

**Rhondda Cynon Taf
Revised Local Development Plan
2022 – 2037**

**Spatial Strategy Options
Paper 2023**



Spatial Strategy Options Paper

1.0 Introduction

This Spatial Strategy Options Paper is one of a number of documents prepared as part of the evidence base for the Rhondda Cynon Taf Revised Local Development Plan (RLDP) 2022-2037 at the Preferred Strategy stage.

1.1 Purpose of the report

This paper has been prepared to set out the spatial strategy options for the Revised LDP. It firstly sets out a context for the key national, regional and local policy relevant to the formulation of spatial strategy options within an RLDP. The document then sets out what other considerations and evidence that has been included in the formulation of appropriate strategy options. The key part of this paper then sets out a suite of potential spatial strategy options. A comprehensive assessment of them then identifies the positive and realistic aspects of the options, whilst also acknowledging known weaknesses and unsuitable elements of them.

1.2 Background to Spatial Strategies

An LDP, or its revision, needs to set out a number of key elements in its stages of preparation; to ultimately formulate a 'sound' final plan. As a land use plan, one of the key considerations is where new development or 'growth' should and can be located. This may be housing, employment, retail or generally where the Council considers to be the most appropriate places for development over the RLDP plan period. Where this growth will be located is referred to as the spatial strategy element of the RLDP.

In order to frame and adopt a suitable spatial strategy to take forward through the RLDP preparation, it is necessary to look at a number of different opportunities or options to where this growth can be located. These options have to be realistic in that they will seek to address the objectives of the plan and are also in compliance with local, regional and national policy and priorities. This should all ultimately play a considerable role in determining the RLDP's wider Strategy; ensuring that the Vision and Objectives of the RLDP can be achieved.

As part of the earlier stages of the revision of the LDP, a series of evidence base documents have been prepared and other necessary revision procedures undertaken. These are set out in detail in section 5 of the report, along with broader matters and evidence that need to feed into the formulation of spatial strategy options. A key part of this evidence are the outcomes of the significant review of the Vision, Issues, aims and Objectives of the LDP. The outcomes of the analysis of relevant evidence and broad stakeholder engagement are set out in the Vision, Issues, Aims and Objectives paper. This Spatial Strategy Options paper is seen as one of the next steps in the preparation of the Preferred Strategy for the RLDP. The spatial strategy identifies where growth should take place over the plan period. The spatial strategy must clearly

communicate where future development will be located, why and how it will deliver the Vision, key Issues, and Objectives. It should be realistic and show a good understanding of the plan area.

2.0 Policy Context

When developing spatial options, it is necessary to review national, regional and local policies and strategies to ensure that what is being proposed does not conflict with the overall aims and direction of travel of these documents. In preparing these options the following have been considered and the options appraised against them:

National Policy

2.1 Future Wales: The National Plan 2040

As the national development framework, Future Wales is the highest tier of development plan and is focused on solutions to issues and challenges at a national scale. Its strategic nature means it does not allocate development to all parts of Wales, nor does it include policies on all land uses. It is a framework which will be built on by Strategic Development Plans at a regional level and Local Development Plans at local authority level. These plans will identify the location of new infrastructure and development. Strategic and Local Development Plans are required to be in conformity with Future Wales and must be kept up to date to ensure they and Future Wales work together effectively. Planning decisions at every level of the planning system in Wales must be taken in accordance with the development plan as a whole. Future Wales replaces the Wales Spatial Plan.

2.2 The Future Wales Ambitions are:

- **A Wales where people live and work in connected, inclusive and healthy places**
- **A Wales where people live in vibrant rural places with access to homes, jobs, and services**
- **A Wales where people live in distinctive regions that tackle health and socio-economic inequality through sustainable growth.**
- **A Wales where people live in places with a thriving Welsh Language.**
- **A Wales where people live and work in towns and cities which are a focus and springboard for sustainable growth.**
- **A Wales where people live in places where prosperity, innovation and culture are promoted**
- **A Wales where people live in places where travel is sustainable**

- **A Wales where people live in places with world-class digital infrastructure.**
- **A Wales where people live in places that sustainably manage their natural resources and reduce pollution**
- **A Wales where people live in places with biodiverse, resilient, and connected ecosystems**
- **A Wales where people live in places which are decarbonised and climate-resilient**

2.3 Regional Future Wales aspirations

The NDF sets out aspirations on a Regional Level. RCT falls into the South East Region and is within a national growth area. The aspirations for this region which the RLDP will have to be in accordance with are set out below:

- *Housing, economic growth, digital and transport connectivity infrastructure should be co-ordinated and planned on the basis of the whole region.*
- *The management of natural resources, flooding and the protection and enhancement of areas of environmental and landscape importance should inform strategic decisions on locations for growth and new infrastructure.*
- *Decarbonisation and responding to the threats of the climate emergency should be central to all regional planning.*
- *The Welsh Government supports co-ordinated regeneration and investment in the Valleys area to improve well-being, increase prosperity and address social inequalities.*
- *The Welsh Government will work with regional bodies, local authorities, businesses, the third sector, agencies, and stakeholders to support investment, including in the manufacturing sector, and to ensure a regional approach is taken to addressing socio-economic issues in the Valleys.*

2.4 Planning Policy Wales (WG Edition11) (February 2021)

PPW refers to the spatial strategy and what to consider in preparation of one. It highlights that an essential element of a sustainable place is the location of development. PPW includes things that the spatial must do these are:

Development plans must include a spatial strategy covering the lifetime of the plan which establishes a pattern of development improving social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being. A balance should be achieved between the number of homes provided and expected job opportunities. As well as ensuring all **services** needed for the expectant levels of growth are provided, an important

consideration will be **minimising the need to travel, reducing reliance on the private car, and increasing walking, cycling and use of public transport**. The spatial strategy should be informed by a sustainability appraisal and must form an integral part of an over-arching strategy in the development plan. (Para 3.42)

In developing their spatial strategy planning authorities must prioritise the use of **suitable and sustainable previously developed land and/or underutilised sites** for all types of development. When identifying sites in their development plans planning authorities should consider previously developed land and/or underutilised sites **located within existing settlements in the first instance** with sites on the edge of settlements considered at the next stage. (Para 3.43)

Spatial strategies should be consistent with the **Key Planning Principles** and contribute towards the **National Sustainable Placemaking Outcomes**. They should be based on approaches that recognise the mutual dependence between town and country, thus improving the linkages between urban areas and their rural surroundings. (Para 3.48)

Spatial strategies should support the objectives of **minimising the need to travel**, reducing reliance on the private car, and increasing walking, cycling and use of public transport. Spatial strategies should be informed by the development of an **integrated planning and transport strategy**, which considers the transport considerations set out in the Active & Social Places chapter 4, as well as the transport infrastructure considerations contained in the Productive & Enterprising Places chapter 5. (Para 3.49)

A broad balance between housing, community facilities, services and employment opportunities in both urban and rural areas should be promoted **to minimise the need for long distance commuting**. (Para 3.50)

2.5 Development Plans Manual (Edition 3 March 2020)

The Development Plans Manual sets out the approach to be taken for the spatial strategy it states:

The spatial strategy underpins all elements of the plan and must demonstrate compliance with the gateway test, search sequence and National Sustainable Placemaking Outcomes in PPW. (Page 95)

The spatial strategy must clearly communicate where future development will be located, why and how it will deliver the vision, key issues, and objectives. (Page 95)

In order to develop and create sustainable places, each LPA must involve its stakeholders and community to develop a thorough understanding of its area, including strengths, opportunities, and constraints, justified by an up-to-date evidence base. A robust understanding of the role and function of places, supply, and demand factors, both within and beyond its administrative boundary is fundamental to achieving an effective strategy and quality planning outcomes. This must be clearly articulated in the plan and evidence base. (Page 95)

2.6 Llwybr Newydd: The Wales Transport Strategy 2021

Llwybr Newydd is the Transport Strategy for Wales which sets out a 'New Path' for transport in Wales for the next 20 years with the aim of creating a more prosperous, green and equal society. As well as setting out short term priorities and long term ambitions the Welsh Government has also set out nine mini plans which explain how the aims will be delivered within different transport modes and sectors.

The vision for the strategy is: *'An accessible, sustainable and efficient transport system.'*

The plans priorities are:

1. **Bring services to people in order to reduce the need to travel**
2. **Allow people and goods to move easily from door to door by accessible, sustainable and efficient transport services and infrastructure.**
3. **Encourage people to make the change to more sustainable transport**

2.7 Strategic Local Policy Context

2.8 Rhondda Cynon Taf Corporate Plan 'Making a difference' 2020-2024

The Council Vision is: *For Rhondda Cynon Taf to be the best place in Wales to live, work and play, where people and businesses are independent, healthy, and prosperous*

The Council's purpose and the reason why it exists is: "To provide strong community leadership and create the environment for people and businesses to be independent, healthy, and prosperous.

The Council has 3 main priorities:



People: Are healthy, independent, and successful

Places: Where people are proud to live, work and play

Prosperity: Creating the opportunity for people and businesses to be innovative, be entrepreneurial and fulfil their potential and prosper.

2.9 Cwm Taf Morgannwg Our Well Being Plan: A More EQUAL Cwm Taf Morgannwg 2023-2028

Our Cwm Taf Well-Being Plan was written by the Cwm Taf Public Services Board. Directed by the Well-being of Future Generations Act it provides an opportunity for all public services and partners to work together to improve well-being for all.

2.10 Tackling Climate Change Rhondda Cynon Taf Climate Change Strategy (2022-2025)

The RCT Climate Change Strategy aims to meet the Council's commitments to reduce carbon emissions across the Council and the County Borough and in doing so tackle climate change.

Its sets out that by 2030:

- Rhondda Cynon Taf will be carbon neutral and
- The whole County Borough will be as close as possible to carbon neutral.
- Our work with partners will have ensured that all public and private organisations that operate in the County Borough will be carbon neutral by 2040.
- Rhondda Cynon Taf will have contributed to the Welsh Government's ambition of a net zero public sector by 2030.

3.0 Considerations for preparing Spatial Strategy Options and determining a Spatial Strategy

3.1 When formulating the spatial strategy options and ultimately the preferred strategy option, there are many matters that need to be considered and taken into account including:

- National policies, strategies and priorities
- Regional strategies and aspirations
- Local strategies and aspirations (such as the Council's Corporate Plan)
- Aspirations of the plan (Vision, issues, objectives, regeneration, challenges)
- Availability and suitability of land including brownfield land, agricultural land, and constraints such as ecology.
- Affordable housing need both in terms of amount and location
- Climate change/sustainability/ modal shift of transport and reducing the need to travel
- Access to employment
- Viability
- Deliverability
- Capacity of existing and potential infrastructure
- Environmental implications, e.g., energy consumption, greenhouse gas emissions, flood risk, biodiversity, green infrastructure, mineral resources, and ground conditions, including mine gas
- Social and cultural factors, including consideration of the Welsh language

3.2 Objectives for the RLDP to address

The role of the spatial strategy is to help achieve the plans Vision. The Vision of the plan is developed into a series of Objectives. Objectives set out goals to achieve this Vision which in turn sets out what RCT will look like at the end of the plan period. These Objectives have been derived from a comprehensive process which begun with the identification of a suite of Issues that affect RCT. These were generated via a comprehensive engagement process alongside the Integrated Sustainability Appraisal (ISA) and via the collection of baseline data. The issues and objectives paper sets this process along with the Vision and Issues in full.

Each spatial option below has also been subject to a comprehensive engagement process with key stakeholders, the results of which are incorporated into the analysis of each option.

The objectives that the spatial strategy needs to consider are as follows:

Objective 1: Mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change and reduce flood risk.

Objective 2: Provide an appropriate amount and mix of housing to meet local needs.

Objective 3: Promote vibrant communities, with opportunities for living, working and socialising for all.

Objective 4: Encourage healthy and safe lifestyles that promote wellbeing and improve overall health levels in RCT.

Objective 5: Reduce the need to travel and promote more sustainable modes of transport.

Objective 6: Promote, protect and enhance cultural heritage and the built environment.

Objective 7: Promote the use of the Welsh language.

Objective 8: Protect and enhance the quality and character of the landscape.

Objective 9: Protect and enhance biodiversity.

Objective 10: Protect the quality and quantity of RCT's water resources.

Objective 11: Protect and enhance air quality.

Objective 12: Promote the efficient use of land, soils and minerals.

Objective 13: Continue to minimise waste generation and promote more sustainable waste management.

Objective 14: Provide for a sustainable economy.

Objective 15: Provide for a diverse range of job opportunities.

Objective 16: Promote vibrant, adaptable and resilient Town centres.

Objective 17: Address the impacts of the mining legacy in RCT.

Objective 18: To support the growth of the tourism and leisure sector

3.3 Evidence Base

As well as the policy context set out above in which the options need to conform with, a suite of evidence base documents have been developed to support decisions of the RLDP, these are set out below:

3.4 The Settlement Hierarchy

A Settlement Hierarchy has been identified for the Revised LDP prepared in order to assess and identify a hierarchy of settlements in RCT which are capable of further growth. This assessment has been based on a range of factors such as access to services and facilities and is underpinned by how sustainable they are. As well as looking at whether these settlements can accommodate growth, the report looks at how *much* growth can be sustainably accommodated.

The report establishes a hierarchy of settlements arranged by their sustainability and role and function. Those at the top of the hierarchy should see the largest growth, the level of growth then follows the hierarchy attributing proportionate levels of growth with the smallest settlements seeing a smaller local needs growth.

Also identified are those settlements which are not capable of seeing any growth as they have been deemed unsustainable settlements.

The findings from the updated assessment need to be reflected in the spatial options. The options should direct development to those areas most appropriate to accommodate growth and ensure those which are not included on the hierarchy do not see development.

The findings from the updated settlement hierarchy assessment remain in the whole unchanged from that set out by the current LDP. One of the changes that is proposed is that Pontyclun become part of the Principal Town of Llantrisant/ Talbot Green, the reasons for which are set out in the paper itself.

Set out below is the settlement hierarchy that should be used to formulate where growth could sustainably be located are deemed the most suitable and capable to be able to accommodate growth for the LDP 2022-2037:

Principal Towns (or what are now known as Principal Settlements as determined in subsequently formulating the Preferred Strategy) – The greatest level of growth attributed in these locations

Aberdare

Pontypridd

Talbot Green/Pontyclun/Llantrisant

These 3 areas have been once again identified as being the most sustainable areas to accommodate the highest level of growth. They remain unchanged from the current LDP apart from the addition of Pontyclun to the Llantrisant/ Talbot Green Principal Town. The addition of Pontyclun is fully explained in the settlement hierarchy paper however one of the main reasons for its inclusion is the relationship it has with the current principal settlement including employment and education.

Key settlements

Tonypandy

Porth

Treorchy

Mountain Ash

Hirwaun

Llanharan

Tonyrefail

Ferndale

The Key settlements listed above are unchanged from the current LDP. These areas are capable of accommodating growth at a smaller scale to the Principal Towns.

