

# PRE-DEPOSIT PROPOSALS DOCUMENT

## PREFERRED STRATEGY - EASY READ VERSION

### What is this document?

This document is an easy to read version of the 'Preferred Strategy' of the Merthyr Tydfil Local Development Plan (LDP for short). It tells you how far the County Borough Council has got in preparing an up-to-date Local Development Plan (LDP).

### What does an LDP do?

The LDP must:



- ◆ Identify enough land for houses to be built on upto 2031;
- ◆ Direct new development towards land that balances environmental, economic, social and cultural concerns;
- ◆ Help to conserve land important for wildlife and buildings important for their history, and;
- ◆ Make sure future generations can meet their needs.

**Having now identified a preferred approach for the LDP, the Council is now giving people the chance to air their views on these choices.**

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# Introduction

We are preparing a plan to guide how Merthyr Tydfil should grow over the next 15 years. It will show how much new building we think is appropriate and where we think it should go. So far we have identified the key issues in the County Borough and used them to write a first draft of the LDP called the 'Preferred Strategy'. Now we want to know if you think our choices, based on the information gathered, are the right choices? If you have other ideas on how much new building you think is needed or where you think it should go, please let us know.

From our research we know that the number of people living in the County Borough is predicted to fall from the mid -2020s and we want to stop this by making the area an attractive place where people want to live, and be proud of. To do this our preferred approach is to:



- ◆ identify a range and choice of land to build 2,250 houses by 2031;
- ◆ Identify enough land for jobs in the right places;
- ◆ Make it as easy as possible for people to get to work, school and access other facilities;
- ◆ Improve our network of green spaces for people to relax and enjoy, and for nature and wildlife to thrive, and
- ◆ Make the most of our important historic buildings and monuments.

# How can I share my views?

There are several ways to tell us what you think of the 'Preferred Strategy':



Fill in our comment form which can be requested or downloaded from:



[www.merthyr.gov.uk](http://www.merthyr.gov.uk)  
The Cwm Taf Hub [www.cwmtafhub.com](http://www.cwmtafhub.com)



Email us at: [devplanning@merthyr.gov.uk](mailto:devplanning@merthyr.gov.uk)



Write to us at The Planning Policy Team  
Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council  
Unit 5, Triangle Business Park  
Pentrebach  
Merthyr Tydfil  
CF48 4TQ



Please share your views by 12pm 25th August 2017.

# What is a Local Development Plan (LDP)?

The Replacement Merthyr Tydfil LDP is a document which shows how much new building, or 'development,' the Council think is appropriate over the plan period 2016-2031, and where it should go.

Once finished it will replace the current LDP which covers 2006 –2021, and will be used to help make decisions on planning applications. Up until 2031 it will be used to support any plans for development that could make the County Borough a more attractive place to live, work and visit, and also help to resist proposals that don't. For instance, once a piece of land has been allocated for a use in the LDP, such as housing, it confirms that the principle of building houses on that piece of land is acceptable. The same will be true for land allocated for any other uses, such as industry, transport, retail.

