

# **Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council Local Development Plan (2016 – 2031)**

## **PRE-DEPOSIT PROPOSALS DOCUMENT 1 THE PREFERRED STRATEGY**

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# Foreword

I am pleased to present our 'Preferred Strategy' for the development of Merthyr Tydfil County Borough up to 2031.

Above all else, this strategy is about people. Each element seeks to enhance our lives and champions our well-being objectives.

That is why we set out to understand our communities<sup>1</sup>, and through a series of working group meetings, have built consensus whilst developing this strategy.

A collective effort is required to ensure our County Borough attracts investment and remains an attractive place where people want to live and are proud of. Attracting and retaining population is the result of getting other things right.

We recognise the importance of providing quality, accessible public services and, in this regard, we are striving for continuous improvement with our partners<sup>2</sup>.

Over the plan period we must maximise the opportunities presented by the 'City Deal' within the context of the Cardiff Capital Region. In particular, our transport connections will be improved by the 'South Wales Metro', the dualling of the A465 and development of 'Active Travel' routes.

All of this requires a focus on delivery, building upon the 'award winning' improvements made over recent years.

I look forward to our future with optimism. Strategy and policy alone do not bring about change and our collective effort will determine the future success of our County Borough.

I hope you will take time to consider and comment on our 'Preferred Strategy' for the development of Merthyr Tydfil County Borough up to 2031, details of how to do this are contained in section 8 of this document.

Leader of the Council.



<sup>1</sup> Understanding our communities - Wellbeing Assessment Consultation: Brief analysis report

<sup>2</sup> Annual Improvement Report 2015-16 Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council



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# 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The built environment affects us all. The planning, design, management and maintenance of the built environment and its interaction with the natural environment, has a long-term impact upon people and communities. It is widely acknowledged that our quality of life, prosperity, health and wellbeing are heavily influenced by the 'place' in which we live or work.
- 1.2 Ensuring new developments are suitable and sustainable for the long-term is important. This is, however, only one part of the solution; the vast majority of the buildings and infrastructure that will exist in 30 years have already been built. The management, adaptation and utilisation of the existing built environment is also, therefore, of great importance.
- 1.3 Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council (The Council) plays a key role in planning for, developing, and managing the built environment. The Council is responsible for developing and keeping up-to-date the Local Development Plan (LDP), which sets out planning policies and allocates sites for different types of development. The Council is also responsible for development control which involves the processing and determination of planning applications.
- 1.4 Whilst the Council plays a key role in shaping priorities and developments within the County Borough, this work is undertaken within the framework set by Planning Policy Wales<sup>3</sup> and accompanying Technical Advice Notes. Furthermore, the Council must work with, and respond to, various other agencies, funders and decision makers to implement proposals. As such, the built environment is a product of national and local priorities and policies.
- 1.5 The review of the current adopted LDP<sup>4</sup> found that whilst many aspects of the LDP<sup>5</sup> are functioning effectively, the plan's development strategy, which underpins the LDP, was not being delivered effectively and that both the level and spatial distribution of growth needs to be reconsidered to determine the most appropriate approach up to 2031.
- 1.6 The existing LDP's development strategy is an 'Enhanced Growth Strategy' based on an ambitious level of growth for both housing and employment. In terms of housing, the rate of housebuilding has not met the needs of the LDP's strategy and, as a consequence, the Council does not have a 5 year housing land supply which is a key planning policy requirement of the Welsh Government.
- 1.7 Additionally, contextual changes, such as the introduction of the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, updates to Planning Policy Wales and changes to the evidence base indicate that certain policies and allocations within the LDP need to be revised and that the LDP's Vision, Primary Aim and Objectives should also be reconsidered.
- 1.8 Following the recommendation of the Review Report, in August 2016 the Council entered into a 'Delivery Agreement'<sup>6</sup> with the Welsh Government for the preparation of a replacement LDP.
- 1.9 Agreeing the preferred strategy is the first formal stage in preparing a replacement LDP. It provides direction for the development and use of land until 2031, meeting the aims of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 by contributing to improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural

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<sup>3</sup> Planning Policy Wales (Edition 9, 2016).

<sup>4</sup> Merthyr Tydfil Local Development Plan 2006-2021 Review Report April 2016.

<sup>5</sup> Merthyr Tydfil Local Development Plan 2006-2021.

<sup>6</sup> Replacement Merthyr Tydfil Local Development Plan 2016 – 2031 Delivery Agreement, August 2016.



well-being of Wales as part of carrying out sustainable development.

1.10 The opportunity for people to nominate sites for protection or development in the LDP was provided over three months, closing in early December 2016. Natural Resources Wales' and Cadw's opinions were sought on a 'Baseline Scoping Report' which has informed the methodology of the 'Initial Sustainability Appraisal'<sup>7</sup>, which accompanies this document.

1.11 To help identify key issues for the replacement LDP, an integrated approach to community involvement has been undertaken, which also informs the 'Cwm Taf Local Wellbeing Plan'<sup>8</sup>. The evidence gathered from this involvement demonstrates the complexity of issues, and identifies overlapping themes.

1.12 A series of LDP specific steering and topic-based working groups have also been held to develop and consider LDP specific issues, objectives, growth and spatial options. Sections 2, 3 and 4 consider these matters, along with the vision for the preferred strategy, and provide reasons for the selection of the preferred level of growth and spatial distribution of development.

1.13 Sections 5, 6 and 7 set out the preferred strategy for the future development of Merthyr Tydfil County Borough to 2031.

1.14 It is important that this 'Preferred Strategy Report' is considered as a whole and in combination with Planning Policy Wales<sup>9</sup> and Technical Advice Notes<sup>10</sup>. Its aim is to provide a sound basis to develop the 'Deposit LDP' and achieve a sustainable future for the County Borough to 2031.

1.15 As a whole, the document explains how the Council intends responding to identified and evidenced issues and how it will protect and respect the environment. It reflects a full and careful consideration of all relevant factors identified in the 'Initial Sustainability Appraisal', extensive work undertaken in building an evidence base and issues emerging from involvement and dialogue with a wide range of bodies and individuals.

1.16 Publication of this document at an early stage in the preparation of the replacement LDP provides an opportunity for everyone to comment which is important to help us ensure the 'Deposit LDP' (the next stage of plan making) is sound. Section 8 explains how to comment.

1.17 Ultimately, approval for the plan rests with the Planning Inspectorate who will decide if the plan is fit for purpose by assessing it against the three tests of soundness<sup>11</sup>:

1. Does the plan fit?
2. Is the plan appropriate?
3. Will the plan deliver?

1.18 Once the replacement LDP (2016-2031) is adopted, it will form part of the statutory development plan for the area, alongside the National Development Framework and will replace the existing LDP (2006-2021), adopted in May 2011.



<sup>7</sup> Replacement Merthyr Tydfil Local Development Plan 2016 – 2031 Initial Sustainability Appraisal Report 2017.

<sup>8</sup> Understanding our communities. Wellbeing Assessment Consultation: Brief analysis report.

<sup>9</sup> Planning Policy Wales (Edition 9, November 2016).

<sup>10</sup> Technical Advice Notes 1 – 24 (Excluding 9, 17 & 22 which are no longer in force).

<sup>11</sup> Local Development Plan Manual (Edition 2, August 2015).





## 2. Context and key issues

2.1 This section provides a short contextual summary of the County Borough and identifies some of the key issues which have informed the preferred strategy.

### Context

2.2 Located in the Heads of the Valleys, within the Cardiff Capital Region, Merthyr Tydfil County Borough is the smallest Welsh local authority, with a population of 59,325<sup>12</sup> and an area of approximately 11,000 ha of which 2,300 ha lies within the Brecon Beacons National Park.

2.3 Neighbouring Local Authorities are Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council (west and south-west), Caerphilly County Borough Council (east and south-east) and Powys County Council (north).

2.4 The A470 (north-south) and A465 (east-west) meet to the north-west of Merthyr Tydfil and are the County Borough's major roads. They are connected to the eastern side of Merthyr Tydfil by the A4060. The Valley lines rail network supports a half hourly service from Merthyr Tydfil to Cardiff.

2.5 The County Borough has rich geology and a mixture of quality habitats influenced by its industrial past. Having been the most productive centre of iron making in the world, the County Borough has profound historic and cultural substance.

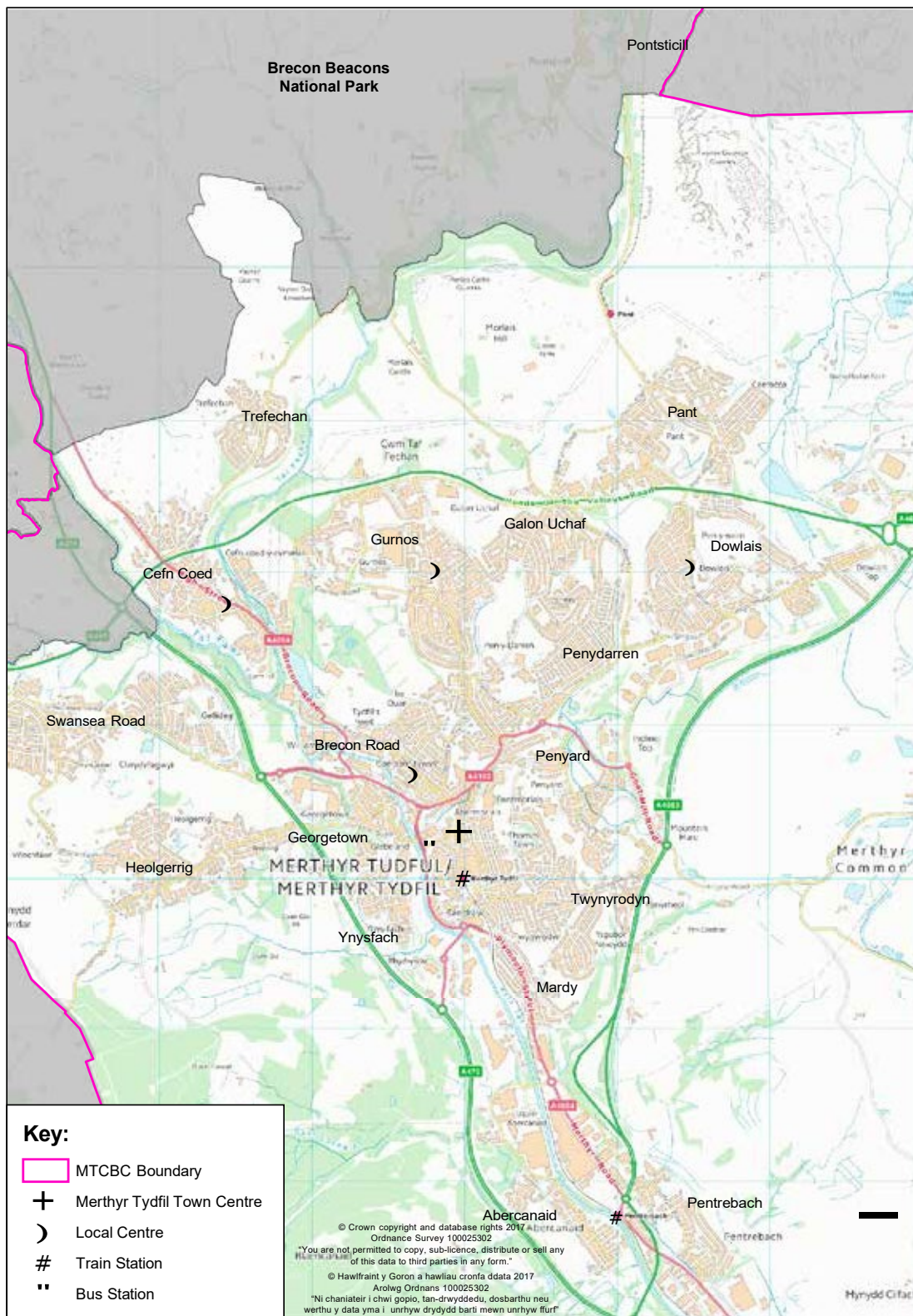
2.6 The main town of Merthyr Tydfil lies approximately 20 miles north of Cardiff and comprises the communities of Abercanaid, Brecon Road, Cefn Coed, Dowlais, Galon Uchaf, Heolgerrig, Georgetown, Gurnos, Pant, Pentrebach, Penydarren, Swansea Road, Trefechan and Ynys Fach. With a population of approximately 43,000, it is the main retail and service centre in the Heads of the Valleys fulfilling a key strategic role (See Map 1).

2.7 The other settlements within the plan area are Aberfan, Bedlinog, Merthyr Vale, Trelewis, Troedryhiw, Treharris (which includes the community of Edwardsville), and Quakers Yard. These settlements have a combined population of approximately 16,000.



<sup>12</sup> Estimates of the usual resident population as at 30 June 2015 - Office for National Statistics

Map 1: The main settlement of Merthyr Tydfil







## Key issues

2.8 A wide range of social, cultural, environmental and economic information is expressed in the 'Initial Sustainability Appraisal' which sits alongside this document. This information, along with the messages from community involvement, helped identify key issues for the LDP to address. These are summarised in Figure 1:

**Figure 1: Summary of key issues for the LDP to address**

- ◆ A projected population decline from 2024, with the loss of working aged people to elsewhere in the UK.
- ◆ Aligning service provision and facilities with demographic changes (such as education, health and leisure).
- ◆ The impact of development on community identity and characteristics and amenity.
- ◆ Levels of deprivation experienced are higher in the north of the County Borough; access to sufficient quality open space varies across the County Borough.
- ◆ The need for more social, affordable and older persons housing.
- ◆ The quality and energy efficiency of the existing housing.
- ◆ Very little new development has been built on employment land over the past 5 years. The number of vacant commercial units is above the Wales average.
- ◆ The number of people who walk or cycle for trips of less than 5km is low, walking and cycling routes are not well connected and east-west travel is difficult.
- ◆ A new central bus station is proposed. The South Wales Metro project will improve access to Cardiff.
- ◆ Home energy use is the primary cause of local GHG emissions. Carbon budgeting is set to drive demand for renewable and low carbon energy.

