

# Integrated Sustainability Appraisal (ISA) for the Torfaen Replacement Local Development Plan

Initial ISA Report - Non-Technical Summary

Torfaen County Borough Council

February 2020

## Quality information

| <b>Prepared by</b>                               | <b>Checked by</b>                      | <b>Verified by</b>                         | <b>Approved by</b>                         |
|--|--|--|--|
| Rosie Cox<br>Environmental Planner               | Alastair Peattie<br>Associate Director | Nick Chisholm-Batten<br>Associate Director | Nick Chisholm-Batten<br>Associate Director |
| Chris McNulty<br>Senior Environmental<br>Planner |  |  |  |

## Revision History

| <b>Revision</b> | <b>Revision date</b> | <b>Details</b>                      | <b>Name</b>      | <b>Position</b>    |
|-----------------|----------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| v1              | 27/02/20             | Draft for client review and comment | Alastair Peattie | Associate Director |
| v2              | 28/02/20             | Final for consultation              | Alastair Peattie | Associate Director |

**Prepared for:**

Torfaen County Borough Council

**Prepared by:**

AECOM Infrastructure & Environment UK Limited  
3rd Floor, Portwall Place  
Portwall Lane  
Bristol BS1 6NA  
United Kingdom

T: +44 117 901 7000  
aecom.com

© 2020 AECOM Infrastructure & Environment UK Limited. All Rights Reserved.

This document has been prepared by AECOM Infrastructure & Environment UK Limited ("AECOM") for sole use of our client (the "Client") in accordance with generally accepted consultancy principles, the budget for fees and the terms of reference agreed between AECOM and the Client. Any information provided by third parties and referred to herein has not been checked or verified by AECOM, unless otherwise expressly stated in the document. No third party may rely upon this document without the prior and express written agreement of AECOM.

**THIS PAGE IS INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK**

## Table of Contents

|    |   |    |
|----|---|----|
| 1. | Introduction.....                       | 1  |
| 2. | Plan-making/ ISA up to this point ..... | 6  |
| 3. | Appraisal findings at this stage.....   | 24 |
| 4. | Next steps and monitoring.....          | 29 |

# Introduction

# 1. Introduction

- 1.1 AECOM is commissioned to lead on an Integrated Sustainability Appraisal (ISA) in support of Torfaen County Borough Council's Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP). ISA fulfils the requirements and duties for Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA), Health Impact Assessment (HIA), Welsh Language Impact Assessment (WLIA) and Well-being of Future Generations (WBFG).
- 1.2 ISA is a mechanism for considering and communicating the likely effects of an emerging plan, and alternatives in terms of key sustainability issues. The aim of ISA is to inform and influence the plan-making process with a view to avoiding and mitigating negative impacts and maximising positive impacts. Through this approach, the ISA for the RLDP seeks to maximise the development plan's contribution to sustainable development.
- 1.3 As identified above, the ISA seeks to fulfil the requirements and duties for SA, SEA, EqIA, HIA, WLIA and WBFG. The approach is to fully integrate these components to provide a single assessment process to inform the development of the RLDP. A description of each of the various components and their purposes is provided below.
- 1.4 The Initial ISA Report and this Non-Technical Summary is published alongside the RLDP Preferred Strategy. Any representations received will be taken into account and a revised ISA Report and Non-Technical Summary will be published subsequently alongside the Deposit RLDP.
- 1.5 ISA reporting essentially involves answering the following questions in turn:
  1. What has plan-making/ ISA involved up to this point?
    - Including in relation to 'reasonable alternatives'.
  2. What are the appraisal findings at this current stage?
    - i.e. in relation to the Draft Plan (i.e. the Preferred Strategy).
  3. What happens next?
    - What steps will be taken to finalise (and monitor) the plan?
- 1.6 Each of these questions is answered in turn below. Firstly though there is a need to set the scene further by answering the questions i) What is the plan trying to achieve?; and ii) What is the scope of the SA?

## What is the RLDP seeking to achieve?

- 1.7 Torfaen County Borough Council ('the Council') is in the process of preparing a Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP) for the County Borough. The LDP is the Council's land use plan that will establish where and how much new development will take place in the County Borough over the period 2018-2033. It will also identify which areas are to be protected from development and will replace the existing Local Development Plan (LDP 2006-2021) once adopted.

## Vision

1.8 The vision for the RLDP is set out below.

*“At the eastern edge of the South Wales Valleys, Torfaen will be part of a Networked City Region supporting healthy, thriving communities and a sustainable prosperous economy in an outstanding historical, cultural and natural environment.*

*To achieve this: By 2033, through collaborative working, the development strategy for the Replacement Torfaen Local Development Plan will deliver sustainable growth that supports the wellbeing of current and future generations whilst responding to the challenges of climate change. It will provide a distinctive, vibrant and prosperous area for people to live work and visit and where people have the skills, knowledge and opportunities to achieve a better quality of life in safe, healthy and thriving communities with accessible green infrastructure and local facilities”.*

## Objectives

1.9 17 objectives have been identified to address the challenges facing the County Borough and to reflect updated national policy and legislation. The objectives are set out below:

1. **Employment** - To ensure the protection and provision of an appropriate quantity and range of employment sites and retail, commercial and leisure opportunities to support high and stable levels of employment in Torfaen and deliver a competitive, modern and sustainable economy and thriving & diverse town centres, which support local needs and the foundation economy;
2. **Community Facilities** - To promote health and well-being through the provision of development including in the development sites and by providing accessible community facilities, leisure and outdoor recreational opportunities accessible to all, as well as the protection and maintenance of such facilities;
3. **Flooding** - To ensure that the location of development does not result in unacceptable risk from flooding, subsidence or health hazards;
4. **Placemaking** - To ensure that all new developments achieve the highest quality of sustainable design, location, construction, operation and energy usage in all developments and to deliver placemaking of safe, healthy and attractive environments;
5. **Education** - To provide opportunities for the establishment of a network of quality educational and training facilities which serve local communities and are accessible for all existing and future generations;
6. **Tourism** - To protect, manage and enhance sustainable tourist attractions and facilities in Torfaen for the benefit of tourists and the community;
7. **Heritage** - To conserve and enhance the distinctive cultural and historic resources of the County Borough, including the Blaenavon Industrial Landscape World Heritage Site;
8. **Minerals** - To allocate mineral sites if required and practicable and safeguard appropriate mineral resources from sterilisation;
9. **Green Infrastructure** - To protect, manage and enhance green infrastructure, biodiversity and ecological networks across Torfaen;
10. **Climate Change** - To minimise climate change impacts through, enabling renewable energy generation and energy efficiency improvements, reducing emissions of greenhouse gases in both new and existing development, promoting innovation and adaption to climate change by considering its effects in the design and location of new development;
11. **Landscape** - To protect and enhance the valued urban and rural landscape character of Torfaen, including important open space and sense of rurality between settlements;
12. **Previously Developed Land** - To protect Greenfield land by enabling and promoting the most efficient use of appropriate brownfield sites for redevelopment across Torfaen;

13. **Water** - To ensure all development contributes to improving water quality, protecting water supply and maximising the efficiency of water consumption;
14. **Soil** - To identify and conserve important soil (including 'high quality' agricultural land) and geological resources including Regionally Important Geological Sites (RIGS) and maintain their quality;
15. **Housing** - To ensure the allocation of an appropriate quantity and variety of housing sites to deliver high quality choice in form and construction in sustainable locations, well served by essential facilities and accessible by a range of transport modes;
16. **Transport** - To develop integrated and efficient transport infrastructure, public transport and communication networks which protect air quality and are accessible and attractive to all, and encourage active travel and a reduction in private car use; and
17. **Waste** - To ensure people and organisations reduce, reuse and recycle waste and to foster this through the provision of regional and local waste management facilities.

