sites developed by the end of the current monitoring period.

Whilst it is encouraging that allocated development sites continue to come forward, the anticipated phased delivery rate is not currently being met. The target is for approximately 65% of allocations to be delivered by 2016, and a significant increase in the delivery rate is now required for this target to be met. As such, a detailed assessment of the delivery of the LDPs enhanced growth strategy should be undertaken as part of the statutory four year review.

Notwithstanding the above, there are differences in the delivery of different types of development and accordingly, a brief overview is provided below.

In respect of community facilities, all health and education facilities have been delivered as anticipated.

In terms of housing, a further 4.93 ha of allocated housing sites has been developed over the monitoring period. This includes contributions from 3 LDP second phase allocated housing sites and 3 LDP first phase allocated housing sites that are being developed at a slower rate than anticipated. The delay in the delivery of housing sites is largely attributable to the poor condition of the housing market and the wider economic climate.

In order to stimulate development on allocated housing sites, the Council is utilising funding from the Welsh Government's Vibrant and Vibrant Places regeneration programme to undertake survey work and secure planning permission on a number of selected sites. In doing so, it is anticipated that development costs will be reduced and developers will have

more certainty with regard to the level of risk in developing allocated sites.

With regard to employment sites, further development has occurred on site allocation E6 (Rhydycar) – a first phase site – with the opening of the new Merthyr Bridewell police station. This has resulted in the development of approximately of 1.77 hectares of land, leaving approximately 1.78 hectares of land still to be delivered. No development has begun on the LDP’s second phase allocated employment sites, namely E4 (Goatmill Road) and E8 (Former Hoover car park). Development on both sites is not anticipated to be completed until 2016.

In previous monitoring reports, recommendations were made in respect of encouraging and supporting the development of additional business units for small to medium sized enterprises. With regard to this, further progress has been made towards the delivery of another incubation unit similar to the existing Orbit Centre. Scoping work has been undertaken for the creation of an enterprise centre within Cyfarthfa Castle and a stage 1 Heritage Lottery Fund application has been submitted with funding aligned to the ‘Vibrant and Viable Places’ initiative. The Cyfarthfa Enterprise Centre is intended to complement the existing Orbit Centre with latter providing high quality general office facilities to meet the needs of growing businesses. The Cyfarthfa Enterprise centre will also compliment the emerging Town Centre Enterprise Centre.

Recommendations

The Council’s Economic Development Department should continue to investigate opportunities for development on allocated employment sites and continue to focus on marketing and targeted funding.

All undelivered allocated housing and employment sites should also be reviewed as part of the statutory four year LDP review process.

LDP Policy	Indicator	Target	Trigger Level	Performance
-	Percentage of total development permitted on allocated sites (ha)	Maintain a target of approximately 85% over the plan period	Less than 80% for 2 consecutive years	Approximately 11%

Analysis

Over the monitoring period, approximately 11% of the total development permitted was on allocated sites. This figure is significantly below the target of 85%, and the trigger level of less than 80% has not been met for three consecutive monitoring periods. Allocated development sites are clearly not coming forward as anticipated and there are concerns over

whether the LDP's enhance strategy can be delivered by 2021.

The delayed delivery of allocated development sites is considered to be primarily the result of the economic downturn. Whilst the economy grew between 2012 and 2013 (GVA in Wales up by 3.7%), output from the construction sector still remains below the levels experienced at the pre-downturn peak in 2008 and there is little anecdotal evidence of any significant increase in local construction activity over the monitoring period.

The delivery of allocated development sites should improve as construction activity increases alongside economic growth, and the use of funding from the Welsh Government's Vibrant and Viable Places regeneration programme should also assist in stimulating development. However, it remains unlikely that the LDP's enhanced growth strategy will be delivered by 2021 given the extent to which anticipated delivery timescales have already been missed.

Recommendations

To consider undelivered allocated development sites as part of the wider four year LDP review.

LDP Policy	Indicator	Target	Trigger Level	Performance
AS10	Highway network improvements (1) Aberfan – Merthyr Vale Link (T1)	Deliver by the end of 2011	-	Not delivered by end of 2011 Under construction during 2014/2015

Analysis

Significant progress has been made towards the delivery of this highway network improvement, which is directly linked to the redevelopment of the former Merthyr Vale Colliery site (Project Riverside). It is anticipated that the infrastructure works will be completed by November 2015.

Recommendations

Progress on the delivery of this highway network improvement should continue to be closely monitored to ensure that any further delays in delivery are identified at the earliest opportunity and solutions are identified.

LDP Policy	Indicator	Target	Trigger Level	Performance
AS12	Remodelling of Merthyr Tydfil Central Bus Station	Deliver by the end of 2016	No application registered by the end of 2014	No application registered
<p><u>Analysis</u></p> <p>Merthyr Tydfil's central bus station is to be relocated to Swan Street on the combined sites of the former Hollies Health Centre and the Central Police Station. In terms of progress, both community services have been relocated to other sites within the County Borough and both buildings have now been demolished. A planning application for the new 'Intermodal Transport Facility' is expected to be submitted in Autumn 2015, and should planning approval be granted, target start and completion dates have been set for the of summer 2016 and 2017 respectively.</p>				
<p><u>Recommendations</u></p> <p>To closely monitor the progress on delivering the new 'Intermodal Transport Facility', and to revisit Policy AS12 as part of the wider four year LDP review.</p>				

3.4.3 Overall summary on policy performance and conclusion on whether the strategic objective is being achieved

For the purposes of this annual monitoring report, the level of achievement towards Strategic Objective SO4 is based on the performance of 2 separate LDP policies and compliance with the LDP's land-use strategy, particularly the Plan's spatial distribution of development allocations.

This objective is partially being achieved with both successes and areas of concern identified. In terms of the former, developments are continuing to come forward in sustainable locations where there is good access to local facilities and increased opportunity for using more sustainable modes of transport, such as walking and cycling. Housing density and brownfield land targets also continue to be met, reflecting a more efficient use of land resources. Finally, there has also been significant progress in the delivery of the Aberfan-Merthyr Vale link road, which will improve the efficiency of the local transport network and facilitate the redevelopment of the former Merthyr Vale Colliery site (Project Riverside).

The continued failure to meet targets relating to the delivery of allocated development sites remains an area of concern, particularly given that it is becoming increasingly unlikely that the LDPs strategy will be delivered by 2021. Whilst improving economic conditions and progress in the implementation of the Vibrant and Viable Places regeneration programme are steps in the direction, the appropriateness of the LDPs

strategy, policies and allocations will need to be fully considered as part of the statutory four year review of the LDP.

3.5 **SO5: To manage natural resources wisely avoiding irreversible damage in order to maintain and enhance their value for future generations.**

3.5.1 **Contextual Changes**

Minerals

The Annual Monitoring Report of 2013-2014 referred to the publication of the draft Regional Technical Statement (RTS) on Aggregates 1st Review document. The final edition of the RTS, which has been endorsed by all local authorities and the Welsh Government, has been now been published (25th July 2014) and remains unchanged from the draft RTS in respect of the joint apportionment for the future provision of land-won primary aggregates in Merthyr Tydfil and Brecon Beacons National Park.

Appendix B of the RTS indicates that the annualised amount for crushed rock is 0.82 million tonnes per year, which equates to 20.5 million tonnes of crushed rock over the 25 year period covered by the RTS. A comparison with the joint existing landbank of 94 million tonnes for crushed rock indicates that there is a surplus of existing permitted crushed rock reserves, and as such, no further allocations for crushed rock are required to be identified within the Merthyr Tydfil or Brecon Beacons National Park LDPs.

Notwithstanding the above, the potential need to revise the supporting text of relevant LDP policies in order to reflect these contextual changes should be considered as part of the statutory four year review of the LDP.

3.5.2 **Policy Monitoring**

LDP Policy	Indicator	Target	Trigger Level	Performance	
BW10	The tonnage (Mt) of primary land-won aggregates produced in accordance with the Regional Technical Statement for Aggregates	Minimum of 4.92 Mt produced by the end of 2016 (N.B. targets are based on joint production with Brecon Beacons National Park)	Less than 0.82 Mt per annum for 2 consecutive years	Circa 2.9 Mt of primary aggregates jointly produced since 2011	Circa 0.6 Mt of primary aggregates jointly produced in 2014
	Aggregates land bank	Minimum 10 year land bank maintained	Land bank falling below target	Adequate current land bank	

		throughout the plan period		
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Analysis

The monitoring framework contains two indicators which relate to Policy BW10, namely the annual production of aggregates and maintenance of a minimum 10 year land bank. Each indicator is considered separately below.

The original Regional Technical Statement on Aggregates (2008) provided joint apportionment figures for Merthyr Tydfil and Caerphilly, and accordingly, the combined tonnage of primary land-won aggregates produced by both authorities has been monitored since plan adoption. As discussed above, the situation has now changed with the RTS 1st Review (2014) providing joint apportionments for Merthyr Tydfil and Brecon Beacons National Park. Consequently, the monitoring target and data has been amended to reflect this change.

With regard to the tonnage of primary land-won aggregates produced, the combined aggregates production for Merthyr Tydfil and Brecon Beacons National Park was approximately 0.6 Mt in 2014. When combined with the amount of primary aggregates jointly produced since 2011, the cumulative total is approximately 2.9 Mt, which is below the anticipated level of aggregate production set out in the RTS 1st Review (2014).

Aggregate production is directly influenced by aggregate use or demand. The poor economic climate and depressed levels of activity in the building and construction industry has resulted in relatively low levels of crushed rock sales within the South Wales region, reflecting a weak demand. The most recent South Wales Regional Aggregates Working Party Annual Report (2013) continues to show this trend. It is therefore considered that the failure to produce the expected amount of aggregates in 2014 is a result of the economic downturn and that there are no policy constraints impeding the production of aggregates at the quarries within Merthyr Tydfil.

In respect of the aggregates land bank, Merthyr Tydfil's current land bank is sufficient to maintain a minimum 10 year land bank throughout the plan period. It is considered that Policy BW10 is functioning effectively and that there are no policy constraints that would hinder future aggregates production.

Recommendations

This element of policy is currently being achieved, and as such, no action is required.

LDP Policy	Indicator	Target	Trigger Level	Performance
BW8	Amount of development (by TAN 15 paragraph 5.1 development category) permitted in C1 and C2 floodplain areas not meeting all TAN 15 tests (paragraph 6.2 i-v)	No development permitted	1 or more developments permitted	No developments granted planning permission in C1 or C2 floodplain areas that do not meet all TAN 15 tests
	Developments incorporating sustainable urban drainage systems (SuDS)	All developments to include SuDS where appropriate (N.B. Excludes developments that have not incorporated SuDS for environmental or practical reasons)	1 or 2 developments permitted without SuDS for 2 consecutive years, or, 3 or more developments permitted without SuDS in 1 year	All developments granted planning permission incorporate SuDS where appropriate

Analysis

The monitoring framework contains two indicators which seek to monitor separate elements of Policy BW8, namely reducing flood risk and securing the incorporation of sustainable drainage systems in new developments. Each element is considered separately below.

In respect of flood risk, 13 developments were granted planning permission in zone C over the monitoring period. In all instances, the developments were justified in their location and the consequences associated with flooding were acceptable. As no developments were permitted in zone C that did not meet TAN 15 tests, it is considered that Policy BW8 is functioning effectively in respect of this matter.

In terms of securing SuDS in new developments, no developments have been granted planning permission without incorporating SuDS into the design of the scheme unless there have been environmental or practical reasons for not doing so. As such, it is considered that Policy BW8 is also functioning effectively in respect of securing SuDS in new developments.

Recommendations

This element of policy is currently being achieved, and as such, no action is required.

LDP Policy	Indicator	Target	Trigger Level	Performance
AS7	Amount of new licensed waste management facilities permitted	Between 1.1 and 3.2 hectares of B2 employment land developed for waste management facilities (N.B. New facilities will be delivered in partnership Rhondda Cynon Taf)	No new facilities granted planning permission by the end of 2012	Two new waste management facilities granted planning permission over monitoring period
	Landfill capacity at Trecatti	To maintain spare capacity over the Plan period	Input at the maximum of 625,000 tpa for 3 consecutive years	Input below maximum in 2013

Analysis

The monitoring framework contains two indicators which seek to monitor separate elements of Policy AS7, namely the delivery of waste management facilities on B2 employment sites and the safeguarding of Trecatti landfill site for continued disposal of residual waste.

With regards to the delivery of waste management facilities on B2 employment sites, a new waste sorting and transfer facility has been granted planning permission at Units 3 and 4 Merthyr Industrial Estate, which is an “*area of search*” for waste management facilities. This intermediate waste management facility will prepare high quality dry recyclables for onward shipment to recycling markets, and enable kerbside collected food waste to be bulked in sealed containers and transported to the Biogen anaerobic digestion treatment facility at Bryn Pica, Aberdare. It is anticipated that the latter will be operational and processing Merthyr Tydfil’s food waste by the summer of 2015.

In respect of the delivery of a waste management facility to treat residual waste streams, the procurement process is at its final stage and the preferred bidder is the Viridor energy recovery facility in Cardiff. It is anticipated that the facility will be processing Merthyr Tydfil’s residual waste by April 2016.

In terms of the delivery of a new civic amenity site to serve the southern half of the County Borough, a planning application has been approved for a replacement civic amenity site, which will accommodate larger volumes and a wider range of recyclable materials, at the existing site in Aberfan. It is anticipated that the replacement civic amenity site will be operational by mid-2015.

The Council’s decision to replace the civic amenity on the existing site at Aberfan now

means that the LDP allocation for a replacement civic amenity site to the east of Treharris (LDP Policy AS8) will no longer be implemented. Whilst this decision has implications for the review of the LDP, it does not affect the Council's objectives for improving waste services within the County Borough and meeting the Welsh Government's waste targets as set out in Towards Zero Waste.

In respect of the continued disposal of residual waste in Trecatti landfill site, the amount of waste inputted in 2013 was below the maximum of 625,000 tonnes per annum. Consequently, there are currently no concerns over maintaining space capacity during the Plan period.

Recommendations

This element of policy is currently being achieved, and as such, no action is required.

3.5.3 Overall summary on policy performance and conclusion on whether the strategic objective is being achieved

For the purposes of this annual monitoring report, the level of achievement towards Strategic Objective SO5 is based on the performance of 3 separate LDP policies, relating to minerals, waste and the water environment.

Targets relating to waste and the water environment have been achieved and the associated policies are considered to be functioning effectively. Whilst the tonnage of land-won aggregates produced in Merthyr and Brecon Beacons National Park have failed to meet the target during the monitoring period, it is considered that this reflects the relatively low level of demand in the building and construction industry, rather than policy constraints. It is therefore considered that Strategic Objective SO5 is currently being achieved.

- 3.6. **SO6: To provide a range of dwelling sizes and types, including affordable and special needs housing, which support the needs of the local community, attract new inhabitants to the area and create mixed and socially inclusive communities.**

3.6.1 Contextual Changes

A revised Technical Advice Note (TAN) 1: Joint Housing Land Availability Studies (JHLAS) was published in January 2015, which outlined the revised categories for sites included in the schedule, and finalised the new timetable and method for production of the report. The method of calculating housing land supply has not changed as part of this revision.

Merthyr Tydfil's Local Housing Market Assessment (LHMA), covering the period 2014-2019, was published in February 2015. The LHMA found a much higher need for affordable housing than was indicated at the time of preparing the LDP, with a requirement of 366 net additional affordable dwellings a year. In particular, there is a shortage of affordable smaller properties, with an annual need of 314 one bedroom dwellings, and 53 two bedroom dwellings. The implications for the LDP's housing related policies and allocations will be considered as part of the statutory four year review of the LDP.

3.6.2 Policy Monitoring

LDP Policy	Indicator	Target	Trigger Level	Performance
-	Housing Land Supply	Maintain a minimum of 5 years supply (ha)	Less than a 5 year supply for 1 year	2.8 years

Analysis

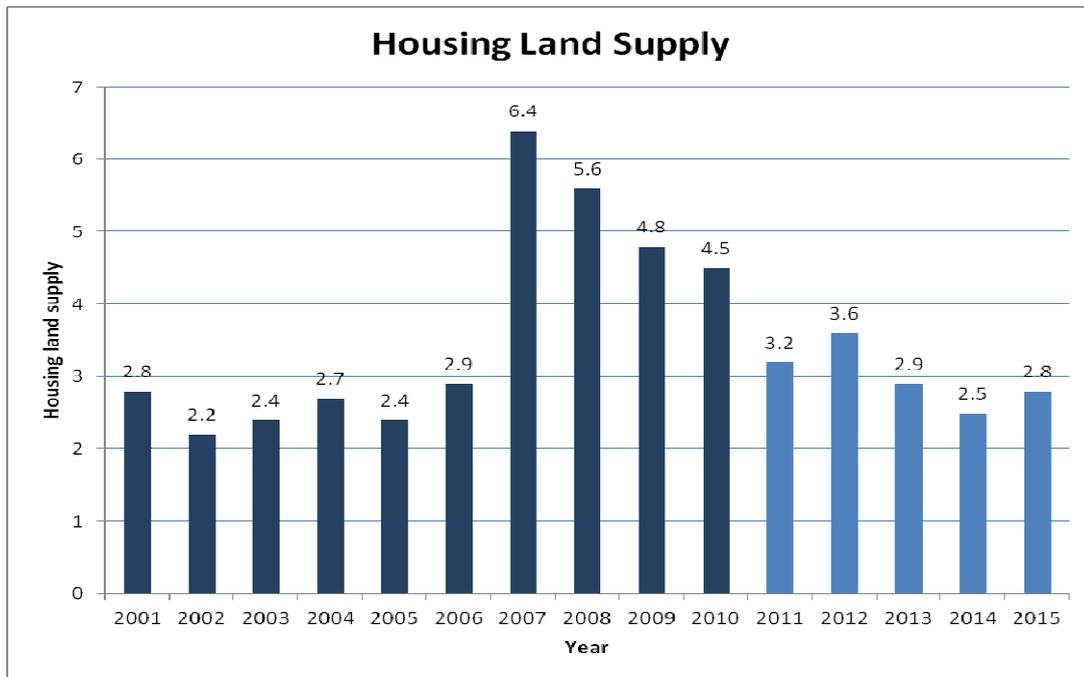
Merthyr Tydfil's 5 year land supply is now calculated using the residual method rather than the past build rates method that was used prior to the adoption of the Local Development Plan.

