



# Torfaen County Borough Council Local Development Plan (to 2021)

## Annual Monitoring Report 2017 Executive Summary October 2017



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## Executive Summary

**Background** - The Torfaen Local Development Plan (LDP) was adopted by Torfaen County Borough Council on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2013. The LDP sets out the Council's objectives and priorities for the development and use of land within Torfaen and its policies and proposals for implementing them up to 2021. Following adoption of the LDP the Council has a statutory duty to produce an Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) for submission to the Welsh Government by the 31<sup>st</sup> October each year. This is the third AMR, and is based on the preceding year from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017. The AMR has two key roles, firstly to consider whether the LDP Strategy and Policies are being implemented successfully and secondly to consider all the information gathered from the various monitoring indicators to determine whether a full or partial review of the Plan is required. The Council is required to undertake a full review of the Plan 4 years after its adoption (December 2017) unless the AMR indicates otherwise. The AMR monitors the effectiveness of delivery of the Plan, its sustainability credentials and any contextual issues that will influence its implementation. *The second AMR (2016) concluded that 'There is evidence to indicate that there is a need for a full or partial review of the plan at this time. Despite work to promote sites progress in delivery of the strategy is slower than expected primarily due to the prevailing economic climate impacting on the housing and employment markets. A Report is to be presented to Council to consider the options for review in the context of the emerging national and regional planning situation.*

**Contextual Changes** - In assessing the performance of the LDP and hence determining whether a full or partial review of the LDP is required it is necessary to consider any national, regional and local contextual changes that have occurred in the preceding year that may have affected the delivery of the LDP or even necessitate the need for its review.

**National Context** - includes considering the effects of the BREXIT vote, resulting in a complete loss of EU grants which would result in post BREXIT funding shortfall for Wales. Further it considers the Wales Act 2017, the Welsh Government White Paper (Reforming Local Government: Resilient and Renewed), the Welsh Government National Development Framework Statement of Public Participation, The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015; latest 2014 based population projections for Wales, potential reforms to the Community Infrastructure Levy, Welsh Government Consultations 'Planning for Gypsy, Traveller and Showpeople Sites (Feb 2017), and Building Regulations Sustainability Review (May 2017) Taking forward Wales Sustainable Management of Natural Resources (June 2017), Enabling Gypsies Roma and Travellers (September 2017), Welsh Government Valleys Task Force 'Our Valleys, Our Future (July 2017), Welsh Government Prosperity for All: the national strategy and several Policy documents (revisions to Planning Policy Wales (PPW) No.9; TANs and guidance letters.

**Regional Context** - The Cardiff Capital Region City Deal was signed by the 10 constituent Local Authority Leaders (from Blaenau Gwent, Bridgend, Caerphilly, Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil, Monmouthshire, Newport, Rhondda Cynon Taff, Torfaen and the Vale of Glamorgan), the Secretary of State for Wales, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury and the First Minister on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2017. The CCRC is a 20 year / £1.28 billion investment programme which aims to achieve a 5% uplift in the Region's GVA ('Gross Value Added' - a measure of the value of the goods produced and services delivered in the area) by delivering a range of programmes which will increase connectivity, improve physical and digital infrastructure, as well as regional business governance. Over its lifetime, local partners expect the CCRC

to deliver up to 25,000 new jobs and leverage an additional £4 billion of private sector investment by 2036.

Similarly, it is likely that Torfaen will be part of the future Cardiff Strategic Development Plan (SDP) area. An SDP is expected to cover cross boundary matters of more than local community importance; and could include the strategic elements of LDPs; such as larger housing / employment sites, major transport schemes, etc. This regional context is important as whilst the whole of former 'Gwent' is now covered by adopted LDPs a number of South East Wales authorities are embarking on reviews of their plans. A decision on the SDP was expected in January 2017; but has been delayed to the end of the year.

