

# Development Datblygiad

Unitary Development Plan

Cynllun Datblygu Unedol



Adopted By Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council March 2008

Mabwysiadwyd Gan Gyngor Bwrdeistref Castell-nedd Port Talbot Mawrth 2008

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## **Foreword**



The Unitary Development Plan has been adopted following a lengthy and complex preparation. Its primary aims are delivering Sustainable Development and a better quality of life. Through its strategy and policies it will guide planning decisions across the County Borough area.

Councillor David Lewis

Cabinet Member with responsibility for the Unitary Development Plan.



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# **1 INTRODUCTION**

## **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1.1 The Local Government (Wales) Act 1994 requires local authorities to prepare Unitary Development Plans (UDP) for their areas. The plan is prepared under The 1990 Town and Country Planning Act (as amended), and The Town and Country Planning (Development Plan) Regulations 1991 and Development Plan (Amendment) Regulations 1997. Government advice on the preparation of the plan and its policy content is provided in: Unitary Development Plans Wales 2001; Unitary Development Plans A Guide to Procedures 2001; Planning Policy Wales 2002; Mineral Planning Policy Wales 2000 and the accompanying series of Technical Advice Notes.

The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 introduces the requirement for local planning authorities to prepare Local Development Plans (LDPs) in place of UDPs. The Authority has resolved to complete the adoption of this UDP, following which work will commence on the preparation of the LDP.

Other primary legislation is contained in:

- the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990; and
- the Planning (Hazardous Substances) Act 1990.

Each of the Acts has been amended by the Planning and Compensation Act 1991.

The main instruments of subordinate legislation include:

- the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995; and
- The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes (Wales) Regulations 2004 introduced the need to undertake Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).
- the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987.

Instruments of Environmental Legislation:

- The Conservation (Natural Habitats & c) Regulations 1994;
- The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000;
- The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment)(England and Wales) Regulations 1999.

1.1.2 The UDP covers the whole County Borough area of Neath Port Talbot and, when adopted will replace the existing Development Plan i.e. the Structure Plan, local plans and minerals local plan.

1.1.3 Section 54A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) requires that:

*“Where, in making any determination under the Planning Acts, regard is to be had to the development plan, the determination shall be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise”.*

1.1.4 The purpose of the UDP is to guide development, conservation and the use of land within the County Borough for the fifteen years up to mid 2016. The plan has a base date of mid 2001. (Whenever possible information in the plan will include information based on June 30<sup>th</sup> 2001)

1.1.5 The UDP consists of two sections.

**Part 1.** A written statement of the authority's strategic policies for the development and other use of land in the area.

**Part 2** A detailed written statement setting out the policies and proposals for the development and other use of land within the County Borough. The policies and proposals are displayed on the Proposals Map which is based on an Ordnance Survey Plan. It also includes justifications of the general policies set out in Part 1.

1.1.6 When considering proposals the plan is not a rigid blue print; more recent Assembly Government guidance, and other material considerations including new information will be taken into account. Where justified, the Authority will consider whether a proposal should be granted consent as a “departure” from the plan. All applications which amount to a departure would be advertised by the Authority.

## **1.2 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

1.2.1 Supporting information referred to in the text which is not essential to explain the plan, or is liable to regular updating, will be available from the Authority. A list of supporting information is contained in Appendix 1.

## **1.3 SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE**

1.3.1 More detailed guidance on how the Authority will consider proposals will be provided in Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG). This is likely to include matters such as: design, parking and highway (access), accessibility (by public transport, cycling and walking as well as the car), site and area development briefs, the provision of public open space and community facilities, the Welsh Language, landscape, and wildlife (biodiversity).

- 1.3.2 The SPG documents will not have the statutory status of the adopted UDP, but will be taken into account as material considerations when decisions are taken on planning proposals (both by the Local Planning Authority and by Welsh Assembly Government Planning Inspectors).
- 1.3.3 The Authority will undertake widespread consultation on the SPG documents and the responses will be taken fully into account before the guidance is finalised. A record of the responses will be available from the Authority.
- 1.3.4 A list of existing and proposed SPG's is included in Appendix 2 and will be available in an updated form on the Authority's web site.

#### **1.4 FORMAT OF THE PLAN**

- 1.4.1 Recognising that relatively few people are likely to read the plan from cover to cover, and in order to help consideration as part of the Community planning process, its format has been designed to provide:
  - the vision, for the whole of the County Borough;
  - a more localised vision for each locality area;
  - the Strategy and Targets for each Chapter; and
  - the detailed policies and allocations.
- 1.4.2 The individual policies are highlighted in **Bold** type, and they are followed (in Part 2) by the reasoned justification. Part 1 policies are repeated for information purposes at the start of each Part 2 Chapter.
- 1.4.3 Proposals will be considered in terms of any of the plan's policies that may be relevant. In order to aid users of the document Environment policies GC1 and GC2 have been designed to gather together the main criteria by which proposals for buildings and operations will be considered. Detailed issues will be addressed by the appropriate policies contained elsewhere within the topic chapters.
- 1.4.4 Guidance on policies that are particularly relevant is provided within boxes within each topic chapter.

#### **1.5 THE COMMUNITY PLAN AND RELATED PLANS AND STRATEGIES**

- 1.5.1 The County Borough Council is committed to working in partnership with the businesses, organisations, agencies and communities that make up and serve Neath Port Talbot. The Neath Port Talbot Community Plan (adopted in January 2002 and available on the website or from Council offices) contains the vision and strategy of the Authority and its partners. It is the key umbrella document providing "top level" guidance for activities (including town and country planning) within Neath-Port Talbot. The Community Plan review was completed in the Spring of 2005.

- 1.5.2 The Community Plan Partnership includes local community representatives, Community Councils, the DEIN, Environment Agency, Countryside Council for Wales, South Wales Police, Glamorgan Wildlife Trust, local industry, transport operators, Community Development Organisations and the Neath Port Talbot Council for Voluntary Services. These organisations have their individual strategies and plans which have, in turn, influenced the preparation of the UDP. A list of these is included in Appendix 3.
- 1.5.3 In preparing the UDP, and through the Sustainability Appraisal, the Authority has sought to avoid the unfair treatment of groups within the community or local communities. The Community Planning process will provide an important means of assessing the operation of the UDP through the development control process and help identify where it should be amended.
- 1.5.4 The preparation of the Community Plan built on the earlier work on Agenda 21, which included an extensive programme of public community meetings and consultations including every school. The Neath Port Talbot Local Agenda 21 Plan (published 2001 and available on the Authority's web site) summarises the responses. This commitment to working with and listening to the community and groups within the community has been translated into the approach to Community Planning within Neath Port Talbot. In addition to consultation and discussion at the County Borough – wide level, there will be a focus on 14 community-based localities. This approach is reflected in the UDP, in that the vision for the overall area is accompanied by more local visions for community areas.
- 1.5.5 This on-going process will provide an important input to the review and amendment of the UDP to make it more effective and better related to the needs of our communities. The monitoring of targets and indicators, including the Best Value assessment of how the Authority performs, will contribute to this debate.
- 1.5.6 The Community Plan is itself guided by the Assembly Government's strategy "Plan for Wales 2001". The Community Plan provides direction for the Authority's key statutory policy documents: the Unitary Development Plan; Social Care and Housing Plan; Education Strategic Plan; Local Transport Plan and its many other strategies and policies.
- 1.5.7 The Community Plan underwent its first review in late 2004/5. While it has not been possible to include the revisions in the plan they will influence the monitoring and the preparation of the Local Development Plan that will replace the UDP. A cornerstone of the Community Plan is working towards Sustainability and this has guided the choice of its key themes as:
- Economic Prosperity;
  - Education and Life Long Learning;
  - Better Health and Well Being;
  - Environment and Transport;

- Crime and Disorder;
- Confident Communities.

## **1.6 DESCRIPTION OF THE COUNTY BOROUGH AREA**

- 1.6.1 The County Borough of Neath Port Talbot covers an area of 44,217 hectares. Rising from sea level in the west to 600 metres at Craig Y Llyn, above Glynneath, Neath Port Talbot is predominantly an upland area dissected by the valleys of the Afan, Neath, Dulas and Tawe rivers which all flow to the sea in Swansea Bay. These valleys are separated from each other by ridges of high forest or moorland. A narrow coastal strip extends around Swansea Bay where the main centres of population are found. The surrounding valleys are rural in aspect with scattered communities, many of which still contain significant numbers of Welsh speakers. The County Borough has a population of 134,400 (Revised 2001 Census) and contains 66,585 dwellings (Digest of Welsh Local Area Statistics 2001). While over recent decades the overall population trend has been of gradual decline, the 2002 and 2003 Mid Year Estimates (MYEs) showed an increase of 900. The 2001 Census confirmed that the population of the County Borough reflects the consequences of decades of population loss with an ageing population which also has high levels of long term ill health and low levels of economic activity and access to private transport.
- 1.6.2 The County Borough is served by the M4 motorway with the A465 “Heads of the Valleys” road providing links to the M50, M5 and M6. The Intercity Rail service includes mainline stations in Neath and Port Talbot. The area has a strong manufacturing base with more than twice the UK average employed in the manufacturing sector.
- 1.6.3 The local economy continues to experience change. The coal, oil, petrochemical and metal manufacturing industries which have dominated the area’s economy and employment have suffered substantial contraction or restructuring over recent decades. As a result, major employment has become increasingly concentrated in the coastal towns. Particular hardship has been created in the upper Swansea Valley following the closure of several large employers.
- 1.6.4 The steel industry remains by far the largest industrial employer in the County Borough with around 3,000 employed directly at the Port Talbot works although contraction in the labour force has affected employment, contractors and suppliers.
- 1.6.5 Coal mining is still important in the valley communities where small mines, opencast sites and coal processing/washeries provide valuable local jobs.
- 1.6.6 The closure of the Llandarcy refinery in 1998 and the contraction of the Baglan Bay Petrochemical complex have created two of the largest “brownfield” regeneration areas in the UK (445 and 757 hectares respectively). BP are working with the County Borough and WAG’s Department of Enterprise, Innovation and Networks (DEIN) to help bring the land forward for development and reinvigorate the area’s economy. The Government decided in 1999 to allow the development of

a Gas-fired 500 mw power station at Baglan Bay. This will form the core of the Energy Park and is intended to attract the creation of new industry and business through offering discounted electricity.

- 1.6.7 The motor industry is a key sector within the County Borough, with the Visteon (Ford) plant at Jersey Marine, while in the Neath Valley a supplier park to service the TRW plant has been created.
- 1.6.8 Sites for major new business parks have been created in the Neath Valley at Glynneath and in the Swansea Valley at Glanrhdyd, and Abernant (Cwmgors).
- 1.6.9 Tourism has become a significant part of the economy over recent decades. The countryside based visitor interest has continued to strengthen. This is particularly focused on the Upper Afan and Neath valleys and Margam Park. Currently plans for a renaissance of the Aberavon Sea Front are bearing fruit with the area re-emerging as a major visitor and leisure destination.
- 1.6.10 Leisure facilities are largely concentrated in the three main towns of Neath, Port Talbot and Pontardawe and they contribute both to employment and their role as town centres. While retaining their own identities, the three centres are only 14 kilometres apart.
- 1.6.11 Neath and Port Talbot are the principal shopping towns. Both centres are the focus of new development and initiatives to make them more attractive in terms of their range of shops, appearance and welcome.
- 1.6.12 An under provision of retail warehousing has led to the loss of trade and jobs outside the County Borough, but this is being addressed with new developments in Cadoxton Road and Melincryddan, Neath and Baglan Moors, Port Talbot.

## **1.7 SUSTAINABILITY**

- 1.7.1 The Assembly Government, in accordance with its Sustainable Development Scheme, has set the aim of promoting development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
- 1.7.2 The Assembly Government has identified in Planning Policy Wales (2002) key Sustainable Development principles which relate directly to the content and operation of UDP's. They include:
  - putting people, and the quality of life now and in the future, at the centre of concern;
  - taking a long term perspective to safeguard the interests of future generations, whilst at the same time meeting the needs of people today;
  - respecting environmental limits, so that resources are not irrecoverably depleted or the environment irreversibly damaged;

- applying the precautionary principle;
  - while preventing pollution as far as possible, ensuring that the polluter pays for damage resulting from pollution; and
  - applying the proximity principle, especially in managing waste and pollution.
- 1.7.3 Sustainability lies at the heart of the Community Plan and the County Borough sees the UDP as having a key role in delivering Sustainability through:
- guiding new development to achieve more sustainable communities;
  - protecting and improving the quality of life for everyone living in and using the area;
  - protecting and enhancing the area's environment (and making a local contribution to tackling global problems);
  - making prudent use of natural resources;
  - achieving a high and sustainable level of economic activity; and
  - removing social exclusion (whether poor, ill, disabled, isolated, elderly, young, or by religious or ethnic groups).
- 1.7.4 The Authority undertook an Environmental Assessment of the Pre-Draft Consultation document, but to accord with Assembly Government guidance and the European Union's Directive on Strategic Environmental Assessment, broadened it to become a Sustainability Assessment. The method does not identify solutions but aims to highlight likely impacts and opportunities and whether the strategy has been consistently applied through the policies.
- 1.7.5 A description of the method is available on the Authority's website and the detailed workings are available for inspection. While the workings can become complicated, the Authority is concerned that the focus should be on the findings and how they inform the decisions on the issues being considered. To assist this, a summary of the findings is included in each chapter of the plan. A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the plan was undertaken in the autumn of 2004. The findings have been assessed alongside the Sustainability Assessment.
- 1.7.6 The Authority views moving towards Sustainability as an ongoing and continuing process. While the UDP provides a base, the process continues through assessing individual planning applications, and monitoring whether the policies are effective and require amending. A simplified version of the assessment will be applied when considering applications, programmes and projects. Requirements to undertake Environmental Impact Assessments on individual planning applications will complement and refine the approach.

## **1.8 THE REGIONAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING CONTEXT**

- 1.8.1 Neath Port Talbot is a member of the South West Wales Strategic Planning Group which also comprises the Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire County Councils, the City and County of Swansea and the Brecon Beacons (part) and Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authorities. The Group provides a forum to consider strategic and cross-boundary issues. In April 2000 it published its Regional Planning Guidance, which the Assembly Government confirms should be treated as a material consideration when preparing UDP's and considering planning applications. The population and household forecasts used in the UDP fall within those agreed by the Group. (Copies of the Guidance and the papers considered by the Group are available from the Authority). The Guidance sets an overall context for the approach followed in this plan.
- 1.8.2 The Group's boundaries follow those of the Assembly Government's South West Wales regional committee. The same group of Authorities provides regional transport planning for this area via the South West Wales Integrated Transport Consortium (SWITCH). There is close liaison between the groups, and with the South West Wales Economic Forum in order to ensure a co-ordinated regional approach.
- 1.8.3 The South West Wales Regional Waste Planning Forum was created in 2002. In addition to the authorities listed above, the Group includes the Ceredigion County Council and Bridgend County Borough Council. The Group is required by Technical Advice Note 21: Waste to prepare a Regional Waste Plan by November 2003. Neath Port Talbot, as a local Waste Planning Authority is required to address the findings of the South West Wales Regional Waste Plan 2004.
- 1.8.4 The Assembly Government published its Wales Spatial Plan on November 10<sup>th</sup> 2004. It sets out guidance for the Swansea Bay – Waterfront & Western Valleys Area:
- “Industrial restructuring has left a legacy of extensive brownfield sites often in attractive locations. The availability of these sites provides a major opportunity to revitalise the area to create an attractive waterfront urban network....Central to this process is the joint preparation of an integrated waterfront regeneration masterplan. Existing proposals, including the Baglan Bay Energy Park, Llandarcy Urban Village, SA1 Waterfront and Llanelli Millennium Coastal Park, should be integrated in this plan.”
- 1.8.5 Planning Policy Wales (2002) sets out key policy objectives which reflect the emerging priorities of the Wales Spatial Plan and which should be taken into account in UDP's and when taking development control decisions: -
- promote resource-efficient settlement patterns that minimise land-take (and especially extensions to the area of impermeable surfaces) and urban sprawl, especially through preference for the re-use of suitable previously developed land and buildings, wherever possible avoiding development on greenfield sites;

- locate developments so as to minimise the demand for travel, especially by private car;
- contribute to climate protection by encouraging land uses that result in reduced emissions of greenhouses gases, in particular energy-efficient development, and promoting the use of energy from renewable sources;
- minimise the risks posed by, or to, development on or adjacent to, unstable or contaminated land and land liable to flooding. This includes managing and seeking to mitigate the effects of climate change;
- play an appropriate role in securing the provision of environmental infrastructure (including water supplies, sewerage and associated waste water treatment facilities, waste management facilities, energy supplies and distribution networks) – the basis for sustainable communities – and telecommunications infrastructure, while ensuring proper assessment of their sustainability impacts;
- contribute to the protection and improvement of the environment, so as to improve the quality of life, and protect local and global ecosystems. In particular, planning should seek to ensure that development does not produce irreversible harmful effects on the natural environment. The conservation and enhancement of statutorily designated areas and the biodiversity, habitats and landscapes, the conservation of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and enhancement of the urban environment all need to be promoted;
- help to ensure the conservation of the historic environment and cultural heritage, acknowledging and fostering local diversity;
- minimise the use of non-renewable resources, and, where it is judged necessary to use them, maximise efficiencies in their use. The use of renewable resources and of sustainably-produced materials from local sources should be encouraged;
- encourage opportunities to reduce waste and all forms of pollution and promote good environmental management and best environmental practice;
- ensure that all local communities, both urban and rural, have sufficient good quality housing for their needs, including affordable housing for local needs and for special needs where appropriate, in safe neighbourhoods;
- promote access to employment, shopping, education, health, community, leisure and sports facilities and open and green space, maximising opportunities for community development and social welfare;
- foster improvements to transport facilities and services which maintain or improve accessibility to services and facilities, secure employment, economic and environmental objectives, and improve safety and amenity. In

general, developments likely to support the achievement of an integrated transport system should be encouraged;

- foster social inclusion by ensuring that full advantage is taken of the opportunities to secure a more accessible environment for everyone which the development of land and buildings provides. This includes helping to ensure that development is accessible by means other than the private car;
- promote quality, lasting, environmentally-sound and flexible employment opportunities;
- support initiative and innovation and avoid placing unnecessary burdens on enterprises (especially small and medium sized firms) so as to enhance the economic success of both urban and rural areas, helping businesses to maximise their competitiveness;
- respect and encourage diversity in the local economy;
- promote a greener economy and social enterprises; and
- contribute to the protection and, where possible, the improvement of people's health and well-being as a core component of sustainable development. Consideration of the possible impacts of developments – positive and/or negative – on people's health at an early stage will help to clarify the relevance of health and the extent to which it needs to be taken into account.

## **2 THE VISION**

### **2.1 THE VISION FOR NEATH PORT TALBOT**

2.1.1 The Community Plan has set out the vision that by 2012 our communities will be:-

- healthier, more prosperous, attractive and welcoming;
- able to offer an increasingly skilled and qualified workforce;
- able to offer a better quality of life;
- able to offer a wider range of facilities, services and jobs within easy travelling distance.

The need to work towards Sustainable Development is a central theme which is at the core of the UDP. While addressing more local issues, it will also help the County Borough make its contribution to tackling global environmental problems.

2.1.2 This translates into the following: -

- the recent trend of gradual population decline will be halted as a result of increased employment opportunities. This will create a stable population which is better able to sustain existing and new facilities within the communities;
- the Swansea Bay Arc of Opportunity concept underpins the Plan's Vision. This reflects and complements the approach being pursued by the City and County of Swansea. The Arc straddles the boundary with the City and County of Swansea, and extends around the shores of Swansea Bay and along the M4 corridor. It is an initiative of national significance to Wales. It aims to regenerate the area and communities as a growth point which will act as a stimulus to the whole of South West Wales. This will focus on the creation of a thriving, high quality sub-region with an emphasis both on raising the quality of life throughout the area and key regeneration sites including: the Port Tawe Innovation Village, Swansea Vale Mixed Use Area, Llandarcy Urban Village and the Baglan Bay Development;
- the rural economy will be encouraged to become more sustainable and appropriate opportunities for its diversification will be supported;
- new development will be concentrated in the urban area of Neath-Port Talbot and Pontardawe. These centres will be the main focus for employment, housing, healthcare, shopping, services, leisure and entertainment facilities;
- the smaller settlements outside these centres will be protected and supported. They will continue to provide centres and facilities serving their local communities and the creation of housing and employment to serve their needs will be supported;

- throughout the County Borough confidence in the local community will be encouraged. This will include the provision of health, education, leisure and life long learning, social inclusion will be provided and crime and disorder discouraged;
- the use of the Welsh Language will be encouraged and within the Swansea Valley where the language is a significant feature of community life, developments which would reduce the concentration of Welsh speakers and provision for them will be resisted;
- the countryside, habitats and wildlife will be protected and enhanced particularly where they are scarce or important in terms of the character of the area;
- the area's natural resources will be safeguarded and husbanded. Their use will be supported where it provides sufficient benefits to outweigh any adverse impacts;
- the area's Built environment will be protected and enhanced. This will include not only Ancient Monuments, Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas but also ensuring that the design of new developments takes sufficient account of the character of the area, potential users of the development and occupiers of adjacent properties;
- all new development will be expected to contribute to Sustainability, through measures including minimising the use of energy and the generation of vehicular traffic and waste;
- waste minimisation and pollution issues will be addressed both in order to meet local concerns and also to ensure that Neath Port Talbot makes its contribution to meeting national and international commitments.

## **2.2. THE VISION FOR INDIVIDUAL LOCALITIES AND COMMUNITIES WITHIN NEATH PORT TALBOT**

### **2.3 CWMGORS (including Gwaun-Cae-Gurwen and Lower Brynamman)**

- 2.3.1 The UDP aims to ensure that sufficient and appropriate housing sites will be available to meet the communities' needs. This is in line with helping communities remain self-sustaining and helping conserve and promote the Welsh language.
- 2.3.2 While the communities are already, to a large extent, dormitory settlements with people having to travel to work, the creation and expansion of local businesses will be supported.
- 2.3.3 The village centre in Gwaun-cae-Gurwen will be promoted as the main centre serving the area's local needs in terms of shopping and the provision of other services.

- 2.3.4 The employment allocation at Abernant (Cwmgors) offers the potential to create an important source of economic activity to serve the surrounding communities.
- 2.3.5 The area's hills should play a more important role in terms of access and recreation, although care is needed over farmers' and commoners' needs and protecting habitats.
- 2.3.6 There is development interest for opencast mining and windfarms in the area and care will be taken in respect of the impacts on the communities, landscape and habitats.

#### **2.4 YSTALYFERA (including Cwmllynfell, Rhiwfawr and Godre'r Graig)**

- 2.4.1 The UDP aims to ensure that sufficient and appropriate housing sites are available to meet the communities' needs. This is in line with helping communities remain self-sustaining and helping conserve and promote the Welsh language.
- 2.4.2 Within Ystalyfera, Panteg and lower Cwmtwrch housing sites are in short supply. As a result land which has been in the past allocated for industrial use will be allocated for housing.
- 2.4.3 The village centre in Ystalyfera will be promoted as the main centre serving the area's local needs in terms of shopping and provision of other services.
- 2.4.4 The area is of interest in terms of opencast mining and windfarms and care will be taken in respect of the impacts on the communities, landscape and habitats and species.

#### **2.5 PONTARDawe (including Trebanos, Rhydyfro, Alltwen and Rhos)**

- 2.5.1 Pontardawe will remain an important centre serving the Swansea Valley and surrounding area in terms of shopping, leisure, business and employment. Currently, there is considerable trade loss to shops and centres outside the valley, and this also leads to a loss of jobs, and increased traffic. Further, there is a loss in community terms in that so much activity, which could focus on Pontardawe, takes place outside the valley. This was recognised in the Authority's decision to support, subject to legal agreement, a proposal for a new mixed retail/leisure development on the Gwyn's Drift site, which is intended to strengthen Pontardawe's role as a centre in the valley.
- 2.5.2 While the Upper Swansea Valley has continued to experience symptoms of a gradual loss of population, Pontardawe has demonstrated the potential to act as a growth point in the valley. New housing allocations have been included in Rhydyfro and Alltwen. They will balance the reduction in the allocation at Graig Newydd, Godre'r Graig which performs poorly in terms of the Sustainability Assessment but would serve the upper valley communities. This is in line with sustaining the valley's communities and helping conserve and promote the Welsh language.

2.5.3 The Glanrhdyd site was brought forward as a key site for industrial development. This development has not occurred and the potential for other forms of employment creation including the development of the suggested Pontardawe Arena will be considered.

## **2.6 DULAIS VALLEY (including Crynant, Seven Sisters and Onllwyn)**

2.6.1 The UDP aims to ensure that sufficient and appropriate housing sites are available to meet the communities' needs. This is in line with helping them remain self-sustaining and in terms of the likely impacts on the Welsh language.

2.6.2 While the communities are already, to a large extent, dormitory settlements with people having to travel to work, the creation and expansion of local businesses will generally be supported. This will build upon the business parks at Crynant and Nant-Y-Cafn, Seven Sisters.

2.6.3 The provision of facilities to serve the local communities will be encouraged in Banwen, Seven Sisters and Crynant.

2.6.4 The area's hills should play a more important role in terms of access and recreation. They are also the subject of continuing open cast coal mining and there is interest in developing wind farms. Future proposals will need to balance and integrate benefits to the local communities and environmental impacts while taking into account the potential for habitat creation.

## **2.7 NEATH VALLEY (including Resolven and Glynneath)**

2.7.1 Glynneath and Resolven will remain the main centres serving the valley's communities in terms of shopping and other facilities. They are well served by the A465 road and public transport. They have, however, been constrained by a variety of physical and legal constraints that have effectively prevented any substantial housing development since the 1970's.

2.7.2 Their potential to accommodate new development will be encouraged, and this is needed if the communities are to remain buoyant and able to sustain and attract new facilities.

2.7.3 A "supplier park" was developed during the 1990's at Resolven adjacent to the TRW plant. Development on the large Vale of Neath Business Park at Glynneath/Cwmgwrach will be promoted.

2.7.4 Adequate land will be allocated to meet the communities' housing needs. The Vale of Neath has long been recognised as a tourist attraction, and future effort will be focused on 'green tourism and recreation'. This is likely to include the use of the forests, Neath Canal and the complex of lakes at Rheola above Resolven

**2.8 NEATH (including Skewen, Bryncoch, Aberdulais, Tonna, Cimla, Melincryddan and Briton Ferry)**

- 2.8.1 Neath is the largest centre of population and has the largest town centre within the County Borough. Enhancement of the town centre will be encouraged, with particular emphasis on its fulfilling more of the needs of local communities.
- 2.8.2 The town centre will be promoted as a prime centre to meet the town and surrounding area's shopping, leisure and other needs. Planning permissions for bulky goods shopping exist at the Vale of Neath Retail Park, Cadoxton Road, and at Melincryddan.
- 2.8.3 The majority of new housing development to serve the area will be located at Llandarcy. The site of the former refinery at Llandarcy will be developed as a mixed-use Urban Village which will also embrace employment uses. While the new Urban Village will be promoted as a growth point which embraces Sustainable Development, care will be taken to ensure that its facilities do not detract from or damage those in nearby centres including Neath and Skewen. Opportunities for the redevelopment of sites for housing and other uses within Neath will be promoted. There is little scope to create new sites for business and industry within the town, but improvements to access to the major new developments at Baglan and Llandarcy will be promoted.
- 2.8.4 The town centre's attractiveness and accessibility will be improved in terms of motorists, public transport, cycling and walking.
- 2.8.5 Skewen and Briton Ferry will be promoted as district centres serving their communities' needs. Their attractiveness and accessibility will be improved.
- 2.8.6 The Briton Ferry Docks area forms part of the Baglan Bay Development. The regeneration work while protecting the Brunel Dock offers the potential to revitalise the area.
- 2.8.7 Important wildlife and habitats including Crymlyn Burrows, Crymlyn Bog, Pant y Sais Fen and the Neath estuary will be protected and where feasible enhanced.

**2.9 UPPER AFAN VALLEY (including Glyncorrwg, Cymmer and Abergwynfi)**

- 2.9.1 The Upper Afan Valley has been transformed into one of the most attractive valleys scenically in South Wales and it is emerging as a destination for leisure and green tourism. The communities however, have not recovered from the loss of the coal and metal working industries. They have been locked in a vicious circle whereby they are largely dormitory settlements, and continue to suffer a gradual out migration. This has made the maintenance of facilities and the ability to retain and attract people difficult.
- 2.9.2 The UDP will make a contribution to helping sustain the communities through ensuring that a supply of attractive housing plots is identified, and that the creation and expansion of local businesses is encouraged.

- 2.9.3 Cymmer will be promoted as the main centre serving the area's local needs in terms of shopping and the provision of other services.
- 2.9.4 The valley's potential as a major forest and countryside recreation and tourist area based on Afan Argoed and Glyncorwg will create employment and help regenerate communities.
- 2.9.5 The plan will encourage tourist/leisure development provided it does not significantly adversely affect the landscape or biodiversity.

## **2.10 LOWER AFAN VALLEY (including Cwmafan, Pontrhydyfen, Tonmawr and Bryn)**

- 2.10.1 Housing in Cwmafan has played an important role in meeting Port Talbot's needs over the last decade. This will continue with new allocations being made. Whilst the main housing site would replace an existing industrial allocation, it is considered to be more appropriate for housing, while major industrial allocations are available in nearby Port Talbot. Bryn has experienced considerable house building (mainly comprising self-build plots) over the last decade, and the plan's provisions will allow this regeneration to continue. The scope for further growth may however be constrained by water supply difficulties. Sufficient and appropriate housing sites are identified to serve Tonmawr and Pontrhydyfen.
- 2.10.2 Cwmafan will be promoted as the main centre serving the area's local needs in terms of shopping and the provision of other services.

## **2.11 PORT TALBOT (including Baglan and Margam)**

- 2.11.1 After some years of experiencing difficulties in attracting new investment and housing in the town, there are encouraging signs that its image and attractiveness are changing.
- 2.11.2 New house building has been buoyant since the late 1990's both outside the town at Coed Hirwaun and Eglwys Nunydd and within the urban area. Provision will be made to allow new housing within the town.
- 2.11.3 The town's employment base continues to undergo major structural change, but the Baglan Bay Development, which includes the Baglan Energy Park is creating a growth point which is also intended as a catalyst to transform the type of industry and business being attracted to the town. Baglan Bay will also provide a significant amount of housing to meet the town's needs, while this major regeneration scheme will also protect and enhance sand dunes and other nature conservation interests.
- 2.11.4 The town centre will be promoted along with Neath as a prime centre to meet the town and surrounding area's shopping and other needs.
- 2.11.5 Food shopping provision, which had contributed to the severe loss of trade out of the town, has been anchored by the Tesco store in the town centre and the development of the Morrisons store in the Baglan Moors District Centre.

- 2.11.6 Bulky goods shopping is provided for on the retail park adjacent to the Baglan Moors Centre, while the construction of the new Peripheral Distributor Road (PDR) will open up the Docks area for the retail and other uses which need a central location adjacent to the town centre. The Docks and riverside area also has tremendous, and as yet largely untapped, potential for water-side housing, business, office, leisure, retail and port-related development.
- 2.11.7 The Green Park and Burrows Yard areas along Water Street which have seen interest in retail and commercial development are likely to be more appropriate for housing which needs a central and easily accessible location.
- 2.11.8 The regeneration of the Aberavon Sea Front has taken major steps forward with the enhancement of the promenade and Aquadome Leisure Complex, the development of the multi-screen cinema and the development of new seaside housing. The authority will continue to encourage this regeneration. In turn the focus of attention for development and regeneration will shift to the docks area.
- 2.11.9 The area east of Margam, which is important in terms of its landscape and biodiversity, will remain largely undisturbed. Margam Park will be enhanced as a regional tourist recreation and leisure destination. The potential for recreation, leisure and tourism within the dramatic scenery extending from Margam Park northwards into the Goytre and Cwm Wernderi valleys and towards Bryn will be pursued.
- 2.11.10 Important wildlife and habitats along the coast and in the Neath, Afan and Kenfig estuaries will be protected and where feasible enhanced.

### **3. THE STRATEGY**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

- 3.1.1 The County Borough experienced population decline for some decades, although by 2002/3 there were signs of recovery. The regeneration of the area's economy provides the key to stabilising the County Borough's population. It is particularly important that the UDP and Local Transport Plan (LTP) are effective in guiding the location and design of development, traffic management and the provision of transport services to secure the best solutions for our communities.