Merthyr Tydfil had in excess of a 5 year land supply in 2007 and 2008 (6.4 and 5.6 years respectively). Since then the land supply has steadily decreased up until 2011 where there were 611 dwellings in the 5 year supply, resulting in a 3.2 year land supply. This trend in housing land supply is shown in Graph 2 below.

Since the LDP was adopted in May 2011, newly allocated sites have been able to be included in the land supply calculations. This resulted in over 400 units being added to the five year supply during 2011/12 with 1062 units included in the calculation, which gave a supply of 3.6 years for the 2012 Joint Housing Land Availability Study (JHLAS). The 2013 and 2014 JHLASs reported decreases in land supply to 2.9 and 2.5 years respectively, while

the 2015 JHLAS shows a housing land supply of 2.8 years, a small increase from the 2014 figure (see Graph 2).

The recent increase in housing land supply reflects the positive contribution made by the Welsh Government’s Vibrant Viable Places (VVP) regeneration programme which has increased the levels of confidence over the delivery of certain sites in the next five years.



Graph 2

Technical Advice Note (TAN) 1 states that where there is a land supply below the 5 year requirement, local planning authorities must take steps to increase the supply of housing land. This may include steps such as releasing land in the Local Authority’s ownership or securing infrastructure for particular sites.

During 2014/15 the Council has secured outline planning permission on one site (Rhydycar Leisure Village) and has commissioned a significant amount of survey work on the other sites. It is anticipated that by carrying out survey work (site investigations, ecology surveys etc.) as part of the planning application process, potential developers will have more certainty in regard to the level of risk on site; in turn increasing the attractiveness of these sites to housebuilders. It is intended to complete all survey work on all sites by the end of 2015. The Council will also produce a strategy document that will outline the next steps in bringing these sites forward, and then produce a portfolio of the sites to take to the market. There may also be scope for VVP funding to contribute towards physical works on some sites, such as ground remediation or access improvements.

One of the key issues that still needs to be addressed in bringing the VVP regeneration programme forward, and delivering higher levels of housing, is that the majority of housing sites currently under the control of the Council are subject to 100% clawback to Welsh Government. In order to dispose of these sites, MTCBC require various permissions from Welsh Government. Some flexibility in terms of land receipts and associated issues may therefore be required from Welsh Government, if these sites are to be brought forward as

soon as possible. Discussions with officers from Welsh Government have already taken place on these issues and will be ongoing as the sites progress.

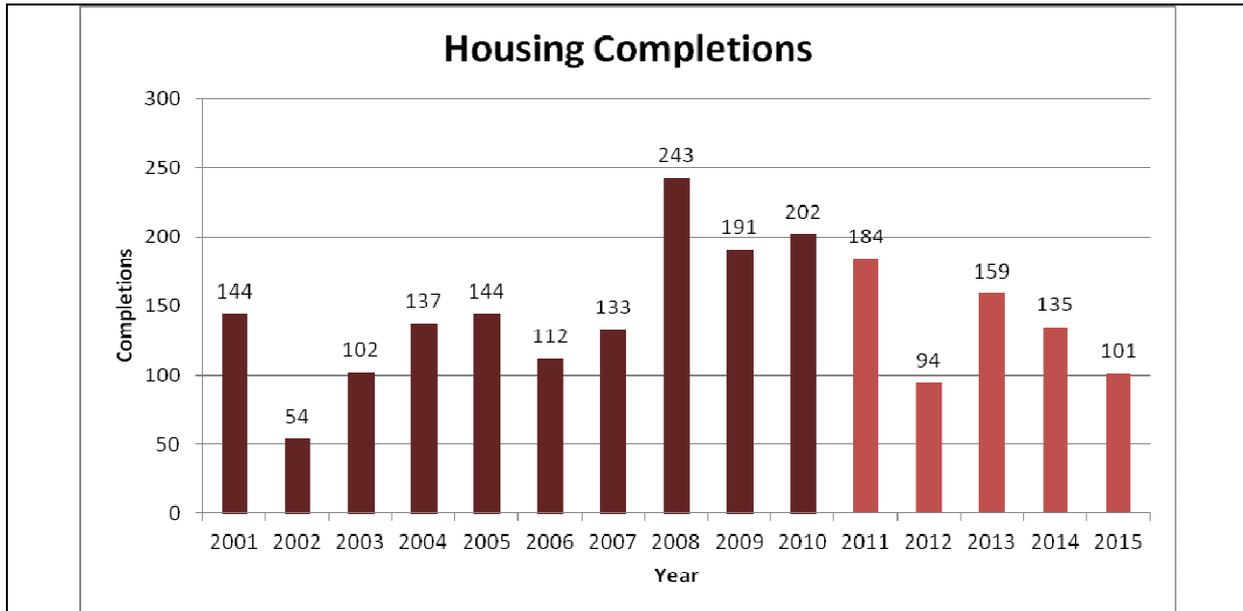
Recommendations

Whilst the housing land supply figure has increased over the monitoring period, it still remains significantly below the 5 year land supply target. The level of housing delivery continues to be below that which is required to meet the adopted LDP strategy and it remains highly unlikely that the housing strategy of the Plan can be met without changes being affected. The appropriateness of the LDP’s strategy, policies and allocations in respect of housing will therefore be revisited as part of the statutory four year review of the LDP.

LDP Policy	Indicator	Target	Trigger Level	Performance
-	Number of all dwellings built	Between 2400 and 2720 net completions by April 2016	20% less or greater than LDP strategy build rate for 2 consecutive years	1536 completions at end of March 2015

Analysis

Housing completions have been in general decline since 2008, reflecting the economic recession (see Graph 3). Over the monitoring period, the level of dwelling completions has continued to fall with 101 units being built in comparison to 135 units in 2013/2014. This has resulted in the indicator scoring ‘red’ as the figure is still well below that which is required to fulfil the LDP’s growth strategy and there are currently no clear signs that the level of house building activity is increasing.



Graph 3

Recommendations

The level of housing delivery continues to be below that which is required to meet the adopted LDP strategy and it remains highly unlikely that the housing strategy of the Plan can be met without changes being affected. The appropriateness of the LDP's strategy, policies and allocations in respect of housing will therefore be revisited as part of the statutory four year review of the LDP.

LDP Policy	Indicator	Target	Trigger Level	Performance
-	Number of new general market dwellings built	Between 2110 and 2390 net completions by April 2016	20% less or greater than LDP strategy build rate for 2 consecutive years	1249 completions by the end of March 2015 (75 during 2014/2015)

Analysis

The number of market dwelling completions fell from 115 during 2013/14 to 75 during 2014/15. In order to meet the target of delivering at least 2110 dwellings by 2016, 861 dwellings would need to be delivered over the next monitoring period (2015/2016), which is not considered to be achievable. As such, the indicator again scores 'red', reflecting the fact that the level of dwelling completions remains well below what is required in order to fulfil the

LDP's housing strategy.

Recommendations

The level of market housing delivery continues to be below that which is required to meet the adopted LDP strategy and it remains highly unlikely that the housing strategy of the Plan can be met without changes being affected. The appropriateness of the LDP's strategy, policies and allocations in respect of housing will therefore be revisited as part of the statutory four year review of the LDP.

LDP Policy	Indicator	Target	Trigger Level	Performance
-	Number of affordable dwellings built	Between 225 and 255 net completions by April 2016	20% less or greater than LDP strategy build rate for 2 consecutive years	287 completions by end of March 2015 (26 during 2014/2015)

Analysis

The data collected shows that 287 affordable dwellings were completed in the County Borough by the end of March 2015. This indicates that there has been a slightly higher level of affordable housing built than initially anticipated and has resulted in the indicator scoring 'yellow' as this is beyond the build rate proposed by the LDP.

As the overall affordable housing target in the monitoring framework is "at least 350 net completions by 2021", the fact that there has been more affordable housing built than anticipated is not considered a matter for concern.

Recommendations

This element of policy is currently being over achieved, and as such, no action is required.

LDP Policy	Indicator	Target	Trigger Level	Performance	
AS22	Number of affordable dwellings secured as a planning obligation	Approximately 130 by April 2016	<p>10% Area: delivering less than 7.5% or more than 12.5%</p> <p>5% Area: delivering less than 2.5% or more than 7.5%</p>	39 dwellings by the end of March 2015	<p>5% delivered</p> <p>5% delivered</p>

Analysis

Over the monitoring period, a 5% on-site contribution was secured on a housing scheme at Commercial Street, Bedlinog. This was in-line with the affordable housing requirement for Other Growth Areas and as such, there are currently no concerns over securing affordable housing in these areas.

In terms of the Primary Growth Area, a renewal of outline permission for the Project Heartland development in Dowlais has retained a 5% on-site contribution of affordable housing, which is below both the 10% target and 7.5% trigger level. In this instance, a 'yellow' score has been given due to the fact that this site has development constraints that give rise to abnormal costs, which render the development unviable with a 10% on-site contribution to affordable housing. Project Heartland is considered to be unique in terms of development constraints and as such, is not considered to provide a clear indication of whether LDP Policy AS22 functioning effectively and further monitoring is considered necessary.

In addition to securing on-site affordable housing, a financial contribution was secured via a section 106 agreement on the Former Sandbrook Care Home site.

It should also be noted that 100% affordable housing sites were granted consent at the former Labour Exchange, Penydarren (24 units); Twyncarmel (10 units) and the former St Paul's and St Peter's Church, Abercanaid (13 units). As such, there remains a steady supply of affordable housing across the County Borough.

The target of securing 130 affordable dwellings as a planning obligation by 2016 is unlikely to be met given that only 39 dwellings have been secured by the end of March 2015. This low number is primarily due to the fact that a significant number of allocated housing sites have not come forward as anticipated; nevertheless, the statutory four year review will need to consider whether the affordable housing requirements of Policy AS22 remain appropriate, particularly in relation to the requirements of the LHMA (2015) and the implementation of the community infrastructure levy in June 2014.

Recommendations

The low amount of affordable housing secured as a planning obligation needs to be considered in the context of the low levels of housing delivery experienced to date, and will therefore form part of the four year review of the LDP's strategy, policies and allocations in relation to housing.

LDP Policy	Indicator	Target	Trigger Level	Performance
TB13	Number of affordable dwellings secured through affordable housing exceptions policy (Applies only to the Other Growth Areas)	Approximately 10 by April 2016	No planning application submitted by the end of 2014	No planning application submitted

Analysis

The affordable housing exceptions policy has a target to deliver 10 affordable dwellings by April 2016 and an associated trigger level of no planning application submitted by the end of 2014. No planning application was submitted by the end of March 2015 for an affordable housing development in a countryside location which meets the affordable housing needs of the Other Growth Areas, and as such, the indicator now scores 'red'.

With no application submitted, the likelihood of 10 affordable dwellings being secured by 2016 is reduced. This is matter of concern as the number of affordable houses delivered in the Other Growth Areas is below the requirement, despite the overall target for the County Borough in 2016 already being met.

Recommendations

The low amount of affordable housing secured in the Other Growth Areas needs to be considered in the context of the low levels of housing delivery experienced to date, and will therefore form part of the four year review of the LDP's strategy, policies and allocations in relation to housing.

LDP Policy	Indicator	Target	Trigger Level	Performance
AS22	Average house price (Baseline: Approximately £86,900 at 2010, amended in line with Land Registry Data to £73,153)	-	+/- 10% change from base level	£63,152

Analysis

House prices have fallen further over the monitoring period with a decrease of around £4,000. As a consequence, the average house price is now nearly 15% lower than the baseline data which informed the 2010 Local Housing Market Assessment (LHMA). Whilst the trigger level has been reached, the Council has already revised the LHMA which provides an up to date assessment of housing need and affordability within the County Borough.

Recommendations

The revised LHMA (March 2015) provides an up to date evidence base in respect of housing need and affordability, which will inform the statutory four year review of the LDP. It should be noted that the LHMA will be revised by the Council every 2 years in line with Welsh Government requirements.

LDP Policy	Indicator	Target	Trigger Level	Performance
-	Average income (gross weekly pay) (Baseline: Approximately £380 at 2009, amended in line with NOMIS data to £392)	-	+/- 10% change from base level	£434.50 (+11%)

Analysis

Average income has risen during the monitoring period to £434.50 per week, which equates to an 11% increase from the baseline data. Whilst the trigger level has been reached, the

Council has already revised LHMA which provides an up to date assessment of housing need and affordability within the County Borough.

Recommendations

The revised LHMA (March 2015) provides an up to date evidence base in respect of housing need and affordability, which will inform the statutory four year review of the LDP. It should be noted that the LHMA will be revised by the Council every 2 years in line with Welsh Government requirements.

LDP Policy	Indicator	Target	Trigger Level	Performance
	Vacancy rates of existing housing stock (Baseline: 6% at 2010)	--	Vacancy rate increasing for 1 year or remaining static for 2 consecutive years	4.5%

Analysis

There has been a further decrease in the vacancy rate of existing housing stock from 4.9% to 4.5% over the monitoring period. This decrease can be linked to an improving housing market in the County Borough where properties are being purchased more quickly, partially due to increased confidence in buy to let/investment properties as well as the fact the prices remain relatively affordable. Grant funding has also continued to be available over the monitoring period, which aims to bring empty properties and empty space above shops back into use.

Recommendations

No action required at present.

LDP Policy	Indicator	Target	Trigger Level	Performance
-	Percentage of relevant planning applications complying with Affordable Housing SPG	All (Post SPG adoption)	-	All relevant applications complying with SPG.

Analysis

All relevant applications have complied with the Affordable Housing SPG over the monitoring period. In particular, a commuted sum has been secured on the Former Sandbrook Care Home site. On all other sites considered during 2014/15, the applicant has demonstrated that a contribution would be likely to render a development unviable.

Recommendations

No action required at present other than continuing to maintain accurate records of all planning applications where there is an identified requirement for affordable housing.

3.6.3 Overall summary on policy performance and conclusion on whether the strategic objective is being achieved

For the purposes of this annual monitoring report, the level of achievement towards Strategic Objective SO6 is based on the performance of housing related LDP policies, Supplementary Planning Guidance on Affordable Housing, and compliance with the LDP's land use strategy, particularly, the Plan's spatial distribution of development allocations.

The failure to achieve a 5-year housing land supply and the low number of dwelling completions, particularly general market dwellings, continues to be a concern. The adopted LDP is based on an enhanced growth strategy which, amongst other things, requires ambitious levels of housing delivery. The level of housing delivery over the plan period to date has been much lower than anticipated and it appears highly unlikely that the housing target of delivering at least 2,400 dwellings by 2016 will be met.

The delivery of affordable dwellings has exceeded the target for 2016, although the number of affordable dwellings secured through planning obligations has been lower than anticipated. The latter is considered to reflect the fact that a significant number of allocated housing sites have not come forward as anticipated.

For these reasons, it is considered that Strategic Objective SO6 is only partially being achieved. The statutory four year review of the LDP will therefore need to consider the appropriateness of the LDP's strategy, policies and allocations in respect of housing, and recommendations will be made on the extent of changes required to the LDP in a review report. It should be noted that the review will need to take into account the context of the wider economic situation and the fact that the LDP may be constrained in its ability to have a direct influence on current economic conditions.

3.7 SO7: To improve and diversify the economy, safeguarding existing jobs and creating a range of new job opportunities in a sustainable manner.