- ◆ Climate change puts pressure on species, habitats and water resources. Transport fuel use is the secondary cause of local greenhouse gas emissions; Twynyrodyn Hill has been declared an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA).
- ◆ The presence of a wide range of threatened species and habitats. Some green corridors and green spaces do not link together.
- ◆ Improvement is needed to ground, surface and water bodies in particular The Nant Morlais, due to a decline in water quality.
- ◆ Parts of the Town Centre are identified as being at risk from flooding.
- ◆ National and local heritage designations based on past iron and coal industries need sensitive conservation.
- ◆ Mineral resources located outside of settlements are protected. The Ffos-y-fran land reclamation scheme is on-going and some other mineral reserves still have permission. A good network of waste facilities exists.
- ◆ At less than 10%, the number of people that can communicate in Welsh is below the Wales average.
- ◆ High quality landscape areas, prominent views and traditional field boundaries need to be protected.



### 3. LDP Vision and objectives

- 3.1 The LDP vision and objectives provide an overarching context for the plan that shows how economic, social, cultural and environmental considerations are balanced to deliver the sustainable development of Merthyr Tydfil County Borough up to 2031.
- 3.2 Local Well-being Plans (LWBP) provide the overarching strategic framework for all local authority plans and strategies, including the LDP. The Cwm Taf LWBP will be agreed in time for the 'Deposit LDP'. In the meantime the LDP steering and working groups held between January and March 2017 informed the development of the LDP vision which reads as follows:

***Vision:*** *To strengthen Merthyr Tydfil's position as the regional centre for the Heads of the Valleys within the Cardiff Capital Region, to 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.*

- 3.3 In advance of the LWBP, the Council has set local well-being objectives (see below) and these are explained in the Council's 'Well-being Statement'<sup>13</sup>.

***MTCBC's Well-being objectives:***

- Children get the best start to life.*
- Children and young people are equipped with the skills they need to be successful learners and confident individuals.*
- Making skills work for Merthyr Tydfil: Developing the workforce of the future.*
- Developing the environment and infrastructure for businesses to flourish.*

- Communities protect, enhance and promote our natural environment and countryside.*
- Communities protect, develop and promote our heritage and cultural assets.*
- Developing safe and inclusive communities.*
- People have good physical and mental wellbeing.*
- People live independently.*

- 3.4 It is important to recognise that the LDP cannot deliver all of these outcomes. Many issues extend beyond the direct influence of 'land-use planning'. Nevertheless, the LDP contributes towards creating the right conditions to support their delivery.

#### LDP Objectives

- 3.5 To realise the vision, support local well-being objectives and address key issues, LDP objectives have been identified having regard to the emerging evidence and Planning Policy Wales (see Figure 2). These have been considered by the LDP steering and working groups held between January and March 2017, during which consensus was reached that the proposed LDP objectives were reasonable.
- 3.6 The LDP objectives are grouped by their contribution to improving the social, cultural, environmental and economic well-being of Wales to accord with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. Having been considered against the sustainability objectives of the 'Initial Sustainability Appraisal', they are considered to provide an appropriate framework for developing detailed planning policies and proposals to achieve the Council's vision for the preferred strategy.

<sup>13</sup> Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council, Local well-being statement (2017).

**Figure 2:LDP Objectives**

<b>Improving social well-being:</b>	
LDP Objective 1	To encourage a sustainable level and distribution of population growth.
LDP Objective 2	To promote the use of the Welsh language.
LDP Objective 3	To promote suitable previously developed land for the delivery of a diverse supply of housing.
LDP Objective 4	To ensure the provision of infrastructure and open space is the basis for the regeneration of communities.
LDP Objective 5	To promote high quality, sustainable and inclusive design and support measures which mitigate the predicted effects of climate change.
LDP Objective 6	To support an integrated transport system, promote active travel and ensure new developments are accessible by walking, cycling and public transport.
LDP Objective 7	To support existing community facilities and suitable community led development.
<b>Improving cultural well-being</b>	
LDP Objective 8	To protect, enhance and promote heritage and cultural assets.
<b>Improving environmental well-being</b>	
LDP Objective 9	To improve habitats which contribute to ecosystem resilience and connectivity and which support protected species.
LDP Objective 10	To protect and enhance the character and appearance of the landscape and the countryside.
<b>Improving economic well-being</b>	
LDP Objective 11	To provide and safeguard appropriate land for economic and skills development.
LDP Objective 12	To strengthen and diversify the rural economy.
LDP Objective 13	To develop the town and local centres as accessible, attractive, viable and vibrant places.
LDP Objective 14	To support suitable tourism, leisure and recreation developments and encourage a year round tourism industry
LDP Objective 15	To promote renewable and low carbon energy.
LDP Objective 16	To ensure a sustainable supply of minerals.
LDP Objective 17	To promote the efficient use of materials and resources and ensure an integrated network of waste management facilities.





## 4. Growth and Spatial Options

4.1 An integral element of plan preparation is the identification and consideration of reasonable alternatives for growth, otherwise known as 'strategic options'. A summary of the growth and spatial distribution options and reasons for selecting the preferred options are provided below, a full explanation is provided in the Initial Sustainability Appraisal Report.

### Growth Options

4.2 Significant population trends have emerged since the existing LDP was adopted, necessitating a reconsideration of its 'Enhanced Growth Strategy'. From a range of population futures assessed through 'Popgroup', high, mid and low 'Growth Options' were selected for consideration (See Figure 3).

Figure 3: Growth Options

Growth option	Summary of analysis
High growth option	This would result in a significant increase (nearly 15%) in the population to nearly 69,000 by 2031 and a dwelling requirement of over 3,000.
Continuation of existing strategy	<p>This would be likely to place significant pressure on both physical and social infrastructure and would require an increase in house building of at least 40% on current levels bringing into question whether this is achievable.</p> <p>Furthermore this would see:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A significant increase in the number of school age children requiring a significant school building/extension programme.</li><li>• The highest number of elderly people living in the County Borough (compared with the mid and low growth options). Catering for this demographic will be a key issue for service providers across the public and private sectors.</li><li>• The retention of a far larger share of working age adults (the loss of this demographic has been a key issue in the County Borough for decades). This will increase the importance of appropriately locating physical infrastructure and job opportunities, and ensuring that the public transport network effectively links Merthyr Tydfil County Borough with the rest of South East Wales.</li><li>• Deficiencies in access to good quality open space being exacerbated.</li></ul>

<sup>14</sup> Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council, Population and housing requirements background paper 2017.

Mid growth option	This would result in an increase in the population (approx. 8%) to nearly 64,400 by 2031, with a resulting dwelling requirement of 2,250.
Sustainable population growth	<p>This would require a level of house building only slightly higher than historic build rates.</p> <p>Furthermore this would see:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An increase in the number of school age children at a level which could be more readily accommodated without the need for new schools.</li> <li>• A significant increase in the proportion of elderly people living in the County Borough. Catering for this demographic will be a key issue for service providers across the public and private sectors.</li> <li>• A smaller proportion of the working age population moving elsewhere in the UK than is currently occurring, increasing the importance of correctly locating physical infrastructure and job opportunities, and ensuring that the public transport network effectively links Merthyr Tydfil County Borough with the rest of South East Wales.</li> <li>• Development at this level is likely to have some impact on open space provision across the County Borough. However built development should be able to be planned in conjunction with improvements to the quality and access to important areas of open space.</li> </ul>
Low growth option	This would result in the population declining (less than 1%) to 59,000 by 2031, with a resulting dwelling requirement of approximately 300.
Planning for population decline	<p>Following the low growth option would result in a strategy to manage population decline. Over the plan period there would be some small population growth until the mid-2020s, before falling back into a cycle of decline that occurred for decades up until the mid-2000s. This option would require a level of house building approximately 80% lower than historic build rates.</p> <p>Furthermore this would see:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Falling numbers of school aged children leading to pressure for further school rationalisation.</li> <li>• An increase in the proportion of elderly people living in the County Borough. Catering for this demographic will be a key issue for service providers across the public and private sectors.</li> <li>• The continuing loss of working age people to elsewhere in the UK.</li> <li>• Deficiencies in access to good quality open space being exacerbated.</li> </ul>



## Preferred growth option and reasons for its selection

- 4.3 At the LDP steering and working groups held between January and March 2017, the broad consensus was that the growth options considered were reasonable and that the preferred growth option should be the mid growth option.
- 4.4 A population increase of approximately 8% to 64,400 by 2031, with a resulting dwelling requirement of 2,250 over the plan period appears to be a level of growth that can be sustainably managed and is considered to be both ambitious and realistic.
- 4.5 Such a level of growth shows ambition as it addresses the long term issue of population decline and would see more working aged people retained in the County Borough. It is also considered to be realistic and deliverable because the level of house building is broadly in line with historic build rates. Furthermore, it enables sustainable economic growth in the area in line with the Council's draft 'Economic Growth Strategy'.
- 4.6 The option requires significantly less housing than the high growth option (a level which is not being achieved), but considerably more than low growth option where the total requirement would be just 300 dwellings.
- 4.7 Whilst the low growth option may assist in easing pressure on infrastructure and service provision, it also decreases the likelihood that such facilities will be improved as levels of funding that Local Authorities and other organisations can attract are often linked to population. Similarly, the scope for improvements provided by planning gain may be reduced, particularly in respect of CIL and Section 106 agreements. As such,

pursuing the low growth option would show little ambition, restrict economic growth in the area and would not fit with other plans, programmes and strategies including the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal<sup>15</sup>.

- 4.8 Five Annual Monitoring Reports (AMRs) have been produced since adoption of the existing LDP. Alongside the 'LDP Review Report' (published April 2016), these clearly highlight that the high growth option is not being delivered. Historic completion data shows that since 2001 there have only been two years (2008 and 2010) with more than 200 dwelling completions, the rate required to meet the high growth option.

## Spatial Options

- 4.9 Reasonable alternatives for the distribution of growth were presented by the candidate sites submissions<sup>16</sup> received in December 2016. No further suggestions were forthcoming at the steering and working groups held during January and March 2017, and as such three options were selected for detailed consideration. The Initial Sustainability Appraisal includes a full consideration of the options and the potential sustainability implications of pursuing each. A summary is provided in Figures 4, 5 and 6 below.
- 4.10 Each of the options are reflective of the fact that Merthyr Tydfil has the best prospects for sustainable growth and the majority of development will be focused in this area. This is consistent with the Wales Spatial Plan<sup>17</sup> and 'Turning Heads - A Strategy for the Heads of the Valleys 2020'<sup>18</sup>. Each identifies Merthyr Tydfil as one of the 'Primary Key Settlements' in the 'Heads of the Valleys' sub-region.

<sup>15</sup> [http://cardiffcapitalregioncitydeal.wales/Cardiff\\_Capital\\_Region\\_City\\_Deal.pdf](http://cardiffcapitalregioncitydeal.wales/Cardiff_Capital_Region_City_Deal.pdf)

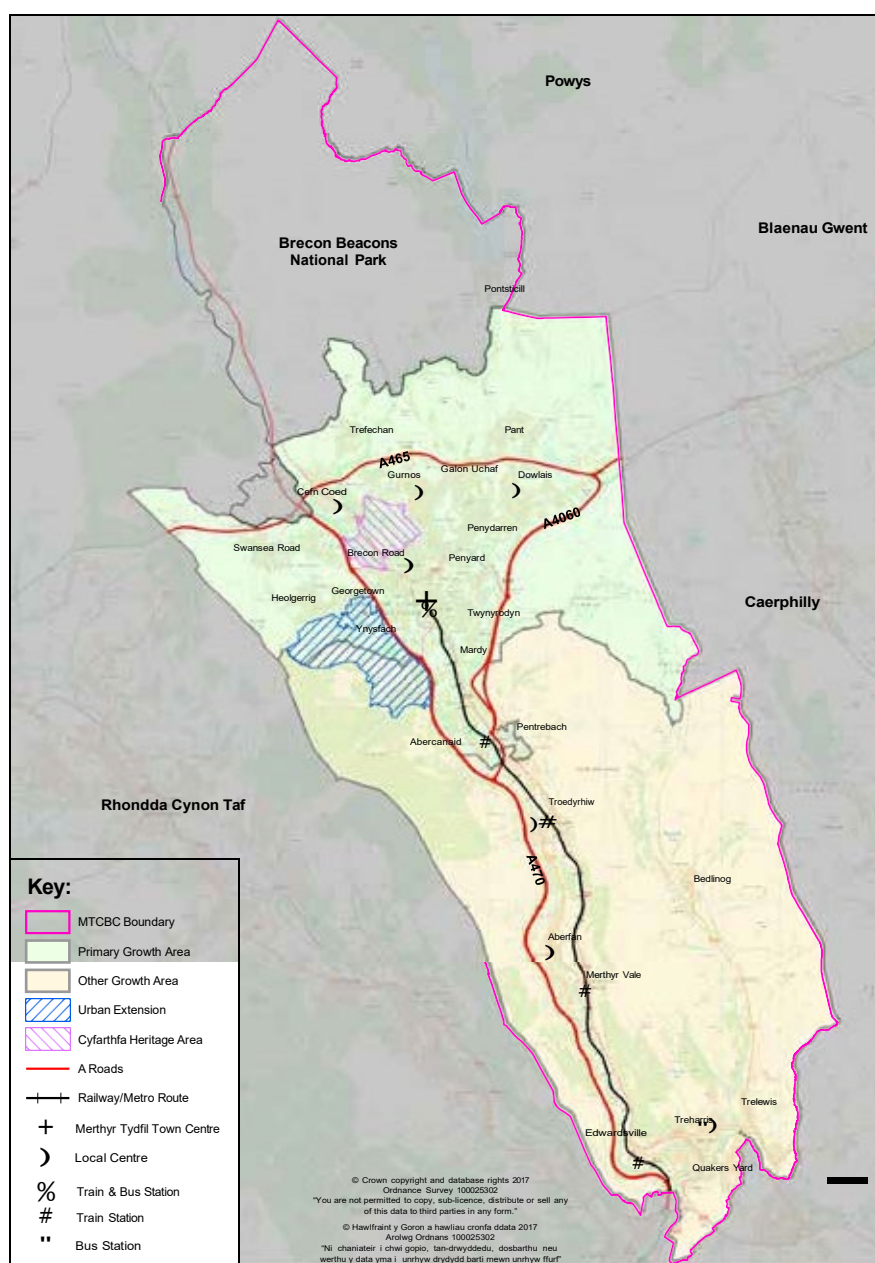
<sup>16</sup> Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council Candidate Sites Register 2017.

<sup>17</sup> People, places, futures – The Wales Spatial Plan update 2008.

<sup>18</sup> Turning Heads...A strategy for the Heads of the Valleys 2020 (2006).