**Local Context** - Within Torfaen progress is being made in delivering the LDP allocated housing sites, and whilst we are performing well in terms of the supply of planning permissions for new housing in delivery terms we are behind target in meeting the LDP Housing target of 4700 dwellings and associated housing sub market area targets. New house prices continue to rise and the housing market prospects are favourable. However the speed of delivery of new housing is below that envisaged in the plan strategy. The latest Joint Housing Land Availability Study 2017 shows that Torfaen has a 3.6 years housing land supply; which is maintained from 2016 but which is still significantly below the required 5 years land supply under WG policy. The plan is performing well in terms of Affordable Housing Delivery.

The Council has made progress in delivering its 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme, including three Primary Schools opened during the year, being built shortly; work is progressing with the preparation of its Torfaen Active Travel Plan with an Integrated Network map due to submitted to WG shortly; and been successful in utilising WG 'Vibrant and Viable Places' funding for delivery of the Torfaen housing Project to speed up delivery of affordable housing units. Following the Welsh Government announcement of a £350m investment for the large regional Grange University Hospital at Llanfrechfa which is allocated as part of the Llanfrechfa Grange Strategic Action Area', initial site infrastructure commenced in July 2017 but the facility is not now expected to open until Spring 2021.

**Local Development Plan Policy Monitoring** - An overview of the LDP Monitoring Data for the 2017 AMR provides an interesting insight into the implementation of the LDP over the monitoring period. Of particular note is the following:-

### **Housing**

- Housing Delivery is behind LDP target. To date 2,114 units (44.9% of the total housing requirement) has been delivered;
- Planning permission for 463 new residential dwellings have been granted during the year (310 market and 153 Affordable units);
- The plan is performing well in terms of Affordable Housing Delivery. A further 118 units have been delivered. To date against the 1,132 target 700 or 61% has been delivered;
- The Draft Statement of Common Ground for the JHLAS indicates the housing land supply figure will be maintained from the 2016 figure at 3.6 years. However the figure is well below the required 5 year figure;
- Major planning approvals have been given for South Sebastopol and the former Llantarnam Comprehensive School with work progressing on both sites;
- An Outline Planning Application and Listed Building Application has been submitted for the major regeneration scheme at Mamhilad Action Area (Policy SAA4) and detailed reserved Matters Application for Phase 2 of the Former Police College Site, St Dials (Policy H1/2); and

- The Annual Affordable Housing Viability Review has shown that the affordable housing percentages and the site size thresholds should remain unchanged.

### **Employment**

- No allocated employment land has been developed in the last year, however, planning permissions for 1.3ha of new employment land has been approved comprising new build and redevelopment of existing sites. However delivery of employment land is significantly below target.

### **Retail**

- Cwmbran continues to perform exceptionally well as a sub-regional centre with vacancy rates well below the national average. Vacancy rates in Blaenavon are above the Welsh average and Pontypool rates have fluctuated over the plan period and are currently just below the Welsh average.

### **Health**

- Planning approval has been granted for the Grange University Hospital (Policy SAA7) and work has commenced on site.

### **Land Reclamation / Regeneration**

- The British SAA5 Action Area, the largest remaining area of industrial dereliction in SE Wales has been bought by the Council and a Cleaning and Greening scheme for the reclamation and subsequent regeneration and redevelopment of this key site in North Torfaen is being progressed.

### **Education**

- Planning approvals granted for a number of new education facilities as part of the Councils 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Program. Council is working on proposals for delivering the Post 16 Centre at the Eastern Strip, Cwmbran.

### **S106 Contributions from new development**

- Through Planning permission granted during 2016-2017 financial contributions totalling £1,298,657.00 alongside provision of affordable housing were secured by planning from new development for the provision of community facilities including Highways improvements, Education, Adult Recreation, Children’s Play and to deliver conservation of a Listed Building.

### **Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)**

- Work on preparation of a Community Infrastructure Levy for Torfaen is progressing with approval of the Draft CIL Charging Schedule by Council in September 2017 which will be consulted on shortly.

### **Heritage**

- The Blaenavon Conservation Area Appraisal has been undertaken this year and is presented for approval at this Council. However the remaining Conservation Area Appraisal Programme is significantly behind schedule.