3.7.1 Contextual Changes

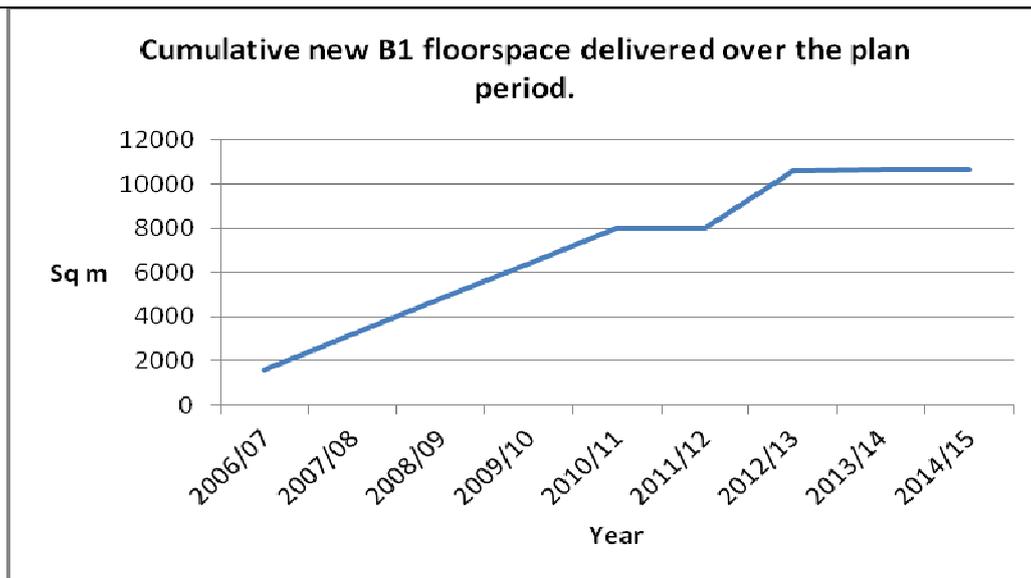
No significant contextual changes relating to this strategic objective have occurred during the monitoring period.

3.7.2 Policy Monitoring

LDP Policy	Indicator	Target	Trigger Level	Performance	
BW14 AS14 AS24	New B1 floor space delivered	Between 28,500 and 30,790 sq m net floor space delivered by April 2016	Greater than 7,120 sq m per annum or less than 890 sq m per annum for 2 consecutive years	10,661 sq m delivered by the end of March 2015	0 sq m delivered 2014/2015 57 sq m delivered 2013/2014

Analysis

The overall delivery of new B1 floor-space remains low with no new floor-space delivered over the monitoring period. The cumulative amount of new B1 floor-space delivered since the start of the plan period (2006) therefore remains at 10,661 sq m (see Graph 4), which is significantly below the forthcoming target of delivering between 28,500 – 30,790 sq m of B1 floor-space by 2016. In addition, the amount of B1 floor-space delivered is below the minimum requirement (890 sq m) for the second consecutive year and as such, the trigger level is met and a 'red' score has been given.



Graph 4

The delivery of a significant amount of B1 floor-space in the short term appears unlikely given that planning permission was granted for just three B1 related developments over the monitoring period with a total floor-space of just 326 sq m. It therefore appears unlikely that both the B1 floor-space target for 2016 and the longer term for 2021 (53,400 sq m) will be met.

Recommendations

The following should be considered to increase the delivery rate of B1 floor space in future:

- **Improved Marketing** – Market awareness of Merthyr Tydfil’s available employment sites/units remains low but steps are being taken to improve the situation. The Goatmill Road employment site (LDP allocation E4) which involves approximately 10 hectares of land suitable for B1, B2 and B8 uses is currently being marketed, and the *Invest in Merthyr Tydfil* website is currently being developed which will advertise vacant business properties and land within the area of Merthyr Tydfil. It is essential that such actions continue to be progressed and further efforts are made to raise awareness of available employment sites within the County Borough and to promote Merthyr Tydfil as a suitable location for employment.
- **Provision of further B1 office incubation space** – The Orbit Centre at Rhydygar was built to foster smaller, start-up businesses and provides varying size B1 office space for companies to rent in the initial years of their business development. The intention is for these companies to grow and eventually move to larger premises within the County Borough. The Orbit Centre continues to provide excellent facilities for start-up and existing businesses and the occupation rate remains high.

The Economic Development Department has been working towards the delivery of a new incubation facility for start-up businesses, to be known as the Cyfarthfa Enterprise

Centre, which will have a similar function to the existing Orbit Centre. Scoping work has been undertaken for the creation of this enterprise centre within Cyfarthfa Castle and a stage 1 Heritage Lottery Fund application has been submitted with funding aligned to the 'Vibrant and Viable Places' initiative. Cyfarthfa Enterprise Centre is intended to complement the existing Orbit Centre, with the latter providing high quality general office facilities to meet the needs of growing businesses. Cyfarthfa Enterprise Centre will also compliment the emerging Town Centre Enterprise Centre.

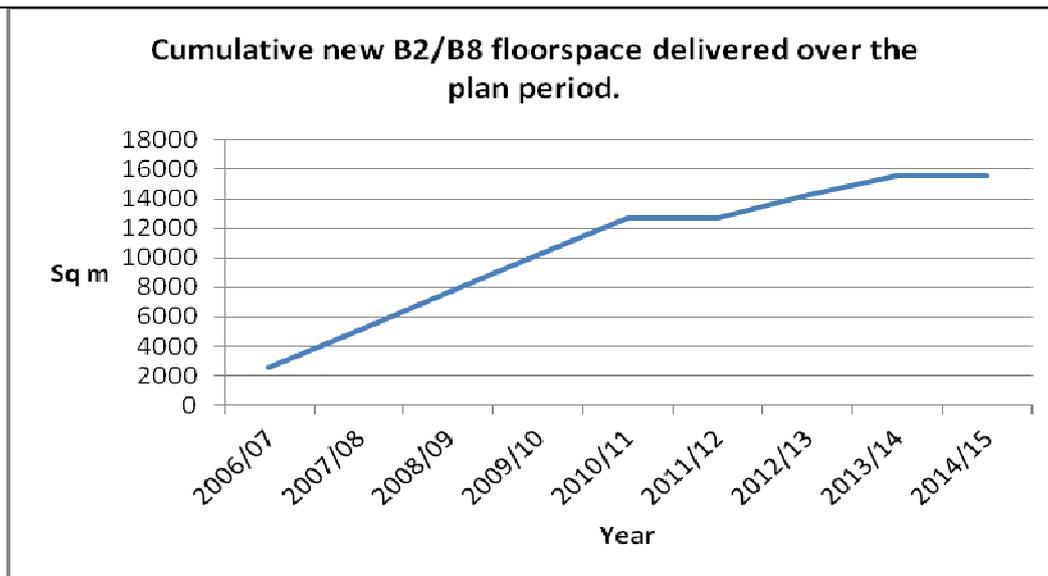
- Statutory LDP Four Year Review – Further analysis of the Local Development Plan's employment strategy, including the delivery of B1 employment allocations and the current condition of the employment market, will be undertaken as part of the statutory four year LDP review process.

LDP Policy	Indicator	Target	Trigger Level	Performance	
BW14 AS14 AS24	New B2/B8 floor-space delivered	Between 7,920 and 9,680 sq m net floor-space delivered by April 2016	Greater than 7,540 sq m per annum or less than 940 sq m per annum for 2 consecutive years.	15601 sq m delivered by the end of March 2015	0 sq m delivered 2014/2015 1330 sq m delivered 2013/2014

Analysis

This performance indicator contains 2 elements, namely a target floor space figure by 2016, and an associated trigger level figure. Detailed analysis of the relevant data shows these elements to be performing differently; the performance of each is considered below.

No new B2/B8 floor-space was delivered over the monitoring period (April 2014 – March 2015); nevertheless, the amount of B2/B8 floor space previously delivered (15,601 sq m) has already exceeded the 2016 target of between 7,920 and 9,680 sq m (see Graph 5). In addition, a further 835 sqm of B2/B8 floor space is anticipated to come forward in the short term, reflecting the four planning permissions granted for B2/B8 related development over the monitoring period. The amount of B2/B8 floor-space delivered is below the minimum requirement (940 sq m) for this monitoring period; however, it must be below the minimum requirement for two consecutive years for the trigger level to be met.



Graph 5

As per the previous AMR, the data collected shows that the employment land delivered has been on existing business / employment sites, often as extensions to existing buildings which meets the needs of the current market. Whilst such developments have exceeded current B2/B8 floor-space targets, it must be recognised that meeting the longer term target of delivering at least 56,500 sq m of B2/B8 floorspace by 2021 remains a significant challenge and the lack of activity and progress on developing allocated employment sites needs to be closely monitored. These allocations are primarily large sites aimed at single, large employers, and with their associated infrastructure costs, may only prove to be more attractive when market conditions improve and/or when specialists users are found.

Recommendations

The following should be considered in order to successfully deliver B2/B8 floor-space in future:

- **Improved Marketing** – Market awareness of Merthyr Tydfil’s available employment sites/units remains low but steps are being taken to improve the situation. The Goatmill Road employment site (LDP allocation E4) which involves approximately 10 hectares of land suitable for B1, B2 and B8 uses is currently being marketed, and the *Invest in Merthyr Tydfil* website is currently being developed which will advertise vacant business properties and land within the area of Merthyr Tydfil. It is essential that such actions continue to be progressed and further efforts are made to raise awareness of available employment sites within the County Borough and to promote Merthyr Tydfil as a suitable location for employment.
- **Statutory LDP Four Year Review** – Further analysis of the Local Development Plan’s employment strategy, including the delivery of B2/B8 employment allocations and the current condition of the employment market, will be undertaken as part of the statutory

four year LDP review process.

LDP Policy	Indicator	Target	Trigger Level	Performance	
BW14 AS14 AS24	Minimum number of net additional jobs delivered (B class uses only)	Between 1,800 and 1,980 jobs delivered by April 2016	Greater than 592 jobs per annum or less than 74 jobs per annum for 2 consecutive years.	1318 jobs delivered by the end of March 2015	220 jobs delivered 2014/2015

Analysis

This performance indicator contains 2 elements, namely a target jobs figure by 2016 and an associated trigger level figure. Detailed analysis of the relevant data shows these elements to be performing similarly with each being considered further below.

Over the monitoring period, 220 jobs were delivered with the opening of the Tenneco Automative Factory at Pengarnddu Industrial Estate. As a consequence, the cumulative jobs delivered since the start of the monitoring period has increased significantly to 1,318 jobs and there is now a reasonable prospect of meeting the target of delivering between 1,800 – 1,980 jobs by 2016.

Recommendations

Significant progress has been made towards meeting the additional jobs target, and as such, no action is required.

LDP Policy	Indicator	Target	Trigger Level	Performance
AS24	Developments granted planning permission that result in a loss of employment land within employment sites protected under Policy AS24	No loss of employment land on protected employment sites except where justified within the terms of the policy	1 or 2 developments granted planning permission for 2 consecutive years, or, 3 or more developments granted planning permission in 1 year	No unjustified loss of employment land

Analysis

Within this monitoring period, three planning applications were approved for developments which resulted in the loss of employment land. These related to the erection of a 20MW embedded power plant at Plot 2, Pengarnddu Industrial Estate; a change of use of land to a car sales office and valet centre at Unit 31, Pant Industrial Estate; and a change of use of land and siting of a mobile catering unit at Harlan Business Park, Goatmill Road. All developments were justified in accordance with LDP Policy AS24 and the associated policy clarification note. The latter is proving invaluable in providing decision-makers with further clarity on the evidence that is required to be submitted as part of any change of use application that would result in the loss of protected employment land/ units.

Recommendations

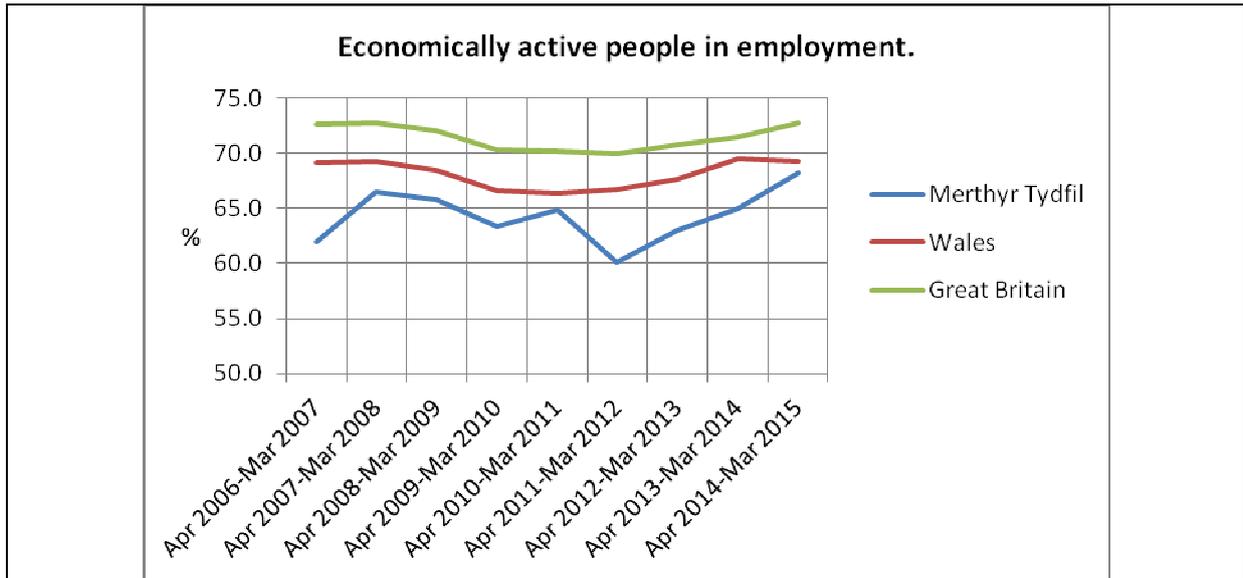
This element of policy is currently being achieved, and as such, no action is required.

LDP Policy	Indicator	Target	Trigger Level	Performance	
AS14 AS24	Percentage of economically active people in employment (Baseline: 64% at 2009)	Approximately 74% by the end of 2016	Reduction of 5% or failure to increase for 2 consecutive years.	68.2%	Increase of 3.3% from last year

Analysis

The percentage of economically active people in employment is highly dependent on external factors such as the current economic climate. Over the monitoring period, the proportion of economically active people in employment was 68.2%, which represents an increase of 3.3% compared with 2013-2014 figure of 64.9%.

The 2011 target of 67% has now been met and progress is being made towards the 2016 target of 74%. It is also worth noting that the percentage of economically active people in Merthyr Tydfil is moving closer to the average figures for Wales (69.3%) and Great Britain (72.7%) (See Graph 6). Despite these gains, meeting the 2016 target of 74% over the next 1 and a half years remains significant challenge, and accordingly, a “yellow” score has been given.



Graph 6

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Recommendation

The ability of the LDP to directly affect the percentage of economically active people is limited. However, it is considered that the AMR’s recommendations to help deliver improvements to employment floor-space provision elsewhere under Strategic Objective SO7 will assist in improving the situation across the County Borough.

LDP Policy	Indicator	Target	Trigger Level	Performance
BW14 AS14 AS24	Vacancy rates of existing employment buildings	Maintain vacancy rate within range of 5-10% of existing stock	+ or – 2.5% beyond range for 2 consecutive years	17%

Analysis

Data has been gathered and inputted for the Joint Employment Land Availability Database (JELAD). Survey work has involved noting the Use Class Order category of each employment unit, the vacancy rates on each industrial / business park, and a general assessment of the appearance / upkeep of each facility.

Over the monitoring period, the overall vacancy rate for all employment units has increased to 17%, which exceeds both the target of 5-10% and the trigger level of + or – 2.5%. The

vacancy rate does, however, vary across the main industrial/business parks within the County Borough as shown in Table 1 below.

This is the first year that the trigger level has been met and a 'yellow' score has been introduced owing to the fact that the monitoring framework requires the vacancy rate to be beyond the stipulated range for two consecutive years. Whilst the increase in vacancy rate is concerning, further monitoring is required in order to establish whether this movement outside the optimal market range of between 5% and 10% is temporary or more permanent in nature.

Site Name.	Total Units.	No. Vacant.	% Vacant.
Pant Ind. Est.	121	18	15
Pengarnddu Ind. Est.	25	2	8
Willows Ind. Est.	13	3	23
Merthyr Ind. Est.	67	14	21
Plymouth St. Arches.	17	7	41
Rhydyicar Business Park.	4	0	0
Abercanaid Ind. Est.	7	2	29
Goatmill Rd. Ind. Est.	37	4	11
Triangle Business Park.	9	1	11
Overall	300	51	17

Recommendations

Continue to monitor vacancy rates in order to establish whether the relatively high figure is temporary or more permanent in nature.

3.7.3 Overall summary on policy performance and conclusion on whether the strategic objective is being achieved

For the purposes of this annual monitoring report, the level of achievement towards Strategic Objective SO7 is based on the performance of 3 separate LDP policies and compliance with the LDP's land use strategy, particularly, the Plan's spatial distribution of development allocations.

A shortfall in the delivery of B1 employment floor space has been identified as the primary issue of concern within a number of AMR's, and the situation has not improved over the current monitoring period. On the contrary, some additional

concern is arising from the reduced levels of B2/B8 floor-space delivery and the increase in vacancy rates of existing employment buildings.