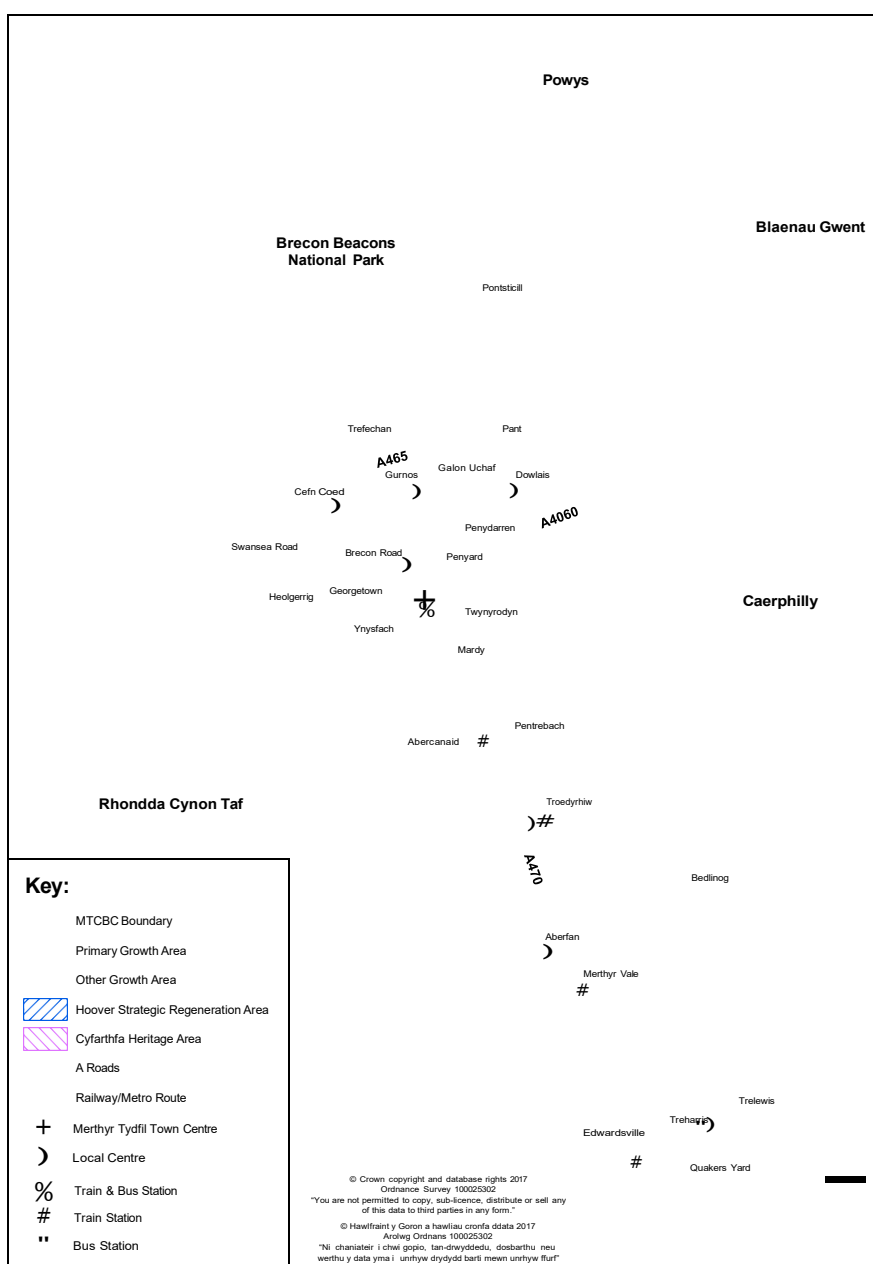
Figure 4: Urban extension in Merthyr Tydfil (Cwm Glo Glyndyrys SSSI) and other small sites.

Spatial Option	Summary of analysis
<p><b>Urban extension in Merthyr Tydfil (Cwm Glo Glyndyrus SSSI) and other small sites.</b></p> <p>The majority of housing (up to 1500 dwellings) would be located on an urban extension at Cwm Glo and Glyndyrus Site of Scientific Interest (SSSI) along with associated leisure, retail and tourism development.</p>	<p>The 'urban extension' option scores positively on objectives relating to population growth and housing, however there are fundamental constraints relating to biodiversity, soils, landscape and heritage. Selecting the Cwmglo and Glyndyrus SSSI as the key component of the LDP's strategy at present is considered inappropriate given the fundamental constraints, the land's planning history and because alternative spatial options are available.</p>



**Figure 5: 'Hoover Strategic Regeneration Area' and other small sites.**

Spatial Option	Summary of analysis
<p><b>'Hoover Strategic Regeneration Area' and other small sites (Map 2).</b></p> <p>A significant proportion of housing (up to 1000 dwellings) will be located on the 'Hoover Strategic Regeneration Area' (Abercanaid/Pentrebach) which will also support employment uses and form a key part of the 'South Wales Metro' proposals.</p>	<p>The 'Hoover Strategic Regeneration Area' option has significant positive impacts for population growth, economic development, transport and infrastructure and also scores positively in terms of housing, communities and human health and brownfield land. A potential negative impact has been identified in regard to the water environment, however the level and distribution of new development increases the likelihood of mitigation/compensation being achieved.</p>



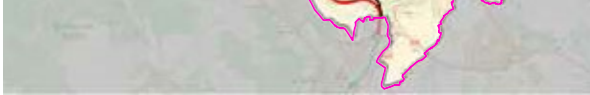
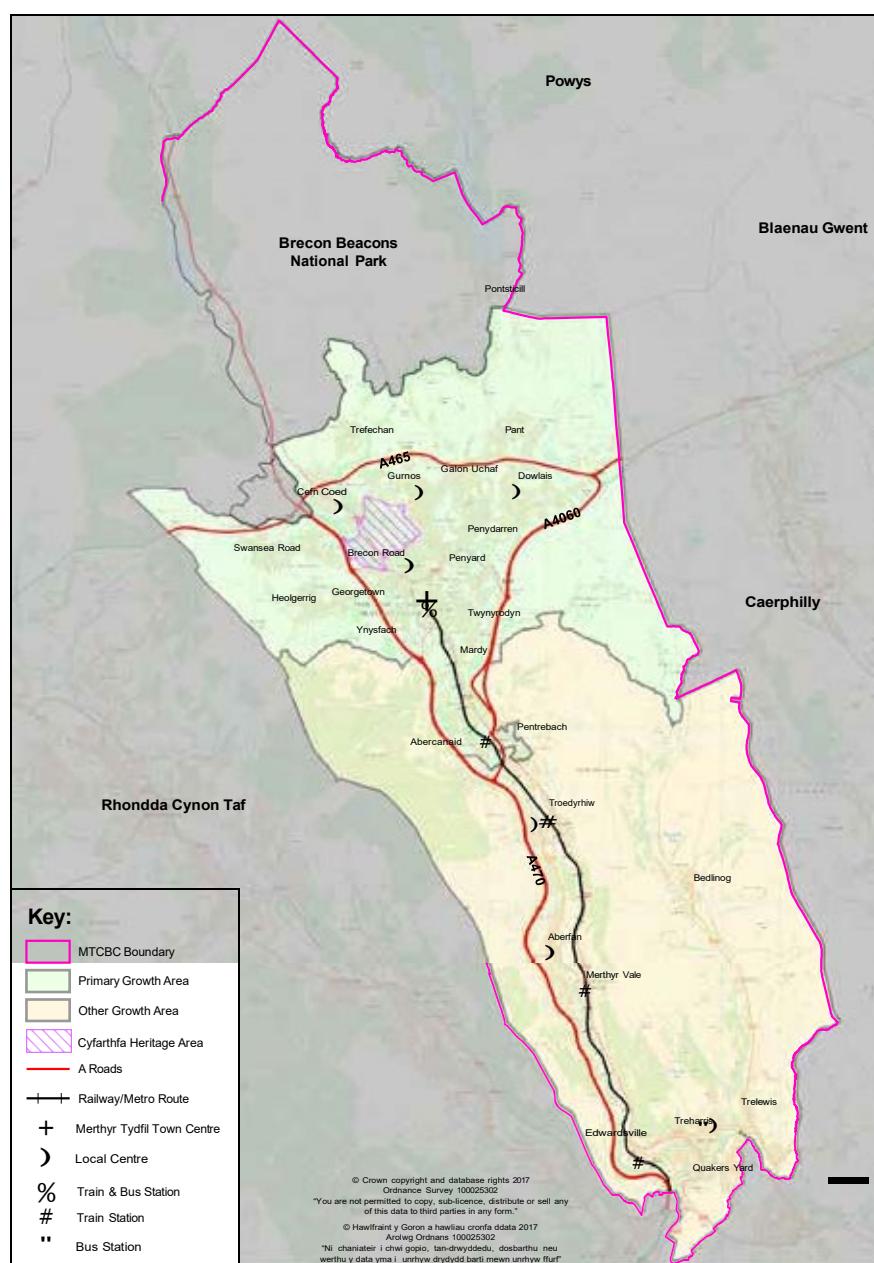




Figure 6: Dispersal of small sites across the County Borough (continuation of existing LDP strategy).

Spatial Option	Summary of analysis
<p><b>Dispersal of small sites across the County Borough (continuation of existing LDP strategy).</b></p> <p>Housing will be located on a number of sites across the County Borough (approx. 50-150 dwellings per site). The majority of these would be situated in the main settlement of Merthyr Tydfil.</p>	<p>The 'dispersed sites' option scores well in relation to the same issues as the 'Strategic Regeneration Area' option, although not to the same extent. Again, a potential negative has been identified in regard to the water environment, however the level and distribution of new development increases the likelihood of mitigation/compensation being achieved.</p>





## Preferred spatial option and reasons for its selection

4.11 At the LDP steering and working groups held between January and March 2017, the broad consensus was that the spatial options considered were reasonable and that the preferred spatial option for delivering sustainable population growth in Merthyr Tydfil County Borough should be the 'Hoover Strategic Regeneration Area' and other small sites.

4.12 From the analysis of the spatial options, it is clear that the 'urban extension' option is not suitable to take forward because of fundamental constraints, however the differences between the remaining two options are more subtle as both options would potentially be a suitable spatial option of delivering sustainable population growth. The key difference between these two options is the introduction of the 'Hoover Strategic Regeneration Area' at Abercanaid/Pentrebach which would form an integral part of the LDP strategy, contributing housing, employment land and transport infrastructure.



4.13 The 'dispersed sites' option is essentially a continuation of the current LDP's spatial strategy and would be likely to deliver growth in sustainable locations. However, the option does not present the same opportunities as the 'Hoover Strategic Regeneration Area' which will capitalise on the 'South Wales Metro' and regenerate an iconic former industrial site that has been largely vacant for nearly 10 years.

## Growth zones

4.14 The existing LDP identifies three Growth Zones: Primary (Merthyr Tydfil), Secondary (the lower valley settlements of Treharris and Trelewis) and Other (the mid valley communities).

4.15 Supporting a sustainable level of population growth combined with the fact the majority of existing allocations in the lower valley area have been delivered means that differentiating between the 'Secondary' and 'Other' growth zones is no longer considered to be justified and so the strategy combines them as the 'Other Growth Area'. The examination conducted for the introduction of the Community Infrastructure Levy<sup>19</sup> supports this approach having concluded that CIL was not viable in either the Secondary or Other growth zones.

<sup>19</sup> Report on the examination of the draft Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule. The Planning Inspectorate (February 2014).

## 5. The Preferred Strategy

- 5.1 This section describes the preferred strategy. Key policies to deliver it are provided in section 7. Important elements are depicted on the key diagram in section 6.
- 5.2 The strategy presents preferred growth and spatial options which seek to address a projected population decline by encouraging a sustainable level of population growth, directing development primarily to Merthyr Tydfil and, in particular, to the 'Hoover Strategic Regeneration Area' in (Abercanaid/Pentrebach) as well as to other small sites.
- 5.3 Recognising the County Borough's context as the main retail and service centre in the Heads of the Valleys, with good connections to the Cardiff Capital Region, the Swansea Bay City Region and the Brecon Beacons National Park is a key element of the strategy, as is connecting people with job opportunities, services and recreational opportunities locally and regionally via sustainable transport, which includes the South Wales Metro and Active Travel Routes.
- 5.4 To help create places that fully respect their local context and are successfully integrated with adjoining areas, the principles of good design will be promoted.
- build rates, shows this level of population growth can be achieved<sup>21</sup>.
- 5.6 This will see fewer working age people leaving the County Borough and balances an increased demand for local facilities and services with the capacity of existing community and social infrastructure to accommodate it. It also helps to maintain the number of Welsh speakers in the County Borough.
- 5.7 To facilitate the sustainable growth of the County Borough's population, we have estimated that 2,250 new homes need to be built by 2031. To ensure delivery, a contingency of approximately 25%, will be provided to enable flexibility in case some of the allocated sites are not developed as expected. This is considered a reasonable approach on the basis that the strategy predominantly relies on the development of brownfield sites.
- 5.8 These new homes will provide a range and choice of new housing opportunities across the County Borough, with different dwelling sizes and tenures supported to meet a range of needs. The distribution supports a greater proportion of the County Borough's population living in the 'Primary Growth Area', (Merthyr Tydfil), which has the best access to jobs, services, facilities and public transport. Strong development boundaries will protect against the coalescence of settlements<sup>22</sup>.

### Improving social well-being (LDP Objectives 1 – 7).

- 5.5 The strategy seeks to facilitate sustainable growth in the County Borough's population from the 2015 mid-year estimate of 59,324<sup>20</sup> to approximately 64,000 by 2031 (an increase of approximately 8%). This level of growth is above the 2014-based Welsh Government population projection which is the starting point for setting growth levels in LDPs, however evidence, in the form of past

### Primary Growth Area

- 5.9 Directing the majority of development to the 'Primary Growth Area' is consistent with the Wales Spatial Plan<sup>23</sup> and 'Turning Heads - A Strategy for the Heads of the Valleys 2020'<sup>24</sup>.

<sup>20</sup> Estimates of the usual resident population as at 30 June 2015. Office for National Statistics.

<sup>21</sup> Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council, Population and housing requirements background paper 2017.

<sup>22</sup> Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council Green wedge review background paper 2017.

<sup>23</sup> People, places, futures – The Wales Spatial Plan update 2008.

<sup>24</sup> Turning Heads...A strategy for the Heads of the Valleys 2020 (2006).