## What is the scope of the ISA?

- 1.10 The scope of the ISA is essentially reflected in a list of sustainability objectives, developed subsequent to a 'scoping' process (which included consultation on the scope of the SA in 2019). Taken together, these objectives indicate the parameters of ISA, and provide a methodological 'framework' for appraisal.

**Table 1.1: ISA framework**

| ISA theme  | ISA objective  |
|--|--|
| <b>Economy and Employment</b>                            | To promote economic growth and maximise the economic contribution of the area to the Cardiff City Region, strengthening and diversifying the economy, promoting tourism, enhancing the vitality and viability of town centres and increasing prosperity for all.                                   |
|  | To increase levels of local employment and ensure distribution of opportunities, whilst improving educational attainment and increasing skill levels   |
| <b>Population and Communities</b>                        | To provide a sufficient quantity of good quality market and affordable homes in sustainable locations to meet identified needs.  |
|  | To enhance design quality to create great places for people.   |
| <b>Health and well-being</b>                             | To improve the health and well-being of the population including physical and mental health, social well-being and community safety.   |
| <b>Equalities, diversity and social inclusion</b>        | To reduce poverty and inequality; tackle social exclusion and promote community cohesion.  |
| <b>Transport and Movement</b>                            | To improve access for all to the jobs, services and facilities they need whilst supporting a reduction in the use of private transport by promoting active travel and encouraging modal shift to sustainable transport, and improving access to high quality digital communications and utilities. |
| <b>Natural Resources (Air, Land, Minerals and Water)</b> | To identify and pursue any opportunities to reduce, or at least, minimise population exposure to air pollution.  |
|  | To make the best use of previously developed land and existing buildings to minimise pressure for greenfield development and protecting where possible higher grade agricultural land.   |
|  | To promote the circular economy by reducing waste generation and maximising reuse and recycling, ensuring the use of natural resources and the provision of an adequate supply of minerals.  |
|  | To conserve, protect and enhance the water environment, water quality and water resources.   |
| <b>Biodiversity and Geodiversity</b>                     | To conserve, protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity interests within and surrounding Blaenau Gwent.   |

| <b>ISA theme</b>            | <b>ISA objective</b>   |
|-----------------------------|--|
| <b>Historic Environment</b> | To conserve and enhance the significance of the County Borough's historic environment, cultural assets (including the use of the Welsh language) and heritage assets and their settings. |
| <b>Landscape</b>            | To protect and enhance the quality and character of the landscape.   |
| <b>Climate Change</b>       | To mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change through increasing energy efficiency and generation and use of low carbon and renewable energy sources.                           |
| <b>Flood Risk</b>           | To reduce and manage the risk of flooding.   |

**Part 1: What has Plan-making/  
ISA involved up to this point?**

## 2. Plan-making/ ISA up to this point

- 2.1 Local plan-making has been underway since 2017, with a wide range of evidence produced to inform the development of the RLDP. **Table 2.1** sets out the key RLDP and SA Documents published along with dates for consultation. The RLDP documents and the evidence base (including the ISA Reports) can be viewed and downloaded on the Council's website.<sup>1</sup>

**Table 2.1: Revised LDP and SA stages**

| RLDP Documents & Consultation   | ISA Documents & Consultation   |
|---|--|
|   | ISA Scoping Report<br>Sent to statutory consultees for consultation in April 2019. |
| Spatial Strategy Options Briefing Paper<br>Public consultation from November 2018 to September 2019 |  |
| Preferred Strategy<br>Public consultation from March to May 2020                                    | This Initial ISA Report and NTS<br>Public consultation from March to May 2020      |

- 2.2 This part of the Non-Technical Summary sets out the work undertaken in 2018/ 19 that led to the development of the Preferred Strategy document that is currently the focus of the appraisal (see Part 2, below) and currently published for consultation. Specifically, in-line with regulatory requirements (Schedule 2 of the SEA Regulations), there is a need to explain how work was undertaken to develop and then appraise reasonable alternatives, and how the Council then took into account appraisal findings when finalising the draft plan for publication.
- 2.3 This part of the Initial ISA Report and this Non-Technical Summary presents information regarding the consideration of reasonable alternatives. This information is important given regulatory requirements.<sup>2</sup>

## Establishing the Reasonable Alternatives

### Level of growth

- 2.4 Blaenau Gwent, Torfaen and Monmouthshire County Councils jointly commissioned Edge Analytics to prepare a range of demographic, housing and employment growth scenarios to inform the Replacement LDPs.<sup>3</sup> To date eleven different scenarios have been prepared, each with different outcomes in terms of population, dwellings and demographics. These have, based upon an estimate of residential 'commitments', been grouped into five potential options for the RLDP period (2018-2033). For each option a figure is given for the number of new homes in different scenarios to include flexibility allowances, and the number of jobs. The five options are set out in the table below.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.torfaen.gov.uk/en/PlanningAndDevelopment/Planningpolicy/Local-Development-Plan-Review/Replacement-Torfaen-Local-Development-Plan.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> There is a requirement for the SA Report to present an appraisal of 'reasonable alternatives' and 'an outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with'. Whilst this report is not the SA Report, it is appropriate to present this information nonetheless for the benefit of stakeholders.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.torfaen.gov.uk/en/PlanningAndDevelopment/Planningpolicy/Local-Development-Plan-Review/Replacement-Torfaen-Local-Development-Plan.aspx>

**Table 2.2: Growth Options**

| Option   | Dwellings<br>2018-2033 | Dwellings +<br>10%<br>flexibility<br>allowance | Dwellings +<br>25%<br>flexibility<br>allowance | New jobs      |
|--|------------------------|--|--|---------------|
| 1. Dwelling-led (10yr Average)<br>(222 dwellings p.a.) | 3,330                  | N/A  | N/A  | 810           |
| 2. PG Short Term (237<br>dwellings p.a.)               | 3,555                  | 3,911  | 4,444  | 795           |
| 3. Dwelling-led (5yr Average)<br>(256 dwellings p.a.)  | 3,840                  | 4,224  | 4,800  | 1,455         |
| 4. PG Long Term (Adjusted)<br>(275 dwellings p.a.)     | 4,125                  | 4,538  | 5,156  | 2,055         |
| 5. Dwelling led (300 - 320<br>dwellings p.a.)          | 4,500 - 4,800          | 4,950 - 5,280                                  | 5,625 - 6,000                                  | 2,310 - 2,685 |

## Distribution of growth

- 2.5 The Council identified five potential high-level options for the distribution of growth during the plan period in the Housing Growth and Spatial Options Briefing Paper (2019). These are as follows:
- **Option 1** - Within existing settlement boundaries - Distribute growth throughout existing urban area taking advantage of brownfield/ open space opportunities.
  - **Option 2** - Eastern Expansion of Cwmbran - Based on significant sites around Primary settlement of Cwmbran and opportunity area around new hospital development at Llanfrechfa Grange.
  - **Option 3** - Southern Expansion of Cwmbran - Opportunities are spread across a number of sites from Cefn Perthry to Ponthir.
  - **Option 4** - Market led growth - Focus on viable candidate sites throughout Torfaen County Borough Council.
  - **Option 5** - Continuation of Existing Strategy - Network of Integrated Communities.
- 2.6 To ensure that growth is distributed to the most sustainable settlements Welsh Government requires the assessment of the roles and function of settlements. The Welsh Government draft LDP Manual requires a clearly expressed settlement hierarchy is identified within the RLDP.
- 2.7 In order to effectively assess the role and function of each the five sizeable settlements in Torfaen, an audit of existing services and facilities was undertaken within each settlement in 2019. This audit was based on scoring the 3 principles set out below and finally the size of the settlement to identify one of three sustainable settlement tiers:
- Principle 1: The level of sustainable transport accessibility in and around settlements.
  - Principle 2: The availability of local facilities and services in and around settlements.
  - Principle 3: The level of existing/ allocated employment opportunities in and around settlements.
- 2.8 The findings of this work are summarised in **Table 2.3** below.