#### **3.2 SETTLEMENT STRATEGY**

- 3.2.1 The majority of significant development will be concentrated in the Port Talbot-Neath urban area and to a lesser extent Pontardawe.
- 3.2.2 Through guiding and controlling the location and design of development the Authority will seek to improve the quality of life within urban areas and settlements. New development should be environmentally sound and socially inclusive. Open space and green areas will be safeguarded and enhanced. Development proposals should seek to reduce noise, congestion and traffic pollution, and encourage the use of public transport, cycling and walking.
- 3.2.3 The main new housing allocation will result in the creation of the Urban Village at Llandarcy on the site of the former BP refinery. It will form an extension to the Greater Neath urban area at Skewen. Llandarcy will be a sustainable, fine grained, mixed-use community. Through its internal and external transport links it will encourage the use of public transport, cycling and walking rather than the car and make an important contribution to helping reduce overall traffic generation within the area. The Baglan Bay development will accommodate a substantial portion of the Port Talbot area's housing needs in an extension to the main urban area that is well located and maximises the use of brownfield land.
- 3.2.4 The Urban Village and Baglan Bay allocations will make important contributions in terms of housing and employment and will have important implications throughout the Plan. In order that the proposals can be fully explained and considered they are addressed in separate chapters in addition to the specific allocations contained in the relevant topic chapters.
- 3.2.5 Major generators of traffic (e.g. retail, leisure, recreation, education, health, community, business uses), in accordance with creating more sustainable communities will be expected to locate in or near town centres. If it can be demonstrated that this is not feasible, and in any case, they should be sited in locations which are or would be well located in terms of public transport, cycling and walking and would minimise the generation of traffic.
- 3.2.6 The County Borough is well served by a range of smaller town and village centres. These smaller settlements which have a range of facilities and services meeting everyday needs (e.g. shop, pub, church, chapel, community hall, primary school, sport, public transport) of the village and surrounding rural area will be supported.

- 3.2.7 Existing commitments (extant planning permissions and local plan allocations) which conflict with these aims have been reassessed in terms of whether the allocated use is still appropriate. The potential to create higher density development in locations which have good accessibility on foot, bicycle and public transport will be encouraged provided it would not damage an area's character or amenity.
- 3.2.8 Settlement limits are defined to manage the shape and extent of settlements. They are an important means of addressing Sustainability. The identification of settlements where new housing will be allowed is based on the availability of services and facilities to meet the community's needs. The Authority aims to encourage the creation of more sustainable communities and individual Settlement Limits have been drawn to make allowance for the creation of appropriate business activity in order to encourage the growth of small enterprises. The limits are based on an assessment of environmental capacity and the community's needs and aspirations (see para 1.5.4). They also provide certainty to a community in terms of its future shape and size. Through guiding and controlling the location and design of development the Authority will seek to improve the quality of life within urban areas and settlements and promote a sustainable land use pattern.
- 3.2.9 The creation of new isolated dwellings, even where they would fill small gaps between existing dwellings would be contrary to the plan's drive towards more sustainable patterns of development and will be resisted.
- 3.2.10 Green wedges are used to define areas of countryside that may not be of particular scenic value but are particularly important in terms of protecting the form and setting of an urban area, or preventing the coalescence of settlements.
- 3.2.11 Although a wide range of considerations, including site conditions, ecology and visual amenity will have to be taken into account, in general, previously developed (brownfield) land should be used before greenfield.

### **3.3 TRANSPORT STRATEGY**

- 3.3.1 Neath, Port Talbot and Pontardawe Town Centres
- 3.3.2 Within the Town Centres of Neath, Port Talbot and Pontardawe facilities for public transport, service vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians will take precedence. These will include traffic management schemes, facilities for bus and train passengers and parking and storage facilities.
- 3.3.3 Measures to improve access by public transport, cycling and walking from the catchment areas will be a priority.
- 3.3.4 The centres face strong competition from other centres and outlets with free parking outside the County Borough. Reducing trade loss is a key aim of the authority.

3.3.5 Within the centres the provision of safe, easily accessible parking for shoppers, leisure and business users will be a priority.

3.3.6 Other Centres

3.3.7 As a priority, parking provision for shoppers, leisure and business users will be made attractive, safe and easily accessible. This may include a mix of on and off-street parking.

3.3.8 The improvement of facilities for users of public transport, cyclists and walkers will be a priority, as will be the improvement of safe routes for cyclists and walkers from the catchment areas.

3.3.9 Industrial Estates and Other Significant Out of Centre Developments

3.3.10 These are major generators of traffic. They should be well located in terms of the core/freight traffic road network, and make full use of and not compromise existing and future rail and harbour facilities. Access to the main likely sources of workers should be easy by public transport, cycling and walking as well as the car. Opportunities to promote the shift from roadfreight to rail, water or pipeline will be maximised.

3.3.11 Proposed developments should include provision both within the site and outside to ensure that they are easily accessible and minimise traffic generation.

3.3.12 Residential Areas and Developments

3.3.13 A prime concern of the Authority is to make the best use of areas that are well located in terms of existing and committed facilities and are well served by public transport, cycling and walking. Within such areas on and off street parking requirements will be minimised. New developments will be expected to make provision for cycle storage.

3.3.14 Wherever reasonable and feasible, all developments will be expected to be permeable (both within, and linking with adjacent paths and roads) in terms of public transport, cycling and walking. While measures to discourage crime and disorder may conflict with this, these conflicts will be minimised.

3.3.15 Where land is allocated for development, having been selected following its appraisal in terms of Sustainability, full use should be made of it. The Authority will review its procedures and policies when drafting Supplementary Planning Guidance to ensure that they do not arbitrarily prevent the reasonable use of such sites. However, the Authority will resist proposals where the layout and design would create unacceptable implications for occupiers and those visiting and providing services for the properties.

### **3.4 COASTAL STRATEGY**

- 3.4.1 The undeveloped coast (including the tidal reaches of the River Neath) will be protected from development which does not need a coastal location. Measures to enhance the landscape and habitats will be encouraged.
- 3.4.2 Along the developed coast, new development will be encouraged to respect the coastal location in terms of its design, siting and layout.

### **3.5 RURAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY**

- 3.5.1 The County Borough's countryside is particularly attractive, varied and ecologically rich. Conserving and enhancing the landscapes and biodiversity are key duties in terms of Sustainability, and providing the basis for a thriving and diverse rural economy.
- 3.5.2 The rural communities, including people living within villages and the countryside, will be supported. The Authority will seek to encourage the provision and retention of facilities and services within or adjoining settlements, and the diversification of the rural economy.
- 3.5.3 While accepting that this will mean new development, the Authority will ensure that it is directly related to the needs of the rural community, respects the character of the surrounding area, is of appropriate scale and design, and that other impacts are acceptable.

### **3.6 WELSH LANGUAGE STRATEGY**

- 3.6.1 Neath Port Talbot contains communities (mainly in the Swansea Valley) in which the language is a feature of community life. They make a significant contribution to the South Wales core of Welsh speaking communities, which extends across the Amman and Gwendraeth Valleys
- 3.6.2 The main problems facing the communities (in common with the other valley communities within the County Borough) are a gradual loss of population and difficulties in attracting new employment and sustaining community and other facilities.
- 3.6.3 The UDP strategy is to support the communities through ensuring that there is sufficient land available to allow the creation of local employment and the development of housing to meet their needs.

### **3.7 ENVIRONMENT STRATEGY**

- 3.7.1 A primary aim of the UDP is to move towards Sustainable Development and the effective protection of the environment is one of the plan's most fundamental and important duties.

- 3.7.2 The County Borough's landscape, seascape, natural resources, habitats and species are held in trust for future generations and their protection and enhancements are a key task.
- 3.7.3 The protection and enhancement of the area's built environment, open areas and cultural heritage are of central importance to the quality of life.
- 3.7.4 Earlier plans identified areas of landscape that were considered of particular local importance. In place of this approach, where the lower graded received little priority, the strategy is to protect and enhance the whole of the landscape and habitats with guidance and information identifying what is likely to be of particular importance or significance.

## **4 OBJECTIVES**

### **4.1 THE OBJECTIVES IN TERMS OF THE INDIVIDUAL TOPIC CHAPTERS**

- 4.1.1 The plan will operate through the policies set out in the individual topic chapters. The vision and strategies are translated into objectives which will guide the content of the topic chapters. Some objectives will inevitably be in conflict and they should be read alongside each other and equal weight should be given to environmental, economic and social concerns.
- 4.1.2 Community Plan objectives and targets (2002-2012) which are closely related to the UDP are also included. These objectives and targets will be revised via the Community Plan process and it is intended that this process will guide the review of the UDP.

### **4.2 ENVIRONMENT**

- protecting and enhancing Neath Port Talbot's landscape, seascape, species and habitats, not only the most special but whenever the site contributes to the landscape character and, or the biodiversity of the area;
- protecting and encouraging the enhancement of the area's buildings, townscape, and historic remains;
- minimising the creation of pollution, and contamination and within the Port Talbot Air Quality Management Area the creation of new sources of particulates (which are the main cause of pollution within the area) and protecting sensitive uses from pollution;
- resisting development which would bring hazardous or bad neighbour processes into close contact with housing or other sensitive uses;
- resisting development which could create or be affected by flooding, tidal inundation or unstable ground;
- resisting development which would sterilise significant reserves of natural resources;
- resisting development which would have an adverse effect on the amenity or security of residential areas, whether on an individual case or if a number of similar proposals took place;
- ensuring that new development makes its fair contribution to mitigating its impacts on the environment, and community, including design, energy and water efficient layout and design, density of development measures to encourage recycling of waste and tree planting to address global warming; and

- ensuring that the most sustainable use is made of previously developed (brownfield) land, and that opportunities are taken to address pollution, contamination and unstable land.

#### Community Plan Objectives and Targets

- *tackle environmental problems that address local concerns and do whatever we can to protect and enhance the quality of the natural environment and make our contribution to tackling global environmental problems;*
- *guide new development, in ways which meet high environmental standards, promote good environmental practice and contribute to more sustainable communities;*
- *promote the prudent use of Neath Port Talbot's natural resources;*
- *reduce air pollution ( $PM_{10}$ ) levels within the Margam/Taibach Air Quality Management Area to below national objective targets;*
- *improve the water quality of the area's rivers and water courses, so there would be none within the Environment Agency's "poor" and "fair" quality categories;*
- *reduce by 10% the amount of carbon dioxide emissions associated with the use of electricity, gas and oil in Council buildings;*
- *encourage annual 2% increases in the creation of open areas within conifer plantations and in the planting of broad leaf and mixed woodland in appropriate locations;*
- *halt the loss of scarce habitats and species supported habitats as identified in the Local Biodiversity Action Plan;*
- *undertake a health check of each Conservation Area;*
- *to achieve demonstrable year on year improvements to the accessibility of services to disabled people;*
- *reduce the fear of crime by 5%.*

### 4.3 HOUSING

- meet the main housing market's needs (which is largely concentrated in Neath, Port Talbot and Pontardawe) on a range of sites in locations which meet the Plan's sustainability objectives;
- ensure that the smaller communities have sufficient land identified within the settlement limit to meet their needs;

- ensure that new housing developments make their fair contribution to meeting the demands which they place on the local community, its facilities, services and infrastructure and towards the provision of affordable housing;
- focus the main new housing allocation at Llandarcy. This would be a fine grained, extension of the urban area (Urban Village) with an integrated land use pattern of residential and employment uses supported by a full range of community facilities and offering the opportunity to live and work in the same community.

#### Community Plan Objectives and Targets

- *Neath Port Talbot will have a stable population sustaining existing facilities and attracting new ones;*
- *increase the percentage of homes built on previously developed land by 10%;*
- *encourage the redevelopment of brownfield sites e.g. Llandarcy and Neath Abbey Wharf to create development opportunities that will enhance the quality of life.*

#### 4.3.1 UDP Monitoring

4.3.2 The take up of housing land will be monitored through:

- the Annual Joint Housing Land Availability Studies undertaken in accordance with TAN 1;
- an assessment of the proportions of previously developed (brownfield) and greenfield land;
- an assessment of the densities achieved, and
- an assessment of the impact on the County Borough's habitats.

#### 4.4 EMPLOYMENT

- through policies to encourage employment, reduce the need for residents to leave the area in search of work, and help stabilise the area's population;
- ensure that there is an attractive, readily available and sufficient range and amount of sites and premises;
- focus key employment provision within Port Talbot and Neath at Llandarcy Urban Village, Jersey Marine, Baglan Bay Development, Port Talbot Docks and Margam, together with important sites within the valleys at Abernant (Cwmgors), Glanrhdyd (Pontardawe), Glynneath, Resolven, and Cymmer;

- encourage the creation and expansion of businesses wherever this can be achieved without causing unacceptable harm;
- encourage tourism and improvement of tourist facilities to maximise the economic and employment benefits whilst safeguarding the environment and interests of local communities.

*Community Plan Objectives and Targets*

- *Neath Port Talbot will be an attractive location for inward investors with room for indigenous business to expand. Small and medium sized enterprises will be well supported and a significant sector is the local economy;*
- *whilst large scale employment opportunities will be concentrated on the coastal belt e.g. at Baglan Energy Park (providing 3,600 jobs by 2012) and Llandarcy, the growth of the small indigenous business sector in the valleys will be apparent;*
- *increase the GDP in the County Borough to within 5% of the G.B average;*
- *narrow the gap between the rate of unemployment in Neath Port Talbot and the G.B figure to 10%;*
- *attract 300 jobs per annum to Neath Port Talbot via inward investment;*
- *increase the number of new business start ups by 5% per annum;*
- *create 5,000 m<sup>2</sup> of new industrial/commercial premises per annum;*
- *encourage the redevelopment of brownfield sites e.g. Llandarcy and Neath Abbey Wharf to create development opportunities that will enhance the quality of life.*

## **4.5 COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL IMPACTS**

- focus development, investment and the provision of services to sustain and enhance communities;
- minimise adverse impacts on communities and groups within communities;
- encourage development which would help sustain the use of the Welsh language and resist proposals which would be likely to harm the linguistic character of communities.

*Community Plan Objectives and Targets*

- *communities will receive high quality, value for money public services that are responsive to their diverse needs and designed to be accessible to all, particularly excluded groups;*

- *the Welsh language will be supported particularly in those communities where it plays a significant part of everyday life;*
- *communities will have the capacity to play a key role in determining their future and, with the help of partner organisations, find local solutions to their needs and aspirations;*
- *Neath Port Talbot's communities will continue to prove their resilience, but some huge challenges will remain: sustaining life long learning; improving health and well being; reducing inequality and social division, improving the environment and local neighbourhoods;*
- *every community will have easy access to life long learning;*
- *to effectively implement in partnership with local communities, strategies to tackle social exclusion in the 10 most deprived areas within Neath Port Talbot (i.e. the Upper Afan, Dulais and Swansea Valleys, Sandfields, Briton Ferry East/Neath East, Brynamman and Gwaun-Cae-Gurwen, Pelenna, Brynbyddan and Penllyn in Cwmafan and Fairyland, Neath);*
- *to develop and implement a joint targeted health promotion strategy which provides healthier life styles and tackles determinants of poor health;*
- *to provide support within their own homes and communities for at least 90% of elderly and disabled people who need social and health care support.*

#### **4.6 TOWN CENTRES, RETAILING AND LEISURE**

- ensure that town centres provide the focus for community, leisure, sporting, shopping and business activities, and that district, local and village centres provide for the needs of their local communities;
- protect town, district, local and village centres from retail developments which would undermine their roles and attractiveness;
- promote new developments which broaden the range of business shopping and leisure opportunities offered, in line with the “sequential approach” which places town centres first, and recognises the more local roles of district, local and village centres.

##### Community Plan Objectives and Targets

- *our town centres will be healthy and vibrant with an attractive built environment and townscape;*
- *more people will take advantage of a wider range of evening activities improving current perceptions of the town centres at night;*

- encourage the regeneration of our town centres by increasing by 10% the number of individual buildings, which receive financial support for maintenance and enhancement;
- undertake a “health check” of the main town centres of Neath, Port Talbot and Pontardawe.

## 4.7 TRANSPORT

- promote an integrated transport system which serves the needs of the County Borough’s communities including the provision of new facilities, roads and paths and helps improve highway safety and reduce traffic congestion and pollution. Promote measures to make the use of public transport, cycling and walking more attractive and reduce the need to depend on using the private car;
- ensure that new development is well located and designed to contribute to more sustainable patterns of development and movement;
- protect facilities such as wharfs and railway lines which offer the potential for future use or re-use.

### Community Plan Objectives and Targets

*Public Safety will have improved through improvements to street lighting and the use of speed reduction measures.*

*Further action will be taken to reduce car dependency and increase the use, and recognise the environmental benefits of public transport, cycling and walking.*

*There will be better public and community transport links between the urban centre and the valleys leading to improved access to employment, training, shopping and leisure activities.*

*Urban and sub regional transport links will also be better integrated.*

*The Peripheral Distributor Road will be completed opening up a new future for Port Talbot’s docks area and regenerating the local communities along the existing A48 route.*

- increase by 5% the numbers of passengers on buses using the “Green Route”;
- increase by 5% the numbers of children walking to school;
- increase by 10% the numbers of cyclists using the new cycleways;
- reduce serious casualties and fatalities at road traffic accidents by 50% and serious casualties involving children by 50%.

## **4.8 RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE**

- open spaces and built facilities are integral parts of the settlement;
- promote a sustainable pattern of provision which would enhance the facilities and opportunities available to residents and visitors, provided they would not cause unacceptable impacts;
- ensure that new development makes its fair contribution to the provision of necessary facilities and services, either within the site or as a contribution to provision to serve the area.

### *Community Plan Objectives and Targets*

*An increasing proportion of the population will be participating in leisure, recreational and cultural activities and have healthier lifestyles. The range of events at local entertainment centres will continue to expand.*

*Recreationally, Margam Park will retain its status as the “jewel in the crown” with increased levels of attendance there and at the country parks such as the Gnoll.*

- *to increase access to leisure facilities such as leisure centres and country parks, by people who are disadvantaged, unemployed or with low incomes by 1% per annum*

## **4.9 INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENERGY**

- allow the provision of infrastructure while minimising adverse impacts;
- guide development to make best use of available or programmed infrastructure;
- encourage proposals to create renewable energy while minimising adverse impacts;
- encourage the most effective use of energy through the location and design of proposals (Implemented through the Environment chapter policies).

### *Community Plan Objectives and Targets*

- *Health Services will meet national standards with improved access to primary and secondary care;*
- *the new Neath Port Talbot Hospital at Baglan and other planned secondary care developments will provide high quality, modern facilities and G.P services will work with other agencies to promote healthy communities;*

- *disadvantaged children and young people will have access to high quality health, social and education opportunities and services.*

#### **4.10 MINERALS**

- ensure that prudent use is made of the area's minerals, taking into account the need to protect long term needs;
- ensure that mineral extraction minimises adverse affects on communities, the landscape, water resources, wildlife and habitats.

*Community Plan Objectives and Targets*

- *tackle local environmental problems that address local concerns and do whatever we can to protect and enhance the quality of the natural environment;*
- *guide new development in ways which meet high environmental standards, promote good environmental practice and contribute to more sustainable communities;*
- *promote the prudent use of Neath Port Talbot's natural resources.*

#### **4.11 WASTE**

- ensure that proposals are designed to minimise the creation of waste and to encourage recycling and re-use of materials;
- ensure that the provision of facilities to collect, treat and dispose of waste are located to minimise adverse effects. (These issues are also addressed through the Environment Chapter policies).

*Community Plan Objectives and Targets*

- *tackle local environmental problems that address local concerns and do whatever we can to protect and enhance the quality of the natural environment;*
- *guide new development in ways which meet high environmental standards, promote good environmental practice and contribute to more sustainable communities;*
- *promote the prudent use of Neath Port Talbot's natural resources;*
- *less waste will be generated and the amount of waste being recycled will have exceeded national targets;*
- *increase to 30% the amount of household waste recycled including composting;*

- *recover (including recycling) 70% of household waste.*

## **4.12 RESOURCES**

- 4.12.1 While the Plan's vision is based upon creating new economic activity and employment, care has been taken to make the strategy flexible in terms of the availability of resources. The key economic redevelopment sites are committed and underway, but their speed of development will depend heavily on the area's success in attracting investment.
- 4.12.2 In terms of allocating land for all types of development the focus has been on identifying land that is likely to be attractive to developers and not involve unreasonable development costs
- 4.12.3 The strategy reflects the increased emphasis placed on encouraging small and medium sized enterprises.
- 4.12.4 The Llandarcy development is dependent upon the availability of adequate funding to deal with contamination and the provision of infrastructure. Detailed feasibility studies have been undertaken and the Authority is confident that the development will proceed unconstrained by resource problems.

**5 PART 1 POLICIES**

**ENVIRONMENT**

**POLICY 1**

**The countryside, seascapes and landscapes of Neath Port Talbot will be enhanced where appropriate and / or protected from proposals that would have unacceptable impacts on their character and appearance.**

**POLICY 2**

**Wildlife and habitats, including those within urban areas, will be enhanced where appropriate and protected from proposals that would cause unacceptable impacts. Particular emphasis will be placed on species and habitat areas that are designated as being of international or national importance.**

**POLICY 3**

**The area's minerals and other natural resources, both finite and renewable, will be conserved and safeguarded, and when exploited the most prudent use of them will be sought.**

**POLICY 4**

**The creation of pollution or risks to health and amenities that would have unacceptable impacts upon the environment, communities or individuals will be resisted.**

**POLICY 5**

**The area's built environment will be enhanced where appropriate and/ or protected from proposals that would have unacceptable impacts on its character, appearance and on the quality of life.**

**POLICY 6**

**The County Borough's historic environment including archaeology, ancient monuments, listed buildings, conservation areas and historic parks, gardens and landscapes will be protected and proposals that would aid its preservation and enhancement will be supported.**

## **HOUSING**

### **POLICY 7**

**In order to meet the County Borough's new housing needs, land will be made available for the development of approximately 6155 houses during the period mid 2001- mid 2016, distributed as follows:**

Housing Zone	Large Sites	Small Sites	Total
Port Talbot	1739	215	1954
Greater Neath	3085	250	3335
Neath & Dulais Valley	155	153	308
Upper Afan Valley	0	35	35
Swansea Valley	248	275	523

**An overall capacity for the Llandarcy Urban Village of 4,000 dwellings is allocated, this will extend beyond the plan period.**

**Development to serve the needs of individual communities will be catered for within settlement limits.**

## **ECONOMY AND EMPLOYMENT**

### **POLICY 8**

**The main sources of employment will be concentrated along the coastal belt within the urban area of Jersey Marine – Neath – Port Talbot.**

### **POLICY 9**

**The diversification and strengthening of the local economy will be encouraged. Emphasis will be placed on helping farms diversify, tourism-related proposals, assisting the creation and growth of small and medium sized enterprises and in particular, those which seek to promote social inclusion and more environmentally sustainable practices.**

### **POLICY 10**

**The expansion or redevelopment of existing enterprises will wherever appropriate be encouraged.**

## **COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

### **POLICY 11**

**Social needs and aspirations of communities and groups within communities will be taken fully into account when planning applications are considered.**

## **TRANSPORT**

### **POLICY 12**

**Improvements to the transport system will concentrate on: -**

- a) improving accessibility and highway safety and reducing congestion, pollution and disturbance generated by traffic;**
- b) encouraging travel by public transport, cycling and walking as alternatives to the car; and**
- c) encouraging the movement of freight by rail and sea as alternatives to road.**

### **POLICY 13**

**The location and design of development should contribute to more sustainable communities through reducing dependency on the motorcar and encouraging the use of public transport, cycling and walking.**

### **POLICY 14**

**Proposals will be resisted which would be likely to cause unacceptable adverse impact in terms of: -**

- a) traffic generation and highway safety;**
- b) poor accessibility by public transport, cycling and walking including people with disabilities and**
- c) preventing the use or re-use of docks, harbours, wharfs or routes of railway lines.**

## **RETAIL**

### **POLICY 15**

**Neath, Port Talbot and Pontardawe, as the primary town centres, providing retail, leisure, commercial and cultural facilities serving the County Borough's communities will be protected and enhanced.**

## **POLICY 16**

**District, Local and Village Centres will be protected and enhanced provided the proposals are appropriate to the centre and would not harm the vitality, attractiveness and viability of any other centre.**

## **RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE**

### **POLICY 17**

**Provision for sport, recreation and open space will be protected and enhanced by: -**

- a) encouraging new and enhanced provision provided no unacceptable impacts would be created;**
- b) steering proposals for facilities that generate high levels of travel demand to sites in or close to town centres;**
- c) protecting existing playing fields and areas of open space that have significant recreational value to the community from development, unless it can be demonstrated that they are surplus to long term requirements or satisfactory alternative provision can be made;**
- d) ensuring that new development makes it fair contribution to meeting any additional demands which it creates;**
- e) encouraging and promoting the appropriate improvement of opportunities for access to and enjoyment of the coast and the countryside**

## **INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENERGY**

### **POLICY 18**

**The plan will encourage the best and most efficient use of infrastructure and resources, but proposals which would place unacceptable demands on existing and programmed resources and facilities will be resisted.**

### **POLICY 19**

**Opportunities to create energy from renewable resources will be encouraged provided that unacceptable impacts are not created.**

## **MINERALS**

### **POLICY 20**

- A) Proposals for coal extraction will be favoured where they contribute to the County Borough's share of local, regional or national production subject to: -
- a) ensuring that the impacts on the environment and local communities are acceptable; and
  - b) securing appropriate, high quality and prompt restoration and aftercare to provide a beneficial after-use.
- B) Aggregates and dimension stone production will be catered for by the expansion of the Gilfach and Cwm Nant Lleuci quarries.

### **POLICY 21**

Mineral resources will be conserved, and the efficient use of aggregates and the use of byproducts and recycled materials as alternatives to primary aggregates promoted.

### **POLICY 22**

Proposals that would prejudice the extraction or safeguarding of the aggregate resources identified on the Proposals Map will be resisted.

### **POLICY 23**

The recycling and re-use of minerals and materials will be encouraged, and proposals generally should minimise the use of minerals through siting and design.

## **WASTE**

### **POLICY 24**

New development will be expected to incorporate processes and facilities to minimise the creation of waste, and to include measures to ensure the re-use and/or recycling of the waste which they generate. As far as is feasible, waste generated on site should be treated on site.

### **POLICY 25**

The creation of a network of waste management facilities will be promoted through the plan in order to:

- a) meet the existing and future needs of the County Borough; and
- b) contribute to meeting the needs and potential new demands of the region.

## **POLICY 26**

**Proposals for the collection, treatment or disposal of waste will be considered in terms of whether they would represent a sustainable approach to waste management, and would not create any unacceptable impacts.**

## **LLANDARCY URBAN VILLAGE**

### **POLICY 27**

**A new urban village will be created at Llandarcy providing a mixed use development on brownfield land as an extension to the Neath urban area at Skewen**

## **POR T TALBOT DOCKS AND INDUSTRIAL ESTATE**

### **POLICY 28**

**The potential of the Port Talbot Docks and adjacent areas as a key regeneration area for the County Borough will be promoted.**

## **BAGLAN BAY DEVELOPMENT**

### **POLICY 29**

**The potential of the Baglan Bay area as a key regeneration area for the County Borough will be promoted.**

## **6 SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL**

### **6.1 SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL FINDINGS SUMMARY**

- 6.1.1 The Vision sets the aims that the Plan will seek to achieve. They embrace the key Sustainability aims set out by the Government, Welsh Assembly Government and the Community Plan. They contain potential conflicts, but as a result of applying Sustainability Assessment, both in the preparation of the UDP and when considering individual proposals, the likely impacts and options should be clearer and better recognised as decisions are taken.
- 6.1.2 The majority of new development will, following market forces, be located within the main urban areas focused on Pontardawe, Neath and Port Talbot. This will contribute towards Sustainability in locating new housing near employment, shopping and other facilities.
- 6.1.3 The most fundamental decision is to aim to regain and maintain the 1991 level of population despite a trend of gradual decline. While this involves the provision of new housing and other development, the maximum use will be made of previously developed land (brownfield – but avoiding land where wildlife interests are important). It will stabilise the population and help sustain the communities and facilities and services.
- 6.1.4 The Sustainability Appraisal was applied throughout the preparation of the plan as described in the Pre Deposit Consultation document. As a result a number of housing and employment sites identified in existing Local Plans or with the benefit of planning permission and which perform poorly in terms of the Appraisal have been omitted.
- 6.1.5 The creation of the Urban Village at Llandarcy will make use of the site of the former refinery and reduce development on greenfield sites on the edge of the Neath and Port Talbot urban areas. It could result in residents and people travelling to Llandarcy to work and using its facilities and creating additional traffic. However, when viewed in the context of the aims of the Urban Village and also the wider context of traffic movements within the wider area, Llandarcy is centrally located and it can be expected to lead to a reduction overall in traffic generated by the trips.
- 6.1.5 The creation of a network of public transport, cycling and walking links to the surrounding communities will be very important in terms of delivering more sustainable patterns of movement. As a result, the Llandarcy development could have a significant influence on tying the broader area together more closely in transport, economic and social terms.
- 6.1.6 In terms of wildlife and biodiversity, the site occupies a key strategic location at the centre of Swansea Bay and adjacent to the tidal River Neath, Crymlyn Bog and Crymlyn Burrows. It offers the opportunity to increase the area's potential as a green lung and wildlife corridor within the near continuous belt of urban development that extends from Llanelli to Margam.

- 6.1.7 The Vision also includes the key strategic decision to support and sustain the smaller communities, which are located outside the urban area and mainly within the valleys. It could be argued that residents of the communities are increasingly dependent on travelling to larger centres for most work, shopping and leisure activities. On the other hand the settlements retain considerable facilities and services and a strong community spirit. Through allowing the provision of housing, and employment to satisfy local needs, the plan aims to help sustain and enhance the communities, and their facilities and services.
- 6.1.8 The Welsh Language is a significant feature in some of these communities, which share the same problems of a declining population and difficulty in sustaining facilities.
- 6.1.9 The Strategy comprises cross cutting themes and topic chapters. It sets out the specific objectives which the Part 1 and Part 2 policies will seek to address.
- 6.1.10 Monitoring and evaluation of the plan should not only assess the effectiveness and appropriateness of individual policies, but whether the vision and targets accurately reflect those emerging through the Community Plan process.
- 6.1.11 The setting out of the Vision, locality visions, strategies and objectives is intended to aid the Community Plan process as it considers the effectiveness and appropriateness of the UDP's strategies and policies.

## **7 GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS**

### **7.1 BACKGROUND**

- 7.1.1 The range of matters relevant to planning considerations has broadened extensively over recent years while the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 has introduced a statutory requirement to address sustainability (including social, economic and environmental issues). The breadth of relevant issues is reflected in the range and extent of Welsh Government Guidance which includes 24 major documents. It would not be feasible to summarise this guidance, while WAG guidance discourages it in the interest of more succinct Development Plans
- 7.1.2 The two General Considerations policies draw together sets of criteria that would otherwise be distributed throughout the plan. This is intended to clarify matters not only for applicants but also the wider community. In accordance with WAG guidance, they set out criteria that will be applied to proposals. They cannot be comprehensive but provide a checklist of important issues that will (if appropriate) need to be considered. They may in turn relate to more detailed policies within the plan, while existing and future WAG planning guidance will complement them.
- 7.1.3 The policies (and others with similar wording elsewhere in the plan) are based on the assumption that where the Authority resolves to resist a proposal in that it would be likely to have “unacceptable” impacts, the onus will be clearly on the Authority to explain why this is the case.