5.10 Merthyr Tydfil is strategically located at the centre of the Heads of the Valleys geographic and economic region in the north of the 'Cardiff Capital Region' and provides a strategic link between the north-south A470 (T) and the east-west A465 (T) roads. This is reflected by good public transport infrastructure including a rail terminus and bus interchange.

5.11 Whilst Merthyr Tydfil comprises many separate and distinct communities, there is considerable interdependence between them, in part due to the geographical character of the area. All communities are in close proximity to the town centre which, as the main commercial retail and service centre in the Heads of the Valleys, provides access to a wide range of shops, employment opportunities and other facilities.

5.12 Accordingly, the strategy includes appropriate policies and land allocations to facilitate the expansion of the main settlement of Merthyr Tydfil as a sustainable place to live, work and visit. This approach also reflects Merthyr Tydfil's greater capacity for the regeneration of brownfield sites than anywhere else in the County Borough.

5.13 Candidate site submissions<sup>25</sup> and sites included within the Council's 5-year land supply<sup>26</sup> indicate Cyfarthfa, Plymouth and Town wards are likely to experience most growth to 2031. A significant proportion of the new homes will be delivered as part of a major mixed use development at the 'Hoover Strategic Regeneration Area' incorporating the Hoover Site and Dragon Parc.

5.14 Confidence that directing growth to the Primary Growth Area is both viable and most likely to benefit the County Borough and sub-region is provided by substantial private

sector investment achieved over recent years. The strategy builds on the success of these recent developments such as the Cwrt Aneurin Bevan housing development, the extension of Cyfarthfa Retail Park and BikePark Wales.

5.15 The principles of good design are key to creating attractive places to live, work and visit. They will be promoted to ensure that any land use conflicts are kept to an absolute minimum with appropriate mitigation / compensation measures implemented where necessary.

## Other Growth Area

5.16 The 'Other Growth Area' comprises of a number of interdependent communities and valley settlements situated within the southern half of the County Borough. Each has its own identity and community spirit which contributes significantly to the character of the County Borough. The area is midway between the M4 and the A465 (T) and as a result of its accessibility to Merthyr Tydfil, Pontypridd and Cardiff by both road and rail, the area has developed a residential commuter role.

5.17 Within the 'Other Growth Area' a relatively high level of housing development over the past two decades has resulted in much of the developable land already having been used or committed and consequently only limited capacity for additional development remains without causing undue environmental harm and overburdening local services and facilities.

5.18 The settlements within these areas are reasonably served by public transport with the bus service ensuring access to / from the main centres of Merthyr Tydfil and

<sup>25</sup> Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council Candidate Sites Register 2017.

<sup>26</sup> Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council Joint Housing Land Availability Study 2017.



Pontypridd, and the Merthyr to Cardiff train line serving the communities situated within the Taff Fawr Valley. The Taff, Trevithick and Celtic trails also provide an integrated cycle network through the area.

5.19 Significant public sector investment over the past two decades has physically regenerated the post-industrial landscape and greatly enhanced the visual appeal of the area. Parc Taf Bargoed and Rock UK are key assets and capitalising on their potential for enhanced leisure and tourism provision will be crucial to driving regeneration and attracting further investment to the area as well as contributing significantly to improving the health and wellbeing of residents.

5.20 Directing some growth to these communities makes an important contribution to their regeneration and vitality and supports the retention of existing services and facilities.

### **Developing detailed proposals in the primary and other growth areas**

5.21 Ensuring new homes and jobs form part of well planned communities which have the right range of facilities provided is of key importance. Detailed decisions on proposals, for example which housing sites will be selected as allocations, will be made by the Council when agreeing the 'Deposit Plan' in 2018.

5.22 The sustainability merits of each candidate site have been considered and comments on the 'Candidate Sites Register'<sup>27</sup> are being sought as part of this consultation before any decisions are made on which ones will be selected as allocations in the 'Deposit Plan'.

5.23 Initial discussions with utilities providers have indicated no fundamental constraints, although further detailed work will continue to ensure sites allocated are deliverable by 2031.

5.24 A key consideration will be how potential development sites fit with schools provision and sustainable transportation. Ensuring the connectivity between areas where people live and the services within the County Borough and the wider Cardiff Capital Region is essential.

5.25 The strategy also sets out ways to improve the quality of life for residents, for instance by supporting improvements to the amount, quality and accessibility of open space and by supporting community facilities and local centres.

### **Improving cultural and environmental wellbeing (LDP Objectives 8 – 10)**

5.26 The strategy seeks to protect, manage and enhance the County Borough's rich and diverse cultural and environmental assets which contribute to distinctiveness and a sense of place. Many of these are of national importance and are designated by other organisations such as Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments and Natural Resources Wales.

5.27 Locally, 'Conservation Areas' and 'Urban Character Areas'<sup>28</sup> have been identified and 'Archaeologically Sensitive Areas' will be identified in the near future to provide the focus for retaining historic character. The Cyfarthfa Heritage Area supports the development of a heritage based visitor attraction to complement the offer of Cyfarthfa Castle and Park.

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<sup>27</sup> Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council Candidate Sites Register 2017.

<sup>28</sup> Merthyr Tydfil: Understanding Urban Character Cadw: 2015.





5.28 Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation<sup>29</sup> are the most important examples of local habitats; their monitoring provides an indication as to the health of the County Borough's biodiversity and their interests will be protected accordingly. Local Nature Reserves are proposed as a means of connecting people in urban areas with nature.

5.29 Locally important landscapes are proposed to be identified as 'Special Landscape Areas'<sup>30</sup> recognising that their character forms a high quality setting for the County Borough's settlements.

### **Improving economic well-being (LDP Objectives 11 – 17)**

5.30 The strategy seeks to complement the County Borough's draft Economic Growth Strategy and Destination Management Plan<sup>31</sup> by supporting the allocation of an appropriate amount and choice of employment land, protecting employment sites performing an important economic role and supporting the town centre.

5.31 From candidate site submissions, indications are that the main employment land allocations will be directed towards the 'Hoover Strategic Regeneration Area', Goatmill Road and land adjacent to A4060. The latter will depend on completion of the first phase of the Ffos-y-Fran land reclamation scheme and benefits from the dualling of the Heads of Valleys road (A465). Suitable industrial sites will be identified as areas of search to accommodate appropriate waste management facilities.

5.32 The Town Centre, particularly, is seen as a key asset and will continue to form the lynchpin for regeneration. The strategy reflects the

need to continue town centre regeneration and will aim to capitalise on the extra spending power attracted to Merthyr Tydfil through edge of centre developments such as the Cyfartha Retail Park and Trago Mills. Fundamental to the success of this approach is ensuring that the retail offer in each of these locations is kept sufficiently distinct so as not to undermine the vitality and viability of the town centre. Furthermore it provides support for the tourism sector and for the retailing role of the town and local centres.

5.33 By the end of 2018, carbon budgets covering the period 2016 - 2025 are set to be introduced by the Welsh Government (WG)<sup>32</sup>. Renewable energy presents an opportunity to reduce carbon emissions and generate income. Increasing the amount of renewable energy generation is supported by the strategy. To establish the potential renewable energy resource available, we commissioned Regen SW (a not for profit expert organisation) to undertake an assessment in accordance with national guidance<sup>33</sup>.

5.34 Following further detailed work the 'Deposit LDP' will identify a local renewable and low carbon energy target and may identify 'Local Search Areas' for Local Authority Wide and Sub-Local Authority Scale projects. Developments with a significant heating demand will be required to consider renewable options for generating heat. Due to the comparatively urban nature of Merthyr Tydfil, renewables associated with buildings will play a vital role and there is significant potential for rooftop photovoltaics, converting light into electricity.

5.35 The strategy also supports the sustainable regional supply of Minerals.

<sup>29</sup> Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation background paper 2017.

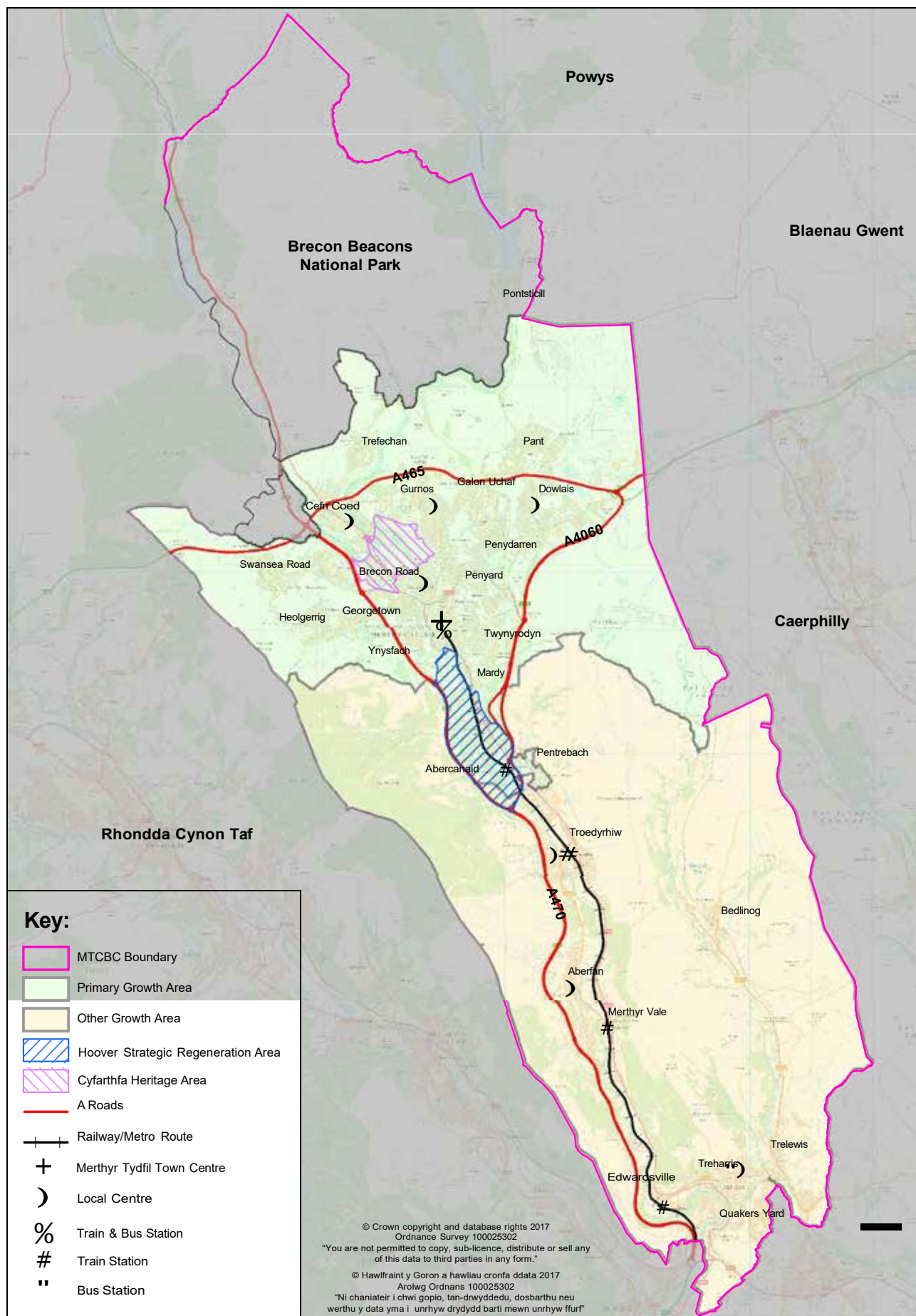
<sup>30</sup> Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council Special Landscape Areas background paper 2017.

<sup>31</sup> Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council Destination Management Plan (2016 – 2018).

<sup>32</sup> Environment (Wales) Act 2016.

<sup>33</sup> Welsh Government Practice Guidance: Planning for renewable and low carbon energy – a toolkit for planners.

# 6. Key Diagram



## 7. Key policies to deliver the preferred strategy

7.1 To ensure the County Borough remains an attractive place where people want to live and are proud of up to 2031 and beyond this preferred strategy provides a sound basis for developing the Deposit LDP, clarifying the contribution our County Borough will make towards the Cardiff Capital Region until 2031.

7.2 To address the vision and local well-being objectives through the planning system, LDP objectives have been selected and are ordered by their contribution to improving the social, cultural, environmental and economic well-being of Wales.

7.3 Under each of the LDP objectives, policy approaches are identified and reasons are provided to help show how the strategy will be delivered.

7.4 It is important that the preferred strategy is considered as a whole and in combination with Planning Policy Wales and Technical Advice Notes.

### 7.5 Improving our Social Well-being

**LDP Objective 1: To encourage a sustainable level and distribution of population growth.**

7.5.1 Population growth attracts investment and drives demand for services and facilities which are important to our everyday lives. An attractive and relatively affordable place to live, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) 2015 mid-year estimate sets our County Borough's population at 59,324<sup>34</sup>. The ONS projections<sup>35</sup> anticipate a slight increase until 2024, before falling back over the remainder of the plan period.

7.5.2 Our demographic analysis<sup>36</sup> shows more births, fewer deaths and international migration have masked the impact of our residents choosing to move elsewhere in the UK, a trend which has been apparent since 2008.

7.5.3 To retain and sustainably grow our population, we must fulfil our vision and strive to improve the attractiveness of our County Borough as a place to be proud of.

7.5.4 Having derived three growth options from eight demographic scenarios<sup>37</sup>, consensus amongst key stakeholders is that growing the population to approximately 64,000 people by 2031 is considered the most sustainable demographic outcome. This will see fewer working age people leaving the County Borough and an increase in demand to support the provision of local facilities in accessible locations without overburdening existing community and social infrastructure<sup>38</sup>.

7.5.6 Our research<sup>39</sup> shows that times when our homebuilding rates are healthy correlate with times when our population has been retained and sustainably grown. Supporting homebuilding is therefore a key focus for the Local Development Plan (LDP).

**LDP Objective 2: To promote the use of the Welsh language.**

7.5.7 The Welsh Government's ambition is for a third of the Welsh population to speak Welsh by 2050. Maintaining the level of Welsh Speakers in our County Borough is a key objective of our emerging Welsh Language Promotional Strategy<sup>40</sup>. Sustainably growing

<sup>34</sup> Estimates of the usual resident population as at 30 June 2015- Office for National Statistics.

<sup>35</sup> Principal population projection: 2014- based. Office for National Statistics.