**Table 2.3: Overall settlement hierarchy based on population size**

| Settlement | Overall Settlement Assessment |       |        |
|------------|-------------------------------|-------|--------|
|            | Population (2011)             | Score | Tier   |
| Cwmbran    | 48,535                        | 10    | Tier 1 |
| Pontypool  | 36,485                        | 10    | Tier 1 |
| Blaenavon  | 6,055                         | 6     | Tier 2 |
| Ponthir    | 1,429                         | 3     | Tier 3 |
| Varteg     | 374 est.                      | 0     | Tier 3 |

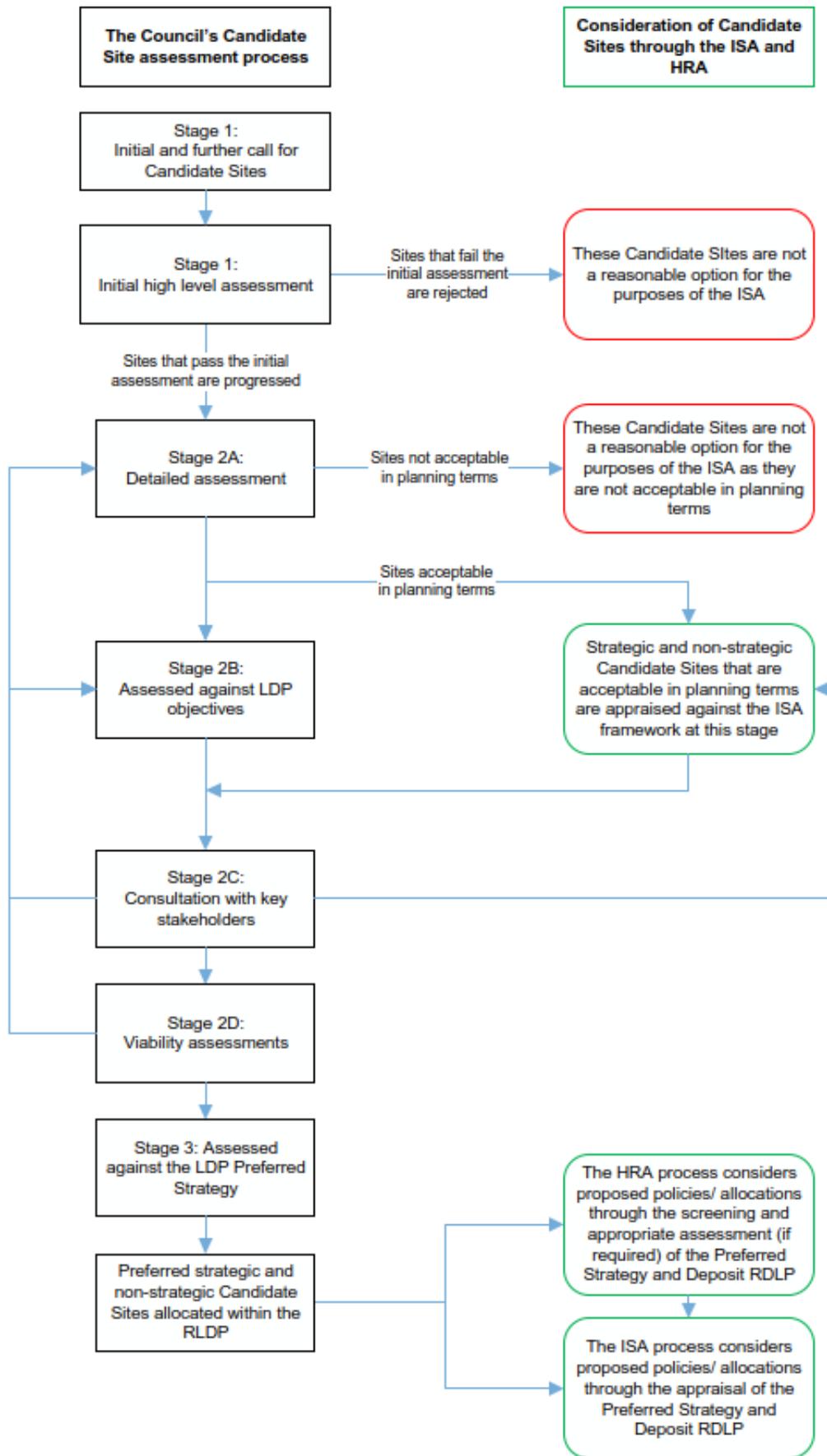
## Candidate sites

2.9 The Council's Candidate Sites Assessment comprises a three-stage process following on from a Call for Candidate Sites during August to October 2018. The first stage subjected all identified sites to an initial high-level assessment to reject any unsuitable sites based on set criteria of:

- Site size;
- Potential conflicts with sustainability principles set out in national planning policy;
- Fundamental constraints that cannot be mitigated (e.g. isolated development in open countryside or location within a Zone C2 flood-plain); and
- Likely deliverability issues, including ability to be delivered during the plan period or evidenced viability constraints.

2.10 The second and current stage of the Candidate Sites Assessment is split into four sub-stages which include detailed site assessment, assessment against the LDP objectives, consultation with key stakeholders and viability assessments. Sites that were found acceptable in planning terms after a detailed assessment were subject to SEA as reasonable options at this stage. Following on from the stage 2 assessments the third and final stage brings together the findings to assess the sites in relation to the LDP Preferred Strategy. **Figure 2.1** below summarises this process and its relationship with the ISA and HRA.

**Figure 2.1: Candidate Sites Assessment process and its relationship with the ISA**



## Appraising the Reasonable Alternatives

- 2.11 The strategic options identified above were subject to a comparative appraisal under each ISA theme and summary findings are presented below.
- 2.12 The assessment examined likely significant effects on the baseline, drawing on the sustainability objectives and themes identified through scoping (see **Table 1.1**) as a methodological framework. Based on the evidence available a judgement is made if there is likely to be a significant effect. Where it is not possible to predict likely significant effects on the basis of reasonable assumptions, efforts are made to comment on the relative merits of the alternatives in more general terms and to indicate a rank of preference. The number indicates the rank and does not have any bearing on likely significant effects. This is helpful, as it enables a distinction to be made between the alternatives even where it is not possible to distinguish between them in terms of 'significant effects'. For example, if an option is ranked as 1 then it is judged to perform better against that ISA theme compared to an option that is ranked 2.

### Level of growth

- 2.13 Each of the five options for the level of growth identified earlier were subject to a comparative appraisal under each ISA theme. The summary findings are provided below.