Smaller settlements

- Abercwmboi/Cwmaman
- Abercynon
- Beddau
- Church Village
- Cilfynydd
- Cwmbach
- Cymmer
- Efail Isaf
- Gilfach Goch
- Glyncoch
- Hawthorn
- Llanharry
- Llantwit Fardre
- Llwydcoed
- Maerdy
- Penrhiwceiber
- Pentre
- Penywaun
- Rhigos
- Taffs Well
- Tonteg
- Treherbert
- Tylorstown
- Ynyshir
- Ynysybwl
- Ystrad

The smaller settlements listed above can see some growth. It is here that windfall opportunities may be possible within the settlement boundary.

Unsustainable settlements

Name	Location
North View Terrace	Aberaman
Goitre Coed Isaf	Abercynon
Gelynog Court	Beddau
Blaencwm	Blaencwm
Coedely	Coedely
Bwllfadare Terrace	Cwmdare
Heol Creigiau	Efail Isaf
Groesfaen	Groesfaen
Halt Road	Hirwaun
Seymour Avenue	Llanharan
Meiros Valley	Llanharan
Trem-y-Fforest	Llanharry
Degar	Llanharry
Gwaun Llanhari	Llanharry
Castell-y-Mwnws	Llanharry
Mwyndy	Llantrisant
Greys Place	Llwydcoed
Pantaquesta	Miskin
Highlands	Penycoedcae
Penycoedcae	Penycoedcae
Cefn Rhigos	Rhigos
Rhiwsaeson	Rhiwsaeson
Talygarn	Talygarn
Talygarn House	Talygarn
Pantybrad	Tonyrefail
Tylacoch Place	Treorchy
Ynysmaerdy	Ynysmaerdy
Pleasant View	Ynysybwl
Daren Ddu	Ynysybwl

These settlements listed as unsustainable settlements are not suitable to accommodate any growth due to the unsustainable nature of them. This tier of the hierarchy therefore should not have any allocations attributed to them or spatial options which encourages development in these locations.

The settlement hierarchy is crucial in preparing the spatial options and has been considered when devising them. The spatial options should reflect the correct level of growth in the correct locations as set out by the hierarchy.

3.5 Land availability

Alongside a settlements ability to grow, assessments will be made against available land to grow. This has been done through the Candidate Site assessment process alongside urban capacity work undertaken. A spatial option cannot be realistically deliverable if there is no land available to accommodate such growth.

3.6 Urban Capacity Study process

In order to establish whether there is available land and buildings within the settlements in RCT an urban capacity study was undertaken. This study provides further evidence which will help to inform both the growth options and this spatial option. The methodology for the urban capacity study can be seen in the report itself but in summary in order to comply with national policy as well as the desire to see development achieved in the most sustainable manner, the study has looked sequentially starting in the retail centres and working gradually outwards.

The findings of the urban capacity study has identified a total of 190 sites in sustainable locations, 13 of which were within retail centres and 177 within either 400m to Key Settlement or Local and Neighbourhood retail centres, or 800m to Principal Town retail centres. However, they are generally smaller sites and they do not have significant levels of certainty and deliverability associated with them. It is estimated that these sites would be able to deliver approximately 600 dwellings, if they were to be developed.

With regard to the Council's housing growth aspirations, 600 dwellings is not a substantial figure to be able to rely heavily upon. If all of these sites did come forward during the plan period, this would only average approximately 44 dwellings per year from 2022-2037.

The outcome of the UCS suggests that a spatial strategy focusing growth within town and retail centres is highly unlikely to be feasible, due to lack of land availability suitable for residential development.

3.7 Candidate Site process

There have been 2 calls for Candidate Sites which have contributed to the RLDP process. The first was undertaken during a call for sites as part of a previous ceased plan process, promoters of these sites were informed that these sites would be carried forward into the new process unless they did not wish them to be. This was done as very little time had passed between the two calls. A second call was also undertaken as part of this plan process. This demonstrates that more than sufficient opportunity has been afforded to the call for sites.

In addition to this the Council's land ownership has been thoroughly reviewed and a number of Council owned sites have been added to the Candidate Site assessment process.

Previous undeveloped allocations of the current LDP have also been added to the Candidate Site process for reassessment.

The spatial options need to be realistic which means deliverable too. The land for development needs to be available to achieve the growth in the locations that the options suggest.

The results of the initial stage 1 assessment of the submitted Candidate Sites has resulted in 42 sites being put through to stage 2. What is notable is that the vast majority of these sites are located in the south of RCT.

There is a cluster of sites in the northern part of the Cynon (Aberdare and Hirwaun areas) but a lack of sites in the Rhondda Valleys and the lower Cynon Valley.

Of the sites that have gone through there are a number of large sites remaining in the south.

3.8 Brownfield Vs Greenfield land and Agricultural Land

It is set out in clearly in national policy that when preparing Local Plans brownfield land (land that has previously been developed) should be allocated over greenfield land. Although the plan will seek to do this it needs to be established if there is enough viable and deliverable brownfield land to do so.

The call for Candidate Sites has shown that the vast majority of land that has been submitted to the process is greenfield. Although the plan will always try to allocate brownfield land wherever possible it does need to be acknowledged that a significant lack of brownfield land has been identified as being available.

Alongside this is the viability and deliverability issues which arise regarding the development of brownfield sites which can be impacted upon due to the often complicated constraints and legacy which can be experienced. This has an impact on where these sites can be delivered and is discussed further in the viability section below.

Whilst brownfield land will be sought for allocation where possible and development supported on wherever possible it needs to be acknowledged that this will not always be possible.

It is also noted that there is a need to protect the finite resource of agricultural land. The spatial strategy will seek to reduce any loss of the highest quality resource and locate development in areas of lower or no classification. Any areas which are proposed in higher grade land will need to meet the national policy requirements for the use of agricultural land.

3.9 Viability and Market Areas

A high level viability assessment has been undertaken by Avison Young on behalf of RCTCBC. The report provides a general viability review of residential developments across RCT and examines the potential barriers to development. It also assists in the

consideration of where the provision of affordable housing should be realistically anticipated.

The assessment breaks the County Borough into four zones derived from the Council's Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) areas: Zone 1a (Rhondda Fach and Rhondda Fawr valleys), 1b (Cynon valley), 2 (Central), and 3 (South). The assessment then considers brownfield and greenfield sites of varying sizes, ranging from 10 unit sites, 25 unit sites, 50 unit sites, and 100 unit sites.

The report suggests that viability is largely effected by differing sales values achievable across the County Borough, due to factors such as proximity to public transport routes, and accessibility to Cardiff and main roads. It also notes that each site can differ significantly in terms of potential for additional unknown costs, such as land contamination and topography, and that the report should therefore be considered as a generic assessment of viabilities across the four zones.

The assessment found that greenfield sites in Zones 1a and 1b will be potentially unviable, even before additional factors are included, if they are smaller to mid-sized schemes. Larger schemes in these zones could, however, be viable for development while being policy compliant. Brownfield sites in Zones 1a and 1b were found to be largely unviable for all sized schemes, if forced to be current LDP policy compliant.

On the other hand, the assessment determined that both brownfield and greenfield sites within Zones 2 and 3 of 25 or more units are likely to be largely viable and policy compliant.

This has a real impact on where development can realistically be expected and delivered.

3.10 Local Housing Market Assessment Review (LHMA) Draft Findings 2024

The development plans manual sets out the need and importance for an LHMA to support the RLDP specifically the spatial strategy because its value that it identifies a level of housing need, per annum, both numerically and spatially. For this paper it's the spatial element that will be the focus drawing out where the need is.

In summary the LHMA identifies that demand in the Taf area is relatively higher than across the rest of the locality. Price to income ration here is far greater across this area rendering affordability more of a significant issue with some areas in the southern part of RCT are twice as expensive as areas in the north. Whilst other areas of the County Borough have a lower demand such as the north, there is evidence of housing market 'hotspots'.

The spatial option therefore should look to help achieve affordable housing in the areas of need identified by the LHMA.

3.11 Integrated Sustainability Appraisal (ISA)

As part of the process of preparing the RLDP an Integrated Sustainability Appraisal (ISA) is required. This appraises all aspects of the RLDP against the objectives of the ISA which ensure the plan is sustainable and environmentally responsible. In the case of RCT the ISA also appraises against other things such as health, the Welsh language and equality. Each option that has been proposed has been assessed by the ISA and the overall outcome included under the analysis of each option below. An ISA appraisal for the options can be found in Appendix 3 at the end of this paper.

As the ISA Objectives have been used for the RLDP Objectives the analysis undertaken by the ISA has been used as the assessment of the Objectives against the Spatial Options. However, the 3 additional Objectives that the RLDP has identified have been assessed and are included under each Option in addition.

As part of the RLDP process all options have to be assessed against the ISA. Under each option below a short synopsis of the assessments have been included along with a narrative which form parts of the concluding comments. The full assessment can be viewed in the ISA Report for the Preferred Strategy.

4.0 RLDP Spatial Strategy Options

4.1 Introduction

The RLDP needs to be informed by evidence. The above sections identify the relevant evidence used to inform the Spatial Strategy. From this a series of options have been derived. The options for the Spatial Strategy need to be realistic and deliverable and they also need to support national, regional and Local policy and aims. Importantly the options need to support the delivery of the objectives set out for the RLDP.

The following spatial options have been considered:

4.2 Option 1: Continuation of the current LDP Strategy

As this is a review of the current LDP it is necessary to look at the current spatial strategy to see if it is still relevant and correct in its totality or in some of its elements. The current strategy has been monitored and reported on annually and therefore there is data to establish what strategy elements have worked well and what elements have not.

In general, the strategy's performance over the plan period has seen mixed success with some elements arguably working and others not. The full analysis of the strategy is set out in the Council's review report which forms part of the RLDP evidence base. This strategy option assesses what would happen if we continued to use the current strategy and is based on the trends that have been seen over the plan period. It is worth noting that this paper only assesses the spatial element of the strategy, the whole strategy is a much wider picture.

What is the current LDP strategy?

The current LDP strategy is a combined Growth and Local needs strategy:

Growth- Concentration of growth in several key areas which could provide benefits of scale in terms of infrastructure improvements and enhance existing communities by provision of an appropriate mix of uses. Such sustainable and planned growth was also hoped to assist in achieving regeneration objectives by focussing growth in locations where wider benefits were more likely to occur.

Local need- This option concentrated on addressing development needs of each individual settlement which it was hoped would create a dispersed form of growth. This option mirrored previous local plans where allocations were made to reflect the size and scale of the settlement patterns.

The combination of the above was created due to the acknowledgement that due to constraints such as landform and topography the growth scenario alone might be difficult to apply to valleys areas where there are limited opportunities for lateral expansion of settlements. It encouraged sustainable growth with large scale development where possible and expansion of individual settlements where this was

not achievable, support for town centres and retail and less pressure on environmentally sensitive areas.

Spatial elements of the current strategy

In order to achieve the objectives of the plan as part of the strategy there were a number of spatial elements.

North/ South split strategy areas

Firstly, it was obvious that there was a fundamental difference between the northern parts of the County Borough and the southern. Evidence suggested that the north was suffering population loss and high levels of dereliction, a need for regeneration of these areas. The south was suffering overdevelopment and significant pressure for further development. Therefore, the strategy aimed to have a differing approach north and south.

Northern Strategy Area (central and northern valleys) the LDP sought to:

- Halt the process of decline by stimulating growth in the housing and employment markets.
- Removing dereliction, and
- Supporting services in important urban centres.

Southern Strategy Area the aim was to:

- Manage growth sustainably by balancing housing and commercial development with social and environmental considerations.

The spatial element of the strategy recognised that a one size fits all approach would not work for the County Borough as there were too many differences between the northern area of RCT and the south. Therefore 2 strategy area approaches were adopted.

The northern strategy area covers the Rhondda and Cynon Valleys and the southern strategy area which covers the Taf Ely area. In these strategy areas a differing policy approach was adopted including differing requirements for affordable housing for example.

Settlement boundaries

As part of the differing approaches to each strategy area a different approach to settlement boundaries was used. In the southern strategy areas due to ever increasing pressure on the natural environment and greenfield land a fixed settlement boundary was set to prevent sprawl and loss of the open countryside.

In the northern strategy area (with the exception of Aberdare) a flexible settlement boundary was used to recognise the fact that there was less developable land in this area but still a need and desire for development. Aberdare was an exception to the flexible settlement boundary as there had been a significant amount of development over recent years in the area that had not been matched with appropriate social

infrastructure, therefore, to avoid further pressure the settlement boundary was fixed to allow for a more balanced approach to this area.

Strategic Sites

Evidence collected at the time identified the presence of a number of large brownfield sites which had an industrial legacy in most part and were in desperate need of remediation for the benefit of the communities in which they were situated and the potential wider benefit they could achieve.

The current strategy allocated 8 of these Strategic Sites which it was felt could offer large scale regeneration opportunities on brownfield land and achieve a number of benefits. These were mixed use and accounted for a large amount of the housing requirement, these were also spread around the County Borough being in both the northern and southern strategy areas.

Settlement Hierarchy: Principal Towns, Key Settlements and Smaller Settlements

In order to assess where growth was to be achieved in addition to the Strategic Sites a settlement hierarchy assessment was undertaken which identified those areas that were capable of accommodating growth and indeed those which were not. Development allocations were located proportionately around these areas dependent on their size and the role and function of the settlement. These were categorised as Principal Towns, Key Settlements and smaller settlements. The strategy seeks to locate development around these areas in order to support their position on the settlement hierarchy with the largest development located in the most sustainable Principal Towns.

Brownfield land

Overall, the current spatial strategy recognises that it is preferential to have a brownfield first approach as per national policy both at the time and indeed now. However, the strategy was also realistic regarding the barriers to this due to the legacy of the past this would not always be possible. Therefore, where possible a brownfield approach to development was taken but with the acknowledgment that there inevitably would need to be appropriate greenfield releases. Therefore, the allocations of the plan are on both brown and green field land.

Advantages and Disadvantages

With this strategy option we are in the unique position of knowing how it has performed rather than having to predict the advantages and disadvantages. The 'aims and objectives' of the strategy were set out in the preferred strategy, these are the advantages with the actual 'outcomes' being the disadvantages or achievements:

Aims and Objectives	Outcomes
Promotes sustainable regeneration	Approximately delivered half of the required amount of housing. However more recent Welsh Government population projections of 2014 indicated we were building in line with that more correct population forecast and the associated housing need.
Halts the process of decline by stimulating growth in the housing and employment markets in the north	Less than half of the overall delivery on allocated housing and employment sites
Removing dereliction in the north through the allocation of numerous brownfield sites	Significant under delivery of Strategic Sites, particularly the more contaminated/constrained brownfield sites.
Supporting services in important urban centres in the north.	Over reliance on brownfield allocated sites
Manage growth by balancing housing and commercial development pressure with social and environmental considerations in the south.	High delivery of windfall sites particularly in the Cynon and Taf Valley -
Encourage development in the Principal Towns and Key Settlements to help regeneration and also encourage growth in the most sustainable locations.	Over the current plan period, Development has come forward in earnest around Aberdare, Llanharan, Tonyrefail, outlying villages of Pontypridd and Llantrisant/Talbot Green in more recent times. However, very limited development in the Rhondda Valleys

As stated above, during the life of the current plan the AMR's have tracked how the strategy has performed against its objectives.