<sup>36</sup> Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council, Population and housing requirements background paper 2017.

<sup>37</sup> Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council, Population and housing requirements background paper 2017.

<sup>38</sup> Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council, Initial Sustainability Appraisal 2017.

<sup>39</sup> Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council, Population and housing requirements background paper 2017.

<sup>40</sup> Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council, draft Welsh Language Promotional Strategy 2017.



our population complements this objective by seeking to avoid a projected decline in our population from the mid 2020's.

#### **Policy SW1: Provision of new homes.**

**To sustainably grow our population, 2250 additional homes are required. To ensure these are delivered, provision is made for 2825 additional homes.**

#### **Dwelling requirement**

7.5.8 To facilitate the sustainable growth of our population to approximately 64,000 people by 2031, we have estimated that 2,250<sup>41</sup> new homes are needed. To ensure these homes are delivered, the LDP provides an additional contingency allowance of approximately 25%, reflecting the focus of the strategy on using brownfield land.

7.5.9 Our aspiration to achieve sustainable growth will be met entirely within the Local Planning Area.

#### **Components of supply**

- 7.5.10 The components of supply for the 2825 homes in the Deposit LDP will be:
- Completions 1st April 2016 – 31st March 2018.
  - Homes under construction and included within the 5-year supply at 1st April 2018.
  - Landbank permissions in the 5-year supply at 1st April 2018.
  - A windfall contribution
  - Allocations for housebuilding.

#### **Windfall contribution**

7.5.11 Monitoring enables a potential windfall contribution to be estimated. Table 1 on page 23 shows a windfall contribution amounting to 395 homes.

#### **Summary of growth strategy**

7.5.12 Delivering 2,250 homes is both aspirational and deliverable. Achieving this level of housing growth will meet our aspiration to avoid a projected population decline by retaining more working aged people. The strategy provides sufficient opportunity to enable the continuation of average housebuilding rates experienced since 2002, when our population was estimated at 55,996<sup>42</sup>.

7.5.13 At 'deposit' we will provide a trajectory of housing delivery to demonstrate a 5-year land supply for the dwelling requirement of 2,250 until 2031, with a base date of 1st April 2016. Using the annual Joint Housing Land Availability Study, we will monitor delivery against this trajectory.

#### **Policy SW2: Provision of affordable housing.**

**To help meet the County Borough's identified need for affordable housing, the LDP will contribute (x number) affordable homes.**

#### **Affordable housing**

7.5.14 Whilst delivering the dwelling requirement, we will strive to maximise the provision of affordable housing, working with housing associations and developers. This will be achieved by including a policy target for the overall provision of affordable homes, a policy requirement for a proportion of units to be for affordable housing on sites above a certain threshold, facilitating affordable housing exception sites outside settlement boundaries and allocating certain sites for 100% affordable housing.

7.5.15 Our Local Housing Market Assessment (2015)<sup>43</sup> estimates a need of 366 additional affordable homes per year, with social rented affordable housing accounting for the vast majority of this need.

<sup>41</sup> Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council, Population and housing requirements background paper 2017.

<sup>42</sup> Estimates of the usual resident population as at 30 June 2002 - Office for National Statistics.

<sup>43</sup> Estimates of the usual resident population as at 30 June 2002 - Office for National Statistics.

7.5.16 An updated Local Market Housing Assessment will be prepared in early 2018.

7.5.17 The contribution that the Plan makes to affordable housing will be monitored through the Development Control quarterly returns.

### **Policy SW3: Sustainably distributing new homes.**

**New homes will be concentrated within the main settlement of Merthyr Tydfil (Primary Growth Area). A significant proportion of these (circa 800) will be delivered within the 'Hoover Strategic Regeneration Area'.**

- List of allocations to be added at deposit stage.

**New homes will also be directed to our other settlements of Troedyrhiw, Merthyr Vale and Aberfan, Bedlinog, and Edwardsville, Quakers Yard, Trelewis and Treharris (Other Growth Area).**

- List of allocations to be added at deposit stage.

**Affordable housing developments of x homes or fewer will be supported on sites no greater than x Ha. outside but adjoining the settlement boundary.**

### **Distributing housing growth**

7.5.18 Having determined a sustainable level of population growth and the dwelling requirement to achieve it, the next question is how best to distribute the growth across the County Borough to ensure communities, services and infrastructure can accommodate more people?

7.5.19 To achieve sustainable growth for all of our communities, it is important that new homes are built within our primary settlement (Merthyr Tydfil), our other settlements and to support essential needs in our rural communities.

7.5.20 Having requested site nominations in 2016<sup>44</sup>, three distribution options for new homes within our primary settlement (Merthyr Tydfil) are apparent<sup>45</sup>. The consensus amongst key stakeholders is that directing development to the 'Hoover Strategic Regeneration Area', the majority of which is in the south of the Primary Growth Area, as well as to other smaller sites across the County Borough provides the most sustainable distribution option.

### **Primary Growth Area**

7.5.21 Directing the majority of development to the Primary Growth Area is consistent with the Wales Spatial Plan<sup>46</sup> and 'Turning Heads - A Strategy for the Heads of the Valleys 2020'<sup>47</sup>. Each identifies Merthyr Tydfil as one of the 'Primary Key Settlements' in the Heads of the Valleys sub-region.

7.5.22 This approach presents opportunities to make the best use of previously developed land at the 'Hoover Strategic Regeneration Area', where a significant proportion of the new homes will be delivered as part of a major mixed use development.

### **Other Growth Area**

7.5.23 The key opportunities for housing, improving environmental quality and appropriate economic development in the 'Other Growth Area' are generally more 'local' in scale than those in the Primary Growth Area.

<sup>44</sup> Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council Candidate Sites Register 2017.

<sup>45</sup> Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council, Initial Sustainability Appraisal 2017.

<sup>46</sup> People, places, futures – The Wales Spatial Plan update 2008.

<sup>47</sup> Turning Heads...A strategy for the Heads of the Valleys 2020 (2006).

7.5.24 The existing LDP (2006 – 2021) strategy differentiates between the 'Southernmost settlements' and the 'Mid-valley settlements', reflecting their different housing market areas. However, a reduced dwelling requirement in comparison with the existing LDP means the level of growth expected in these areas is best combined. This also reflects the present zero Community Infrastructure Levy residential rate in the Mid Valleys and Lower Valley areas.

#### **Distribution between the Primary and Other Growth Areas**

7.5.25 The exact distribution of new homes between growth areas in the 'Deposit Plan' will be based on information collected for the Joint Housing Land Availability Study to 31st March 2018 although it will broadly follow that expressed in Table 1 (below). This shows that approximately 75% of new homes will be directed towards Merthyr Tydfil (Primary Growth Area), with the remaining 25% directed towards our other settlements, Troedyrhiw, Merthyr Vale and Aberfan, Bedlinog, Edwardsville, Quakers Yard, Trelewis and Treharris (Other Growth Area).

Table 1 – Components and distribution of housing supply as of 1st April 2017.

	Components of Housing Supply	Primary Growth Area	Other Growth Areas	Total
A	Total completions (small and large) 01.04.16 – 31.03.17	121	52	173
B	Under construction	39	2	41
C	Units with planning permission or included in Category 2 of JHLAS (31.03.17)	325	266	591
D	Strategy compliant candidate sites/allocations (subject to further refinement)	1465 (circa 800 on strategic site)	160	1625
E	Large windfall sites (+10) 14 years remaining	81	20	101
F	Small windfall sites (-10) 14 years remaining	235	59	294
G	Approximate housing provision	2266	559	2825





## Flexibility in distribution

7.5.26 Flexibility is built into the distribution of new homes by supporting a range of sites in both the Primary and Other Growth Area. Whilst the 'Hoover Strategic Regeneration Area' will account for a significant proportion of housing in the Primary Growth Area, other sites for housebuilding, to attract volume, small and self-builders will also be supported. In the Other Growth Areas, recognising the different housing market areas, flexibility for growth is provided between the communities. Again, sites for housebuilding, to attract volume, small and self-homebuilders will be supported.

## Choosing housing allocations

7.5.27 Appropriate sites for housebuilding in each of the growth areas will be chosen from the pool of 'candidate sites'<sup>48</sup> and Joint Housing Land Availability Sites<sup>49</sup> to meet our dwelling requirement.

7.5.28 The 'candidate sites register' forms part of this consultation allowing for comments to be made on sites submitted for consideration. This consultation also provides the opportunity for further sites to be nominated for consideration.

7.5.29 Decisions over which land will be allocated for housebuilding in the Deposit LDP will be made in accordance with PPW criteria<sup>50</sup> and based on a wide range of information including:

- Site planning history.
- Relative performance against sustainability objectives<sup>51</sup>.
- Site deliverability assessments.
- The merits of comments received during this consultation.

7.5.30 Indicative policy requirements, densities and phasing considerations for each allocated site will be appended to the deposit plan. The annual Joint Housing Land Availability Study will monitor delivery.

### **Policy SW4: Settlement Boundaries.**

**To encourage development within urban areas, support the re-use of previously developed land, and to protect and support the functioning of our rural economy and the countryside, settlement boundaries will be defined as follows:**

#### **Primary Growth Area:**

- Merthyr Tydfil.
- Trefechan.

#### **Other Growth Areas:**

- Troedyrhiw.
- Aberfan and Merthyr Vale.
- Quakers Yard, Edwardsville, Treharris and Trelewis.
- Bedlinog.

**Outside defined settlement boundaries, proposals will be regarded as 'countryside development' and will not be permitted unless:-**

- The development is associated with rural enterprises or the winning and working of minerals.
- The development is for the re-use, adaptation, or replacement of rural buildings and dwellings.
- The development supports the expansion of an existing business in the countryside.
- The development is for tourism, recreation or leisure facilities where the need for a countryside location is fully justified and viability demonstrated.
- The development is for the provision of public utilities, infrastructure or waste management facilities that cannot reasonably be located elsewhere.

<sup>48</sup> Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council Candidate Sites Register 2017.

<sup>49</sup> Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council Joint Housing Land Availability Study 2017.

<sup>50</sup> Planning Policy Wales Section 9.2.9 (Edition 9 2016).

<sup>51</sup> Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council, Initial Sustainability Appraisal 2017.

- The development is required for the reclamation or treatment of unstable or contaminated land.
- The development is for renewable energy.
- The development is for affordable housing.

### Settlement boundaries

7.5.31 Containing development within the urban area promotes sustainably located development which can assimilate with existing services and facilities and also encourages the re-use of previously developed land in accordance with Planning Policy Wales<sup>52</sup>. To provide 'planning' certainty, the 'Countryside' needs to be clearly and precisely defined. Land values are generally lower in the Countryside which enables the proper functioning of or our key rural sectors: agriculture and forestry and provides some protection for the character of our rural areas.

7.5.32 The strategy does not include 'Green Wedge' designations (unlike the existing LDP). Strong settlement boundaries are considered a sufficient mechanism to avoid urban coalescence.

7.5.33 A detailed settlement boundary review will be undertaken to inform the deposit LDP. Settlement boundaries are generally based on the extent of the built area, apart from where formerly productive agricultural land is severed and made unviable by infrastructure development or where development is allocated as an urban extension. In these instances, the settlement boundary may be drawn beyond the existing extent of urban development.

### Supporting sustainable rural communities

7.5.34 Whilst recognising the general presumption of protection of the Countryside, we also understand that a working countryside can provide a thriving and diverse local economy where agriculture-related activities are complemented by sustainable tourism and other forms of economic development.

7.5.35 Policies elsewhere:

- Provide for the protection and enhancement of key features of cultural and environmental importance in the Countryside.
- Support development for appropriate accommodation, regeneration and economic development in the Countryside.

7.5.36 For planning purposes, land outside any settlement boundary will be regarded as the 'countryside', where development will be carefully managed in accordance with other relevant policies of the LDP and National Development Management Policy and advice supporting sustainable rural communities<sup>54</sup>.

**LDP Objective 3: To promote suitable previously developed land for the delivery of a diverse supply of housing.**

7.5.37 To deliver a wide choice of high quality homes and create sustainable, inclusive communities across the County Borough, we will facilitate a mix of housing to meet the needs of different groups in our community, maximise the contribution of brownfield sites and the re-use of the existing building stock.

<sup>54</sup> Technical Advice Note 6 – planning for sustainable rural communities.

7.5.38 Our demographic projections identify the aging profile of our population by 2031. We are particularly aware of the health and social care implications. Our emerging 'Population Needs Assessment'<sup>55</sup> and the 'Cwm Taf Aging Well in Wales Plan'<sup>56</sup> identify access to appropriate housing as a key determinant of our wellbeing.

7.5.39 Supporting the provision of specialist retirement housing delivers wider social and economic benefits, meeting the needs of older residents, releases housing and delays the need for institutional care.

**Policy SW5 – Hoover Strategic Regeneration Area.**

**The Hoover Strategic Regeneration Area is identified on the key diagram to facilitate a major mixed-use development.**

7.5.40 The 'Hoover Strategic Regeneration Area' is a key element of our strategy and more detailed proposals and information will be included in the Deposit Plan. Merthyr Tydfil's growing reputation as an attractive, sustainable and well-connected place will be enhanced by the significant regeneration project with sustainable transport at its heart.

7.5.41 The South Wales Metro, with high frequency light rail connections, will be the catalyst for the development of a sustainable, mixed use, neighbourhood in which new businesses, homes, shops and parkland will flourish in a riverside environment with excellent links to the green hillsides, the Taff & Trevithick trails and the amenities of Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre. Initial indications are that the strategic regeneration area will support

transport infrastructure (a new metro station and park and ride facility) and a small element of retail provision to support approximately 800 homes and employment land.

7.5.42 A framework masterplan is in development as the basis for a detailed demand and viability appraisal to the detailed planning and phasing of the development.

**Policy SW6: The former Ivor Steel Works Regeneration Site.**

**Appropriate development on the former Ivor Steel Works site in Dowlais will be supported.**

7.5.43 The former Ivor Steel Works site in Dowlais offers the potential to stimulate regeneration, economic growth and environmental improvements in the Primary Growth Area. Although a detailed masterplan exists for a mixed use development known as 'Project Heartland', the current viability deficit is such that the plan cannot reasonably rely on the site to deliver development within the plan period. Nevertheless, should proposals for appropriate development be forthcoming, they could be supported subject to adherence to other relevant policies.

