

# Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP) (2022-2037)

## Background Paper: Candidate Sites Assessment Methodology

May 2023

### Executive Summary

*This document is available in Welsh  
Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg*

#### Introduction

- 1.1 This Background Paper is published to inform potential site proposers in advance of the RLDP Call for Candidate Sites. Additional useful documents are the Council's:
- Sustainability Appraisal (SA) assessment criteria / methodology (i.e. the Integrated SA Framework / Scoring Matrix) for Candidate Site Assessment
  - Financial Viability Guidance Note (May 2023)
  - Sustainable Settlement Appraisal (May 2023)
  - Ecology Survey Guidance Note (Nov 2020)
  - LANDMAP Guidance Note (May 2023)
  - Site Design, Masterplanning and Development Briefs Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) (adopted Feb 2023)
  - Sustainable Locations SPG (Consultation Draft Feb 2023)
  - Revised Planning Obligations SPG (adopted Feb 2023)
  - Call for Candidate Sites: Submission Guidance Note

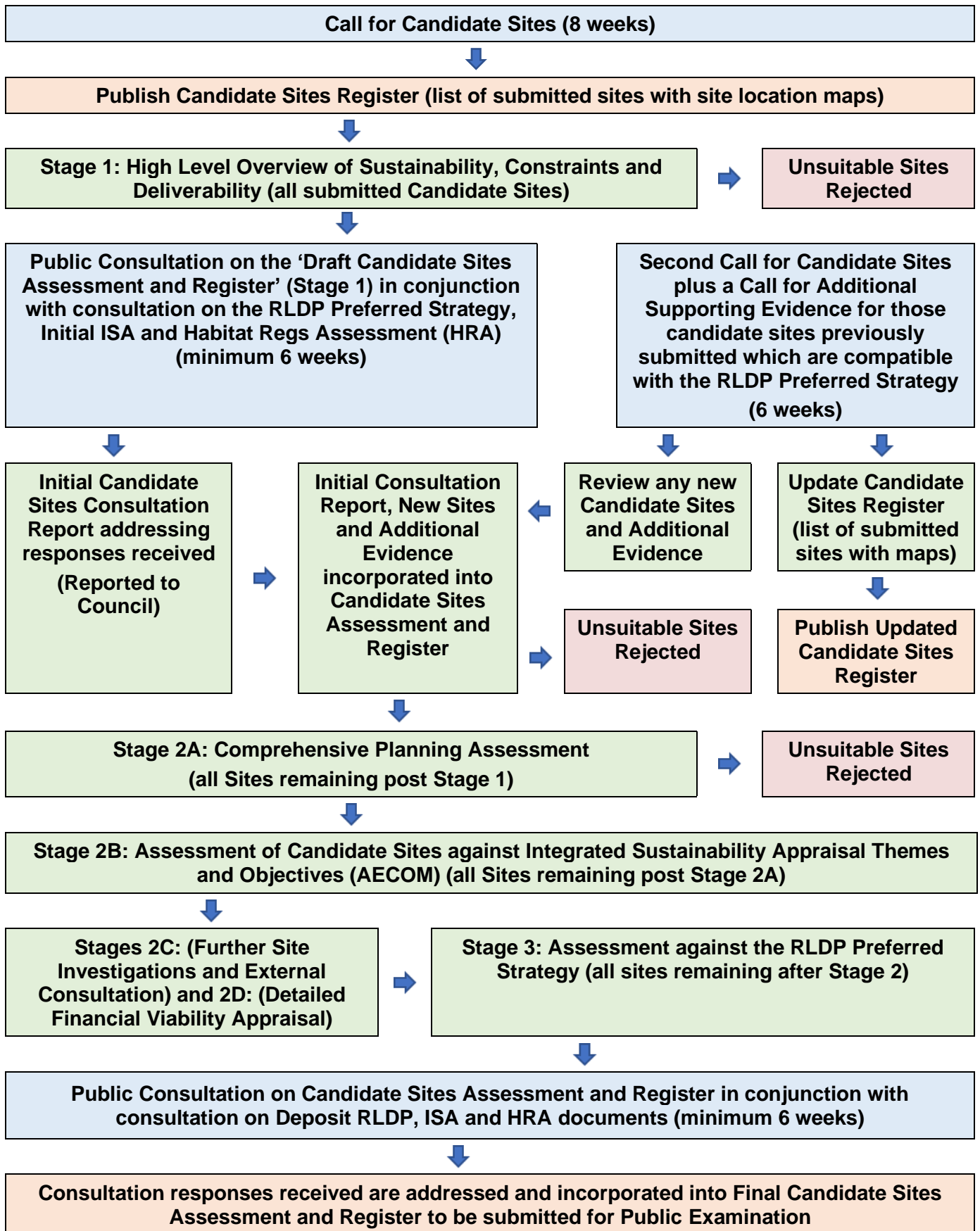
#### Candidate Sites Process

- 1.2 The Council will undertake an 8 week Call for Candidate Sites, publicised in accordance with the Community Involvement Strategy and facilitated by OpusConsult. Submissions will be invited from interested parties who wish to have land considered for inclusion within the RLDP, either for development, re-development or protection from development. Potential land uses include housing, employment, community facilities, tourism, green infrastructure, waste, health, education, social care, Gypsy and Traveller provision, retail, recreation, renewable energy, biodiversity, transport infrastructure and minerals.
- 1.3 The threshold for submission of a residential development is either 10 dwellings or a minimum site size of 0.33ha. Smaller residential sites will be considered through the RLDP settlement boundary review. There are no minimum thresholds for any other land use site submissions. Previously submitted candidate sites (2018 or 2020/21) and existing Local Development Plan

allocations without planning consent will need to be resubmitted. The Council will run at least one workshop event to assist landowners / developers and the wider community with submitting Candidate Sites and we will also offer an optional submission service for a (cost based) fee.

- 1.4 The Call for Sites Submission Guidance Note will advise on the supporting information to be submitted. This must include a Stage 1 viability assessment (see the separate Financial Viability Guidance Note (May 2023)). An inadequate level of information to demonstrate the deliverability of a site (including financial viability) is a valid reason for rejecting a site from Stage 1 of the assessment process.