A variety of recommendations are set out above, but it is recognised that the LDP may be constrained in its ability to have a direct influence on current employment market conditions which are the main factors at play. The statutory four year review of the LDP will allow for further analysis of the employment market including re-assessing the requirements of business and industry in the area and considering any site delivery issues. In doing so, a judgement will be made on the appropriateness of the LDP's strategy, policies and allocations in respect of employment.

3.8 ***SO8: To promote social inclusion and ensure equality of opportunity through reducing the need to travel and providing better access by sustainable means to employment opportunities, community facilities and services.***

3.8.1 **Contextual Changes**

No significant contextual changes relating to this strategic objective occurred during the monitoring period.

3.8.2 **Policy Monitoring**

LDP Policy	Indicator	Target	Trigger Level	Performance
BW15	Number of community facilities lost through change of use	No loss of viable community facilities below identified need (except where justified within the terms of the policy)	1 or 2 community facilities lost for 2 consecutive years, or, 3 or more community facilities lost in 1 year	No unjustified loss of a community facility
<p><u>Analysis</u></p> <p>Within this monitoring period, five planning applications were approved for developments which resulted in the loss, or partial loss, of a community facility. These related to the change of use of a squash court to beauty salon at Aberfan and Merthyr Vale Community Centre; the partial change of use of public house to a dwelling at Cyfarthfa Arms, Brecon Road; the redevelopment of St Peter’s and St Paul’s Church, Abercanaid for housing; the change of use of a community centre to crèche at the Residents Building Galon Uchaf; and the change of use of a public house to hotel at Tredegar Arms, Dowlais Top.</p> <p>All developments were justified in accordance with LDP Policy BW15 and the associated community facilities flow chart. The latter aids the consideration of planning applications involving the potential loss of community facilities; providing further clarity as to what constitutes a community facility and the evidence that will be required from applicants when a development proposal proposes the loss of such a facility.</p>				
<p><u>Recommendations</u></p> <p>This element of policy is currently being achieved, and as such, no action is required.</p>				

LDP Policy	Indicator	Target	Trigger Level	Performance
BW17 AS17	Amount of planning obligations secured on allocated housing developments	Secure contributions on 33 (67%) of the allocated housing developments	1 or 2 sites failing to secure planning obligations for 2 consecutive years, or, 3 or more sites failing to secure planning obligations in 1 year	No allocated sites failing to secure identified contributions

Analysis

Continuing to secure planning contributions on all identified sites is an important part of the LDP's strategy; however, negotiating obligations continues to be challenging owing to the unfavourable economic climate.

One allocated housing site, with an identified need for planning obligations, was granted planning permission over the monitoring period. This related to the renewal of planning permission for the Project Heartland development in Dowlais, which secured on-site affordable housing provision.

Recommendations

No action is required as this element of policy is currently being achieved. However, there are wider concerns over the delivery of the LDP's housing strategy (see recommendations under Strategic Objective 6).

LDP Policy	Indicator	Target	Trigger Level	Performance
BW17	Percentage of relevant planning applications complying with Planning Obligations SPG	All (Post SPG adoption)	-	All applications complying
<p><u>Analysis</u></p> <p>All qualifying applications have been assessed against the relevant adopted SPG and were either found to comply or amended to comply.</p>				
<p><u>Recommendations</u></p> <p>All qualifying applications received should continue to be assessed against the adopted SPG.</p>				

3.8.3 Overall summary on policy performance and conclusion on whether the strategic objective is being achieved

For the purposes of this annual monitoring report, the level of achievement towards Strategic Objective SO8 is based on the performance of 3 separate LDP policies as outlined above.

It is considered that this strategic objective is being achieved.

3.9 ***SO9: To promote health and wellbeing by providing accessible and varied opportunities for leisure and recreational activities.***

3.9.1 **Contextual Changes**

"Wales - a Play Friendly Country" published in July 2014 is the updated statutory guidance for local authorities on assessing for and securing sufficient play opportunities for children in their areas. It replaces the previous "Creating a play friendly Wales" 2012 statutory guidance and commences the duties under section 11 of Play Opportunities of the Children and Families Measure 2010. The Play Sufficiency Assessments include open spaces, outdoor designated play spaces and playing fields as matters that need to be taken into account. This new statutory guidance will inform the preparation of Merthyr Tydfil's Open Space Strategy (OSS).

Merthyr Tydfil's Single Integrated Plan 2013 – 17 was revised and approved by the Merthyr Tydfil Local Service board in July 2014, and includes Healthy Lifestyles as a priority outcome promoting the use of green spaces to increase the opportunities for adults and children to be physically active.

3.9.2 **Policy Monitoring**

LDP Policy	Indicator	Target	Trigger Level	Performance
BW16	Amount of public open space, including play space and informal recreational areas, lost to development (ha) which is not allocated in the development plan	No loss below identified need	-	0.05ha

Analysis

Over the monitoring period, 0.05 ha of informal public open space, comprising of underused amenity grassland, was developed for a community facility in Treharris, which retained and enhanced links to both the Taff Trail and an adjacent playground, and incorporated additional native planting. Although a small amount of public open space was lost, this was balanced against the fact that the development provided multiple benefits, including a beneficial community use, improvements to the amenity value of the area and improved access to other local leisure facilities.

It is therefore considered that Policy BW16 continues to function as intended and there no concerns over its effectiveness.

A contributing factor to the success of this policy is the on-going work towards producing an

Open Space Strategy (OSS) for Merthyr Tydfil. The OSS has identified and surveyed all accessible open space with the County Borough and assigned it a 'typology'. The number and type of identified spaces will be analysed against the population demographic to identify its suitability and supply at a ward level.

The ability to reference the emerging OSS over the past 12 months has continued to prove invaluable to the planning policy team both for pre-application discussions and during the planning application process. The detailed analysis contained within the Strategy has helped provide a solid evidence base when raising objections to proposals that would entail the loss of open space and when highlighting the need to provide additional facilities to make up the identified shortfall of such spaces across the County Borough.

Recommendations

This element of policy continues to function effectively, and as such, no action is required.

LDP Policy	Indicator	Target	Trigger Level	Performance
AS15	Local New Leisure/recreational development ii) Parc Taf Bargoed	Deliver by the end of 2016	No planning application by the end of 2014	Developments delivered

Analysis

Parc Taf Barged, which comprises 3 former colliery sites, has been transformed into community parkland. A number of leisure/recreational related developments have been completed since the LDP adoption, including 3 Parc Gateway Projects and an extension to the Parc Pavillion.

Recommendations

Leisure/recreational related developments are being delivered, and as such, no action is required.

3.9.3 Overall summary on policy performance and conclusion on whether the strategic objective is being achieved

For the purposes of this annual monitoring report, the level of achievement towards Strategic Objective SO9 is based on the performance of 2 separate LDP policies as outlined above.

It is considered that this strategic objective is being achieved with public open space continuing to be adequately protected and leisure/recreational related developments coming forward at Parc Taf Bargoed earlier than anticipated. The latter also complements leisure/recreational developments delivered at Cyfarthfa Park, allowing Merthyr Tydfil to make a significant contribution to the Valleys Regional Park.

3.10 **SO10: To ensure good quality design of new development and the creation of safer communities.**

3.10.1 **Contextual Changes**

No significant contextual changes relating to this strategic objective have been introduced during the monitoring period.

3.10.2 **Policy Monitoring**

LDP Policy	Indicator	Target	Trigger Level	Performance
BW7	Percentage of relevant schemes incorporating “secured by design principles”	All major applications	-	All major applications granted planning permission incorporated “secured by design principles”
<p><u>Analysis</u></p> <p>Over the monitoring period, all major developments incorporated “secured by design principles”. It is therefore considered that Policy BW7 is functioning effectively in respect delivering safe built environments.</p>				
<p><u>Recommendations</u></p> <p>This element of policy is currently being achieved, and as such, no action is required.</p>				

LDP Policy	Indicator	Target	Trigger Level	Performance
BW7	Percentage of planning applications complying with sustainable design SPG	All (post SPG adoption)	-	All relevant applications complying with SPG
<p><u>Analysis</u></p> <p>All relevant applications have complied with the adopted sustainable design SPG, resulting in key elements of sustainable design being incorporated into new developments.</p>				
<p><u>Recommendations</u></p> <p>This element of policy is currently being achieved, and as such, no action is required.</p>				

3.10.3 Overall summary on policy performance and conclusion on whether the strategic objective is being achieved

For the purposes of this annual monitoring report, the level of achievement towards Strategic Objective SO10 is based on the performance of a single LDP policy as outlined above.

Targets relating to the delivery of safe and sustainable built environments have been achieved and the associated policy and supplementary planning guidance are considered to be functioning effectively. It is therefore considered that this strategic objective continues to be achieved overall.

3.11 SO11: To ensure continued protection and enhancement of the natural, cultural, built and historic environment.

3.11.1 Contextual Changes

In January 2015, following a review of the responses to the Welsh Government’s “The future of our past: A consultation on proposals for the historic environment of Wales”, the Minister for Culture and Sport announced that there was strong support for an independent advisory panel. The intention is to establish this panel through the emerging legislation to be put to the National Assembly in 2015. The new legislation should also make important improvements to the existing systems for the protection and sustainable management of the Welsh historic environment including listed buildings and scheduled monuments and may contain the creation of a statutory register of Wales’ Historic Parks and Gardens. The Minister also announced that Cadw and the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales will remain separate organisations for the time being.

In September 2014 the Minister for Natural Resources consulted on the ‘Nature Recovery Plan for Wales’ which sets out how the Welsh Government intends to reverse the decline of biodiversity in Wales. It will include actions to review how designated sites and species are managed and help to protect the natural environment. The plan will fulfil the commitment, under the Convention on Biological Diversity, to have a National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan in place by 2015.

In March 2015, the Minister also announced that The Environment Bill, expected to be introduced over the coming months, is intended to provide a modern legislative framework to manage Wales’s natural resources and the opportunity to set out a clear approach to delivering many of the actions in the emerging Nature Recovery Plan.

3.11.2 Policy Monitoring

LDP Policy	Indicator	Target	Trigger Level	Performance
BW6	Developments granted planning permission that do not preserve or enhance scheduled ancient monuments, registered historic parks and gardens, listed buildings or conservation areas	No developments that would fail to preserve or enhance heritage features granted planning permission	1 or 2 developments failing to preserve or enhance features for 2 consecutive years, or, 3 or more developments failing to preserve or enhance	No developments granted planning permission failed to preserve or enhance heritage features

			features in 1 year	
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Analysis

Policy BW6 seeks to preserve or enhance various elements of Merthyr Tydfil’s built heritage, including Scheduled Ancient Monuments, registered Historic Parks and Gardens, Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas. Over the monitoring period, a total of 49 developments were granted planning permission that impacted on built heritage assets. These developments can be broken down as follows:

- No developments were granted planning permission that impacted on a Scheduled Ancient Monument;
- 2 developments were granted planning permission within an Historic Park and Garden (which were also within a Conservation Area);
- 14 developments were granted planning permission impacting on a Listed Building (9 of which were also within a Conservation area) and
- 44 developments were granted within a Conservation Area (9 of which were Listed Buildings).

The majority of approvals relating to townscape and the built heritage were either non material amendments, renewal of existing consents or sympathetic refurbishments which enhanced Listed Buildings or Conservation Areas by reinstating traditional features. The applications within Cyfarthfa Park Historic Park and Garden and Cyfarthfa Conservation Area firstly comprised a sympathetically landscaped parking area with fruit tree planting reinstating an original use to the area and following appropriate archaeological excavations. Secondly, planning approval was granted for viewing platforms and interpretation panels designed in keeping with the built heritage and proposed to enhance the sites leisure and tourism activities. A minority of approvals related to Cyfarthfa Retail Park which is partially located within Cyfarthfa Conservation Area and within the vicinity of a Scheduled Ancient Monument and Grade I Listed Building. Special conditions including suitable screening were applied to consents to minimise any impact on the built heritage features. It is therefore considered that all permissions granted complied with Policy BW6.

Furthermore, 1 application for proposed development within both a Historic Park and Garden and a Conservation Area was withdrawn and 6 applications for inappropriate development within Conservation Areas were refused. It is therefore considered that Policy BW6 continues to function as intended.

Recommendations

This element of policy is currently being achieved, and as such, no action is required.

LDP Policy	Indicator	Target	Trigger Level	Performance
BW5 AS6	Developments granted planning permission that cause harm to the overall nature conservation value of SINC or the LNR	No development that would cause harm to the overall nature conservation value of SINC or the LNR granted planning permission	1 or 2 developments resulting in overall harm for 2 consecutive years, or, 3 or more developments resulting in overall harm in 1 year	All developments granted planning permission do not cause harm to the overall nature conservation value of SINC or the LNR
	Developments granted planning permission that cause harm to a SSSI	No developments that would cause harm to a SSSI granted planning permission	1 or more developments resulting in harm to a SSSI	All developments granted planning permission do not cause harm to a SSSI

Analysis

The monitoring framework contains two indicators which relate to the number of developments causing harm to the overall nature conservation value of a site of importance for nature conservation (SINC) or a local nature reserve (LNR), and the number of developments causing harm to a site of special scientific interest (SSSI). The former indicator measures the effectiveness of Policies BW5 and AS6, while the latter only measures the performance of Policy BW5. Each indicator is considered separately below.

Over the monitoring period, 8 developments were granted planning permission that had the potential to affect a SINC, but in all instances, the overall nature conservation value of the SINC was safeguarded. In addition, planning permission was refused for 2 inappropriate development proposals within a SINC and no developments were granted planning permission that could potentially cause harm to a Local Nature Reserve.

In respect of the impact of development on a SSSI, no applications were granted planning permission that could potentially cause harm to a SSSI over the monitoring period..

As a consequence of the above, it is considered that Policies BW5 and AS6 are functioning effectively.

Recommendations

This element of policy is currently being achieved, and as such, no action is required.

3.11.3 Overall summary on policy performance and conclusion on whether the strategic objective is being achieved

For the purposes of this annual monitoring report, the level of achievement towards Strategic Objective SO11 is based on the performance of 3 LDP policies, relating to the historic and natural environment.

Targets relating to the preservation and enhancement of both the historic and natural environment are being met and the associated policies are considered to be functioning effectively. It is therefore considered that this strategic objective continues to be achieved.

3.12 SO12: To contribute towards reducing the impact of climate change through reduced carbon dioxide emissions in new developments.

3.12.1 Contextual Changes

No significant contextual changes relating to this strategic objective have occurred during the monitoring period.

3.12.2 Policy Monitoring

LDP Policy	Indicator	Target	Trigger Level	Performance
BW7	Percentage of planning applications complying with sustainable design SPG	All (post SPG adoption)	-	All relevant applications complying with SPG
<p><u>Analysis</u></p> <p>All relevant applications have complied with the adopted sustainable design SPG, resulting in key elements of sustainable design being incorporated into new developments.</p>				
<p><u>Recommendations</u></p> <p>This element of policy is currently being achieved, and as such, no action is required.</p>				

3.12.3 Overall summary on policy performance and conclusion on whether the strategic objective is being achieved

For the purposes of this annual monitoring report, the level of achievement towards Strategic Objective SO12 is based on the performance of a single LDP policy as outlined above.

The target relating to the delivery of sustainable built environments has been achieved and the associated policy and supplementary planning guidance are considered to be functioning effectively. It is therefore considered that this strategic objective continues to be achieved.

4.0 Community Infrastructure Levy

- 4.1 Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) was introduced in Merthyr Tydfil County Borough on 2nd June 2014. It is a compulsory charge that is levied against all new qualifying development.
- 4.2 In order to ensure that the implementation of the Community Infrastructure Levy is open and transparent, the Council must prepare an annual report on CIL. This can be a bespoke report or can be included in an existing reporting mechanism, such as the annual monitoring report which reports on the LDP. This is a sensible mechanism for reporting on CIL as it is inextricably linked to the LDP. The 2015 AMR is therefore the first AMR to also report on the implementation of CIL.
- 4.3 The CIL monitoring report must be published by the Council, by the 31st December each year, for the previous financial year. In this instance, the reporting period is 1st April 2014 to 31 March 2015.
- 4.4 CIL becomes payable upon commencement of the chargeable development, as such there is likely to be a delay between the implementation of CIL and CIL monies being received. Only planning applications approved after 2 June 2014 would be liable for CIL, and only those that have then commenced development would have generated income.
- 4.5 No CIL income was received during the monitoring period (April 2014 – March 2015) and consequently, no schemes have been undertaken.