**Policy SW7 – Gypsy, Traveller and Showpeople sites.**

**The Glynmill site will be shown on the deposit proposals map as the preferred location for development for Gypsy, Traveller and Showpeople needs.**

**Development for Gypsy, Traveller and Showpeople needs will be the subject of a criteria based policy in the Deposit Plan.**

<sup>55</sup> Cwm Taf Public Service Board Population Needs Assessment 2017.

<sup>56</sup> Cwm Taf Public Service Board Aging Well in Wales Plan.

7.5.44 The demand for Gypsy Traveller pitches to 2021 can be accommodated on the Glynmill Site<sup>57</sup>. Policy SW7 is included for unanticipated residential and transit sites and any newly identified needs when the Gypsy Traveller Accommodation Assessment is updated in 2021.

7.5.45 In all cases, the standards and design must have regard to the Mobile Homes (Wales) Act 2013 and the Welsh Government Good Practice Guide in Designing Gypsy Traveller Sites 2014.

**LDP Objective 4: To ensure infrastructure and open space supports the regeneration of communities.**

7.5.46 To support a growing population, a full range of social, health, leisure and education facilities, including affordable housing, are necessary. As development sites are selected for the deposit plan, critical infrastructure enabling development to be acceptably accommodated will be identified and secured through the use of Planning Obligations and the Community Infrastructure Levy. National development management policy explains the appropriate use of 'Planning Obligations and the Community Infrastructure Levy'<sup>58</sup>.

### **Policy SW8: Planning Obligations.**

**Planning Obligations may be sought for:**

1. **On site provision of affordable housing on sites of x homes or more at an indicative level of:**
  - **x% in the Primary Growth Area.**
  - **x% in the Other Growth Area.**
2. **A financial contribution towards the provision of affordable housing:**

- **On sites of between x and x homes**
- **On sites of x or more homes, where on-site provision is not appropriate.**

3. **The provision and / or improvement of open space on sites of x or more.**

4. **Other relevant obligations not included within the Council's Regulation 123 List of Infrastructure**

7.5.47 To help deliver affordable housing, improvements to open space and other necessary infrastructure the Council intends to:

- Use planning obligations in the form of section 106 agreements;
- Review the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL);
- Attach conditions to planning permissions.

7.5.48 All policies set out in the deposit plan, such as requirements for affordable housing, supporting infrastructure and environmental measures in new developments, must be tested to ensure developers make a reasonable profit after development costs are taken into account (including the provision of a competitive return to land owners).

7.5.49 A realistic understanding of costs is essential for the proper assessment of viability and we will intend to seek consensus on key assumptions through the LDP Housing and Viability working group before undertaking a detailed study.

7.5.50 Further viability work will be undertaken before the deposit plan is determined to ensure it has a reasonable prospect of being delivered.

<sup>57</sup> Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council Gypsy Traveller Accommodation Assessment 2016.

<sup>58</sup> Planning Policy Wales (Edition 9, 2016).



7.5.51 This viability work will also indicate whether our CIL rate should be changed. If necessary we will issue a preliminary draft charging schedule, setting initial proposals for the levy, for public consultation alongside the deposit plan. This will enable a joint examination of the charging schedule and the LDP.

7.5.52 Returns for the Development Management Quarterly Survey<sup>59</sup> will monitor the level of Planning Obligations and CIL secured.

**Policy SW9: Protecting and improving our open spaces.**

**Designated open space will be protected unless its loss is mitigated or compensated by improvements to the quality of other nearby open space.**

7.5.53 Open spaces which are accessible, well-designed and maintained make a significant contribution to our local well-being objective for people to have good physical and mental wellbeing and can help mitigate the impacts of climate change.

7.5.54 Accordingly, our Open Space Strategy<sup>60</sup> provides a long-term framework to protect and improve the quality and accessibility of our network of 139 open spaces. These will be shown on the Council's proposals map.

7.5.55 Our focus is on improving the quality of our existing open spaces and in particular improvements made to twenty-one 'priority' open spaces. This will be monitored annually through the Open Space Strategy Annual Monitoring Report.

**LDP Objective 5: To promote high quality, sustainable and inclusive design and support measures which mitigate the predicted effects of climate change.**

7.5.56 The places that we create have a profound effect upon the quality of life of people who live and work in them. Good design ensures the built environment is accessible to communities as a whole and is critical to the acceptance of new development and, as such, is essential to meeting our local well-being objectives .

7.5.57 There are strong economic reasons for supporting well-planned environments and good design. Good design is also recognised as a factor in health and well-being, community cohesion, reducing crime and mitigating the predicted effects of climate change.

7.5.58 High quality, sustainable and inclusive design underpins 'Sustainable Development' and is defined in PPW and TAN 12: Design (2016). When making decisions on planning applications, the presumption in favour of sustainable development<sup>62</sup> applies ensuring social, economic and environmental issues are balanced and integrated including tackling poverty and inequality and ensuring access for all.

**Policy SW10: Sustainable Design and Placemaking**

**Development must contribute to the creation of attractive and sustainable places through high quality, sustainable and inclusive design.**

**Detailed criteria to be identified in the Deposit Plan.**

<sup>59</sup> Welsh Government Development Management Quarterly Survey.

<sup>60</sup> Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council Open Space Strategy 2016.

<sup>61</sup> Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council, Local well-being statement (2017).

<sup>62</sup> Planning Policy Wales, Section 4.2 (Edition 9, 2016).



7.5.59 Policy SW10 will be developed to complement National Development Management Policy by identifying key criteria promoting sustainable design and place making not addressed elsewhere in the LDP such as:

- Site context and landscaping.
- Design and layout.
- Materials.
- Amenity.
- Flood risk (complementing the Council's Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (April 2013)).
- Green Infrastructure and Sustainable Drainage Systems<sup>63</sup>.
- Accessibility.
- Resource efficiency and renewable technologies.
- Land stability & contamination.

7.5.60 Returns for the Development Management Quarterly Survey<sup>64</sup> will monitor the plans contribution to sustainable design and placemaking.

**LDP Objective 6: To support an integrated transport system, promote active travel and ensure new developments are accessible by walking, cycling and public transport.**

7.5.61 The County Borough's role and location within the Cardiff Capital Region means that commuting will inevitably continue to and from Cardiff.

7.5.62 Our rail and bus service will be modernised and incorporated into the South Wales Metro network which will bring significant improvements in journey time and frequency between Merthyr Tydfil and Cardiff.

7.5.63 Being more readily connected with other areas in the Cardiff Capital Region improves access to employment, services, facilities, recreation, and social opportunities.

7.5.64 We will locate development in accessible locations with good connections to sustainable transport to reduce the need to travel and will seek to improve opportunities for walking and cycling.

**Policy SW11: Improving our local transport network.**

**Development supporting the enhancement of pedestrian, cycle, road, rail and bus routes will be supported.**

**Development meeting the access and mobility requirements of all and adhering to maximum parking standards will be supported where it does not cause unacceptable levels of congestion or safety risk to highway users and/or pedestrians.**

7.5.65 The relative compactness of our settlements offers good opportunities for alternatives to local car trips.

7.5.66 Our existing active travel routes have been identified and proposed routes are soon to be confirmed. Over the plan period, improvements will be made to them in three phases.

7.5.67 Sustainable transport links are also provided by the National Cycle Network<sup>65</sup> and our public rights of way<sup>66</sup>. Significant socio-economic benefits would be brought by re-connecting Merthyr Tydfil and Aberdare through the Abernant Tunnel and this remains an aspiration of both Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council and Sustrans.

<sup>63</sup> Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council Gypsy Traveller Accommodation Assessment 2016

<sup>64</sup> Planning Policy Wales (Edition 9, 2016).

<sup>65</sup> <http://www.sustrans.org.uk/ncn/map/national-cycle-network>

<sup>66</sup> Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council Rights of Way Improvement Plan (2007).

7.5.68 To ensure development layouts are pedestrian and cycle friendly, we endorse the design principles set out in the Manual for Streets. Supplementary Planning Guidance will define maximum parking standards and will replace standards provided by the County Surveyors Society (CSS) in 2008.

7.5.69 To demonstrate their acceptability, development generating significant traffic movements will be required to prepare transport assessments and, where appropriate, travel plans in accordance with PPW and advice in TAN 18: Transport.

**Policy SW12: Improving our strategic transport network.**

**Land will be safeguarded for the 'South Wales Metro' and dualling of the A465.**

**Policy SW13: Central bus station.**

**Allocation T1 will show the site of the new central bus station.**

7.5.70 Strategic improvements to our transportation network are identified in the National Transport Finance Plan<sup>67</sup>, the South East Wales Valleys Local Transport Plan<sup>68</sup>, and the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal.

7.5.71 A modern, accessible, integrated and sustainable transport system is sought by the South-East Wales Valleys Local Transport Plan and on-going improvements to the A465, which will improve connections with the Heads of the Valleys Enterprise Zone, the Swansea Bay City Region and the M50, are supported by the National Transport Finance Plan.

7.5.72 The close proximity of a new central bus station and terminus for the 'South Wales Metro' within the southern end of the Town Centre will help increase the use of public transport. Importantly, new and electrified public transport feet will improve air quality and reduce noise pollution experienced in this area.

7.5.73 The provision of transportation infrastructure at an early phase in the development at the 'Hoover Strategic Regeneration Area' will ensure that sustainable travel patterns are embedded from the outset. The modal shift away from commuting by private car on the A470 between Merthyr Tydfil and Cardiff will be supported by including park and ride facilities in close proximity to the South Wales Metro network.

**LDP Objective 7: To support existing community facilities and suitable community led development.**

7.5.74 Access to community facilities, which provide day-to-day opportunities to meet and participate in community life, can help combat feelings of isolation and are important to creating cohesive communities.

7.5.75 A catalyst for community action, projects where the benefits and/or profit return to local residents are hugely important. We will work proactively with communities to ensure their acceptability.



<sup>67</sup> Welsh Government National Transport Finance Plan (2015).

<sup>68</sup> South East Wales Valleys Local Transport Plan (2015).

**Policy SW14: Protecting and improving our local community facilities.**

**The provision of new and enhanced recreational, educational and community facilities will be supported.**

**The protection of existing community facilities may be the subject of a criteria based policy in the Deposit Plan and Supplementary Planning Guidance.**

7.5.76 The provision and retention of community facilities, which are wide ranging in nature, contributes significantly to our local well-being objective of developing safe and inclusive communities. Furthermore, they foster a sense of belonging and enhance the County Borough's strong cultural and sporting traditions.

7.5.77 However, many are threatened by a wide range of economic factors and face challenges to continue operating. A criterion based policy and supplementary planning guidance supporting their appropriate protection may be developed and included in the deposit plan.

7.5.78 As accessible locations for the provision of a wide range of local services, we recognise the importance of our town and local centres. The economic well-being objectives support their important retail and commercial function and proposals for new commercial community facilities will be considered accordingly.

**7.6 Improving our Cultural Well-being**

**LDP Objective 8: To protect, enhance and promote heritage and cultural assets.**

7.6.1 The sense of pride and pleasure a community feels in its surroundings and the attractiveness to visitors is significantly impacted by the maintenance and upkeep of buildings of historic value.

7.6.2 Having been the most productive centre of iron making in the world, Merthyr Tydfil has profound historic and cultural substance which is a significant asset for the County Borough's appeal and distinctiveness. Accordingly, our local well-being objective is to support our communities to protect, develop and promote our heritage and cultural assets.

7.6.3 Our heritage's conservation and our understanding of it is enhanced greatly by the Merthyr Tydfil Heritage Trust and our own proactive approach to the historic environment will be evident in the 'Historic Environment Strategy' which will be finalised by the time the deposit plan is prepared.

**Policy CW15: Historic Environment.**

**The setting and integrity of our designated historic environment assets will be conserved and enhanced.**

**Development within Urban Character Areas, Archaeologically Sensitive Areas must have regard to their special character and archaeological importance.**

7.6.4 Although much of our historic environment is fragile and can easily be compromised by poor design, its careful conservation can help bring positive change, enterprise and regeneration.

7.6.5 Designated historic environment assets present in the County Borough include:

- Merthyr Tydfil landscape of outstanding historic interest in Wales.
- Gelli-gaer common landscape of special historic interest in Wales.
- Cyfarthfa Castle (register of landscapes, parks and gardens of special historic interest in Wales).
- Aberfan: Cemetery, garden of remembrance and former tip and slide area (register of landscapes, parks and gardens of special historic interest in Wales).
- Cefn Coed cemetery (register of landscapes, parks and gardens of special historic interest in Wales).
- Scheduled Ancient Monuments.
- Listed Buildings including the Grade I listed Cyfarthfa Castle.
- Conservation Areas.

7.6.8 Council Street and Urban Street, Cwmfelin, Cyfarthfa Park, Dowlais, Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre, Morgantown, Thomastown and Treharris are designated Conservation Areas. Measures identified to preserve and enhance them are detailed in their appraisals and associated management plans.

#### **Policy CW16: Cyfarthfa Heritage Area.**

The Cyfarthfa Heritage Area is identified on the key diagram to support the development of a heritage based visitor attraction to complement the offer of Cyfarthfa Castle and park.

### **7.7 Improving our Environmental Well-being**

**LDP Objective 9: To improve habitats which contribute to ecosystem resilience and connectivity and which support protected species.**

7.7.1 Our natural environment provides important services essential to our well-being. Ecosystems, species, freshwater,

land, minerals and the air all produce value, however they are not always accounted for in financial models which can lead to their over-exploitation for short term gains rather than their maintenance for long-term benefit.

7.7.2 Species information from the South-East Wales Biodiversity Recording Centre along with the State of Natural Resources Report<sup>69</sup> helps our understanding of the environment and confirms that our 'natural environmental capital' is in decline.

7.7.3 Our changing climate is also a significant threat to our biodiversity. Native species are predicted to suffer as they seek new migration routes and as alien and invasive species thrive. Warmer, drier summers will reduce river flows and water availability in the summer. People, property and infrastructure are likely to be affected by flooding from extreme weather events.

7.7.4 Our local well-being objective is for communities to protect, enhance and promote our natural environment and countryside. The Merthyr Tydfil Biodiversity Partnership and Action Plan bring together the many active environmental groups in the County Borough, with the aim of reversing the fragmentation of our natural environment by restoring ecological networks and improving land management practices.

7.7.5 Whilst protecting, managing and enhancing our environmental assets, the strategy seeks to accommodate growth. Most importantly, adverse impacts on Natura 2000 sites must be avoided and this is considered in depth by the accompanying Habitats Regulations Assessment Initial Screening Report<sup>70</sup>.