- 1.5 A 'Candidate Sites Register' listing all submissions will be published following the Call for Candidate Sites. **It is important to note that inclusion of a site within the Candidate Sites Register should not be taken to indicate in any way that a site will be developed, or that it will be included in the Replacement Local Development Plan, or that the Council considers that it should be developed.**
- 1.6 A Second Call for Sites will accept new sites and provide existing site proposers the opportunity to submit additional supporting evidence to address any outstanding issues. A Stage 2 viability assessment and ecological surveys will also be required at this time. It is not expected that the Council will accept any new Candidate Sites following the close of the Second Call for Sites.
- 1.7 The Council will only seek to allocate sites that adhere to national planning guidance as set out in Planning Policy Wales (PPW)11 and the Technical Advice Notes (TANs) i.e.
  - new development in the open countryside, away from established settlements, is unlikely to be acceptable;
  - sites that are subject to international or national designations for biodiversity will not be acceptable; and
  - proposals for highly vulnerable development (which includes housing, public buildings and emergency services) within the highest risk areas of the flood plain will not be acceptable.
- 1.8 The PPW11 site search sequence will be followed, prioritising previously developed land (brownfield) and/or underutilised sites within settlements in the first instance; then suitable and sustainable greenfield sites within or on the edge of settlements. Where insufficient deliverable brownfield sites are available to meet future requirements, the Council will need to consider the release of greenfield sites on the edge of settlements.
- 1.9 In summary, the broad parameters of where sites could potentially be acceptable are:
  - where they focus on the most sustainable settlements identified within the Council's Sustainable Settlement Appraisal;
  - where they comply with the site search sequence set out in PPW11;
  - where they would contribute positively to the National Sustainable Placemaking Outcomes (PPW11); and
  - where there is a focus on minimising the need to travel in accordance with the Sustainable Transport Hierarchy (PPW11).
- 2.9 Figure 1 below sets out an overview of the Candidate Sites process with the blue boxes representing public engagement opportunities:

Figure 1: Overview of the Candidate Sites Process



### Stage 1 Methodology: High Level Overview of Sustainability, Constraints and Deliverability

- 1.10 In accordance with Development Plans Manual (DPM) 3 (2020), the Council's Stage 1 Assessment comprises a high-level overview of key facts, sustainability of location, environmental and physical constraints and any known deliverability or viability issues summarised in a table.
- 1.11 If a site promoter is aware of a significant constraint (e.g. part of the site is within the flood plain, or the site has ecological value, or it is within a high-risk coal mining area) then it is within the site promoters' interests to submit information in respect of this constraint alongside their site submission. Sites included in the RLDP must be realistic, appropriate and be founded on a robust and credible evidence base, and therefore the more information that can be submitted to demonstrate that a site is suitable, the greater the likelihood of a site being included.
- 1.12 Where insufficient information has been submitted, the Council may request additional information such as ecological surveys, arboricultural surveys, strategic flood consequences assessments, drainage studies, coal mining risk assessments, traffic impact assessments, air quality impact assessments, and any other information that may be required to demonstrate that a site is deliverable. The responsibility of undertaking relevant technical work to support a sites inclusion in the plan, including financial costs, resides with the site promoter.
- 1.13 The Stage 1 conclusion for each site will clearly identify whether or not the site should proceed to the next stage in the assessment process and set out the reasoning and / or justification, identifying relevant national planning policy / guidance where appropriate.

#### **4. Stage 2A Methodology: Comprehensive Planning Assessment**

- 4.1 DPM3 (2020) identifies the need for a comprehensive and systematic assessment methodology for all sites which pass through the Stage 1 filtering. Table 5 in DPM3 provides a set of illustrative site assessment criteria under a number of headings in accord with the principles of sustainable development and placemaking contained within PPW11.
- 4.2 As such, the Council has developed a set of 44 questions with key topic areas split between the twin foci of 'sustainability' and 'deliverability', see Figure 2 below. The questions cover a wide range of sustainability issues considered under the headings of Location and Accessibility; Site Context and Character; Accessibility and Highway Capacity; Landscape and Environmental Impact. Deliverability aspects are set out under the headings of Flood Risk; Mineral Resources / Buffer Zones; Infrastructure Capacity; Deliverability; and Viability. A final heading relates to the Planning Context of a site both in terms of any previous allocation within a development plan and / or any relevant historic planning applications.
- 4.3 Internal consultees will be involved in completing this assessment as required. The conclusion will seek to identify the issues raised in the assessment with specific reference to sustainability and deliverability. It will determine whether the Candidate Site should be considered further within the assessment process or not. Reasoning and / or justification, identifying relevant national planning policy / guidance where appropriate will be included.

**Figure 2: List of Stage 2A Assessment Questions:**

1.	How does the site relate to and integrate with the existing settlement form? a) Within the existing settlement b) Settlement rounding off c) Edge of Settlement d) Out of settlement / open countryside
2.	Can the site provide pedestrian access to a wider mix of key community based services / facilities in line with the guidelines established by the Chartered Institute of Highways and Transportation (2015)? *distances measured along footways / footpaths from the furthest point of the site
3.	Could the catchment schools accommodate the additional school places that would likely be required as a result of the development of the site?
4.	Does the proposal result in the loss of public open space / recreational facilities / community facilities?
5.	Does the site comprise Previously Developed Land (as defined in PPW 11 <sup>th</sup> Ed. p37)?
6.	Is the proposed land use compatible with neighbouring uses?
7.	Does the site have any known physical constraints such as Public Rights of Way, power cables, topography, hedgerows, woodland or Tree Preservation Orders?
8.	Is there any reasonable expectation that the site could be contaminated?
9.	Is the site visually prominent within its context so as to pose a potential constraint to development?
10.	Is the site currently accessible from the existing public (adopted) highway network?
11.	Can the site provide safe access to an Active Travel Route (ATR)?
12.	Can the whole of the site be served by a public transport connection i.e. bus stop or railway station, within the preferred maximum walking distance of 800m as identified by the Chartered Institute of Highways and Transportation (2015)?
13.	Does the public transport closest to the site provide an acceptable frequency (minimum of one service per hour from 7am to 7pm, Mondays to Saturdays plus Sunday service) and choice of destination to constitute a realistic alternative to car based travel?
14.	Where the site is not served by an acceptable public transport connection (in terms of proximity, frequency or choice of destination), is it of a size that could sustain a commercial service to support the development?
15.	Is the current highway network capable of accommodating the traffic and travel movements associated with development of the site?
16.	Can a satisfactory highway access be provided to serve the site including the achievement of adequate visibility splays?
17.	Is the site subject to a landscape designation that would have an impact upon the proposed development of the site? (National Park, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, World Heritage Site, Landscape of Historic Interest, Conservation Area or Registered Park & Gardens)
18.	Is the site specifically valued for its contribution to the wider landscape and to what extent?
19.	Is the site subject to an ecological or biodiversity designation that would have an impact upon the proposed development of the site? (Local Nature Reserve, Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation, Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland)

20.	Are there records of Section 7 Habitats, Protected Species/ Wales Priority Species or Habitats or Torfaen LBAP Species or Habitats on the site?
21.	Is the site suitable for supporting protected species or habitats (even if such species and / or habitats are not currently present)?
22.	Is the site strategically important as a Wildlife Corridor or stepping stone habitat?
23.	Has a Green Infrastructure Assessment for the site been undertaken? Does it present constraints for the proposed development or opportunities for multifunctional green space and climate change mitigation or adaptation?
24.	Does the site comprise agricultural land of Grades 1, 2 or 3a (i.e. Best and Most Versatile Land)?
25.	Does the site contain, or is it located within or close to a Listed Building or Scheduled Ancient Monument, where the proposed development could impact its value or setting?
26.	Would development of the site create a significant negative impact on air quality or any potential air quality management area in the locality?
27.	Would development of the site create a significant negative impact on the soundscape of an area or any noise management area in the locality? Would the proposed development be a receptor to unacceptable noise?
28.	Where a site or access is fully or partly located in an area of Flood Risk (TAN 15 Defended Zone, Zone 2 or Zone 3 for surface water / ordinary watercourses and / or flooding from rivers or the sea) identified within the most recent published TAN15 Flood Map for Planning (from June 2023), does the submitted Flood Consequences Assessment adequately address the issue so that the site could be developed as proposed?
29.	Does the site contain any Category 1 or 2 aggregates resources? Does it fall within any existing mineral safeguarding areas or buffer zone?
30.	Does the site fall within a 'High Risk Development Area' regarding former coal workings and mine entry points?
31.	Is the site located in proximity to existing utilities infrastructure with capacity to serve the proposed development?
32.	Does the site fall within an area of opportunity for contributing to low or zero carbon energy generation as specified by the TCBC Energy Opportunities Plan produced as part of the Council's Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Assessment (Carbon Trust, 2020)?
33.	Does the site submission demonstrate the intention to pursue decarbonisation of the built environment via sustainable building design and energy minimising measures in accordance with the Energy Hierarchy for Planning set out in PPW11?
34.	Are there any restrictive covenants relating to the use of the land/buildings contained within the proposed site?
35.	Is the site (including access and visibility splay requirements) wholly in the ownership of the proposer?
36.	If not, are all landowners in agreement with the proposed candidate site land use?
37.	Are there economic constraints / development abnormalities, which will affect the development of the site within the plan period 2022-2037?
38.	Has the landowner / proposer engaged with / undertaken any discussions with a potential developer(s)?
39.	Has an acceptable viability assessment for the Candidate Site been submitted?
40.	Is this site an existing LDP allocation or has it been considered as part of a previous Candidate Site Assessment process?

41.	Have there been any previous planning applications of relevance relating to all or part of the site?
42.	Are there any other unimplemented permissions sites or candidate RLDP development sites in the area that may in conjunction with this one, have a cumulative impact on the surrounding area?
43.	Are there additional studies / surveys or information that need to be provided in order to inform further consideration of the site in the RLDP process? N.B. The Council reserves the right to ask for additional information as required.
44.	Are there additional studies / surveys or information that would need to be submitted in conjunction with a planning application for the proposed development? N.B. The Council reserves the right to ask for additional information as required.

## **5. Stage 2B (ISA Themes and Objectives) Methodology: Assessment of Candidate Sites against Integrated Sustainability Appraisal Themes / Objectives and Scoring Matrix**

5.1 The requirement for Candidate Sites to be assessed against Sustainability Appraisal objectives as part of the Integrated Sustainability Appraisal (ISA) is clearly set out in DPM3 (2020). As stated in the introduction to this Background Paper, the Candidate Sites will be assessed as part of the ISA undertaken by AECOM on behalf of the Council.

## **6. Stage 2C Methodology: Further Site Investigations and External Consultation**

6.1 Consultation of Candidate Sites with external bodies and key stakeholders is specifically referenced within DPM3 (2020) and forms Stage 2C of the Council's Candidate Sites Assessment methodology. Only such sites as have progressed through the assessment process so far should be the subject of this targeted consultation.

6.2 The results of the Stage 2A comprehensive planning assessments will be used to determine the relevant external consultees applicable to each site. Responses received in relation to the further investigations and external consultations will be detailed in the specific site record in the Candidate Site Register and Assessment.

6.3 Organisations that will be consulted include:

- Health and Safety Executive (HSE)
- Coal Authority
- Cadw
- National Grid (formerly Western Power Distribution)
- Ofcom
- Canal and River Trust
- Aneurin Bevan University Health Board
- Bus Operators
- Welsh Ministers (Planning Division)
- Natural Resources Wales (NRW) / Cyfoeth Naturiol Cymru
- Dwr Cymru Welsh Water (DCWW)
- Wales and West Utilities
- Network Rail Infrastructure Ltd
- Glamorgan Gwent Archaeological Trust (GGAT)
- National Grid
- Blaenavon Industrial Landscape World Heritage Site
- International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) UK

## **7. Stage 2D Methodology: Detailed Financial Viability Assessment**

7.1 This Stage of Candidate Sites Assessment focuses on the individual financial viability of candidate sites for their proposed uses. DPM3 (2020) states in paragraph 3.30 that *“to maximise involvement and the effectiveness of all stages of plan preparation, as much evidence as possible should be provided at the candidate site stage, including a financial viability assessment. This applies to all candidate sites.”*

7.2 Requirements for a Financial Viability Assessment to comply with this element of the Candidate Sites Assessment are set out in the separate Viability Assessment Guidance Note (May 2023). To summarise, a Stage 1 viability assessment confirming the principle of financial viability will be required to accompany initial submission of a Candidate Site. A full viability assessment (Development Viability Model - DVM) will then be required to be submitted during the Call for Additional Information.

## **8. Stage 3 Methodology: Assessment against the RLDP Strategy**

8.1 Stage 3 of the Candidate Sites Assessment process considers the appropriateness of each remaining site in relation to the Council’s growth and spatial strategies as tested in the Preferred Strategy and set out within the Deposit RLDP. This stage will also take into account a review of sites against the Public Service Board’s Well-being Assessment for Gwent (May 2022), National Resources Wales’s Area Statement, the Council’s Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) and the ISA conclusions.

## **9. Candidate Sites Assessment Results**

9.1 The Candidate Sites Assessment documents will be merged with the Candidate Sites Register and compiled as a site based record so that all information relating to a single site will be contained in a single location rather than referencing several documents. Indexing will ensure that where a site has multiple entries due to differing proposals, these can be identified and cross-referenced.

9.2 The full assessment for each site will comprise a Summary Page, Site Location Plan, Representative Site Photos, Stage 1 Assessment, Stage 2A Assessment (if applicable), Pre-Deposit Consultation Comments (where submitted) and the Council’s Response, Stage 2C Assessment (if applicable), Stage 2D Assessment (if applicable), Stage 3 Assessment (if applicable) with reference to Concept Masterplan / Framework SPG if appropriate and Deposit Consultation Comments (where submitted) and the Council’s Response.

9.3 The Stage 2B (ISA Themes and Objectives) Assessment will be published separately as part of the RLDP Integrated Sustainability Appraisal.