In assessing this strategy option, we have to establish what elements of the strategy have worked and could be kept and indeed what hasn't worked and needs to be changed. It is also sensible at this point to establish what trends have been seen which could be extrapolated over the new plan period indicating the direction of travel for spatial development in the years after plan adoption.

Analysis

In assessing the current spatial strategy its elements listed above have been assessed in their component parts however it should be remembered that the overall strategy is much wider than simply the spatial element and therefore the performance of the strategy should be looked at as a whole which can be viewed in the review report.

As well as looking at how the strategy has performed against the objectives set out in the current LDP it is necessary when preparing the spatial strategy to look at whether the current spatial strategy meets the new objectives set out for the RLDP.

The review report and AMR's provide the full picture and analysis of the plan's performance this report will summarise the spatial elements of the strategy.

North/ South Strategy Split

The strategy to have differing approaches in the north and south of RCT was based on the very different characteristics and issues which are faced by each area. The north was characterised by deprivation, depopulation, and a very real need for regeneration. The south faced real pressures for development of greenfield land eroding the countryside and causing environmental problems.

The evidence suggests that there has been some success with this split strategy approach. Both strategy areas continued to grow throughout the plan period with a healthy overall growth of housing. In addition to this there has been a balanced split of development of housing between the north and the south in line with what the strategy hoped to achieve. There have been some years in the plan period where the growth in the north has surpassed the south. This would suggest that this element of the strategy is showing some success.

Moreover there is still clear evidence which has arisen to suggest that there is still very much a need to have a split strategy area approach to the preferred strategy. This has been clear from collation of the baseline data such as the WIMD which very clearly highlights the differences between the two areas. Likewise the viability and deliverability of both areas is significantly different with the south being far more viable and deliverable than most areas of the north some of which show no viability. This was also supported by the results of the Visioning engagement process where the differences were referenced on numerous occasions.

However, the lack of viability does not mean there is no demand, to the contrary it is felt that there is a high level of demand for growth in these areas as witnessed through high numbers of homebuyers queuing for newly release homes outside estate agents. The issue in supplying greater growth in the north is lack of appropriate land.

Over all it can be concluded that on evidence and data alone there should still be a divided strategy area approach to the RLDP with the unique characteristics of each areas considered. This may not be as clear cut as a North/South approach, however, with some element of both areas fairing better than others.

Settlement boundaries

As set out above the approach to the north and south in terms of settlement boundaries reflected the issues of each area. In the north little land to expand outwards due to constrained valley floors and topography made it difficult to allocate all the land needed

to meet local need. Therefore a flexible settlement boundary was used to provide the opportunity for sites of up to 10 dwellings to come forward.

In the south the issues faced were over development and environmental issues caused by this. Therefore a fixed settlement boundary was used.

The fixed settlement boundary in the south it is argued has worked. During the plan period there has been very little development outside of these boundaries with many approaches and applications determined not to be appropriate or necessary during the plan period. Some more major allocations have since successfully come forward in recent years. There has been very little SINC, green wedge and SLA has been lost through the plan period also. The Northern flexible settlement boundary has seen some applications approved outside of it but not to the extent that you can necessarily rely on it as the sole method of housing delivery in the north.

Allocations

Overall, the plan did not meet the housing requirement figure set out. This is seen to be due to a number of reasons including an unforeseen outcome of the financial crash in 2008.

In the northern strategy area by 2019, 19 allocations had either been implemented, subject to planning consent or part of the allocation has been permitted. This equated to 42% of all 45 Strategic Sites, residential, employment, retail and transportation allocations.

In the Southern Strategy Area 21 allocations had either been implemented, subject to planning consent or part of the allocation has been permitted. This equated to 55% of all 38 Strategic Site, residential, employment, retail and transportation allocations.

When looking at this in relation to the spatial strategy it does appear that more allocations in the south were delivered than in the north. However, when looking at all development over this period it can be argued that the north has achieved an increase in development overall.

Therefore, it can be argued that there have been difficulties in delivering many of the allocations in both areas to some extent. In the south however evidence suggests that there is viable, deliverable and available land for development. This is supported by the call for Candidate Sites for the Revised LDP which saw the vast majority of sites submitted were located in the south.

In the north very few of the allocations came forward. Having had viability work completed on these current allocations it is clear that many of the sites are not viable or deliverable. There were however a number of non-allocated sites developed in the north during the plan period. These were 'windfall' sites and mainly Council owned releases. This includes those that were released due to school's reorganisation.

Therefore, in terms of allocations and their locations it is clear to see that much of the South of RCT would tend to be more viable and deliverable for growth, albeit many sites have been a lot slower to come forward than expected. However, as the issues

and subsequent objectives suggest there is a real need to balance any development with sustainability, environmental protection and to the need to reduce the reliance on private motor vehicles.

In the north it may be the case that allocating at any significant scale in many areas including the Rhondda Valleys is not viable or deliverable. A different approach may be required in this area than just allocating new land for development. The reliance on recent windfall site for numbers holds some risk as it is unlikely that windfall to this scale would be realised again. The windfall process itself is difficult to quantify as they are unknown sites. It is also fair to conclude that after discussions and assessment of available Council land, there is little coming forward in terms of reorganisation etc.

Overall allocations in the south in the right place are still a realistic spatial element, however the approach in the north due to viability and deliverability will need further consideration.

Principle Towns, Key Settlements and Smaller Settlements

The strategy to locate development around the areas identified in the settlement hierarchy has worked well with the hierarchies of these areas being supported.

The review report states that since the adoption of the LDP in 2011, an average of 99.46% of all houses, 93.34% of all employment and 99.5% of all retail permissions granted, were in sustainable locations.

The settlement hierarchy has been reviewed and the hierarchy identifies the most sustainable places able to accommodate growth. This approach of growing the most sustainable areas and have a town centre first approach as set out in national policy is directly supported by continuing to develop around the hierarchy set out in the plan. This should continue to be part of the approach to a spatial strategy.

Strategic Sites

The current strategy relies heavily on the success of the 8 strategic sites. It can be argued that although the allocated for the right reasons which haven't changed, the overall delivery of this strategy element hasn't worked.

Llanilid in the south is currently being delivered and is successful. Development has recently begun on Cefn yr Hendy, both of these sites are in the south. These are high demand and market areas both close to the M4 corridor. In the north Aberdare hospital/Robertstown is currently benefitting from investment and outside funding from WG which is allowing it's development to soon come forward, whilst significant new employment units have recently been built in Roberstown. The employment element of the Tower, Hirwaun site has been remediated in preparation for the future development it is allocated for, following the opencast mining there.

There has been very little progress on most other strategic sites to date. One reason for the unsuccessful delivery of some of these sites is due to the difficulties in viability and the amount of work and investment needed to bring the sites forward. It can be argued that if a Key/ strategic site was to be looked at for the RLDP it would be most

realistic in the south of RCT. Particularly so for housing. Any Key site in the north which had significant numbers of houses attributed to it would need to be thoroughly evidenced.

Although some of the more difficult strategic sites have not been able to come forward there is still merit in seeking remediation of these sites which have an industrial legacy, for the benefit of the existing communities and the regeneration benefits this could bring. E.g. the former Cwm Coking Works and Phurnacite sites, Maerdy and Former Fernhill Colliery. This would require intervention in the form of funding, and therefore it would not be prudent to count any housing on these sites in the requirement figure but to include them in the plan for regeneration or other uses such as tourism purposes.

Brownfield land

Considerable success has also been achieved in determining applications on brownfield land. In all but two years since the adoption of the plan permission for over half of all development has been on brownfield land, with the highest figures seen in 2014-2015 and 2018-2019 for 78% and 72% respectively. As stated above the RLDP acknowledges the need to choose brownfield land to develop before greenfield, however it needs to be acknowledged that there is a significant lack of brownfield land promoted for development as supported by the candidate sites which have been submitted. There is also significant issues with the delivery of brownfield land witnessed in RCT due to a lack of viability particularly in the north which is also supported by the viability assessment.

Overall, this strategy option has seen some successes but due to the failure to deliver it cannot be taken forward as a whole for a number of reasons. The strategic sites element of the strategy which saw 8 of these located in both the northern and southern strategy areas did not deliver the required growth. This was due to the constrained nature of many of them and the viability and deliverability issues which result from this. It maybe possible to have one or two key sites but these will need to be in the south of RCT and proven viable and deliverable. It is also fair to say that the spread of allocations throughout the County Borough to support the growth of individual settlements also did not work. This is mostly in the north where windfall development did deliver growth, although allocations did not. There are also issues with land availability for this element of the strategy as there is no land to deliver this, particularly in the north.

However, there are some elements of the strategy that could be retained for the RLDP. There is still sufficient evidence that a one size fits all strategy approach is not suitable due to the stark differences between the north and the south of RCT. Therefore a split strategy approach is needed. It is also still appropriate based on the reviewed settlement hierarchy report to try and focus growth around these existing settlements in proportion to their size.

In terms of national policy overall the strategy performs well. The strategy seeks ambitious growth in line with the location in a growth area. It is a sustainable growth strategy which seeks to grow close to existing settlements with tightly draw settlement

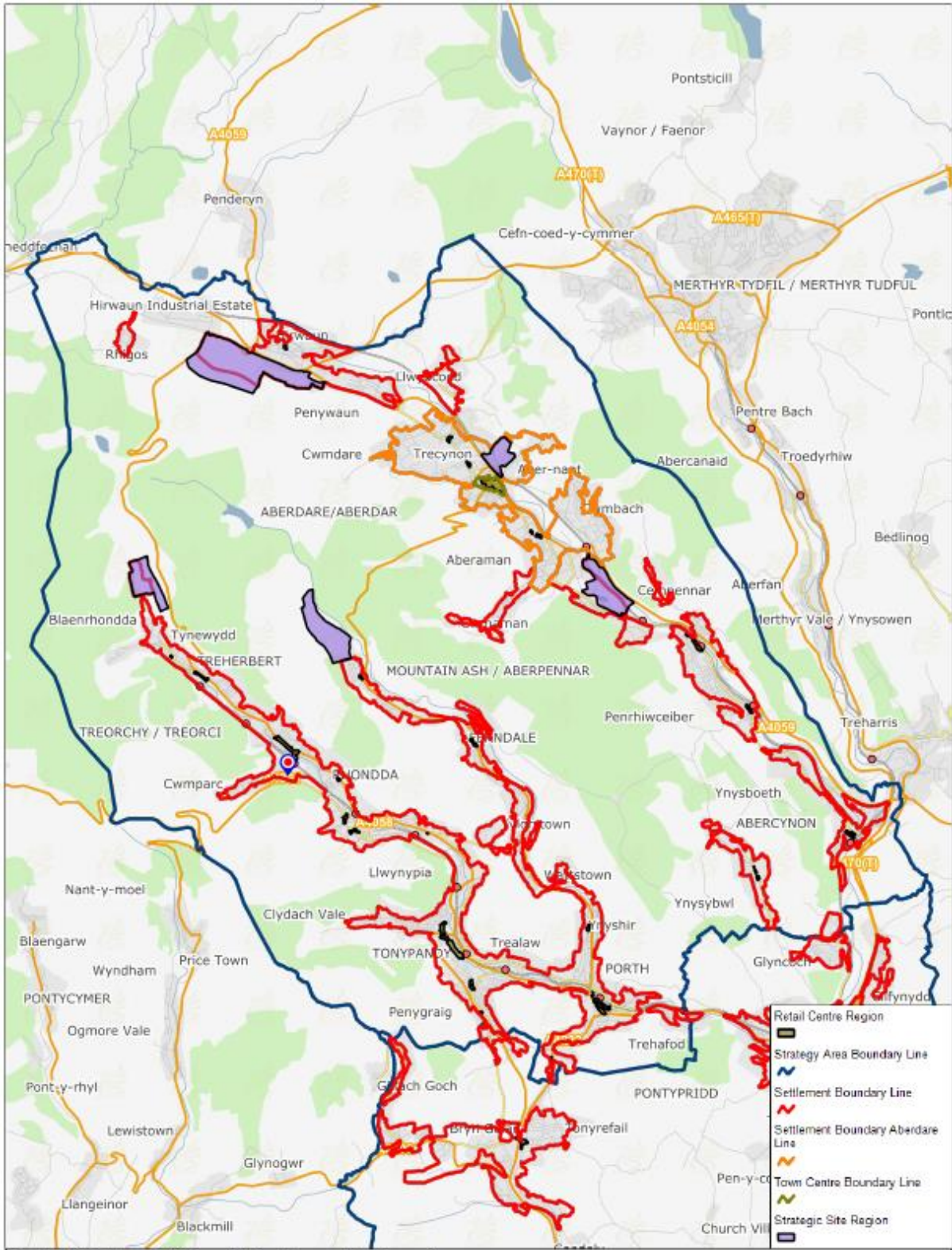
boundaries in the south to prevent environmental degradation. The overall placemaking aims of the strategy also support the NDF.

The strategy sets a clear goal of locating development in sustainable locations and therefore supported the climate change agenda, however it is felt that this could be even stronger in the RLDP. Arguably some of the allocations in the plan could be in more sustainable locations which could be rectified by the RLDP.

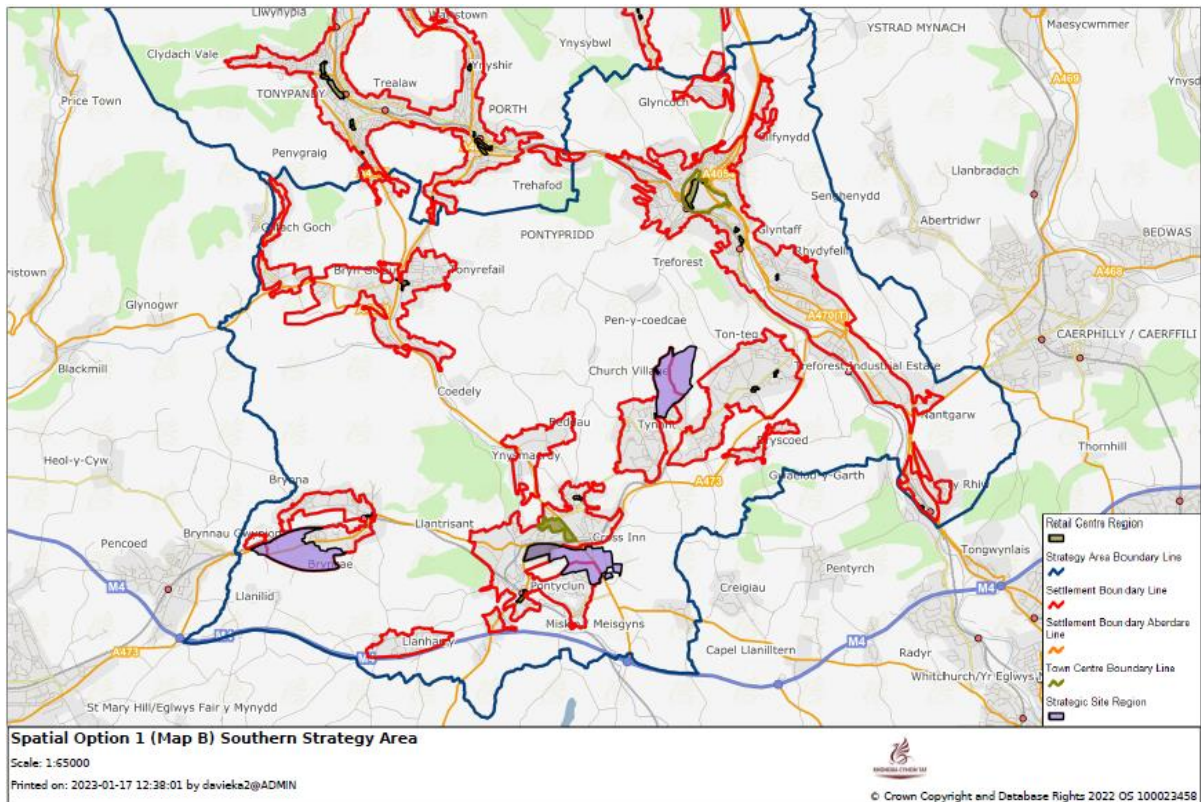
Summary of the Integrated Sustainability Appraisal (ISA) of the Option against the RLDP Objectives (which may be seen in more detail in Appendix 3)

The results of the formal ISA for objectives 1-15 are as follows. For option 1 the outcomes were mixed with minor positive affects being seen for objectives 3 (vibrant communities), 4 (healthy and safe lifestyles) and 5 (reduce the need to travel), 14 (sustainable economy) and 15 (jobs) linked to the location of development in line with the settlement hierarchy. There were no significant positives from the assessment. To the contrary this option saw a number of minor negative effects with notably significant negatives in relation to objectives 1 (Climate change and flood risk) due to many of the principal towns and key settlements being at risk of flooding and the loss of large areas of greenfield land. The option also performs poorly under the housing objective assessed as a significant negative. The poor delivery of allocated housing sites under this option and demonstrates an unsustainable reliance on windfall sites. This under delivery could continue under this option.