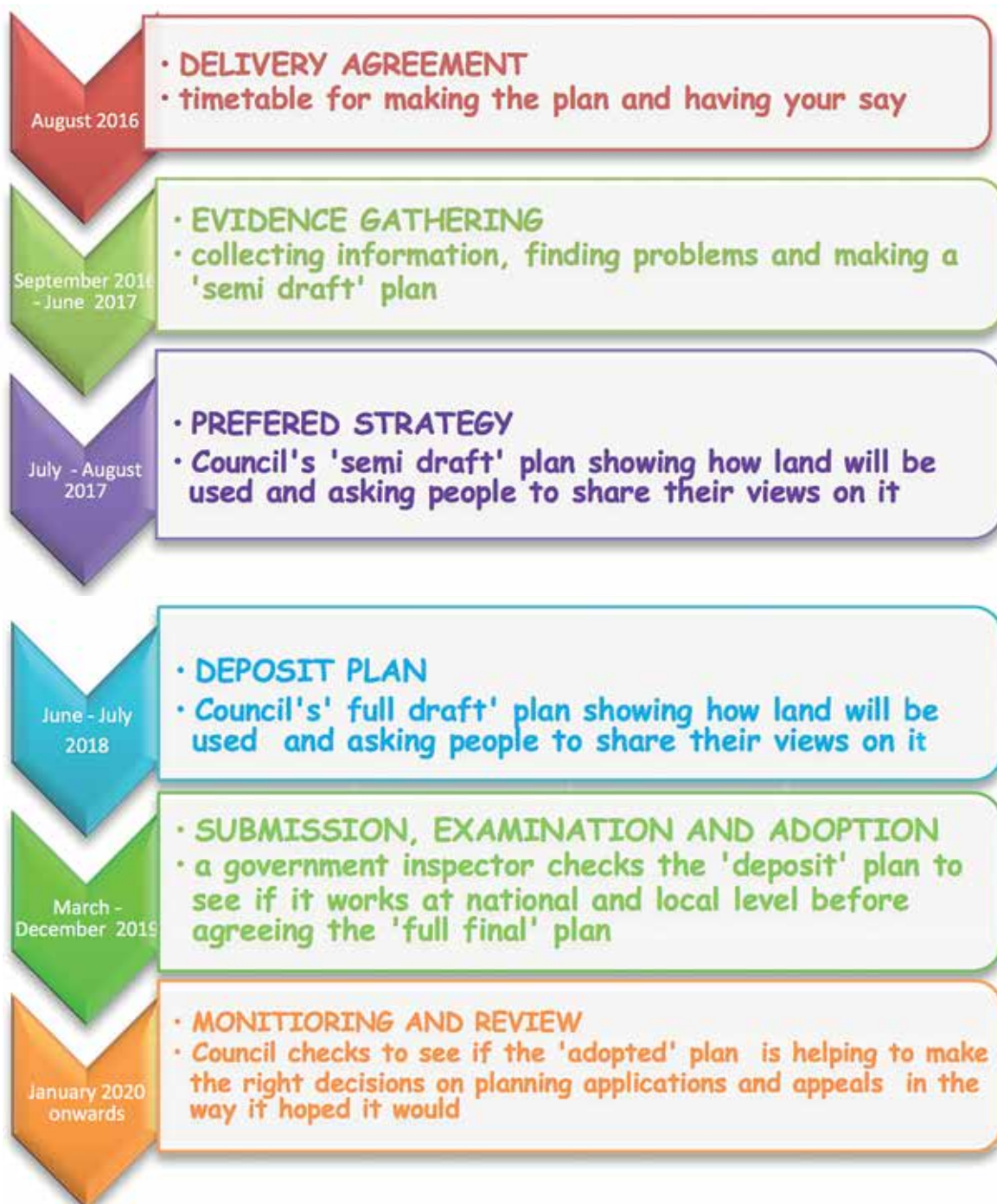
On the other hand, if a piece of land is shown as important for nature, play or open space, or in the countryside, the plan can help to protect it from development. If such land is lost to building works, the plan can help to lessen its effect or make sure a new space is created to make-up for that loss.

**That is why it is important to have your say at this stage**

# What are the key steps of preparing the replacement LDP?

The key steps for preparing the replacement plan are shown in the Delivery Agreement (DA for short), a document the Council agreed with the Welsh Government in August 2016.

In short, it shows how and when the steps to make the plan will be taken, and how and when people can share their views on the plan. We are now at the 'Preferred Strategy' Stage and all the key steps are shown below:



<sup>1</sup> This can be viewed at <http://www.merthyr.gov.uk/media/2432/website-council-approved-replacement-ldp-delivery-agreement.pdf>

# What is the Preferred Strategy?

The Preferred Strategy (PS) is a document written so that the Council can ask people for their views before writing the full draft version of the plan. It says how much new development we think is appropriate and broadly where we think it should go. It sets out the 'strategy' of the replacement LDP.

It also protects against any inappropriate development in the wrong areas, and says how any issues that may arise from carrying out the plan can be addressed.

**To make a Plan for everyone in the County Borough, we think it is important for people to have their say now whilst the plan is at a fairly early stage.**

# What is our approach to making the plan?

To help us decide how to take the LDP forward, we identified the issues affecting the County Borough, then prepared a Vision and objectives for the LDP; and then developed some options as to how this Vision could be delivered.

These steps are shown fully in technical documents but in short are:

## STEP 1: IDENTIFYING THE ISSUES



## STEP 2: PREPARE VISION AND OBJECTIVES

**VISION & OBJECTIVES**

## STEP 3: DEVELOP OPTIONS FOR HOW TO DELIVER THE STRATEGY





# What's happened so far?

## Identifying issues:

Although we are still in the early stages of making the plan, a large amount of information has been gathered to help identify the main issues facing the County Borough.