5.0 Sustainability Performance

- 5.1 The Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive requires local authorities to undertake Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) as an integral part of their plan preparation. In addition, the LDP Regulations require that local authorities undertake Sustainability Appraisal (SA) of their plan. It is recognised as best practice for local authorities to undertake SEA and SA together as an iterative part of the development plan process throughout plan preparation. In preparing its LDP, Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council commissioned a joint SEA and SA and produced and published its SEA/SA Report in conjunction with the publication of the LDP.
- 5.2 The SEA Directive also requires that the Council monitors the state of the environment through monitoring the sustainability objectives set out in the SEA/SA Report. Table 7.1 of the Final SA Report for the LDP (May 2011) sets out potential SA targets and indicators with reference to the relevant topic area in the SEA directive and each of the 15 SA objectives identified during the plan preparation process. The table refers to potential targets rather than confirmed / absolute targets owing to the fact that the Council recognises changes to the monitoring framework may be necessary in future. Notwithstanding, the table set out in the Final SA Report remains the basis of sustainability monitoring for the LDP at this point in time.
- 5.3 The targets were set as aspirations to be reached by the end of the plan period rather than being achievable milestones during particular periods of the LDP. Consequently, it is recognised that they may not always be measurable, and even where they are, they may not always provide a direct indication of whether the LDP is having the intended benefit for the environment as a whole as it is unlikely that the LDP will have realised these aspirational targets during the early part of the plan period. As a result, SA Monitoring will consider whether there is movement towards the target rather than the absolute position of whether the target has been reached, and this will require a significant level of officer interpretation to the background information / indicators.
- 5.4 Furthermore, whilst the AMR sets out a variety of objectives and targets to assess performance, the Council has found that monitoring each of the background indicators (not published in this document) has often proved difficult owing to the availability and /or timeliness of various data sources. In addition, there are often conflicting results from certain background indicators that may have the effect of masking any notable trends or movements. In circumstances such as these, where there are large, diverse and potentially conflicting sources of information, it has proved difficult to draw an overall picture of the effect of the plan on the environment. The inherent tension between certain indicators does not lend itself to the production of meaningful results.
- 5.5 To help overcome the above difficulties and to present an assessment of sustainability performance in the most coherent and meaningful manner, the Council has restricted its AMR evaluation to a simple commentary on each of the 15 SA Objectives. This commentary is subdivided into the relevant SA targets and its composition is guided / informed by the background indicators wherever possible. In

this way, the AMR avoids dwelling overly on the intricacies or inadequacies of the various data sets.

- 5.6 Given that SEA Monitoring should take a strategic view of the effects of the plan on the environment, the Council considers it entirely appropriate for the SEA Monitoring to use the Strategic Objectives as the top tier measuring unit for the process. The effect of some background indicators can be aggregated together to form a more comprehensive and more balanced method of assessment which should help overcome potential conflicts and aid performance evaluation across a wider perspective.
- 5.7 The traffic light system used in policy evaluation has not been taken forward to this section owing to the fact that many of the SEA targets and indicators are aspirational and much less specific than their policy equivalents. Evaluation of success is therefore likely to be less quantifiable, and though the degree of progress toward a target is explained in commentary, this does not translate sufficiently readily into a quick-reference colour-coded assessment.

6.0 Sustainability Assessments

6.1 The following pages set out the sustainability assessments with reference to the relevant sustainability objectives.

SA Objective Number	Sustainability Objective
1 - Housing	<p>SA Objective 1: Meet the overall housing requirement through a mix of dwelling types catering for all needs to promote integrated and thriving communities.</p> <p>This SA Objective is informed by 1 target and 7 background indicators.</p> <p>SA Target: Reduce discrepancies between housing requirement, especially for affordable and special need housing and stock.</p> <p>Further progress has been made towards meeting this objective in Merthyr Tydfil with 1536 new dwellings built in the County Borough since 2006. However, this rate of housebuilding is well below the level required to fulfil the strategy of the LDP.</p> <p>Further affordable housing has also been delivered over the monitoring period with the completion of 17 dwellings at the Former Rhyd y Grug School, Quakers Yard; 3 dwellings at Marigold Close, Gurnos; and 6 dwellings as part of the Redrow development in Trelewis. Work is also progressing on several affordable housing schemes, including developments at Old School Close and the former Abercanaid Primary School.</p> <p>There has been another decrease in the average house price during the monitoring period and an increase in wages, and accordingly, an updated Local Housing Market Assessment was published in March 2015, highlighting the housing need in the County Borough up to 2019.</p> <p>The standard of existing stock has also been improved with nearly all social housing in the County Borough meeting Welsh Housing Quality Standard, and the largest Registered Social Landlord in the County Borough (Merthyr Valley Homes) now being able to construct new dwellings after improving the quality of its existing stock to an appropriate standard. Further schemes to improve energy efficiency on social housing stock are also being carried out, such as installation of external wall insulation.</p> <p>SUMMARY ASSESSMENT: Progress continues to be made towards the delivery of a mix of housing types; however, the SA objective is not being fully achieved due to the lower than anticipated level of housing delivery.</p>
2 - Cultural Heritage	<p>SA Objective 2: Promote and protect Welsh Culture and Heritage including landscape and archaeology.</p> <p>This SA Objective is informed by 1 target and 6 background indicators.</p> <p>SA Target: Increase proportion of new development that protects or enhances</p>

	<p>sites of historical and cultural interest.</p> <p>All relevant developments granted planning permission during 2014/2015 either protected or enhanced heritage features as part of that permission.</p> <p>Thomastown Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (CAAMP) and Council Street and Urban Street CAAMP were both adopted by the Council over the monitoring period. These documents, both of which were subjected to public consultation before being adopted, will act as up-to-date guides for property owners and occupiers in each of the conservation areas as well as a guide for those contemplating undertaking development. The CAAMPs will help inform planning decisions and raise the profile of these designations with a view to more sensitive management in the longer term.</p> <p>In terms of positive or negative change in the Buildings at Risk Register, it is anticipated that CADW will complete their survey in 2016, and as such, an update will be provided in a future AMR.</p> <p>The percentage of Merthyr Tydfil’s residents that can speak Welsh has seen an increase from 22% and 25.9%.</p> <p>SUMMARY ASSESSMENT: Progress continues to be made towards meeting this SA objective in terms of both promoting the Welsh language and protecting historical assets.</p>
3 - Communities	<p>SA Objective 3: Encourage population retention and growth; and promote integrated and distinctive communities with opportunities for living, working and socialising for all.</p> <p>This SA Objective is informed by 3 targets and 6 background indicators.</p> <p>SA Target 1: All people to have access to a GP, post office, play area, pub and village hall.</p> <p>The availability of local services is an integral part of the decision-making process on the location of new residential development. For this reason, all residential allocations within the LDP have been located within defined settlement limits and situated within close proximity to existing services and facilities.</p> <p>Over the monitoring period, 95% of residential development granted planning permission in the County Borough was located within 400m of a bus stop and 600m of primary facilities including a shop and school.</p> <p>The percentage of residents with access to a GP and play area is as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The National Survey for Wales Team figures released in May 2014 estimated that 85% of the population of Merthyr Tydfil had easy access to a GP surgery; and • Surveys undertaken for the Council’s Draft Open Space Strategy (OSS) found that 37% of the County Borough’s households had access to a play area within 600m of their home.

Statistics for accessibility to pubs, post offices and village halls do not exist at local authority level.

In terms of the variation in car ownership at the local and national level, the 2011 Census showed car ownership rates of 77.1% and 70.3% for Wales and Merthyr Tydfil respectively. Within Merthyr Tydfil, levels of car ownership between wards varied greatly, from 48.7% in Gurnos to 88.3% in Treharris. Whilst detailed information on car ownership trends will not be available until analysis of the 2021 Census, latest figures published in the Statistics for Wales Statistical Bulletin, dated September 2014, showed that at the end of 2013 there was a registered stock of 1.46 million cars in Wales, compared with a registered stock of 1.43 million in 2011, an increase of 2.36%.

SA Target 2: Increase percentage of people with qualifications and improve skills.

Increasing the proportion of the population with qualifications is not directly related to land use planning policy, although access to improved education and skills facilities remains a fundamental part of the LDP's strategy which is being fulfilled via a number of LDP policies.

With regard to the number of adults attending adult and community learning courses, the Merthyr Tydfil Adult Community Learning (ACL) Partnership provides learning opportunities for adults to suit all levels, from complete beginners, to those with more experience. Providers include the County Borough Council, Merthyr College, Merthyr Canolfan Soar, the Workers' Educational Association (WEA) and Communities First. Between September 2012 and July 2013 a total of 4589 adult enrolment learning activities were recorded by the ACL. This increased to a total of 5489 between September 2013 and July 2014 an increase of 900 adult enrolments. Figures for 2014/15 will be available in February 2016.

SA Target 3: Reduce the number of wards that are among the 100 most deprived in Wales.

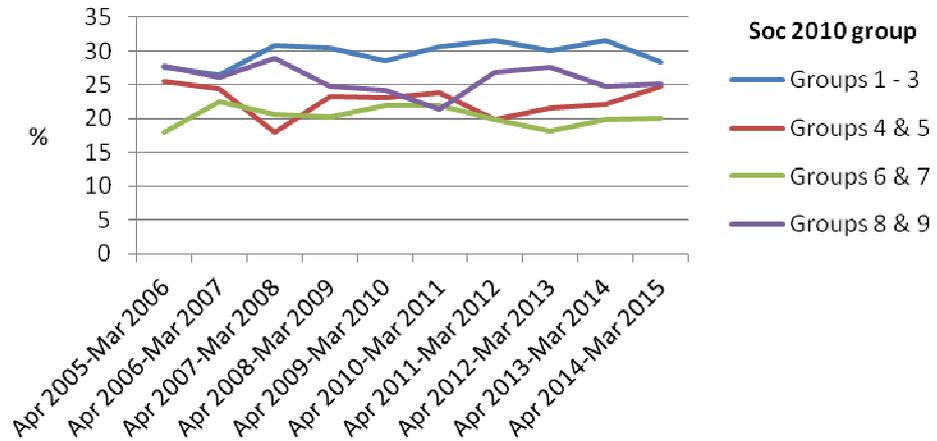
Figures from the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation released in November 2014, show in general, that the valleys and urban local authorities have higher concentrations of multiple deprivation. Merthyr Tydfil has the second highest percentage of Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in the most deprived 10 % in Wales with 22 % of its LSOAs ranking between 1 -191. This represents a decrease from 25 % cent of its LSOAs ranking between 1 -191 compared to the last available figures published in November 2011.

SUMMARY ASSESSMENT: Progress continues to be made towards meeting this SA objective, particularly in relation to the number of adults enrolled in learning activities and the reduction in the number of LSOAs in the most deprived 10% in Wales.

<p>4 - Health</p>	<p>SA Objective 4: Promote services and facilities that encourage a healthy and safe lifestyle.</p> <p>This SA Objective is informed by 3 targets and 9 background indicators.</p> <p>SA Target 1: Increase access to physical recreation facilities.</p> <p>LDP Strategic Objective SO9 seeks to promote health and wellbeing by providing accessible and varied opportunities for leisure and recreational activities. Seven LDP policies flow from this objective including Policy BW16, which seeks to protect and enhance the County Borough’s network of leisure facilities; Policy AS17, which requires new outdoor sport / play space that will help to meet Fields in Trust Standards; and Policy BW7, which requires new development to contribute to the provision of usable open and outdoor play space.</p> <p>Surveys undertaken for the Council’s Draft Open Space Strategy (OSS) found that 37% of the County Borough’s households had access to play area within 600m of their home. In addition, data from the OSS shows that 56% of households within the County Borough currently live within 400m of a natural / semi natural green space. It is anticipated that the OSS will assist in working towards national play space, sport and recreation standards across the County Borough.</p> <p>Air Quality is presently monitored at various locations throughout the County Borough and where standards are not met Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA) are designated. The last Air Quality Updating and Screening Assessment for the County Borough, which was conducted in May 2012, concluded that no AQMAs are required at present. An update will be provided when further information becomes available.</p> <p>SA Target 2: Design to encourage walking and cycling.</p> <p>The close proximity of housing, employment, retail and other land uses has been a major consideration in the pattern of land allocation in the LDP, and will assist in minimising the need to travel whilst helping to ensure there is sufficient incentive to undertake journeys by means other than the car.</p> <p>Equally important is the need to provide sustainable links between communities including better use of existing footpaths/cycle networks and the creation of new routes and links.</p> <p>During 2014/2015, approximately 0.22 km of new bridleway/cycleway was created in the County Borough. This compares with 0.28 km created in 2013/2014. In addition, 2.94 km of footpaths were created in the County Borough over the monitoring period compared with 2.34 km in the previous review period.</p> <p>People will only walk or cycle within the local and wider area if they feel safe to do so. The National Survey for Wales (2014-2015) indicates that, at a national level, 80% of people walking alone in a local authority area after dark felt either fairly safe or very safe. Unfortunately, no comparable data has been provided at a local authority level; however, it is noted that the figure reported in last year’s</p>
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	<p>AMR was 70%, some 10% below the current national average. This matter will be considered further when comparative data becomes available.</p> <p>SA Target 3: Decrease in the number of people with limiting long-term illness or general health ‘not good’.</p> <p>Welsh Health Survey data has been identified which relates to the percentage of adults who reported their general health status as ‘fair/poor’ (i.e. ‘not good’) for the period between 2006 and 2014. The data for Merthyr Tydfil shows a general decline over this period from 27% (2006-2007) to 24% (2013-2014). Although the current figure for Merthyr Tydfil remains 5% above the Welsh Average, it is promising that the percentage decline between 2006 and 2014 has been greater in Merthyr Tydfil than across Wales as a whole.</p> <p>Welsh Health Survey figures for 2013/2014 indicate that 38% of adults living in Merthyr Tydfil reported having ‘limiting health problems. This represents a 2% reduction on the 40% figure report in the last year’s AMR.</p> <p>Life expectancy data is published by ONS every two years. The data currently available for Merthyr Tydfil indicates that male life expectancy has risen from 76.4 to 77.4 between 2009-11 and 2010-12 respectively. Similarly, female life expectancy has risen from 80.8 to 81.1 over the same period. A further update will be provided when data relating to 2011-13 becomes available.</p> <p>SUMMARY ASSESSMENT: Further progress has been made towards meeting this SA objective.</p>
5 - Economy & Employment	<p>SA Objective 5: Encourage a thriving and sustainable economy with a diverse range of job opportunities.</p> <p>This SA Objective is informed by 3 targets and 16 background indicators.</p> <p>SA Target 1: Broaden economic base.</p> <p>LDP Strategic Objective SO7 seeks to improve and diversify the economy, safeguarding existing jobs and creating a range of new job opportunities in a sustainable manner.</p> <p>Nine LDP policies flow from this objective including those covering employment land allocations, existing and proposed leisure developments, and retail development. The performance of each of these policies has been assessed and results published in Section 3 of this AMR.</p> <p>The following graph shows the proportion of people working in higher level managerial, director and professional roles (Soc 2010 major group 1-3); the proportion of those working within skilled trades or administrative work (Soc 2010 major group 4 & 5); the proportion of those working within the caring, leisure & sales, and customer service areas (Soc 2010 major group 6 & 7); and the proportion of people working in elementary occupations and as plant / machine operatives (Soc 2010 major group 8 & 9).</p>

Proportion of people working by Soc 2010 major group - Merthyr Tydfil.



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The proportion of people working in higher level managerial, director and professional roles (Soc 2010 major group 1-3) is still the highest employment sector within the County Borough, although it decreased over the past year to 28.4% in 2014/15.

The proportion of those within skilled trades or administrative work (Soc 2010 major group 4-5) has been fluctuating for the past 5 years, with an increase of 2.6% over the past 12 months to 24.8% in 2014/15.

The proportion of those working within the caring, leisure & sales, and customer service areas (Soc 2010 major group 6-7) remains the lowest employment sector in the County Borough, but the proportion of those employed within this sector has risen to 20.1% in 2014/15.

The proportion of people working in elementary occupations and as plant / machine operatives remains the second highest employment sector within the County Borough. The proportion of those employed within this sector has risen to 25.2% in 2014/15.

SA Target 2: Increase opportunities to work within the County Borough.

No new employment floor space was built in the LDP’s Primary Growth Area over the monitoring period. 220 new jobs were, however, delivered with the opening of the Tenneco Automotive Factory at Pengarnddu Industrial Estate.

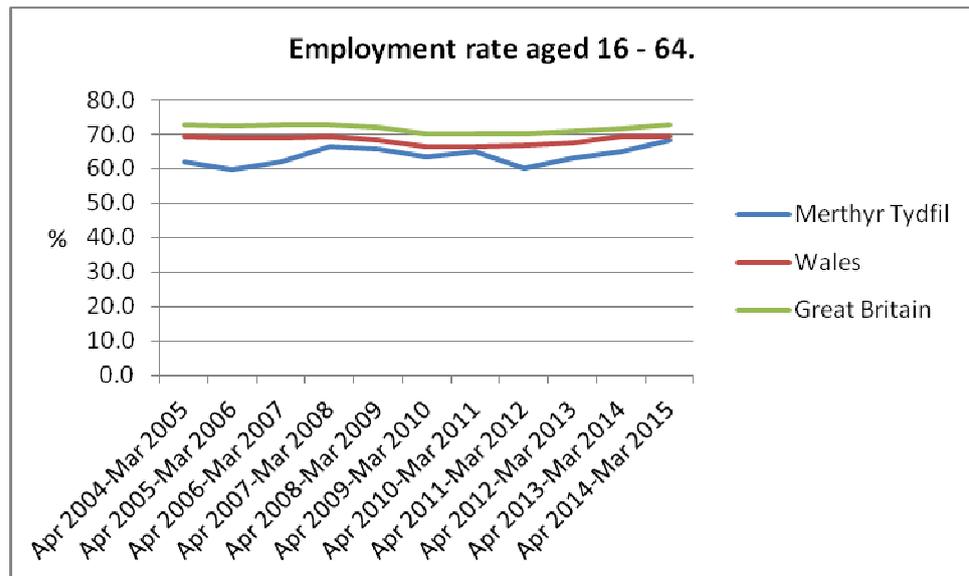
The take up of LDP land from the start of the plan period to the end of the monitoring period equates to 32% of the total allocated. This figure being lower than the target range set out within the Monitoring Framework.