Assessment of LDP Objectives 16 Promote vibrant, adaptable and resilient Town centres, 17 address the impacts of the mining legacy in RCT and 18 To support the growth of the tourism and leisure sector (which are not included in the ISA process raise the following points; This option promotes development in line with the settlement hierarchy which would have a positive effect on town centres. The strategies use of brownfield land would also have a positive effect on addressing the mining legacy as many of the brownfield areas which would form part of this option are associated with a mining legacy. In terms of tourism the strategy is seen to have a neutral impact although the continued support of the town centres leisure and tourism may increase due to increased footfall. Regeneration of brownfield sites could improve the natural environment in many areas of the County Borough and could also include leisure and tourism uses on them.



Spatial Option 1 (Map A) Northern Strategy Area
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4.3 Option 2: Strategic Highway Network considering the Principal Towns

This option which has been formulated for consideration for the purposes of the Revised LDP, focusses on locating growth around the strategic highway networks of the M4, A470 and A465. This happens to correlate with the three Principal Towns of Llantrisant/Talbot Green, Pontypridd, and Aberdare respectively.

Key Elements

- Target development around the M4 corridor in order to maximise house building which offers a range of house types and affordable housing.
- Target development in close proximity to the A470 and A465 corridors in order to support ongoing regeneration in the area. In this location, it should also align with the development of the Metro.
- Supports the considerable investment in the dualling of the A465
- Encourage development which supports the regeneration of the Principal Towns.

Why has this option been considered?

There is evidence to suggest that development in these areas would be beneficial in a number of ways, taking each area in turn:

M4 corridor- This area is arguably the most marketable and in-demand area in RCT. The location close to Cardiff with more competitive land values means it is a strong

area for employment options with good strategic road links. The area in general, being focussed around M4 junctions 34 and 35, being Llantrisant/ Talbot Green and Llanharan, also has a very good offer of services and facilities alongside.

Development here has a proven track record of delivery. Alongside the above the Candidate Site process has seen the greatest number of sites being promoted in this area. Viability work has shown that the land is viable and deliverable with a healthy market demand. The Draft LHMA has shown that in this area there is an affordable housing need. The land in the area is mostly greenfield and coupled with the land values developments will be able to deliver the most for the communities.

Evidence in the demographics paper has also shown that RCT loses population, the most via outmigration to Bridgend suggesting that there is seen to be a lack of options in RCT. It is considered that development here could halt this. There is already a successful strategic site underway in this area.

A465 corridor- This strategic corridor is undergoing considerable change at present with the dualling of the A465. The hope in this area is that with the new road in place it will encourage further investment in the area which already, it is argued, is well placed to bring together housing and employment opportunities. This is supported by a large mixed site which is now available for development on the old Tower Colliery site in Hirwaun.

Development here would also be supported by plans to extend the passenger rail network to Hirwaun which would further connect the top area of this corridor to the Principal Town of Aberdare. Aberdare and surrounding area has an abundance of services and facilities and has seen much investment over recent years. There is also proven records of delivery and very high demand for new housing which has been seen via the release of the Council owned ex school sites over recent years.

The new focus on tourism in the area which has been supported by Zipworld, the continuing success of the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park and the Dare Valley Country Park, for example, would provide the further employment opportunities which could be sensibly coupled with further housing and maintaining population levels in the area.

A470 - The A470 corridor has always been an important route for RCT. This link provides access to and from Cardiff and also Caerphilly and Merthyr.

The area is home to the Principal Town/Settlement of Pontypridd which has begun a transformation over recent years seeing such developments as Llys Cadwyn, the national Lido of Wales and the redevelopment of the YMCA. Further proposals are planned for this area. This area has been further supported by Future Wales which identifies Pontypridd specifically as a regional growth area.

Alongside this is the planned Metro hub in Pontypridd which will see a train to Cardiff every 10 minutes with reduced travel time. This, it is argued, will further the demand for homes in this area becoming even more attractive to commuters to Cardiff.

The corridor also has Treforest industrial estate, the Council's prime employment site which offers a vast array of employment opportunities. It is therefore sensible to

provide homes to match these opportunities. Alongside this is the University of South Wales which also supports employment and skills.

Advantage and Disadvantages

Advantages	Disadvantages
Viable and deliverable sites available for development in most areas.	Could rely heavily on greenfield land
Proven record of delivery in most of these areas.	Lack of sustainability in some of the strategy area
Ability to provide affordable housing in an area with affordable housing need.	Lack of land in some areas which would be limiting in terms of allowing for a higher level growth option
Maximise the advantage of the areas of RCT with good access to key nationally strategic highways in the M4, A465 and A470. Also maximise the benefits of the massive Welsh Government investment in the A465 in recent years.	Limited consideration for growth in the Rhondda Valleys and Tonyrefail.
Maximise the impact of the regeneration and investment in tourism in the Cynon Valley	Principle of a highway network based strategy possibly considered unsustainable.
Help to prevent out-migration/out-commuting to areas such as Bridgend.	

Analysis

This strategy would see development focussed on along and land close to the strategic highway network of the M4, A470 and A465 corridors. This option has a number of advantages and disadvantages. There is a risk with this option that it could appear to be a road-based strategy contrary to national policy and the recent road's view process and will encourage car use locating development on these corridors. Whilst it is true that some of the areas along these corridors do not perform particularly well in sustainability terms, these corridors also correlate with some of the more built-up areas of the County Borough including the Principal Towns where there is good access to services, facilities and public transport.

There is concern that some areas of the strategy area would not accord with national policy due to a lack of public transport, this is the case mainly for the M4 corridor which is mostly car dependent. The other corridors A465 and A470 do have access to public transport hubs in Aberdare and Pontypridd with good public transport both up and down the valleys. Although not in place yet, the Metro development will further improve the public transport options. Therefore, if the sites chosen for this option are carefully managed it would still be possible to locate development in sustainable locations which support the Principal Towns.

The strategy option performs poorly in relation to the biodiversity and air quality Objectives. There are a number of environmental designations at both local and national, and international level in these corridors which may be affected by this option.

Likewise there are a number of AQMA's in the area, development along these would exacerbate the air pollution problem and impact on health.

The option correlates with the 3 Principal Towns in the settlement hierarchy and by focussing development here would support these to perform their role and function meeting a number of the RLDP objectives. There are also advantages of maximising the investment being seen on these corridors as set out above.

This option aims to locate economic growth to maximise potential benefits associated with ease of access to the strategic road network. The M4 is in demand and there are competitive land values. This option offers the opportunity to build on this. The A465 corridor is undergoing considerable change at present with the dualling of the A465. This means that the area may be well placed to see further investment. The A470 corridor provides access to and from Cardiff, Caerphilly, and Merthyr. The area is home to the Principal Town of Pontypridd which has begun a transformation over recent years seeing such developments as Llys Cadwyn, the national Lido of Wales and the redevelopment of the YMCA to generate strong economic gain. Further developments are planned for this area. The corridor also has Treforest industrial estate, the Council's prime employment site which offers a vast array of employment opportunities. Alongside this is the University of South Wales which also supports employment and skills. This option therefore offers very good opportunities to build on the economic potential of these highways corridors, and would result in development being fairly broadly distributed throughout the north and south of RCT. This would support the aims and strategies of the Council.

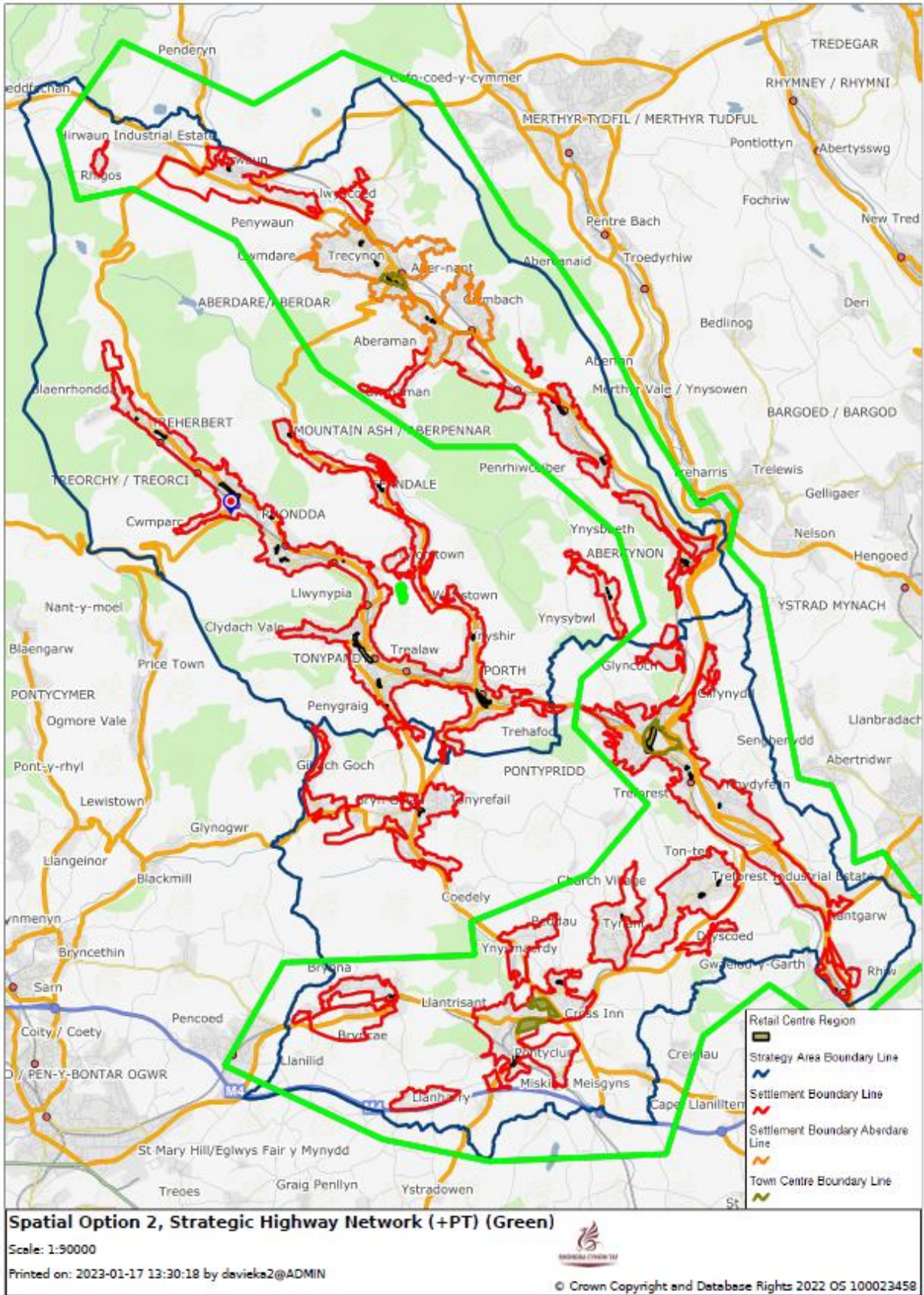
There is a proven track record of delivery of housing and high levels of demand (particularly around the M4 corridor) in these areas. The RLDP Candidate Sites process has seen the greatest number of sites being promoted in the M4 corridor. It is therefore likely that this option would enable the delivery of sites, including affordable housing in the areas of great need and would therefore support the LHMA. This would also mean that this option would see unbalanced growth with a heavy reliance on the M4 corridor. This would put pressure on an area which has already seen much growth in recent years and suffers with environmental issues.

Summary of the Integrated Sustainability Appraisal (ISA) of the Option against the RLDP Objectives (which may be seen in more detail in Appendix 3)

The results of the formal ISA for objectives 1-15 are as follows. The results for option 2 saw a significant positive effect on objective 14 (sustainable economy). This option offers very good opportunities to build on the economic potential of the stated highways corridors, and would result in development being fairly broadly distributed throughout the north and south of RCT. A significant positive effect is therefore likely. A minor positive is predicted for objective 3 (vibrant communities) due to the location of development being around already built-up areas with access to services and facilities. Significant negative effects were seen for objectives 8 (landscape) due to the location of development abutting the SLAs and also potential to affect the setting of the Bannau Brycheiniog National Park. Objective 11 air quality also has a significant negative affect due to potentially encouraging car use and the potential to increase air

pollution. Objective 12 efficient use of land soils and minerals also has a significant negative effect due to the potential loss of agricultural land and greenfield land.

Assessment of LDP Objectives 16 Promote vibrant, adaptable and resilient Town centres,¹⁷ address the impacts of the mining legacy in RCT and 18 To support the growth of the tourism and leisure sector (which are not included in the ISA process) have been incorporated into the analysis section above where applicable.



4.4 Option 3: Town Centre First

This strategy option which has been formulated for consideration for the purposes of the Revised LDP, would see a town centre first approach to the location of development.

Key Elements:

- This option will identify development sites which are in close proximity to the Principal Towns and Key Settlements as set out in the settlement hierarchy.
- Use a sequential approach to locating development.
- Promote sustainable travel by locating development close to public transport.
- Locate development close to employment opportunities, services and facilities to achieve sustainable living and modal shift.
- The principles of appropriate Placemaking can be best achieved.

Why has this option been considered?

This option has been considered firstly as it is the preferred approach set out in the NDF and echoed through policy in PPW. LDP's have to be in general conformity with national policy. Town/ commercial centres are the most sustainable places to locate development. There is a greater level of access to employment, services, facilities, and public transport on the doorstep. This reduces the need to travel by private vehicle which supports national aims and local aims of helping to tackle the climate change emergency and seeing a modal shift in transport modes. There is a desire in RCT to regenerate our town centres with the Council's regeneration team seeing many successes over recent years. By locating growth around existing centres this will further support this aim.