### **7.2 POLICY GC1 – NEW BUILDINGS/STRUCTURES AND CHANGES OF USE**

**Any proposal involving new buildings, structures, change of use, extensions and alterations will not be permitted if it would create an unacceptable impact in failing to:**

- a) take into account the topography and the site’s role in terms of the landscape, seascape, biodiversity and archaeology;  
see policies: ENV3, ENV4, ENV5, ENV22, ENV23 and ENV24
- b) address contamination, instability, impacts on health and amenity and proximity or exposure to noise, lighting, pollution or hazard;  
see policies: ENV12, ENV14, ENV15, ENV16, ENV26, ENV27, ENV28, ENV29
- c) ensure that the proposal would not be at risk from flooding, nor increase flood risk off-site or create additional water run-off;  
see policy ENV 11
- d) ensure that the orientation and exposure of the site maximises both energy efficiency, and the opportunity to integrate energy and water conservation measures into the design and layout of the development;

- e) ensure that measures are taken to minimise the adverse impacts of the development on the character and townscape of the surrounding area including building densities, architectural styles, layout patterns, orientation of buildings, scale, height, mass and materials of nearby buildings, structures and infrastructure (including power lines, roads and railways;)  
 see policies: ENV 18, ENV 19, ENV 20
- (f) ensure that proposals that could (individually or cumulatively) lead to a significant increase in traffic generation, density of occupation, or which are intended to provide affordable housing, housing for the elderly or for people with disabilities, are well located in terms of access on foot to facilities and public transport.
- g) ensure that in residential developments, efficient use is made of the site in terms of the density of development including the size and footprint of the buildings, the extent of gardens and curtilages, and the amount and extent of parking and circulation space;  
 see policies H2, H3
- h) ensure that the layout and design of the development achieves inclusive design by ensuring barrier free environments, giving access to the widest possible range of people by integrating development with existing footpaths, cycle ways and public and private transport infrastructure, and makes full provision for people with disabilities.  
 see policy T1, T2, T3
- i) ensure that the proposal includes appropriate parking, servicing and access provisions and does not create unacceptable hazards or inconvenience for users of highways or rights of way;  
 see policies T1, T9, T10, T12
- j) ensure that the layout of the development does not preclude the efficient use of other adjacent land which is either allocated for development in the plan or is located within a settlement limit;
- k) ensure that adequate sunlight, and daylight, is available for buildings and amenity spaces both adjacent to and within the site;
- l) ensure that there are reasonable levels of privacy and amenity for occupiers of properties both adjacent to and within the site;
- m) ensure that the proposal includes appropriate landscaping;
- n) ensure that wherever a proposal would be likely to generate significant amounts of waste appropriate waste minimisation, recycling, collection, treatment and disposal facilities are provided both during construction and the use or operation of the proposal;

- o) ensure that adequate infrastructure and services are available, or can be readily and economically provided, to serve the development; proposals including non mains drainage schemes *must demonstrate that connection to the main sewer is not feasible.*  
**see policy IE1**
  - p) ensure that the development would not impose unacceptable demands upon the community or its facilities including schools, sports, recreation, formal and informal open space, leisure, health and community facilities, nor be likely to create unacceptable problems in terms of crime prevention or the Welsh language;  
**see policies H4, H5**
  - q) ensure that in the case of proposals involving new construction work a design statement is provided explaining the design proposed, how the issues have been considered and solutions derived, and including illustrations of how the proposal would relate to its surrounding area of townscape, seascapes or landscape as appropriate;
- 7.2.1 It is when each individual site is developed that the community will be able to assess whether Sustainability and Quality of Life issues have been adequately addressed. This policy sets out the criteria by which all developments, including buildings, structures and changes of use will be assessed.
- 7.2.2 All proposals involving new construction will be required to provide a design statement explaining the design, how the design has addressed the criteria in the policy and how the design would relate to the surrounding landscape or townscape.
- 7.2.3 The efficient use of land is a key part of sustainability in respect of making the best use of well-located and serviced land and reducing the need for further land take. Generally, the Authority will expect residential developments to achieve a density of 30 dwellings per hectare (having excluded major distribution roads, primary schools, open spaces serving a wider area and significant landscape strips, but including access roads within the site, private garden space, car parking areas, incidental open space and landscaping and children's play areas). Lower density developments that offer choice within the housing local market will be considered, but they should be justified in terms of their location, design and layout and landscaping.
- 7.2.4 In order to reduce the need for development to encroach upon the countryside and to make full use of land identified for development, it is important that it is fully developed. When applications are considered, care will be taken to ensure that the design does not frustrate (for instance in terms of highways, drainage, landscaping, layout etc) the development of an adjacent site.
- 7.2.5 Layout and design have an important influence on maintaining and enhancing amenity and quality of life for residents and users of buildings and open spaces. The policy identifies issues which should be addressed including creating "barrier free" housing which is flexible to the needs of all, including young children and

people with disabilities. The provision of facilities to minimise and deal with waste should form an integral part of the design and layout of a proposal.

- 7.2.6 While encouraging the full use of well located land, the Authority will resist proposals which would have unacceptable impacts on amenities and the quality of life for adjacent residents, or which would be incompatible with existing industrial or commercial activities.
- 7.2.7 The availability of services and infrastructure including roads, water, sewerage, open space, schools, health and other community facilities to serve the development will be assessed. Where they may be inadequate the developer will be expected to make contributions on or off site to meet the needs or mitigate impacts generated by the development. Alternatively the development might be phased in order to allow committed works to address the problem to be completed. Proposals should take full account of flood risk and should not create additional run-off. Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS), using techniques to control surface water run-off as close to its origin as possible before it enters a watercourse, should, wherever practicable, help to manage flood risk and environmental damage through minimising changes in the volume and rate of surface run-off.
- 7.2.8 The design of an area has a significant influence on the quality of life of those who live, work and enjoy leisure time in that area. Within the Neath Port Talbot area there is a commitment to designing out crime and disorder to reduce crime and the fear of crime. Developers will be expected to adhere to the principles of crime prevention through environmental design. Developers should take the opportunity where possible to comply with the Police approved "Secured by Design" scheme and consult with the police local Architectural Liaison Officer. Neath Port Talbot Council and the South Wales Police are working to prepare Supplementary Planning Guidance on Community Safety within the area.
- 7.2.9 Low energy building design will be expected and the opportunity should be taken to include measures such as solar panels and the careful location and orientation of the buildings.
- 7.2.10 Minimising the creation of waste and promoting recycling, reuse and composting should be taken into account at all stages including the design of the proposal, any processes which would be undertaken and use by occupiers and visitors. The nature of the provision of facilities will relate to the likely generation of waste and the potential for minimisation and recycling. Where a proposal would be likely to generate significant waste (including for example a new manufacturing unit, school, health centre or retail outlet) the developer will be expected to demonstrate how the policy has been complied with.
- 7.2.11 The Council intends to prepare Supplementary Planning Guidance aimed at addressing the impacts on air quality and global warming caused by new and existing land uses. The Guidance will take into account likely improvements in the carbon efficiency of vehicles and energy production, and the carbon rating of new and existing development. On the basis of these calculations, it will set requirements for tree planting to be carried out in association with new

development, and will propose other arrangements for managed planting schemes aimed at mitigating the effects of existing development, particularly in urban areas.

- 7.2.12 Where appropriate, proposals will be assessed in relation to other developments undertaken or approved within the previous five years, taking into account the cumulative and incremental effects of the developments on landscape, townscape, seascape, traffic, communities, facilities, and the local economy. Proposals may also be assessed in terms of other policies contained in the plan, while Supplementary Planning Guidance will be prepared to explain the Authority's expectations.

### **7.3 POLICY GC2 – ENGINEERING WORKS AND OPERATIONS (INCLUDING MINERALS AND WASTE)**

**Any proposal for or including engineering works and other operations will not be permitted if it would create an unacceptable impact in failing to:-**

- a) respect the landscape, seascape and/or townscape including its local topography, character, features, and archaeological remains;  
see policies: ENV3, ENV10, ENV18, ENV19, ENV20, ENV22, ENV23, Design Policy (ENV17) and ENV24
- b) ensure that there are no adverse effects on the biodiversity of the site and the surrounding area, with particular care being given to priority species and habitats and designated areas;  
see policies: ENV 4 and ENV 5
- c) take into account local communities and their amenity and health including noise, pollution, blasting, grit, dust, smoke, smell, vibration, illumination, views and cumulative impacts;  
see policies: ENV 15, ENV26, ENV27, ENV28 and ENV29
- d) ensure that there are no adverse effects on water supply, water quality or quantity, land drainage and flooding;  
see policies: ENV 11 and ENV 12
- e) satisfactorily address any ground contamination;  
see policy: ENV 16
- f) satisfactorily address ground stability;  
see policy: ENV 14
- g) ensure that there is adequate access, parking and servicing provision;  
see policies: T1and T10
- h) ensure that unacceptable hazard or inconvenience for users of highways and rights of way are not created;  
see policies: T1 and T12

- i) ensure that satisfactory arrangements are made for the moving of materials, supplies, personnel and other operational needs to, within and from the site;
- j) make the best practical environmental use of materials on the site and which could reasonably be made available as a result of the work;
- k) ensure that it does not sterilise minerals, soil, agricultural holdings or high quality farmland, or other resources (including the potential for the creation of renewable energy), or land which is within a settlement limit or allocated in the UDP for other purposes; and  
**see policies: ENV 1, ENV 6**
- l) a scheme has been submitted as part of the proposals which indicates satisfactorily how the work will be undertaken including:
  - (i) the method, planning and duration;
  - (ii) the control of environmental and other impacts; and
  - (iii) restoration and/or aftercare which ensures a beneficial after use which takes full account of the potential to create habitats in line with the LBAP, landscaping, and any proposals to mitigate the impacts created upon the community and environment.

- 7.3.1 The policy provides a framework to guide the consideration of proposals which include engineering and similar operations. They could include proposals for mineral working, waste disposal, the creation of roads and other routes, or be a part of development proposals which require earth moving and similar work.
- 7.3.2 Many such proposals are likely to require the preparation of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and this could include the assessment of alternatives, but this policy will relate equally to smaller scale proposals, which should also demonstrate how they have addressed potential impacts.
- 7.3.3 In terms of access and transport issues, wherever feasible the arrangements should favour the use of rail, water or off-highway routes provided these would not themselves create unacceptable impacts. Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS), using techniques to control surface water run-off as close to its origin as possible before it enters a watercourse, should wherever practicable, help to manage flood risk and environmental damage through minimising changes in the volume and rate of surface run-off.
- 7.3.4 The likely impacts on local communities will be a particular concern and this will include dwellings, other sensitive buildings (such as schools and hospitals) and areas of land which are allocated for such uses or are important in terms of amenity or recreation.
- 7.3.5 When assessing proposals the Authority will consider whether they are making their contribution to Sustainability and are making full use of the potential of the

- site, and the resources on or underground. Proposals should take full account of flood risk and not create additional run-off.
- 7.3.6 Restoration and aftercare proposals will be of particular importance. This can be in terms of mitigating the impacts on the landscape, townscape and wildlife or taking advantage of the opportunity to create new habitats or features. This should include compensating for any loss of trees or woodland both in terms of amenity and addressing air quality issues.
- 7.3.7 Where appropriate, proposals will be assessed in relation to other developments undertaken or approved within the previous five years, taking into account the cumulative and incremental effects of the developments on landscape, townscape, seascapes, traffic, communities, facilities, and the local economy. Proposals will also be assessed in terms of other policies contained in the plan.

#### **7.4 SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL SUMMARY**

- 7.4.1 The policies are designed to ensure that sustainability issues are specifically considered in relation to every proposal. This could range from how waste treatment and collection is addressed to impacts on the community. Their use and effectiveness will need to be carefully monitored and assessed. This will be central to reviewing the environmental appraisal (SEA). This monitoring and assessment should be a key part of the Annual Monitoring Reports and should inform the Community Planning process.

## **8 ENVIRONMENT**

### **8.1 CURRENT POSITION**

- 8.1.1 The landscape, habitats and settlements that make up Neath Port Talbot are particularly varied. They range from coastal saltmarsh and sand dunes, through valley-side meadows and ancient woodlands, to wind swept upland areas of purple moor grass and from the dense urban towns of Neath and Port Talbot to isolated former mining communities which now share many of the same issues as remote rural communities.
- 8.1.2 The area's landscape, and man's effects on it, has been heavily influenced by its geology. In the Neath and Swansea Valleys the glaciers left steep and sometimes unstable, valley sides and flat valley floors which contain a considerable depth of aggregates. At Rheola the extraction of this gravel has created two large lakes. The whole of the area is underlain by Coal Measures that outcrop along the northern and southern rims of the coalfield between Gwaun Cae Gurwen and Glynneath and to the south east of Margam. These outcrops continue to attract considerable opencast coal interest.
- 8.1.3 Above the Coal Measures, much of the uplands are made up of sandstone. This provides outcrops and features which bring character, but the rock is also an important potential source of aggregates and cut stone.
- 8.1.4 Inland from the coastal plain much of the County Borough is made up of valleys cut into the mountains, which while once largely covered with moorland and oakwood, now contain large conifer plantations. Forest Enterprise managed plantations cover 35% of the Authority's land area; this is the highest proportion in England and Wales.
- 8.1.5 Little of the land is of high agricultural quality and the area saw a lower intensity of deep coal mining than the valleys to the east. As a result the County Borough's countryside contains much which is of value in terms of landscape and wildlife. The area's farming is mainly made up of family and small farms specialising in sheep and cattle raising with little crop growing. The area contains areas of countryside ranging from Crymlyn Bog/Pant Y Sais Fen to the headwaters of the River Neath above Pontneddfechan, which are of international and national wildlife conservation importance. Much of the area is of more local interest in terms of habitats and species. There are two designated Local Nature Reserves, while areas of land are held as wildlife reserves by bodies including the RSPB, National Trust, Woodland Trust and South and West Wales Wildlife Trust. The area also contains areas of historic countryside and parks that have been identified by Cadw as being of great importance. These are identified in the Register of Landscapes Parks and Gardens in Wales.
- 8.1.6 Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas and Archaeological Remains are an irreplaceable part of our history, traditions and culture that we hold in trust for current and future generations. Their existence in-situ and their settings are often fundamental to their significance. Once damaged or destroyed they cannot be replaced.

- 8.1.7 This heritage of historic buildings and remains extends back through examples of the Industrial Revolution, to Roman and Prehistoric remains. Reflecting the great variety in landscape and character within the County Borough our legacy ranges from the coastal medieval abbey complexes at Margam and Neath Abbey to the comparatively little changed uplands. Here, the remains of farmsteads, ancient fields, mines and monuments of ancient worship survive remarkably intact and relatively untouched by the agricultural change and development which have transformed lower areas.
- 8.1.8 Welsh Historic Monuments has responsibility for protecting, conserving and promoting the historic environment of Wales. The Assembly Government has a duty to prepare lists of buildings of special architectural or historic interest (i.e. "listed buildings"). This has the effect of bringing the buildings within statutory control. The Assembly Government may schedule ancient monuments considered to be of national importance and determines applications for consent for works affecting scheduled ancient monuments and Local Authority owned listed buildings as well as those in private ownership where a local authority proposes to undertake any works.
- 8.1.9 The Countryside Council for Wales has statutory responsibilities on sustaining natural beauty, wildlife, the opportunity for outdoor enjoyment and the protection of the landscape. Along with Cadw and ICOMOS (the International Commission on Monuments and Sites) it is the joint sponsor of the Register of Landscapes of Historic Interest in Wales.
- 8.1.10 The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales (RCAHMW) is the national body of survey and record and provides a comprehensive archive of ancient monuments and historic buildings. The Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust maintains the Sites and Monuments record for the area and provides archaeological guidance to the Authority. The Trust has also produced a report on the history of the County Borough that will form part of a Landmap study of the area. It will be available for inspection or purchase and will form background to Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) that the Authority will produce on Landscape and the Historic Environment.
- 8.1.11 The County Borough as local planning authority has the duty of designating any area of "special architectural or historic interest" the character of which it is desirable to preserve as a Conservation Area. There are seven within the County Borough and the designation of further areas will be considered.
- 8.1.12 While relatively short in length, the County Borough's coastline contains areas of great wildlife and landscape interest. Between Crymlyn Burrows and the Aberavon Sea Front promenade and eastwards from the mouth of the River Afan towards Kenfig are important sand dune systems. The tidal estuary of the River Neath extends deep inland to the confluence of the Neath and Dulais valleys at Aberdulais. Apart from being a habitat identified in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan, the salt marshes are a dramatic feature within the lower Neath Valley, particularly when flooded at high tide.

## **8.2 CURRENT TRENDS AND ISSUES**

- 8.2.1 The County Borough's countryside is under continuing pressure for new development. While there is an increasing emphasis on using brownfield land rather than greenfield, there is a constant need to find land for development. This pressure from development is particularly intense on the edges of settlements. There is also considerable interest in opencast mining and quarrying within the area. New development not only results in the direct loss of the land, wildlife and landscape features concerned (and some "brownfield" sites are of a greater ecological interest than greenfield), but there is a cumulative impact when habitats become isolated or too small to sustain some types of wildlife. Already there is a virtually continuous strip of development within the County Borough from Skewen to Margam (and which extends westwards beyond Llanelli).
- 8.2.2 The Neath Port Talbot Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) identifies habitats and species which require particular protection, being of principal importance for the conservation of biological diversity in the UK or Wales, or of local priority. Local Biodiversity Action Plans have been developed across the UK to ensure that national targets are translated into effective action at a local level. The Neath Port Talbot Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) was compiled by the Neath Port Talbot Biodiversity Forum in 2001.
- 8.2.3 In the Taibach-Margam area PM<sub>10</sub> particles, mainly emitted by industrial processes, cause air pollution. An Air Quality Management Area has been designated (under the Air Quality (Wales) Regulations 2000). Improvements currently being implemented should reduce the levels of pollution to meet national standards. Significant progress was made in 2006 compared with 2004, with a reduction from 38 to 31 daily exceedences.
- 8.2.4 The quality of water in the area's rivers, watercourses and canals is improving generally. This is as a result of major investment in sewage treatment facilities, Environment Agency regulation, guidance, and initiatives to address causes of pollution including the outflow of water polluted with iron from former coal mines. Major decontamination schemes are underway on the River Pelenna above Tonmawr, and in the Vale of Neath below Resolven which will allow the cleansing and restoration for navigation of a further section of the Neath Canal.
- 8.2.5 The rural economy has been experiencing severe pressures and changes due to economic forces while the foot and mouth outbreak in 2001 created further problems. Within Neath Port Talbot there are 139 registered agricultural holdings. The Plan's policies aim to help the industry diversify in order to sustain the farms and rural economy which contribute so much to conserving the countryside and to the County Borough's cultures and traditions.
- 8.2.6 Although forest plantations cover much of the area's countryside and Forest Enterprise's South Wales office is located at Rheola, much of the work within the forest is carried out by contractors. Efforts are being made, led by Coed Cymru to encourage the management and use of broadleaf woodlands to produce sustainable timber resources and encourage local enterprises to use this high quality resource. Forest Enterprise, which manages its woodlands on behalf of the Assembly

Government is working with local communities on the management of the forests, encouraging recreation, tourism and leisure. It is moving towards recreating larger areas of indigenous broadleaf woodland when replanting, particularly in areas of high amenity value, along watercourses and where areas of ancient woodland were cleared to create the plantations.

- 8.2.7 It is now recognised that climate change is one of the most important issues facing the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. There is growing evidence of increasing rainfall and rising sea levels. This is likely to increase the risk of flooding and tidal inundations. The European Union is introducing a programme of measures to meet international obligations to tackle pollution which is helping accelerate these changes. The emphasis is increasingly on expanding the use of non-polluting fuels and reducing the creation of pollution. While the creation and use of energy are major global issues, development proposals cause important local concern because of their impacts.
- 8.2.8 The County Borough continues to make a significant contribution to coal production, mainly from opencast sites, while a gas fired power station will commence operation in Baglan in 2002. There is also considerable interest in developing wind farms in the area. While a non-polluting source of energy, it can have major impacts on the landscape.
- 8.2.9 The concentration of opencast sites, particularly in the Upper Amman, Twrch, Dulais and Neath valleys and between Margam and Pyle has caused concern over the effects on the landscape and local communities.
- 8.2.10 New development can place significant and sometimes unacceptable demands on a community, and its services and infrastructure. The availability and adequacy of current provision can constrain development although new proposals can also provide an opportunity to overcome existing problems.
- 8.2.11 The minimisation, treatment and disposal of waste are very important concerns as a result of their contribution to pollution, the unnecessary use of resources and local impacts resulting from collection, treatment and disposal. These issues are also addressed in the Waste chapter.
- 8.2.12 The special hardness and durability of some of the area's sandstone has attracted interest in creating further quarries, while the Welsh Office pioneered the creation of borrow pits to extract aggregates for the construction of the A465 in the Vale of Neath. Future sources of aggregates and sand cause concern in South Wales as a result of the impacts of on shore extraction and off shore dredging.
- 8.2.13 While the best examples of the area's buildings and townscape have been designated as ancient monuments, listed buildings and conservation areas, other areas retain considerable interest in terms of their quality and their contribution to the attractiveness and interest of the local area. However, unsympathetic design and alteration have damaged some.

### **8.3 STRATEGY**

- 8.3.1 The UDP aims to place sustainability at the heart of all planning decisions. In making these decisions a balance will be struck between the need to allow and encourage economic and social developments to improve the quality of life, and any environmental impacts which may result from such developments.
- 8.3.2 Major development proposals with significant impacts on the environment are likely to be subject to the vigorous assessment of potential environmental impacts through having to prepare Environment Impact Assessments (EIA). However, work on Agenda 21, the Community Plan, the Local Biodiversity Action Plan, and other community development work has emphasised the importance of taking all the potential impacts on individual communities into account. Features that are of importance to the local landscape or biodiversity will be protected, and where appropriate, enhanced. This could include a field pattern or rock face. Similarly while a habitat such as heath may be locally common, it is important on an international scale and as a result is of particular concern.
- 8.3.3 Sustainability must be translated into individual proposals: the impacts of a single proposal have a minute impact on issues such as global warming, but when the approach is applied consistently to all new development an increasing impact is made on local and global issues.
- 8.3.4 The strategy and policies in the plan implement and complement those in the Community Plan. They support the Strategies, Programmes and Action Plans of partner organisations including the Environment Agency, WAG's Department of Enterprise, Innovation and Networks (DEIN), Countryside Council for Wales (CCW), Cadw Neath Port Talbot Biodiversity Forum and voluntary and community groups.
- 8.3.5 The County Borough considers much of the area to be of special quality in terms of its wildlife and landscapes. Protecting and enhancing the environment of local communities will be central to their quality of life.
- 8.3.6 In addition to sites that are designated as being of European or UK importance in terms of nature conservation, the UDP will seek to protect and enhance the area's landscapes and biodiversity. The countryside is clearly defined through the UDP's allocations (for housing, industry etc) and the identification of settlement limits. The Authority has considered the need for establishing Green Belts where land would be protected for a longer period than this UDP, but considered that making local Green Wedge designations would be more appropriate. They do not convey the permanence of a Green Belt but address the need to protect the open character or landscape of those areas of countryside which are considered important in separating or forming the setting of urban areas.
- 8.3.7 Any application for development should wherever possible avoid adverse effects on the landscape and features of nature conservation importance.

- 8.3.8 The UDP will take biodiversity issues fully into account when considering proposals, and this will include their significance in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan and the Neath Port Talbot Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP).
- 8.3.9 The County Borough's coastline, including its sand dune systems and the tidal estuary and salt marshes of the River Neath, is viewed as important in terms of landscape and biodiversity. Development outside existing urban areas will need to demonstrate a particular need to locate in this very vulnerable area.
- 8.3.10 The Environment Agency has identified areas that are liable to flooding and tidal inundation. In such areas, development should be the exception. Within the zone of highest flood risk (taking into account flood defences), highly vulnerable development (including residential development) will not be allowed. Less vulnerable development may be justified, provided that adequate precautions have been demonstrated. A similar precautionary approach will be pursued where proposals might create or be located in areas subject to noise, hazard, pollution, contamination and instability.
- 8.3.11 Proposals associated with farming and farm diversification will be supported provided they would not create any unacceptable impacts. Except for the diversification of an existing and operating farm unit, new economic development in the countryside should generally be located within or adjacent to settlements as defined on the Proposal Map.
- 8.3.12 As a result of its landscape and mineral resources, the County Borough is of interest in terms of opencast coal mining, quarrying, landfill and wind farms. The Plan provides policies and identifies, where appropriate, spatial guidance for new development. Longer term strategies and commitments should follow a thorough regional assessment and evaluation. The South West Wales Regional Waste Plan was published in 2004 and the Welsh Assembly Government has published guidance on Aggregates and draft guidance on Renewable Energy. New guidance has been taken into account in the preparation of the Plan
- 8.3.13 The Authority will seek to protect and enhance the County Borough's historic environment: its archaeological remains, listed buildings, conservation areas and other areas and buildings that contribute to the area's character, culture, economic vitality and quality of life.
- 8.3.14 The Authority will seek to achieve a balance between making best use of urban areas and protecting them from over intensive development which erodes the local quality of life.
- 8.3.15 The Authority will expect new development to contribute towards sustainability. This will include the layout and design and the way issues ranging from accessibility for everyone to the collection, treatment and disposal of waste is addressed.
- 8.3.16 In order to encourage a comprehensive approach to the preparation and consideration of proposals two policies have been included in the Built

Environment section which draw together the key considerations ranging from energy efficiency and waste minimisation to accessibility.

- 8.3.17 The Assembly Government has highlighted the contribution that each individual development can make to improving design by introducing the need for a design statement to be prepared to explain each proposal. The Authority will expect designs to reflect this concern and to consider the architectural character of the area, and not follow local examples of unsympathetic or poor design.

## **8.4 PART 1 POLICIES**

### **POLICY 1**

**The countryside, seascapes and landscapes of Neath Port Talbot will be enhanced where appropriate and / or protected from proposals that would have unacceptable impacts on their character and appearance.**

### **POLICY 2**

**Wildlife and habitats, including those within urban areas, will be enhanced where appropriate and protected from proposals that would cause unacceptable impacts. Particular emphasis will be placed on species and habitat areas that are designated as being of international or national importance.**

### **POLICY 3**

**The area's minerals and other natural resources, both finite and renewable, will be conserved and safeguarded, and when exploited the most prudent use of them will be sought.**

### **POLICY 4**

**The creation of pollution or risks to health and amenities that would have unacceptable impacts upon the environment, communities or individuals will be resisted.**

### **POLICY 5**

**The area's built environment will be enhanced where appropriate and / or protected from proposals that would have unacceptable impacts on its character, appearance and on the quality of life.**

**The area's minerals and other resources, both finite and renewable, will be conserved and safeguarded, and when exploited the best and most effective use of them will be sought.**

### **POLICY 6**

**The County Borough's historic environment including archaeology, ancient monuments, listed buildings, conservation areas and historic parks, gardens and landscapes will be protected and proposals that would aid its preservation and enhancement will be supported.**

- 8.4.1 One of the key aims of sustainability, and in some ways the most important, is the protection and enhancement of the environment. A central theme of Agenda 21 is that the present generation holds the world, or our portion of it, for our children and future generations. Of course, this includes our history, traditions, landscapes and quality and amenity of our towns and settlements. It also includes our most precious resources: water, air and soil, habitats and wildlife, natural and finite resources and our historic environment.
- 8.4.2 Neath Port Talbot's Community Plan, and the programme of Agenda 21 community meetings which contributed to it, emphasised the importance which our communities place on their local environment and quality of life. The town and country planning system has a key role in helping the shift towards sustainability through controlling the location, design, extent and impacts of development. This does not only mean resisting development with unacceptable impacts, but also allowing or encouraging development which can contribute social, economic or environmental benefits.
- 8.4.3 The undeveloped coast (including the tidal reaches of the River Neath) will rarely be the most appropriate location for development, and it will be protected from unnecessary development.

## **8.5 POLICY ENV1 – DEVELOPMENT IN THE COUNTRYSIDE**

**A proposal for development in the countryside will not be permitted unless: -**

- a) it is development for agricultural or forestry purposes, and it has been demonstrated that the development is necessary to meet the needs of farming or forestry practices and that it justifies a countryside location; or
- b) it is associated with farm diversification; or
- c) it is a small-scale employment-generating rural enterprise adjacent to a rural settlement in accordance with Policy EC5; or
- d) it is development necessary to serve the social, recreational or economic needs of the local community (this includes the expansion of an existing commercial or industrial use) and it has been demonstrated that the development cannot be located within a settlement; or
- e) it is the conversion, re-use, adaptation or replacement of an existing building; or
- f) it is a development appropriate to and associated with nature conservation; or
- g) it is a gypsy caravan site in accordance with Policy H8; or
- h) it is development necessary for communications, telecommunications and other forms of infrastructure provision, renewable energy generation, waste treatment or disposal, derelict or contaminated land reclamation, or minerals extraction; and

**in all cases the development would not create unacceptable impacts upon the character or appearance of the countryside, biodiversity, the amenities of neighbouring residents or other land users, traffic generation or highway safety.**

- 8.5.1 The countryside is defined for the purposes of this plan as all land lying outside settlements limits and sites allocated for development.
- 8.5.2 Our countryside, with its landscape, water, habitats and wildlife, agriculture and woodland, minerals and sources of renewable energy is perhaps our most precious resource.
- 8.5.3 A key task of the Town and Country planning system is to protect it from unnecessary development. This will also have the benefit of guiding development towards the County Borough's settlements and reducing traffic generation.
- 8.5.4 This policy sets out the framework identifying which sorts of development may be permitted in the countryside. Other policies, below, provide more detailed guidance on how specific types of applications will be considered and on how the Authority will encourage the diversification of the rural economy.
- 8.5.5 New housing in the countryside outside settlement limits will be resisted unless it is justified in terms of agricultural or forestry needs or as a rural exception site.
- 8.5.6 While seeking to encourage the diversification of the rural economy and the provision of facilities which clearly justify a countryside location, development which would be more appropriately located within a settlement or urban location will be resisted. Proposals that would only offer short-term economic gain are unlikely to be considered appropriate.
- 8.5.7 It is recognised that some industries have specific land requirements that cannot be accommodated within settlements. Any such proposals will be assessed in terms of why they could not be located within a business park or on previously developed land before a greenfield site is considered favourably.
- 8.5.8 Provided a proposal satisfies the criteria contained in this policy it will be assessed in terms of other relevant policies below in particular policies ENV7, ENV8, GC1 and GC2 and policies in other chapters.

## **8.6 POLICY ENV2 – GREEN WEDGES**

- A. **Green Wedges are identified to protect the setting of built-up areas and prevent urban coalescence between settlements. Within these areas inappropriate development will not be permitted except in very exceptional circumstances. Apart from those forms of development which are specifically defined as appropriate, any other development which would prejudice the openness of the Green Wedge will be considered as inappropriate development and will not be permitted.**
- B. **The following Green Wedges are identified on the Proposals Map:-**

- (i) Alltwen/Rhos/Bryncoch/Neath Abbey/Leiros Park**
- (ii) Skewen/Birchgrove**
- (iii) Neath/Tonna/Cimla/Efail Fach**
- (iv) Crymlyn Bog/Crymlyn Burrows/Llandarcy**
- (v) Margam**

- 8.6.1 The areas of countryside included in the Green Wedges are of particular importance in providing a backdrop to our main towns, or in separating and defining settlements. Although they may not necessarily be particularly attractive scenically, they contribute strongly to the quality of life in our communities. Agenda 21 and Community Plan consultation exercises have demonstrated that such areas are valued highly by local residents.
- 8.6.2 These areas face pressure for development and are particularly vulnerable to proposals which would normally be justified in seeking a countryside location but could have an unacceptable impact on their openness.
- 8.6.3 Settlement limits are defined on the Proposals Map to identify settlements where infilling will be allowed.
- 8.6.4 The construction of new buildings within a Green Wedge is likely to be inappropriate. Only the following new buildings are appropriate: buildings justified by agriculture or forestry needs; essential facilities for outdoor sport and recreation; limited extension, alteration or replacement of existing dwellings; limited infilling in settlements identified in the UDP for limited infilling; small scale diversification within farm complexes where run as part of the farm business. The re-use of buildings is not inappropriate provided that the original building is substantial, permanent and capable of conversion without major reconstruction. In such cases, the impact of any associated development and uses on the openness of the area will be a particular concern. Other forms of development (including mineral extraction) may not be inappropriate provided that they maintain the openness of the Green Wedge. Only in very exceptional circumstances will inappropriate development be allowed, and then only where other considerations clearly outweigh the harm caused to the Green Wedge and so justify the development.

## **8.7 POLICY ENV3 – IMPACTS ON THE LANDSCAPE**

**Proposals that would create unacceptable impacts on the landscape will be resisted.**

**Particular emphasis will be placed on protecting: -**

- **significant skylines, views and panoramas;**

- **features which are important in terms of contributing to the character of the local landscape; and**
- **landscapes, parks and gardens which are of special historic interest.**

8.7.1 Much of the County Borough's landscape is of particular interest and quality, but the Authority believes that all our countryside should, whenever possible, be protected and enhanced.

8.7.2 The character and quality of the landscape is not only dependent on the broad sweep of the hills and valleys, but more detailed features make an important contribution and they include:

*hedgerows, trees, woodlands, sand dunes, salt marshes, moorlands, heaths, river and canal corridors, ponds, wetlands, stone walls and geological and geomorphologic features ranging from rock outcrops to moraines.*

8.7.3 Views and panoramas are of particular importance to the countryside and within settlements. They contribute strongly to the sense of place of an area and can easily be degraded.

8.7.4 There is no right to a private view from an individual property, but the policy relates to views which are important in terms of the community or wider landscapes. Where the view or panorama includes land which forms part of the setting to the Brecon Beacons National Park, or is part of or forms the setting to a historic landscape, park or garden identified by Cadw this will add weight to the consideration.

8.7.5 In some circumstances it may be justified for proposals to alter or remove a feature and wherever appropriate the Authority will seek to ensure that mitigation measures such as the creation of a new landscape feature are provided.