In terms of vacancy rates, Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre has experienced an increase of 2.1% over the monitoring and is now slightly above the Welsh average. Across the County Borough as the whole, information from non-

domestic rates exemptions shows that 242 of 1717 properties (approximately 14%) are receiving rate relief due to them being vacant.

SA Target 3: Decrease unemployment.

The number of economically active people in employment in the County Borough has increased for the third consecutive year to 25,400. The following graph shows the current rate to be 68.2%.



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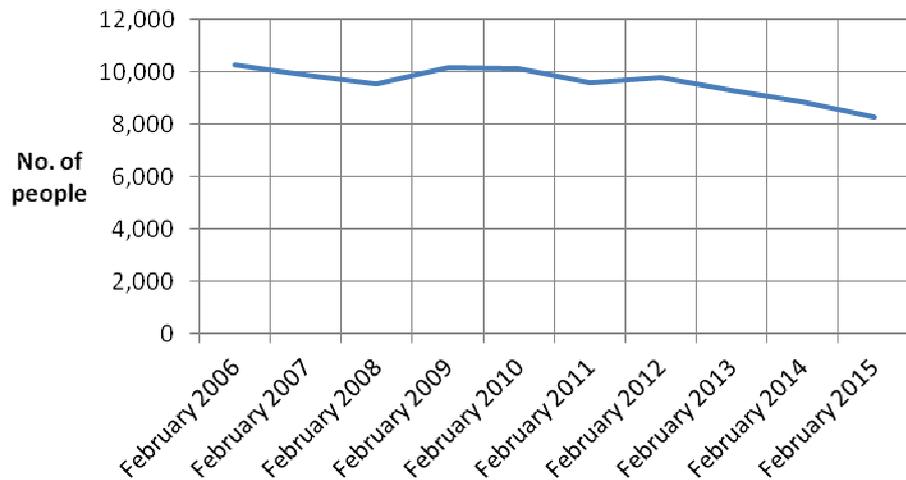
Data for the percentage of people living as well as working within the County Borough is only available every 10 years owing to the fact that it is collected through the Census. Therefore, there is no new data to allow comparison during this monitoring period.

Data for household disposable income is only available at a regional level, which includes the 'Central Valleys' area within which Merthyr Tydfil is located. This data shows the Gross Disposable Household Income (GDHI) has steadily increased over recent years. The most recently available information shows that in 2013, the Central Valleys had the highest GDHI since 2005.

Following four consecutive years where there was an increase in the proportion of people of working age being qualified to NVQ Level 4 or above, there was a decrease in the 2014 calendar year from 26% to 25.3%. This figure remains below the levels of both Wales (33.2%) and Great Britain (36%).

The number of people of working age receiving benefits within the County Borough continues to fall with 8270 recipients in February 2015 (See graph below).

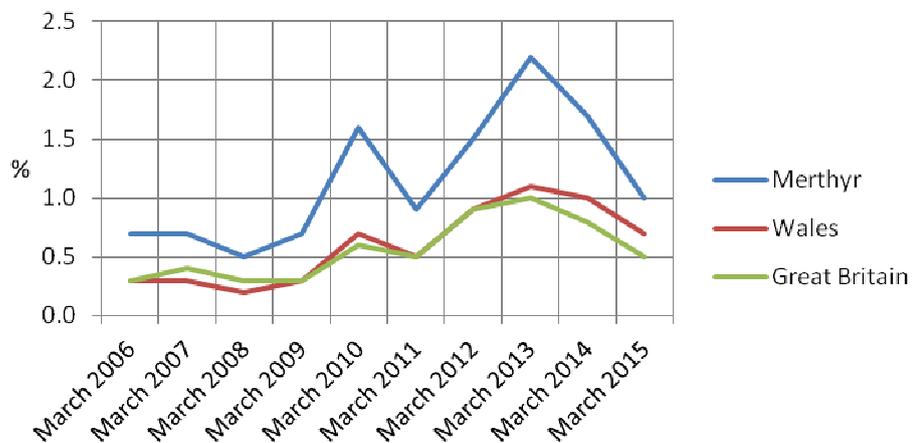
Working age benefit claimants - Merthyr Tydfil.



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The rate of those claiming Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) that have been out of work for more than a year within the County Borough has also decreased to 1%; moving closer to the Welsh average (See graph below).

The rate of those claiming Job Seekers Allowance that have been out of work for more than a year.



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SA Target 4: Support the rural economy.

Two farm diversification proposals were permitted during this monitoring period relating to single wind turbines at Cefn Forest Farm, Treharris and Penrhiw Farm, Trelewis.

SA Target 5: Support potential funding to provide basic infrastructure, develop human resources, and invest in research, innovation and the information society.

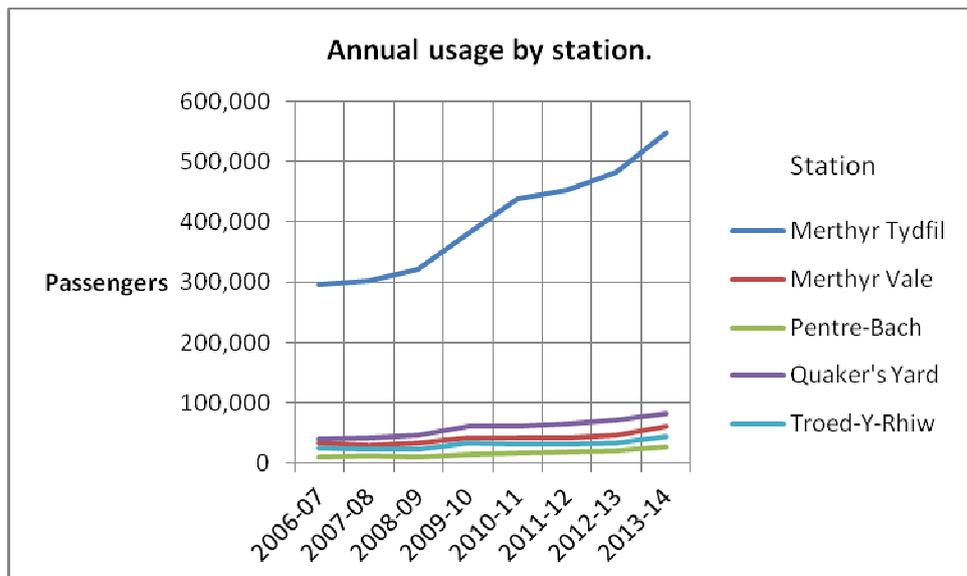
	<p>A range of programmes are being delivered across the County Borough. Developments in the monitoring period include the following:</p> <p>In April 2014, Welsh Government approved an allocation of £12.873 million for the implementation and delivery of the Merthyr Tydfil Regional Centre Regeneration programme (Vibrant and Viable Places Programme). The Programme aims to revitalise and promote the sustainability of the town centre, build a vibrant and sustainable community which is more prosperous, tackle poverty by creating jobs and helping people into work, encourage wider investment in housing and deliver strategic projects of a significant scale within the area.</p> <p>Funding for a Town Centre Partnership was secured through Welsh Government for Treharris in September 2014 and this will form the exit strategy for the Taff Bargoed Regeneration Programme.</p> <p>In November 2014 MTCBC were successful in securing £25,000 through WG to explore the potential of establishing a Business Improvement District on two Industrial Estates in Merthyr Tydfil, building on the success the Merthyr Town Centre BID.</p> <p>Welsh Government funding has been secured for the ‘Effect’ project which provides an innovative, community-based enterprise development structure in three of the South East Wales County Boroughs, including Merthyr Tydfil.</p> <p>SUMMARY ASSESSMENT: Progress has been made towards meeting this SA objective.</p>
6 - Transport	<p>SA Objective 6: Assist in reducing the need to travel and promote more sustainable modes of transport.</p> <p>This SA Objective is informed by 2 targets and 4 background indicators.</p> <p>SA Target 1: Promote more sustainable modes of transport.</p> <p>The requirement to reduce the need to travel is one of the guiding principles of the LDP’s spatial development strategy. Where travel remains necessary, it is proposed that a greater proportion of journeys are undertaken by public transport than previously.</p> <p>Data from the 2001 and 2011 Censuses, reported in the 2012/13 AMR, showed an increase in the use of public transport over the 10 year period. The next comparable dataset will not be published until the Census of 2021.</p> <p>SA Target 2: Locate new development in sustainable locations, reducing the need to travel.</p>

In taking into account the inter-relationship between land use planning and transport, the LDP focuses the majority of new development within or adjacent to established settlements where services and facilities already exist, or where they can realistically be provided as part of new development.

Car ownership data taken from the 2001 and 2011 Censuses showed an increase of 17.2% in the number of cars/vans per 1000 people and an increase of 8.4% in the percentage of households with a car/van over the 10 years. The next comparable dataset will not be published until the Census of 2021.

Data is available to compare rail passenger numbers using the five stations within the County Borough (Merthyr Tydfil, Pentrebach, Troedyrhiw, Merthyr Vale and Quakers Yard). The graph below shows annual usage by station over the plan period. It can be seen that all stations have experienced an increase in passenger numbers over the plan period, particularly Merthyr Tydfil Station.

This is a positive sign that suggests people are changing their mode of transport in favour of rail. Bus passenger figures are unavailable so a comparison of bus and rail passenger figures is not possible at this time.



SUMMARY ASSESSMENT: Progress has been made towards meeting this SA objective, particularly in respect of increasing the use of public transport.

7 – Built Environment

SA Objective 7: Encourage a high quality built environment that promotes community pride.

This SA Objective is informed by 3 targets and 4 background indicators.

SA Target 1: Seek a high standard of design in all new development.

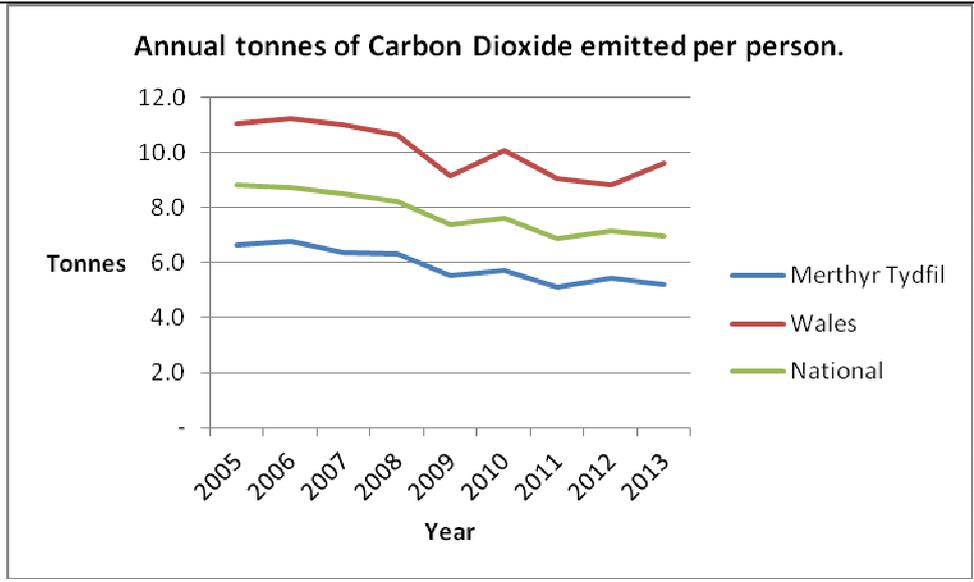
Over the monitoring period, new developments have continued to comply with the sustainable design SPG and have incorporated “secured by design principles” where appropriate.

	<p>As of 31st July 2014, national planning policy requirements for sustainable building standards have been removed and Technical Advice Note (TAN) 22: Planning for Sustainable Buildings has been cancelled. As an alternative, energy conservation matters have been incorporated into Part L of Building Regulations and TAN 12: Design has been updated to include key elements previously contained in TAN 22. TAN 12: Design (2014) continues to be used as an important material consideration in determining the appropriateness of developments.</p> <p>SA Target 2: Increase opportunities for community participation in design of new development.</p> <p>All non-householder planning applications that are deemed to require a Design and Access Statement are not registered unless an appropriate statement is submitted. There are types of application that are exempt from submitting Design and Access statements, including applications for change of use where there are no alterations proposed to the building, applications for advertising consent, and applications for engineering works.</p> <p>SA Target 3: Improve public spaces.</p> <p>During 2014/15, progress has been made on a number of developments that have improved Merthyr Tydfil's public realm. In particular, a significant amount of work has taken place in Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre with the opening of the River Taff Central link in late 2014. This development, together with the environmental enhancement works at Penderyn Square, won the Royal Town Planning Institute 'Excellence in Planning and Design for the Public Realm' Award.</p> <p>SUMMARY ASSESSMENT: Significant progress has been made towards meeting this SA objective, particularly in relation to public realm improvements.</p>
8 - Landscape	<p>SA Objective 8: Facilitate the protection and enhancement of the countryside and landscape character.</p> <p>This SA Objective is informed by 1 target and 7 background indicators.</p> <p>SA Target: Achieve favourable conditions of nationally and locally important landscape designations.</p> <p>During the monitoring period, no nationally or locally important land has been given over to inappropriate development, and no developments have been granted consent that would have an adverse effect on either of the SSSIs in the County Borough.</p> <p>The most recent figures published for fly-tipping show a decrease in incidents from 1406 incidents in 2012-13 to 1320 in 2013/14. The figures for 2014/15 have not yet been published and it will be important to monitor this data to see if this positive trend continues.</p> <p>There is still a lack of available data regarding levels of night blight.</p>

	<p>The monitoring period saw no inappropriate development granted on common land, and there was no loss of protected trees and woodlands during 2014/15.</p> <p>SUMMARY ASSESSMENT: Progress has been made towards meeting this SA objective.</p>
9 - Biodiversity	<p>SA Objective 9: Protect and enhance the diversity and abundance of wildlife habitats and native species.</p> <p>This SA Objective is informed by 2 targets and 8 background indicators.</p> <p>SA Target 1: Protect and enhance biodiversity.</p> <p>There are 5248 ha of Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) priority habitats in Merthyr Tydfil including broadleaf woodland, grassland, heath land, wetland, inland rocks and mineral spoil habitat. The figure remains the same as last year.</p> <p>Loss of habitats in general has been compensated through landscaping schemes, landscape management plans and ecological mitigation. There has, however, been a small net loss of habitat as a result of development on SINC, primarily within allocated housing sites. Accordingly, there has been a small change in total area of SINC which is currently being surveyed and quantified as part of the LDP Review process.</p> <p>Taf Fechan SSSI remains at an unfavourable conservation status but is under favourable management, meaning that it should be heading towards favourable status given time. Cwm Glo & Glyndyrus SSSI has not yet been assessed but is currently under favourable management.</p> <p>In terms of non-native species, 1.67 ha of Japanese Knotweed was eradicated over the monitoring period. This compares favourably with the 0.45 ha of Japanese Knotweed eradicated during 2013/2014. In addition, 3 ha of Himalayan Balsam was removed over the monitoring period. There are no records of Giant Hogweed occurring within the County Borough.</p> <p>With regard to LBAP selected local characteristic species, the Lapwing Population at Ffos-y-Fran is in decline, while the population of Great Crested Newt is increasing. There is, however, no contextual information available to make a judgement as to the particular significance of these changes.</p> <p>Over the monitoring period, 60% of the 38 relevant planning approvals incorporated ecological mitigation measures, which represents a 23% increase compared to the last monitoring period. Mitigation measures related to the protection of amphibians including Great Crested Newts, bats, reptiles, otters and birds including owls; the eradication or prevention of invasive species; and the protection/introduction of hedgerows and trees.</p> <p>Approximately 9.35 km of linear habitat has been created, maintained or enhanced within the monitoring period. This represents a significant improvement on the last monitoring period where no new linear habitats were</p>