**Table 2.4: Summary appraisal findings for growth level options**

| ISA Themes  | Rank/<br>Significant<br>effects | Categorisation and rank                            |  |  |  |   |
|---|---------------------------------|--|--|--|--|---|
|   |                                 | Option 1 -<br>(3,330<br>dwellings and<br>810 jobs) | Option 2 -<br>(3,555<br>dwellings and<br>795 jobs) | Option 3 -<br>(3,840<br>dwellings and<br>1,455 jobs) | Option 4 -<br>(4,125<br>dwellings and<br>2,055 jobs) | Option 5 -<br>(4,500-4,800<br>dwellings and<br>2,310-2,685<br>jobs 2018-<br>2033) |
| <b>Economy and<br/>Employment</b>                         | Rank                            | <b>4</b>   | <b>4</b>   | <b>3</b>   | <b>2</b>   | <b>1</b>  |
|   | Significant<br>effect?          | <b>Uncertain</b>                                   | <b>Uncertain</b>                                   | <b>Yes -<br/>Positive</b>                            | <b>Yes -<br/>Positive</b>                            | <b>Yes -<br/>Positive</b>   |
| <b>Population and<br/>Communities</b>                     | Rank                            | <b>5</b>   | <b>4</b>   | <b>3</b>   | <b>2</b>   | <b>1</b>  |
|   | Significant<br>effect?          | <b>No</b>  | <b>No</b>  | <b>Yes -<br/>Positive</b>                            | <b>Yes -<br/>Positive</b>                            | <b>Yes -<br/>Positive</b>   |
| <b>Health and<br/>wellbeing</b>                           | Rank                            | <b>2</b>   | <b>1</b>   | <b>1</b>   | <b>1</b>   | <b>1</b>  |
|   | Significant<br>effect?          | <b>No</b>  | <b>No</b>  | <b>No</b>  | <b>No</b>  | <b>No</b>   |
| <b>Equalities,<br/>diversity and<br/>social inclusion</b> | Rank                            | <b>5</b>   | <b>4</b>   | <b>3</b>   | <b>2</b>   | <b>1</b>  |
|   | Significant<br>effect?          | <b>No</b>  | <b>No</b>  | <b>Yes -<br/>Positive</b>                            | <b>Yes -<br/>Positive</b>                            | <b>Yes -<br/>Positive</b>   |
| <b>Transport and<br/>movement</b>                         | Rank                            | <b>=</b>   | <b>=</b>   | <b>=</b>   | <b>=</b>   | <b>=</b>  |
|   | Significant<br>effect?          | <b>No</b>  | <b>No</b>  | <b>No</b>  | <b>No</b>  | <b>No</b>   |
| <b>Natural Resources</b>                                  | Rank                            | <b>1</b>   | <b>2</b>   | <b>3</b>   | <b>4</b>   | <b>5</b>  |
|   | Significant<br>effect?          | <b>No</b>  | <b>Uncertain</b>                                   | <b>Uncertain</b>                                     | <b>Uncertain</b>                                     | <b>Uncertain</b>  |
| <b>Biodiversity and<br/>geodiversity</b>                  | Rank                            | <b>=</b>   | <b>=</b>   | <b>=</b>   | <b>=</b>   | <b>=</b>  |
|   | Significant<br>effect?          | <b>No</b>  | <b>No</b>  | <b>No</b>  | <b>No</b>  | <b>No</b>   |
| <b>Historic<br/>Environment</b>                           | Rank                            | <b>=</b>   | <b>=</b>   | <b>=</b>   | <b>=</b>   | <b>=</b>  |
|   | Significant<br>effect?          | <b>No</b>  | <b>No</b>  | <b>No</b>  | <b>No</b>  | <b>No</b>   |
| <b>Landscape</b>  | Rank                            | <b>=</b>   | <b>=</b>   | <b>=</b>   | <b>=</b>   | <b>=</b>  |
|   | Significant<br>effect?          | <b>No</b>  | <b>No</b>  | <b>No</b>  | <b>No</b>  | <b>No</b>   |
| <b>Climate Change</b>                                     | Rank                            | <b>1</b>   | <b>2</b>   | <b>3</b>   | <b>4</b>   | <b>5</b>  |
|   | Significant<br>effect?          | <b>No</b>  | <b>No</b>  | <b>No</b>  | <b>No</b>  | <b>No</b>   |

2.14 The bulk of growth to be delivered under each option during the RLDP plan period (2018-2033) is comprised of built, committed, small site and windfall development (3,194 dwellings). Depending on the preferred level of growth and flexibility allowance selected the level of additional residential development varies between the options.

2.15 For ISA themes relating to transport, biodiversity, the landscape and historic environment - the nature and significant effects will be dependent on where the additional growth (proposed under Options 2 to 5) is located and how development is designed/ implemented. There is no evidence at this stage to suggest that the additional growth proposed under Options 2 to 5 would result in a significant negative effect on these themes as long as the development is located away from sensitive receptors and/ or suitable mitigation is provided.

- 2.16 The higher growth options (in particular Options 3, 4 and 5) are identified as performing better against ISA themes relating to the economy and employment, population and communities, health and wellbeing and equalities as the additional growth provides an opportunity to deliver a greater range of housing, employment opportunities and community infrastructure to meet the needs of the County Borough. This has the potential for a residual long term significant positive effect for the population and communities, economy and employment and equalities themes. Option 1 and 2 are less likely to have a residual significant positive effect as they either propose no additional growth or a small amount of additional growth beyond what is already committed or likely to come forward as windfall during the plan period. They are therefore less likely to deliver a diverse range of new homes or address the significant affordable housing need in the County Borough.
- 2.17 The appraisal found that as the level of growth increases so does the likelihood for negative impacts on natural resources and climate change through the potential increased loss of greenfield/ agricultural land and mineral resources as well as increased carbon emissions. Options 2, 3, 4 and 5 are predicted to have an uncertain effect against this theme at this stage as the precise location of development is not known. If development is primarily delivered on high quality agricultural land then a residual negative effect is likely, with the significance of this effect increasing as the level of growth increases. If the majority of growth can be delivered on brownfield land then there is the potential for a positive effect.

## Distribution of growth

- 2.18 Each of the five options for the location of growth identified earlier were subject to a comparative appraisal under each ISA theme. The summary findings are provided below.

**Table 2.5: Summary appraisal findings for distribution options**

| ISA Themes  | Rank/<br>Significant effects | Categorisation and rank                             |  |   |                                 |   |
|---|------------------------------|---|--|---|---------------------------------|---|
|   |                              | Option 1 -<br>Within existing settlement boundaries | Option 2 -<br>Eastern expansion of Cwmbran | Option 3 -<br>Southern expansion of Cwmbran | Option 4 -<br>Market led growth | Option 5 -<br>Continuation of existing strategy |
| <b>Economy and Employment</b>                     | Rank                         | 1   | 1  | 1   | 2                               | 1   |
|   | Significant effect?          | No  | No   | No  | No                              | No  |
| <b>Population and Communities</b>                 | Rank                         | 1   | 1  | 1   | 2                               | 1   |
|   | Significant effect?          | Yes - Positive                                      | Yes - Positive                             | Yes - Positive                              | No                              | Yes - Positive                                  |
| <b>Health and wellbeing</b>                       | Rank                         | 3   | 1  | 2   | 5                               | 4   |
|   | Significant effect?          | No  | Yes - Positive                             | Yes - Positive                              | No                              | No  |
| <b>Equalities, diversity and social inclusion</b> | Rank                         | 1   | 3  | 3   | 3                               | 2   |
|   | Significant effect?          | No  | No   | No  | No                              | No  |
| <b>Transport and movement</b>                     | Rank                         | 2   | 1  | 1   | 2                               | 2   |
|   | Significant effect?          | No  | No   | No  | No                              | No  |
| <b>Natural Resources</b>                          | Rank                         | 1   | 4  | 4   | 3                               | 2   |
|   | Significant effect?          | No  | Yes - Negative                             | Yes - Negative                              | Uncertain                       | No  |
| <b>Biodiversity and geodiversity</b>              | Rank                         | =   | =  | =   | =                               | =   |
|   | Significant effect?          | No  | No   | No  | No                              | No  |
| <b>Historic Environment</b>                       | Rank                         | =   | =  | =   | =                               | =   |
|   | Significant effect?          | No  | No   | No  | No                              | No  |
| <b>Landscape</b>                                  | Rank                         | 1   | 2  | 3   | 1                               | 1   |
|   | Significant effect?          | No  | Yes - Negative                             | Yes - Negative                              | No                              | No  |
| <b>Climate Change</b>                             | Rank                         | 2   | 1  | 1   | 2                               | 2   |
|   | Significant effect?          | No  | No   | No  | No                              | No  |

2.19 Overall, Option 4 has emerged as the least preferred option, and this is generally owing to the potential for sporadic or piecemeal development in a less coordinated approach. Under this option there is less potential to realise significant planning gains, and development may result in significant greenfield loss and effects on designated landscape areas.