8.7.6 Parks and gardens, together with their settings, which are identified on the first part of Cadw's "*Register of Landscapes, Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in Wales*" will be protected. The historic landscapes identified within the Borough are Margam Mountain and the Merthyr Mawr, Kenfig and Margam Burrows, while the historic parks and gardens include Margam Park and the Gnoll Country Park. When considering impacts on the landscape, landscapes identified by Cadw in the second part of the Register will also be an important consideration. Cadw advises on development aimed at improving access for disabled people to historic buildings, in its publication 'Overcoming Barriers: Providing Physical Access to Historic Buildings'.

8.7.7 Hedgerows, trees and woodlands are important as features in landscapes and townscapes as well as in terms of their contribution to biodiversity and reducing air pollution. The significant loss of trees and the fragmentation of woodlands will be resisted. The Authority has the power to protect trees in the interest of amenity through making Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs), trees within Conservation Areas are subject to similar controls, while hedgerows are protected by the Hedgerow Regulations 1997. With regard to land owned by the Forestry Commission the

retention, planting or felling of trees will be guided by Forest Design Plans which are prepared in accordance with the strategy for Trees and Woodlands titled 'Woodlands for Wales' published by the Welsh Assembly Government. Forestry operations do not require planning permission; however, Forest Design Plans have to undergo a process of consultation.

- 8.7.8 Supplementary Planning Guidance will be provided to help identify what the Authority believes is important in contributing to landscape quality and indicate its expectations in terms of planning proposals. This will be influenced by the work already carried out on the landscape character and archaeological heritage of the area and will relate to work produced under LANDMAP (an integrated approach to countryside assessment and evaluation promoted by the Countryside Council for Wales).

**8.8 POLICY ENV4 –PROPOSALS AFFECTING INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL SITES FOR NATURE CONSERVATION AND SPECIES PROTECTED BY EUROPEAN OR UK LEGISLATION**

**A. Proposals that would adversely affect the integrity of an existing, candidate, or proposed site of European significance for nature conservation or a designated Ramsar site will not be permitted except: -**

- a) where they are directly connected with, or necessary for, the beneficial management of the site(s); and/or**
- b) for sites that also host a priority habitat or species, there are imperative overriding human health and public safety considerations or benefits of primary importance to the environment which justify the development, and there are no alternative solution(s); and/or**
- c) for sites that do not host a priority natural habitat or a priority species, there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest for the proposal.**

**Notwithstanding the above, the Council will consider the use of planning conditions or planning obligations/agreements to secure any compensatory measures necessary to retain and enhance the overall coherence of the Natura 2000 network.**

**B. There is a presumption against proposals that would be likely to damage or destroy a SSSI. Proposals which would adversely affect such a nationally designated site for nature conservation will be permitted only where such proposals safeguard the nature conservation value of the national network of such sites.**

**C. There is a presumption against proposals that would be likely to result in disturbance to a species protected under European or UK legislation or its habitats.**

- 8.8.1 The enhanced safeguards and duties imposed by the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c) Regulations 1994 and the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 gave increased protection to the sites designated as being of national or international nature conservation interest. They also place additional duties on the County Borough as the local planning authority, on CCW and on the Assembly Government.
- 8.8.2 The Government and the European Union have identified Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) as key sites of European importance. They form part of the Natura 2000 network which defines areas which are of critical importance to European wildlife. Within the County Borough, they represent the highest tier of importance for nature conservation.
- 8.8.3 Neath Port Talbot contains portions of three SACs: Kenfig; Crymlyn Bog including Pantysais Fen (which is designated as a wetland of international significance under the Ramsar Convention), and Coedydd Nedd a Mellte SAC which lies above Pontneddfechan. These three sites are also designated as National Nature Reserves and as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs).
- 8.8.4 When considering proposals that may affect these sites, the Authority will assess them with a level of rigour reflecting their status. Any proposal within or affecting these sites is likely to be required to be accompanied by an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). Where a proposal would be likely to have a significant effect on a Natura 2000 network site (see above) an appropriate assessment of the development's implications for the site under the Habitats Regulations will be required.
- 8.8.5 Should the Authority be convinced that a proposal justifies approval despite it being likely to have damaging impacts on a SAC, it would be required to refer the application to the Assembly Government.
- 8.8.6 The County Borough contains 18 SSSIs (2002). These have been designated as being of national (UK) nature conservation significance. Three of them are also designated as having the SAC status referred to above. Several of the SSSI's were designated as a result of their earth science significance in terms of geology or geomorphology.
- 8.8.7 The SSSIs are protected under part B of the policy. Proposals affecting a SSSI will be the subject of special scrutiny to establish any potential direct or indirect impacts. When potential impacts remain uncertain, the Authority is likely to pursue the “precautionary approach” in favour of their preservation. Proposals will be considered in terms of their intrinsic value and their contribution to the national network of nature conservation sites. This will include whether a site is also designated as a National Nature Reserve or is a site identified under the Nature Conservation Review or Geological Conservation Review. Where an overriding need is claimed for the proposals, the onus will be on the applicants to demonstrate the justification and why alternatives which would be less damaging to nature conservation could not be used.

- 8.8.8 Proposals affecting a SSSI are likely to be regarded as requiring the provision of an EIA. This would help identify the full range and extent of environmental impacts and ensure that all alternatives have been fully assessed and that all appropriate mitigation measures have been provided. Guidance from CCW and the Environment Agency will be of particular relevance in guiding the Authority's consideration of proposals.
- 8.8.9 The Authority will use planning conditions, obligations and agreements to ensure that any adverse impacts and mitigating measures are strictly controlled and to ensure that any appropriate opportunities to enhance the sites' nature conservation interest are taken up. The SSIS (including these which also have the higher status of being SACs) are identified on the Proposals Map.
- 8.8.10 Where a proposal would be likely to result in disturbance or harm to a species or its habitat which is protected under European or UK legislation, this will need to be fully assessed. An ecological survey may be required to confirm where a protected species is present and to assess the likely impact and effectiveness of any mitigation proposals. The European Union Habitat Regulations define 3 criteria under which a licence may be granted by the Assembly Government to authorise such work. The criteria will be taken into account when considering any proposal where a European protected species is present:

- There is no satisfactory alternative;
- The action authorised would not be detrimental to the maintenance of the population of the species at a favourable conservation status in its natural range; and
- The works proposed must be for the purpose of preserving "public health or safety", or for other imperative reasons of overriding interest, including those of a social or economic nature and beneficial consequences or primary importance for the environment.

## **8.9 POLICY ENV5 – NATURE CONSERVATION**

**Proposals that would unacceptably damage or destroy significant local habitats and species will not be permitted. All new development should: -**

- a) retain existing features which are of particular significance in terms of nature conservation including woodland, trees, hedgerows, sand dunes, salt marshes, heathlands, moorlands, wetlands, watercourses, ponds, green lanes, protected species, geological and geomorphological features and safeguard them during construction work;**
- b) conserve existing habitats and features of nature conservation interest in any landscaping or planting scheme;**
- c) take full account of adjacent nature conservation interests, including where the site forms part of a wildlife corridor;**
- d) avoid the loss or damage to a habitat or species which is identified as a priority in the Neath Port Talbot Local Biodiversity Action Plan**

**(LBAP), or for any such loss of habitat/species which can be adequately mitigated against, provide replacement habitats (features of equivalent or greater extent or contribute a financial sum specifically to fund mitigation works off site) and**

- e) **take full account of opportunities to restore and enhance habitats and ecosystems including measures to eradicate invasive plant species.**

- 8.9.1 Much of the County Borough area includes habitats and species which should be conserved and enhanced. As part of achieving sustainable development, proposals should address opportunities to restore and enhance biodiversity. This should include eradicating invasive plant species such as Japanese Knotweed or Rhododendron, and retaining and enhancing broadleaved woodland. All proposals should seek to avoid causing unacceptable harm to habitats and in particular those which are identified as a priority in the Neath Port Talbot LBAP. Reflecting UK BAP objectives, the Authority will be concerned to ensure that the overall population and natural ranges of native species are not harmed by proposals and to take into account the need to protect and enhance habitats and species which have been diminished over recent decades. In some instances social, economic or infrastructure interests may justify development proceeding despite adverse impacts on biodiversity. The Authority will consider the provision of mitigation measures to compensate for losses which are otherwise unacceptable. This could include the translocation of existing habitat and species or new planting. It is not always feasible, or most effective, to provide mitigation within the application site or on other land within the applicant's control. In such a situation, where it is feasible and realistic, the Authority will consider negotiating the payment of a commuted sum to contribute to a scheme to provide mitigation for the loss off site.
- 8.9.2 Development is not only constantly eroding habitats, but increasingly areas are becoming isolated. This can be particularly harmful in reducing the likelihood of species surviving within the smaller area. Wildlife corridors and "stepping stones" can help species retain contact over wider areas and increase their likelihood of survival within the area through migration, dispersal or genetic exchange. Ancient and semi-natural woodlands are themselves irreplaceable ecological assets and play an important role as corridors or stepping-stones. The Common Land within the County Borough plays an important role in safeguarding and in many cases maintaining these habitats. It is a finite resource and will be protected from unnecessary development.
- 8.9.3 Protecting and enhancing habitats and species within Neath Port Talbot is a cornerstone of working towards sustainability. It is a key part of acting as custodians of our part of the planet for future generations. The Neath Port Talbot Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP), is produced and updated by the Neath Port Talbot Local Biodiversity Forum and copies may be obtained from the Authority's Environmental Quality Unit or from the Authority's website: [www.neath-porttalbot.gov.uk/biodiversity](http://www.neath-porttalbot.gov.uk/biodiversity). The LBAP provides a co-ordinated approach addressing all the habitats and species which are considered to be important across the County Borough. It will help aid the Authority in assessing whether a proposal's impacts on biodiversity are unacceptable.

8.9.4 Supplementary Planning Guidance based upon the LBAP will be produced to identify the habitats which make up the County Borough, and the location of habitats and species which are a priority. It will help identify wild life corridors and stepping stones and include information on the sites of national and international significance which are addressed under the preceding policy and include information on the sites of national and international significance, which are addressed in the preceding policy. The SPG will also identify those sites which are of earth science interest including Regionally Important Geomorphological/ Geological sites (RIGS).

8.9.5 The Authority will encourage the creation and management of nature reserves and trails and the creation of Local Nature Reserves. This will help complement and improve the ecological coherence of the Natura 2000 network.

#### **8.10 POLICY ENV6 –AGRICULTURAL LAND**

**Non-agricultural land, or land of lesser quality than grades 1, 2 and 3a (the best and most versatile), should be used when development is proposed, except where:**

- (i) **there is an overriding need for the development and no land of lesser quality is available; or**
- (ii) **there would be unacceptable adverse effects on land of landscape or nature conservation value.**

8.10.1 Our better quality agricultural land, and its soil, is of central importance to sustainability. Once developed, or the soil extracted for use elsewhere only rarely can it be recreated. This will be resisted unless there is an overriding need and other previously used land or land in lower agricultural grades is unavailable or is of sufficient landscape, wildlife or archaeological value to outweigh the agricultural considerations.

#### **8.11 POLICY ENV7 – NEW DWELLINGS FOR AGRICULTURAL AND FORESTRY PURPOSES**

**The development of a new dwelling in the countryside for agriculture or forestry purposes will not be permitted unless: -**

- a) **it is justified in terms of the well-established financial viability of the enterprise;**
- b) **there is an essential need for the farm or forestry workers to live at or very close to their place of work, and**
- c) **the size of the dwelling and its garden and curtilage are justified by the level of financial viability of the unit.**

8.11.1 New dwellings for farm or forestry workers may be justified as an exception to the policies protecting the countryside from unnecessary development. In order to justify the provision of a new dwelling, the functional and financial tests will need to be satisfied with regard to the land in question. If the case is not completely

proven, or there is doubt over whether the need is likely to be sustained over a reasonable period, the Authority may consider granting permission for a temporary dwelling for a three-year period. This period would allow the developer to prove the justification for a permanent dwelling and for the Authority to assess whether the case is adequately proven. The Authority will not normally renew the permission for a further period. The temporary dwelling must be capable of being easily removed at the end of the three-year period.

- 8.11.2 Occupancy conditions will be used to ensure that any dwelling justified as isolated residential development in the countryside is kept available to meet the demonstrated need. Should it subsequently appear that the need for the condition no longer exists, then before considering any relaxation of the condition the Authority will expect that considerable efforts have been made to sell or rent the property to people employed in agriculture or forestry within a ten mile radius, over a two year period, and at a price reflecting the constraint imposed by the condition.
- 8.11.3 The Authority considers that it will be unusual for a justification for the construction of a development to be proven in terms of the need to live at or very close to the place of work, as much of the County Borough lies within a few miles of a settlement. Retirement from farming and forestry is not considered a reason to justify the provision of a new dwelling.

## **8.12 ENV8A – REPLACEMENT DWELLINGS IN THE COUNTRYSIDE**

**The replacement of a dwelling will be permitted only where the proposal satisfies all the following criteria:**

- a) it can be demonstrated that the building has a current lawful use as a dwelling;
- b) if located in a Green Wedge, the proposal complies with Policy ENV2;
- c) the size and scale of the replacement dwelling and associated buildings are not substantially larger than the existing;
- d) the siting and design of the proposal, including its means of enclosure, garden and parking space, would not have an unacceptable adverse effect upon the character of the area, including its architectural traditions;
- e) the conservation of existing buildings which are of architectural or historic interest would not be prejudiced;
- f) the scheme includes landscaping proposals which would both help blend the development into the landscape and complement the biodiversity of the area;
- g) the proposal confirms the timescale for the removal of the existing dwelling and the reinstatement of the land.

## **ENV8B – CONVERSION OR RE-USE OF BUILDINGS IN THE COUNTRYSIDE**

**The conversion, rehabilitation and/or re-use of an existing building will be permitted only where the proposal satisfies all the following criteria:**

- a) if located in a Green Wedge, the proposal complies with Policy ENV2;
- b) the existing building is permanent, structurally sound, capable of conversion and suited to the purpose proposed without major reconstruction;
- c) the siting and design of the proposal, including its means of enclosure, garden and parking space, would not have an unacceptable adverse effect upon the character of the area, including its architectural traditions;
- d) the conservation of existing buildings which are of architectural or historic interest would not be prejudiced;
- e) satisfactory provision is made to retain and encourage wildlife habitats including bat roosts and bird boxes;
- f) where a conversion to residential use is proposed, the applicant has made every reasonable attempt to secure suitable business re-use; or the residential conversion is a subordinate part of a scheme for business re-use; or the resulting housing will provide affordable housing to meet an identified local need.

## **ENV8C – FARM DIVERSIFICATION**

**New buildings and the conversion of existing buildings as part of a scheme for farm diversification will be permitted where:**

- a) if located in a Green Wedge, the proposal is limited to small-scale diversification within a farm complex, and is run as part of the farm business;
  - b) if located in the countryside outside a Green Wedge, any new building required as part of a farm diversification scheme is located within the farm complex;
  - c) any goods sold or services provided would be produced or provided respectively on the farm unit and the proposal complies with Policy TRL7.
- 8.12.1 New buildings are needed by a dynamic rural economy, but the Authority is concerned that their siting, size and design ensures that they fit into the landscape or seascapes and that other impacts are minimised. All associated works and activities including flood and tidal defences should be taken into account. New farm buildings must be within an agricultural unit, which is at least 5 hectares in area.
- 8.12.2 Where a building is needed as part of a scheme to diversify a farm, (i.e. an established and existing agricultural unit) consideration should first be given to

adapting existing buildings. With the exception of farm diversification, other new development needed to create employment within the countryside should generally be located within or where this is not possible, adjacent to settlement limits. Proposals that could create unacceptable impacts should be sited sufficiently far from nearby dwellings and settlements.

- 8.12.3 Farming, forestry and other rural businesses have experienced great change and difficulties over recent years. The diversification of farm businesses for uses including tourism, recreation or business creation is critical to the survival of the rural economy and community. The Authority will encourage further economic diversity in the countryside which is in keeping with the distinctiveness of the area in terms of its social, economic and environmental characteristics. Where schemes would generate significant levels of traffic and serve and relate primarily to an urban area then it may not be appropriate for them to be located within the countryside.
- 8.12.4 Proposals (including tourism, recreation, the provision of infrastructure and the expansion of existing enterprises) which are justified in terms of a location in the countryside (see Policy ENV1) will be required to take particular care over the location and design of any buildings, operations, means of enclosure and landscaping which might have an impact on biodiversity and the appearance and character of the landscape.
- 8.12.5 Proposals for replacement dwellings and for conversion to and the extension of existing dwellings will be expected to enhance the countryside. They should take the opportunity to provide a design which may be innovative, but which respects the design, scale and layout of dwellings in the local countryside. The size and bulk of the proposed building is likely to have a major influence on its visual impact, and proposals should not normally exceed the footprint or cubic content of the original building by more than 20%.
- 8.12.6 The creation of local employment is a priority within the County Borough and especially within rural areas in order to sustain the rural community. Applicants proposing the conversion or a rural building to a dwelling will be expected to provide a statement explaining the efforts which have been made to secure a business use through advertising the property over a two year period and at a price reflecting the market for such business use.
- 8.12.7 Habitats for bats and birds are under pressure and becoming scarce and the opportunity should be taken to retain and create nests and roost sites. More detail is provided at 8.8.10.
- 8.12.8 As indicated in Policy ENV1, proposals authorised under Policy EC2 will not be considered in terms of this policy but other policies including ENV2, GC1 and GC2 will be particularly relevant.

## **8.13 POLICY ENV9 – HORSE RELATED PROPOSALS**

Horse related proposals, including stables, field shelters, riding schools, stud farms, livery stables and related facilities will be permitted provided they would not: -

- a) prejudice viable agricultural units;
- b) detract from the character or appearance of the area, or prejudice nature conservation interests;
- c) cause potential danger or nuisance to neighbours, pedestrians, vehicles, horse riders or highway safety; and
- d) result in the overuse of local bridleways, other rights of way or open space.

8.13.1 Horse related activities are an increasingly popular pastime, and are often located within close proximity of urban areas. However, they can have a dramatic adverse impact upon an area. This can be as a result of the unsympathetic location or design of buildings and related facilities, but can also be as a result of the over intensive use of the land and surrounding highways.

## **8.14 POLICY ENV10 – COASTAL PROTECTION**

Proposals that would adversely affect the coastal landscape, seascape or habitats, including tidal areas and any areas that visually or functionally relate to the coast, will only be permitted if: -

- a) coastal processes including sediment transport, erosion and accretion are not significantly adversely affected;
- b) coastal protection and/or sea defence measures arising from the proposals are satisfactory and are sustainable in the long term;
- c) nature conservation interests are not significantly adversely affected;
- d) the landscape, seascape and amenity value of the coast are not significantly adversely affected;
- e) historic, cultural and archaeological interests are not significantly adversely affected;
- f) in respect of the undeveloped coast there is a particular need for the proposal to be located there; or
- g) in respect of the urbanised coast, proposals have taken full account of the potential for them to contribute to and enhance the coastal character of the townscape and seascape.

- 8.14.1 The County Borough's coastline although relatively short varies from unspoilt sand dunes of national nature conservation interest to intensively developed urban areas. It also includes the tidal River Neath Grazing Marshes which extend inland to Aberdulais.
- 8.14.2 The Coastal Management Plan and Neath Estuary Management Plan have been produced and their provisions will be taken fully into account when considering proposals. Both documents will be subject to periodic review and this will include full consultation of interested organisations, bodies and individuals.
- 8.14.3 Other policies relate to proposals within the urban portion of the coast, but in addition the opportunity to enhance the coastal character, townscape and seascape should be taken. The regeneration of the seafront at Aberavon is gaining pace and individual proposals should contribute to the recreation of a seaside resort character.
- 8.14.4 Outside the existing built up areas the Authority's emphasis is very firmly on protecting and conserving the habitats, environment and resources. Coastal processes such as tidal drift and land forms including sand dunes are particularly dynamic while there is increasing concern over the suspected impacts of off shore sand dredging on beaches. Where there are unacceptable levels of uncertainty over the impacts of proposals, they may be resisted under the precautionary principle.
- 8.14.5 The County Borough's undeveloped coastline is of particular value in terms of its landscape and nature conservation interest, and proposals will be expected to demonstrate the need for a coastal location, to minimise any adverse effects and avoid unacceptable impacts. The likely impacts of proposals on the coastal landscape and seacape will be important concerns and in some cases a proposal could be some distance from the shoreline but still influence its visual character.
- 8.14.6 The coast is of particular importance in terms of commercial shipping, and issues related to the Port Talbot Tidal Harbour, Port Talbot Docks and the River Neath wharfs are considered in the Transport chapter. The tidal rivers Neath and Afan are also bases for fishing and sailing/cruising boats and this is addressed in the Recreation and Open Space chapter.

## **8.15 POLICY ENV 11 – PROPOSALS IN AREAS OF FLOOD RISK**

- A) Proposals located in an area of floodplain or tidal wash area, where floodwater is currently unobstructed will be resisted unless a flood risk assessment can demonstrate that:**
- i) it is wholly exceptional and limited to essential transport and utilities infrastructure;**
  - ii) it would remain operational at times of flood;**
  - iii) it would not result in a net loss of flood plain/ wash area storage;**
  - iv) it would not impede water flows; and**
  - v) it would not increase flood risk elsewhere.**

- B)** **Proposals located in areas identified as being at high risk from flooding and other areas where the Authority is satisfied there is a significant risk from flooding will not be permitted unless a flood risk assessment demonstrates that:**
- i) **The development could be justified in the location,**
  - ii) **The proposal would not result in the intensification of existing development which may itself be at risk or would increase the potential adverse impacts of flooding**
  - iii) **The proposal can be properly protected by engineering works and /or other flood protection measures, which are committed expenditure or would be provided as part of the proposal, and could be expected to be effective for the lifetime of the development.**
- C)** **Proposals for development will be resisted unless they have taken all reasonable steps to ensure that surface water run-off is controlled as near to the source as possible by the use of sustainable drainage systems.**
- 8.15.1 The plan aims to prevent locating new development in areas which would be at risk from flooding or tidal inundation, or where the flow of flood water in a flood plain or tidal wash lands could be impeded. It is anticipated that global warming will result in climate change that could result in both rising sea levels and an increased risk of flooding inland.
- 8.15.2 The construction of hard-engineered flood defences in areas at risk from flooding is unlikely to be sustainable in the long term and resources for flood and coastal defence projects are directed at protecting existing developments rather than in anticipation of future developments. A more sustainable approach would include the creation and restoration of tidal washlands, and flood plains.
- 8.15.3 Development proposals should reduce flood risk arising from river and/or coastal flooding. Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS), using techniques to control surface water run-off as close to its origin as possible before it enters a watercourse, should, wherever practicable, help to manage flood risk and environmental damage through minimising changes in the volume and rate of surface run-off. The preparation of flood risk assessments should be in accordance with the approach set out in TAN 15.
- 8.15.4 TAN 15: Development and Flood Risk, together with the accompanying Development Advice Maps (DAM), provide the method that will guide the assessment of flood risk in relation to planning applications. The TAN advises that “highly vulnerable” development (including all residential proposals and vulnerable industrial development such as power stations and waste disposal sites) should be directed away from high risk areas (zone C on the DAM maps). Flooding may also be an issue in zone B (areas that have been known to flood) and zone A (considered to be at little risk from flooding) where proposals should not increase flood risk elsewhere. Where an application lies within zones B or C,

applicants are advised to discuss their proposals and the need for a Flood Risk Assessment with the Local Planning Authority before preparing their proposal.

- 8.15.5 The WAG Development Advice Maps accompany TAN 15 and are available for inspection or purchase from the Planning Services office or from the authority's web site.
- 8.15.6 Where measures are proposed to safeguard new development from flooding the consequences of a failure of the measures proposed should be fully assessed. The Authority will need to be convinced that the measures proposed would not have any unacceptable impacts or increase the likelihood of flooding elsewhere and would be effective at reasonable cost for the foreseeable future. Maintenance costs should be addressed in the proposal.

#### **8.16 POLICY ENV12 – PROPOSALS AFFECTING WATER RESOURCES**

**Proposals that would be prejudicial to or would materially affect the quality or quantity of controlled waters fresh water or seawater will not be permitted.**

- 8.16.1 Unpolluted water is one of the most fundamental needs of sustainability and the Authority will vigorously seek to work with the Environment Agency and Glas Cymru to protect and enhance water quality. The County Borough contains a range of watercourses and features and the quality and amount of water feeding them can be of great importance to sustaining them and their habitats.
- 8.16.2 Considerable investment has been made and is continuing to be made to address both fresh and sea water quality. This includes the new treatment plant at Port Talbot to serve the towns of Neath and Port Talbot, improvements to the sewerage system and smaller treatment works.
- 8.16.3 The adequacy of water supply to serve new development is considered in terms of other Environment Chapter policies on new development, while water supply infrastructure is addressed in the Infrastructure and Energy chapter policies.

#### **8.17 POLICY ENV13 – BROWNFIELD, DERELICT AND WASTELAND**

**Within settlement limits and allocations and where proposals justify a countryside location, preference should be given to the development of previously developed land. The restoration of derelict and wasteland will be encouraged, provided the nature conservation, industrial heritage or amenity value of the site does not outweigh the need to develop it.**

- 8.17.1 Previously developed land should generally be used before greenfield sites. It includes land that is or was occupied by a permanent structure and associated fixed surface infrastructure and its curtilage, but excludes land and buildings used for agriculture or forestry, land where the remains of any structure or activity have blended into the landscape or land where the nature conservation value could outweigh the benefits from the re-use of the site (for a full definition see Planning Policy Wales 2002).

- 8.17.2 Similarly, derelict and wasteland should be restored and developed in preference to greenfield sites. This would help make more effective and sustainable use of land in both urban and rural areas. It may offer the opportunity to address amenity, contamination, instability and pollution and the presence of invasive plants. Where necessary in order to progress a scheme, the Authority will consider the use of compulsory purchase powers.
- 8.17.3 It is recognised that the land or remains may be of significant interest in terms of local history or industrial archaeology, while some “brownfield” sites contain significant ecological interest and may be important as green corridors or stepping stones.

## **8.18 POLICY ENV14 - UNSTABLE LAND**

**Proposals which would create, affect or might be affected by unstable or potentially unstable land will not be permitted unless measures are proposed which would make the land capable of supporting the development, and which overcome unacceptable risks to occupiers of the site or adjacent areas.**

- 8.18.1 Unstable or potentially unstable ground may result from natural geological conditions or human activities. As a result of the area's steep sided valleys some areas may be liable to land slip or rock falls, while others may be affected by mining, quarrying and other activities.
- 8.18.2 Indirect hazards could include the migration of landfill or mine gas or the contamination of surface and or groundwater. Development proposals may worsen an existing problem or create new ones, but could offer the opportunity to remediate existing problems.
- 8.18.3 Where there is likely to be a potential hazard from instability, the Authority will be likely to require the developer to undertake a specialist investigation and assessment to determine the stability of the ground and identify any remedial measures required to deal with any instability. It should be noted, however, that the responsibility and subsequent liability for safe development and secure occupancy of the site rests with the developer and/or landowner, and that any grant of planning permission does not mean that the land is or would be free from instability.
- 8.18.4 The landslip at Panteg, Ystalyfera has been a cause of concern and has constrained new development. Detailed information is available from the Planning Services office.

## **8.19 POLICY ENV15 – AIR QUALITY**

**Proposals which would be likely to have an unacceptable adverse effect on air quality, or would expose people to an unacceptable level of air pollution will not be permitted.**

- 8.19.1 Through its control over where different types of development can be located, the UDP can play an important role in helping improve air quality. This is part of a

co-ordinated approach including the Authority's and Environment Agency's various roles with regard to regulation under Pollution Prevention and Control.

- 8.19.2 While concerned to ensure that the area makes its contribution to addressing global air pollution problems, current assessments of air quality, as part of the statutory air quality management process against objectives set for the seven air pollutants allocated for local air pollution control by the Welsh Assembly Government, have confirmed a local problem with particulates ( $PM_{10}$ ). The Authority declared the Taibach - Margam area as a Local Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) under the 1995 Environment Act. As a result the sources of  $PM_{10}$  in this area, including sources of  $PM_{10}$  in the surrounding Air Quality Plan Area potentially affecting the AQMA are important concerns in the preparation of the plan and when taking decisions which affect the AQMA.
- 8.19.3 A significant contribution to the problem (which is defined as the number of occasions when the Assembly Government's Air Quality Objective for  $PM_{10}$  is exceeded) has been attributed to processes within the Corus Steel works. It had been anticipated that the rebuilding and upgrading of Blast Furnace No. 5 following an explosion in 2001 would have substantially addressed the problem. Following recommissioning, however,  $PM_{10}$  levels have risen above the objective although not to levels as high as previously. As a result the AQMA is likely to remain in force until the objectives are met.
- 8.19.4 Proposals for new or expanded activities or developments will be resisted on air quality grounds in the following circumstances:
- a) Within the Taibach/Margam AQMA or Air Quality ActionPlan Area where the activity or development will create significant additional  $PM_{10}$  within the AQMA and give rise to significant risk of additional breaches of the Air Quality Objective;
  - b) Where the development or activity will cause a significant risk that any of the local Air Quality Objectives or Limits Values set by the Assembly Government or established Environmental Bench Marks for other air pollutants will be breached. Any such proposals will be assessed in accordance with the methodology in the Environment Agency HORIZONTAL GUIDANCE NOTE IPPC H1: "Environmental Assessment and Appraisal of BAT" MODULE 3 Quantify Impacts – ISBN 011 3101082.
- 8.19.5 Where existing businesses or organisations put forward a proposal which would result in a net improvement in emissions, and this would not prejudice the likelihood of emissions in the whole of the AQMA area breaching the national targets, the proposal would be likely to be considered favourably in terms of air pollution considerations.
- 8.19.6 Where there is the potential for a proposal to have an unacceptable impact on air quality, the developer is likely to be required to prepare a specialist assessment of the impacts of the proposal. This should take into account any relevant proposals to reduce polluting emissions and any planning permissions and commitments for proposals which would create emissions which would affect the area concerned.

- 8.19.7 The Authority will assess proposals for new sensitive uses (such as housing) within the area on air quality grounds (see policy ENV 27).
- 8.19.8 Policies throughout the plan are designed to tackle air quality problems and they include the location and design of developments and new roads, measures to reduce traffic, to increase the recycling of waste, energy efficiency measures and the encouragement of renewable energy.
- 8.19.9 While improvements in technology will help reduce emissions from industry and road and rail traffic, it is likely that the Assembly Government will introduce more stringent air quality targets. The Authority will carefully monitor the situation and address any need to amend its policies when the UDP is reviewed.

## **8.20 POLICY ENV16 – CONTAMINATED LAND**

**Proposals that would affect land, which is, or is likely to be contaminated, will not be permitted unless: -**

- a) **investigations have been undertaken by the applicant to establish whether contamination exists, its nature and extent, any potential hazards to the development, its occupants and the local environment, and to determine the appropriate treatment;**
  - b) **the proposals would not have any unacceptable impacts;**
  - c) **the site is treated to prevent sources of contamination leaking into watercourses or groundwater; and**
  - d) **adequate measures are proposed to monitor the site, any impacts of the proposals, and to undertake remediation action for a specified period in order to ensure that the remediation implemented is appropriate for the end use of the site.**
- 8.20.1 Proposals that would tackle contaminated areas will be welcomed provided they would address the contamination without causing unacceptable impacts.
  - 8.20.2 Where land is or may be contaminated, development should not take place without an understanding and assessment of the risks including those associated with existing and previous land uses, mine and landfill gas emissions and rising groundwater from abandoned mines. Any potential impacts which remediation measures would have on the natural and historic environments should be fully considered.
  - 8.20.3 Where there is a significant risk of land being contaminated, a developer will be required to prepare a specialist investigation and assessment of the contamination (including the source of the contamination, the route or pathway by which the contamination is or could result, and the receptor or persons, land, water, or habitats affected), and to identify any appropriate remedial measures.

- 8.20.4 Where remediation is required under Part IIA of the Environment Protection Act 1990 the developer will be required to convince the Local Planning Authority that the land is suitable for its proposed use. The remediation would be enforced through the planning permission. It should be noted that in the absence of a definite timetable for implementing the planning permission, the option would remain for enforcement action by the appropriate enforcing authority.
- 8.20.5 The Authority has produced its Contaminated Land Strategy under Part IIA of the Environmental Protection Act. It sets out the strategy for meeting its duties in terms of identification and remediation of statutory designated contaminated land. Further information on the known location of contaminated land is available from the Authority via the Planning Services office. This includes known areas of contamination, where the site history suggests a risk of contamination or the land is designated as contaminated land under Part IIA of the Environment Protection Act 1990. It should be noted that this information is not necessarily exhaustive, and while the Authority will take known contamination into account when considering proposals, the onus for dealing with contamination rests with the landowner.