Advantages and Disadvantages

Advantages	Disadvantages
Supports the Future Wales National Development Framework	Lack of land in most town centres which would be very limiting in terms of allowing for a higher level growth option
Encourages sustainability	Not all areas with town centres have transport hubs particularly in the south-west of the County Borough.
Helps address climate change	Many parts of several of our town centres are subject to flooding which would constrain development opportunities
Reduces the need to travel	Potential to overlook good sites in other locations.
Supports the town centres	Costs (including public sector), related to redevelopment which inevitably would be required
Utilises the current settlement hierarchy and produces an efficient growth pattern	There is a significant risk that our housing need would not be met

Analysis

This option importantly accords with national policy and specifically policies in Future Wales which seek a town centre first approach to locating development. It accords with the national placemaking outcomes and is arguably one of the most sustainable options. It would also accord with national policy in changing the way traditional Town centres are seen, moving to a more mixed use and flexible approach where they can become more of a commercial hub. This option also very much supports the Council's agenda of continuing to regenerate and further improve its town centres, building on the excellent work that has been undertaken in Pontypridd, Porth and Aberdare and continuing to do this by supporting the regeneration strategies in place for others.

This option performs well under the RLDP objectives overall. This option directs new development where possible to town centres. However, many of these centres including Aberdare and Pontypridd are identified areas of high flood risk and have experienced this in recent years. By further intensifying these urban areas there is a risk of increasing flood risk due to increase surface water runoff. This however could be mitigated potentially through the inclusion of green space within these centres which would have a multifaceted benefit. Focusing development in town centres allows for greater use of brownfield land and for a more sustainable strategy reducing the need to travel in general as services and facilities are close to new development but also encouraging the use of more sustainable modes of transport which is available in the majority of town centres. However, it could have a negative impact on those settlements without a town centre and not meet needs in these areas.

In terms of housing this option presents fundamental issues with delivery of the housing required due to land availability. The results of the Candidate Sites process has shown a distinct lack of sites submitted in Town Centre areas or on the periphery of them. An urban capacity study also demonstrates a lack of large-scale sites available. This is even the case for Council owned land which was scrutinised during the Candidate Site process. Therefore, there is a real risk that there would be a lack of land available to deliver this option. This is further exacerbated as discussed above by the flood risk in these areas.

In order to see what the housing delivery was like in town centres, average trends over the plan period were also looked at. It showed that delivery of residential development in these areas is much too low to deliver the amount of housing required for the growth.

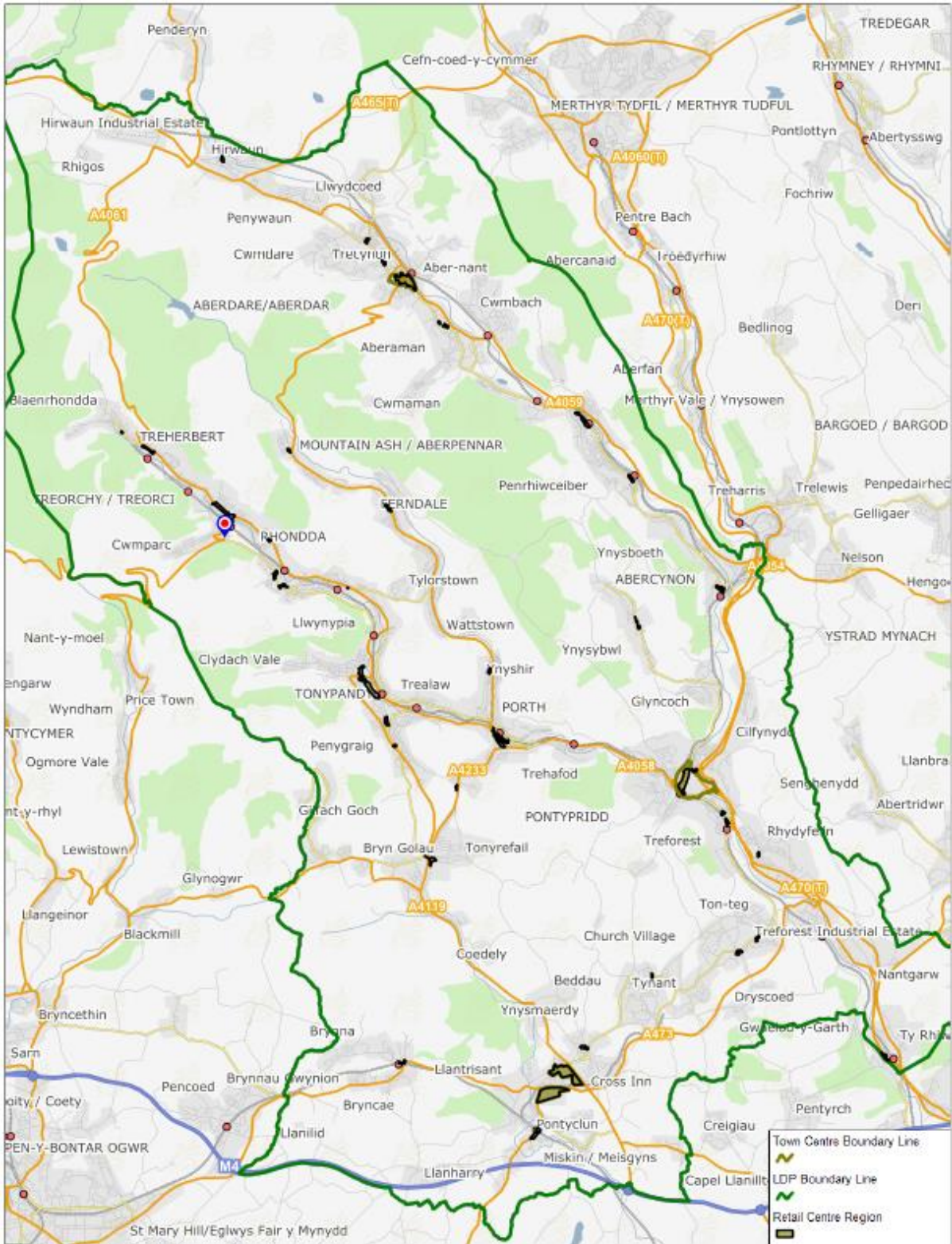
This option should offer good opportunities to also draw development into some of the more deprived areas of RCT and to distribute the benefits of development throughout different parts of the County Borough. However, opportunities to deliver development to support the economy in more rural areas would be more limited.

Sustainable urban development focussed in the Town Centres would mean that more people are able to access jobs in those areas, including via sustainable modes of transport. New residents may also have access to sustainable transport links in other locations to access employment opportunities elsewhere.

Summary of the Integrated Sustainability Appraisal (ISA) of the Option against the RLDP Objectives (which may be seen in more detail in Appendix 3)

The results of the formal ISA for objectives 1-15 are as follows. The results for option 3 saw significantly positive effects for objective 3 vibrant communities due to the location of development being directed to Principal Towns, Key Settlements and town centres. Objective 5 reducing the need to travel was also assessed as a significant positive due to the locations being close to services and facilities and offering sustainable transport options. Objective 12 efficient use of land soils and minerals also sees a significant positive owing to the fact that this option offers the opportunity to use brownfield land. This option also sees minor positives for objective 14 sustainable economy as focussing new development in the town centres should offer excellent opportunities to regenerate those areas, promoting their vitality and viability. This option should offer good opportunities to also draw development into some of the more deprived areas of RCT and to distribute the benefits of development throughout different parts of the County Borough. Objective 15 jobs also saw a minor positive. There was a significant negative effect under objective 2 housing due to the lack of available land.

Assessment of LDP Objectives 16 Promote vibrant, adaptable and resilient Town centres, 17 address the impacts of the mining legacy in RCT and 18 To support the growth of the tourism and leisure sector (which are not included in the ISA process) have been incorporated into the analysis section above where applicable.



Spatial Option 3, Town Centre First

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4.5 Option 4: Southern Growth Strategy

This strategy option which has been formulated for consideration for the purposes of the Revised LDP, focuses on growth in the southern strategy area (Taff Ely area) of the County Borough with a particular focus on the M4 corridor.

Key Elements

- Locate the majority of growth in the south of RCT.
- Development mainly on greenfield release
- Limited growth in the northern areas which just accommodates local need.
- Utilise the settlement hierarchy where possible

Why has this option been considered?

In order to achieve the growth required in any LDP the sites allocated for development and the areas considered suitable for growth have to be deliverable and viable. From the experiences over the current plan period it has become clear that the south of RCT is more viable, deliverable and realistic than the north. This particularly so in relation to private land and allocations. This has also been borne out by the amount of Candidate Sites that have been received in this area in comparison to the north. This strategy would offer a lower element of risk to delivery of the plan. The south of RCT has the highest market demand, land values, developable and less constrained land and the highest level of viability. There is a proven record of delivery and also constant market pressure.

Development here would see a mix and variety of housing compliant with planning obligations including the delivery of affordable housing which is also in demand here.

Advantages and Disadvantages

Advantages	Disadvantages
Viable and deliverable sites available	Over development
Ability to achieve affordable housing in an area which is in need	Environmental issues
Help to halt out-commuting/ migration to Cardiff and Bridgend.	Development on greenfield and high value agricultural land
Proven delivery record and market demand.	Much of the area is heavily car dependant and lacking in sufficient public transport.
Ability to achieve housing numbers	Lack of development and investment in the north
Would allow for a range of housing to be achieved	Competition for housing market and commercial development with NW Cardiff and Bridgend
Continued growth of successful employment areas	

Analysis

This option overall performs well in many aspects but also has some important issues to overcome. Arguably the major positive of this option is that it will clearly be able to deliver the required housing growth as set out by the plan. The south of RCT is the most viable area of RCT and has a proven track record of delivery and demand. It is the only option likely to deliver the housing Objective. Development here would allow for the delivery of affordable housing in an area of need as set out by the Draft LHMA. It would also allow for the delivery of much needed social, community and health infrastructure which was clearly highlighted as an issue that needs addressing in the area. The majority of Candidate Sites received were in this area, these included a number of large sites capable of achieving significant growth. Growth here would support two Principal Towns and would further support and benefit from a thriving employment sector. It is also possible that development here would help prevent commuting to Bridgend and Cardiff although to the contrary these could also be competition for developments in this area.

However, development in this area due to the lack of brownfield land would result in mainly greenfield release. It would also mean a potential lack of growth for the north of RCT and a significant lack of investment often brought by new development and increased population, this strategy therefore would see an undispersed form of growth. Existing services and facilities along with community infrastructure are lacking in the south, further development could exacerbate this, however to the converse there maybe opportunities to secure investment for such infrastructure uses through the allocations.

There is a concern that locating development in the south would encourage car use due to the access to the M4 and other strategic highway networks. There is also a distinct lack of public transport in this area which limits choice and further encourages car use. This would be contrary to national policy.

There is concern that this option could see ecological damage due to the majority of growth being in one area where there are a number of designations as is the concern with the development of agricultural land although these issues could be mitigated, or these sensitive areas avoided as there are more Candidate Sites to consider. There is also the potential to increase traffic emissions on a cumulative basis, with a detrimental impact on air quality. There are also a number of existing AQMAs in the south where existing issues could be compounded.

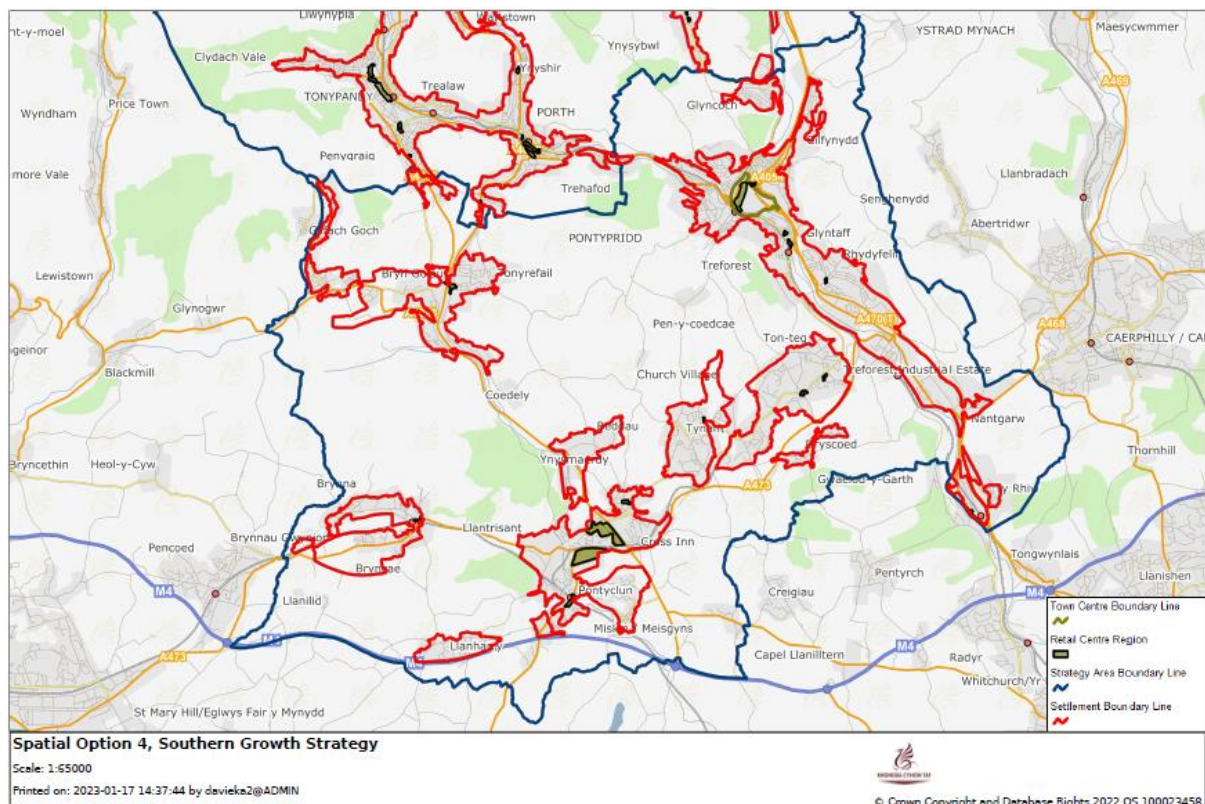
There are currently proposals and associated reports that have sought to improve the public transport infrastructure in the south of the County Borough. Improved bus services have been considered from Bridgend through to Llanharan and Pontypridd and across the central South Wales Valleys. Continued advancement of proposals to bring forward light rail infrastructure from central Cardiff out into north west Cardiff should extend into south east RCT. Consideration is also given to whether further main train line capacity to serve the south west of the County Borough could materialise in the near future.

Development here has the opportunity to build on the convenient location and attract inward investment, this could see further jobs being created for RCT.