2.20 Strategic growth around Cwmbran proposed under Options 2 and 3 is identified for potential significant positive effects with regards to the ISA themes of population and communities and health and wellbeing. Option 2 presents an opportunity to strategically plan housing development alongside the development of the Llanfrechfa Hospital, which will support improved connectivity and integration, as well as create good access to this significant health-care resource and employment base in the Borough. By targeting the Primary settlement in the Borough, all new development is also likely to be supported by relatively good access to public

transport modes and hubs existing in Cwmbran, as well as the services, facilities, and employment opportunities on offer there.

- 2.21 However, the strategic growth proposed around Cwmbran under Options 2 and 3 is also identified for potential significant negative effects with regards to efficient land use - through significant loss of greenfield and 'best and most versatile' agricultural land - and landscapes - through significant development with designated Special Landscape Areas and erosion of the joint 'Green Wedge' network with Newport. These options are the only options under consideration that are identified for potential significant negative effects, although it is recognised that there is also the potential for significant greenfield loss under Option 4.
- 2.22 Option 1 and to a large extent Option 5 contain development within existing settlement boundaries, utilising brownfield and intensification opportunities and dispersing development across a greater number of settlements. This positively affects many of the ISA themes including population and communities, health and wellbeing, equalities, diversity and social inclusion, natural resources and landscape. Given that these options have not been identified as having potential for significant negative effects, they are considered to perform better overall against the range of ISA themes when compared to Options 2, 3 and 4.
- 2.23 In terms of the biodiversity and historic environment themes, at this stage it is not possible to identify any significant differences between the options or conclude that they are likely to have significant effects. The nature and significance of effects will ultimately be dependent on the precise location and scale of development.

## Candidate sites

- 2.24 As identified in Chapter 5, the candidate sites found acceptable in planning terms following Stage 2A assessment were subject to appraisal through the ISA process. The summary findings are provided below in **Table 2.7** and is based on the following key in **Table 2.6**.

**Table 2.6: ISA candidate site key**

|           |                       |
|-----------|-----------------------|
| <b>++</b> | Major positive effect |
| <b>+</b>  | Minor positive effect |
| <b>0</b>  | Neutral/ No effect    |
| <b>?</b>  | Uncertain effect      |
| <b>-</b>  | Minor negative effect |
| <b>--</b> | Major negative effect |

Table 2.7: ISA summary of candidate sites.

| Site reference                     | Site name                             | Economy and employment | Population and communities | Health and wellbeing | Equalities, diversity and social inclusion | Transport and movement | Natural resources (air, land, minerals and water) | Biodiversity and geodiversity | Historic environment | Landscape | Climate change |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|--|------------------------|---|-------------------------------|----------------------|-----------|----------------|
| <b>Strategic housing sites</b>     |                                       |                        |                            |                      |  |                        |   |                               |                      |           |                |
| CSPL201                            | Llanfrechfa Strategic Action Area     | ++                     | ++                         | +                    | 0  | ++                     | -   | -                             | --                   | -         | -              |
| CS-015                             | Pontypool College                     | +                      | ++                         | -                    | 0  | -                      | -   | +                             | 0                    | +         | +              |
| CS-040                             | Land at Craig Y Felin (housing)       | -                      | ++                         | -                    | 0  | -                      | --  | -                             | -                    | -         | +              |
| CSPL204                            | Land at Craig Y Felin (mixed-use)     | +                      | ++                         | -                    | 0  | -                      | --  | -                             | -                    | -         | +              |
| CSPL212                            | Former County Hall Site and Police HQ | -                      | ++                         | +                    | 0  | +                      | -   | -                             | +                    | +         | -              |
| CS-061                             | Part of H1-1 Former County Hall Site  | +                      | ++                         | +                    | 0  | +                      | -   | -                             | +                    | +         | -              |
| <b>Non-strategic housing sites</b> |                                       |                        |                            |                      |  |                        |   |                               |                      |           |                |
| CS-008                             | Land off Giles Road                   | +                      | +                          | -                    | 0  | -                      | +   | -                             | +                    | +         | -              |
| CS-013                             | Former Autopia Site                   | -                      | +                          | +                    | 0  | +                      | +   | +                             | +                    | +         | +              |
| CS-048                             | Land at Hafren Road                   | +                      | +                          | -                    | 0  | +                      | -   | -                             | 0                    | -         | +              |

| Site reference                      | Site name  | Economy and employment | Population and communities | Health and wellbeing | Equalities, diversity and social inclusion | Transport and movement | Natural resources (air, land, minerals and water) | Biodiversity and geodiversity | Historic environment | Landscape | Climate change |
|-------------------------------------|--|------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|--|------------------------|---|-------------------------------|----------------------|-----------|----------------|
| CS-049                              | Land at Church Avenue                                | +                      | +                          | -                    | 0  | +                      | -   | -                             | 0                    | -         | +              |
| CS-063                              | H3- 3 Former St Peter's Primary School               | +                      | +                          | +                    | 0  | ?                      | +   | -                             | ?                    | +         | +              |
| CS-077                              | Part of H1-1, Police HQ                              | -                      | +                          | +                    | 0  | +                      | +   | -                             | 0                    | +         | -              |
| CS-078                              | Pontypool Police Station (20 dwellings + commercial) | -                      | +                          | +                    | 0  | +                      | +   | 0                             | ?                    | +         | +              |
| CS-079                              | Cwmbran Police Station (30 dwellings + commercial)   | -                      | +                          | +                    | 0  | +                      | +   | 0                             | ?                    | +         | +              |
| <b>Employment development sites</b> |  |                        |                            |                      |  |                        |   |                               |                      |           |                |
| CSPL205                             | Land at Llantarnam Business Park                     | ++                     | +                          | +                    | 0  | -                      | -   | --                            | 0                    | +         | ?              |
| CS-014                              | Land at Kays and Kears                               | ++                     | +                          | ?                    | 0  | -                      | -   | -                             | --                   | -         | +              |
| CS-019                              | Former Alfa Laval Site                               | ++                     | +                          | +                    | 0  | +                      | +   | -                             | +                    | +         | ?              |
| CS-022                              | Plot C1, Llantarnam Business Park (employment)       | +                      | +                          | +                    | 0  | -                      | -   | --                            | 0                    | +         | ?              |
| CS-033                              | Land at Bryntovey                                    | ++                     | +                          | ?                    | 0  | -                      | -   | -                             | 0                    | -         | ?              |

| Site reference         | Site name   | Economy and employment | Population and communities | Health and wellbeing | Equalities, diversity and social inclusion | Transport and movement | Natural resources (air, land, minerals and water) | Biodiversity and geodiversity | Historic environment | Landscape | Climate change |
|------------------------|---|------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|--|------------------------|---|-------------------------------|----------------------|-----------|----------------|
| CS-041                 | Land North of Ashbridge Inn   | +                      | +                          | -                    | 0  | +                      | --  | -                             | -                    | --        | -              |
| CS-069                 | Land opposite Heritage Court  | +                      | +                          | --                   | 0  | -                      | -   | -                             | -                    | ?         | -              |
| CS-095                 | Land South of Best Western Hotel                                      | +                      | +                          | -                    | 0  | -                      | -   | -                             | ?                    | ?         | +              |
| <b>Other land uses</b> |   |                        |                            |                      |  |                        |   |                               |                      |           |                |
| CS-076                 | Part of EET4/2, Land at Former Ty Coch Tip (leisure/tourism use)      | +                      | 0                          | +                    | 0  | -                      | -   | -                             | ?                    | ?         | -              |
| CS-092                 | Part of EET4/2, Land at Former Ty Coch Tip (leisure/tourism use)      | +                      | 0                          | +                    | 0  | -                      | -   | -                             | ?                    | ?         | -              |
| CS-093                 | Part of The British Strategic Site SAA4 (leisure/tourism use)         | +                      | 0                          | +                    | 0  | -                      | -   | -                             | ?                    | ?         | +              |
| CS-060                 | Land at The British SAA5 Strategic Action Area (renewable energy use) | 0                      | 0                          | +                    | 0  | 0                      | +   | -                             | ?                    | ?         | ++             |