The information has been gathered by looking at other Plans, Policies and Programmes and talking to other service providers working in the area. We have also spoken to individuals and specialists with an interest in a particular topic. Some of the key issues are identified below:

## Improving social well-being:

- ◆ Retaining people in the area, including Welsh speakers;
- ◆ Identifying enough land for a range of new homes;
- ◆ Having enough open space and community facilities for everyone; and
- ◆ Helping people to walk more, cycle more and use good public transport.

## Improving cultural well-being:

- ◆ Protecting and improving local culture and heritage.

## Improving environmental well-being:

- ◆ Protecting the countryside and open areas;
- ◆ Protecting and improving areas important for landscape, wildlife and nature; and
- ◆ Lowering pollution.

## Improving economic well-being:

- ◆ Identifying and safeguarding enough land for a range of jobs;
- ◆ Improving the attractiveness of the Town Centre and Local Centres;
- ◆ Having a wide range of shops and leisure facilities; and
- ◆ Encouraging people to visit the area.

## Creating a vision for the future of Merthyr Tydfil

We have used all the information collected to:

- ◆ Paint a picture of the County Borough as it is today
- ◆ Create a vision of how we want the County Borough to look in 2031
- ◆ Develop a strategy to help us get there
  
- ◆ **The Vision** - a description containing social, economic, environmental and cultural goals

To strengthen Merthyr Tydfil's position as the regional centre for the Heads of the Valleys within the Cardiff Capital Region, encourage a sustainable level of population growth and be a place to be proud of where:

- People learn and develop skills to fulfil their ambitions;
- People live, work, have a safe, healthy and fulfilled life; and
- People visit, enjoy and return.

The 'strategy' is made up of:

- ◆ **A set of LDP objectives** - a way to provide land-use opportunities to improve people's economic social, environmental and cultural well-being
- ◆ **Growth options** - a choice of different amounts of future growth in population, housing and employment up to 2031
- ◆ **Spatial Options** - a choice of different broad locations for housing and, employment
- ◆ **Strategy** - a description of the strategy
- ◆ **Key Policies** - broad actions needed to achieve the vision and objectives and help guide future land- use decisions

These elements can be found in the full version of the 'Preferred Strategy'.

**As part of working towards the next stage of the plan, the ‘Deposit Plan’, we have also:**

- ◆ Asked people to suggest sites for development or protection, known as ‘Candidate Sites’, which they would like included in the final LDP; and
- ◆ Carried out a study, known as the Joint Housing Land Availability Study (JHLAS), which assesses the availability of land for housing in the County Borough.

The Candidate sites can be found on the Candidate Sites Register and the JHLAS sites can be found in the Joint Housing Land Availability Study 2016.

98 Candidate Sites have been put forward and the JHLAS currently has 45 sites.







This consultation provides the opportunity to comment on the Candidate Sites and submit new sites for consideration

All these sites are being assessed as to whether they fit in with the Preferred Strategy. Following the consultation, only sites that fit in with the ‘Preferred Strategy’ will appear in the ‘Deposit’ plan.

# How do we think Merthyr Tydfil County Borough should grow?

Following the 'vision' and 'objectives' we have developed the strategy for the plan by looking at different ways for the County Borough to grow.

Three growth options were looked at:

- ◆ **High growth:**  Building over 200 houses a year  Increasing the Population in the area by 15 % by 2031
- ◆ **Low growth:**  Building between 20 and 30 houses a year  Lowering the population in the area by 0.5 % by 2031
- ◆ **Steady growth:**  Building 150 houses a year (like the last 15 years)  Increasing the population in the area by 8 % by 2031

We looked at these options to work out how they would affect the area by considering them against objectives contained in the Initial Sustainability Appraisal. This is what we found:




High growth	Low growth	Steady growth
This option would increase pressure on facilities, natural resources and undeveloped land. It could also cause the loss of open space, break-up areas good for wildlife and nature, increase congestion and affect air quality.	This option could result in the inefficient use of land, loss of community facilities, lack of investment and housing choice, and lead to isolation of communities. In the longer term this option could also increase unemployment and lead to poverty.	This option could help to keep working aged people, community identities and facilities in the County Borough. It is likely to offer a range of house types and jobs. It could also offer investment, town centre regeneration and opportunities for low emissions and healthy transport.