Summary of the Integrated Sustainability Appraisal (ISA) of the Option against the RLDP Objectives (which may be seen in more detail in Appendix 3)

The results of the formal ISA for objectives 1-15 are as follows. The results for option 4 show a major negative for objectives 1 Climate change and flooding, objective 5 reduce the need to travel, objective 11 air quality, and objective 12 efficient use of land soils and minerals. An uncertain significant major negative affect for objectives 6 cultural and built heritage and 9 biodiversity of which it is the only option to see a significant negative under this objective. There are no major positive affects for this option but objective 2 housing is a mixed major positive due to the proven delivery of homes in the south and minor negative due to a lack of development in the north. Interestingly this is the only option that sees a significant positive effect achieved for housing.

Assessment of LDP Objectives 16 Promote vibrant, adaptable and resilient Town centres, 17 address the impacts of the mining legacy in RCT and 18 To support the growth of the tourism and leisure sector (which are not included in the ISA process) have been incorporated into the analysis section above where applicable.



4.6 Option 5: Metro and Public Transport Nodes

This spatial strategy option which has been formulated for consideration for the purposes of the Revised LDP.

Key Elements

- Focus development around public transport hubs, corridors and existing stations.
- Maximise development within walking or cycling distance to Metro stations and hubs.
- Seek growth in those areas best served by public transport.
- Support the further improvements in public transport
- Reduce the need to travel by private vehicle.
- The principles of appropriate Placemaking can be best achieved.
- Utilise the settlement hierarchy.

Why has this option been considered?

This option is similar to the town centre first option in as much as the areas which are public transport hubs or have good access to public transport tend to be the area around the town centres. However, there are additional areas in RCT with good public transport links which are outside of these. This option supports national policy including Future Wales and the national transport plan for Wales which seeks more sustainable travel and a modal shift from the private vehicle to more sustainable methods of transport. It is hoped that this option would also maximise the impact that the development of the metro could have and by locating development in these areas it would create an even greater efficient use of land.

Advantages and Disadvantages

Advantages	Disadvantages
Would support sustainable development and climate change	There is insufficient land to meet this strategy option
Would support the modal shift to public transport	May lead to good sites being missed
Would support the growth of the South Wales Metro	Would potentially reduce improvements to the road network by focussing on public transport as car borne traffic will still be generated
Would serve the Rhondda Fawr and Cynon well	Not many opportunities in Taf and Rhondda Fach
Would generally align well with the Town Centres on the existing rail network	Would reduce development opportunities in other areas.
Would generally align with the settlement hierarchy.	

Analysis

This option is similar to the town centre first approach. It would see development located around the new Metro transport and public transport hubs, these are in the main located within or very close to the town centres in RCT. This option actively promotes modal shift and would encourage the reduction in private car use, this option therefore accords with national policy including transport policy.

Given that these hubs are located mainly in and around the town centres this option performs very well in sustainability terms providing access to services and facilities, especially for those who do not have access to a car. The location would also support the continued regeneration of town centres, the introduction of housing to these areas would provide footfall and a mix of uses. This strategy allows for the use of brownfield land to be maximised but there is also concern that in those areas subject to flood risk that this could be further exacerbated through increased urbanisation.

This option would see a more dispersed form of growth that would benefit the north due to its rail line and metro stations; however it could fail to identify good sites that are not so close to Metro or transport hubs such as in the south of RCT. There are also some areas with metro stations and transport hubs which are not located close to existing centres which would reduce the sustainability of locating development here.

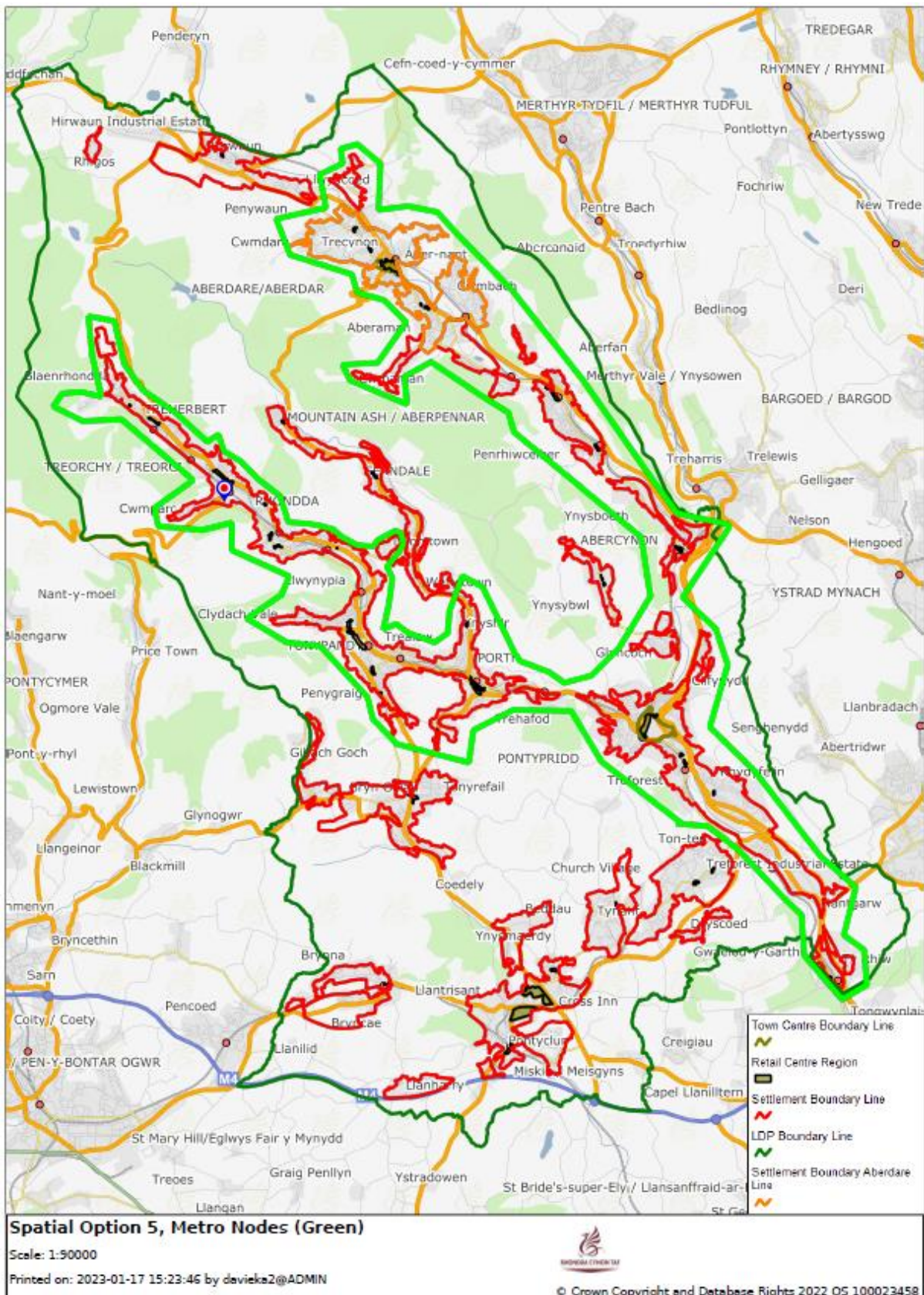
The biggest issue for this strategy option is the availability of land to deliver it. During the Candidate Site process there were very few sites submitted in these areas. Likewise, an urban capacity study undertaken failed to identify sufficient land, particularly large sites to deliver the numbers required. During this study the proposed Metro hubs were specifically looked at to identify any land within acceptable proximity to them. This process didn't find any sites of substantial size to achieve the required growth. The viability study also shows that the north of RCT does not have the viability to accommodate development only on large greenfield sites which are not available in these areas.

Summary of the Integrated Sustainability Appraisal (ISA) of the Option against the RLDP Objectives (which may be seen in more detail in Appendix 3)

The results of the formal ISA for objectives 1-15 are as follows. The results for option 5 show significant positive affects for objectives 3 vibrant communities, 4 healthy and safe lifestyles, 5 reduce the need to travel, 11 air quality, 14 sustainable economy and 15 jobs which is in the most part due to the location close to sustainable transport options. There is a significant negative for objective 2 housing due to the lack of available land for development and an uncertain significant negative for objective 6 heritage and culture. This option offers the most positive effects.

Assessment of LDP Objectives 16 Promote vibrant, adaptable and resilient Town centres, 17 address the impacts of the mining legacy in RCT and 18 To support the

growth of the tourism and leisure sector (which are not included in the ISA process) have been incorporated into the analysis section above where applicable.



4.7 Option 6 Key Strategic Site in the South

This strategy option which has been formulated for consideration for the purposes of the Revised LDP, would see the allocation of a large Key site in the south of the County Borough which would accommodate a significant majority of the new housing development over the plan period.

Key Components:

- Allocate a large Key site in the south
- Majority of the housing apportionment on one site
- Smaller allocations spread through the County Borough to address local need
- Reduce the number of allocated sites overall in the area.
- Potential infrastructure improvements
- Improvements to public transport
- Some smaller allocations in the north and regeneration sites

Why has this option been chosen?

This option has been considered for a number of reasons. As discussed above, the southern area of RCT has been proven to be both viable and deliverable with a genuine market in demand. Having one large site would allow for maximum benefits in terms of planning obligations and would allow for the delivery of necessary infrastructure such as education and affordable housing which there is a high need for in this area which some smaller sites even in accumulation would not.

Due to the pressures and risk of overdevelopment of the south as identified by the issues that have been raised, locating development of a large number of houses on one site rather than a number of small and medium sites would allow for mitigation and curb erosion of the open countryside in other parts of this area.

Advantages and Disadvantages

Advantages	Disadvantages
Deliverable and viable area	Heavy reliance on one site
Highly marketable area with proven delivery	Lack of investment and growth in the rest of RCT
Co-location of housing and employment	Ecological sensitive areas
Sufficient land to achieve the strategy	Limited public transport in SW RCT
Protects the other areas of the south which are under demand pressure.	Rate of delivery on one site may not achieve the necessary housing over the plan period
Would help stop out migration and some out commuting	

Analysis

As part of the current LDP strategy strategic sites were used and a large percentage of the growth attributed to them. These sites were arguably the most successful in the south with Llanilid currently being developed and Cefn Y Hendy gaining permission and development begun.

During the Candidate Site process a number of larger sites were submitted capable of achieving a considerable amount of growth. There are a number of positives to the allocation of a larger site/s. Firstly, there is a proven record of delivery in the south of RCT. There is a large market demand and good viability in the area which can be evidenced through the viability study. This has also been borne out by the Candidate Sites process which has seen the most site submitted in the south. One of the major positives for this option is the potential to maximise planning obligations and achieve community infrastructure and affordable housing which in the south is in demand. Allocating larger sites allow for ecological mitigation and enhancement which on smaller sites might not be possible. However there is a concern that the rate of housing delivery on such a large site would mean that not necessarily all the required growth would be delivered.

Locating a large amount of development on one site eases pressure on other areas of the south which are under huge demand for development this could form a more managed growth.

The delivery of a large site in the south would mean that there is limited growth for the north and thus lack of investment in such things as infrastructure and affordable housing. There is also concern that locating a large majority of the growth in in one area would create a much higher risk of not achieving the growth figure if the site does not come to fruition.

Having a large site means co-location of services and facilities is possible which would seek to reduce the actual need to travel and would allow for planning obligations to help improve the sustainable transport options in the area.

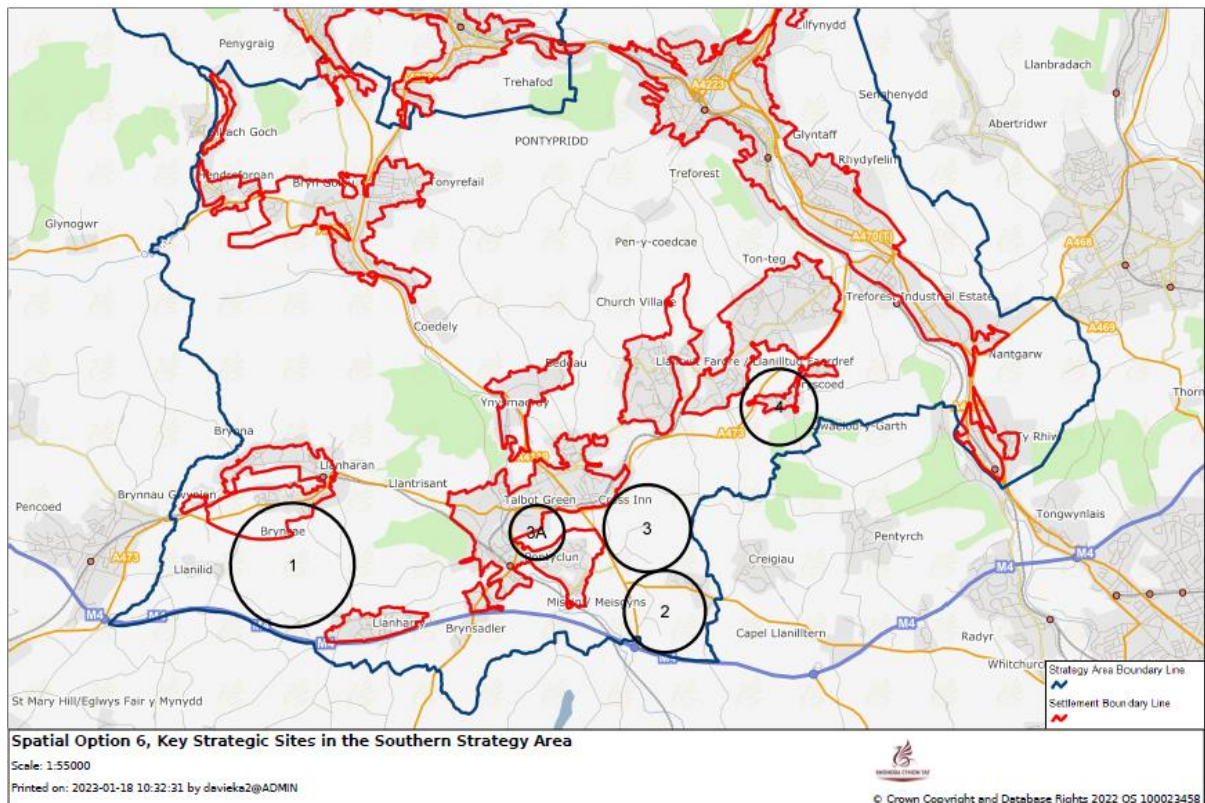
There are currently proposals and associated reports that have sought to improve the public transport infrastructure in the south of the County Borough. Improved bus services have been considered from Bridgend through to Llanharan and Pontypridd and across the central South Wales Valleys. Continued advancement of proposals to bring forward light rail infrastructure from central Cardiff out into north west Cardiff should extend into south east RCT. Consideration is also given to whether further main train line capacity to serve the south west of the County Borough could materialise in the near future.

Summary of the Integrated Sustainability Appraisal (ISA) of the Option against the RLDP Objectives (which may be seen in more detail in Appendix 3)

The results of the formal ISA for objectives 1-15 are as follows. The results for option 6 show no major significant positive effects but objective 4 healthy and safe lifestyle is a mixed major positive and minor negative due to the fact that a large site could deliver obligations and could see improved healthcare facilities developed. The

minor negative comes from focussing development in one area and not seeing these improvements spread over RCT. There is a significant negative shown for objective 12 efficient use of land soils and minerals due to the loss of greenfield and agricultural land. The majority of the objectives score a mixed minor or significant effects likely or minor negative effects.

