

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

Sustainable Settlement Assessment - Executive Summary

August 2023

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

The Assessment, which is based upon Welsh Government advice in Planning Policy Wales (Edition 11, February 2021) and the Development Plans Manual (Edition 3, March 2020), and a regionally agreed draft methodology, has analysed the location, role and function of Torfaen's sustainable settlements, their relationship with other settlements in the region; and identified a settlement hierarchy. The assessment involved a combination of desktop survey work and site visits and has identified the most appropriate locations to accommodate future growth in the County Borough in order to achieve sustainable development and placemaking, minimise unsustainable patterns of movement and support local services and facilities. This Assessment forms a key part of the evidence base for the Replacement Torfaen Local Development Plan (RLDP) 2022-2037.

Four settlements have been subject to the assessment, which generally reflect the urban boundaries identified within the adopted Local Development Plan (2006-2021) and comprise the distinct sustainable settlements of Blaenavon, Cwmbran and Ponthir, and the amalgamated urban area of Pontypool.

In order to effectively assess the role and function of each individual settlement an audit of existing services and facilities was undertaken within each settlement in early 2023. This audit was based on the following three principles (as detailed in Tables 1-3 below) and the population size of each settlement:-

- **Principle 1 - The level of sustainable transport and accessibility in and around settlements;**
- **Principle 2 - The availability of local facilities and services in and around settlements;** and
- **Principle 3 - The level of employment opportunities in and around settlements.**

Table 1: Principle 1 - Sustainable Transport and Accessibility

Consideration	Settlement			
	Blaenavon	Pontypool	Cwmbran	Ponthir
Active Travel Provision	Fair	Fair	Fair	Limited
Score (max 10)	5	5	5	2
Bus Service Frequency	every 10 minutes	every 10 minutes	every 10 minutes	every 30 minutes
Score (max 10)	10	10	10	5
Rail Services (location & frequency)	Train Station >3 miles	Train Station in settlement 1-2 trains / hour	Train Station in settlement 2 trains / hour	Train Station >3 miles
Score (max 10)	0	8	10	0
Proximity to Strategic Highway Network	Between 3 and 5 miles	Less than 3 miles	Less than 3 miles	Less than 3 miles
Score (max 5)	2	5	5	5

Total Score (max 35)	17	28	30	12
Weighted Score (40%)	19.4%	32.0%	34.3%	13.7%

Table 2: Principle 2 - Availability of Facilities and Services

Consideration	Settlement			
	Blaenavon	Pontypool	Cwmbran	Ponthir
Presence of Shops within settlement	Minor District Town Centre (TC)	Major Dis.TC Local Centres Pantry Shops	Sub-Regional TC Local Centres Pantry Shops	None
Score (max 27)	10	22	27	0
Regular Needs	3 Conv. Stores 3+ non-f. Shops 1 Post Office 0 Bank 1 Petrol Station	3+ Conv. Stores 3+ non-f. Shops 3+ Post Offices 1 Bank 3+ Petrol Stations	3+ Conv. Stores 3+ non-f. Shops 3+ Post Offices 3+ Banks 3+ Petrol Stations	0 Conv. Store 0 non-f. Shop 0 Post Office 0 Bank 0 Petrol Station
Score (max 15)	7	13	15	0
Community Facilities	3+ Public Halls 3+ P.o.Worship 1 Library (3) 0 Leisure Centre 1 Gym 1 Cin.& Theatre (3) 3 Open Spaces 3+ Sports 3 Children's Play 3+ Youth Clubs	3+ Public Hall 3+ P.o.Worship 1 Library (3) 1 Leisure C. (3) 3+ Gyms 0 Cin./Theatre 3+ Open Spaces 3+ Sports 3+ Children's Play 3+ Youth Clubs	3+ Public Hall 3+ P.o.Worship 1 Library (3) 3 Leisure C. (3) 3+ Gyms 2 Cin./Theatre (3) 3+ Open Spaces 3+ Sports 3+ Children's Play 3+ Youth Clubs	1 Public Hall 1 P.o.Worship 0 Library 0 Leisure Centre 0 Gym 0 Cin./Theatre 2 Open Spaces 2 Sports 2 Children's Play 0 Youth Club
Score (max 30)	23	27	30	8
Medical Facilities	0 Hospital 1 GP Surgery 2 Pharmacies 0 Dentist	1 Hospital (3) 3+ GP Surgeries 3+ Pharmacies 3+ Dentists	1 Hospital (3) 3+ GP Surgeries 3+ Pharmacies 3+ Dentists	0 Hospital 1 GP Surgery 1 Pharmacy 2 Dentists
Score (max 12)	3	12	12	4
Education Facilities	3+ Nursery etc. 1 Prim. Sch. 0 Secondary/6 th Form / 0 Further Education	3+ Nursery etc. 3+ Prim. Sch. 3+ Secondary/6 th Form / 0 Further Education	3+ Nursery etc. 3+ Prim. Sch. 3+ Secondary/6 th Form / 1 Further Education	1 Nursery etc. 1 Prim. Sch. 0 Secondary/6 th Form / 0 Further Education
Score (max 9)	4	9	9	2
Cafes, Bars, Pubs, Rest. & Takeaways	3+ Public House 3+ Cafés, etc.	3+ Public House 3+ Cafés, etc.	3+ Public House 3+ Cafés, etc.	2 Public House 0 Café, etc.
Score (max 6)	6	6	6	2
Broadband Connectivity (website - 07/23)	Superfast: upload: 70 Mb download: 16 Mb	Superfast: upload: 68 Mb download: 18 Mb	Super/Ultra-fast: upload: 62/600 Mb download: 20/50Mb	Superfast: upload: 100 Mb download: 20 Mb
Score (max 5)	3	3	4	3
Total Score (max 104 points)	56	92	103	19
Weighted Score (30%)	16.2%	27.3%	29.7%	5.5%

Table 3: Principle 3 - Employment Opportunities

Consideration	Settlement			
	Blaenavon	Pontypool	Cwmbran	Ponthir
Area of Protected B1-B8 Use Employment Site(s) within settlement	28.3Ha	107.6Ha	189.8Ha	0Ha
Score (max 20)	8	15	20	0
Area of Permitted / Allocated Business / Industrial Sites or Mixed-Use sites within settlement	6.0Ha	7.0Ha	51.9Ha	0Ha
Score (max 20)	10	10	20	0
OR Proximity to Protected / Allocated Employment Site if not within settlement	N/A	N/A	N/A	Less than 1 mile
Score (max 5)	0	0	0	5
Total Score (max 40 points)	18	25	40	5
Weighted Score (30%)	13.5%	18.8%	30%	3.8%

The Settlement Hierarchy - Ranking of Settlements based on their Weighted Scores against the Three Principles and Settlement Size

Using the audit results from Tables 1-3 above, the settlements have been divided into 3 tiers depending on their weighted score against each of the 3 principles. The tiers have been colour coded, with Tier 1 green as they achieve the highest scores; the middle Tier 2 scores as amber; and Tier 3 with the lowest scores as red. The tiers have been arrived at by dividing each category equally into three. Using this combination of scoring and colour coding Table 4a below provides an initial hierarchy of the settlements.

Table 4a: Initial Hierarchy of Settlements based on their weighted scores against the Three Principles

Settlement	Principle 1: Transport Services & Accessibility (40%)		Principle 2: Community Services & Facilities (30%)		Principle 3: Employment Opportunity (30%)		Total	
	Score %	Tier	Score %	Tier	Score %	Tier	Score %	Tier
Cwmbran	34.3%	Tier 1	29.7%	Tier 1	30%	Tier 1	94.0%	Tier 1
Pontypool	32.0%	Tier 1	27.3%	Tier 1	18.8%	Tier 2	78.1%	Tier 1
Blaenavon	19.4%	Tier 2	16.2%	Tier 2	13.5%	Tier 2	49.1%	Tier 2
Ponthir	13.7%	Tier 2	5.5%	Tier 3	3.8%	Tier 3	23.0%	Tier 3

Finally, as the Welsh Government Development Plans Manual (Ed.3 - 2020) also recommends that the size of a settlement be taken into account in the settlement assessment, we have produced the following overall Torfaen Settlement Hierarchy:-

Table 4b: Overall Torfaen Settlements Hierarchy based on (2021 Census) Population Size

Settlement	Overall Settlement Assessment		
	Population (2021 Census)	Score	Tier
Cwmbran	48,354	10	Tier 1
Pontypool	36,629	10	Tier 1
Blaenavon	6,014	6	Tier 2
Ponther	1,260	0	Tier 3

Therefore, the following Torfaen settlement hierarchy has been identified:-

Tier 1: Primary Settlements: Cwmbran and Pontypool;

Tier 2: Main Settlement: Blaenavon; and

Tier 3: Minor Settlement: Ponther.