## Developing the Preferred Strategy

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

### The Council's outline reasons for choosing the preferred strategy

- 2.26 The Preferred Strategy is the first statutory consultation stage in the preparation of a Replacement LDP for Torfaen and provides the strategic direction for the new Plan. It represents the completion of a period of pre-deposit stakeholder / member participation, the outcome of which has had an influence over the selection of the Preferred Strategy. In summary, the Preferred Strategy sets out the Vision and overall Objectives of the RLDP, the Strategy on the level / distribution of future growth and 17 strategic policies to address them.
- 2.27 Firstly, it is noted that the Preferred Strategy has to be prepared within the parameters of Welsh National Planning Guidance and Policy, including:-
1. Planning Policy Wales (10<sup>th</sup> Edition) (PPW10) which (inter alia) advises to:-
    - avoid flood risk areas;
    - strike a balance between housing and jobs;
    - minimise the need to travel and reduce reliance on the private car;
    - prioritise the use of previously developed land within existing settlements first before sites on the edge of settlements, etc.;
    - locate new development in Sustainable Settlements; and
    - support Green Infrastructure.
  2. The Draft National Development Framework (NDF), which the RLDP is legally required to be in 'Conformity' with and (inter alia) proposes that Torfaen lies within the South East Wales Growth Area.
- 2.28 Secondly, the Preferred Strategy has been influenced by the Well-being Plan for Torfaen (2018-2023); which has a detailed shared vision and the following seven well-being objectives; that the RLDP is required to have regard to:-
1. (Green Infrastructure) Develop a functional, connected network of natural areas that support the current and future well-being needs of local populations;
  2. (Climate Change) Develop mitigation and adaptation responses to the impacts of climate change;
  3. (Children) Provide children and young people with the best possible start in life;
  4. (Health) Prevent chronic health conditions through supporting healthy lifestyles and enabling people to age well;
  5. (Poverty & Jobs) Tackle the inter-generational patterns of poverty and develop economic resilience;
  6. (Skills) Improve local skills through work-force planning, training, apprentice-ships, and volunteering opportunities; and
  7. (Placemaking) Create safe, confident communities and promote community cohesion.
- 2.29 Finally, the consideration of the RLDP background evidence by all has also helped shape the Preferred Strategy; from the LDP Review Report, SA Scoping Report, Stakeholder / Member Briefing Paper and the suite of employment and housing / demographic evidence detailed below.
- 2.30 The employment evidence from the South East Wales Regional Employment Study and the Torfaen Employment Land Study show that in Torfaen there:-
- is a lack of employment units and serviced sites of varying sizes;
  - is strong demand for employment units and sites in Cwmbran;

- is an ageing employment stock;
- thus there are problems retaining existing employers;
- is a 'viability gap' for employment development;
- is a need for deliverable 'employment sites'; and
- a need for 'employment sites' to accommodate the unmet demand for larger units.

2.31 Similarly, the following housing / demographic evidence has also been considered:-

- Torfaen RLDP: Sustainable Settlement Appraisal (SSA) - which assessed the sustainability of Torfaen's settlements in terms of their role and function; which as would be expected, resulted in Cwmbran, then Pontypool, and then Blaenavon being identified as the most sustainable locations;
- Torfaen RLDP: Housing Background Paper - Provides information on residential completions, the delivery of permitted housing sites and the potential for small / 'windfall' sites over the plan period 2018-2033, etc. (see paragraph 7.10 & 7.12 below for further details);
- 2017 Torfaen Local Housing Market Assessment (LHMA) - estimates that there is an affordable housing need in Torfaen of 223 dwellings p.a. as follows:-

**Table 2.8 Affordable housing need in Torfaen (per annum)**

| Torfaen Housing Sub-Market Area | Social (Rented) Housing | Intermediate Housing |          |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|----------|
|                                 |                         | Home ownership       | rented   |
| North Torfaen                   | 2                       | 5                    | 0        |
| Pontypool                       | 46                      | 7                    | 0        |
| Cwmbran                         | 149                     | 11                   | 3        |
| <b>TOTAL (223)</b>              | <b>197</b>              | <b>23</b>            | <b>3</b> |

- The Demographic Evidence for Torfaen - Provides a range of alternative dwellings / jobs forecasts based upon various growth scenarios (see paragraphs 7.10 - 7.11 below for further details); and
- Torfaen RLDP: Draft Candidate Sites Assessment Report - provides a detailed staged assessment of submitted and officer's candidate sites; from which the 'better performing' sites have been used to inform the RLDP.

2.32 As a first step in producing the Preferred Strategy, this evidence and discussions at the stakeholder / member workshops led to the identification of the following RLDP Vision and 17 RLDP Objectives (only subject headings shown):-

*"At the eastern edge of the South Wales Valleys, Torfaen will be part of a Networked City Region supporting healthy, thriving communities and a sustainable prosperous economy in an outstanding historical, cultural and natural environment.*

*To achieve this: By 2033, through collaborative working, the development strategy for the Replacement Torfaen Local Development Plan will deliver sustainable growth that supports the wellbeing of current and future generations whilst responding to the challenges of climate change. It will provide a distinctive, vibrant and prosperous area for people to live work and visit and where people have the skills, knowledge and opportunities to achieve a better quality of life in safe, healthy and thriving communities with accessible green infrastructure and local facilities."*

**Table 2.9 Torfaen RLDP Objectives**

| 1. Employment           | 10. Climate Change            |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 2. Community facilities | 11. Landscape                 |
| 3. Flooding             | 12. Previously Developed Land |
| 4. Placemaking          | 13. Water                     |
| 5. Education            | 14. Soil                      |
| 6. Tourism              | 15. Housing                   |
| 7. Heritage             | 16. Transport                 |
| 8. Minerals             | 17. Waste                     |
| 9. Green Infrastructure |                               |

## Level of growth

2.33 The next choice was the Level of Housing / Employment Growth (*the how much?*) in the RLDP to deliver the above Vision & Objectives? Here an important consideration was the need, as stated in PPW10 (paragraph 5.4.13) to *"align jobs and services with housing and sustainable transport infrastructure, to reduce the need for travel, and dependency on travel by car"*. Similarly, stakeholders and members at the workshops wished the RLDP, whilst seeking to protect the environment and address the need for affordable housing and the challenges of climate change to:-

- ensure that Torfaen did not consist of 'dormitory settlements';
- reduce the growing levels of out commuting for work;
- tackle unemployment levels & poverty;
- respond to the issues of employers either leaving or not coming to Torfaen due to a lack of employment development sites or suitable buildings; and
- consider new housing allocations that can bridge the 'viability gap for employment development' wherever possible.

2.34 Here, as required by WG Policy, a range of 11 balanced housing, jobs, demographic and policy led growth scenarios produced by Edge Analytics were used as a starting point. These growth scenarios ranged from 81 dwellings (and a corresponding need for -103 jobs) to 320 dwellings (+179 jobs) per annum. This equates to 1,215 dwellings (-1,545 jobs) to 4,800 dwellings (+2,685 jobs) respectively over the 15 year Plan Period (2018-2033). However, it was recognised that the RLDP does not start with a 'clean slate' for housing numbers; as some dwellings have already been built since the start date for the RLDP (i.e. 382 dwellings already built since 2018). In addition, many housing sites already have planning permission or are under construction and are considered likely to be built by 2033 (1,883 dwellings). Also, based on past trends, it can be estimated that some dwellings will come forward on 'acceptable' sites that are not allocated in the RLDP (i.e. on 'small sites' of 9 or less dwellings (392 dwellings) or on larger 'windfall sites' of 10 or more dwellings (537 dwellings)). Therefore, in summary, some 3,194 dwellings could be considered as already 'committed', before choices can be made in the RLDP.

2.35 Thus, taking account of the above housing 'commitment' figure of 3,194 dwellings, six of the housing growth scenarios are likely to be exceeded in any event. Therefore, the five possible remaining growth scenarios were considered against the ten themes of the ISA Framework by AECOM in this Report; the summary findings of this work are presented in Chapter 6 and the detailed appraisals provided in Appendix III.

2.36 In analysis of the ISA findings, it was noted that there are no differences between the five growth options in terms of their effect on 4 of the ISA themes; marginal differences in terms of their effect on 'health & well-being'; but scalable difference in term of there being more positive effects (some significant) as growth levels increase on 'economy & employment', population &

communities' and 'equalities, diversity and social inclusion'; but to a similar scalable effect, to the detriment of 'natural resources' and 'climate change', where the lower growth options perform better. However, in conclusion, the highest growth option 5 (Dwelling-led: 300 / 320 p.a.) performed best against the full ISA Framework. In addition, it was noted that the 3,194 dwelling 'commitments' already accounted for above, a further 1,143 dwellings are likely to obtain planning permission before the new RLDP is adopted under the current Torfaen LDP, making an expected total of 4,337 dwellings over the Plan period in any event. Therefore, the ability for any new allocations to enable change and deliver the RLDP Vision & Objectives were limited to the highest policy growth scenarios of 300 or 320 dwellings per annum.

- 2.37 As regards jobs, the Torfaen Employment Land Study, has forecast that the Council needs to allocate between approximately 44ha and 54ha of employment land over the Plan period. Therefore, 50ha of employment land allocations and the highest housing growth scenario of 4,800 dwellings (plus a 15% flexibility allowance to allow for delays in site delivery and a choice and range of site sizes and locations) has been recommended as the RLDP Preferred Strategy over the plan period.

## Distribution of growth

- 2.38 The next / linked choice was consideration of the Spatial Options (the where?) i.e. where this level of new growth should be located. Here stakeholders and members considered the following 5 spatial options; and a hybrid of Options 2 and 5 was favoured by the majority:-

- Option 1 - Within existing settlement boundaries;
- Option 2 - Eastern expansion of Cwmbran - Based on significant candidate sites submitted in this area and an employment opportunity associated with the new hospital development at Llanfrechfa Grange;
- Option 3 - Southern expansion of Cwmbran - based upon significant candidate sites submitted within this area;
- Option 4 - Market led growth; or
- Option 5 - Continuation of existing LDP Strategy - the 'Network of Integrated Communities'; where development and access to services and facilities are focused on the three key settlements / towns in Torfaen.

- 2.39 Similar to the level of growth above, these 5 Spatial Options were considered against the ten themes of the ISA Framework by AECOM in this Report; the summary findings of this work are presented in Chapter 6 and the detailed appraisals provided in Appendix III.

- 2.40 In analysis of the ISA findings, it was noted that the ISA shows that the market led growth option is the least preferred; and development within existing settlement boundaries would be the most preferred. However, this latter option was considered less practical as, taking the candidate sites assessments into account, it would result in the loss of valuable greenspaces and employment land; and there are also issues of sites not being in 'sustainable' locations. Similarly, this option is unlikely to deliver associated employment land, which are key PPW10 and RLDP objectives to justify any housing growth. Therefore, whilst there was little to separate the remaining three growth options, the eastern expansion of Cwmbran performed well; and noting the stakeholders and members workshop majority preference for this option and the continuation of the existing LDP Strategy a hybrid of both growth options was thus been developed into the RLDP Preferred Strategy.

- 2.41 In summary, the continuation of the existing 'Network of Integrated Communities' (Eastern Expansion of Cwmbran) 'hybrid' Strategy would focus particularly on the three key settlements of Cwmbran, Pontypool and Blaenavon to ensure that they are successful and function as service hubs for the surrounding and lower tier settlements. Development would be emphasised along key transport routes and in locations where services and facilities already exist or can be provided. The strategy also reflects the role, scale and function of individual settlements; with each settlement building upon its particular opportunities for the benefit of the County Borough as a whole. This strategy would seek to ensure that key services and facilities are accessible to the County Borough as a whole. Improvements to existing facilities would be

sought to reduce disparities between settlements and improvements in accessibility to key services would be directed to ensure access for all, which will assist in reducing social inequality and make communities more self-sufficient.

## Candidate sites

- 2.42 Finally, as regards the 'Candidate Sites' submitted by landowners or developers for potential inclusion in the RLDP; 96 sites were subject to a 'Stage 1 - High Level Assessment' using a methodology based upon national policy considerations in Planning Policy Wales, the Draft Development Plans Manual, and an agreed South East Wales Strategic Planning Group (SEWSPG) regional methodology. 42 sites were rejected at Stage 1; and 54 sites progressed to a comprehensive 'Stage 2A - Planning Assessment' (of 42 questions) and also scored against the seventeen RLDP Objectives ('Stage 2B'). As a result, 22 positive / neutral scoring sites were then considered against the ISA (ten) Themes / (sixteen) Objectives by AECOM under the final part of Stage 2B. In addition, 4 further 'strategic' candidate sites have also been fully assessed which are being recommended for inclusion in the RLDP Preferred Strategy by officers.
- 2.43 The ISA findings for candidate sites is summarised in Chapter 6 with the detailed appraisal presented in Appendix IV of this report. The candidate site assessments have therefore identified the more sustainable / deliverable sites when considered against national policy and what the RLDP / ISA Framework is looking to achieve; and will be published for 8 weeks public consultation in the draft Candidate Sites Assessment Report (CSAR) alongside the RLDP Preferred Strategy. During the consultation on the draft CSAR:-
- a. members of the public will be able to make comments on any of the candidate sites; for consideration and reporting in the final CSAR published alongside the Deposit RLDP later in 2020;
  - b. candidate site proposers will be able to submit additional information in support of their site for its re-assessment in the final CSAR;
  - c. site proposers, with strategic sites in the RLDP Preferred Strategy or with positive / neutral Stage 2B scores, will be asked to submit / agree further supporting details and viability assessments for their sites; and
  - d. interested parties will be able to submit new candidate sites (with full supporting information being required).

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

## 3. Appraisal findings at this stage

- 3.1 Part 2 of the ISA Report and this Non-Technical Summary answers the question - What are appraisal findings at this stage? - by presenting an appraisal of the Preferred Strategy Document. Summary findings of the appraisal are presented below.
- 3.2 The ISA found that the Preferred Strategy has the potential for significant positive effects in relation to the economy and employment and population and communities ISA themes. It proposes a level of growth to meet the needs of communities during the plan period and distributes it according to the settlement hierarchy, the majority of growth being focussed at settlements where there is good access to sustainable transport modes and existing facilities/ services/ employment opportunities. Where possible, it takes advantage of opportunities being presented through the Cardiff City Deal and South East Wales Metro.
- 3.3 The ISA found that the Preferred Strategy has the potential for long term positive effects on themes relating to transport and movement, climate change, health and wellbeing and equalities, diversity and social inclusion. However, given the scale of growth it is unlikely that it would result in a residual significant effect.
- 3.4 The overall effects on natural resources, biodiversity and landscape remain uncertain at this stage. The development of the HRA will support conclusions on the overall effects in relation to biodiversity at the Deposit Plan stage; however, further agricultural land quality assessment would be required to identify overall likely effects in relation to soil resources and ultimately the nature and significance of the likely residual effects in relation to the landscape will be dependent upon the final design and layout of development schemes.
- 3.5 **Table 3.1** below sets out a summary of the appraisal findings for the Preferred Strategy 'as a whole' against each ISA theme.

**Table 3.1: Summary appraisal findings**

| ISA theme   | Commentary  | Residual significant effect predicted at this stage? |
|---|---|--|
| <b>Economy and employment</b>                     | The Preferred Strategy proposes the delivery of new employment land and homes to meet identified needs and provide flexibility during the plan period. Overall, the Preferred Strategy supports the growth aspirations of the Council as well as takes advantage of opportunities arising from the Cardiff City Deal and South Wales Metro proposals. As a result, it could help to increase the activity rate, reduce economic inactivity and reduce out-commuting of the current population.  | <b>Yes - Positive</b>                                |
| <b>Population and communities</b>                 | The Preferred Strategy proposes the delivery of 4,800 dwellings at the County's most sustainable settlements, with growth principally concentrated at strategic sites in Cwmbran and Pontypool. The broad distribution of growth is supported by a number of policies which are likely to contribute to positive effects in relation to providing a range of homes in sustainable locations and enhancing design quality. Key messages from the relevant strategic policies include: establishing a preference for developing brownfield sites before greenfield; making land available for small and medium housebuilders to ensure supply is not simply coming from major developers on strategic sites; embedding opportunities to sustainably access local services and facilities into new development, and; aligning the development of new homes with the development of new employment land and other key services and facilities.                | <b>Yes - Positive</b>                                |
| <b>Health and wellbeing</b>                       | The Preferred Strategy presents opportunities to link new development with the existing walking, cycling and Green Infrastructure networks at the two main settlements, whilst also offering potential to secure enhancements to these networks through the development process. Where possible, the Preferred Strategy supports growth at locations from which goods, services and local employment could potentially be reached via healthy travel options, subject to detailed matters of site design and layout. It also directs the majority of housing growth to settlements with the widest range of healthcare facilities and requires that such facilities are enhanced as necessary through the development process to continue to provide a high quality service. Although effects are predicted to be positive overall, it is considered unlikely that they will be significant.  | <b>No</b>  |
| <b>Equalities, diversity and social inclusion</b> | The strategic policies of the Preferred Strategy support enhanced access to local employment opportunities and new housing which will support aims to tackle inequalities and deprivation. This includes a focus on improving access to town centres by sustainable modes of transport - with a particular focus on active travel opportunities, and on designing new development so that multiple uses can be safely and conveniently accessed by all members of the community. With demonstrated efforts to reduce poverty and inequality, tackle social exclusion and promote community cohesion, it is considered that the Preferred Strategy is likely to have a long term positive contribution to addressing the objectives of the equalities, diversity and social exclusion ISA theme, though the residual effect is unlikely to be significant.   | <b>No</b>  |
| <b>Transport and movement</b>                     | By focussing growth at the two largest settlements the Preferred Strategy directs the majority of new development to locations which are best served by public transport and are closest to the widest range of local services, facilities and employment. This could help reduce the need to travel by car to meet some needs and could help facilitate walking and cycling. The strategic policies of the Preferred Strategy establish clear support for embedding walking and cycling connectivity into new development to link new homes and employment sites with services and facilities through active travel. Overall, there is potential for positive effects in relation to transport and movement though the degree of significance will be informed by the final design and layout of site allocations, particularly the strategic sites, as well as the extent to which active travel infrastructure is delivered through the final schemes. | <b>No</b>  |

| ISA theme                            | Commentary  | Residual significant effect predicted at this stage? |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|
| <b>Natural resources</b>             | The Preferred Strategy's focuses the majority of growth to Cwmbran and Pontypool means that there will be opportunities to seek delivery on brownfield sites in the existing urban areas, including the strategic brownfield sites of the former County Hall & Police HQ in Cwmbran and Pontypool College in Pontypool. This will help to direct development away from agricultural land and is consistent with the natural resources ISA objective to make the best use of previously developed land and to minimise pressure for greenfield development. Despite this, some greenfield development will be necessary to meet housing need, and much of the strategic site at Llanfrechfa is currently in agricultural use. However, the precise nature of effects will depend on the quality of this agricultural land. The baseline position of the County in relation to air quality and water resources and mineral resources is considered unlikely to be affected by development proposed through the Preferred Strategy given the scale of growth across the plan period. Overall, an uncertain effect is predicted at this stage as the nature and significance of effects are dependent on the quality of the agricultural land which will be lost through greenfield development, particularly at Llanfrechfa. | <b>Uncertain</b>                                     |
| <b>Biodiversity and geodiversity</b> | The proposed distribution of growth through the Preferred Strategy could potentially see new development delivered in relatively close proximity to a number of locally designated sites. The HRA could not conclude no adverse effect on European sites at this stage until further evidence base work is carried out and the precise location of development is known at Deposit Plan stage. Development proposed through the preferred strategy has the potential for impacts on biodiversity that could have both positive and negative effects. The Preferred Strategy includes policies that seek to protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity. Uncertain effects are identified at this stage until further HRA work is carried out.   | <b>Uncertain</b>                                     |
| <b>Historic environment</b>          | The plan area contains one of Wales's three World Heritage Sites, the Blaenavon Industrial Landscape. Avoiding adverse effects upon, and seeking opportunities to enhance, the WHS will be an important strand of ensuring overall positive performance in relation to the historic environment ISA theme. There are a number of designated and non-designated heritage assets within the rest of the plan area, though it is notable that the Preferred Strategy directs the majority of growth to the new town of Cwmbran which is distant from the WHS and has very limited intrinsic heritage sensitivity. As a result, there is low potential for adverse effects on sensitive assets. The Preferred Strategy includes policies that seek to protect and where possible enhance the landscape and historic environment. Taking the above into account, no significant effects are anticipated in relation. The Preferred Strategy is not likely to have any direct or significant effects on the Welsh language - indirectly the proposed delivery of housing and new jobs to meet needs as well as wider infrastructure has the potential for positive effects on the Welsh Language but these are not likely to be significant.  | <b>No</b>  |
| <b>Landscape</b>                     | Development proposed through the Preferred Strategy has the potential for both positive and negative effects on the landscape/ townscape, including special landscapes such as the World Heritage Site, National Park and Special Landscape Areas (SLAs). The strategic policies aim to protect and enhance important landscape features/ areas; notably through protecting greenfield land outside settlement boundaries from inappropriate development where possible. In this context, uncertain effects are identified at this stage as the nature and significance of effects will ultimately be dependent on the design and layout of development, particularly at the proposed Llanfrechfa strategic site east of Cwmbran. However, it is considered unlikely that residual effects from the Preferred Strategy will be significant.   | <b>Uncertain</b>                                     |
| <b>Climate change</b>                | Although any scale of growth has the potential to increase emissions from the built environment to some extent, the limited scale of growth and its efficient use of available land means that effects are unlikely to be significant. The key policies of the Preferred Strategy seek to minimise adverse effects in relation to flooding and emissions; or mitigate these where avoidance is not realistic or practicable. Whilst it is recognised that policy provisions could be enhanced through direct identification of the need for further   | <b>No</b>  |

| ISA theme | Commentary   | Residual significant effect predicted at this stage? |
|-----------|--|--|
|           | <p>hydrological assessment at two of the five proposed allocation sites, the PPW position in relation to flood risk is likely to ensure no residual significant effects. Requirements to deliver high energy efficiency in all new development and in-principle support for low carbon energy generation are also established. Overall, long-term positive effects are anticipated in relation to climate change, though the small scale of proposed development means that these effects are not considered likely to be significant overall.</p> |  |

## **Part 3: What happens next?**

## 4. Next steps and monitoring

- 4.1 Part 3 of the Initial SA Report and this Non-Technical Summary explains the next steps in the plan-making/ SA process.

### Next Steps

- 4.2 The Initial SA Report and this Non-Technical Summary will accompany the Preferred Strategy for public consultation in March - May 2020. Any comments received will be reviewed and then taken into account as part of the iterative plan-making and ISA process.
- 4.3 The representations received along with further evidence base work, including further ISA work, will inform the development of the Deposit RLDP which is scheduled to be published for consultation later in 2020. An updated ISA Report will accompany the Deposit RLDP for consultation.

### Monitoring

- 4.4 Monitoring measures will be established within the next version of the ISA Report to address the potential significant effects associated with the Deposit version of the plan. No measures have been identified at this stage, as the Deposit RLDP is yet to be prepared.