Assessment of LDP Objectives 16 Promote vibrant, adaptable and resilient Town centres, 17 address the impacts of the mining legacy in RCT and 18 To support the growth of the tourism and leisure sector (which are not included in the ISA process) have been incorporated into the analysis section above where applicable.



4.8 Option 7 - Urban Containment

This strategy option seeks to deliver growth within the current urban area without the need to release new land for development. The key elements of this strategy are:

- Utilising empty properties
- No new greenfield releases
- Building on brownfield land within current settlement limits
- Tight settlement boundaries
- Windfall releases
- Current committed sites
- Utilises the settlement hierarchy

Why has this strategy option been chosen?

It was thought appropriate to look at this option to evaluate whether a more contained strategy which saw no new greenfield release and would be very much in line with the climate change agenda could deliver the growth required in RCT. RCT has approximately 3,000 empty properties within the County Borough and although bringing these back into beneficial use cannot be counted towards the housing delivery figure it does provide an indication of potential space available to accommodate some level of growth.

Due to the home working pattern which has increased dramatically since the pandemic there are an ever-increasing amount of vacant office or other commercial buildings available which may be suitable for conversion with many of these bring close to town centres or embedded in the urban fabric. Recent years have also seen smaller older building such as churches or pubs also come forward for multiple units.

Particularly in the north of RCT there are number of brownfield sites which have not come forward in the current plan period which are available for development. This could allow for the use of brownfield land already within the settlement boundary to be used in preference to green field release.

This option seeks to re-use existing and underused land and property for growth instead of allocating new land.

Advantages and Disadvantages

Advantages	Disadvantages
Supports the reduction of climate change	Not necessarily what the housing developers could deliver.
Makes the best use of existing land	High risk as commitments and windfall are not guaranteed
Would further assist empty properties in being brought back into beneficial use	Reliance on intervention and public sector funding to deliver

Protects the environment and ecology	Lack of land within the urban area which would be very limiting in terms of allowing for a higher level growth option.
Removes pressure from the south of RCT	There is a significant risk that our housing need would not be met
Utilises the settlement hierarchy	

Analysis

As a containment strategy this option seeks to reuse, convert and redevelopment to achieve growth and would see no new greenfield releases instead utilising brownfield land within the settlement boundary. By its nature therefore this option is very positive for the climate change agenda and also for sustainability terms as many of these locations where development would be seen would be existing settlements and the need to travel could also be reduced. This strategy would accord with national policy. There are a high number of empty properties in RCT especially in the north. Due to the empty homes scheme which is run by RCT's housing department there are a number of these being brought back into beneficial use each year. Although these can not be counted towards the housing delivery figure it does show another way through regeneration that homes can be created. This option would further support this crucial work by putting in place a policy framework to support conversions and reuse of derelict and under used buildings.

This option would support town centres which have a number of large buildings and recently vacant office space for example which could be reused to accommodate housing development and would see a reduction in dereliction which provides a nicer environment. This strategy would allow for a different model of housing delivery in the north which has struggled to achieve growth through the traditional model of delivery.

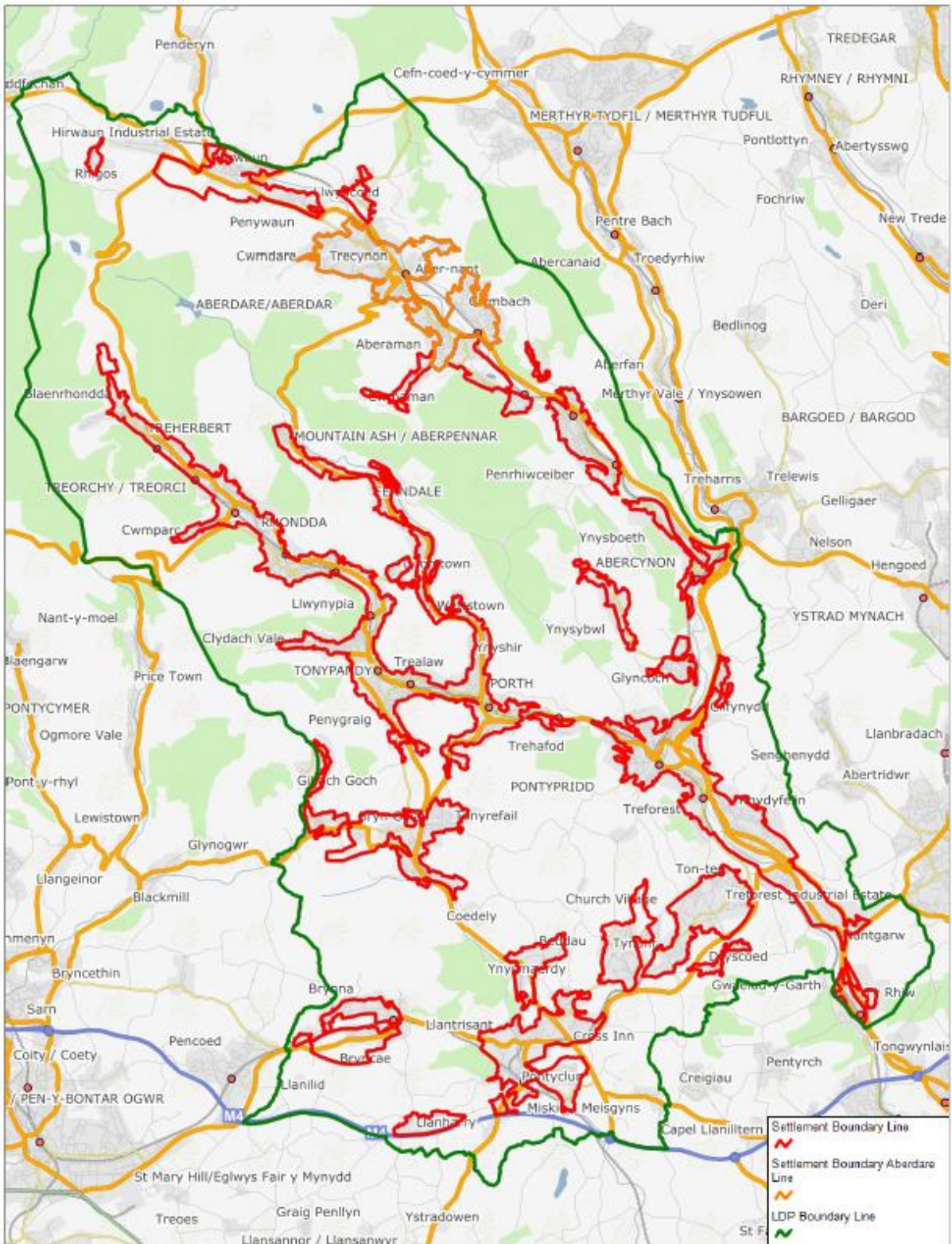
The major negative with this option is that overall, it would achieve a lower growth figure notwithstanding the actual land availability due to the nature of the strategy. In terms of actual land availability both the urban capacity study and Candidate Site processes have found very little land or buildings within this option area to achieve the growth figure required. This option would also not allow for some traditional house builder to build in RCT due to the lack of large or even medium sites available. The remaining allocations within the current urban areas especially in the north have been found to be unviable and or undeliverable in the most part. This option would rely heavily on intervention and even public sector investment which may not be achievable. However it could also lead to the preservation of historic buildings which is a positive for the culture of RCT.

Under this option development may be relatively piecemeal, this could mean that the necessary increase in population to justify the provision of new services is not reached in certain places, and existing services and facilities could face additional pressure. There would also not be the same opportunities for establishing vibrant new communities that sometimes occur with the development of larger sites.

Summary of the Integrated Sustainability Appraisal (ISA) of the Option against the RLDP Objectives (which may be seen in more detail in Appendix 3)

The results of the formal ISA for objectives 1-15 are as follows option 7 show significant positive effects for objective 5 reducing the need to travel due to this option providing more transport choices and existing facilities to residents. Objective 12 efficient use of land soils and minerals also shows a significant positive due to the option directly promoting the efficient use of land through no new releases. No significant negative effects are seen; however, the majority of objectives show mixed minor or significant effects likely.

Assessment of LDP Objectives 16 Promote vibrant, adaptable and resilient Town centres, 17 address the impacts of the mining legacy in RCT and 18 To support the growth of the tourism and leisure sector (which are not included in the ISA process) have been incorporated into the analysis section above where applicable.



Spatial Option 7, Urban Containment

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4.9 Option 8- Local Needs Strategy

This option looks at concentrating on addressing development needs of each individual settlement which would result in a dispersed form of growth. This would reflect, in broad terms, proportionate development allocations were made to reflect the size and scale of associated settlement patterns along with the affordable and market housing need. The key elements of the strategy are:

- Development to address the individual needs of settlements in line with the Draft LHMA and its housing submarket areas.
- Proportionately sized allocations
- Lower levels of overall growth

Why has this strategy option been chosen?

This option would see the level of growth shared around the County Borough meeting local needs without putting undue pressure on particular areas. It is hoped this would reduce over development and pressure on high demand areas of the County Borough and allow all areas to grow.

The table below is derived from the Draft LHMA Review and identifies the total housing need in submarket areas up to 2037. The benefit of this to the spatial strategy is it tells us where the demand for housing is and thus where the spatial options should look to support growth:

Sub- market area	Affordable need
Greater Aberdare	798
South West Taf	745
Central Taf	742
East of Pontypridd	530
Lower Cynon Valley	418
Tonyrefail and Gilfach Goch	268
Upper Rhondda Fawr	228
Greater Pontypridd	732
Upper Cynon Valley	102
Lower Rhondda Fach	258
Upper Rhondda Fach	329
Lower Rhondda Fawr	361
Taffs Well	160

Advantages	Disadvantages
Dispersed pattern of development	Probable issues with viability and delivery in all areas
Limited expansion in many settlements	Lack of land in some settlements and sub-housing market areas
Provides for growth where it is needed	Lack of market interest in some settlements and sub-housing market areas
Impact of development reduced	Dispersed development can lead to lack of cumulative opportunities such as investment in education facilities or improvements in public transport
Would broadly align with the settlement hierarchy	

Analysis

This option would see growth in areas of need both for affordable and market housing. This would form a dispersed form of growth in the County Borough. The positives to this option is that the growth would be provided where it is needed and at a level that it is needed, this would be positives for those who live in those communities. This option would disperse development which would avoid burdening some in demand areas and reduce the impact on these areas. However, a number of the areas which are identified for need under the LHMA Draft Findings 2024 are not necessarily the areas in which there is market demand for housing and not where market forces wish to build, this could lead to a reduced delivery and a failure to meet the housing need figure and an overall lower level of growth. Dispersing growth also does not achieve the cumulative effect that a focussed development strategy would achieve in terms of planning obligations and the development of infrastructure, therefore there would likely be a lack of investment even in those areas which will see growth.

However, it should also be noted that a lot of the areas with the highest growth are across the sub market areas in the South of RCT.

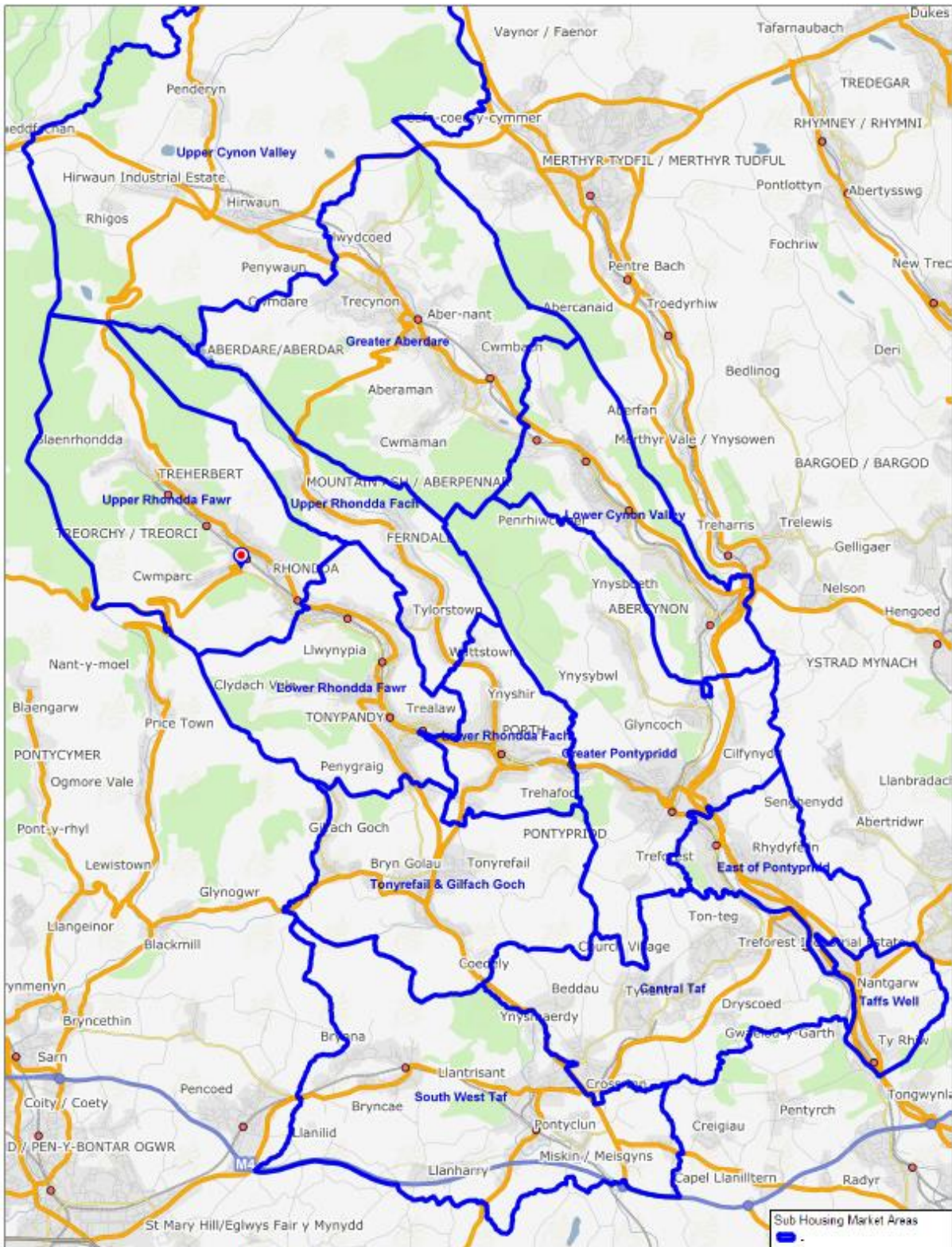
The major concern with this option is the lack of land availability in many of the areas of need, this has been confirmed by the urban capacity study and also the Candidate Site process which have both failed to identify sufficient land to deliver this option.

