

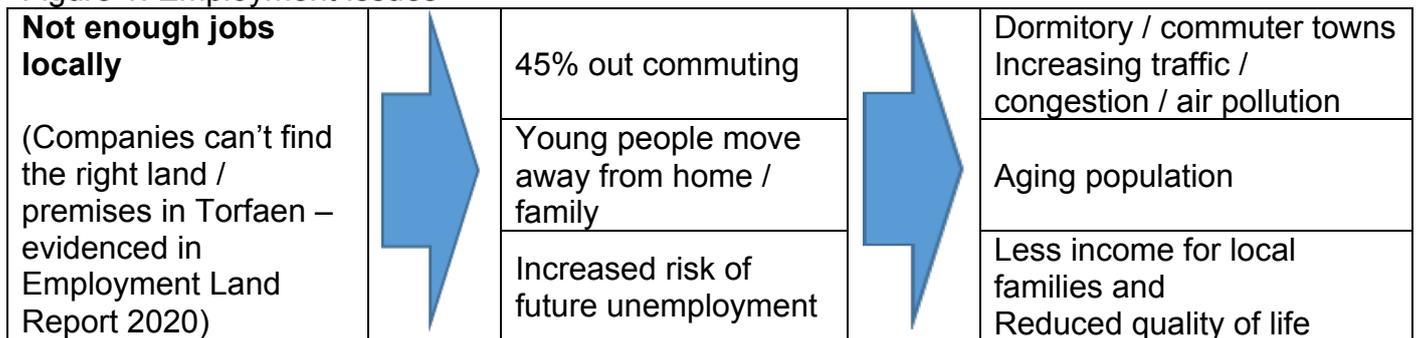
The Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP) Strategy Frequently Asked Questions: Craig Y Felin Strategic Action Area

The Strategy

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 requires the Council to achieve sustainable development – meeting the current needs of the population without preventing future generations from meeting their needs. This requires a careful balance of economic, social, environmental and cultural issues.

Planning Officers have looked at lots of the issues facing the residents of Torfaen (detailed at Section 3 of the Preferred Strategy) and have focussed on the following as one of the biggest issues with knock-on impacts that are likely to affect the most people:

Figure 1. Employment Issues



We have also taken into account the Torfaen and Welsh Government declarations of a climate emergency and the legal requirements for the country to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. So our priorities for land use planning 2018 to 2033 are:

Prevent / Reduce above Employment Related Issues AND Climate Change

Starting Point 2020:

- 818 homes already built 2018-2020
- 1,638 homes with planning consent (of which 633 will be 'affordable' (for people on the TCBC Housing Register))
- Expectation of 888 new homes from unforeseen planning applications until 2033 (number of affordable unknown)
- 26 Hectares of Employment land from a proportion of remaining LDP allocations to be taken forward in the Replacement LDP with an additional 20 to 30 hectares also required. In order help assist with the delivery of this site a mixed use scheme including residential development is being proposed to help with site delivery i.e. providing infrastructure.

Proposal:

Our idea is to use residential development to pay for the preparation of new employment sites including roads, electricity and water services to encourage new and expanding businesses to move in / stay in the area. This could have a positive impact on all of the issues identified in Figure 1. An additional benefit of this idea is that the development would provide quality market and affordable homes (for people on the TCBC Housing Register).

The Welsh planning system requires **all** development to be based upon 'placemaking' which means it is designed to be unique – combining features of the location with useful walking and cycling paths, green surroundings for people and the local wildlife, provision of essential community facilities such as schools, playgrounds and local shops, all in a high quality design that connects the development to the 'place' and encourages people to build a sense of community. The two Strategic Action Areas named in the Preferred Strategy could both provide this opportunity.

Craig Y Felin Strategic Action Area: The site is identified for employment land in the current Local Development Plan but this has not been successful so far. In 2018, the landowner put the site forward for new housing. Planning Officers considered that a combination of some employment and some new housing could be acceptable. Planning Officers are still in the early stages of considering this site and have asked the landowner for more information and evidence relating to traffic, land quality, minerals within the ground, noise and air quality. If the site continues to be considered, we will also need ecological surveys, tree surveys and landscape impact assessment.

Q. 1 Why are you suggesting a greenfield site over brownfield? The development of brownfield land is always the first choice but there are surprisingly few options for brownfield development sites in Torfaen and these are mostly already accounted for in the employment land survey. In order to address the issues in Figure 1, we need a large enough site that can provide new employment opportunities. The site also needs to be next to an existing town to benefit from the central services and facilities available (see also Q4. below) and enable walking and cycling as a realistic travel option.

Q. 2 How can you justify the loss of green open space (impact on wildlife, walking, access to nature, mental health, climate emergency)? Sustainable development is a balancing act between economic, environmental, social and cultural issues. In this case, the potential positives of new high quality employment opportunities would have knock on benefits to the issues set out in Figure 1. Protected wildlife and ways to address the climate emergency would have to be built in to any detailed proposal. The woodland and river corridor and the public rights of ways footpaths would be kept.

Q. 3 How can you consider a site that scored so badly against the RLDP objectives? The assessment was completed on the basis of information provided by the landowner and known by Planning Officers in 2018. It has been published in draft form with full knowledge that it will be updated as more information becomes available. Planning Officers can direct a landowner to address some impacts in any proposal that is put forward and therefore it is expected that an overall positive score will be achieved when more information is available and upon successful negotiation with the landowner / developer. The final score will be published for public consultation with the draft version of the full RLDP, expected later in 2021.

Q. 4 There aren't enough school places, doctors and dentists to cope with any new homes. The roads will not cope with the increased traffic. How can this be answered? Planning Officers are working with the Torfaen Education Officers to see how many children may live on the site and how they can be provided for in local schools. Planning Officers have also met with Aneurin Bevan University Health Board to discuss the options for healthcare. This work is ongoing because consideration of the site is still at such an early stage. Both education and healthcare will form part of the overall conclusion on whether the site can be taken forward. Planning Officers have asked for a traffic impact assessment on the surrounding road network after the lockdown. This has yet to be received but will be fully examined. Planning Officers will work with the Welsh Government to assess the impact on the A4042.

Q. 5 Why have you undertaken a public consultation during a pandemic? The Preferred Strategy consultation was originally due to start in March 2020 and at that time would have run for 6 weeks (the legal requirement) with public exhibitions in the main towns. The first lockdown immediately put the consultation on hold. By November 2020, Wales had just completed the firebreak lockdown and there was general confidence in the libraries and Civic Centre being available for a period of 6 weeks for public access to the consultation documents. Planning Officers have a strict timetable for development of the RLDP agreed by both Torfaen Councillors and the Welsh Government. There was no overriding reason for further delay at that time.