## 8.21 POLICY ENV17 – DESIGN

**Any proposal that would include new construction or alteration to an existing building's appearance should be well designed. This will include whether it has:**

- a) paid sufficient regard to the character of the area, and to conserve biodiversity and strengthen habitat connectivity;
- b) ensured that its design and operation would not have any unsatisfactory impacts on the occupants of any other properties (including proposals with the benefit of planning permission);
- c) taken sufficient regard of the need to address climate change and sustainability issues;
- d) incorporated good design that addresses the safety and security of people and property, and reduces the opportunities for crime. In assessing development proposals particular attention should be paid towards:
  - (i) natural surveillance of public spaces from existing or proposed development;
  - (ii) the location of footpaths and access points;
  - (iii) secure locations for any associated car and cycle parking;
  - (iv) satisfactory lighting; and
  - (v) provision of CCTV, where the proposal would contribute to a significant increase in traffic or pedestrian activity.

- 8.21.1 Good design has a major influence on conserving and enhancing the character of an area and the quality of life for those using it. This can include not only the appearance of an area, but the enjoyment and quality of life of those occupying and using the properties. The character of the area could include the townscape, landscape or seascape and whether the area or setting retains a local character that

it is desirable to protect or complement. It will include the layout, density, scale and setting of buildings, their relationship to each other, open spaces and natural features. A proposal should ensure that it would not create an unacceptable impact upon the occupants (or future occupants) of other properties. This could include the use and enjoyment of buildings, open space, servicing facilities and access arrangements.

- 8.21.2 The design of a proposal should produce attractive and well-managed environments that help discourage crime and vandalism. Developers should adopt layouts and designs for new development that take the security of people and property fully into account.
- 8.21.3 The planning system can be instrumental in producing attractive and well-managed environments that help discourage crime and vandalism. It can do this by encouraging developers to adopt designs for new development that take the security of people and property fully into account.
- 8.21.4 Proposals should, wherever appropriate, address climate change implications including increased temperatures, water constraints, flood issues and adverse weather conditions. In conformity with WAG planning guidance proposals should, whenever applicable, make an appropriate contribution to maximising design and location opportunities to reduce energy demand, opportunities to use energy efficient supply measures, and incorporate a proportion of on-site renewable energy generation. Supplementary Planning Guidance will be prepared to provide information and guidance.

## **8.22 POLICY ENV 18– LISTED BUILDINGS**

**There is a presumption in favour of the preservation of listed buildings and their special architectural or historic character.**

**Proposals for the demolition of listed buildings should be fully justified and demonstrate that all reasonable steps to secure the building's preservation have been fully explored. The justification for the demolition of any Grade I or Grade II\* listed building would have to be wholly exceptional and supported by the strongest justification.**

**Proposals for the alteration, extension or re-use of a listed building or its curtilage should not adversely affect its special architectural or historic character.**

- 8.22.1 Buildings listed as being of special architectural or historic interest are a key part of our heritage and play an important role in contributing to the character and culture of the area. Listed Buildings are designated by Cadw while local planning authorities have the power to serve Building Preservation Notices in respect of buildings which they consider worthy of designation and in danger of demolition or being harmed by alterations. The Authority will be sympathetic to schemes aimed at conserving and preserving a building but the primary duty will be to safeguard the building and the reasons why it was listed.

- 8.22.2 When considering proposals for the alteration, re-use or extension of a listed building, satisfactory provision should be made for the retention, protection and encouragement of any protected species and their habitats which may be present.
- 8.22.3 Cadw advises on development aimed at improving access for disabled people to historic buildings, in its publication ‘Overcoming Barriers: Providing Physical Access to Historic Buildings’.
- 8.22.4 Works to listed buildings do not fall under the control of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, but are separately enforced through the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. The policy provides guidance which will be taken into account when considering applications for listed building consent. Before considering granting consent for demolition, the Authority will need to be convinced of the justification, that all reasonable steps to find alternative uses have been taken, and that any subsequent development is reasonably certain to take place within an agreed timescale. The justification should include an assessment of the condition of the building, its value, and the costs of repairing and maintaining it.
- 8.22.5 In cases where the demolition of a listed building is allowed, the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments of Wales must be given the opportunity of access to record the building before demolition takes place. In all cases of alteration or demolition the Authority will consider whether it is appropriate to require the recording of the building or features concerned.

## **8.23 POLICY ENV19 – PROPOSALS WITHIN CONSERVATION AREAS OR WHICH WOULD AFFECT THE SETTING OF A LISTED BUILDING**

**Proposals within Conservation Areas, including the felling or other works to trees, or which would affect the setting of a Listed Building will only be permitted where they: -**

- a) **conserve and respect the elements which contribute to the Conservation Area or Listed Building’s special character;**
- b) **protect and enhance views, both in and out, vistas, characteristic street scenes and roofscapes;**
- c) **pay particular regard to existing and proposed open areas and their relationship to the layout and scale of nearby buildings;**
- d) **use materials and landscaping appropriate to the setting and context;**
- e) **protect trees, hedges and other habitats of importance to nature conservation and visual amenity; and**
- f) **respect local and historic cultural traditions.**

- 8.23.1 Our Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas represent much of the best of the townscape and cultural heritage of our communities. They are an irreplaceable

asset which we hold in store for future generations. There is a strong presumption against proposals which would conflict with preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a Conservation Area or the setting of a listed building unless they are outweighed by the public interest. Proposals will be expected to promote or reinforce traditional and local distinctiveness and pay particular attention to the features, interests and architectural styles that make them special. Details of the location and description of the listed buildings (2002) are available from the County Borough's Planning Services office.

- 8.23.2 Preparatory work on the UDP has identified further areas that appear appropriate for Conservation Area status and the Authority will consult occupiers and landowners, and consider designating them.
- 8.23.3 Important features of individual Conservation Areas, including for example, boundary walls and chimneys, may be under threat from development which is permitted under the GPDO (the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995). Where this is the case, the Authority will consider bringing the activities within the scope of planning control through making a direction under Article 4.
- 8.23.4 When considering proposals to fell or undertake other works to a tree in a Conservation Area the Authority will consider the contribution it makes to the character or appearance of the Area, the condition of the tree, the need to replace it, or whether a Tree Preservation Order should be made to protect the tree.
- 8.23.5 In 2004, the County Borough contained six Conservation Areas, while the designation of further areas or the amendment of the boundaries of existing areas will be considered (see Policy ENV21). Assessment and Proposal documents will be prepared for each Conservation Area. They will be published as Supplementary Planning Guidance and will provide guidance to assist in the preparation and consideration of proposals.
- 8.23.6 Outline planning applications are unlikely to contain sufficient information to enable the favourable consideration of a proposal within a Conservation Area or affecting the setting of a listed building. Proposals will be judged on their effect on the Area's character and appearance

#### **8.24 POLICY ENV20- DEMOLITION OF UNLISTED BUILDINGS WITHIN CONSERVATION AREAS**

**A) Proposals that would involve the demolition of an unlisted building within a Conservation Area will not be permitted unless the following criteria have been satisfactorily addressed: -**

- a) the contribution which the present building and any replacement building would make to the character or appearance of the area;**
- b) the proposal either makes a positive contribution to the area's character and appearance, or the character and appearance are not harmed**
- c) the condition of the existing building(s) and any potential for adaptation or conversion; and**

- d) the submission of a site development brief which explains: (i) how criteria a), b) and c) have been addressed; (ii) the arrangements to be made for (wherever possible) the re-use of the materials arising from demolition; (iii) the funding arrangements and timetable drawn up to ensure that a satisfactory replacement building or design solution is delivered.
- B) Where consent is granted subject to the erection of a replacement building, a condition will be imposed to prevent demolition until a contract has been let for the replacement building.

- 8.24.1 Conservation Area consent is required under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. As a result there is no statutory requirement when considering proposals to have regard to this Plan's policies. However, the policies provide guidance which relate to development control decisions and will be taken into consideration when proposals are considered. Welsh Office Circular 1/98 sets out a series of exemptions where consent is not required.
- 8.24.2 One of the purposes of the designation of Conservation Areas is to control the demolition of unlisted buildings. On occasion, it may become necessary to replace existing buildings with Conservation Areas. The Authority expects that such a proposal will adequately address whether the proposal is justified (including the condition and value of the building and the costs of repairing and monitoring it), and whether an acceptable replacement building or design solution is feasible and provided within an agreed timescale.
- 8.24.3 The Authority will produce guidance concerning buildings and other features of the built environment which are not listed or within a Conservation Area but which are of local interest, and the matters that should be considered in dealing with proposals that affect them.

## **8.25 POLICY ENV21– THE DESIGNATION OF NEW AND REVIEW OF EXISTING CONSERVATION AREAS**

**The criteria against which existing or new Conservation Areas and their boundaries will be considered will include whether: -**

- a) the area is of special architectural or historic interest which it is desirable to preserve or enhance;
  - b) the identified boundaries include those buildings and spaces which contribute to its interest or character; and
  - c) the area or a part no longer possesses the special interest which led to its designation
- 8.25.1 The Authority has a duty under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to designate any appropriate areas as Conservation Areas. The policy sets out criteria by which areas will be considered.

- 8.25.2 The Authority will prepare and consult on proposals for their conservation and enhancement. They will help applicants when preparing proposals, and will form a basis for the Authority when preparing schemes for the preservation and enhancement of an Area.

**8.26 POLICY ENV22– ARCHAEOLOGICAL REMAINS**

**Any proposal that would damage or destroy a site of archaeological interest and its setting will be required to demonstrate that the need for the development clearly outweighs the value of the archaeological site. Where the site is of national importance the proposal will be required to demonstrate, in addition, that there is no feasible alternative. Where sites of archaeological interest are of national importance, whether they are scheduled or not, there will be a presumption that they should be preserved in situ.**

**8.27 POLICY ENV23– ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION**

**Where important archaeological remains may exist within the site of a proposal, or their setting might be affected, the developer may be required to undertake an archaeological evaluation to clarify the position.**

**8.28 POLICY ENV24– ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORDING**

**Before consent is granted for a proposal which would result in damage to or the destruction of important archaeological remains, the Authority will need to be satisfied that the developer has made appropriate provisions for the archaeological investigation and subsequent recording of the remains and the publication of the results. Further, the developer will need to demonstrate before any works are commenced which would affect the remains that there is a reasonable level of certainty that the proposal will take place within a specified time scale.**

- 8.28.1 The policies set out criteria to guide the consideration of proposals which would be likely to damage or destroy ancient monuments, or where they may exist. The policies reflecting the precautionary principle seek to ensure that before any development takes place there is reasonable certainty about any impacts on the historic legacy. The reason for setting a specified time scale for the development is to ensure that archaeological remains are not unnecessarily excavated to sanitize a development site and the development does not subsequently proceed.
- 8.28.2 Cadw has produced a non-statutory Register of Landscapes, Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in Wales in two parts and both parts of the Register will be taken into account when considering proposals and are specifically addressed in Policy ENV3 of this Chapter.
- 8.28.3 76 scheduled ancient monuments and over 2100 archaeological sites are recorded by the Glamorgan Gwent Archaeological Trust (GGAT) on its Sites and Monuments Record as being within the County Borough. The Record is a material consideration when dealing with planning applications. The curatorial section of GGAT has been appointed by the Authority to act as archaeological advisers on

planning applications, to provide the Authority with briefs for the undertaking of archaeological recording required by planning conditions, and to monitor this work on the Authority's behalf.

- 8.28.4 A study of the County Borough's historic landscape has been prepared for the Authority by the GGAT as part of the Landmap (a landscape assessment method) process. It contains a summary of information on the archaeology of the area and provides guidance on the character and preferred management within local historic landscape areas. The Authority has identified four areas as being of particular archaeological sensitivity. They comprise: the site of the medieval town within Neath town centre; the Roman forts and environs near Banwen; Margam Abbey and its environs, and an area extending from the Roman Fort at Roman Way, Neath to the Neath Abbey and the nearby Blast Furnaces. The Authority will consider all proposals within these areas with particular care, and potential applicants are advised to contact the GGAT as early as possible for an opinion on the likely archaeological impacts of the proposal and advice on information which is likely to be needed.
- 8.28.5 The Study and details of the four areas will be published as Supplementary Planning Guidance.
- 8.28.6 The developer is encouraged to discuss their proposals with the Authority at an early stage. Developers may commission an archaeological assessment (sometimes as part of a wider Environmental Impact Assessment) before submitting a planning application. The Authority would also encourage developers to follow the guidance set out in Welsh Office Circular 60/96, 'Planning and the Historic Environment: Archaeology'.

## **8.29 POLICY ENV25– ADVERTISEMENTS**

**Proposals for advertisements will only be permitted where: -**

- a) they carefully relate to the character, scale and architectural features of any building on which they are placed;**
- b) the existing number of advertisements in the vicinity is taken into account, and whether the proposals will create excessive clutter of advertisements;**
- c) their siting and appearance does not distract users of the highway;**
- d) their siting ensures safe and easy passage for pedestrians and in particular does not hinder the movement of people with disabilities, the elderly and people with young children;**
- e) with regard to signs mounted on commercial and business premises:-**
  - (i) they are located on the front elevation and are located at fascia level and not above the level of the windowsills on the first floor;**

- (ii) where a separate business wishes to advertise on the upper floors of the building, advertisement should normally be in the form of simple lettering painted on the windows; and
  - (iii) the sign is accommodated in a way that contributes to the overall design of the building fascia.
- f) with regard to the 'advance' sign-posting of tourism or major sport or leisure destinations:-
  - (i) normally one such sign would be allowed per business or activity;
  - (ii) the sign is required to locate a business or activity which is not situated in a named road or in a readily identifiable location;
  - (iii) it is not illuminated;
  - (iv) it makes use of existing means of support, wherever possible;
  - (v) it is sited to avoid creating any highways of traffic hazard; and
  - (vi) it does not otherwise harm the amenities of the locality because of its size, positioning, colour or design.
- g) with regard to advertisement hoardings: -
  - (i) regard is paid to the character of the locality;
  - (ii) it is ensured that architectural features are not obscured;
  - (iii) locations in the open countryside are avoided;
  - (iv) locations in villages and residential areas are avoided unless they are carefully related to the scale, layout and aspect of nearby buildings and features; and
  - (v) the character or setting of Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings and Ancient Monuments are not adversely affected.

- 8.29.1 Advertisements include either those on or relating to business and other premises and advertisement hoardings.
- 8.29.2 Advertisements announcing the business or activity carried out at premises are often vital to the enterprise and important in terms of users and visitors. However, too many, or those of unsympathetic design, can result in clutter and detract from the appearance of an area. The policy sets out the criteria by which proposals will be assessed and seeks to balance the operational needs of the business or activity with avoiding visual clutter. Traditional "hanging" signs can enhance the street

scene, and may be appropriate within Conservation Areas, but will still be expected to comply with section (e) of the policy.

- 8.29.3 Advertisement hoardings can contribute interest to a street scene and in some cases help regeneration through tidying up a site. However, they can dominate an area visually and the policy sets out the criteria by which proposals will be assessed.
- 8.29.4 Normally ‘advance’ tourism signs would be limited to one sign per business or activity, unless it can be demonstrated that there is a particular need for additional signs for direction purposes. Advance signs may be justified for leisure or sporting activities which generate significant levels of traffic.
- 8.29.5 The provision of bilingual signs will be encouraged and it is important that this is carefully considered in terms of the sign, its size and visual impact. Within communities where the Welsh language is a significant feature, the provision of Welsh language or bilingual signs will be particularly important in terms of reflecting the linguistic character of the community. (See Community and Social Consideration chapter).

### **8.30 POLICY ENV26– EXTERNAL LIGHTING**

**External lighting will be permitted only where the applicant has demonstrated that:**

- a) light spillage will be minimised through the use of lighting of appropriate design at suitable locations;
  - b) it will not compromise pedestrians/highway safety through dazzling effects or distraction to pedestrians, cyclists or drivers using footpaths, cycle paths or roads;
  - c) the location, direction and hours of illumination will be appropriately controlled if the proposal is to be sited within, or near to, existing or proposed residential properties and development;
  - d) there will be no unacceptable effects on the visual character of either the urban or rural environment of the County Borough – this will be of particular significance to the assessment of proposals in those areas which currently enjoy ‘dark skies’, which will be conserved wherever possible;
  - e) there will be no adverse impacts upon biodiversity; and
  - f) in the countryside, and at the edge of settlements, suitable landscaping measures will be taken to screen lighting from neighbouring areas, dwellings and agricultural buildings.
- 8.30.1 While lighting is often essential in terms of the effective and safe operation of activities and reducing crime and vandalism, it can detract from the amenities of occupiers of nearby premises. It can introduce an urban feel to areas of

countryside, and be detrimental to wildlife. It can also lead to the “light pollution” of dark skies which otherwise would be largely free from artificial lighting.

### **8.31 POLICY ENV27– LOCATION OF SENSITIVE USES**

**The development of land for housing or other sensitive uses will not be permitted where the proximity of an existing use or installation or exposure to pollutants would unacceptably affect amenity, safety, health or environmental quality.**

### **8.32 POLICY ENV28– POLLUTING OR HAZARDOUS INSTALLATIONS**

**The development of polluting or hazardous installations which would create a significant adverse impact on safety, health or environmental quality will not be permitted.**

- 8.32.1 Proposals for developments that could cause significant pollution, hazard, disturbance, noise or nuisance would be likely to require Environmental Impact Assessment. Criteria for assessing whether a proposal would require EIA and procedures for requesting a screening opinion or direction are set out in the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (England and Wales) Regulations 1999.

### **8.33 POLICY ENV29– ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY AND AMENITY**

**Proposals that would adversely affect the environmental quality or amenity of the surrounding area through causing unacceptable levels of pollution, disturbance, noise or nuisance will not be permitted.**

- 8.33.1 The policies aim to separate housing and sensitive uses from installations and proposals which could cause unacceptable safety, hazard or environmental quality impacts. The Authority will seek the advice of the Health and Safety Executive on the suitability of proposals which may cause concern. These could include consents for the storage of hazardous substances or proximity to high-pressure pipelines. Information on existing installations, which are notifiable under Health and Safety legislation, is available from the Planning Services Offices.
- 8.33.2 The Town and Country Planning (Hazardous Substances) Regulations impose controls on the location of potentially hazardous proposals. When considering proposals under the regulations, or other proposals which would be located in close proximity to such sites the Authority will be guided by these policies.
- 8.33.3 The protection and improvement of air quality is fundamental to sustainability and this will also be addressed under Policy ENV15. The Authority will seek to reduce the creation of pollutants and the exposure of occupiers of new buildings to unacceptable pollution. This will both contribute to reducing global pollution and climate change and tackle more localised health and related issues.
- 8.33.4 Where there is potential for proposals to generate significant levels of noise, the developer may be required to produce a specialist technical assessment of noise

which would be generated, the character of the area, and of any appropriate mitigation measures.

- 8.33.5 The potential for the creation of pollution and nuisance will be taken into account. This could include the creation of unacceptable levels of noise, smell, vibration or dust. It could relate to likely problems for residents as a result of proposals for hot food takeaways which may be compounded if they operate late at night, or the creation of noisy uses in the countryside which could affect residents, visitors or wildlife.
- 8.33.6 When considering applications for potentially polluting development, the Authority will take into account: -
- the reasons for the developer selecting the chosen site and whether there are any feasible alternative locations or means of production or operation;
  - impacts on health and amenity, the creation of noise, and impacts on road safety and traffic generation;
  - the risk and impact of potential pollution from the proposals on the use of other land and the surrounding environment, and
  - the need and feasibility of restoring the land or water resources to standards sufficient for an appropriate after-use.

#### **8.34 SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL SUMMARY**

- 8.34.1 The policies address a range of "environmental" aspects of Sustainability into the design and consideration of proposals. Key criteria for considering individual proposals have been gathered into two comprehensive policies, while detailed issues are further considered in individual policies.
- 8.34.2 As a result of assessments carried out during the preparation of the plan, responses to consultations and the Sustainability Appraisal, existing planning permissions and allocations were reassessed and where appropriate amended.
- 8.34.3 The policies set out a comprehensive framework to guide the preparation and consideration of proposals and carry forward the plan's Strategy comprehensively.
- 8.34.4 The policies comprise the key environmental elements of the UDP and their effectiveness will be carefully monitored and assessed.

**Proposals will be considered against any of the Plan's policies that are relevant.**

**Useful starting points are: -**

**CHAPTER 8: ENVIRONMENT**

**Policy ENV8:** **A) Replacement dwellings; B) Conversions or re-use of buildings & C) Farm Diversification in the countryside.**

**Policy GC1:** **New Buildings, Structures & Changes of Use**

**Policy GC2:** **Engineering Works and Operations [Including Minerals and Waste]**

## **9. HOUSING**

### **9.1 CURRENT POSITION**

- 9.1.1 In addition to meeting our communities' housing needs, the plan's new housing land allocations have a key role to play in creating more sustainable communities. This is both in terms of defining their future distribution and shape, and influencing travel patterns. The UDP faces two separate tasks: to address population change and the implications for housing, and secondly to ensure that there is a continuing 5 year housing land bank (see Planning Policy Wales and TAN1). Further information on Population and Housing is provided in the Topic Paper, and the Annual Monitoring Reports.
- 9.1.2 Between 1981 and 2001 the County Borough experienced a gradual but continuing decline in population. This was reflected in an ageing population structure. The losses were particularly pronounced during the ten-year period to 1991 when the area suffered a 5% decline. Out migration followed the contraction of the area's major industries as people left in search of employment. By 2001, the main cause of the decline was a substantial excess of deaths over births.
- 9.1.3 The decline in population varied markedly according to area, with Port Talbot experiencing the greatest loss (8.7%). In smaller and valley communities the loss of younger people had a particularly pronounced effect.
- 9.1.4 Despite the prolonged loss of population, the rate of building within the County Borough had remained buoyant with a peak in 1999/ 2001. The continuing demand for new housing reflected factors including smaller family size and more people living alone. The County Borough's main settlements of Neath, Port Talbot and to a lesser extent Pontardawe have been the focus for residential development, with the urban areas of Neath and Port Talbot accommodating 85% of new completions over the period 1986-2004. In contrast, there has been comparatively little residential development in the valley areas.
- 9.1.5 Development on major sites accounted for most new build completions over this period at an average of 320 dwellings per annum, with small sites of ten or fewer dwellings providing a further 60 dwellings per annum.
- 9.1.6 The building rate has varied between building zones (defined in the annual TAN1 House Building Assessment), with Greater Neath having the more consistent yearly rate averaging 191 dwellings per year over the period. Port Talbot in contrast had a 132 average rate, however, this varied from 24 dwellings in 1986/87 to 290 in 1999/2000. Within the valley areas, Northern Lliw had an average of 36 dwellings, the Neath and Dulais Valleys had 16, and the Upper Afan Valley 5.
- 9.1.7 Private sector development over the period 1989- 2004 accounted for the majority of all dwellings (75%), although its relative significance has varied according to area. During the period, the proportion of new dwellings built on previously developed (brownfield) land in the County Borough amounted to 50% of all completions.

- 9.1.8 The Authority viewed the continuing population loss with concern as this is reflected in an ageing and infirm population with communities finding increasing difficulty in sustaining facilities and services and attracting new investment. As a result, a key element of the Community Plan strategy has been to regenerate the area's economy and communities. The Deposit Plan was based on addressing the area's declining population and regaining the 1991 Census total of 139,449 by 2016. This would have represented an increase of 1,495 people. At the time of the publication of the Deposit Plan, the 2002 Housing Needs Survey identified a low level of housing demand and a very low level of need for social (mainly local authority and Housing Association) housing. This was reflected in a local authority programme to demolish surplus housing. In line with an ageing population, the average number of persons per household in Neath Port Talbot was 2.3 in 2001 compared with 2.4 across Wales.
- 9.1.9 The Deposit Plan proposed a housing allocation which recognised an anticipated reduction in demand but also made provision to accommodate growth generated by the Authority's strategies of regeneration. The allocation of 4,950 (or 330 per year) houses reflected previous private house building rates. This housing allocation was substantially lower than the 9,450 dwellings that applying the more aspirational West Glamorgan Structure Plan policies would have required.

## **9.2 CURRENT TRENDS AND ISSUES**

- 9.2.1 Following the publication of the Deposit Plan, the Office of National Statistics (ONS) revised the 1991 and 2001 Census totals. As a result, the County Borough's 2001 population was revised downwards to 134,400. In order to regain the revised 1991 population level of 138,800, this would mean an increase of 4,400 people.
- 9.2.2 Signs of a significant change in population trends emerged in 2003 with the ONS Mid Year Estimate (MYE) of population for 2001/2002 indicating a population increase of 200. This grew to 700 in the 2002/2003 MYE. The increase was due to in-migration, as deaths increasingly exceeded births (20% or 345 in 2003). Encouragingly, analysis of the in-migrants revealed that many are young adults or families with children.
- 9.2.3 From a 16 year peak of 560 in 2000/01 annual house building rates fell to 339 in 2004. In contrast, over the same years, demand for social housing increased with some 400 empty properties being occupied. By September 2004 there was significant unmet demand throughout the County Borough. As a result the programme of demolition has been ended and the Authority is bidding for resources to fund new social housing. Little weight has been placed on the Authority's housing needs assessment (2002) which suggested that there was little need for new housing and very low demand for social housing.
- 9.2.4 Although the area has been experiencing a gradual decline in population since the 1980's, there has been a continuing demand for new housing as a result of factors including smaller family size, more people living alone and an ageing population. If the 2003 level of in migration was to continue, the population would increase by over 9,000 by the end of the plan period in 2016. It is considered unlikely that such a rate of population increase would prevail throughout the plan period. While

the low level of house prices (2<sup>nd</sup> lowest local authority area in England and Wales in September 2004) is likely to have attracted inward migration there were signs of a rapid increase. On the other hand, it is also unlikely that the increase would abruptly end. Regeneration of the area's economy is gaining momentum with major development underway at Baglan Bay, Llandarcy and within the travel to work area in Swansea and Carmarthenshire.

**PAST BUILD RATES 1986 – 2006**

Zone		1986/ 87	1987/ 88	1988/ 89	1989/ 90	1990/ 91	1991/ 92	1992/ 93	1993/ 94	1994/ 95	1995/ 96	1996/ 97	1997/ 98	1998/ 99	1999/ 00	2000/ 01	2001/ 02	2002/ 03	2003/ 04	2004/ 05	2005/ 06
Greater Neath	Large Sites	64	111	144	181	172	147	125	154	213	200	199	232	194	225	223	146	173	131	154	117
	Small Sites	23	39	14	41	27	19	13	15	24	20	19	3	31	14	19	15	15	20	24	33
	Total	87	150	158	222	199	166	138	169	237	220	218	235	225	239	242	161	188	151	178	150
Neath & Dulais	Large Sites	0	0	11	12	26	18	0	0	0	0	0	2	3	10	22	34	10	5	16	
	Small Sites	7	9	6	13	19	10	9	5	6	14	5	5	4	4	8	4	4	10	13	14
	Total	7	9	17	25	45	28	9	5	6	14	5	5	6	7	18	26	38	20	18	30
Port Talbot	Large Sites	15	71	51	125	162	128	23	115	44	129	106	68	87	270	253	185	109	124	97	111
	Small Sites	9	5	22	18	16	25	9	13	17	28	1	21	18	20	26	19	22	25	15	22
	Total	24	76	73	143	178	153	32	128	61	157	107	89	105	290	279	204	131	149	112	133
Upper Afan	Large Sites	0	22	0	14	0	31	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Small Sites	1	2	1	0	2	2	3	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	2	0	3
	Total	1	24	1	14	2	33	3	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	2	0	3
Northern Lliw	Large Sites	0	0	23	75	67	14	20	35	64	26	15	39	26	14	0	1	0	2	8	4
	Small Sites	10	10	10	10	10	18	12	16	11	18	12	5	6	7	21	5	10	15	29	21
	Total	10	10	33	85	77	32	32	51	75	44	27	44	32	21	21	6	10	17	37	25
NPT	Large Sites	79	204	229	407	427	338	168	304	321	355	320	339	309	512	486	354	316	267	264	248
	Small Sites	50	65	53	82	74	74	46	50	59	81	37	34	60	45	74	44	51	72	81	93
	Total	129	269	282	489	501	412	214	354	380	436	357	373	369	557	560	398	367	339	345	341

- 9.2.5 As the Neath Port Talbot area faces an apparent shift from population decline to increase there are no past trends to extrapolate and the extent to which the existing housing stock could accommodate increased population is not known. The Authority's strategy remains to regain the 1991 level of population. This now represents an increase of 4,400 people (or 3,500 as 900 had already been achieved by 2003).
- 9.2.6 Translating this population growth into a housing need would be based on a series of assumptions and as yet there is little on which to base them. With a total housing stock of 66600 dwellings and an ageing population, significant increases in population could be absorbed by the existing housing stock. Already the authority's stock of vacant social housing has been exhausted. The Authority has the duty of ensuring that there is an adequate housing land bank to meet the area's needs. The housing allocation proposed in the Deposit Plan (a total of 330 dwellings per year) would not meet current or historic building rates. A selection of average annual house building rates is set out below:

1986-2004: 377 houses per year

1998-2002: 452

1994-2004: 414

1999-2004: 444

- 9.2.7 The Authority has selected a revised housing allocation for the plan period based on a building rate of 410 houses per year. Although this is a higher rate than achieved in the three years 2001-2004, it reflects the average over the last 10 years. This represents an allocation of 6,150 houses or 1,200 more than in the Deposit Plan.

### **9.3 STRATEGY**

- 9.3.1 The economic objectives of the County Borough Council contained in the Community Plan and addressed by the UDP aim to arrest and reverse the trends that have led to population decline. This will be through developing job opportunities in locations such as the Baglan Bay Development and Llandarcy, and promoting a culture of business growth, e-commerce and entrepreneurial skills. This will provide the platform for community prosperity and confidence and in turn the quality of life, and the health and social well being of local communities.
- 9.3.2 Allocations for residential development are made in the plan to meet the expected increase in households in a way that will allow the development of communities, whilst at the same time protecting important environmental assets both within and beyond the existing urban area. The distribution of the housing allocation between and within house building areas has been influenced by past build rates.

- 9.3.3 A key element of the housing strategy is its contribution to the regeneration of communities through promoting sustainable settlements. Sufficient housing land is provided in each settlement to ensure it can grow and flourish, through the allocation of housing sites and the inclusion of land within settlement boundaries.
- 9.3.4 The strategy for settlements concentrates the majority of significant development in the Neath-Port Talbot urban area and to a lesser extent Pontardawe. Major generators of traffic (eg. retail, leisure, recreation, health, community and business uses) will be expected to locate in or near town centres. If it can be clearly demonstrated that this is not feasible then they should be sited in locations which are or would be well located in terms of public transport, cycling and walking and would minimise the generation of traffic.
- 9.3.5 Smaller settlements, which have a range of facilities, serving everyday needs (eg. shop, post office, pub, church, chapel, community hall, primary school, and sport/leisure) and are served by public transport will be supported. Settlement limits for these communities have been designated and include where appropriate space for new development in order to meet their needs.
- 9.3.6 The concept of sustainability underpins the housing land allocations. The sites identified should make full use of existing and planned infrastructure. They should be located to reduce the need to travel and facilitate use of alternatives to the car by being in close proximity to public transport provision, employment opportunities and other community facilities. The development and maintenance of viable communities, where quality of life and access to facilities are good, is a priority. The countryside will be conserved and enhanced, and development located where appropriate on previously developed land.
- 9.3.7 A key focus of this plan therefore is urban regeneration and the use of “brownfield” land for housing development. The use of “brownfield” sites helps limit the amount of countryside needed for development. Typical journey lengths will tend to be shorter from sites within the urban area, and are more likely to be possible by public transport, walking or cycling. Not all land within urban areas will be suitable for housing development. For example there may be local open space or wildlife interests, land may be contaminated, or affected by ‘bad neighbour’ land uses.
- 9.3.8 The allocation of housing sites and identification of land within settlement limits will provide a range of sites suitable for the full range of housing types meeting the needs of all groups within the community. Developments should seek to retain key landscape and wildlife elements where appropriate. Design issues will also be considered in terms of policies in the Environment Chapter.
- 9.3.9 Existing, proposed and allocated employment and industrial sites will be safeguarded through avoiding the creation of dwellings in such close proximity that they might constrain the potential of the sites.

- 9.3.10 The Authority has considered the accommodation needs of gypsy families and is satisfied that it has exercised its responsibilities in this regard by the provision of suitable sites to cater for such needs at Briton Ferry and Caegarw, Pyle. Proposals for the provision of further sites will be considered in terms of the policies set out in the plan.
- 9.3.11 The need for affordable housing is a material planning consideration. The need for the provision of an element of affordable housing within a development will depend upon evidence being available from an up-to-date assessment of need having taken into account the characteristics of the local housing market.