**We chose the steady growth or 'sustainable' growth option.  
Do you agree?**

# Where do we think the houses should go?

We then looked at different ways to work out where the new houses should be built.

Three spatial options were looked at as follows:

- ◆ Extending Merthyr Tydfil to the west plus some small sites  Building most of the houses, up to 1500 on the Cwm Glo and Glyndyrus Site of Scientific (SSSI) along with leisure, shopping and tourist development.
- ◆ One large site plus some small sites  Building a lot of houses, up to 1000, on the Hoover's site along with employment and leisure uses to make the most of new Metro proposals.
- ◆ Spreading small sites across the County Borough  Building roughly between 50 and 150 houses on a number of sites spread across the County Borough but mainly in Merthyr Tydfil Town.

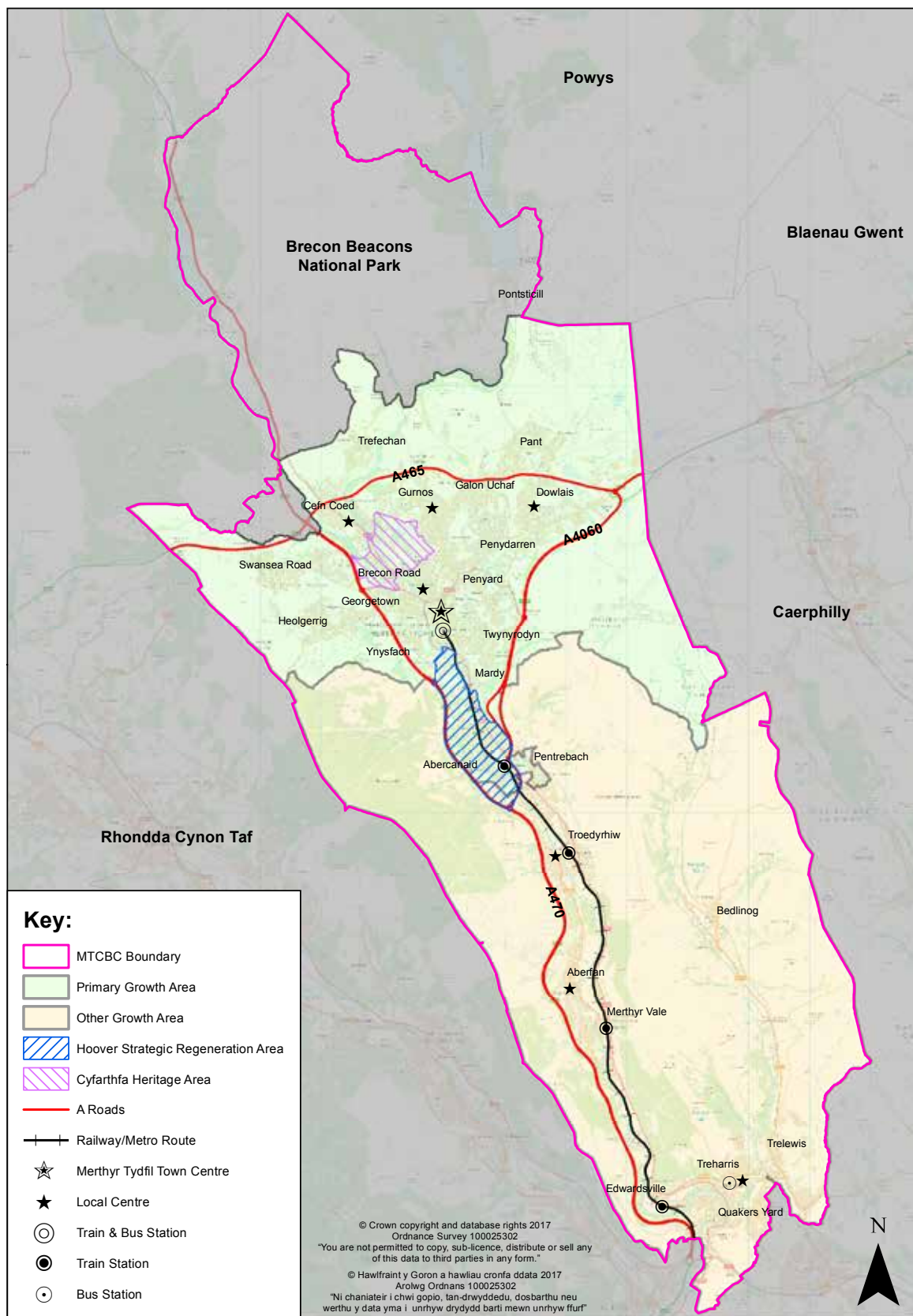
We looked at these options to see how they would affect the area by considering them against objectives contained in the Initial Sustainability Appraisal. This is what we found:

Extending Merthyr Tydfil to the west plus some small sites	Hoover site plus some small sites	Spreading small sites across the County Borough
Although this option could encourage working aged people to stay in the area and support a range of housing and facilities, it would need more roads, increase energy use and travel times. It would also cause severe harm to a SSSI, a Landscape of Historic Interest and restrict access to coal reserves.	The Hoover site option would act as a hub for transport and transport links throughout the County Borough. Also by spreading small sites throughout the area, new facilities such as schools could be built in existing communities and improvements made to facilities already there.	This option would allow the right amount of housing and employment to be built but would need a better transport network, use green sites and therefore potentially cause harm to natural areas and wildlife.

**We chose the Hoover site plus some small sites spatial option.  
Do you agree?**

# The key diagram

The 'Hoover Strategic Regeneration Area' is shown on the 'key diagram' below. The other small sites will be chosen from the JHLAS and the Candidates Sites Register, the majority within the 'Primary Growth Area' which is the north of the County Borough.





# What else are we proposing?

In addition to choosing where we think housing should go, we also think other key actions are needed to achieve the vision and objectives and help guide future land-use.

**To improve our social well-being we have included policies that help to:**

- ◆ Keep Welsh speakers in the area
- ◆ Direct building towards sites that have been built on before mainly within:
  - o Merthyr Tydfil Town and Trefechan but also:
  - o within Troedyrhiw, Aberfan, Merthyr Vale, Quakers Yard, Edwardsville, Treharris, Trelewis and Bedlinog
- ◆ Keep the best and improve the worst open spaces
- ◆ Join-up roads, footpaths, cycleways, rail and bus routes
- ◆ Keep and improve community facilities

**To improve our cultural well-being we have included policies that help to:**

- ◆ Keep and improve historic buildings, other assets and their surroundings which are important for local history and tourism in particular:
  - o the Cyfarthfa Heritage Area

**To improve our environmental well-being we have included policies that help to:**

- ◆ Prevent the loss of important species and habitats
- ◆ Protect the countryside, special landscapes and geology

**To improve our economic well-being we have included policies that help to:**

- ◆ Offer a range of sites for employment use
- ◆ Support the Town and Local centres
- ◆ Support tourism
- ◆ Use natural resources sustainably

# What happens next?

As preparing the plan is a step-by-step process, we want to hear your views on the choices we have made so far in particular the 'growth' and 'spatial' options. More detailed information can be found in the Preferred Strategy which can be viewed at:

- ◆ [www.merthyr.gov.uk](http://www.merthyr.gov.uk)
- ◆ Council Offices, Civic Centre, Castle Street, Merthyr Tydfil, CF47 8AN
- ◆ Council Offices, Unit 5, Triangle Business Park, Pentrebach, Merthyr Tydfil, CF48 4TQ
- ◆ Merthyr Tydfil Central Library, High Street, Merthyr Tydfil, CF47 8AF
- ◆ Dowlais Library, Church Street, Dowlais, Merthyr Tydfil, CF48 3HS
- ◆ Treharris Library, Perrott Street, Treharris, Merthyr Tydfil, CF46 5ET
- ◆ Aberfan Community Library, Pantglas Road, Aberfan, Merthyr Tydfil, CF48 4QE
- ◆ Rhydycar Library Hub, Merthyr Tydfil Leisure Centre, Merthyr Tydfil, CF48 1UT

Here you will also find other documents including:

- ◆ The Initial Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and non-technical summary
- ◆ The Candidates Sites Register
- ◆ The Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening Report (HRA)

Other supporting technical documents including:

- ◆ Population and Housing Requirements Background Paper
- ◆ Special Landscape Areas Background Paper
- ◆ Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) Review Background Paper
- ◆ Green Wedges Review Background Paper
- ◆ LDP Review Report

The council will consider all comments received before 12pm on 25th August 2017 in advance of preparing the Deposit version of the LDP and the accompanying Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA).