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Integrated Sustainability Appraisal (ISA) for the Blaenau Gwent Replacement Local Development Plan

Initial ISA Report - Non-Technical Summary

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

December 2019

Quality information

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Table of Contents

1. Introduction....1
2. Plan-making/ ISA up to this point....6
3. Appraisal findings at this stage....19
4. Next steps and monitoring....23

Introduction

1. Introduction

1.1 AECOM is commissioned to lead on an Integrated Sustainability Appraisal (ISA) in support of Blaenau Gwent 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 Preferred Strategy RLDP. 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 replacement LDP seeking to achieve?

1.7 Blaenau Gwent 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.

RLDP Vision and Objectives

1.8 The vision for the RLDP is set out below.

*"Through collaborative working, by 2033, Blaenau Gwent will become a network of connected **sustainable, vibrant valley communities** that support the **well-being** of current and future generations with:*

- *a **prosperous low carbon economy** where people have the skills, knowledge and opportunities to achieve a better quality of life;*
- *residents living in **well connected**, healthy and safe communities, in a range of good quality homes and having better access to services; and*
- *its **distinctive natural environment**, cultural and historic identity is protected and enhanced creating a place where people want to live, work and visit".*

1.9 The RLDP Vision has been broken down into four outcomes and these are considered central to the delivery of the RLDP vision as they embrace the principles of sustainable development and the concept of placemaking and embed the duties set out in the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015.

- **Outcome 1:** Create a Network of Sustainable Vibrant Valley Communities (Placemaking)
- **Outcome 2:** Create Well-Connected, Active and Healthy Communities
- **Outcome 3:** Create Opportunities for a Prosperous Low Carbon Economy and Promote Learning and Skills
- **Outcome 4:** Protect and Enhance the Distinctive Natural and Built Environment

1.10 Under the four key Outcomes sit 19 objectives which have been identified to address the challenges facing the County Borough and to reflect updated national policy and legislation. The objectives are set out in the table below and structured according to the theme under which they sit.

Table 1.1: RLDP objectives

RLDP objective number	Headline	RLDP objective
Outcome 1: Create a Network of Sustainable Vibrant Valley Communities (Placemaking)		
1	Spatial Strategy	To promote the 4 main settlements of the County Borough as the focus for major employment, commercial and residential development
2	Demography	To increase opportunities for people to live and work within Blaenau Gwent resulting in population growth.
3	Placemaking	All developments should contribute to creating high quality, attractive, safe and sustainable places which enhance the community in which they are located whilst having regard to the natural, historic and built environment and supporting and safeguarding the Welsh language.
4	Climate Change	To minimise climate change impacts through reduced emissions of greenhouse gases in both new and existing developments, and to adapt to climate change through considerations of its effects through the design and location of new developments. This can be achieved by: • Maximising the use of previously developed land; • Promoting the re-use and restoration of derelict land and buildings; • By focussing development away from areas vulnerable to flooding; • By increasing the supply of renewable energy; • Encouraging balanced job and population growth to reduce out commuting; • Provision of broadband connectivity to reduce the need to travel; • Provision of ultra-low emission vehicle charging infrastructure to reduce emissions and improve air quality; and • Provision of quality green infrastructure.

RLDP objective number	Headline	RLDP objective
Outcome 2: Create opportunities for a prosperous low carbon economy and promote learning and skills		
5	Economic Growth	To support economic growth through the creation of a thriving well-connected, diverse economy which provides a range good quality employment opportunities to enable indigenous business growth, attract inward investment and competitive innovative businesses in appropriate growth sectors.
6	Education and Skills	To contribute to the improvement of the education and skills infrastructure through ensuring that skills and training match economic growth sectors and facilities can be accessed by all.
7	Minerals/ Waste	To meet the County Borough's national, regional and local requirements to manage and dispose of its waste and to safeguard and to use its mineral resource in a sustainable manner.
8	Circular Economy	Promote the circular economy and make the best use of material resources for the benefit of both the built and natural environments.
9	Tourism	Develop a growing tourism economy to support sustainable and vibrant town centres recognising the role of the County Borough's proximity to the Brecon Beacons National Park, local heritage and leisure opportunities.
Outcome 3: Well Connected, Active and Healthy Communities		
10	Housing	To improve the range and quality of housing through ensuring new developments contain a mix of house types and tenures thus providing affordable, accessible and aspirational homes for existing and future residents.
11	Town Centres	To sustain and enhance a network of 4 town centres serving their own populations and valley catchments whilst recognising that the role of these centres is evolving.
12	Sustainable Transport	To promote accessibility for all by prioritising walking and cycling (active travel) then public transport and finally motor vehicles thus reducing air borne pollution, the need to travel and dependency on private vehicles.
13	Accessibility	To create a network of well-connected settlements where services are easily accessible through improved integrated sustainable modes of transport.
14	Infrastructure	To create an accessible network of green open spaces and high quality leisure and community infrastructure to contribute towards improving health and well-being.
Outcome 4: Protect and Enhance the Distinctive Natural and Built Environment		
15	Ecosystems	To protect, enhance and manage the ecosystems of Blaenau Gwent by enabling them to adapt to climate change through connecting existing areas by creating new linkages and stepping stones.
16	Green Infrastructure	Promote multi-functional green infrastructure with an emphasis on its integration with existing and new development.
17	Landscape	To protect, enhance and manage the distinctive landscape of Blaenau Gwent to help foster sustainable tourism and community pride.
18	Historic/ Cultural	To protect and enhance the historical and cultural environment of Blaenau Gwent to contribute to the regeneration of the area.
19	Environmental Quality	To safeguard the quality of water, air and soil and tackle all sources of pollution including noise.

What is the scope of the ISA?

1.11 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 2018). Taken together, these objectives indicate the parameters of ISA, and provide a methodological 'framework' for appraisal.

Table 1.2: ISA framework

ISA theme	ISA objective
Economy and Employment	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
Population and Communities	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.
Health and well-being	To improve the health and well-being of the population including physical and mental health, social well-being and community safety.
Equalities, diversity and social inclusion	To reduce poverty and inequality; tackle social exclusion and promote community cohesion.
Transport and Movement	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.
Natural Resources (Air, Land, Minerals and Water)	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.
Biodiversity and Geodiversity	To conserve, protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity interests within and surrounding Blaenau Gwent.
Historic Environment	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.
Landscape	To protect and enhance the quality and character of the landscape.
Climate Change	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.
Flood Risk	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 October 2018, with a wide range of evidence produced to inform the development of the RLDP. **Table 2.1** sets out the key RLDP and ISA 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.[1]

Table 2.1: Replacement LDP and ISA stages

RLDP Documents & Consultation	ISA Documents & Consultation
	ISA Scoping Report Sent to statutory consultees for consultation between 31st October and 05th December 2018
Preferred Strategy Public consultation from Thursday 16th January 2020 to Thursday 27th February 2020	This Initial ISA Report and Non Technical Summary Public consultation from Thursday 16th January 2020 to Thursday 27th February 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.[2]

Establishing the Reasonable Alternatives

Levels 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 revised LDPs.[3] To date eleven different scenarios have been prepared each with different outcomes in terms of population, dwellings and demographics. These have been grouped into three options of low, medium and high growth for the RLDP period (2018-2033). For each option a figure is given for the increase in the population, the number of new homes and the impact on the number of people in the workforce. The three options are set out in the table below.

Table 2.2: Growth options

Growth option	Level of housing and employment
Option 1 - Low growth (based on WG latest 2014 projections principal and 10 yr migration)	**Population:** loss of between 857 to 1,815 (-0.8% to 2.6% loss) **Housing:** 19 - 54 per annum (Total: 285 - 810) **Employment:** loss of 94 to 59 per annum (Total loss of 810 to 1,410 jobs)
Option 2 - Medium growth (based on 3 dwelling led projections (5,10 & 15 yr average) and Net nil migration)	**Population:** 162 to 690 gain (0.2 to 1% growth) **Housing:** 79 - 94 per annum (Total 1,185 - 1,410) **Employment:** loss of 52 to 36 per annum (Total loss of between

[1] https://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/en/resident/planning/local-development-plan/local-development-plan-2018-2033/
[2] 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.
[3] https://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/en/resident/planning/local-development-plan/local-development-plan-2018-2033/

Growth option	Level of housing and employment
	540 to 780 jobs)
Option 3 - High growth (based on PopGroup short term, long term, and long term adjusted)	**Population:** 1,996 to 5,009 gain (2.9% to 7.2% growth) **Housing:** 141 - 226 per annum (Total 2,115 - 3,390) **Employment:** -3 to 74 per annum (Total -45 to 1,110 jobs)

Location of growth

2.5 The Council identified three potential high-level options for the distribution of growth during the plan period in the Spatial Strategy Options Briefing Paper (2019). These are as follows:

- **Option 1 (Current LDP)** - North (Ebbw Vale, Cwm, Tredegar, Trefil, Pochin, Bedwellty Pits and Brynmawr (including Nantyglo and Blaina)) / South (Abertillery (including Cwmtillery, Six Bells, Brynithel, Llanhilleth and Aberbeeg) and Swfrydd) split with most of the growth in the north and with a focus of growth in Ebbw Vale;
- **Option 2 (Heads of the Valleys emphasis)** - North/ South split based on opportunities for growth along the Heads of the Valleys corridor; and
- **Option 3 (Balanced growth)** - Growth equally distributed across the borough based on the sustainability of settlement assessments.

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 The current LDP assessed the role and function of settlements when preparing Holistic Action Regeneration Plans for Blaenau Gwent. In addition to this and as part of the RLDP evidence base the Council has carried out a sustainable settlement assessment. Each of the settlements have been assessed in terms of:

- The level of sustainable transport and accessibility in and around settlements;
- The availability of local facilities and services in and around settlements; and
- The level of employment opportunities in and around settlements.

2.8 This is supported by contextual information in terms of size, and characteristics of the settlements. The Council identified two options, the first option is based on the current LDP hierarchy and the second is based on the settlement boundaries as identified in the current LDP. The two options are identified in the table below.

Table 2.3: Settlement hierarchy options

Description	Settlement hierarchy
Option 1: Current LDP	**Principal Hub:** Ebbw Vale **District Hubs:** Tredegar Brynmawr Abertillery **Local Hub:** Blaina
Option 2: Based on Sustainable Assessment of Settlements (settlement boundaries used to identify settlements)	**Tier 1: Principal Settlements** Ebbw Vale Tredegar Brynmawr / Nantyglo / Blaina Abertillery /Cwmtillery / Six Bells / Brynithel / Llanhilleth /Aberbeeg **Tier 2: Secondary Settlements** Cwm

Description	Settlement hierarchy
	Tier 3: Villages and Hamlets
	Trefil
	Pochin
	Bedwellty Pits
	Swfrydd

Spatial strategy options

2.9 The Council merged the potential options for the level and location of growth to identify four realistic spatial strategy options. The first Option 1 (Growth and Regeneration) is based on the current LDP and involved a medium level of growth; with a north south divide and a focus of growth on Ebbw Vale; and a settlement hierarchy based on an analysis of the roles of towns (the current LDP).

2.10 Option 2 (Balanced and Interconnected Communities) involves a low level of growth; with equal distribution across the borough; and based on using the sustainable assessment of settlements to distribute this growth. Option 3 (Economic Growth Strategy) involves high growth; with a north south split based on opportunities for growth along the Heads of the Valleys; using the sustainable assessment of settlement to distribute the growth. Option 4 (Sustainable Economic Growth) is the same as option 3 but spread the growth equally across the Borough. The four options are set out in more detail in the table below.

Table 2.4: Spatial strategy options

Name	Growth Level	Spatial Distribution	Settlement Hierarchy
Option 1: Growth and Regeneration (current LDP)	**Option 2** **Medium Growth** Population: 162 to 690 gain (0.2 to1% growth) Housing: 79-94 per annum Total 1,185-1,410 Employment: loss of 52 to 36 per annum (Total loss of between 540 to 780)	**Option 1** North / South split with most of the growth in the north and with a focus of growth in Ebbw Vale	**Option 1** Principal Hub: Ebbw Vale District Hubs: Tredegar/ Brynmawr/ Abertillery Local Hub: Blaina
Option 2: Balanced and Interconnected Communities	**Option 1** **Low Growth** Population: Loss of 857 to 1,815 (-2.6 to -0.8% loss) Housing: 19-54 per annum (Total: 285-810) Employment: loss of 94 to 59 per annum (Total loss of – 810 to 1,410)	**Option 2** Growth equally distributed across the borough based on sustainability of settlement assessment	**Option 2** Tier 1: Principal Settlements Ebbw Vale/ Tredegar/ Brynmawr / Nantyglo / Blaina/ Abertillery / Cwmtillery / Six Bells / Brynithel / Llanhilleth / Aberbeeg Tier 2: Secondary Settlements Cwm Tier 3: Hamlets Trefil/ Pochin/ Bedwellty Pits/ Swfrydd
Option 3: Economic Growth Strategy	**Option 3** **High Growth** Population: 1,996 to 5,009 (2.9 to 7% growth) Housing: 141 to 226 per annum (Total 2,115 to 3,390) Employment: 74 per annum (Total -45 to plus 1,110)	**Option 3** North / South split based on opportunities for growth along the Heads of the Valleys settlements	**Option 2** Tier 1: Principal Settlements Ebbw Vale/ Tredegar/ Brynmawr / Nantyglo / Blaina / Abertillery / Cwmtillery / Six Bells / Brynithel / Llanhilleth / Aberbeeg Tier 2: Secondary Settlements Cwm Tier 3: Hamlets Trefil/ Pochin/ Bedwellty Pits/ Swfrydd
Option 4: Sustainable Economic	**Option 3** **High Growth** Population: 1,996 to 5,009 (2.9	**Option 2** Growth equally distributed across	**Option 2** Tier 1: Principal Settlements Ebbw Vale/ Tredegar/ Brynmawr /

Name	Growth Level	Spatial Distribution	Settlement Hierarchy
Growth Strategy	to 7% growth) Housing: 141 to 226 per annum (Total 2,115 to 3,390) Employment: 74 per annum (Total - 45 to plus 1,110)	the borough based on sustainability of settlement assessment	Nantyglo / Blaina/ Abertillery / Cwmtillery / Six Bells / Brynithel / Llanhilleth / Aberbeeg Tier 2: Secondary Settlements Cwm Tier 3: Hamlets Trefil/ Pochin/ Bedwellty Pits/ Swfrydd

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

Table 2.5: Summary appraisal findings for growth level options

ISA Themes	Rank/ significant effect	Categorisation and rank		
		Option 1 - Low growth	**Option 2** - Medium growth	**Option 3** - High growth
Economy and Employment	Rank	**3**	**2**	**1**
	Significant effect?	**Yes - Negative**	**No**	**Yes - Positive**
Population and Communities	Rank	**3**	**2**	**1**
	Significant effect?	**Uncertain**	**Yes - Positive**	**Yes - Positive**
Health and wellbeing	Rank	**2**	**1**	**1**
	Significant effect?	**Uncertain**	**Uncertain**	**Uncertain**
Equalities, diversity and social inclusion	Rank	**3**	**2**	**1**
	Significant effect?	**No**	**No**	**Yes - Positive**
Transport and movement	Rank	**=**	**=**	**=**
	Significant effect?	**No**	**No**	**No**
Natural Resources	Rank	**1**	**2**	**3**
	Significant effect?	**No**	**Uncertain**	**Uncertain**
Biodiversity and geodiversity	Rank	**=**	**=**	**=**
	Significant effect?	**No**	**No**	**No**
Historic Environment	Rank	**=**	**=**	**=**
	Significant effect?	**No**	**No**	**No**
Landscape	Rank	**=**	**=**	**=**

	Significant effect?	**No**	**No**	**No**
Climate Change	Rank	**1**	**2**	**3**
	Significant effect?	**No**	**No**	**No**

2.13 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 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 and 3 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.

2.14 The higher growth options (2 and 3) 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 new housing, employment opportunities and community infrastructure to meet the needs of the County Borough. The appraisal identified the potential for a residual long term significant positive effect for Option 3 on the population and communities, economy and employment and the equalities theme. Option 2 was also identified as having the potential for a long term significant positive effect on the population and communities theme. Option 1 is less likely to have a residual significant positive effect on these themes as it would only provide a small level of additional growth beyond what is already committed or likely to come forward as windfall during the replacement LDP plan period. It is therefore less likely to deliver a diverse range of new homes, employment opportunities or community infrastructure. The predicted loss in jobs coupled with the low level of housing growth proposed under Option 1 has the potential for a significant long term negative effect in relation to the economy and employment ISA theme.

2.15 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 and 3 are predicted to have an uncertain effect against the natural resources theme at this stage as the precise location of development is not known. If development is primarily delivered on greenfield land and important mineral resources 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.

Location of growth

Table 2.6: Summary appraisal findings for distribution options

ISA Themes	Rank/ significant effect	Categorisation and rank		
		Option 1 - Current LDP	**Option 2** - Heads of the Valleys emphasis	**Option 3** - Balanced growth
Economy and Employment	Rank	**1**	**1**	**2**
	Significant effect?	**No**	**No**	**No**
Population and Communities	Rank	**1**	**2**	**3**
	Significant effect?	**Yes - Positive**	**Yes - Positive**	**Yes - Positive**
Health and wellbeing	Rank	**1**	**2**	**3**
	Significant effect?	**No**	**No**	**No**
Equalities, diversity and social inclusion	Rank	**1**	**2**	**3**
	Significant effect?	**No**	**No**	**No**
Transport and movement	Rank	**1**	**2**	**3**

	Significant effect?	**No**	**No**	**No**
Natural Resources	Rank	**=**	**=**	**=**
	Significant effect?	**No**	**No**	**No**
Biodiversity and geodiversity	Rank	**2**	**2**	**1**
	Significant effect?	**Uncertain**	**Uncertain**	**No**
Historic Environment	Rank	**=**	**=**	**=**
	Significant effect?	**No**	**No**	**No**
Landscape	Rank	**1**	**1**	**2**
	Significant effect?	**No**	**No**	**No**
Climate Change	Rank	**3**	**2**	**1**
	Significant effect?	**Uncertain**	**Uncertain**	**Uncertain**

2.16 The appraisal found that there is little to differentiate between the Options at this stage with regard to the historic environment and natural resources ISA themes. This is given that all Options have the potential for impacts through directing development to areas that are sensitive in terms of heritage, air, land, mineral and water constraints; albeit in different areas of the County Borough. Development also has the potential to deliver positive effects through mitigation and environmental improvement/ enhancement measures secured at the project scale. While significant negative effects are not anticipated for any of the options this will ultimately be dependent on the precise location and the design/ layout of development.

2.17 In terms of the landscape theme, Options 1 and 2 direct development to more urban areas in the north of the County Borough, that are less sensitive in landscape terms than the south. Option 3 distributes growth evenly throughout the County Borough and is therefore more likely to impact upon key views and visual amenity of the south. Option 3 is therefore worst performing in this respect. Conversely, Option 3 is best performing in terms of the biodiversity ISA theme, given dispersed growth will avoid concentrating growth in close proximity to sensitive biodiversity designations; notably avoiding the European and nationally designated biodiversity sites to the north east of Blaenau Gwent. However, while Options 1 and 2 are considered more likely to lead to negative effects on designated biodiversity sites in the north, these Options (notably Option 1) may offer increased opportunity to deliver larger scale development with greater potential to deliver strategic green infrastructure, including the potential for achieving a net gain in biodiversity at a greater scale. However, this is uncertain at this stage.

2.18 Option 1 is best performing against ISA themes relating to communities, health, economy, transport, and equalities, followed by Option 2, with Option 3 identified as worst performing. Positive effects of greatest significance are predicted through Option 1 as a result of focussing more growth at the principal hub of Ebbw Vale, where there is better access to existing employment and facilities/ services, and an opportunity to deliver large-scale regeneration. This will help to reduce reliance on the private vehicle, encourage a modal shift and support connected, sustainable communities.

2.19 Option 2 also directs growth to the Heads of the Valleys, with less emphasis on Ebbw Vale. Option 2 therefore performs less positively than Option 1 as it would result in a higher level of growth at lower order settlements across the Heads of the Valleys, reducing opportunities to capitalise upon strategic regeneration at Ebbw Vale. However, Option 2 will lead to positive effects through providing opportunity for greater regeneration at the other settlements (not Ebbw Vale) in the north. This will lead to improved connectivity and integration across the Heads of the Valleys, addressing key issues such as housing affordability and deprivation.

2.20 Option 3 performs less well given there is generally poorer access to sustainable transport, employment opportunities and facilities/ services in the wider County Borough. However, it is recognised that there is a train station in Llanhilleth and a proposed extension of the Ebbw Vale railway line to Abertillery through the Metro project. Delivering balanced growth is nonetheless

likely to encourage the trend of private vehicle use and could impact upon the more vulnerable and less mobile members of the community, such as the elderly. While Option 3 would deliver a level of growth to rural communities to the south and contribute towards meeting local needs, it is considered that this Option would be less likely to deliver larger scale growth and therefore provide the critical mass to deliver greater infrastructure improvements. This may lead to exacerbated demographic issues and increased levels of out-commuting. It is also recognised that the south has fewer opportunities for development given the topographical constraints present.

2.21 Option 3 is identified as performing better than Options 1 and 2 in terms of the climate change theme as it directs less growth to areas identified as having high flood risk. However, it is recognised that all new development will accord with Technical Advice Note 15: Development and Flood risk (2004), which sets out a precautionary framework to direct new development away from those areas which are at high risk of flooding. To this effect, in accordance with national policy, information will need to be provided to demonstrate that any development proposal satisfies the tests contained in the TAN.

2.22 It should be noted that it was not considered necessary to carry out an appraisal of the settlement hierarchy options identified in Chapter 5. A detailed assessment was carried out by the Council on the current role and function of settlements, which also took into consideration the relationships between settlements and their potential future roles. The likely significant effects of focussing growth at different areas within the County Borough have been explored through the appraisal of distribution options above and spatial strategy options below.

Spatial strategy

Table 2.7: Summary appraisal findings for the spatial strategy options

ISA Themes	Rank/ Significant effects	Categorisation and rank			
		Option 1 - Growth and regeneration (current LDP)	**Option 2** - Balanced and interconnected communities	**Option 3** - Economic growth strategy	**Option 4** - Sustainable economic growth strategy
Economy and Employment	Rank	**2**	**3**	**1**	**1**
	Significant effect?	**Uncertain**	**Yes - Negative**	**Yes - Positive**	**Yes - Positive**
Population and Communities	Rank	**2**	**3**	**1**	**1**
	Significant effect?	**No**	**Yes - Negative**	**Yes - Positive**	**Yes - Positive**
Health and wellbeing	Rank	**3**	**4**	**1**	**2**
	Significant effect?	**Uncertain**	**No**	**Yes - Positive**	**Uncertain**
Equalities, diversity and social inclusion	Rank	**2**	**3**	**1**	**2**
	Significant effect?	**Yes - Positive**	**No**	**Yes - Positive**	**Yes - Positive**
Transport and movement	Rank	**2**	**4**	**1**	**3**
	Significant effect?	**Uncertain**	**No**	**Yes - Positive**	**Uncertain**
Natural Resources	Rank	**1**	**1**	**2**	**2**
	Significant effect?	**No**	**No**	**Uncertain**	**Uncertain**
Biodiversity and geodiversity	Rank	**2**	**1**	**4**	**3**
	Significant effect?	**No**	**No**	**Uncertain**	**No**
Historic Environment	Rank	**2**	**1**	**4**	**3**
	Significant effect?	**No**	**No**	**Uncertain**	**Uncertain**
Landscape	Rank	**1**	**1**	**2**	**3**
	Significant effect?	**No**	**No**	**No**	**Uncertain**

Climate Change	Rank	**2**	**1**	**3**	**3**
	Significant effect?	**No**	**No**	**No**	**No**

2.23 Options 3 and 4 are considered to perform better compared to Options 1 and 2 against ISA themes relating to the economy and employment, population and communities, health and wellbeing and equalities, diversity and social inclusion. They propose a higher level of housing and employment growth and are therefore more likely to meet the needs of the borough. They are also more likely to deliver greater improvements to community infrastructure and the public realm. The delivery of new homes, employment opportunities and associated infrastructure can help to address deprivation and reduce social exclusion. As a result, they are identified as having the potential for a significant long term positive effects against themes relating to the economy/ employment, population/ communities and equalities/ diversity/ social inclusion themes. Option 2 performs less well against these ISA themes as it proposes the lowest level of growth and is unlikely to meet the needs of communities. It is therefore identified as having the potential for a significant long term negative effect against the economy and employment and population and communities themes.

2.24 Options 3 and 4 generally perform more poorly against ISA themes relating to biodiversity, historic environment, landscape, natural resources and climate change. The higher levels of growth increase the likelihood of impacts and therefore negative effects; however, this is dependent on the location of development. Option 3 is identified as being most likely to result in impacts to sensitive biodiversity and historic environment receptors in the north of the borough. While Option 1 proposes a similar distribution of development it proposes a lower overall level of growth and is therefore less likely to have negative effects. Option 4 is more likely to have impacts on the sensitive landscape in the south of the borough.

2.25 In terms of transport and movement, Option 3 is considered to perform best at this stage and is identified as likely to have a significant long term positive effect. It delivers a higher level of growth and focuses it (new homes, jobs and community infrastructure) at the higher order settlements in the north of the borough with good access to public transport. While Option 1 proposes a similar distribution of development with a greater focus on Ebbw Vale, it also proposes a lower level of growth and would not deliver the same level of employment opportunities or community infrastructure improvements compared to Option 3. Options 4 and in particular Option 2 perform less well as they propose distributing growth equally across the borough, which would include lower order settlements and rural areas. This will not help to reduce the need to travel or encourage the use of more sustainable transport modes.

Developing the Preferred Strategy

2.26 This Chapter 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

Level of growth

Table 7.1: Outline reasons for choosing preferred growth option

Options (type)	Outline reasons
Low Growth Options	
(Demographic) WG 2014-based Principal	Planning Policy Wales (PPW) Edition 10 (December 2018) states that the latest Welsh Government local authority level household Projection for Wales should be considered. The latest available projections, the 2014-based projections, were used and this scenario is based on the Principal projection. Using this scenario as the growth strategy for the RLDP would result in a negative population growth and would adversely impact upon the Council's challenges for economic and housing growth. The combination of the decrease in the population of the workforce cohorts and an increase in the 60+ age cohort would not drive job creation; rather it would result in an outflow of workers and residents from the County Borough. This would result in implications in terms of keeping younger people within the County Borough to live and work. The unbalanced demographic and lack of opportunities would impact on the ability of the County Borough to build sustainable communities.
(Demographic) WG 10 year migration	As with the above option the 2014-based projections, were used and this scenario is based on the 10 year migration projection. Similarly, using this scenario as the growth strategy for the RLDP would result in a negative population growth and would adversely impact upon the Council's challenges of economic and housing growth. The combination of the decrease in the population of the workforce cohorts and an increase in the 60+ age cohort would not drive job creation; rather it would result in an outflow of workers and residents from the County Borough. This would result in implications in terms of keeping younger people within the County to live and work. The unbalanced demographic and lack of opportunities would impact on the ability of the County Borough to build sustainable communities.
(Demographic) OE Baseline	The Oxford Econometrics 'Baseline' economic forecast was based on a similar projection to that presented in the WG 2014 (Principal) scenario. As with the previous scenarios, using this scenario as the growth strategy for the RLDP would result in a negative population growth and adversely impact upon the Council's challenges of economic and housing growth. The combination of the decrease in the population of the workforce cohorts and an increase in the 60+ age cohort would not drive job creation; rather it would result in an outflow of workers and residents from the County Borough. This would result in implications in terms of keeping younger people within the County Borough to live and work. The unbalanced demographic and lack of opportunities would impact on the ability of the County Borough to build sustainable communities.
Mid Growth Options	29% of stakeholders supported the mid growth options.
(Dwelling) Dwelling-led 5 year average	This option represents 'business as usual', i.e. maintaining the past average 5-year build rate. This would result in a continuation of the trend towards an ageing demographic, albeit with a small population growth (0.2%). Adopting this scenario as the growth strategy for the RLDP would fail to address the challenges from both an economic and social perspective. The combination of the decrease in the population of sections of the workforce cohorts and an increase in the 60+ age cohort would not drive significant job creation. This would again result in implications in terms of keeping younger people within the County Borough to live and work. The unbalanced demographic and lack of opportunities would impact on the ability of the County Borough to build sustainable communities.
(Demographic) Net Nil Migration	The latest available projections, the 2014-based projections, were used and this scenario is based on the Net Nil Migration projection. Using this scenario as the growth strategy for the RLDP would result in a 'business as usual' and would not support the Council's challenges of economic and housing growth. Though there would be a small increase in the population (0.3%) there would be a decrease in the population of the workforce cohorts and an increase in the 60+ age cohort would not drive job creation; rather it would result in an outflow of workers and residents from the County

	Borough. This would result in implications in terms of keeping younger people within the County Borough to live and work. The unbalanced demographic and limited economic opportunities would impact on the ability of the County Borough to build sustainable communities.
(Dwelling) Dwelling-led 10 year average	This option represents 'business as usual', that is maintaining the past average 10-year build rate, a continuation of the trend towards an ageing demographic, albeit with a small uplift in the population (1%). As with the previous scenario, adopting this scenario as the growth strategy for the RLDP would fail to address the challenges from both an economic and social perspective. The combination of the decrease in the population of sections of the workforce cohorts and an increase in the 60+ age cohort would not drive significant job creation; rather it would continue to result in an outflow of workers and residents from the County Borough. This would again result in implications in terms of keeping younger people within the County Borough to live and work. The unbalanced demographic and limited opportunities would impact on the ability of the County Borough to build sustainable communities.
(Dwelling) Dwelling-led 15 year average	This option represents 'business as usual', that is maintaining the past average 15-year build rate, a continuation of the trend towards an ageing demographic, albeit with a small increase (1.2%) in the population. As with the previous scenario, adopting this scenario as the growth strategy for the RLDP would fail to address the challenges from both an economic and social perspective. The combination of the decrease in the population of sections of the workforce cohorts and an increase in the 60+ age cohort would not drive significant job creation; rather it would continue to result in an outflow of workers and residents from the County Borough This would again result in implications in terms of keeping younger people within the County Borough to live and work. The unbalanced demographic and lack of opportunities would impact on the ability of the County to build sustainable communities. In view of these negative impacts it is not considered prudent to take this forward as the preferred growth option.
High Growth Options	Stakeholder generally supported the high growth options (71%)
(Demographic) PG Short Term	This option results in a reasonable level of growth (2.9%) in the County Borough's population and also an uplift on the current dwelling delivery levels. This scenario results in a small decrease in the working age population. Though when consideration is given to plans to reduce the unemployment rate, increase the employment rate and reducing commuting rates the impacts on the economy are positive. This demographic-led scenario could result in an undeliverable growth strategy for the County Borough.
(Demographic) PG Long Term	This option results in fairly significant growth in the County Borough's population (4.9%) and also an uplift on the current dwelling delivery levels. The scenario results in an uplift in the working age population and the 0-14 age group. This demographic-led scenario would be ambitious in driving economic aspirations but could result in an undeliverable and unsustainable growth strategy for the County Borough.
(Demographic) PG Long Term (adjusted)	This option results in significant growth in the County Borough's population (7.9%) and also an uplift on the current dwelling delivery levels. The scenario results in an uplift in the working age population and the 0-14 age group. The assumptions behind this option take account of the removal of the Severn Bridge Tolls, however whilst it is likely that this will increase in-migration to the County Borough it is still unclear how much of an uplift will result from this change. This demographic-led scenario would be ambitious in driving economic aspirations but will result in an undeliverable and unsustainable growth for the County Borough.
(Dwelling) Dwelling Led - 120	This option was newly introduced to address concerns with the ability to deliver the high growth options. It represents an improvement on past trends but is slightly lower than the high growth options initially considered. This option results in a reasonable level of growth (2.1%) in the County Borough's population and also an uplift on the current dwelling delivery levels. This scenario results in a small decrease in the working age population. Though when consideration is given to plans to reduce the unemployment rate, increase the employment rate and reducing commuting rates the impacts on the economy are positive. This scenario is considered to be deliverable.

2.27 It is clear from the analysis that although there was significant support for the high growth options during stakeholder involvement and they performed well against the LDP challenges set, they were considered to be undeliverable. Whilst the lower of the high growth options is taken forward as the aspirational level of growth, a new scenario was run based on a dwelling-led figure of 120 in order to ensure a population growth that was deliverable. Economic growth is to be delivered through reducing the unemployment rate, increasing the employment rate

and reducing out-commuting rates. Together, these changes will have positive impacts on the economy.

Distribution of growth

Options (type)	Outline reasons
Option 1: Current LDP – Based on a north south divide with the main focus of growth on Ebbw Vale	It is considered that the existing LDP Strategy is not working, as demonstrated in the LDP Annual Monitoring Reports. The level of growth has not been delivered and the shift to Ebbw Vale has yet to materialise due to a delay in bringing forward the two Strategic Sites. The focus on Ebbw Vale is considered to detract from the challenge to create a network of valley communities. Too much focus on Ebbw Vale would also put pressure on services. The current LDP used the role and function of settlements to identify the settlement hierarchy with Ebbw Vale as the principal hub for the area. Only a limited number of stakeholders (7%) supported the current LDP Option.
Option 2: Heads of the Valleys emphasis	This option provides the ability to build on the opportunities along the Heads of the Valleys settlements. However this could be viewed as a road-based strategy that is not a sustainable strategy. The growth is to be distributed based on the sustainability assessment of settlements though with a focus of growth on the Heads of the Valley settlements. Almost a third of stakeholders supported this Option.
Option 3: Balanced Growth	This option proposed growth to be equally distributed across the Borough settlements. This supported the plan's vision to create a network of vibrant valley communities. It could maximise plans to improve connectivity through the Metro proposals and could therefore support sustainable transport options. The growth is to be distributed based on the sustainability assessment of settlements. The majority of stakeholders (63%) supported this option.

2.28 It is clear from the analysis of the spatial options that Option 3 was the favoured option and would support the vision identified for the Plan.

Spatial strategy options

2.29 The growth and spatial strategy options were combined to create a number of options. Initially three options were created, with an additional option added following consultation with Members.

Options (type)	Outline reasons
Option 1: Growth and Regeneration (current LDP)	This option combined a medium level of growth with the LDP spatial distribution of a north south divide with a focus of growth on Ebbw Vale. The medium level of growth meant that it was less likely to deliver large scale growth and associated improvements. Its spatial strategy performed well in terms of national strategies, wider strategies, aspirations of the plan, availability and suitability of brownfield land, location of market housing, deliverability, accessibility to employment, minimising the need to travel and environmental implications. Overall it was the level of growth and focus on Ebbw Vale which led it to being ruled out as the preferred strategy.
Option 2: Balanced and Interconnected Communities	This option combined a low level of growth with a dispersal strategy. This strategy performed well in terms of decarbonisation and environmental implications. Though its low level of growth and dispersal strategy meant that it did not deliver on wider strategies, aspirations of the plan, brownfield land, location of market and affordable housing, viability, accessibility to employment and minimising the need to travel. The level of growth together with its dispersal strategy meant that it performed poorly and led to it being ruled out as the preferred strategy.
Option 3: Economic Growth	This option combined a high level of growth with a focus on the Heads of the Valleys settlements. This strategy performed well in terms of wider strategies, aspirations of the plan, availability of brownfield sites, and accessibility to employment. However, it performed poorly in terms of decarbonisation, deliverability, minimising the need to travel and environmental implications. Though the level of growth meant that it performed well in some areas it also led to a negative impact in other areas. Similarly the focus on the Heads of the Valleys settlements had a mixed impact. This led to it being ruled out as a preferred strategy.

Options (type)	Outline reasons
Option 4: Sustainable Economic Growth	This option combined a high level of growth with a dispersal strategy. This strategy performed well in terms of meeting the wider needs of the population. However, it performed poorly in terms of decarbonisation, wider strategies, aspirations of the plan, availability of brownfield sites, accessibility to employment, deliverability, minimising the need to travel and environmental implications. Though the level of growth and spatial distribution were supported by stakeholders, weaknesses in the strategy were later identified.

2.30 Following consultation with Welsh Government on the above spatial strategy options an amended option was created to address concerns and weaknesses identified by the assessment:

Options (type)	Outline reasons
Option 5 Sustainable Economic Growth	Concerns with the deliverability of the level of growth and the sustainable assessment of settlements led to changes to the Sustainable Economic Growth Strategy Option. The lower end of the high growth option was taken forward as the aspirational growth level and a new dwelling led figure was identified for the housing requirement figure. Changes to the settlement hierarchy means that growth is now more focussed on the most sustainable settlements. The strategy performs reasonable in terms of national strategies, environmental implications and social and cultural factors. The strategy performs well in terms of wider strategies, aspirations of the plan, brownfield land, deliverability, accessibility to employment, minimise the need to travel. Overall this strategy is considered to perform well, it is also based on the strategy favoured by stakeholders.

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 Three strategic mixed use sites are proposed through the Preferred Strategy, though site layouts remain unknown and no details are available in relation to smaller non-strategic sites. In this context the ISA was not able to predict or draw definitive conclusions in relation to the nature and significance of effects that are likely to arise in relation to biodiversity, the landscape, the historic environment, transport and natural resources. The appraisal highlighted the potential for both positive and negative effects dependent on the precise location of growth and scale of development at the sites. Candidate Sites will be considered through the ISA process in due course and the findings will inform the development of the Deposit Plan.

3.4 The ISA found that the Preferred Strategy has the potential for long term positive effects on themes relating to 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.

3.5 **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?
Economy and employment	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 City Deal, Valleys Task Force, Tech Valleys, Enterprise Zone and Metro proposals. As a result, it should help to increase the activity rate, reduce economic inactivity and reduce out-commuting of the current population.	**Yes - Positive**
Population and communities	The Preferred Strategy proposes the delivery of 2,115 dwellings, of which at least 478 will be affordable, at the County's most sustainable settlements, with growth principally concentrated at three strategic mixed use sites at the north of the plan area at The Works, Ebbw Vale, Ebbw Vale Northern Corridor and Nantyglo. 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.	**Yes - Positive**
Health and wellbeing	The Preferred Strategy presents opportunities to link new development with the existing walking, cycling and Green Infrastructure networks at each of the 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 given the scale of growth.	**No**
Equalities, diversity and social inclusion	The strategic policies of the Preferred Strategy establish that enhancing access to key services of significance to tackling inequalities and deprivation, such as employment, training and healthcare, will be a priority for the RLDP. This includes a focus on improving access to service centres by sustainable modes of transport, and on designing new development so that multiple uses can be safely and conveniently accessed by all members of the community. Whilst efforts to reduce poverty and inequality, tackle social exclusion and promote community cohesion will clearly require a nuanced approach coordinated between a range of service providers, it is considered that the Preferred Strategy is likely to make 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.	**No**
Transport and movement	By focussing growth at the Tier 1 and 2 settlements the Preferred Strategy directs the majority of new development to locations which are closest to public transport, 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.	**Uncertain**

ISA theme	Commentary	Residual significant effect predicted at this stage?
Natural resources	The Preferred Strategy's focuses the majority of growth to Ebbw Vale and the main settlements, which means that there could be opportunities to seek delivery on brownfield sites in the existing urban areas. This would 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. It is unlikely that the residual effect will be significant as there is not significant areas of high quality agricultural land in the County. The baseline position of the County in relation to air quality and water resources is considered unlikely to be affected by development proposed through the Preferred Strategy. Proposed development could fall within a mineral safeguarded area but this is uncertain at this stage. Overall, an uncertain effect is predicted at this stage as the nature and significance of effects are dependent on the precise location of growth.	**Uncertain**
Biodiversity and geodiversity	The proposed distribution of growth through the Preferred Strategy could potentially see new development delivered in relatively close proximity to a number of 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. Development proposed through the preferred strategy has the potential for impacts on biodiversity that could have both positive and negative effects. The Preferred Strategy include policies that seek to protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity. Uncertain effects are identified at this stage as the nature and significance of effects are dependent on the precise location of development.	**Uncertain**
Historic environment	As no specific sites/ allocations are identified at this stage, it is difficult to predict or draw any definitive conclusions with regards to the nature and significance of effects that are likely to arise in relation to the historic environment theme/ ISA objectives. There are a number of designated heritage assets within and surrounding the main settlements where the majority of growth is being directed. As a result, there is the potential for impacts on these sensitive receptors, including their setting. The Preferred Strategy includes policies that seek to protect and where possible enhance the landscape and historic environment. Taking the above into account, an uncertain effect is identified at this stage as the nature and significance of effects are dependent on the precise location and scale of growth. 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.	**Uncertain**
Landscape	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 National Park. Strategic policies aim to protect and enhance important landscape features/ areas; notably through protecting greenfield land outside settlement boundaries from inappropriate development. Uncertain effects are identified at this stage as the nature and significance of effects will ultimately be dependent on the precise location, design and layout of development.	**Uncertain**
Climate change	It is considered that in line with national policy development can be located in areas of low flood risk and that suitable mitigation can be provided, although this is uncertain until the site locations are known. 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 (i.e. not expanding the built area overall) 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 to emissions, or mitigate these where avoidance is not realistic or practicable. Requirements to deliver high energy efficiency in all new development and in-principle support for low carbon energy generation are also established. Overall, minor 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.	**No**

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 January 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 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 RLDP is yet to be finalised.