	<p>created.</p> <p>SA Target 2: Achieve an improvement in the water environment.</p> <p>The water environment is considered under SA Objective 10 below as there is no relevant background indicator under SA Objective 9.</p> <p>SUMMARY ASSESSMENT: Further progress has been made towards meeting this SA objective, particularly in respect of the increased incorporation of mitigation measures in new developments, the eradication of non-native species and the creation of new linear habitats.</p>
10 - Water	<p>SA Objective 10: Ensure the protection and enhancement of the water environment.</p> <p>This SA Objective is informed by 2 targets and 6 background indicators.</p> <p>SA Target 1: Improve water quality.</p> <p>Two indicators have been identified which relate to this target. The first monitors river quality by looking at the percentage of total classified river length of “good status”, while the second considers development within groundwater source protection zones.</p> <p>The European Water Framework Directive (WFD) requires that all inland and coastal water bodies reach at least “good status” by 2015, subject to certain exemptions. The term “good status” means the status achieved by a surface water body when both its ecological status and its chemical status are at least good.</p> <p>No rivers in Merthyr Tydfil currently meet “good status”, nor are they expected to achieve it by 2015. The current overall objectives, are for all water bodies within Merthyr Tydfil to meet “good status” by 2027. WFD River Catchment Summaries, published in February 2014, indicate that the status of all water bodies within Merthyr Tydfil remains unchanged from those reported in last year’s AMR.</p> <p>Only a relatively small area of land in the north east extremity of the County Borough falls within a groundwater source protection zone. No developments have occurred within this zone over the monitoring period.</p> <p>SA Target 2: Flood risk to be mitigated or avoided.</p> <p>Over the monitoring period, no developments were granted planning permission in flood zone C that did not meet TAN15 tests. The avoidance of development within the floodplain allows these areas to continue to fulfil their flood flow and water storage functions, preventing physical changes to water bodies.</p> <p>SA Target 3: New development to incorporate sustainable drainage systems.</p> <p>Over the monitoring period, no developments have been granted planning</p>

	<p>permission without incorporating SuDS into the design of the scheme unless there have been environmental or practical reasons for not doing so. This increase in the use of SuDS will contribute to reducing risks of flooding and the pollution of surface waters during high rainfall events.</p> <p>SA Target 4: Encourage more efficient water use.</p> <p>Two indicators have been identified that relate to this this target. The first relates to the number of water efficient developments, and the second to water consumption per household.</p> <p>Water efficient developments have continued to be secured over the monitoring period through the promotion of water conservation/efficiency measures under Policy BW7. Reducing the amount of water consumption in new developments will assist in minimising additional pressures on the water environment.</p> <p>In respect of water consumption per household in Wales, the last update of data provided by StatsWales was in 2010/2011. It is not therefore currently possible to provide an update on changes to the amount of water consumption per household in Wales. Further consideration will be given to this matter when new data becomes available.</p> <p>SUMMARY ASSESSMENT: Progress has been made towards meeting this SA objective.</p>
11 - Climate Change	<p>SA Objective 11: Help to minimise the cause and effects of climate change.</p> <p>This SA Objective is informed 2 targets and 5 background indicators.</p> <p>SA Target 1: Decrease greenhouse gas emissions.</p> <p>Two indicators have been identified which relate to this target. The first monitors the emissions of greenhouse gases and the second tracks the ecological footprint of Merthyr Tydfil.</p> <p>Merthyr Tydfil’s per capita emissions of CO₂ has reduced from 5.7 to 5.2 tonnes between 2012 and 2013 tonnes, which continues the general decline experienced since the start of the Plan period (2006) (see Graph below). This general decline in CO₂ emissions will help mitigate the effects of climate change.</p>



As indicated in the last AMR, the ecological footprint of Merthyr Tydfil was last calculated by the Stockholm Environment Institute in 2006. At this time, the figure for Merthyr Tydfil was just over 4.1 global hectares per person; the second lowest ecological footprint in Wales. It is currently not possible to assess whether the ecological footprint of Merthyr Tydfil is being successfully reduced towards the global average, due to the infrequency of data updates. This indicator will be considered at a later stage when further data becomes available.

SA Target 2: Decrease impacts from the effects of climate change.

Two indicators have been identified under this target which both relate to flooding. The first considers the number of properties at risk from flooding, while the second tracks the number of flood incidents. Climate change is anticipated to affect flood risk in Merthyr Tydfil by increasing levels of rainfall over winter months and increasing the frequency of extreme weather conditions.

As indicated in last year’s AMR, the Authority’s Engineering Department has undertaken an analysis of the number of properties at risk of flooding in the County Borough and the figure remains at 2283 properties.

In respect of flood incidents, no significant flooding occurred in the County Borough between 2014 and 2015.

Both positive outcomes demonstrate that the County Borough is coping well with the effects of Climate Change.

SUMMARY ASSESSMENT: Further progress has been made towards meeting this SA objective in terms of both mitigating, and adapting to, the effects of climate change.

12 - Energy

SA Objective 12: Encourage the supply of renewable energy and a reduction in energy consumption.

	<p>This SA Objective is informed by 2 targets and 5 background indicators.</p> <p>SA Target 1: Encourage energy efficient design in development.</p> <p>Three indicators have been identified under this target. Two relate to the proportion of developments meeting BREEAM and Code for Sustainable Homes standards respectively, while the third considers energy consumption.</p> <p>National planning policy requirements for sustainable building standards were removed and Technical Advice Note (TAN) 22: Planning for Sustainable Buildings was cancelled by the Welsh Government on 31st July 2014. As an alternative, energy conservation matters have been incorporated into Part L of Building Regulations which requires a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from 2010 Building Regulations levels of: 8% for new domestic buildings and 20% for non-domestic buildings.</p> <p>In respect of Merthyr Tydfil’s total energy consumption, sub-national total final energy consumption data for 2012 had not been published by the Department of Energy & Climate Change at the time of writing. An update on this indicator will therefore be provided in the next AMR.</p> <p>SA Target 2: Maximise the use of renewable energy.</p> <p>Two indicators have been identified which relate to this indicator. The first considers the amount of energy generated from renewable sources, while the second measures the proportion of energy needs being met from renewable sources.</p> <p>Over the monitoring period, planning permission has been granted for a 5kw wind turbine at Penrhiw Farm, Trelewis; a 500 kw wind turbine adjacent to Unit 3, Pengarnddu Industrial Estate; and a 500 kw wind turbine at Cefn Forest Farm, Treharris. This equates to just over 1 MWe of permitted capacity, which, based on capacity factor of 0.3, will contribute 2628 MWh per annum.</p> <p>With regard to the proportion of energy needs met from renewable energy sources, relevant local data provided by the Department of Energy and Climate Change was discontinued in 2011. In terms of national targets, the European Environment Agency’s publication ‘Trends and projections in Europe 2014’ explains the UK is on track to meet targets for each of the climate and energy policy objectives, including the overall legally binding commitment for renewable energy consumption of 15% by 2020.</p> <p>SUMMARY ASSESSMENT: Progress has been made towards meeting this SA objective.</p>
13 – Land and Soils	<p>SA Objective 13: Promote efficient use of land and soils.</p> <p>This SA Objective is informed by 2 targets and 4 background indicators.</p> <p>SA Target 1: Percentage of development on previously developed land.</p>

	<p>Promoting an efficient use of land is one of the key elements of the LDP’s strategy as outlined at Para 2.5.22 of the LDP Written Statement. At least 75% of the total land allocated for development in the Plan can be categorised as brownfield.</p> <p>Over the monitoring period, 92% of all development permitted occurred on previously developed land. This continues to exceed the 80% target set for the whole of the plan period. However, only 40% of new dwellings in Merthyr Tydfil were constructed on previously developed land during 2014/15. Whilst this represents a 15% decrease compared with the previous monitoring period, it is primarily due to a significant number of completions on a single, large, greenfield allocation in Trelewis and a lower level of housing completions across the County Borough overall. Over 60% of these completions were at a density of between 25-35 dwellings per hectare, which is in accordance with the targets included in the LDP monitoring framework.</p> <p>SA Target 2: Decrease percentage of contaminated land.</p> <p>The LDP recognises that primarily because of Merthyr Tydfil’s industrial legacy, certain areas of land in the County Borough are potentially contaminated. Furthermore, that the remediation of such land may be required before it can be brought back into beneficial use.</p> <p>The schedule of allocated housing sites listed at Appendix 4 of the LDP Written Statement recognises that potential ground conditions on many sites will require appropriate technical investigation prior to the submission of any planning application. However, as such sites continue to be developed during the course of the plan period, the Council considers that more and more contaminated land will be remediated in accord with the requirements of Policy BW18.</p> <p>The onus to identify site contamination rests with the developer but no data is currently available to quantify progress towards this target.</p> <p>SUMMARY ASSESSMENT: Continued progress has been made towards meeting this SA objective.</p>
14 - Waste	<p>SA Objective 14: Promote the minimisation of waste, especially waste to landfill.</p> <p>This SA Objective is informed by 2 targets and 5 background indicators.</p> <p>SA Target 1: Move up the waste hierarchy.</p> <p>Four indicators have been identified under this target. The first indicator considers municipal reuse/recycling/composting rates (percentage); the second considers municipal waste arisings; the third considers waste service access to households; and the final indicator measures the quantity of commercial waste produced, recycled and landfilled. The latter will only be considered when further data updates become available.</p>

	<p>The amount of reuse, recycling and composting has been steadily increasing in the County Borough for a number of years. The reuse/recycling/composting rate for 2014/15 has increased further to 51% (provisional figure) from 48% in 2013/14. Whilst significant progress has been made with this 3% increase, the current recycling and composting rate remains below the statutory targets of 52% by 2012/13 and 70% by 2024/25.</p> <p>In order to address this issue, Merthyr Tydfil CBC has restructured its waste collection service through investment in new vehicles, containers and equipment, and waste management facilities in order to move to a kerbside sort system of recycling. This should both increase the quantity and improve the quality of materials recycled, and enable the Council to meet national targets.</p> <p>In terms of access to waste service provision, 100 per cent of households in Merthyr Tydfil have access to a weekly recycling and composting service with a fortnightly general waste service. This kerbside waste collection service encourages residents to manage waste more effectively and increases the amount of waste being reused, recycled and composted.</p> <p>Merthyr Tydfil's municipal waste arisings have declined year on year since 2008/09 and this trend is expected to continue as waste policies take effect. However, municipal waste arisings remained stationary between 2012/13 (29,518 tonnes) and 2013/2014 (29,641 tonnes), and actually increased to 30,170 tonnes in 2014/15. It therefore appears, at very least, that the earlier decline in waste arisings has halted. This issue will be considered further as part of the LDP review.</p> <p>SA Target 2: Reduce tonnage of waste to landfill/incineration.</p> <p>The amount of Merthyr Tydfil's waste going to landfill has reduced from 15,099 (2013-14) to 11,115 (2014-2015) tonnes over the monitoring period. At the same time, the amount of waste reused, recycled or composted (+1,155 tonnes), or incinerated with energy recovery (+2,379 tonnes) has increased. This demonstrates that Merthyr Tydfil's waste is being successfully diverted up the waste hierarchy.</p> <p>SUMMARY ASSESSMENT: Progress continues to be made towards meeting this SA objective.</p>
15 - Minerals	<p>SA Objective 15: Promote efficient and appropriate extraction and use of minerals in a manner that minimises social and environment impacts.</p> <p>This SA Objective is informed by 1 targets and 2 background indicators.</p> <p>SA Target 1: Increase percentage use of aggregates from secondary and recycled sources.</p> <p>A construction and demolition (C&D) waste survey undertaken by Natural Resources Wales in 2012 indicates that 87% of C&D waste material generated in Wales was being prepared for re-use, recycling and other material recovery.</p>

	<p>Over the monitoring period, planning permission was granted for two business related developments within the buffer zone of the Ffos-y-Fran land reclamation scheme, and a housing development within the buffer zone of Vaynor Quarry. The business related developments represent non-sensitive land uses, while the housing development represents the final phase of a residential scheme which already encroaches into the buffer zone. As such, the developments are in accordance with the guidance set out in paragraph 40 of Minerals Planning Policy Wales and it is considered that the percentage of land that has been taken up by inappropriate sensitive development is zero.</p>
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SUMMARY ASSESSMENT: Progress continues to be made towards meeting this SA objective.

7.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

- 7.1 Paragraph 4.43 of LDP Wales sets out seven questions that the AMR must seek to address. Whilst all of the issues have been considered and addressed throughout the report, they have not been set out specifically to address the questions. In order that the AMR complies with its statutory requirements, the following section sets out the conclusions and recommendations in a manner that directly responds to the LDP Wales questions.

Does the basic strategy remain sound?

- 7.2 The evidence collected through the AMR process indicates that whilst many aspects of the LDP strategy are being achieved, certain elements of the Plan are currently not being realised. In particular, it is evident that the housing and employment elements of the LDP strategy are not being delivered as quickly as anticipated. However, there is little doubt that the poor economic climate continues to significantly influence this situation and poor economic conditions since the first AMR have affected the degree to which the Plan has been able to remain sound. The soundness of the LDP strategy will therefore need to be considered as part of the statutory four year review of the LDP.

What impact are the policies having globally, nationally, regionally and locally?

- 7.3 It should be noted that the SA monitoring, which incorporates SEA requirements, contains a high proportion of indicators that have not provided results, either because of the requirement for time-series data, or due to relevant data sources being amended, or due to information now being completely unavailable. It will therefore be appropriate to continue to refine / adjust certain background indicators to provide more realistic results, thus leading to the publication of more comprehensive and meaningful assessments in future.
- 7.4 Globally, the SA Monitoring identifies that the Plan is maintaining a balanced effect on economic, social and environmental aspects of sustainability. In terms of SEA requirements, no significant unforeseen adverse effects have been identified.
- 7.5 Nationally, the LDP policy framework continues to deliver development that helps meet national requirements and projections, particularly in respect of affordable housing and renewable energy generation.
- 7.6 From a regional perspective, the LDP is assisting in meeting regional objectives relating to minerals, waste and leisure/tourism facilities.
- 7.7 Locally, policy intervention and the delivery of allocations are assisting with the process of regeneration, delivering development in sustainable locations and helping to meet local community needs.

Do any policies need changing to reflect changes in national policy?

- 7.8 Changes to national policy or guidance that may have an effect or impact upon the planning responsibilities of the LDP are set out in Section 3 of this AMR as necessary and appropriate. Having reviewed the relevant documents and strategies, the Council has concluded that, in themselves, these changes do not require the LDP and its associated policy framework to be immediately amended or changed. They will, however, be considered further as part of the four year review of the LDP.

Are the policies and related targets being met or is progress being made towards meeting them (including publication of relevant SPG)?

- 7.9 Information collected through the AMR process indicates that many of the Plan's policies are being met and that there continues to be positive movement towards related targets. In terms of LDP policy, Para 7.14 below summarises the policy areas that have been triggered for consideration; some of these have mitigating circumstances and do not necessarily reflect a failure of the policies or the policy framework, whilst others (including certain LDP allocations) are now worthy of reconsideration as part of the four year review of the Plan.
- 7.10 From an SEA/SA perspective, Chapter 6 sets out the results of the SEA Monitoring process which concludes that the overall effects of the plan are in balance. The only note of concern emanating from the assessment was the number of background indicators that continue to fail in producing information to provide meaningful results for the commentary under each SA Objective (see 7.3 above).
- 7.11 Four SPG documents have been published and adopted by the Council since the adoption of the LDP in 2011; these relate to Affordable Housing, Planning Obligations, Shopfront Design, and Sustainable Design. A Policy Clarification Note has been produced in respect of the requirements of LDP Policy AS24 – Employment Site Protection, and a process flow chart also prepared to aid the consideration of planning proposals involving the potential loss of community facilities against LDP Policy BW15 – Community Facilities. Two further SPGs relating to biodiversity and householder design are also being prepared by the Council.

Where progress has not been made, what are the reasons for this and what knock on effects may it have?

- 7.12 Between 2011 and 2015, clear trends have emerged as to which policies are performing as expected and which are not. Some policies and allocations are clearly progressing slower than intended or may even be static, whilst a handful may be progressing at a faster rate than originally envisaged.
- 7.13 A variety of recommendations are set out in the relevant sections of this AMR, and these include undertaking further research and analysis of pertinent issues as part of the four year review of the LDP. Continued close monitoring will also be necessary in

helping to ensure identified under-performance in certain areas does not become a more acute, extensive, and longer-term trend. However, it is recognised that the LDP may be constrained in its ability to have a direct influence on the economic downturn or the state of the market which are the main factors at play.

Do any aspects of the LDP need adjusting or replacing because they are not working as intended or are not achieving the objectives of the strategy and / or sustainable development objectives?

7.14 The monitoring process has identified several aspects of the plan and its strategy that are not working or are not progressing towards their stated objectives. These are:

- The number of houses built in the Primary Growth Area
- The amount of employment floor-space built in the Primary Growth Area
- The vacancy rate for retail premises in Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre
- The percentage of LDP land allocations delivered
- The percentage of total development permitted on allocated sites
- The supply of housing land
- The number of dwellings being built, particularly general market dwellings
- The delivery of B1 employment floor-space

If policies or proposals need changing, what suggested actions are required to achieve this?

7.15 A variety of recommendations are set out in the relevant sections of this AMR, and these include undertaking further research and analysis of pertinent issues as part of the four year LDP review. In respect of the latter, it will be necessary to consider the soundness of the adopted Plan based on the findings of AMRs, updates to the evidence base, on-going S61 surveys and reconsideration of the SA. It is likely that even though only certain aspects of the plan are under-achieving, the process of revisiting them or adjusting / replacing them may have wider ranging implications for the LDP as a whole. There is a close interrelationship between many strands of the LDP's strategy, and the advancement towards a particular outcome at a particular time is dependent on a number of factors coming together in a measured and co-ordinated manner.