<sup>69</sup> Natural Resources Wales State of Natural Resources Report September 2016.

<sup>70</sup> South East Wales Valleys Local Transport Plan (2015).



### **Policy EnW17: Environment.**

Development must contribute to the creation of an ecologically connected and sustainable environment. To achieve this:

- I. Development is expected to protect 'green infrastructure'. Any loss of ecosystem connectivity, flowering habitats, locally distinctive geological features and soil will only be supported where mitigation is achievable or compensatory measures are provided.
- II. The features and conservation value of Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation and Regionally Important Geological Sites will be protected and enhanced unless appropriate mitigation or compensatory measures are provided.

### **Policy EnW18: Local Nature Reserves.**

To enable access to nature, Local Nature Reserves are proposed as part of the following designated open spaces:

- Bedlinog – Old colliery site Coed-y-Hendre/Nant Llwynog
- Cyfarthfa – Scwrfa (Gellideg Fields)/Cwm Ffrwdd Woodland
- Dowlais – Ifor Tip
- Gurnos – Y Graig
- Merthyr Vale – Bryngolau
- Park – Cwm Taf and Cefn Coed Tip
- Penydarren – Goitre Lane
- Plymouth – Pentrebach/Nant-yr-Odin Tip
- Town – Cwm Blacs
- Treharris – Cefn Glas
- Penydarren, Dowlais and Town – Newlands Park
- Vaynor – Cwm Taf Fechan; only existing LNR

### **Policy EnW19: Protected sites and species**

The Cwm Glo & Glyndyrus and Taf Fechan Sites of Special Scientific Interest and habitats and species of principle importance in Wales will be protected.

7.7.6 Our County Borough has a rich geology and a mixture of quality habitats influenced by our industrial past supporting habitats and species of principal importance for conservation of Biological Diversity in Wales. Two SSSIs Cwm Taf and Cwm Glo/Glyndrys, are examples of post-industrial landscapes accommodating a wide range of high quality habitats and associated species, including waxcaps, pied flycatchers, dippers, salmon, bats and otter.

7.7.7 Sites of Nature Conservation Importance<sup>71</sup> (SINCs) comprising to 4,040 Ha. of land and Regionally Important Geological Sites (RIGS)<sup>72</sup> are identified in both countryside and urban locations. Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) are proposed across the County Borough, as a means of connecting people with nature in response to the Open Space Strategy.

7.7.8 Together with open spaces and good design contributing high quality landscaping and sustainable drainage solutions, SSSIs, SINCs, RIGSs and LNRs provide for ecosystem connectivity.

**LDP Objective 10: To protect and enhance the character and appearance of the landscape and the countryside.**

7.7.9 Contributing greatly to the attractiveness of our County Borough, our landscape is also essential to a sustainable future. In particular integrated landscape protection, management and planning are essential if the causes and effects of climate change are to be mitigated.

<sup>71</sup> Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation background paper 2017.

<sup>72</sup> British Geological Survey South Wales RIGS Audit.



## **Policy EnW20: Special Landscape Areas**

**Development within Special Landscape Areas must be sensitive to their special characteristics.**

7.7.10 In line with the approach to landscape protection taken by our neighbouring authorities (Caerphilly and Rhondda Cynon Taf), we have identified landscapes of significant local value using Natural Resources Wales most recent methodology<sup>73</sup>.

7.7.11 The character and local distinctiveness of these landscapes, and features providing their sense of place are explained in our 'Special Landscape Areas' background paper<sup>74</sup> and from this work 5 Special Landscape Areas (SLA) are proposed:

- Nant Morlais & Cwm Taf Fechan
- Winchfawr
- Merthyr West Flank
- Pontygwaith
- Gelligaer and Taf Bargoed

7.7.12 To ensure Special Landscape Areas contribute to a sustainable future, Supplementary Planning Guidance will be developed.

## **7.8 Improving our Economic Well-being**

**LDP Objective 11: To provide and safeguard appropriate land for economic and skills development.**

**LDP Objective 12: To strengthen and diversify the rural economy.**

7.8.1 PPW defines economic development broadly so that it can include any form of development that generates wealth, jobs and income. Our draft Economic Growth Strategy (EGS) positions important national, regional and local developments to support a holistic approach to economic growth in the County Borough. It proposes the local Vision for Economic Growth as:

"To position Merthyr Tydfil as a key regional centre within the City Region, with a diverse and vibrant economy with a better qualified and skilled, flexible, and well paid, work force that sustainably improves the environment, economy, society and culture of the county borough to improve the Well-being of its local residents."

7.8.2 Our local well-being objective is to develop the workforce of the future<sup>75</sup>. The Council commit to the Cardiff Capital Region and a £1.2 billion deal to unlock £4bn of private investment, drive significant economic growth and create 25,000 jobs. The most relevant elements of the Cardiff City Deal Growth and Competitiveness Commission's Report<sup>76</sup> (2016) are highlighted by our EGS:

- Making the most of the South Wales Metro for fostering labour market participation;
- Investing in education (from early years to university), skills and employability as the primary way in which individuals can access opportunities and firms can improve productivity, and;
- Support all businesses – emerging and existing – to thrive over the long term through strategies to support innovation, ensuring the availability of finance.

<sup>73</sup> LANDMAP Guidance Note 1: LANDMAP and Special Landscape Areas 2016.

<sup>74</sup> Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council Special Landscape Areas background paper 2017.

<sup>75</sup> Research into Employers Skills Needs and Training Gaps in Merthyr Tydfil Final Report and Skills and Training Strategy, (Wavehill Ltd. November 2017).

<sup>76</sup> Cardiff City Deal Growth and Competitiveness Commission Report 2016.

7.8.3 The preferred economic strategy is therefore:

- To support the Council's draft EGS by capitalising on the County Borough's central role in the Heads of the Valleys and thereby helping drive the prosperity of the Cardiff Capital Region.
- To maximise the economic potential offered by improvements to the transportation network, improving connectivity both within the Cardiff Capital Region and to other UK regions.
- To ensure a range and choice of employment land and business premises at sustainable locations, encourage entrepreneurship, promote the growth of indigenous businesses of all types and size and attract inward investment.

7.8.4 This is delivered by allocating and protecting employment land which is well connected with the transportation network and which complements our other objectives, in particular to develop attractive vibrant and viable town and local centres and to protect and enhance the character and appearance of the landscape and the countryside.

**Policy EcW21: Provision of employment land.**

**To support economic development, up to 30Ha. (in total) of employment land (B1, B2, B8) will be allocated in the deposit plan in the Primary Growth Area at the following locations:**

- **Hoover Strategic Regeneration Area**
- **Goatmill Road**
- **Ffos-y-fran**

7.8.6 Our initial research suggests a land requirement of up to 30 Ha. of employment land, much of which is to enable the relocation or replacement of employment buildings. Whilst there is evidence of demand for 'Grade A' serviced accommodation (for example provided by the Orbit Business Centre), the viability of new employment buildings, without subsidy, is uncertain. Little new build employment development has been delivered in recent years<sup>77</sup>.

7.8.7 The precise amount of land allocated for employment purposes in the deposit plan will be determined in accordance with the Welsh Government's practice guidance: Building and Economic Development Evidence Base<sup>78</sup> and will be taken from monitoring information to 31st March 2018.

7.8.8 When making employment allocations, it is important to ensure a choice of sites for general industrial and light industrial. Having assessed sites promoted for employment uses we are confident that sufficient opportunities are presented, within the Primary Growth Area, by the 'Hoover Strategic Regeneration Area', Goatmill Road and Ffos-y-Fran.

7.8.9 Allocating employment land as part of the 'Hoover Strategic Regeneration Area' offers integration with the South Wales Metro. Land at Goatmill Road and Ffos-y-Fran is well connected to the A4060.

7.8.10 This level and distribution of allocation complements the plan's transportation strategy which will see the County Borough better connected with the Cardiff Capital Region via the South Wales Metro.

<sup>77</sup> Merthyr Tydfil Local Development Plan Annual Monitoring Report 2016.

<sup>78</sup> British Geological Survey South Wales RIGS Audit.

**Policy EcW22: Protecting employment sites.**

In order to protect the employment function of the County Borough's business and employment sites, development will be permitted at Rhydycar Business Park where:-

- it falls within Use Class B1; or
- it provides an ancillary facility or service to the primary employment use.

At Pengarnddu, Pant Industrial Estate, Goatmill Road, Triangle Business Park and Merthyr Tydfil Industrial Park development will be permitted if:-

- It is within Use Classes B1, B2 or B8; or
- It provides an ancillary facility or service to the primary employment use, or
- It is an acceptable commercial service unrelated to class B uses, or
- It is an appropriate waste management facility compatible with existing industrial and commercial activities.

Development proposals for uses other than those stipulated and that would result in the loss of employment land / premises at the above sites will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that the existing use is inappropriate or the land / premises are surplus to the requirements of the employment market.

7.8.11 Existing business and industrial parks are ingrained in the urban form and contribute substantially to our economic base. As such the strategy seeks their protection from development which would erode their individual character, which has evolved over many years to meet economic demands.

7.8.12 The incremental loss of employment land can lead to a gradual erosion of an employment area. Without management, fragmentation and pressure for alternative

uses could result in a cumulative loss of employment sites to the detriment of the local economy.

7.8.13 Accordingly, the strategy seeks to protect important existing office, employment and industrial warehousing land (B1, B2 and B8 uses) to ensure their continued role in providing accessible sources of employment, and encourages the intensification and refurbishment of existing sites which are under used, vacant or in decline.

**LDP Objective 13: To develop the town and local centres as accessible, attractive, viable and vibrant places.**

7.8.14 Our research shows the County Borough's importance as a retail destination both for residents and people from further afield. This reflects the County Borough's position as a primary key settlement in the Heads of the Valleys.

7.8.15 As our main hub for public transport and an accessible destination for retail, leisure and services, the town centre has an important role for our residents and is supported by the strategy. Similarly, the key role of our local centres in providing community services, local shops, businesses, employment and access to public transport is supported.

**Policy EcW23: Retail Hierarchy - supporting our retailing provision.**

**Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre is the favoured location for retail development, being situated at the head of a retail hierarchy and being followed by the local centres of Dowlais, Gurnos, Cefn Coed and Brecon Road/Morgantown, Troedyrhiw, Aberfan, Treharris and a new local centre forming part of the 'Hoover Strategic Regeneration Area'.**

Outside the above centres, proposals will be subject to an assessment of need and a strict application of the sequential test. Proposals will then only be permitted where they avoid causing harm to town/local centre vitality and viability.

#### **Policy EcW24: Retail Allocation**

To support the Town Centre, land will be allocated for retail and commercial development at Merthyr Tydfil bus station.

7.8.16 Our draft retail study demonstrates a need, over the plan period of up to 6,281 sq.m gross floorspace, comprising 409 sq.m for convenience goods, 3,736 sq.m for comparison goods and 2,136 sq.m for food and beverage.

7.8.17 To support the town and local centres, the strategy proposes a sequential approach for locating retail and other complementary commercial development in accordance with PPW.

7.8.18 For instance, if a suitable site or building is not available for retail and other complementary commercial development within a centre, consideration should be given to edge of centre sites and if no such sites are suitable or available, only then should out-of-centre sites be considered.

7.8.19 Other complementary commercial development can include cafes and restaurants, banks, leisure and entertainment and community facilities.

7.8.20 Where located outside a centre, need must be satisfactorily justified and a retail impact assessment will be required for all applications of 2,500 sq. metres or more gross floorspace. An impact assessment may also be required from smaller development proposals proportionate to the potential impacts.

#### **Policy EcW25: Town and Local Centre Development.**

Development enhancing the vitality and viability of the Town and Local Centres will be supported.

Within the Town Centre Primary Shopping Area (PSA) the change of use from A1 to another 'A class' use will be permitted where;

- At least 75% of the commercial uses at street level within the PSA remain A1, and;
- In any row of five shops there are a maximum of two neighbouring properties which are 'non-A1'.

7.8.21 We recognise that retail uses must be carefully blended with cultural, leisure and other uses if the Town Centre is to continue to thrive. The Town Centre Partnership has led to projects stimulating activity, promoting a diversity of uses and increasing access and attractiveness most notably by creating the Big Heart of Merthyr Tydfil Business Improvement District.<sup>79</sup>

7.8.22 Significant improvements to the public realm over recent years are symbolised by the award winning 'River Taff Central Link' and the redevelopment of Merthyr Tydfil College, 'Soar Chapel' and 'Penderyn Square'.

7.8.23 These are set to be complemented by the Pontmorlais Heritage Quarter Townscape Heritage project, a new central bus station and a terminus as part of the 'South Wales Metro' project.

7.8.24 In this context, it is essential that the character of the Town Centre's retailing core is protected and the strategy proposes a primary shopping area is identified to retain its character as such.

<sup>79</sup> The Big Heart of Merthyr Tydfil Business Plan 2017 – 2022.



**LDP Objective 14: To support suitable tourism, leisure and recreation developments and encourage a year-round tourism industry.**

7.8.25 Tourism is vitally important to the economy of Merthyr Tydfil. Our location, its environment and natural and built heritage, provide opportunities to build our reputation as a welcoming visitor destination. The strategy supports the delivery of the Council's 'Destination Management Plan'<sup>80</sup> by supporting a variety of high quality tourist, leisure and recreation facilities and visitor accommodation.

7.8.26 The Destination Management Partnership oversees the programme of improvements to our tourism offer.

7.8.27 The benefit of tourism to our economy is monitored using the Scarborough Tourism Economic Activity Monitor (STEAM) model. The majority of our visitors are day visitors, most of whom come to experience our cultural heritage, activities, attractions and shops. Our overnight visitors tend to use our primary attractions such as BikePark Wales and make use of our great location to as a base to explore the surrounding areas.

7.8.28 Tourism development within the settlement boundary is generally supported. Where tourism proposals are to be located outside the settlement boundary, siting must be fully justified and viability demonstrated.

**LDP Objective 15: To promote renewable and low carbon energy.**

7.8.29 A devolved issue in Wales, carbon budgeting approach is set to be introduced to address Climate Change requiring an increase in the deployment of renewable and low

carbon energy technology is essential if we are to achieve decarbonisation targets.