**LDP Strategy Monitoring** - A summary of the strategy monitoring actions relating to the adopted LDP objectives, which uses a ‘traffic lights scoring system’ is outlined below:-

<b>Revised Monitoring Actions</b>	
Continue Monitoring	
Officer Training Required; Production of Supplementary Planning Guidance / Development Briefs; and Policy Research	
Policy Review; and Plan/Strategy Review	

Table 4.1 below summarises the results of the monitoring of the 18 LDP Objectives for 2017, with the 2016 results indicated for comparison:

<b>Table 4.1: LDP Strategy Monitoring - Summary</b>			
<b>Objectives</b>		<b>2017 Result</b>	<b>2016 Result</b>
<b>1</b>	To ensure the provision of an appropriate quality & range of employment sites and retail opportunities to support high and stable levels of employment in Torfaen and deliver a competitive, modern and sustainable economic and thriving town centres		
<b>2</b>	To promote health and well-being through the provision of development including community facilities, leisure and outdoor recreational opportunities, accessible to all		
<b>3</b>	To ensure that the location of development does not result in unacceptable risk from flooding, subsidence or health hazards		
<b>4</b>	To ensure the highest quality of design in all developments and delivering safe, healthy and attractive environments		
<b>5</b>	To provide opportunities for the establishment of a network of quality educational facilities which serve local communities and are accessible for all sections of the current and future population		
<b>6</b>	To protect, manage and enhance sustainable tourist attractions and facilities in Torfaen for the benefit of tourists and the community		
<b>7</b>	To conserve and enhance the distinctive cultural and historic resources of the County Borough		
<b>8 &amp; 11</b>	To ensure that all new development reflects best practise in sustainable design and location, construction and operation AND To minimise climate change impacts through reduced emissions of greenhouse gases in both new and existing development, and to adapt to climate change through considerations of its effects in the design and location of new development		
<b>9</b>	To allocate mineral sites if required and safeguard appropriate mineral resources from sterilization		
<b>10</b>	To protect, manage and enhance biodiversity and ecological networks across Torfaen		
<b>12</b>	To protect and enhance the valued landscape character of Torfaen, including important open space and sense of rurality between settlements		
<b>13</b>	To protect Greenfield land by enabling and promoting the most efficient use of appropriate brownfield sites for redevelopment across Torfaen		
<b>14</b>	To ensure all development contributes to improving water quality, protecting water supply and maximising the efficiency of water consumption		
<b>15</b>	To identify and conserve important soil and geological resources including Regionally Important Geological Sites (RIGS) and maintain their quality		

16	To ensure the allocation of an appropriate quantity and variety of housing sites to deliver high quality choice in sustainable locations, well served by essential facilities and accessible by a range of transport modes		
17	To develop integrated and efficient transport infrastructure, public transport and communication networks which are accessible and attractive to all, and encourage a reduction in private car use		
18	To ensure people and organisations reduce, reuse and recycle waste and to foster this through the provision of regional and local waste management facilities		

From Table 4.1 above it can be seen that the monitoring has shown that for 10 of the 18 LDP Objectives the indicators suggest the LDP policies are being implemented effectively and no further action is required. The monitoring has also shown that for a further 6 of the LDP Objectives the indicators suggest the LDP policies are not currently being achieved, and that in relation to 2 the situation cannot be addressed without a partial or full review of the Plan. In detail the reasons for these monitoring results are set out in Appendix A. A short summary of the main reasons why these objectives have been indicated as not being achieved is detailed in paragraph 4.7.

**LDP Policy Monitoring** - This AMR in section 4.8 reports on the progress of the implementation of LDP allocations, and where progress is behind schedule it identifies relevant actions that will be undertaken to continue to facilitate delivery of the relevant sites.

**LDP Policy Effectiveness Monitoring** - There is a variation in the effectiveness of LDP policies. Table 4.4 in this AMR identifies where there are issues with the implementation of certain policies with actions to attempt to address them being identified.

**Mandatory Indicators** - The LDP Regulations set out a number of mandatory indicators that should be reported in the AMR. The results of these are set out in Table 4.5 of the main report.