#### **9.4 PART 1 POLICY**

##### **Policy 7**

**In order to meet the County Borough's new housing needs, land will be made available for the development of approximately 6,155 houses during the period mid 2001- mid 2016, distributed as follows:**

Housing Zone	Large Sites	Small Sites	Total
<b>Port Talbot</b>	<b>1739</b>	<b>215</b>	<b>1954</b>
<b>Greater Neath</b>	<b>3085</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>3335</b>
<b>Neath &amp; Dulais Valley</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>153</b>	<b>308</b>
<b>Upper Afan Valley</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Swansea Valley</b>	<b>248</b>	<b>275</b>	<b>523</b>

**An overall capacity for the Llandarcy Urban Village of 4,000 dwellings is allocated, this will extend beyond the plan period.**

**Development to serve the needs of individual communities will be catered for within settlement limits.**

- 9.4.1 “Large Sites” are those which are likely to accommodate 10 or more dwellings. The allowance for “Small Sites” includes both sites of less than 10 dwellings and “windfall” sites. These are sites which have not been anticipated and could for example occur where an existing building within a settlement is demolished and this may exceed 10 dwellings.
- 9.4.2 Planning Policy Wales (2002) requires local planning authorities to ensure that sufficient land is brought forward to provide a five-year supply of land for housing development. To achieve this, sites should be free from constraints, capable of being developed economically, in areas where people want to live and suitable for a full range of housing types.

- 9.4.3 The Authority aims to redress the losses of past decades and stabilise the population at its 1991 level of around 138,800 by 2016. This would help sustain facilities, services and attract new investment into the area and related economic regeneration would reduce the need for people to leave the area in search of employment.
- 9.4.4 Within settlement limits sufficient land was allowed to cater for a mix of social and private housing within a range of house types. Allowance was also made to accommodate a mix of housing and appropriate business use (see policy EC3) to encourage small enterprises and more sustainable communities. The plan's policies will seek to ensure that effective use is made of land allocated in the plan, both in terms of density and ensuring that a development does not unnecessarily prevent the development of other land that is allocated in the plan.
- 9.4.5 Population and housing estimates can, at best, only be "guesstimates". Building rates across the County Borough, within housing zones and communities, will be carefully monitored and addressed as the new Local Development Plan is prepared. If necessary local issues relating to a community may be considered through the preparation of interim housing statements which would involve full consultation, the undertaking of a SEA if required and any subsequent approval of applications being dealt with as departures from the adopted Development Plan.
- 9.4.6 The Council considers that in order to move towards more sustainable patterns of development, to make the best use of existing services and to protect the natural beauty and amenity of the countryside, new residential development should be sited within the boundaries of existing settlements. Correspondingly new residential development in the countryside will not be permitted unless the applicant can support the case for requiring a dwelling associated with the use of land for agriculture or forestry.
- 9.4.7 A firm boundary will be identified around settlements to provide certainty for residents, landowners and developers about the type of development that will be permitted at a given location. It will also prevent the uncoordinated sprawl of development that can lead to the linking up of settlements and the permanent loss of countryside. The settlements have been selected in accordance with the Settlement Strategy and as explained in Policy H3.
- 9.4.8 A detailed analysis of the capacity for infill/windfall sites within urban areas has been undertaken and its findings form a basis for small site allocations. Detailed information on individual community areas is available on request from the Planning Services office.
- 9.4.9 A large proportion of the new housing needed to meet the County Borough's needs will be focussed in the Urban Village at Llandarcy. This will primarily serve the Neath urban area.
- 9.4.10 The distribution of sites between and within housing sub areas is based on past building rates, with an allowance for constraints (principally infrastructure

problems which affected the Amman and Dulais Valleys and Glynneath) and the rate of take up of planning permissions. Sufficient land has been identified within settlements to meet the normal requirements as identified by past building rates. The likely impact on communities within the Swansea Valley in which the Welsh language is a significant feature of everyday life has been taken into account. Within communities, the plan will seek to promote the creation of employment and ensure that there is sufficient housing land to meet local needs.

- 9.4.11 Within the main urban areas of Neath, Port Talbot and Pontardawe the allocations are mainly based (as in the past) on large sites (of over 10 dwellings). Elsewhere, the release of land for housing is generally based on smaller sites.
- 9.4.12 Within the Upper Afan Valley (ie. above Pontrhydyfen), past building rates have been particularly low. The Authority views releasing attractive building plots as a key means of reducing migration and supporting the regeneration of the communities and the allocations contained within the settlement limits are, as a consequence, aspirational.
- 9.4.13 Housing allocations will maximise the use of appropriate ‘brownfield’ sites and take account of the potential for rehabilitation, conversion, clearance and redevelopment in a given area. All new housing developments will be well integrated with existing settlements in order to avoid ribbon and fragmented development patterns.

## **9.5 POLICY H1 – HOUSING LANDBANK**

**The following sites are allocated for residential development:**

<b>Reference No.</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Number of Dwellings</b>		
		<b>2001</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2006</b>
<b>Greater Neath</b>				
H1/1	Penscynor, Cilfrew	40	4	
H1/2	Cimla Hospital, Cimla	29		Complete
H1/3+	Jersey Marine	48	43 +50	Extended allocation
H1/4	Barrons Court, Caewern, Neath	42	33	
H1/5	Waunceirch, Neath	199	81	Complete
H1/6	Brewery Site, Neath	25		Complete
H1/7	Stockhams Corner, Neath	27	12	
H1/8	Sunnybank Farm, Aberdulais	120	120	
H1/9	Crymlyn Parc, Skewen	60	60	
H1/10	Greyhound Stadium, Skewen	58	27	Complete

H1/11+	Neath General Hospital	50	50	
H1/12	Giants Grave, Briton Ferry	52		Complete
H1/13+	Llandarcy		2000	
H1/14	Wern Goch, Skewen		85	
H1/15	Crymlyn Parc, Skewen		200	
<b>Neath &amp; Dulais Valleys</b>				
H1/16	Bryn Bedd, Seven Sisters	83	16	
H1/17+	Lamb & Flag, Glynneath	60	60	
<b>Port Talbot</b>				
H1/18	Baglan House Farm, Baglan	32	18	
H1/19+	Stycellwen, Baglan	50	53	
H1/20	Coed Hirwaun, Margam	168		Complete
H1/21+	Little Warren, Sandfields	92	92	Complete
H1/22	Plasnewydd, Baglan Moors	17		Complete
H1/23+	Rutherglen Yard, Port Talbot	88	42	Complete
H1/24	Addison Place, Aberafan	10		Complete
H1/25	Ascot Drive, Baglan	60	60	Complete
H1/26+	Talbot Road, Port Talbot	16	16	Complete
H1/27+	Jersey Beach Hotel	40	40	
H1/28+	Aberafan Seafront	252	252	
H1/29+	Copperminers, Cwmafan	150	150	
H1/30	Baglan Heights	110	110	
H1/31	Groeswen Hospital, Margam	20	20	
H1/32+	Baglan Moors New Hospital	30	30	Complete
H1/33+	Port Talbot Docks	50	50	
H1/34++	Baglan Hospital		110	
H1/35	Baglan Bay		440	
<b>Upper Afan Valley</b>				
<b>Swansea Valley</b>				
H1/36	Waunsterw, Rhydyfro	40	40	
H1/37	Gelligron, Pontardawe	80	80	
H1/38+	Glanyrafon, Ynysmeudy	20	20	
H1/39+++	Graig Newydd		108	

## Notes

*The number of dwellings identified in the table is not an exact requirement for each site but an indication of the likely level of housing anticipated.*

*The Llandarcy Urban Village site contains a proven capacity of up to 2,500 dwellings and the additional land could be made available should demand require. The Authority resolved in July 2002 to grant planning permission for a 4.9 hectare portion of the site which would include some 150 dwellings. While*

*this could act as a model for the Urban Village project it was viewed as a stand alone development relating to the existing Llandarcy village. The Urban Village has a total capacity of 4,000 dwellings which are allocated as a commitment extending beyond the plan period*

*The highway access to the Lamb and Flag site in Glynneath involves the crossing (and retention) of the navigable line of the Neath Canal.*

*A Certificate of Lawful Development exists for a housing site at Blaen Baglan, Port Talbot for 200 dwellings. The Authority does not consider that this development is likely to proceed during the plan period as a result of ownership and infrastructure constraints.*

*The allocation for Aberfan Seafront comprises a number of sites which are separately identified on the Proposals Map.*

*Sites marked + in the table and written \* on the Proposals Map, lie partly within areas identified in the Development Advice Maps issued under TAN 15: Development and Flood Risk as being at a “high risk” (zone C) from flooding. The Authority has undertaken an assessment of the sites and is satisfied that the approximate number of dwellings could be provided without siting them in parts of the site that are in zone C. It may be feasible to demonstrate that these portions of the sites could be used for uses for which consequences associated with flooding are acceptable. The site marked ++ lies wholly in zone C, but the authority has undertaken a “broad level assessment”, and is satisfied that the design of the development should be able to ensure that it is managed in a suitable way. The site marked +++ lies within zone C but has the benefit of an extant planning permission Developers on all the sites identified (+/++/++) will be expected to undertake an assessment of the flooding consequences (a Flood Consequences Assessment) to accompany and justify their planning application in accordance with the guidance in the TAN.*

*Unless the Flood Consequences Assessment confirms that the portion of land should not have been included within Zone C2 (extreme flood area), then the highly vulnerable development and/or emergency services within Zone C2 will not be allowed.*

- 9.5.1 The maintenance of a 5 year land supply for housing will in the main be served by sites identified in this policy.
- 9.5.2 The study of potential sites for housing development and of areas for inclusion within settlement areas has included a detailed examination of the local environmental capacity including landscape, biodiversity and the capacity of the existing and proposed facilities and infrastructure. It included an examination of the location, orientation, exposure, contamination, land instability, liability to flooding, access and public transport. Consideration of the availability of services included shops, schools, medical, leisure and social facilities and their capacity to absorb the potential population. Potential impacts on Welsh speaking communities were also taken fully into account.

- 9.5.3 The search sequence set out in Planning Policy Wales 2002 was followed in identifying sites: the re-use of previously developed land and buildings within settlements, then settlement extensions and then new development around settlements with good transport links.
- 9.5.4 Many of the sites identified are existing commitments contained in the local plans prepared by the former Authorities prior to local government reorganisation in 1996. Not all of the sites included within those plans have been brought forward, however, as the opportunity has been taken to reassess them.
- 9.5.5 The allocation has been prepared with the aim of ensuring that housing proposals can incorporate a mix of house types and sizes capable of meeting a range of housing needs.
- 9.5.6 Where sites would place a significant and unacceptable impact upon existing and programmed infrastructure and community facilities, development may have to be phased until this is overcome. Developers may wish to consider making contributions to enable development to be brought forward. These issues are addressed in the Environment, Community and Social Considerations and Infrastructure chapters.
- 9.5.7 Current Assembly Government guidance requires Local Planning Authorities, in allocating land for housing development to maximise the use of vacant urban land. In allocating land for residential purposes, consideration was given to the need to utilise vacant urban land, to the conservation and protection of the environment, and to potential impacts upon communities and their facilities including those in which the Welsh language is a significant feature.
- 9.5.8 The allocation is likely to achieve a rate of 75% of the housing being located on previously developed land. Allocated sites and land within settlement limits may include open space or wildlife features or interest that should wherever possible be retained.
- 9.5.9 The layout, design and provision of infrastructure and facilities will also be considered in terms of policies contained in other chapters (and in particular policy GC1).
- 9.5.10 The allocation for the Llandarcy Urban Village is for 4,000 dwellings. It is anticipated that 2,000 would be developed within the plan period and a further 2,000 by 2026. The site has the capacity to accommodate the dwellings and this level of development is needed to fund the development and ensure that it makes its full contribution to sustainability.

## **9.6 POLICY H2 – HOUSING DENSITY**

**Proposals will generally be expected to achieve a density of 30 dwellings per hectare, and higher where the proposal is sited at or immediately adjacent to locations with good public transport accessibility such as town, district, village and local centres or in public transport corridors.**

- 9.6.1 In the interests of sustainability and to avoid the unnecessary loss of land to development, the Authority is concerned to ensure that the land taken by development is minimised (while recognising that the range of sites will need to provide a mix of housing types and sizes).
- 9.6.2 Generally, the Authority will expect residential development proposals whether on previously developed land or greenfield sites to achieve a density of 30 dwellings per hectare (having excluded major distributor roads, schools, open spaces serving a wider area and significant landscape corridors, but including access roads within the site, private garden space, car parking areas, incidental open space, landscaping and children's play areas). Higher density development will be expected within and adjacent to areas which are well located in terms of good public transport accessibility and existing centres and this should be reflected with regard to on site parking provision.
- 9.6.3 Lower density developments that offer choice within the local housing market will also be considered. They should be justified in terms of their location, design, layout and landscaping and are likely to be more appropriate on less well located sites near the urban fringe.

## **9.7 POLICY H3 – INFILL AND WINDFALL DEVELOPMENT WITHIN SETTLEMENTS**

**In addition to those sites contained in Policy H1, the development of “infill” and “windfall” sites within settlement limits, as defined on the Proposals Map, will generally be permitted for housing subject to the following criteria: -**

- a) **there is no unacceptable loss of open or green space that is important for its recreational, amenity or conservation value;**
  - b) **proposals either individually or in combination with existing commitments would not create unacceptable impacts on existing or programmed infrastructure or community facilities;**
  - c) **there will not be a significant detrimental effect on the amenity of the existing residents of the area; and**
  - d) **there would be no unacceptable highway implications**
- 9.7.1 In accordance with the Settlement strategy, settlement limits have been identified for all settlements which the Authority considers meet sustainability criteria. The criteria consider the sufficiency of facilities to meet local community's needs, (principally in relation to the availability of facilities and services such as access to local convenience shopping, public transport, education, community facilities and health provision).
  - 9.7.2 Settlement limits are defined on the Proposals Map to identify settlements where infilling will be allowed. New housing outside the settlement limits will

be resisted unless it is justified in terms of agricultural or forestry needs or as a rural exception site (see policy ENV1).

- 9.7.3 Settlement limits have been defined based on two criteria. Firstly that they contain sufficient land, which meets sustainability criteria (e.g. access to facilities, public transport etc), to meet the community's housing, employment and other needs. Secondly that the boundaries take account of their impact on the local landscape and wildlife and are identifiable and defensible. Mainly within the Upper Afan valley, due to the valley's topography, it has proved difficult to identify housing plots within or as an extension to a community. As a result some nearby sites have been identified within settlement limits to serve these communities.
- 9.7.4 "Infill Sites" will generally comprise less than 10 dwellings (the minimum size for inclusion as an allocation in policy H1). The actual number of dwellings permitted will depend on the location and character of the site and the circumstances. "Windfall sites" are those which include more than 10 dwellings but which were not identified as allocated sites for a variety of reasons including the level of demand, the anticipated feasibility of overcoming legal or physical problems or the availability of the site not having been anticipated.
- 9.7.5 Sites within settlement limits include infill and "windfall" plots and are included in the Part 1 Housing Policy table as small sites. As explained previously, the allocation has been distributed between communities on the basis of past building rates, but with allowance made for constraints which may have limited the building rate.
- 9.7.6 Where proposals would create an unacceptable impact on existing and programmed infrastructure and community facilities they will either be resisted, or phased until it is overcome. Developers may wish to make contributions to enable development to proceed. The issues are also addressed in the Environment, Community and Social consideration chapters.
- 9.7.7 Due regard has been paid to the social effect of the release of land within small communities to ensure that such communities and their facilities are not overwhelmed by rapid expansion particularly in those areas where a significant proportion of the population are Welsh speaking. Whilst it is important that growth occurs to sustain communities this must be balanced against the ability of the community to absorb newcomers, and, in the case of the Welsh language the ability of schools and education facilities to tackle the linguistic challenges involved. This is further considered in policy CS2.
- 9.7.8 In considering vacant sites within urban areas and smaller settlements due regard should be taken of the contribution such sites make to the provision of informal open space and indeed as important habitats for wildlife. Detailed criteria for the consideration of individual proposals are contained in policy GC1. Supplementary Planning Guidance will be issued.
- 9.7.9 Where land within Settlement Limits lies within areas identified as being liable to flooding in plans issued in accordance with TAN15 applicants will be expected

to undertake an assessment of the flooding consequences to accompany and justify their planning application in accordance with the guidance in the TAN. Unless the Flood Consequences Assessment confirms that the portion of land should not have been included within Zone C2 (extreme flood area), then the highly vulnerable development and/or emergency services within Zone C2 will not be allowed.

#### **9.8 POLICY H4 – AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

**Where there is a demonstrable need, determined by reference to an up-to-date housing needs assessment or other properly conducted survey, an element of affordable housing will be sought on suitable sites. The suitability of a site will take into account its size, the economics of provision, any particular costs associated with development of the site, and any prejudice to the realisation of other planning objectives which may constitute a priority on the site. Affordable housing is defined as housing where there are secure mechanisms in place to ensure that it is accessible to those who cannot afford market housing, both on first occupation and for subsequent occupiers. It includes social rented housing provided by local authorities and registered social landlords and intermediate housing where prices or rents are above those of social rent but below market housing prices or rents.**

#### **9.9 POLICY H5 – AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN VILLAGES TO SERVE LOCAL NEED**

Favourable consideration will be given to the siting of small affordable housing sites in or adjoining existing villages on land which would not normally be released for residential development, provided that both the following criteria are met: -

- a) the scheme would meet a genuine local need (evidenced by a properly conducted survey) which could not otherwise be met within a reasonable distance; and
- b) where a registered social landlord is not involved, there are clear and adequate arrangements to ensure that the benefits of affordable housing will be secured for initial and subsequent occupants;
- c) The location of the affordable housing takes into account the need for good accessibility to facilities, services and public transport

9.9.1 The provision of affordable housing to meet a community's needs is a material consideration in the consideration of applications for residential development.

9.9.2 Affordable housing can be defined as housing provided for those whose incomes generally deny them the opportunity to purchase a house on the open market. The need for affordable housing is to be established by reference to a

housing needs assessment or to a properly conducted survey. The Council will update its Housing Needs Assessment of 2001 to take account of changes in the housing market during the plan period.

- 9.9.3 The density and design of the affordable housing should reflect the characteristics of the locality and of the rest of the housing site. The mix of house types, sizes and tenure should reflect: local needs and the existing affordable housing stock in the area; the location (in terms of proximity of local services and facilities and access to public transport) and topography of the site; the requirement to create a quality environment and balanced community and the need to avoid management problems.
- 9.9.4 Residential mobile homes can contribute to the provision of low cost accommodation particularly for small households where a local need is identified. Consideration will be given to proposals for such homes subject to compliance with UDP policies.
- 9.9.5 Rural affordable housing can be important to enable the retention of workers in rural settlements and also for people with strong local connections who have social reasons for living in a particular settlement. In seeking to provide housing for these groups evidence will be required of local need and that this need could not be reasonably satisfied on land included within the settlement limits within the area. Where justified, consideration will be given to the granting of planning permission to meet such need on sites which would not otherwise be released for housing development.
- 9.9.6 The housing provided under these policies should always be available as affordable housing for local people. Therefore, where a registered social landlord is not involved, permissions will be subject to conditions, or a section 106 obligation, to ensure that all initial and subsequent occupiers will be people from the local community in local need who will benefit from the affordable status of the dwelling. In some cases a commuted sum may be given to provide affordable housing elsewhere but serving the same local need. A lack of affordable housing to meet local needs will need to be clearly demonstrated by a local survey or other data. Affordable housing should include both low cost market and subsidised housing, as both will have a role to play in providing for local needs. For example, reference can be made to the level of local incomes and their relationship to house prices or rents, rather than to a particular price or rent. Permitted development rights may be withdrawn so that control can be exercised over the enlargement or alteration of dwellings in ways that would change their affordability for future occupiers.

#### **9.10 POLICY H6 – CONVERSIONS TO AND SUBDIVISION OF DWELLINGS AND OTHER PREMISES**

**Proposals to sub divide residential premises, or to convert premises to provide flats, other forms of multiple residential occupation, or accommodation for people with special housing needs will be considered**

**favourably, provided they would not have an unacceptable adverse effect upon: -**

- (a) the character of the area,**
- (b) the amenities of residents of adjacent dwellings,**
- (c) existing or programmed infrastructure and community facilities, nor create parking or highway problems,**
- (d) where applicable, protected species and their habitats and roosts.**

- 9.10.1 When considering applications for such schemes, the effect on the surrounding area and residents of adjacent properties will be important. Although it is important to meet the needs of the increasing number of smaller households, this should not be at the expense of an area's character or amenity, nor cause parking or highway problems. Proposals for the conversion of surplus space in retail centres will also be considered with regard to the servicing needs of shops and the maintenance of security. Where proposals concern premises in the countryside, the effect on the landscape and character of the area and likely traffic generation will be particularly important.
- 9.10.2 Where proposals would create an unacceptable impact on existing and programmed infrastructure and community facilities they may be resisted, or phased until it is overcome. Developers may wish to make contributions to enable development to proceed. The issues are also addressed in the Environment, Community and Social consideration chapters.
- 9.10.3 Where proposals are located within a town centre, they should comply with Policy TRL5. Policy GC1 will apply generally. Supplementary Planning Guidance will be issued to provide further guidance for applicants.

## **9.11 POLICY H7 – GYPSY CARAVAN SITES**

**Proposals for the development of gypsy caravan sites and temporary stopping places will normally only be permitted where a genuine need over and above the sites already provided be proven, and provided that: -**

- a) the design of the site, including suitable landscaping, is compatible with the character and appearance of the area where the site is located;**
- b) the site is compatible with existing land uses and does not lead to unacceptable levels of pollution, noise, disturbance or risks to health and safety for people living on or near the site;**
- c) the site is within easy reach of community (including education) and other facilities for pedestrians and cyclists;**

- d) the site has or would have a good standard of facilities including water supply, electricity, sewage disposal, regular refuse collections and safe play areas for children;
- e) regard is made to safe and satisfactory accommodation of traffic generated from the development;
- f) where appropriate, sites would ensure that there are adequate facilities and space for the storage of implements, machinery and other objects associated with the business activities of gypsies;
- g) new buildings will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances where they are required for ancillary services which are both non-residential and essential, and where they cannot be accommodated through conversion or rehabilitation of other buildings on the sites;
- h) the scale of the site is in keeping with the particular conditions and characteristics of the location; and
- i) proposals either individually or in combination with existing commitments would not create unacceptable impacts on existing or programmed infrastructure or community facilities.

9.11.1 The Council recognises its responsibilities in respect of the provision of sites for gypsies and has met that responsibility by providing sites at Briton Ferry and Cae Garw, Pyle. Applications for further sites for this purpose, where a genuine need has been proven, will be considered in the light of the criteria while policy GC1 will also be particularly relevant.

## **9.12 POLICY H8 – ‘LIFETIME HOMES’ STANDARDS**

New dwellings should, wherever possible, be constructed according to the ‘Lifetime Homes’ Standards. In making a planning application for residential development, developers must show that they have considered whether or not to apply the ‘Lifetime Homes Standards’ and, where they have chosen not to apply the Standards, should give cogent reasons to support their approach.

## **9.13 SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL SUMMARY**

9.13.1 The selections of housing site allocations, settlements and settlement limit boundaries have all been the subject of appraisal. The major new housing allocation to serve the main urban areas is the Urban Village at Llandarcy. This has the advantage of reducing the loss of green field sites fringing the Neath urban area and of creating an integrated mixed-use community based upon Sustainable Development principles. It has the potential to reduce traffic generation overall within the area and to help shift travel behaviour from a dependency on the car. Following the decision to close the remaining petro-chemical operations, Baglan Bay has emerged as a well located, brownfield site that can satisfy a substantial amount of the Port Talbot area’s housing needs.

- 9.13.2 The sites selected meet sustainability criteria, including minimising traffic generation and dependency on the car. It is important, however, that public transport, cycling and walking links and the ease and attractiveness of access to town centres are developed.
- 9.13.3 Supporting smaller communities is a key element of the Community Plan's Strategy. This is intended to help sustain the communities and other facilities. The selection of areas for inclusion within settlement limits has been heavily influenced by the ease of access to facilities. On occasion this has justified the identification of areas which while separate from the main settlement, are more accessible in terms of its facilities than other more distant parts of the settlement.
- 9.13.4 The sites (including existing commitments in the local plans and planning permissions) have been reassessed through the Sustainability Appraisal. As a result a number of sites have been omitted given the availability of land allocated for housing elsewhere, and the sites concerned performing poorly in terms of sustainability. The sites omitted include part of the Coalyard Row allocation at Bryn, part of Goytre Road, Goytre, Blaen Baglan Farm and other sites within the upper valley areas.

**Proposals will be considered against any of the Plan's policies that are relevant.**

**Useful starting points are: -**

**CHAPTER 8: ENVIRONMENT**

**Policy ENV8:** **A) Replacement dwellings; B) Conversions or re-use of buildings & C) Farm Diversification in the countryside.**

**Policy GC1:** **New Buildings, Structures & Changes of Use**

**Policy GC2:** **Engineering Works and Operations [Including Minerals and Waste]**

## **10 ECONOMY AND EMPLOYMENT**

### **10.1 CURRENT POSITION**

- 10.1.1 During the past three decades the economy of Neath Port Talbot has undergone major changes which have resulted in almost the complete cessation of underground coal mining (although a number of opencast sites are still being worked), major closures and rationalisation in the steel and petrochemical industries and the unwelcome impact of two major recessions in the early 1980's and 1990's. There is also the threat from globalisation of economies including low cost production in Eastern Europe and the prospect of a global slowdown during the early 2000's.
- 10.1.2 There were periods of growth in the mid to late 1980's and mid 1990's, led by an active regional policy, public investment in new infrastructure and the economic regeneration efforts of various agencies. In the steel industry, although jobs have been lost through improvements in productivity, actual output has increased. The recent £120 million investment in the Continuous Annealing Process Line at Port Talbot represents the largest single investment in the British steel industry in the last ten years, whilst the decision to replace No.5 Blast Furnace is a major commitment to the future of the works.
- 10.1.3 The economy today is much more diversified with light industry and the service sector replacing a diminishing though still vitally important heavy industrial sector. Some new inward investment has been secured from both the UK and overseas and indigenous growth has developed through the provision of infrastructure and business support services.
- 10.1.4 Non-traditional sectors, including tourism, the arts, media and cultural industries, are becoming increasingly important in the national economy and these sectors offer good growth prospects. The opportunities for growth in these sectors within the County Borough are excellent with recent investment in a number of projects to improve the tourist potential of the area. These include: a £500,000 investment over the next six years in the Afan Forest Park and its environs to provide a range of activity opportunities, including a centre for excellence in mountain biking, which will be an attraction for the niche activity market; the provision of the 'Cordell Trail' in the Neath Valley as part of the South West Wales Literary Trail; investment in hotel accommodation at Llandacy and Jersey Marine together with an accommodation project at Glyncorrwg as part of a programme involving Forest Enterprise to open up the area for local communities. Funding has also been made available to improve the quality of accommodation to be matched by private funding. Work is ongoing on a project to restore the canal system in the Neath valley which could be linked to the Swansea valley canal system as part of a project which has the potential to become a major tourist attraction. Margam Park has been enhanced by the construction of a light railway attraction, whilst the Orangery function rooms have seen a substantial increase in business. The Park has also received a £350,000 European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) grant to renovate the park gardens with a target of achieving 'Premier Gardens of Wales' status

within 5 years. Funding is also becoming available for the renovation of Margam Castle which stands within the Park.

## **10.2 CURRENT TRENDS AND ISSUES**

- 10.2.1 Neath Port Talbot has one of the lowest employment rates in Wales (Annual Local Area Employment Force Survey 2000 Data – Activity Rates) with only 62.4% of those of working age being economically active. Only Merthyr Tydfil and Blaenau Gwent had a lower rate at 58.8% and 60.3% respectively, with the Wales average being 74.4%. The primary causes are the decline of well paid jobs in manufacturing, including steel, chemicals, oil and engineering, together with the decline of coal adding to the problems of Valley communities. These problems have been recognised by the inclusion of the County Borough in the European Objective 1 area covering West Wales and the Valleys.
- 10.2.2 However unemployment is rising, widening the gap between local and national figures. Levels of youth unemployment, defined as those in the 16-24 age group, are of particular concern within Neath Port Talbot.
- 10.2.3 Many of the economic problems facing the County Borough result from the structural imbalance in the local economy: an over-dependence on a shrinking and low growth manufacturing sector; low levels of service employment, and an under representation of technology based and innovative companies.
- 10.2.4 Neath Port Talbot County Borough is still experiencing difficulty in attracting inward investment projects, despite the local offer available for projects having improved. There have been some new developments, in particular at Baglan Energy Park, where a new office development of 4,366 sq m (47,000 sq ft) is now available, and a Technium for Sustainable Technologies was completed ready for occupation in Summer 2005. In addition, increased regional funding programmes and improved business support services have helped make Neath Port Talbot an attractive place for mobile inward investment projects. The Council is an active partner in the Swansea Bay Partnership, a joint venture between Neath Port Talbot Council, the City and County of Swansea, Carmarthenshire Council and the WAG's Department of Enterprise, Innovation and Networks. The partnership is actively promoting this region as a location for inward investment. The new Technium Sustainable Technologies and the DEIN's ECM2 facility at Margam will enable more high tech/R&D companies to consider the County Borough as a location. A major new project for Neath Port Talbot is the construction of a paper mill at the Energy Park. The investment by the Italian Sofidel Group of £70m is expected to create up to 350 new jobs. It follows the construction of a gas-fired power station at Baglan by GE of America, which can provide cheaper energy to investors at the park. In the period April 2001 to March 2004, 503 new jobs have been created in Neath Port Talbot and 663 jobs safeguarded. Capital expenditure during this period was £90.3m.
- 10.2.5 The poverty associated with poor economic performance leads to a vicious self reinforcing cycle of unemployment, underachievement and welfare dependency which is difficult to break. This poverty induced exclusion from economic and

social opportunities is compounded in some of the County Borough's valley communities by physical isolation as society has become increasingly reliant on the private car.

- 10.2.6 The Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation clearly illustrates these problems. Of the forty-two electoral divisions, thirty-two are shown to be among the 40% most deprived in Wales. The three most deprived are Cymmer, Gwynfi and Sandfields West. Cymmer is the most deprived and ranks eighth out of 865 electoral divisions in Wales.
- 10.2.7 The Welsh Index indicates where the major social and economic problems exist within the area and has been used to target national and local resources, area based regeneration strategies and is a guiding force behind the Assembly Government Community First Programme. Neath Port Talbot has nine Community First Communities and one County Borough wide scheme.
- 10.2.8 The Authority is committed to a comprehensive regeneration programme for the physical environment and to maximising the contribution of regeneration activity to the economic development of Neath Port Talbot and the enhancement of quality of life for its residents. This programme includes the provision of economic infrastructure, area renewal, land reclamation, environmental improvements, town centre improvements and community regeneration initiatives.
- 10.2.9 Regeneration initiatives currently underway include:
- Baglan Bay Development including the Energy Park – major land reclamation and provision of site infrastructure undertaken with grant aid from DEIN. The Authority has constructed 2 large, prestige manufacturing units on the Park with the aid of the Assembly Government and European Funding. The Energy Park partners: BP, DEIN and NPTCBC will pursue further development of the site.
  - Port Talbot Town Centre – a comprehensive renewal programme has been undertaken throughout the town centre of Port Talbot, which has transformed the appearance of the town. The improvements have complemented and stimulated major private sector commercial investments in the town centre. The improvements have won a number of prestigious awards including Civic Trust recognition.
  - Llandarcy – regeneration proposals are being developed for an Urban Village on the former oil refinery site. A partnership has been formed to oversee the development of the project, which includes BP, Prince's Trust, DEIN and NPTCBC.
  - Aberafan Seafront – a strategy for the regeneration of the Aberfan Seafront has been adopted by the Authority and implementation of projects within the action plan is underway.

- 10.2.10 The Authority will continue its programme for the reclamation of derelict land in partnership with the DEIN, bringing new areas of land into beneficial use. A project for the demolition, reclamation and afteruse of Blast Furnace No. 3 within the Corus complex is currently being investigated.
- 10.2.11 An environmental strategy for Neath Town Centre has been adopted by the Authority and will be implemented over the next 5 years. The Action Plan includes environmental improvements to key areas of the town centre to enhance the appearance and function of the town.
- 10.2.12 The programme for regeneration forms a key element of the Authority's Economic Development Strategy.
- 10.2.13 The prospects for investment in the tourism industry are promising. The authority is pro-active in this area and monitors closely the prevailing trends in the industry particularly tourism activity and uses the STEAM (Scarborough Tourism Economic Activity Model) computer system to this end.