Recommendations

7.16 As a result of the above, the Annual Monitoring Report for 2015 concludes and recommends as follows:

1. AMR recommendations should be followed to help ensure identified under-performance in certain areas does not become a more acute, extensive, and longer-term trend. Close monitoring will also be necessary in this regard.
2. Amongst the AMR recommendations is the need for further research and analysis of pertinent issues as part of the four year review of the LDP. The outcome of the review will be the production of a review report which will set out and explain the extent of any changes required to the Plan. In doing so, the Report will identify whether a full or short form procedure will be followed.

Quick-reference to policy achievements

SO1: To capitalise on Merthyr's strategic position, further developing its role as the main commercial, service and employment centre in the Heads of the Valleys area by focusing development within the main town of Merthyr Tydfil.				
Core and Local Indicators	Policy Targets	Policy Achievement	Trigger Level	
<u>Core</u> Number of new homes built in the primary growth area. (Linked to SO6)	Between 1,890 and 2,110 net completions by April 2016	1212 completions by end of March 2015		R
	At least 3,020 net completions by April 2021	--		N/A
<u>Core</u> New employment floorspace built in the primary growth area (Linked to SO7)	Between 36,490 and 40,470 sq m net floorspace by April 2016	25,494 sqm delivered at end of March 2015. 206 sqm delivered during 2013/14	Greater than 14,700 sq m per annum or less than 1,834 sq m per annum for 2 consecutive years.	R
	At least 110,080 sq m net floorspace by April 2021	0 sqm delivered during 2014/15		R
				N/A
<u>Core</u> New retail floorspace built in the town centre (sqm)	Approximately 1,460 sqm net floorspace by the end of 2016	No application registered	No application registered by the end of 2014	Y

<p><u>Local - Town Centre Health Checks</u></p> <p>i) Total annual vacant floor space in Town Centre</p> <p>(Vacancy rate currently at 13% - Retail, Commercial and Leisure Capacity Study, 2009)</p> <p>ii) Percentage of A1 retail uses in primary shopping area</p>	<p>Vacancy rate to reduce to 9% (UK average)</p> <p>Maintain a percentage of at least 83%</p>	<p>16.7% (2.1% increase)</p> <p>82.3% (no change over monitoring period)</p>	<p>Vacancy rate increasing for 1 year or remaining static above target for 2 consecutive years</p> <p>Percentage less than 83%</p>	<p>R</p> <p>Y</p>	<p>R</p> <p>Y</p>
<p><u>Core</u></p> <p>New social and community infrastructure</p> <p>i) Merthyr Tydfil Health Park</p> <p>ii) Merthyr College</p> <p>iii) Ysgol Santes Tudful</p> <p>(Linked to SO8)</p>	<p>Deliver by the end of 2013</p> <p>Deliver by the end of 2016</p> <p>Deliver by the end of 2010</p>	<p>Delivered</p> <p>Delivered</p> <p>Delivered</p>	<p>No planning application registered by the end of 2011</p> <p>No planning application registered by the end of 2014</p>	<p>G</p>	

SO2: To focus appropriate levels of development within the County Borough's smaller valley communities to create affordable and attractive places to live with good access to jobs and services.

Core and Local Indicators	Policy Targets	Policy Achievement	Trigger Level	
<u>Core</u> Number of new homes built in secondary growth area (Linked to SO6)	Between 280 and 320 net completions by April 2016	281 completions by end of March 2015		G
	At least 550 net completions by April 2021	--		N/A
<u>Core</u> Number of new homes built in other growth areas. (Linked to SO6)	Between 200 and 240 net completions by April 2016	43 completions by end of March 2015		Y
	At least 245 net completions by April 2021	--		N/A
<u>Core</u> New social and community infrastructure (i) Primary Health Care at Treharris (ii) Ynysowen Community Primary School (Linked to SO8)	Deliver by the end of 2010 Deliver by the end of 2010	Delivered Delivered		G

SO3. To promote regeneration through the use of suitable and appropriate brownfield land rather than greenfield sites.				
Core and Local Indicators	Policy Targets	Policy Achievement	Trigger Level	
<u>Core</u> Amount of development permitted on previously developed land as a percentage of all development permitted (N.B. this would exclude householder applications and change of use from one non-residential use to another) (ha)	Maintain a percentage of at least 80% over the plan period	2014/15 – 92%	Less than 80% for 2 consecutive years	G
<u>Core</u> Amount of greenfield land lost as a result of inappropriate development on sites not allocated in the LDP	No land lost	No greenfield land lost	1 or 2 developments permitted for 2 consecutive years, or, 3 or more developments permitted in 1 year	G

SO4. To support the principle of sustainability via an energy efficient land use/ transport strategy.				
Core and Local Indicators	Policy Targets	Policy Achievement	Trigger Level	
<u>Local</u> Percentage of new residential development within 400m of bus stop and 600m of primary facilities including a shop and school. (Linked to SO8)	Maintain a percentage of at least 80% over the plan period	95% of new residential developments that were granted planning permission over the monitoring period were within specified distances to local facilities	Less than 80% for 2 consecutive years	G
<u>Local</u> Percentage of new dwellings completed at: (1) less than 20 dph;	Approximately 12%	14%		

(2) 20 dph or greater and less than 25 dph; (3) 25 dph or greater and less than 30 dph; (4) 30 dph or greater and less than 50 dph; and (5) 50 dph or greater (Linked to SO6)	Approximately 13% Approximately 25% Approximately 48% Approximately 2%	0% 66% 16% 4%	More than 25% of new dwellings at less than 25 dph for 2 consecutive years	G	
<u>Core</u> Percentage of allocated sites developed (ha)	Approximately 65% of allocations developed by the end of 2016 Approximately 100% of allocations developed by the end of 2021	Approximately 32% of allocations developed by March 2015. Delivered approximately 6.7 ha over the monitoring period (Trigger level approximately 4.5 ha) --	Less than 25% of LDP phased delivery rate for 2 consecutive years	R	G
				N/A	
<u>Core</u> Percentage of total development permitted on allocated sites (ha)	Maintain a percentage of approximately 85% over the plan period	Approximately 11% of total development permitted on allocated sites over the monitoring period	Less than 80% for 2 consecutive years	R	

<u>Local</u> Highway network improvements				
(1) Aberfan – Merthyr Vale Link (T1)	Deliver by the end of 2011	Not delivered by end of 2011. Under construction during 2014/15	-	Y
(2) Pentwyn Road, Quakers Yard (T2)	Deliver by the end of 2021		No planning application registered by the end of 2019	N/A
(3) A472 at Fiddlers Elbow (T3)	Deliver by the end of 2021		No planning application registered by the end of 2019	N/A
<u>Local</u> Remodelling of Merthyr Tydfil Central Bus Station	Deliver by the end of 2016	No application registered as of March 2015	No planning application registered by the end of 2014	Y

SO5. To manage natural resources wisely avoiding irreversible damage in order to maintain and enhance their value for future generations.					
Core and Local Indicators	Policy Targets	Policy Achievement	Trigger Level		
<u>Core</u> The tonnage (Mt) of primary land-won aggregates permitted in accordance with the Regional Technical Statement for Aggregates	Minimum of 3.3 Mt produced by the end of 2011	Approximately 2.9 Mt produced since 2011	Less than 1.1 Mt per annum for 2 consecutive years	Y	Y
	Minimum of 8.8 Mt produced by the end of 2016	Approximately 0.6 Mt produced in 2014			
	Minimum of 14.3 Mt produced by the end of 2021 <small>(N.B. targets are based on joint production with Caerphilly CBC)</small>			N/A	
<u>Core</u> Aggregates landbank	Minimum 10 year land bank maintained throughout the	Current land bank sufficient to maintain a minimum 10 year	Landbank falling below target	G	

	plan period	land bank throughout the plan period		
<u>Core</u> Amount of development (by TAN 15 paragraph 5.1 development category) permitted in C1 and C2 floodplain areas not meeting all TAN 15 tests (paragraph 6.2 i-v)	No developments permitted	No developments granted planning permission in C1 or C2 floodplain areas that do not meet all TAN 15 tests	1 or more developments permitted	G
<u>Local</u> Developments incorporating sustainable urban drainage systems (SuDS)	All developments to include SuDS where appropriate (N.B Excludes developments that have not incorporated SuDS for environmental or practical reasons)	All developments granted planning permission over the monitoring period incorporate SuDS where appropriate	1 or 2 developments permitted without SuDS for 2 consecutive years, or, 3 or more developments permitted without SuDS in 1 year	G
<u>Core</u> Amount of new licensed waste management facilities permitted	Between 1.1 and 3.2 hectares of B2 employment land developed for waste management facilities. (N.B. New facilities will be delivered in partnership with Rhondda Cynon Taf) New civic amenity site in the south of the Borough to be delivered by the end of 2016	Two new waste management facilities granted planning permission over monitoring period	No new facilities granted planning permission by the end of 2012 No planning application registered by the end of 2014	G
<u>Local</u> Landfill capacity at Trecatty	To maintain spare capacity over the Plan period	Input below maximum in 2013	Input at the maximum of 625,000 tpa for 3 consecutive years	G

SO6: To provide a range of dwelling sizes and types, including affordable and special needs housing, which support the need of the local community, attract new inhabitants to the area and create mixed and socially inclusive communities.

Core and Local Indicators	Policy Targets	Policy Achievement	Trigger Level	
<u>Core</u> Housing Land Supply	Maintain a minimum of 5 years supply (ha)	2.8 yrs	Less than a 5 year supply for 1 year	R
<u>Core</u> Number of all dwellings built	Between 2,400 and 2,720 net completions by April 2016	1536 completions by end of March 2015	20% less or greater than LDP strategy build rate for 2 consecutive years	R
	At least 3,800 net completions by April 2021	--		N/A
<u>Core</u> Number of new general market dwellings built	Between 2,110 and 2,390 net completions by April 2016	1249 completions by end of March 2015	20% less or greater than LDP strategy build rate for 2 consecutive- years	R
	At least 3,330 net completions by April 2021	75 completions during 2014/2015 --		N/A
<u>Core</u> Number of affordable dwellings built	Between 225 and 255 net completions by April 2016	287 completions by end of March 2015	20% less or greater than LDP strategy build rate for 2 consecutive- years	Y
	At least 350 net completions by April 2021	26 completions by during 2014/2015 --		N/A
<u>Local</u> Number of affordable dwellings secured as a planning obligation	Approximately 130 by April 2016	39 dwellings by end of March 2015	10% Area: delivering less than 7.5% or more than 12.5% 5% Area: delivering less than 2.5% or more than 7.5%	Y
	Approximately 240 by April 2021	5% delivered in 10% Area. 5% delivered in 5% Area --		Y G N/A

<u>Local</u> Number of affordable dwellings secured through affordable housing exceptions policy	Approximately 10 by April 2016 Approximately 20 by April 2021	No planning application submitted --	No planning application submitted by the end of 2014	R
				N/A
<u>Local</u> Average house price (Baseline: Approximately £86,900 at 2010, amended in line with Land Registry data to £73,153)	--	£63,152	+/- 10% change from base level	Y
<u>Local</u> Average income (gross weekly pay) (Baseline: Approximately £380 at 2009, amended in line with NOMIS data to £392)	--	£434.50 (+11%)	+/- 10% change from base level	Y
<u>Local</u> Vacancy rates of existing housing stock (Baseline: 6% at 2010)	--	4.5%	Vacancy rate increasing for 1 year or remaining static for 2 consecutive years	G
<u>Local</u> Preparation and adoption of Affordable Housing SPG Percentage of relevant planning applications complying with SPG	By the end of 2011 All (post SPG adoption)	SPG adopted March 2012 All applications complying		G

SO7. To improve and diversify the economy, safeguarding existing jobs and creating a range of new job opportunities in a sustainable manner.					
Core and Local Indicators	Policy Targets	Policy Achievement	Trigger Level		
<u>Core</u> New B1 floorspace delivered	Between 28,500 and 30,790 sq m net floorspace delivered by April 2016	10,661 sq m delivered by end of March 2015. 57sqm delivered 2013/14. 0 sqm delivered 2014/15	Greater than 7,120 sq m per annum or less than 890 sq m per annum for 2 consecutive years	R	R
	At least 53,400 sq m net floorspace delivered by April 2021			N/A	
<u>Core</u> New B2/B8 floorspace delivered	Between 7,920 and 9,680 sq m net floorspace delivered by April 2016	15601 sq m delivered by end of March 2015. 1330 sqm delivered 2013/14 0 sqm delivered 2014/15	Greater than 7,540 sq m per annum or less than 940 sq m per annum for 2 consecutive years	Y	G
	At least 56,500 sq m net floorspace delivered by April 2021			N/A	
<u>Core</u> Minimum number of net additional jobs delivered	Between 1,800 and 1,980 jobs delivered by April 2016	1318 jobs delivered by end of March 2015 220 jobs delivered 2014/15	Greater than 592 jobs per annum or less than 74 jobs per annum for 2 consecutive years	G	G
	At least 4,440 jobs delivered April by 2021			N/A	
<u>Local</u> Developments granted planning permission that result in a loss of employment land within employment sites protected	No loss of employment land on protected employment sites except where justified within the terms of the policy	No unjustified loss of employment land	1 or 2 developments granted planning permission for 2 consecutive years, or, 3 or more developments granted planning permission in 1	G	

under Policy AS24			year		
<u>Local</u> Percentage of economically active people in employment (Baseline: 64% at 2009)	Approximately 74% by the end of 2016 Approximately 80% by the end of 2021	68.2% for 2014/15 (+3.3%)	Reduction of 5% or failure to increase for 2 consecutive years.	Y	G
				N/A	
<u>Local</u> Vacancy rates of existing employment buildings (Baseline vacancy figures as of 2009: B1 = 5.6%; B2/B8 = 9.7%)	Maintain vacancy rate within range of 5-10% of existing stock	17%	+ or – 2.5% beyond range for 2 consecutive years	Y	

SO8. To promote social inclusion and ensure equality of opportunity through reducing the need to travel and providing better access by sustainable means to employment opportunities, community facilities and services.				
Core and Local Indicators	Policy Targets	Policy Achievement	Trigger Level	
<u>Local</u> Number of community facilities lost through change of use	No loss of viable community facilities below identified need (except where justified within terms of policy)	No unjustified loss of a community facility	1 or 2 community facilities lost for 2 consecutive years, or, 3 or more community facilities lost in 1 year	G
<u>Local</u> Amount of planning obligations secured on allocated housing developments	Secure contributions on 33 (67%) of the allocated housing developments	No allocated sites failing to secure identified contributions.	1 or 2 sites failing to secure planning obligations for 2 consecutive years, or, 3 or more sites failing to secure planning obligations in 1 year	G
Percentage of relevant planning applications complying with SPG	All (Post SPG adoption)	All applications complying	-	G

SO9. To promote health and wellbeing by providing accessible and varied opportunities for leisure and recreational activities.				
Core and Local Indicators	Policy Targets	Policy Achievement	Trigger Level	
<u>Local</u> Amount of public open space, including play space and informal recreational areas, lost to development (ha) which is not allocated in the development plan.	No loss below identified need.	0.05 ha loss	-	G
<u>Local</u> New leisure/recreational development ii) Parc Taf Bargoed	Deliver by the end of 2016	Development delivered	No planning application by the end of 2014	G

SO10. To ensure good quality design of new development and the creation of safer communities.				
SO12. To contribute towards reducing the impact of climate change through reduced carbon dioxide emissions in new developments.				
Core and Local Indicators	Policy Targets	Policy Achievement	Trigger Level	
<u>Local</u> Percentage of relevant schemes incorporating "secured by design principles"	All major applications	All major applications granted planning permission incorporate "secured by design principles"	-	G
<u>Local</u> Preparation and adoption of Sustainable Design SPG	By the end of 2012	SPG adopted July 2013	-	G

<u>Local</u> Percentage of planning applications complying with sustainable design SPG	All (Post SPG adoption)	All relevant applications complying with SPG	-	G
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SO11. To ensure the continued protection and enhancement of the natural, cultural, built and historic environment.				
Core and Local Indicators	Policy Targets	Policy Achievement	Trigger Level	
<u>Local</u> Developments granted planning permission that do not preserve or enhance scheduled ancient monuments, registered historic parks and gardens, listed buildings or conservation areas	No developments that would fail to preserve or enhance heritage features granted planning permission	No developments granted planning permission failed to preserve or enhance heritage features	1 or 2 developments failing to preserve or enhance features for 2 consecutive years, or, 3 or more developments failing to preserve or enhance features in 1 year	G
<u>Local</u> Developments granted planning permission that cause harm to the overall nature conservation value of SINCs or the LNR	No developments that would cause harm to the overall nature conservation value of SINCs or the LNR granted planning permission	No development that would cause harm to the overall nature conservation value of SINCs of the LNR granted planning permission	1 or 2 developments resulting in overall harm for 2 consecutive years, or, 3 or more developments resulting in overall harm in 1 year	G
<u>Local</u> Developments granted planning permission that cause harm to a SSSI	No developments that would cause harm to a SSSI granted planning permission	No developments that would cause harm to a SSSI granted planning permission	1 or more developments resulting in harm to a SSSI	G