**Sustainability Appraisal Monitoring** - This section details the results of the Sustainability Appraisal / Strategic Environmental Assessment Monitoring, which is required by the SEA Directive. A summary of the results is outlined in Table 5.1 below, showing a reduction in in positive effects against objectives since 2015, however no negative effects identified. However, on balance against the range of SA Objectives, whilst reduced from 2015 an overall positive effect in the state of the environment is being realised. A traffic light system methodology has been used to identify if progress is being made towards the relevant objective. To summarise therefore for monitoring purposes a green result indicates that the results indicate a positive effect against achieving the objective, a white result indicates a neutral effect and red indicates the results suggest a negative effect against meeting the objective. An overview of the appraisal table is below:-

Positive Effect towards meeting the Objective	
Neutral Effect	N
Negative Effect towards meeting the Objective	

The following Table 5.1 sets out the summary assessment of the results of the Sustainability Monitoring with the 2015 and 2016 AMR results shown for comparison:

Objectives		2017 Result	2016 Result
1 & 2	To enable high and stable levels of local employment in Torfaen (positive effects) To achieve economic growth to contribute to business competitiveness (positive effects)	N	N
3	To promote and enhance sustainable tourism in Torfaen (positive effects)		
4	To protect, manage and enhance Blaenavon Industrial Landscape World Heritage Site as a cultural and tourism destination (positive effects)		
5	To protect, manage and enhance biodiversity (both positive and negative effects)		
6	To protect and manage geodiversity (positive effects)		
7	To reduce air pollution and improve air quality (both positive and negative effects)		
8	To minimise noise and light pollution (both positive and negative effects)		
9	To minimise the risk of and from flooding (both positive and negative effects)	N	N
10	To conserve and enhance historic resources and their settings (both positive and negative effects)	N	
11	To protect and enhance the valued landscape character of Torfaen (both positive and negative effects)		
12	To make most efficient use of land and buildings (both positive and negative effects)	N	N
13	To achieve a modal shift to more sustainable transport modes (both positive and negative effects)		
14	To promote sustainable building design (positive effects)	N	N
15	To reduce waste generation and disposal to landfill and maximise reuse and recycling (both positive and negative effects)		
16	To maintain and improve water quality (both positive and negative effects)	N	N
17	To contribute to an increase in the use of renewable energy sources across the County Borough (positive effects)		
18	To improve the affordability of housing (positive effects)		
19	To improve the variety and quality of housing (positive effects)	N	N
20	To improve accessibility to and protect and improve the quantity and quality of local services and facilities (positive effects)	N	N
21	To improve educational attainment and increase skill levels (positive effects)		
22	To improve the health and wellbeing of the population (positive effects)		
23	To promote, strengthen and enhance the cultural identity of communities and improve social cohesion and diversity (positive effects)	N	N

The results of the Sustainability monitoring indicate that out of 23 Sustainability Objectives overall positive effects were identified for 13 objectives and neutral effects for 9 objectives. This year the previous negative effect for Objective 10 has been reassessed as neutral due to progress in the delivery of the Conservation Area Appraisal programme, with the

production of the Blaenavon Conservation Area Appraisal. Overall as identified in the 2016 AMR the table shows for the majority of the sustainability objectives identified, progress is being made, on balance, against the range of monitoring indicators for the particular objective. In detail the reasons for these monitoring results are set out in Appendix B.

**Conclusions** - This 2017 AMR is the third monitoring report prepared since the adoption of the LDP in December 2013. The findings of the AMR provide an important opportunity for the Council to assess the effectiveness of the Plan and to determine whether or not it needs to be reviewed.

In particular the monitoring has shown that for 5 of the LDP Objectives the indicators suggest the LDP policies are not currently being achieved, and that in relation to 2 in respect of Housing Delivery and Employment Delivery the situation cannot be addressed without a partial or full review of the Plan.

It is considered that the evidence collected from this third AMR following adoption of the LDP in 2013 indicates that the basic strategy whilst sound is taking too long to deliver particularly relating to housing and employment development.

### **Recommendation of 2017 AMR**

**As a result of the above the LDP Annual Monitoring Report 2017 concludes with the following recommendation:-**

- 1. There is evidence to indicate the need for a review of the plan at this time because progress in delivery of the strategy is slower than expected primarily due to the global recession and its impact on the housing and employment markets.**