<b>STEAM Report 2000</b>		
Numeric Executive Summary		
<b>Analysis by Sector of Expenditure</b>		
(£'s millions)	<b>2000</b>	<b>1999</b>
Accommodation	2.1	2.3
Food and Drink	5.1	5.0
Recreation	1.2	1.2
Shopping	4.2	4.2
Transport	2.3	2.2
INDIRECT (excl VAT)	5.7	5.6
VAT	2.6	2.6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>23.2</b>	<b>23.3</b>
<b>Revenue by Category of Visitor</b>		
(£'s millions)	<b>2000</b>	<b>1999</b>
Serviced Accommodation	4.5	5.0
Non-Serviced Accommodation	0.6	0.6
SFR (staying with friends/relatives)	8.4	8.4
Day Visitors	9.8	9.2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>23.2</b>	<b>23.3</b>
<b>Tourist Numbers</b>		
(Thousands)	<b>2000</b>	<b>1999</b>
Serviced Accommodation	30	34
Non-Serviced Accommodation	4	3
SFR	213	214
Day Visitors	877	830
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,463</b>	<b>1,423</b>

## **10.3 STRATEGY**

- 10.3.1 The retention and creation of high quality employment is one of the key aims of the Plan. The Authority has put in place a sustainable strategy which aims to enable the economy to outpace national growth levels and permanently close the prosperity gap. The National Economic Development Strategy for Wales, with its target of 135,000 jobs to be created, will be of particular importance to local economy.
- 10.3.2 The availability of Objective 1 and Assisted Area Status monies and state aids are a vital opportunity for Neath Port Talbot's economic future although the area's Objective 1 designation underlines the serious state of the local economy.
- 10.3.3 The strategy aims to reduce social exclusion and help the local economy recover from the ravages of the last 10 years. The self-reinforcing cycle of underachievement, unemployment and welfare dependency has to be broken and the prosperity gap closed.
- 10.3.4 The strategic vision for the Authority area is to adopt policies that enable economic regeneration by bridging the transition between the declining industries on the coastal plain and new emerging industries. These include the Baglan Energy Park, Llandarcy Urban Village and Port Talbot's docks, and reinforcing the fragile economic and social infrastructure of our valley and urban communities by sustainable measures.
- 10.3.5 This will be achieved by focussing on:
- creating employment through encouraging local firms and attracting inward investment;
  - focussing the main sources of employment along the coastal belt;
  - providing a range of smaller key sites within the valley areas;
  - supporting innovative business proposals and firms using new technologies;
  - allowing in principle small scale business sites within and adjacent to settlements in order to encourage more sustainable urban and rural communities;
  - encouraging integrated cluster development opportunities where environmental benefits arise from co-location;
  - workforce training and skills development;
  - encouraging the diversification of the economic base; and
  - encouraging local indigenous businesses within the valley and rural communities

- 10.3.6 This aims to deliver a robust and vibrant economy capable of sustaining sufficient job opportunities for employment from all community groups including the socially disadvantaged and excluded, together with a wide range of high quality and well paid employment opportunities and a high quality education and training infrastructure which will allow residents to develop their full potential and will meet the workforce requirements of local employers.

## **10.4 PART 1 POLICIES**

### **POLICY 8**

**The main sources of employment will be concentrated along the coastal belt within the urban area of Jersey Marine – Neath – Port Talbot with strategically located business sites in the valley areas and other small businesses located to serve more local needs.**

### **POLICY 9**

**The diversification and strengthening of the local economy will be encouraged. Emphasis will be placed on helping farms diversify, tourism-related proposals, assisting the creation and growth of small and medium sized enterprises and in particular, those which seek to promote social inclusion and more environmentally sustainable practices.**

### **POLICY 10**

**The expansion or redevelopment of existing enterprises will wherever appropriate be encouraged.**

- 10.4.1 An adequate supply of land is identified to meet development needs in order to create the right conditions for economic prosperity. This will be well served by infrastructure and readily capable of development on a variety of sites.
- 10.4.2 In identifying the sites for employment the Authority has ensured that it can be responsive to the needs of industry by providing sites both for strategic employment opportunities together with those wishing to expand. The needs of smaller businesses will be met both in the allocations and where appropriate within settlement limits.
- 10.4.3 The identification of sites seeks to make the best use of available infrastructure and sites that are best located with regard to the needs of the developers and communities in order to contribute to sustainability through easy access.
- 10.4.4 The key sites are located mainly within the coastal belt along the M4 and the main public transport routes. They are complemented by smaller but nevertheless important sites sustaining town and valley communities. In terms of smaller communities, including those where the Welsh language is a significant factor, the creation and expansion of businesses will wherever appropriate be encouraged.
- 10.4.5 The Authority will support the creation of business serving the socially disadvantaged or disabled, and the co-location of innovative and green (eg focussing on the development of waste stream technologies) enterprises.

10.4.6 The creation of employment in the countryside is priority. The diversification and strengthening of the rural economy is addressed through the Environment chapter policies.

10.4.7 Proposals for the creation and enhancement of tourism enterprises and facilities will wherever appropriate be encouraged.

## **10.5 POLICY EC1 – EMPLOYMENT LANDBANK**

**The following sites are allocated for business, industry, storage, distribution and offices (financial and professional services).**

**All employment land in the following categories will be protected, and its loss to other uses will be resisted:**

- a) land allocated for employment development under Policy EC1;**
- b) land in existing employment use, provided that such use is lawful and that it does not constitute a non-conforming use which is also a ‘bad neighbour’ to neighbouring residential or other sensitive uses**

Reference	Site	Use Class	Hectares	
<b>Key Sites</b>			<b>2003</b>	
EC1/1+	Baglan Bay Development	A2,B1,B2 and B8	300	75
EC1/2*+*	Llandarcy Urban Village	A1,A2,A3,B1,B2,C3,D1 and D2	32	13
EC1/3+*	Jersey Marine	A2,B1,B2 and B8	36.3	48.8
EC1/4**+*	Port Talbot Docklands	A1,A2,B1,B2 and B8	140	82
EC1/5+*	Neath Abbey Wharf	A2, B1,B2 and B8	24	3.7
EC1/6+*	Glynneath Business Park	A2,B1,B2 and B8	13.8	8.3
EC1/7+*	Kenfig Industrial Estate	A2,B1,B2 and B8	37.4	2.9
<b>Other Sites</b>				
EC1/8	Neath Abbey Business Park	A2,B1,B2 and B8	3	3
EC1/9	Rheola	A2, B1 and B2	4.9	4.9
EC1/10	Nantycarf, Seven Sisters	A2,B1,B2 and B8	4.7	3.6

EC1/11+	Vale of Neath Supplier Park	A2,B1,B2 and B8	5.2	5.2
EC1/12	Former Blaenant Colliery	A2,B1,B2 and B8	2.4	2.4
EC1/13+	Baglan Industrial Park	A2,B1,B2 and B8	6.5	6.5
EC1/14+	Junction 38, Margam	A2,B1,B2 and B8	27.2	27.2
EC1/15	Croeserw Industrial Estate	A2,B1,B2 and B8	3.3	3.3
EC1/16***+	Glanrhdyd, Pontardawe	A2,B1,B2 and B8	6.6	6.6
EC1/17	Cwmgors Industrial Estate	A2,B1,B2 and B8	0.8	0.8
EC1/18	Abernant Colliery Site	A2,B1,B2 and B8	9.2	9.2
EC1/19+	Melincryddan, CMB Site	A2,B1,B2 and B8	11.2	11.2
EC1/20+	Former Dewhirst Factory Site, Ystalyfera	A2,B1,B2 and B8	1.5	1.5

\* *Retail to serve the needs of the Llandarcy Urban Village.*

\*\* *Edge of Centre Retail for Port Talbot*

\*\*\* *The potential to develop the Glanrhdyd site for alternative forms of employment through the Pontardawe Arena project will be considered*

Sites allocated for B2 uses also have potential for development relating to the collection, treatment, transfer and disposal of non hazardous waste.

Sites marked + in the table and with an \* on the Proposals Map, lie within areas identified in plans issued under TAN15: Development and Flood Risk as being at risk from flooding. The Authority has undertaken an assessment of the sites and is satisfied that sufficient of each allocation lies outside the extreme flood outline (Zone C) to enable development to proceed. It may be feasible to demonstrate that the parts of the sites within Zone C could be used for uses for which the consequences associated with flooding are acceptable. Developers of all sites identified (+) will be expected to undertake an assessment of the flooding consequences (a Flood Consequences Assessment) to accompany and justify their planning application in accordance with the guidance in the TAN.

#### *Explanatory Note to Schedule:*

*Class A1 Shops,*

*Class A2 Financial and Professional Services*

*Class A3 Food & Drink*

*Class C3 Dwelling Houses*

*Class D2 Assembly & Leisure*

*Class B1 Business*

*Class B2 General Industry*

*Class B8 Storage & Distribution*

*Class D1 Non Residential Institutions*

*Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987*

- 10.5.1 The plan's strategies including the need to follow sustainability principles have guided the selection of the sites. The sites will play a key role in improving the accessibility of a range of employment and influencing traffic generation. Previously developed sites and those with existing or committed infrastructure and good accessibility have been given preference. A business land bank of 320.2 hectares is identified, with 233.7 hectares located within the key sites at Baglan Bay Development Park, (which includes the Baglan Energy Park), the Llandarcy Urban Village Concept, Port Talbot Docklands, (which incorporates the Port Talbot Industrial Estate, Docklands and Tidal Harbour area), Jersey Marine, Neath Abbey Wharf, Glynneath Business Park and Kenfig Industrial Estate.
- 10.5.2 Key sites are defined as those large sites, located on or near the strategic transport corridors, which are serviced and available for immediate development and generally capable of satisfying the needs of major developers. Generally, the opportunity has been taken to promote the development of brownfield land which is or has the potential to be well served by rail or water.
- 10.5.3 The Baglan Bay Development (including the Energy Park) is a key regional employment site (see chapter 19). Within the allocation site, land should be set aside to accommodate the breeding of lapwings displaced from those areas to be developed.
- 10.5.4 The allocation at Llandarcy (see Chapter18) includes the provision of up to 30,000 square metres of B1 Uses. As part of the Urban Village concept a high proportion will be locally based employment. There will be an emphasis on encouraging the creation and expansion of small and medium sized enterprises.
- 10.5.5 The Port Talbot Docks comprise the Port Talbot Industrial Estate together with land fronting the Docks and the Tidal Harbour. Much of the land is vacant and underused at present. It provides a unique opportunity for a range of developments benefiting from the recently reopened extensive docks area and the new Peripheral Distributor Road (PDR) which will provide direct links to the M4. The site is close to the Port Talbot Town Centre which will profit economically from the regeneration of these sites.
- 10.5.6 The site at Jersey Marine, located near the County Borough's Materials Recovery and Energy Centre provides an opportunity for the development of an eco – park, where manufacturing and related processes could make use of materials produced by the MREC facility. The wet woodland area adjoining the northern boundary of the allocation with Crymlyn Bog should be incorporated into a landscape belt within the allocated area, in order to protect BAP Priority Habitat and species of local conservation interest.
- 10.5.7 Other business sites are identified which are well placed to serve more local employment needs and particularly the valley communities. Policies within the

plan allow for small industries within communities to help maintain and enhance sustainable communities.

- 10.5.8 The take up of industrial sites of over 0.5 Ha between the period 1996 to 2004 has averaged 8.3 Ha. per year. This has been mainly focussed on the key sites.
- 10.5.9 The need to accommodate enterprises, which due to their size, activities and emissions would not be suitable for locations within or near housing or other sensitive uses, has been taken into account. The suitability of a proposal for an individual location will be considered on its merits and in terms of the policies in the Environment Chapter. The creation of any pollutants will be closely monitored and assessed by the Environment Agency and the Authority.
- 10.5.10 Proposals which would require consent for hazardous substances (see Welsh Assembly Government Circular 20/01: "Planning Consent for Hazardous Substances") or be at or near sites where hazardous substances are present, will be considered in terms of policies in the Environment Chapter.
- 10.5.11 The Local Planning Authority will ensure that employment sites and buildings which exist or which are allocated in the Plan will be treated as a valuable and scarce resource. The use of allocated sites for other forms of development will be resisted as will the encroachment of dwellings and other sensitive uses which could constrain the potential of an employment site.
- 10.5.12 The Local Planning Authority has considered whether Simplified Planning Zone (SPZ) schemes are desirable in the area. A Simplified Planning Zone is one way in which an Authority can help secure development or redevelopment of part of its area without the delay incurred in determining planning applications for successive stages of development. The Authority is satisfied that the selection of sites in this policy together with the priority given to employment creating proposals when dealing with applications, makes the use of SPZ's unnecessary. The plan monitoring process will review the desirability of the need for creating SPZ's.
- 10.5.13 Design, layout and other issues relating to a proposal will be considered in terms of other relevant policies and in particular policy GC1 in the Environment Chapter.

## **10.6 POLICY EC2 – EXTENSIONS TO INDUSTRIAL / BUSINESS PREMISES**

**Proposals for the redevelopment, intensification and expansion of existing industrial and business premises will be permitted unless unacceptable impacts on local amenities, existing industrial and commercial activities, townscape, landscape, biodiversity or highway safety are created.**

- 10.6.1 The County Borough Council is eager to encourage the expansion of local businesses and their contribution to the local economy, especially where they are located adjacent to existing or disused railways or docks.

- 10.6.2 Where proposals would be likely to create impacts on the natural and built environment or create pollution, noise, disturbance, amenity, hazard, highway or traffic generation concerns, they will be considered in terms of the specific policies contained in the Environment and Transport chapters.
- 10.6.3 Proposals located outside Settlement Limits and Business allocations will also be specifically considered in terms of Environment policies ENV1, GC1 and if located within a Green Wedge policy ENV2.

**10.7 POLICY EC3 – CREATION OR EXPANSION OF BUSINESSES WITHIN SETTLEMENT LIMITS**

**Within Settlement Limits (as defined on the Proposals Map) the creation or expansion of business, industrial, storage or office premises will be encouraged subject to the following criteria:**

- a) there would be no unacceptable loss of open or green space that is important for its recreational, amenity or conservation value;
- b) proposals either individually or in combination with existing commitments would not create unacceptable impacts on existing or programmed infrastructure;
- c) there would not be a significant detrimental effect on the amenity of the existing residents of the area; and
- d) there would be no unacceptable highway impacts.

- 10.7.1 The encouragement of small business development within communities will provide economic benefits and help to maintain sustainable communities including those where the Welsh language is an important consideration. The settlement limits have taken account of this policy. The use of vacant, derelict or unsightly buildings for business uses will complement regeneration initiatives. Impacts on local amenity, highway safety and the natural and built environment will be judged against the policies in the Environment Chapter of the plan.
- 10.7.2 The policy is intended to address the needs of smaller enterprises locating within a community. Where a proposal would cause concern in terms of generating significant traffic this would be considered in relation to policies in the Transport Chapter

**10.8 POLICY EC4 – FINANCIAL AND PROFESSIONAL USES**

**Proposals for financial and professional service uses in Victoria Gardens, London Road, and Gnoll Park Road in Neath and Upper Talbot Road in Port Talbot (as indicated on the Proposals Map) will be favourably considered.**

10.8.1 Financial and professional uses are important sources of employment and contribute to the vitality, attractiveness and viability of town centres. Often they do not require a retail location or frontage but need to be well located to meet the needs of clients and reduce the need to travel. Similarly there may be scope within such areas for uses outside the finance and professional services Use Class, such as dentists, chiropodists, chiropractors etc., which have a relatively low turnover of clientele and require limited floorspace. However any such applications will be treated on their own merits and against the criteria contained in Policy GC1. The policy identifies areas within Neath and Port Talbot suitable for such development.

## **10.9 POLICY EC5 – EMPLOYMENT WITHIN THE COUNTRYSIDE**

**The development of a small-scale employment-generating rural enterprise will be permitted in the countryside adjoining a rural settlement provided:**

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- a) the design, scale and siting of the new development does not create unacceptable harm to the character or appearance of the settlement, its setting or the surrounding landscape;
- b) no unacceptable impacts on the amenities of nearby residents or other land users, highway safety or traffic generation would be created;
- c) the proposal would not create unacceptable harm to biodiversity, or result in the unavoidable loss of agricultural land of grades 1, 2 and 3a;
- d) the proposal would create a long term economic and employment benefit for the local community; and
- e) it could not be accommodated within a local settlement, and would not conflict with policies ENV1 or 2.

**In forestry locations, the development of small-scale forest-based employment enterprises directly arising from forestry practices or which are necessary to meet the needs of forestry practices will be permitted, subject to the above criteria.**

10.9.1 This policy seeks to address proposals for small scale rural enterprises which cannot be accommodated within defined Settlement Limits, the vacant sites of existing premises (covered by policy EC2) or allocated business parks. The enterprises should be able to sustain themselves financially, clearly related to the need and resources of the local community and not create unacceptable impacts. Proposals located on the fringe of the larger urban areas are likely to be unacceptable in that the uses could be accommodated within the urban area or allocations without resulting in a loss of countryside. This form of proposal would be inappropriate within a Green Wedge (policy ENV2).

## **10.10 POLICY EC6 – WORKING FROM HOME**

**Proposals to use any part of a dwelling, its curtilage or a building ancillary to a dwelling for business use (A2/B1) will be permitted where: -**

- a) the primary use of the building as a dwelling is not materially altered; and**
  - b) the proposal would not cause unacceptable impacts on local amenities, highway safety or parking.**
- 10.10.1 The Authority recognises that working patterns are changing. Developments in Information Technology and telecommunications are making it easier to work from home, and more people wish to integrate their work with their home lives. This may necessitate the creation of a formal working environment in the home or an ancillary building on a scale which is not incidental to residential use and which would require planning permission.
- 10.10.2 The Authority will seek to ensure that the scale and intensity of such operations and their effect on adjacent properties including amenity, traffic and parking are acceptable. The criteria contained in the Environment and Transport chapters will be a consideration in assessing any proposals.

## **10.11 POLICY EC7 – CRITERIA FOR CONSIDERATION OF PROPOSALS FOR TOURISM FACILITIES AND ATTRACTIONS**

**New or extended tourism facilities and attractions including hotels and other visitor accommodation will be permitted provided:-**

- a) the development is not located in the countryside unless it can be shown that it is directly related to an appropriate countryside, leisure or recreational activity and would not conflict with Policy ENV2;**
  - b) the design scale and siting of the new development does not create unacceptable harm to the character or appearance of the settlement, its setting or the surrounding landscape;**
  - c) unacceptable impacts on the amenities of nearby residents or other land users, highway safety or traffic generation would be created;**
  - d) the proposal would not create unacceptable harm to biodiversity, or result in the unavoidable loss of agricultural land of grades 1, 2 and 3a; and**
  - e) it could not be accommodated within a local settlement.**
- 10.11.1 The Authority is committed to the encouragement of tourism and an improvement in tourist facilities, maximising the economic and employment benefits, promoting geographical and seasonal spread and encouraging the

development of non-traditional destinations, while safeguarding the environment, and the interests of local communities.

- 10.11.2 Tourism comprises a range of different, but interdependent activities and operations. They have close links with sport, entertainment, the arts and other recreation and leisure activities, which are considered in other chapters. It makes a major contribution to the Welsh economy, provides employment in a wide variety of occupations and can bring benefits to local economies and communities in urban and rural areas.
- 10.11.3 Provision of tourist facilities provides a means of strengthening and adding variety to the economy, creating employment opportunities, and enhancing conditions both for the local community and visitors. Proposals should include arrangements for traffic and visitor management to minimise adverse impacts. Where proposals for tourist accommodation are approved in the countryside, conditions will be imposed to ensure that they are used only for tourism purposes and not residential use.
- 10.11.4 Neath Port Talbot straddling the M4 corridor, a main tourist route to West Wales and Ireland, is situated in a unique position to positively benefit from the provision of tourist facilities. It could provide an ideal base for tourists to visit the many attractions both within and outside the County Borough area. The Pontneddfechan area to the north of Glynneath provides a gateway to the Brecon Beacons National Park. The Afan valley's potential as a major forest and countryside recreation and tourist area based on the Afan Forest Park is being realised. The Mountain Bike trails and facilities based in Afan Argoed and Glyncorwg will be of national significance.
- 10.11.5 It is important to ensure that proposals are not located in an unsuitable position that would adversely affect the existing environment. The criteria contained in the Environment chapter will be a consideration in assessing any proposals.
- 10.11.6 Proposals located within the Countryside will be specifically assessed in terms of policies ENV1, ENV8, and GC1. Proposals located within a Green Wedge will be inappropriate unless they comply with policy ENV2. All proposals should favour previously developed in accordance with policy ENV13.

## **10.12 SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL SUMMARY**

- 10.12.1 The sites (including existing commitments in the Local Plans and planning permissions) have been assessed through the Sustainability Appraisal.
- 10.12.2 A number of sites have been omitted reflecting the availability of land allocated for industry elsewhere, and the sites' poor performance in terms of sustainability. The sites omitted include the Margam Contingency Site; Copperminers (Cwmafan); Aberdulais; Cadoxton; Abergarwed; Crynant; Pontardawe Industrial Estate; Gwilym Road, Cwmllynfell; Glanyrafon (Ystalyfera) and Dyffryn (Afan Valley). The allocation at Abernant, Cwmgors has been reduced in size. The Glanyrafon, Dyffryn and Copperminers sites have been identified in terms of residential use.

10.12.3 Emphasis is placed on the encouragement of small and medium sized enterprises to meet the needs of the local communities. The expansion of existing industrial and business enterprises into adjacent countryside, and the creation of small such enterprises adjacent to villages is allowed subject to complying with the policies. Care will be needed in operating these “exception” policies and their effectiveness and impacts will be monitored on a yearly basis as part of the annual monitoring report. The diversification of the rural economy is supported through the Environment chapter. The approach to Tourism encourages the industry while taking account of the countryside and accessibility.

**Proposals will be considered against any of the Plan's policies that are relevant.**

**Useful starting points are: -**

**CHAPTER 8: ENVIRONMENT**

**Policy ENV8:**      **A) Replacement dwellings; B) Conversions or re-use of buildings & C) Farm Diversification in the countryside.**

**Policy GC1:**      **New Buildings, Structures & Changes of Use**

**Policy GC2:**      **Engineering Works and Operations  
[Including Minerals and Waste]**

## **11 COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

### **11.1 CURRENT POSITION**

- 11.1.1 Planning decisions have far reaching and long lasting impacts on the community and groups within a community. Community and social issues are a legitimate concern when preparing the UDP, and taking decisions on applications. Not only should undesirable effects be resisted, but the opportunity taken to secure benefits for the community.
- 11.1.2 Having placed moving towards sustainable development as a key task of the planning system, the Assembly Government expects local planning authorities to take social considerations fully into account alongside economic and environmental ones. The Human Rights Act imposes rights and duties in terms of protecting the rights of individuals which have to be taken into account in all planning decisions.
- 11.1.3 The Authority is increasingly seeking to focus on the needs and aspirations of our communities, and this is expressed in the Community Plan. This reflects both County-Borough wide issues and those relating to each of the 14 "locality" areas which have been selected as representing local communities. Defining local communities can be difficult. Depending on their interests, family, ethnic and social ties, people living in the same street may feel that they belong to differing communities. This is particularly the case in urban areas where there is a turnover of population.
- 11.1.4 Society may be becoming more global and cosmopolitan, but people still relate predominantly to their immediate neighbourhoods and in many instances two or three streets close to their home. This sense of place is valued and initiatives encouraging people to come forward as leaders or "champions" in their neighbourhoods help maintain local initiatives and accountability within communities.
- 11.1.5 The County Borough's population of some 134,400 (Revised 2001 Census) has been experiencing a gradual decline for several decades, and as a result is ageing. The County Borough has experienced relatively low levels of in and out migration. In common with other valley Authorities the population is made up of a comparatively high proportion of people who were born within the area (89.2% in 2001) As a result, many communities retain close family and social ties.
- 11.1.6 This is not the case everywhere, and areas of new housing which have attracted newcomers and areas of rented accommodation may have more mobile populations with fewer ties within the area.
- 11.1.7 Neath Port Talbot contains 31,842 people of over 60 years of age, some 38,424 persons with a long term illness of which approximately half are of pensionable age or older.
- 11.1.8 Community development work is well developed and extensive throughout the County Borough. It is carried out by a range of organisations including the Authority, Health Trusts, and the voluntary sector through the Neath Port

Talbot Council for Voluntary Services. This work is co-ordinated through the Community Plan and its partnerships and initiatives. Particular efforts are being made in terms of the disabled; children and youth; the elderly; those excluded from playing their full role as a result of poverty or discrimination, and reducing crime and alcohol and drug related issues. These problems can be worsened where small communities are isolated and located some distance from facilities.

- 11.1.9 The Welsh Assembly Government's Communities First programme is based on the need to prioritise communities on the basis of social and economic needs. The following communities are being tackled: -

**Port Talbot:** Sandfields East and West

**Afan Valley:** Gwynfi, Glyncorwg, Cymmer and Brynbryddan and Penllyn in Cwmafan

**Neath:** Neath East, Briton Ferry West, Fairyland and Pelenna

**Dulais Valley:** Seven Sisters and Onllwyn

**Amman Valley:** Brynamman

**Swansea Valley:** Ystalyfera and part of Pantteg.

- 11.1.10 This reflects a similar approach by other Community Plan partners. For instance, the Forestry Commission have selected woodlands adjacent to Glyncorwg and Seven Sisters for priority community involvement. The Communities First Programme is seen as leading the way in giving local communities the power to influence the decisions of the Authority and other partners as part of the Community Plan process.

- 11.1.11 The fact that the whole of the County Borough has been included in the Objective 1 Programme area reflects the economic problems which the area faces. Raising skill levels and confidence within communities is an important part of the programme and within Neath Port Talbot a range of initiatives are being developed including the provision of well equipped adult learning centres in 13 communities.

- 11.1.12 A particular characteristic within communities in Wales is the Welsh language. While some 20.5% of the people in Wales speak Welsh, many form minorities within the urban communities of South Wales. Largely in the North and West of the country the language remains a significant feature of community life. Within these communities impacts on the language are important considerations which have to be taken into account when planning decisions are being taken.

- 11.1.13 The Neath Port Talbot area straddles the boundary between communities where the language is a significant feature of community life and is spoken by a considerable proportion of the population and the more anglicised areas to the east and in the coastal belt.

- 11.1.14 The language is particularly a feature of the communities within the Swansea Valley. Across the area from Trebanos to Ystalyfera and Rhos to Gwaun cae Gurwen the percentage of speakers is consistently high (ranging from 28.6% to 68.2%). In the communities from Cwmgors through Gwaun cae Gurwen, Lower Brynamman, Cwmllynfell, and Lower Cwmtwrch to Ystalyfera the proportion of Welsh speakers is particularly high in terms of Wales as a whole.
- 11.1.15 Other communities within which Welsh speakers form a significant part of the population include the Dulais Valley (21.1% - 29.7%), Glynneath (23.1%), and Cwmafan and Bryn 20.1% and Tonmawr and Pontrhydyfen ( 21.7%).
- 11.1.16 Within the County Borough area Menter Amman Tawe, based in Gwaun cae Gurwen and funded by the Welsh Language Board, carries out a range of initiatives and projects to promote the use of the Welsh Language. It also coordinates applications for grant aid towards bilingual adverts and signs on behalf of the Welsh Tourist Board.

## **11.2 CURRENT TRENDS AND ISSUES**

- 11.2.1 Sources of employment, leisure, health care and shopping have changed dramatically over recent decades with the creation of regional, and out of town facilities. This has led to travel patterns becoming more complex and involving longer distances. This has weakened community links within existing settlements and discouraged their creation in areas of new housing or of rapid change of occupants.
- 11.2.2 The gradual decline in Neath Port Talbot's population over recent decades continues to pose problems in terms of sustaining facilities and services ranging from schools and chapels to shops and bus services. This is particularly apparent within valley and village communities. It also has a less obvious but significant effect on the availability of facilities within the urban areas which also serve the whole of the County Borough. The recent upturn in population is caused by in-migration and it is not yet clear whether this trend will continue nor the extent to which it will impact on these issues.
- 11.2.3 The loss of facilities and services as a result of factors including market forces or a reduction in population can lead to communities being impoverished. This can contribute to greater use of the car, increased levels of social exclusion and out migration. As a result of the population slowly ageing, the needs of the elderly and disabled need to be given particular emphasis.
- 11.2.4 New development, ranging from new housing to the creation of new shopping facilities, can offer the potential to address existing problems and deficiencies. This could relate to the whole of a community, or sections of the community including the disabled, elderly, children and young people and those who are socially excluded or discriminated against. As is explained in the Housing Chapter, the County Borough may experience lower levels of building and development activity, at least early in the plan period. This means that particular care is needed to make the best use of existing resources, and to ensure that new development contributes to addressing social and community needs.

- 11.2.5 Careful consideration must be given when considering development sites and their design and access. Development which results in car-dependency is not sustainable. Such developments in addition to creating traffic and pollution can lead to social exclusion for those suffering from poverty and who do not have access to a car or public transport.
- 11.2.6 The provision of health care, education (and adult or life-long learning), leisure, sport and recreation and other support services and community facilities is critical to the quality of life in our communities. Equally important is addressing crime and disorder and alcohol and drug related problems.
- 11.2.7 The County Borough through the Community Plan and its work at a "locality" level, and particularly the Communities First programme, is seeking to assess the adequacy of provision and the needs and aspirations of local communities. This will increasingly feed into and advise the planning process when proposals are being considered and policies included in this plan are revised. Initial feedback from the Communities First consultation programme is that the emerging key social concerns are: -
- transport and access to employment, sport and leisure, shopping and health care;
  - facilities for young people and the anti-social behaviour that results from the lack of them;
  - creation of local jobs and the future for local businesses;
  - crime and disorder, and the need for local policing;
  - proper maintenance of highways; and
  - provision of communal facilities including community halls.
- 11.2.8 Individual developments could potentially have wide ranging impacts on the local community. For example, direct impacts of a large new housing development could include increased demands on existing facilities. Indirect impacts could include an increase in local traffic and pollution, or impacts on the amenities and character of an area. In turn, a development could influence the attractiveness of a community to existing residents, newcomers and inward investment. As with any other impacts created by a development it may be appropriate to consider whether they could be adequately mitigated against through for instance alternative locations, designs or the provision of facilities.
- 11.2.9 New development has both the potential to reinvigorate Welsh language communities and to cause damage that may be temporary or more long lasting. New housing or employment development on an appropriate scale may provide a reason for people to stay or choose to live in the community. It could also result in an increase in the use of English being used in the community to an extent that a significant shift in the use of the language occurs.

### **11.3 STRATEGY**

- 11.3.1 The County Borough's strategy, as set out in the Community Plan, is to stabilise its level of population and support individual communities. This is intended to help sustain them and address the need for new and improved facilities and services. It would also help address the needs of groups within communities.
- 11.3.2 The County Borough's town, district, local and village centres play a central role in serving our communities (including leisure, business, health and education) and as a focus for the community. The Town Centres, Retail and Leisure Chapter identifies the differing roles of the centres. Proposals for activities which are important to the community and should be easily accessible should be located within such centres. If this is not feasible they should be well located in terms of being accessible by the whole community and reducing the generation of traffic. They will be the subject of a "sequential" approach as set out in the Retail policies.
- 11.3.3 Certain types of development serving particular groups within the community (such as the elderly or disabled) need to be well located near facilities and with safe and easy access. As the area's population ages these issues should be given a higher priority. They will be taken fully into account when proposals and programmes are being prepared and considered.
- 11.3.4 Proposals that would result in the loss of facilities that play a key role in the community will be resisted. This will also be addressed through the Town Centres, Retail and Leisure Chapter policies.
- 11.3.5 The plan will protect communities and groups within communities from proposals which would be likely to have unacceptable impacts on them, including their quality of life and health impacts.
- 11.3.6 Where there are likely to be significant impacts on communities in which the Welsh language is a significant feature of community life, a specific assessment of the linguistic impacts will be required.
- 11.3.7 With regard to the Welsh language, the Council believes that the most effective way of sustaining these communities is to ensure that there is sufficient land within the settlement limits to allow new house building and industrial and commercial development to meet the communities' needs. This is addressed through the Community and Settlement strategy and the allocations made in the Housing and Employment chapters. Advertisements can have a powerful influence on the visual character and identity of a community and the consideration of advertisements within Welsh language communities is addressed under policy ENV26.
- 11.3.8 When considering planning issues social, economic and environmental issues may be in conflict. The preparation of this plan included a Sustainability Appraisal which sets out any conflicts in order that they can be understood and better considered. In a similar way when individual proposals or policies are being considered social considerations should be fully assessed and balanced against any potential benefits and impacts.