7.8.30 Generating income by retaining energy spend is also a benefit arising from the deployment of renewable and low carbon energy technology locally. An estimated £90 million is spent on energy each year within the County Borough. Renewable energy that is generated and consumed in the area would help to retain a proportion of that spend locally.

7.8.31 Whilst increasing renewable energy deployment is important, energy efficiency measures and overall demand reduction should not be forgotten.

**Renewable energy futures**

7.8.32 To establish the potential renewable energy resource available, we commissioned Regen SW (a not for profit expert organisation) to undertake an assessment in accordance with national guidance<sup>81</sup>. This work is being finalised and, once complete, will inform the 'Deposit Plan'.

7.8.33 Initial findings explain commercial renewable electricity opportunities are currently constrained by the capacity of the grid to accept new connections. The main 132 kV electricity line into Merthyr Tydfil from the west has reached its thermal capacity with regards to generator connections and the 'bulk supply point' substation transformers have also reached their thermal capacity.

7.8.34 Whilst these constraints are significant for several years, they do not rule out new connections later in the plan period.

<sup>80</sup> Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council Destination Management Plan (2015 – 2018).

<sup>81</sup> Welsh Government Practice Guidance: Planning for renewable and low carbon energy – a toolkit for planners.



There are a number of solutions that the District Network Operator, Western Power Distribution, is exploring to resolve the network constraints.

7.8.35 Due to the comparatively urban nature of Merthyr Tydfil, renewables associated with buildings will play a vital role as these do not, in general, have the same network constraints as commercial schemes and there is significant potential for domestic scale solar.

**Policy EcW26: Renewable Energy.**

**The Deposit Plan will contain a policy on renewable and low carbon energy development.**

**LDP Objective 16: To ensure a sustainable supply of minerals.**

7.8.36 The County Borough's underlying geology supplies minerals to the energy and aggregate markets. The major resources within the County Borough are coal, limestone and sandstone. Superficial sand and gravel resources are known to exist even though there is no recent history of their commercial exploitation.

7.8.37 In terms of Minerals the plan's role is:

1. To safeguard mineral resources and protect mineral reserves.
2. To contribute to an adequate and sustainable regional supply of aggregates for the construction industry and to promote their efficient and appropriate usage, including the use of recycled aggregates where possible.
3. To identify areas where future coal extraction will be unacceptable.
4. To ensure the impacts of extraction are carefully managed.

7.8.38 We must contribute to the regional supply of land-won primary aggregates. Our regional apportionment is set out in the 'Regional Technical Statement (RTS)<sup>82</sup>' and is combined with that of the Brecon Beacon National Park Local Planning Authority. We must also safeguard mineral resources should they be needed in future generations. This is monitored in the South Wales Regional Aggregate Working Party Annual Report<sup>83</sup>.

7.8.39 Our joint annual apportionment for the future provision of land-won aggregates is 0.82 million tonnes of crushed rock. This equates to 20.5 million tonnes of crushed rock over the 25 year period (2011-2036) covered by the RTS.

7.8.40 Vaynor and Gelligaer quarries have significant crushed rock reserves continuing more than 10 years beyond the end date of the replacement LDP, and as such, no further allocations for crushed rock are required.

7.8.41 The progressive restoration of the Merthyr East land reclamation scheme, which involves the extraction of approximately 11 million tonnes of coal, has reached its maximum depth and is expected to be completed by 2025.

7.8.42 The impacts arising from extraction must be carefully managed. The Planning Officers Society for Wales good practice guide for waste planning conditions identifies best practice on the management of minerals sites through the planning system.

**Policy EcW27: Sustainably supplying minerals**

**The Deposit Plan will contain a policy on minerals.**

<sup>82</sup> The Big Heart of Merthyr Tydfil Business Plan 2017 – 2022.

<sup>83</sup> The Big Heart of Merthyr Tydfil Business Plan 2017 – 2022.

**LDP Objective 17: To promote the efficient use of materials and resources and ensure an integrated network of waste management facilities.**

7.8.43 The Council's long-term waste management business plan sets out the vision, objectives, and activities for waste management up to 2025. It continues the work of the Waste Management Collaboration Project to create a greater opportunity for recycling household waste.

7.8.44 The need for further waste facilities will be informed by the waste management goals set out in 'Towards Zero Waste – One Wales: One Planet' (June 2010) – the overarching waste strategy document for Wales – and the Collections, Infrastructure and Market Sector Plan (July 2012). It is difficult to accurately predict future needs for the disposal of waste and recovery of mixed municipal waste, and accordingly, annual monitoring at a regional level is necessary in order to identify whether:

- sufficient landfill capacity is being maintained;
- sufficient treatment capacity for the recovery of mixed municipal waste is coming forward;
- the spatial pattern of provision is appropriate to fulfil identified needs; and
- any further action is needed by local planning authorities to address unforeseen issues.

7.8.45 The findings are presented through the Waste Planning Monitoring Report, which includes recommendations for the further provision of waste facilities. The latest Waste Planning Monitoring Report for South East Wales (2016)<sup>84</sup> concludes there is no further need for landfill capacity within

the South-East Wales region and proposals for further residual waste treatment should be carefully assessed to ensure that the facility would not result in overprovision.

7.8.46 In terms of waste, the plan's role is twofold. In a manner that follows the waste hierarchy (which seeks to maximise the reduction of waste in the first place and thereafter reusing, recovering and recycling options before the disposal of waste material is considered) the plan must:

1. Support sustainable collection and recycling methods for Municipal Waste by maintaining and improving an integrated network of facilities in the County Borough.
2. Facilitate an integrated network of commercial and industrial sustainable waste management facilities consistent with the needs of the South-East Wales area.

7.8.47 Policy EcW21: Existing Employment Sites identifies appropriate industrial sites for waste management facilities.

7.8.48 The impacts arising from waste development must be carefully managed. The Planning Officers Society for Wales good practice guide for waste planning conditions identifies best practice on the management of waste sites through the planning system.

**LDP Policy EcW28: Waste facilities.**

**Waste treatment facilities will only be permitted where there is an identified need, where they are situated away from sensitive locations, accord with the waste hierarchy, the proximity principle and provide comprehensive restoration and aftercare of the land for a beneficial re-use.**

<sup>84</sup> Waste Planning Monitoring Report South East Wales April 2016.

## 8. How to comment on the preferred strategy

8.1 The consultation period runs from 14th July to 25th August 2017.

8.2 Comments made on this Preferred Strategy must be made in writing and received by the County Borough Council by 12 midday on the 25th August 2017.

8.3 All comments made by the deadline will be acknowledged and considered, however the Council cannot guarantee that comments received after this date will be considered.

8.4 Consultation documents and comments forms are available at the following locations:

- ◆ 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
- ◆ Merthyr Library Hub, Merthyr Tydfil Leisure Centre, Merthyr Tydfil, CF48 1UT
- ◆ Treharris Library, Perrott Street, Treharris, Merthyr Tydfil, CF46 5ET
- ◆ Dowlais Library, Church Street, Dowlais, Merthyr Tydfil, CF48 3HS
- ◆ Aberfan Community Library, Pantglas Road, Aberfan, Merthyr Tydfil, CF48 4QE

8.5 Or one can be downloaded from the Council's website at: [www.merthyr.gov.uk](http://www.merthyr.gov.uk) or from the Cwm Taf Hub [www.cwmtafhub.co.uk](http://www.cwmtafhub.co.uk)

8.6 You can either email completed forms to: [devplanning@merthyr.gov.uk](mailto:devplanning@merthyr.gov.uk) or post them to:

The Head of Planning & Countryside  
Planning & Countryside Department  
Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council  
Unit 5, Triangle Business Park  
Pentrebach  
Merthyr Tydfil  
CF48 4TQ

8.7 If you have any queries about how to submit your comments please:  
Email the LDP team @ [devplanning@merthyr.gov.uk](mailto:devplanning@merthyr.gov.uk) or  
Telephone 01685 726279



## Glossary and interpretation

The meanings of locally defined terms are provided below. For terms defined by other statutes and national guidance, the source is referenced.

Active Travel Routes:	Meaning provided in section 2 of the Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013.
Adopted:	Meaning provided in section 67 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
Annual Monitoring Report:	Meaning provided in section 76 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
Archaeologically Sensitive Area:	Areas where a concentration of archaeological remains has been identified or the presence of archaeological remains is suspected.
Baseline scoping report:	Report prepared to consult the prescribed consultation bodies when deciding on the scope and level of detail of the information that must be included in the Environmental Report: Section 12 (5) of The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes (Wales) Regulations 2004.
Brownfield sites:	Meaning provided in Figure 4.4, Planning Policy Wales (Edition 9).
Candidate Site:	Meaning provided in Glossary of the Welsh Government Local Development Plan Manual (Edition 2).
Cardiff Capital Region:	The combined area administered by the 10 South-East Wales Unitary Authorities.
Committed site:	A site with the benefit of planning permission which could be implemented.
Community facilities:	Precise definition to be determined.
Community Infrastructure Levy:	A planning charge, introduced by the Planning Act 2008 as a tool for local authorities in England and Wales to help deliver infrastructure to support the development of their area.
Comparison goods:	Products which consumers purchase relatively infrequently and so they usually evaluate prices.
Complementary commercial development:	To be determined in the 'Deposit Plan'.
Conservation Area:	Areas designated as of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.

Convenience goods:	Items which are widely available and purchased frequently with minimal effort.
Countryside:	Land within the plan area but outside a settlement boundary.
Delivery Agreement:	The agreement between the Council and the Welsh Government including the local planning authority's community involvement scheme and the timetable for the preparation and adoption of the authority's local development plan.
Deposit:	Means the Council's detailed proposals for the Merthyr Tydfil Local Development Plan 2016 – 2031.
Dwelling requirement:	Means the number of new homes required to be built to meet the demographic aspiration of the Council.
Five (5) year supply:	The quantity of land agreed to be genuinely available (under construction or where it is reasonable to assume that dwellings will be completed within 5 years) compared with the remaining housing requirement in the adopted LDP.
Good design:	Meaning provided in Figure 4.5, Planning Policy Wales (Edition 9).
Grade A:	Best quality.
Green infrastructure:	The network of natural and semi-natural features, green spaces, rivers and lakes that intersperse and connect villages, towns and cities. (Landscape Institute, Green Infrastructure – An integrated approach to land use.
Greenhouse Gas:	A gas that traps heat in the atmosphere, like glass in a greenhouse, (by absorbing and emitting radiation within the thermal infrared range) and thereby making the earth warmer.
Growth Area / Zones:	Locally defined planning areas.
Habitats and Species of Principle importance in Wales:	In accordance with the lists published and maintained under Section 7 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016.
Heads of the Valleys:	Settlements in the northern ends of the South Wales Valleys principally connected by the A465.
Hoover Strategic Regeneration Area:	Locally defined planning area.
Initial Sustainability Appraisal:	Integrated plan assessment including the environmental report required by The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes (Wales) Regulations 2004.





Joint Housing Land Availability Study:	Annual study monitoring the supply of housing land within the County Borough.
Landscape:	Means an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of action and interaction of natural and human factors (as defined by the European Landscape Convention 2000).
Land-use planning:	The general term urban planning which seek to order and regulate land use in an efficient and ethical way, thus preventing land-use conflicts.
LDP Steering and Working Groups:	Meetings of specific and general consultation bodies (see delivery agreement) and others held to inform the preferred strategy and identify alternative strategies and options.
Local Authority-wide and Sub Local Authority scale renewable and low carbon energy development:	Meaning provided in Figure 12.2, Planning Policy Wales (Edition 9).
Local Centre:	Locally defined planning area.
Local Development Plan:	Meaning as defined by Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, Section 62.
Local Nature Reserves:	Meaning as defined in The National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, Section 15.
Local Planning Authority:	Meaning as defined by Town and Country Planning Act 1990, Section 1 (as amended).
Local Well-being Plan:	Meaning as defined in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, part 4.
MWe:	Electric output of power generating infrastructure in megawatt.
National Development Framework:	The NDF will set out the Welsh Government's policies on development and land use in a spatial context, and replace the Wales Spatial Plan.
Natura 2000 site:	A nature protection areas in the territory of the European Union, either a Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) or Special Protection Areas (SPAs) designated under the Habitats Directive or Birds Directive.
Natural Environmental Capital:	Means the stock of natural resources, which includes geology, soils, air, water and all living organisms.
Open space:	Means open space identified in the Merthyr Tydfil Open Space Strategy 2016.

Plan area:	Means the area of Merthyr Tydfil County Borough excluding that within the Brecon Beacons National Park.
Plan period:	Means the period from 1st April 2016 until 31st March 2031.
Planning Inspectorate:	An executive agency sponsored by the Welsh Government which deals with planning appeals, national infrastructure planning applications, examinations of local plans and other planning-related and specialist casework.
Popgroup:	A software package that has been developed to forecast population, households and dwellings for areas. It replicates Welsh Government population projections and allows users to develop different policy led scenarios and convert household change into dwelling requirements.
Preferred strategy:	Means the Council's preferred approach for the growth of the County Borough to 2031.
Primary Key Settlement:	As identified in the Wales Spatial Plan.
Review Report:	A review of the current adopted Local Development Plan.
Section 106 agreement:	Private agreements made between local authorities and developers and attached to a planning permission to make acceptable development which would otherwise be unacceptable in planning terms.
Settlement boundary:	Means the boundary delineated by the Council to promote the full and effective use of urban land and prevent inappropriate development in the countryside.
Site of Importance for Nature Conservation:	Locally identified areas of importance for nature conservation.
Sites of Special Scientific Interest:	A conservation designation denoting a protected area in the United Kingdom.
South Wales Metro:	A proposed integration of heavy rail and development of light rail and bus-based public transport services and systems in South East Wales.
Special Landscape Area:	Locally identified areas of locally important landscape characteristics.
Supplementary Planning Guidance:	Supplementary information in respect of the policies in an LDP. SPG does not form part of the development plan and is not subject to independent examination but must be consistent with it and with national planning policy.
Sustainability objective:	Locally defined objective for the purposes of the Initial Sustainability Appraisal.



Sustainable development:	As defined in Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, Section 2.
Tests of Soundness:	In order to be adopted, an LDP must be determined 'sound' by the examination Inspector (Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, S64) Tests of soundness tests and checks are identified in PPW (ch2) and the Local Development Plan Manual (ch8).
Urban Character Area:	As defined in Cadw's Urban Characterisation Study: Understanding Merthyr Tydfil.
Wellbeing statement:	As defined in Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, Section 2.