Summary of the Integrated Sustainability Appraisal (ISA) of the Option against the RLDP Objectives (which may be seen in more detail in Appendix 3)

The results of the formal ISA for objectives 1-15 are as follows. For option 8 the result show a significant positive for objective 3 vibrant communities which would involve proportionate growth at settlements dispersed across the County Borough. While this would result in some development at smaller settlements where access to existing services is less good, it would also increase the population in those areas which may support the viability of new service provision. In addition, there would be proportional

development in larger settlements where access to existing services and facilities is good. Objective 14 sustainable economy shows a mixed significant positive and minor negative due to the dispersal of development over the RCT but due to this there would likely be no cumulative impact of co-location. The majority of the other objectives are showing a mixed minor or significant effects likely.

Assessment of LDP Objectives 16 Promote vibrant, adaptable and resilient Town centres,¹⁷ address the impacts of the mining legacy in RCT and 18 To support the growth of the tourism and leisure sector (which are not included in the ISA process) have been incorporated into the analysis section above where applicable.



Spatial Option 8, Local Needs Strategy
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5.0 Conclusion

Having undertaken analysis of all the options that have been prepared, and considering them against policy, land availability, viability and the Revised LDP's objectives, it is clear in conclusion that there is not one option that would be able to deliver all the needs, aspirations and objectives of the RLDP. Nevertheless, there are very positive and appropriate elements to most of the above options. It will be necessary to seek to consider these better elements in the Preferred Strategy. This may be through the analysis of further evidence we have to hand and further evidence we need to gather. It also is dependent on the level of growth that is ultimately determined to be most appropriate for the RLDP.

A key determining factor in which elements of each option are taken forward is likely to be the deliverability of each option, particularly in terms of land availability. While brownfield-only development in existing urban areas may perform well in sustainability terms, if the approach cannot deliver the required amount of housing and commercial land, it may not be realistic. Failing to deliver the required jobs and homes would also negatively impact upon peoples' health and wellbeing and may result in higher levels of trip generation as people are forced to live and work further apart. Therefore, a key challenge for the Council will be to balance sustainability aspirations with the realistic deliverability of development under each option, bearing in mind particularly the attractiveness of the southern areas to develop compared with the north.

Each option as discussed above has positive elements within them which offer the opportunity for positive outcomes albeit they alone may not be able to deliver the whole strategy. Some of these elements would work in certain areas but not others. It seems therefore that there may be an opportunity for the preferred strategy to encompass the positive elements from these options to create a further combined strategy option.

Appendix 1 - Engagement that informed the preparation of Spatial Options

As part of the wider visioning process engagement was undertaken with a range of stakeholders which generated a range of important issues that need to be addressed in RCT. These issues have been analysed in detail in the Issues paper and have contributed to the formulation of the Objectives set out above.

Many of the issues raised through this process were locational in nature, often specific relating to towns and villages. Many issues also referred to the differences between the north and south of the County Borough and the different solutions required.

The information collected is invaluable in setting the scene for what the stakeholders in RCT see as the pertinent locational issues and therefore these have been used to formulate and inform the spatial options.

Set out below are a high-level summary of the issues raised by a number of stakeholder groups that were considered to be specifically locational in nature.

Internal officer steering group

- Noise and air pollution in the south of RCT
- Difficulty in encouraging development in the north and a different approach needed in the Rhondda.
- Stopping out commuting (supports large sites and southern strategy)
- Lack of infrastructure and facilities in the south
- Ecological damage in the south
- Empty properties
- The need for metro and better transport links north to south (backs up metro and town centre strategy)
- Protection of area of strong Welsh language
- Encouraging employment in the south

Members Steering Group

- Empty properties throughout RCT
- Lack of affordable housing in the south (supports more housing in the south)
- A different approach in the North
- Transport infrastructure issues in the south
- Tourism in the north
- Strengthening Green wedges in the Cynon Lack of facilities in the south
- Diversification of uses in Town centres

LDP Forum

- Development in existing sustainable locations
- Ensure development is on larger sites to allow the delivery of infrastructure.

Climate change working group

- Poor air quality in the south

Let's Talk 2022

- Redevelopment, accessibility, and adaptation of housing stock in the Rhondda needed.
- The need to further improve active travel in the Rhondda.
- Traffic issues in the Brynsadler area
- The need for park and ride facilities in Pontyclun
- The need to regenerate Pontypridd town centre (backs up town centre led)
- The need to regenerate Aberdare town centre
- Encourage tourism in the north.

Let's talk 2021

- The need for more housing in the south
- Better design and infrastructure of housing in the south
- The need for diversity in the housing market in the south (bungalows)
- The need to protect of the environment in the Rhondda and its natural beauty
- The need to develop more brownfield sites such as Cwm Coking Works
- Support for the Metro and maximising development around it
- The need to allocate on sustainable and deliverable sites which comply with placemaking.
- Protection of green and farmland in RCT
- The need for good quality housing in the north
- No new housing in Ynysybwl
- The need to diversify uses in and regeneration of Town centres.
- Improved road infrastructure needed in the Rhondda Fach
- Improved transport infrastructure in the South including better links to the M4.
- More frequent and later trains in the south
- Support for the metro
- Improved public transport in the North and improved internal and cross valley connectivity.
- Improved public transport and connectivity for all of RCT.
- Improvements to public transport in the North
- Promote green leisure and tourism in the north.
- Support for development at Coed Ely
- More employment needed in the north new and the reuse of vacant employment properties.
- Flooding issues in Pontypridd
- Better road system in Pontypridd
- Making the most of the natural environment in the north to grow the economy.

- No development on the opencast in Llanharan- retain the green space.
- Support for development on brownfield sites such as Cwm coking works and Penrhys as opposed to greenfield sites.
- Flooding in Pentre
- Flood risk in Aberdare
- Suggestions for solar farms in various locations
- Stop quarrying at Craig Y Hseg and other locations.
- More Welsh education places needed in the south.
- Promotion of tourism in the north (linked to culture and heritage)
- The need for more Welsh education school places in Pontypridd
- The need for greater accessible healthcare in the south particularly in Llanharan
- More accessible community facilities and healthcare in the northern Cynon Valley
- Retain 6th form education provision in Pontypridd.
- Encourage tourism in Pontypridd.
- More investment in facilities (including retail) in Llanharan/Llanharry and Brynna
- More investment in the Rhondda its being forgotten.

Issues raised in relation to Tonyrefail

There were a marked and considerable number of Issues raised regarding the Tonyrefail area and it is therefore necessary to acknowledge these. In summary the issues relate to overdevelopment in the area which isn't matched with the necessary supporting infrastructure, the need for affordable housing, protection of ecology and green spaces, lack of services and facilities in particular health care and transport issues including public transport.

Appendix 2 - Engagement on the Spatial Strategy Options

Option 1- Continuation of the existing strategy

LDP Forum

- Housing delivery from this option hasn't been too bad in comparison to other, Local Authorities. However much of this delivery has been from windfall sites and not allocations.
- Lack of delivery on the large brownfield strategic sites is an issue across SE Wales.
- Large strategic sites could be kept in the plan but as regeneration sites and not to count towards numbers.
- The strategy is a road based one which Welsh Government will not approve of. A public transport/metro strategy would get more support.
- Viability is still an issue even though house prices are rising due to costs.
- Housing development impacts on health provision greatly and more working together as seen recently is needed.
- Potential capacity issues in the Cynon catchment be mindful if looking to allocate here.
- Any large site would need to have hydraulic modelling on them.

Members Steering Group

- Will the north/south split deliver the required development in the Rhondda if this strategy remains in place although he conceded that the Rhondda is more constrained geographically than the Cynon.
- Housing in the Rhondda has become 'locked' from a highways perspective
- Is the Council capitalising on the Heads of the Valleys and the land for housing/employment? The Tonyrefail community does not want more development in the area.

Option 2- Strategic Highway Network

LDP Forum

- There are highway capacity issues which may put off buyers and therefore developers. Areas with high levels of congestion are not appealing.
- Marketability of these areas depends on who the customers are.
- Cross boundary discussions with other Local Authorities are needed.
- There is only so much capacity for housebuilding in any one area, for example there may be competition in the M4 corridor area with Cardiff and Bridgend who are also developing large sites on the border.
- Wherever houses go services and facilities are needed too. However, this can be reliant on market forces.

Members Steering Group

- Those developments do not benefit or support the Rhondda and it will create greater stress on those areas in the south of the county borough, particularly in terms of the road network.
- The Rhondda would be a good place to live but there are limited options for development and the big industries are gone for good. There is a need to capitalise on public transport to allow residents of the Rhondda to commute to Pontypridd, Cardiff and the wider area.
- The need to ensure that sites are available should employers wish to relocate to the Rhondda.
- Green Wedges and green areas of land are important to residents, and yet housing developments are eradicating them when they should be protected.
- Vacant brownfield sites in the Rhondda are now hot spots for fly tipping and antisocial behaviour and should not be vacant for years.
- A need for decent quality housing linking with improved public transport so that residents can travel to the south of the Borough to work.
- The potential hazards of having a single road out of Maerdy to the rest of the Rhondda Fach if there is a fire or landslide, and concern around managing heavy plant machinery in areas like Maerdy if these areas are developed.

Option 3- Town centre first

LDP Forum

- Cost is an important issue to consider in this option due to new and existing legislation involving accumulations of people in areas such as town centres.
- This option meets many of the policy requirements however many medium and smaller sized towns have lost a lot of services and facilities over recent years and there are questions regarding how these will look in the future. You can't assume these will be the best place for development.
- Flooding in town centres and the new TAN 15 need to be carefully considered.

Members Steering Group

- Agree with the principle of bringing vacant buildings back into beneficial use and large buildings, such as the Tonypany town hall would be ideal for social housing.
- Town centres need to become 'hubs' which include a range of retail, work, leisure and employment opportunities that would increase the footfall. These centres are traditionally well served by public transport and this approach has merits.

- Concern that large derelict can become magnets for antisocial behaviour and the strategy would look to overcome this problem of dereliction.
- There is a need for improved planning applications as some are inadequate in terms of living standards and are too small in size and not suitable as dwellings. It is important to that ensure quality accommodation is available.
- A concern around the need for a clear definition of affordable housing and what this entails as well as the need for definite definitions of social housing, rather than placing various tenures under the umbrella term “affordable”.

Option 4- Southern growth strategy

LDP Forum

- There are already major capacity issues with the A4119 which make it impossible to travel especially at peak times.
- If there is housing growth, there needs to be jobs.
- Public transport isn’t as good in the south as it is in the north.
- The north/ south strategy area is slightly misleading. It would be better to look at the best place for growth first such as where the public transport is and building in the best places rather than a north/ south strategy.

Option 5- Metro and public transport nodes

LDP Forum

- Cost is an important issue to consider in this option due to new and existing legislation involving accumulations of people in areas such as town centres.
- This option meets many of the policy requirements however many medium and smaller sized towns have lost a lot of services and facilities over recent years and there are questions regarding how these will look in the future. You can’t assume these will be the best place for development.
- Flooding in town centres and the new TAN 15 need to be carefully considered.

Members Steering Group

- Discussed specific sites such as the old Llwynypia site, for development.
- Public transport is key and how the Rhondda and Cynon could be attractive places to live, with good commutable distances to Cardiff and cheaper housing. Members considered that the housing stock is limited. They felt that this strategy has potential but queried whether aspects from each option could be included in the plan.

Option 6- Key/strategic site

LDP Forum

- Not much merit in this option, there would need to be a few medium size sites.
- Any key site would need to be very sustainable given the national policy stance on them.
- Very high initial costs for the developer on large sites, this might make developers wary.
- If a large site approach is taken then there needs to be master planning not piecemeal development.

Members Steering Group

- This would involve a key or large strategic site so much of the growth would be on one or two particular sites. The existing southern strategic sites have started to come forward but if that one site did not come forward, the required numbers for the plan would not be achieved. The area also has some ecological issues to overcome.
- Concerns in respect of the limited investment in the North of the county borough. Members highlighted the potential impact of the Cardiff and Bridgend Strategic Sites on the existing road infrastructure.

Option 7- Urban containment

- No comments

Option 8 – Local needs

- No comments

Appendix 3 - Integrated Sustainability Appraisal spatial options assessment summary table

Table 2: Key to symbols and colour coding used in the ISA of the Revised RCT LDP

++	Significant positive effect likely
++/-	Mixed significant positive and minor negative effects likely
+	Minor positive effect likely
+/- OR ++/--	Mixed minor or significant effects likely
-	Minor negative effect likely
--/+	Mixed significant negative and minor positive effects likely
--	Significant negative effect likely
0	Negligible effect likely
?	Likely effect uncertain

ISA objective	Option 1: Continuation of the current LDP Strategy (combined Growth and Local Needs)	Option 2: Strategic Highway Network considering the Principal Towns	Option 3: Town Centre First	Option 4: Southern Growth Strategy	Option 5: Metro and Public Transport Nodes	Option 6: Key Strategic site in the South	Option 7: Urban Containment	Option 8: Local Needs Strategy – LHMA Submarket Areas
1. Mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change and reduce flood risk	--	-	+/-	--	--/+	+/-	+	-
2. Provide an appropriate amount and mix of housing to meet local needs	--	+/-	--	++/-	--	+/-	+/-	+/-
3. Promote vibrant communities, with opportunities for living, working and	+	+	++	-	++	+/-?	+/-	++

ISA objective	Option 1: Continuation of the current LDP Strategy (combined Growth and Local Needs)	Option 2: Strategic Highway Network considering the Principal Towns	Option 3: Town Centre First	Option 4: Southern Growth Strategy	Option 5: Metro and Public Transport Nodes	Option 6: Key Strategic site in the South	Option 7: Urban Containment	Option 8: Local Needs Strategy – LHMA Submarket Areas
socialising for all								
4. Encourage healthy and safe lifestyles that promote well-being and improve overall health levels in RCT.	+	+/-	++/-	+/-	++	++/-	+/-	+/-
5. Reduce the need to travel and promote more sustainable modes of transport	+	-/+	++	--	++	-/+	++	+/-
6. Promote, protect and enhance cultural heritage and the built environment	-?	-?	--?	--?	--?	-?	+/-?	-?
7. Promote the use of the Welsh language	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
8. Protect and enhance the quality and character of the landscape	-?	--?	+?	-?	+?	--?	+?	+/-?
9. Protect and enhance biodiversity	-?	-?	0?	--?	-?	-?	0?	-?
10. Protect the quality and quantity of	-?	-?	-?	-?	-?	+/-?	-?	-?

ISA objective	Option 1: Continuation of the current LDP Strategy (combined Growth and Local Needs)	Option 2: Strategic Highway Network considering the Principal Towns	Option 3: Town Centre First	Option 4: Southern Growth Strategy	Option 5: Metro and Public Transport Nodes	Option 6: Key Strategic site in the South	Option 7: Urban Containment	Option 8: Local Needs Strategy – LHMA Submarket Areas
RCT's water resources								
11. Protect and enhance air quality	-	--	++/-	--	++	+/-	+/-	+/-
12. Promote the efficient use of land, soils and minerals	+/-	--	++	--	+/-	--	++	+/-
13. Continue to minimise waste generation and promote more sustainable waste management	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
14. Provide for a sustainable economy	+	++	+	+/-	++	+/-	+/-	++/-
15. Provide for a diverse range of job opportunities	+	+/-	+	-	++	-	+	+/-