- 11.3.9 The impacts of planning decisions will be monitored through the Community Plan process. This will include localised impacts on individual locality areas and also wider ranging impacts (for instance on health or crime related issues).
- 11.3.10 Proposals for the provision of infrastructure (including new community facilities) will also be considered in relation to the policies set out in the Infrastructure and Energy, and Environment chapters.

#### **11.4 PART 1 POLICY**

##### **POLICY 11**

**Social needs and aspirations of communities and groups within communities will be taken fully into account when planning applications are considered.**

- 11.4.1 Meeting social needs and aspirations and avoiding unacceptable harm to communities are key elements in terms of Sustainability. They will be balanced against economic and environmental interests when planning decisions are taken. The Authority will seek to ensure that social and community issues are identified and fully considered.
- 11.4.2 Supplementary Planning Guidance to assist in the preparation and the consideration of proposals will be prepared.

#### **11.5 POLICY CS1 – COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES**

**Proposals that would be likely to create unacceptable impacts on existing and programmed community facilities and services will be resisted.**

- 11.5.1 Proposals for development can have significant effects upon the community where development is proposed. Where proposals would create an unacceptable impact on existing and programmed infrastructure and community facilities they may be resisted, or phased until this is overcome. Planning obligations may provide a means to overcome obstacles which might otherwise prevent planning permission from being granted.

#### **11.6 POLICY CS2 – WELSH LANGUAGE**

**Proposals which would be likely to have a significant impact on the linguistic character of a community in the Swansea, Amman and Twrch valleys will be expected to include a linguistic impact assessment and include any appropriate measures to mitigate any adverse effects. Within the Swansea, Amman and Twrch Valleys, a housing proposal that would provide 10 or more dwellings will normally be regarded as sufficient to justify the preparation of a linguistic impact assessment. This will include proposals to develop a part of a site that would be capable of delivering more housing than that proposed (and would be above the threshold) or**

**could form part of a more substantial site which would in its totality be likely to be above the threshold.**

- 11.6.1 Within this area focusing on the Upper Swansea Valley the Welsh language is a significant feature of community life. When proposals might have a significant impact on the language in the community including the attraction of non-Welsh speakers through new housing, a linguistic impact assessment will be required. This should not focus exclusively on linguistic issues, but should set them in the context of other issues which the community is facing. Supplementary Planning Guidance will be prepared to assist developers.
- 11.6.2 Such an assessment should identify:
- (i) the extent that Welsh is a feature in the community;
  - (ii) the impacts on Welsh language schools and nursery schools and the likelihood of them being able to accommodate the impacts satisfactorily;
  - (iii) the likely impacts on the linguistic character of the community;
  - (iv) any appropriate mitigation measures;
  - (v) issues in the community including whether the proposal would help sustain facilities and services which may be under threat.

## **11.7 SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL SUMMARY**

- 11.7.1 In terms of almost any planning proposal, the three key strands of sustainability: economic, environmental and social are likely to be in conflict. The chapter aims to ensure that social and community issues are identified and taken fully into account when proposals are considered.
- 11.7.2 The policies have been considered in terms of their consistency and the extent to which they address the UDP's Vision and Strategy and have found to be acceptable.

**Proposals will be considered against any of the Plan's policies that are relevant.**

**Useful starting points are: -**

**CHAPTER 8: ENVIRONMENT**

**Policy ENV8:**      **A) Replacement dwellings; B) Conversions or re-use of buildings & C) Farm Diversification in the countryside.**

**Policy GC1:**      **New Buildings, Structures & Changes of Use**

**Policy GC2:**      **Engineering Works and Operations  
[Including Minerals and Waste]**

## **12 TRANSPORT**

### **12.1 CURRENT POSITION**

- 12.1.1 The majority of the County Borough's population and economic activity is concentrated within the coastal belt through which run the key transport arteries. By contrast the remainder of the County is rural with a number of small communities spread out along the valleys. Over the County Borough as a whole some 40% of households do not own or have direct access to a car. This figure rises in the more rural areas.
- 12.1.2 Neath Port Talbot is the Highway Authority responsible for the majority of transport and highway issues in the Plan area, while the Assembly Government is responsible for motorways and trunk roads. The Neath Port Talbot Local Transport Plan sets out the Authority's detailed proposals for developing an integrated transport strategy over a five year period and forms the basis for bids to central Government and European Union Funds.

#### Infrastructure

- 12.1.3 The M4 motorway follows the coastal belt and is part of the Trans European Road Network between Europe and Ireland. On a more local level it provides the only effective east-west road link across the County Borough.
- 12.1.4 The A465 (Heads of the Valleys) trunk road runs north-east following the Neath Valley from Llandarcy to Hirwaun. It is an increasingly important part of the South Wales trunk road system and the main connection to the Midlands and the north of England. There are a number of "A" classified roads which form essential links between communities especially those running down the valleys to Port Talbot, Neath and Swansea. A number of cross-valley links are also of particular importance linking Neath, Pontardawe and Ammanford, Port Talbot and Maesteg, Crynant and Ystradgynlais, and Glynneath with Banwen and Abercrae.
- 12.1.5 Running parallel with the M4 Motorway is the main South Wales railway line linking Fishguard, Swansea and Paddington. Inter-city stations serve the towns of Neath and Port Talbot, while a local train service, Swanline, serves the smaller coastal communities with smaller stations on the mainline at Skewen, Briton Ferry and Baglan. The Neath, Dulais and Amman valleys retain single-track rail freight services which primarily transport coal and aggregates. Other freight lines serve Swansea Docks via Jersey Marine and the River Neath wharfs.
- 12.1.6 For an area with a relatively short coastline (of some 16 kilometres), Neath Port Talbot makes a very significant contribution in terms of shipping. Apart from the tidal harbour at Port Talbot, the docks in the town reopened in 2000 whilst the River Neath has commercial wharfs at Baglan, Briton Ferry and Neath Abbey. Port Talbot is of national importance with the deep-water harbour being 4th in the UK in terms of size of ships it can handle.
- 12.1.7 The Neath, Tennant and Swansea Canals are currently only available for navigation in part, but form part of a potential network of canals which offer

great tourism and leisure opportunities. They are considered further in the Recreation and Open Space chapter.

#### Rights of Way

- 12.1.8 Public Rights of Way (PROW) comprise a significant element in the local highway network and provide an opportunity to provide sustainable means of transport on foot, bicycle and horseback. Whilst the primary use of these paths is for recreation they are also important for local access. The County Borough has a duty to keep its PROW in good order and undertakes a rolling programme of path improvement schemes, partly grant aided by CCW, including Rights of Way Improvement Plans to be made under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. Within the programme, the value of paths for recreation, leisure and everyday access is given priority.

#### Vehicular Traffic and Traffic Management

- 12.1.9 The Network Management Plan of Traffic Flows for 1998 shows that the highest flows are on the M4 Motorway and A465 trunk road, although, the amount of traffic on the A465 between Neath and Glynneath drops significantly. The most heavily trafficked County Road is the A483 Fabian Way connecting Port Talbot and Neath with Swansea.
- 12.1.10 There are a number of specified HGV routes and routes with lorry weight restrictions primarily within the urban areas. They are identified for safety and amenity in residential areas and to encourage the free flow of freight traffic.
- 12.1.11 A programme of work is underway to enhance road safety and quality of life and this includes the creation of safe residential, leisure and shopping areas through pedestrianisation, traffic calming and environmental improvements.

#### Public Transport

##### Rail & Bus

- 12.1.12 The County Borough is well served by a comprehensive network of bus services. This includes local town buses, a high quality Neath-Port Talbot link and routes serving the valley communities.
- 12.1.13 Whilst Port Talbot has a centrally located bus station, services in Neath terminate both at the railway station and Victoria Gardens. Pontardawe although an important hub in the Swansea Valley bus system, relies on two bus stops as interchange facilities.

##### Park and Ride

- 12.1.14 A Park and Ride service in Neath links the shopping centre with the railway station car park.

### Freight

- 12.1.15 Currently HGVs and vans account for approximately 5% and 10% respectively of the traffic on the County Borough's roads. Road haulage will continue to dominate the movement of freight because of ease of access, distribution and low cost of loading and unloading facilities, economies over short distances and direct control of deliveries. Rail freight serving the area focuses mainly on port related and mineral traffic, while shipping has become more important with the reopening of the Port Talbot docks.

### Parking

- 12.1.16 The Authority seeks to balance the needs of shoppers and workers with those of local residents. Parking provision in Neath focuses on the multi-storey car park, the long stay car park at the railway station and the Morrisons store car park. This is supplemented by short-term pay and display car parking which is largely focused around the Civic Centre, and on-street parking. In Port Talbot, the multi-storey car park and the surface car park behind Station road provide the bulk of the provision. Pontardawe is well served by surface car parks in and to the rear of Herbert Street.

### Walking and Cycling

- 12.1.17 The pedestrianisation of the town centres of Neath and Port Talbot have enabled shoppers and visitors to walk around in a clean and safe environment. Proposals to improve access to the town centres for people with impaired mobility will be supported in principle, and made where appropriate.
- 12.1.18 The Authority is working in partnership with a variety of bodies to provide various schemes to improve walking facilities in the Borough. These include proposals for improvements to the towpaths along the canals and improved access to the countryside. The Authority has constructed and promoted "family orientated" sections of cycleway at Aberafan Promenade, Margam Park and the Neath Canal towpath between Briton Ferry and Aberdulais which complement established routes such as the Afan Argoed, Goytre / Bryn and Pontardawe / Ystalyfera cycleways.

## **12.2 CURRENT TRENDS AND ISSUES**

- 12.2.1 Against a background of traffic growth there is increased concern about the environmental effects of traffic pollution and the impact of new road building on the environment. The UK has set a target to cut carbon dioxide emissions by 20% by 2010 (Climate Change: The UK Programme, DETR, 2000). Carbon Dioxide from road transport is the fastest growing contribution to climate change and a switch from car to public transport, walking and cycling can help meet this target. Encouraging a shift of journeys from cars to public transport, bicycles and walking can also help to achieve a reduction in road traffic and congestion levels.

- 12.2.2 Traffic growth in the County Borough continues to rise at a rate of approximately 5 % per annum (source LTP). This has put an increasing strain on the road network, particularly within urban areas. There is localised congestion in the town centres but generally the most serious occurrence of congestion is on the M4. Local traffic has a big impact because of the lack of suitable alternative highways although this should be addressed in the east of the County Borough through the construction of the Port Talbot PDR. Congestion on main routes often leads to an undesirable increase in the volume of traffic using side streets through adjacent residential areas.
- 12.2.3 Both nationally and locally, there has been a considerable increase in the volume and proportion of heavy goods carried by road and a decline in the use of rail facilities. The UK Government has set a target to increase the amount of freight moved by rail in the UK by 80% by 2010. The lack of any freight transfer facilities in the South West of Wales is distinctly disadvantageous to the region. The deep sea harbour at Port Talbot together with the main line railway, the M4 Motorway and the A465 trunk road suggest that the County Borough is an ideal location for such a transfer facility. Proposals are currently being assessed with the assistance of the DEIN and the potential for a site adjacent to Port Talbot Docks has been identified.
- 12.2.4 Neath Port Talbot's Local Air Quality Strategy, "Air Wise – The Way Forward to Cleaner Air", sets out the Council's strategic policy for achieving cleaner air in partnership with the whole community and Taibach/Margam has been declared an Air Quality Management Area.
- 12.2.5 The Road Traffic Reduction Act (1997) requires the Local Authority to report on existing levels of traffic on local roads, provide a forecast of expected growth for the County and identify targets for dealing with the level of local road traffic or its rate of growth.

### **12.3 STRATEGY**

- 12.3.1 The Authority's strategy is to achieve an integrated and comprehensive transport system. The need to reduce dependence upon the car, and encourage alternative modes of travel which have less environmental impact is a major commitment. The provision of a good public transport network will help address congestion, maintain the roles of town and district centres, and improve access to services for non-car owners, particularly those living in more rural parts of the County Borough.
- 12.3.2 All transport proposals should be sensitive to the natural and built environment and the local quality of life. Some (mainly larger) schemes will be the subject of a detailed Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and proposals for major developments will be expected to be accompanied by a Transport Assessment in order to fully consider the impacts, benefits and implications for sustainability.
- 12.3.3 In considering all transport proposals the Council will take into account: the needs of the mobility impaired; reducing the need to travel especially by car;

promoting the use of walking, cycling and public transport; improving safety, and ensuring the transport network is as user friendly as possible.

- 12.3.4 Facilities for bus services including interchanges, bus stations and stops will be improved. Bus and/or rail based park and ride schemes will be encouraged where they can make a genuine contribution to reducing the use of the car. Better passenger, rail freight services and shipping will be encouraged in order to improve public transport links, aid economic revitalisation and to promote the transfer of freight from road to rail.
- 12.3.5 Road improvement and traffic management schemes that contribute to the integrated strategy, the Authority's settlement and transport strategy and reduce congestion and pollution will be promoted. Local traffic calming will be encouraged in established neighbourhood areas and incorporated in the design and layout of new developments to improve the street environment and road safety.
- 12.3.6 The Authority will encourage shorter journeys to be made by walking and cycling. In order to encourage walking as a healthy and sustainable mode of travel, the Council will seek to ensure that a variety of facilities are within easy walking distance of people's homes. Specific measures to assist pedestrians and cyclists will be promoted on existing highways and in the design of existing and new developments with an emphasis on safety and security considerations. The Authority will continue with its policy of pedestrianising streets and preserving and enhancing the rights of way network. Cycling will be promoted as an important and beneficial mode of travel for both local travel and leisure by providing and improving a range of facilities on and off the road network
- 12.3.7 The Authority will seek to ensure that developments are easily accessible by the whole community. It will seek to balance making the most effective use of land against the need to ensure highway and pedestrian safety and to safeguard amenity and quality of life.
- 12.3.8 The Authority will seek to ensure that adequate parking and servicing provision is made whilst balancing this against the need to encourage a shift away from depending on the car for most journeys.

#### **12.4 PART 1 POLICIES**

##### **POLICY 12**

**Improvements to the transport system will concentrate on: -**

- a) **improving accessibility and highway safety and reducing congestion, pollution and disturbance generated by traffic;**
- b) **encouraging travel by public transport, cycling and walking as alternatives to the car; and**

- c) encouraging the movement of freight by rail and sea as alternatives to road.

#### **POLICY 13**

**The location and design of development should contribute to more sustainable communities through reducing dependency on the motorcar and encouraging the use of public transport, cycling and walking.**

#### **POLICY 14**

**Proposals will be resisted which would be likely to cause unacceptable adverse impact in terms of: -**

- a) traffic generation and highway safety;
  - b) poor accessibility by public transport, cycling and walking including people with disabilities; and
  - c) preventing the use or re-use of docks, harbours, wharfs or routes of railway lines.
- 12.4.1 Transport has an enormous influence on modern life. It shapes where we live, work, shop and socialise and provides the lifeblood to sustain the Borough's communities. It influences whether business invests in the area, how attractive the area is to visitors and the adequacy and attractiveness of the transport system is critical in terms of our quality of life.
- 12.4.2 The UDP and its sister plan, the Local Transport Plan (LTP) will encourage improvements to the road, rail and port related transport system. It will seek to relieve the pressure on the busier roads and town centres, and secure environmental and road safety improvements. It forms part of the settlement and transport strategies to integrate the provision of housing, employment, shopping and other facilities.
- 12.4.3 The transport policies in the plan play a key role in guiding development towards more sustainable communities in which traffic and related pollution are reduced. Over time the policies seek to reduce dependency on the motorcar and encourage healthier alternatives including public transport, cycling and walking and focussing on meeting demand for travel to new developments.

#### **12.5 POLICY T1 – LOCATION, LAYOUT AND ACCESSIBILITY OF NEW PROPOSALS**

**A proposal will only be permitted if: -**

- a) wherever appropriate it would be well located in terms of reducing the need to travel especially by private car, and have good and easy access by public transport, cycling and walking. Where public

**transport facilities and services are included as part of a proposal there should be a reasonable expectation that they would continue to be provided;**

- b) the proposed layout, design, traffic management and associated off-site works provide a safe, convenient, efficient and attractive transport infrastructure (to, from and within the site) that encourages and maximises the use of walking, cycling and public transport (including where appropriate the provision of facilities for public transport), which minimises the reliance on the use of private cars, which takes fully into account the need of the mobility and visually impaired, and reduces opportunities for crime and disorder;
  - c) it would not create or unacceptably worsen highway safety or congestion on the highway network; and
  - d) appropriate car parking and servicing space is provided and whenever appropriate this includes specialised provision for taxis, coaches, cyclists, and people with a mobility or visual impairment.
- 12.5.1 The location of new development has a major influence on travel demand and modal choice. New developments that generate a significant number of journeys should be located so as to minimise the demand for travel and provide the greatest opportunity for access by public transport, cycling and walking. Existing urban sites particularly in close proximity to major public transport interchanges will generally be the best locations to meet these requirements. This will reduce the need to travel by car, and encourage multi-purpose trips.
- 12.5.2 All proposals are expected to demonstrate that they have fully addressed the potential to reduce travel needs and the use of the private car both in terms of their location and design. The needs of the pedestrian, cyclist and public transport should be given priority.
- 12.5.3 New development that would generate significant levels of traffic should take account of all modes of transport in their layout, design and provision of facilities. Wherever appropriate the road layout should accommodate buses and adequate waiting and turning facilities, shelter and information systems should be provided. It is likely that an assessment of the transport impact will be required together with a Green Transport Plan. This should include an indication of the potential for trips to be made by public transport, cycling and walking together with any appropriate mitigation measures. An evaluation should also be made of the environmental impact of traffic generated by the development.
- 12.5.4 Cycling and walking should be the preferred modes of travel for local journeys. New developments should include convenient and safe pedestrian and cycle routes including routes within the site and links to and from the site to the surrounding area. Routes should take advantage of open space within and around the development to make attractive green routes. The provision of footpath and cycleway links between residential areas and employment areas will help reduce car use by making these means of transport safer and more attractive.

- 12.5.5 The creation of a satisfactory pedestrian environment is an essential part of new development. This is particularly important for those with mobility and sensory impairments. There is a need to consider the provision of special facilities such as disabled parking spaces, access ramps, pedestrian crossings, audible traffic signals, flush kerbs, handrails, tactile surfaces and signs for the visually impaired, and the design and location of street furniture. The layout of a site should ensure the physical separation, where possible, of pedestrian and vehicles. Where physical separation is not possible, measures should be included to control vehicle speeds to suitable levels.
- 12.5.6 Where parking is to be provided (other than to serve single dwellings), provision should be set aside for people with a mobility or visual impairment, wheelchair users and people with young children. Dedicated spaces should be clearly marked, sign posted and located close to the principal entrance.
- 12.5.7 Proposals should not give rise to highway, safety or congestion problems and where appropriate, consideration will be given to payments to contribute to making improvements off site for walking, cycling, public transport or other traffic reduction or highway measures.
- 12.5.8 Developments in Town and District Centres (as defined in the Town Centres, Retail and Leisure Chapter) will often not be able to provide car parking facilities to meet their own needs on-site while off site provision may be more appropriate in terms of the parking and public transport strategy. In these circumstances, the Council may seek commuted payments which would be used to finance a range of transport infrastructure, including public car parking, traffic management, public transport improvements, and measures to assist pedestrians and cyclists.
- 12.5.9 Proposals that include the redevelopment or re-use of existing areas of off street car parking, or the creation of new parking will be supported provided they do not conflict with the parking and public transport strategy for the area.
- 12.5.10 Supplementary Planning Guidance will be produced to provide advice on the Authority's expectations on access, parking and servicing provision.

## **12.6 POLICY T2 – BUS AND RAIL INFRASTRUCTURE AND FACILITIES**

**The provision and enhancement of infrastructure and facilities for bus and train passengers including park and ride operations will be supported provided no unacceptable impacts would be created.**

**New developments will be expected, wherever appropriate, to pay particular regard to the need to enhance the surroundings, accessibility and safety of railway and bus stations and bus stops.**

- 12.6.1 If public transport is to become an attractive, viable alternative it is important that whenever possible efforts are undertaken to make public transport more attractive, safe and convenient. It is important that measures ensuring adequate access and priority for buses within major developments are provided together with the introduction of facilities such as bus shelters, raised pavements and better information for passengers.

- 12.6.2 New development will be expected, wherever appropriate, to pay particular regard to the need to enhance the surroundings, accessibility and safety of railway and bus stations and bus stops. The Council will investigate the potential for further park and ride schemes and seek their implementation if found to be viable.
- 12.6.3 Proposals should not create unacceptable impacts including those on landscape, townscape and local amenities.

## **12.7 POLICY T3 – PUBLIC TRANSPORT QUALITY CORRIDORS**

**High quality, fully integrated Strategic Public Transport Corridors will be developed.**

- 12.7.1 The development of integrated public transport corridors forms a key element in the Local Transport Plan. In the medium term the target is the provision of dedicated bus corridors on the main routes within the County Borough. This will involve an enhanced level of service including higher frequency of services, and improved facilities for passengers including Real Time Passenger Information on the main routes. Bus priority lanes will continue to be introduced. In addition, Neath Port Talbot Council for Voluntary Services is working to complement public transport with Community Transport Initiatives.
- 12.7.2 Where developments would lead to a significant increase in car-borne traffic within the urban areas, contributions to the creation and enhancement of Quality Corridors through the use of commuted payments may provide a means of mitigating otherwise unacceptable impacts. Improved bus services in rural areas will include a higher frequency of services and more evening and weekend services.

## **12.8 POLICY T4 – REDUNDANT RAIL ROUTES**

**Redundant rail routes and facilities, where re-use for transport is a feasible possibility, will be protected from development that would inhibit future transport use.**

- 12.8.1 Redundant rail routes and facilities offer the potential not only for the redevelopment of rail for transport use, but for the creation of cycle and walkways. Unless a redundant route or facility (either as a whole or in part) is unlikely ever to be of use in the future, it will be safeguarded in order to retain the potential to promote more sustainable forms of transport. This includes the potential to consider reinstating a railway should this become feasible.

## **12.9 POLICY T5 – USE OF PREMISES FOR CONTROL OF TAXIS AND MINIBUSES**

**Proposals for the use of premises for the control and administration of hackney carriages or private hire vehicles will be permitted provided they have adequately addressed: -**

- a) the effect on the occupiers of any nearby residential premises;**
- b) the ability of the local highway network to accommodate the additional traffic generated; and**
- c) the availability of parking (and wherever necessary off-street) provision for all vehicles to be operated from the base.**

- 12.9.1 Taxis have a major role to play in providing mobility on demand. Taxi operators require locations for their booking offices close to their potential customers. The main planning considerations relate to the proximity of proposed premises to houses, the availability of parking for the vehicles operated and the suitability of the local highway network to accommodate traffic movements generated. Generally taxi offices are likely to be acceptable within town centres, outside of main shopping streets. Within district centres and especially local and village centres the impacts on the amenity and security of the locality will be particularly important.
- 12.9.2 Applications will be considered on the basis of 24-hour operation, unless an operator specifically indicates that restricted hours are acceptable. At off-peak times, there is a tendency for drivers to congregate at their bases. As a consequence, off-street parking to an appropriate standard will be required unless the applicant can demonstrate why a reduction in this standard will be acceptable. To ensure that the appropriate amount of car parking is provided and retained and to avoid the creation of disturbance to local amenities, planning permission will be likely to include conditions to control the number of vehicles operating from the premises.

## **12.10 POLICY T6 – PORTS AND HARBOURS**

**Proposals that would prejudice the potential use of harbours, docks and wharfs for freight movement (including access by water, rail and road) will be resisted. The retention and enhancement of the cargo handling, storage, access (by rail and road) and related facilities will be supported provided no unacceptable impacts would be created.**

- 12.10.1 The Port Talbot Tidal Harbour, Port Talbot Docks and the River Neath wharves represent major freight facilities. The three facilities within the County Borough each serve very different forms of shipping. While the tidal harbour can accommodate ships of up to 180,000 tonnes, the town docks can accommodate general cargo vessels of up to 8,000 tonnes and the tidal River Neath wharf ships of up to 4,000 tonnes. All three offer the potential for increased and more varied use and this could both reduce freight movements on land and encourage port-related industries.
- 12.10.2 Access to each of them by road is somewhat tortuous. The construction of the Peripheral Distributor Road (PDR) between the Dock gates and the M4 junctions 38 at Margam and 41A at Baglan will help provide a modern access which will reduce traffic impacts upon the town of Port Talbot.
- 12.10.3 As a result of their coastal location, particular care will be needed when preparing and considering proposals for extensions to the ports and harbours to

ensure that seascape, landscape and biodiversity interests both on and off shore are safeguarded.

## **12.11 POLICY T7 – RAIL FREIGHT**

**In order to promote the use of rail for freight movements, rail freight interchange facilities will be supported, where they accord with other relevant policies of this Plan.**

- 12.11.1 The County Borough Council's Local Transport Plan supports the provision of a rail freight interchange in the County Borough. The opportunity for a rail/road/water freight interchange located at Port Talbot Docks has been identified. In order to provide facilities to help shift freight from road to rail proposals to establish new rail freight interchange will be favourably considered providing the location would not create an unacceptable impact on the surrounding area, and subject to other policies of this Plan.

## **12.12 POLICY T8 – ROAD SCHEMES**

**a) The Port Talbot Peripheral Distributor Road will be promoted by the Council for implementation during the plan period and the land required will be safeguarded from development;**

**b) A southern highway access to the Llandarcy Urban Village will be provided from Jersey Marine early in the plan period and the land required will be safeguarded from development;**

**c) The height available to vehicles at the Ty Du railway bridge at B4283 Water Street will be improved to full highway standards**

**d) Minor road improvements will be undertaken and priority will be given to those which address highway safety problems, encourage public transport, cycling or walking or improve the quality of life.**

- 12.12.1 It is intended that the Peripheral Distributor Road (PDR) will be considered in the early part of the plan period. In accordance with the New Approach to Appraisal, the design of the PDR has taken account of existing landform and landscape features to reduce noise and visual effects and the need to minimise adverse impacts on the natural, historic and built environment. Where appropriate mitigation measures to minimise impacts will be included. The provision of alternative and rearranged facilities for the CORUS Sports Club will be investigated.
- 12.12.2 The PDR will provide a direct access to the docks and towns centre area from the M4 and provide an alternative route. The road is of major economic and social significance to the well being and regeneration of the town and the development of the docks and tidal harbour.

- 12.12.3 A second and southern access will be provided to the Llandarcy Urban Village. The road will cross Crymlyn Bog, which is a SSSI, National Nature Reserve, Ramsar site and SAC, on a bridge which will replace an existing pipeline bridge. The line and width of the pipeline bridge is excluded from the designations except for a marginal incursion into the Ramsar designation. The need for an Appropriate Assessment under the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c) Regulations 1994 has been considered. The Authority has undertaken an Appropriate Assessment of the UDP and is satisfied that the development could be carried out without causing a significant effect on the SAC or in relation to its designation as a Ramsar site. The need for an Appropriate Assessment would have to be considered prior to the determination of any planning application that might have relevant implications for the SAC/Ramsar site.
- 12.12.4 Its route and design have been carefully chosen to minimise impacts on the ecology, local residents, the landscape and the open character of the Green Wedge. Precautions will be included to prevent any run-off or spillages entering and polluting Crymlyn Bog. Care will be taken to ensure that where the road passes through the area allocated for development under Policy EC1/3 an attractive landscaped gateway is provided.
- 12.12.5 The primary access to the Urban Village will be from M4 junction 43 at Llandarcy. This is where the A465 Heads of the Valleys road joins the M4 and is one of the most important strategic motorway/trunk road junctions in South West Wales. The provision of this southern access will reduce pressure on junction 43 and provide an alternative link to the M4 at junction 42. It also recognises the site's central role within the Swansea Bay Arc of Opportunity, and would also be an important alternative route in emergencies. It is intended to provide a bus only link between Baldwins / Elba Crescent and the new southern link just to the south of Crymlyn Bog. This would enable the provision of an enhanced bus service linking Llandarcy with Elba and Baldwins Crescent and Swansea, including Port Tawe.
- 12.12.6 The proposed scheme to increase the height of the Ty Du Railway Bridge, detailed under Policy T8 (c), is necessary to improve the development potential of Kenfig Industrial Estate. The work will enable HGV access from the west, relieving pressure on routes through North Cornelly, to the east of the estate.
- 12.12.7 The priority to be given to minor road improvements will be as indicated in Policy T8(d). The details, likely timescale and plans of any such schemes proposed during the Plan period will be available to inspect upon request at the Authority's Environment Directorate office. Where necessary, the Authority will consider using its Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) procedures to enable such schemes to be implemented. Proposals will be considered in terms of their compliance with the Plan's policies and in particular Policy GC2.

## **12.13 POLICY T9 – ROAD HIERARCHY**

**In order to facilitate the efficient use of the Highway network and create or maintain acceptable environmental and safety conditions, the Council defines the highway network as follows: -**

**a) Strategic Routes**

Those routes which comprise the Primary road network carry a substantial element of though traffic across the County Borough to major centres of population and commerce elsewhere. Strategic routes should have a limited number of junctions with parking only allowed in purpose-designated lay-bys or service areas. Only in exceptional circumstances will new direct accesses be permitted.

**b) Primary Routes**

These important routes which comprise the core road network connect the main residential and employment areas of the Borough. Heavy Commercial Traffic will be allowed (except where subject to HCV restrictions), but will not be encouraged where satisfactory routes exist on the Strategic roads. Street parking and direct frontage access will be kept to a minimum in the interests of road safety and the efficient movement of traffic.

**c) Local Distributors**

These roads consist mainly of key spine roads within residential and employment areas. Traffic restraint measures will be used to deter through traffic and reduce traffic speeds. Frontage access will be allowed in principle, subject to local circumstances.

**d) Local Access Roads**

These roads provide access to residential areas, employment areas, town centres and small rural communities. Where appropriate stringent traffic calming measures will be used to deter through traffic and reduce traffic speeds. HGVs may be prohibited, except where they need to use these roads for access.

**e) Residential and Local Access Streets**

These are minor roads where traffic volumes and speeds should be low. The Council may sometimes need to employ traffic calming measures to ensure that the environment and safety of these streets is protected. This will be particularly -important in the design of new developments.

**Proposals that would compromise the role of a route or routes in the hierarchy will be resisted.**

- 12.13.1 The road network will be improved in order to help promote economic revitalisation and urban regeneration, improve access to established centres, assist the operation of public transport, and contribute towards a better and safer local environment for residents, shoppers, businesses and visitors. Traffic and development access will be channelled onto the appropriate level of the hierarchy. The hierarchy also sets the context for highway improvement and

traffic calming proposals and the Council will have regard to the road hierarchy in assessing priorities for improvement.

#### **12.14 POLICY T10 – PARKING IN TOWN, DISTRICT, LOCAL AND VILLAGE CENTRES**

**In town, district, local and village centres off-street and on-street parking for cars and motorcycles will be provided in accordance with maximum standards. Parking provision will enhance the accessibility of businesses, without encouraging the growth of private car use. The provision of cycle parking will be encouraged.**

- 12.14.1 Parking provision whether on or off-street has a major influence upon transport patterns. In seeking to ensure the survival of its hierarchy of town and other centres, the Council will strike a careful balance between maintaining adequate levels of parking provision and avoiding over-provision which would only help to encourage greater car use. Parking provision will be based upon maximum standards. Minimum standards are no longer appropriate. The future provision of parking will take into account improvements in public transport and the need to encourage cycling and walking. Parking provision for cycles will be improved and encouraged. Parking standards and other matters relating to parking will be set out in Supplementary Planning Guidance.
- 12.14.2 In making provision for the parking of cars and motorcycles, the emphasis will be upon providing parking which is safe and convenient to use, as this can be a major influence in choosing destinations for shopping and leisure. Car parking provision will not, however, take into account abnormal peak demands such as a Saturday preceding a Bank Holiday, or when a major sporting event takes place.
- 12.14.3 Within the centres, the emphasis will be on short term parking. In streets adjacent to shopping and business areas, and where there is insufficient off-street parking, provision will be made to allow short term parking whilst allowing unrestricted use by residents. Parking and servicing provision should not interfere with the free flow of traffic on adjacent highways or create a nuisance for local residents and businesses.
- 12.14.4 When assessing parking proposals in terms of individual centres, the needs of the users, the nature of the catchment area and the potential to enhance public transport, cycling and walking will be taken into account.

#### **12.15 POLICY T11 – TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT**

**Traffic management schemes will be carried out to reduce the detrimental social, economic and environmental impact of road traffic. This will include traffic and pedestrian safety measures and the promotion of Safer Routes to School. Proposals which would be likely to create unacceptable traffic conditions, or to worsen those which are already unacceptable, will not be permitted unless satisfactory mitigation measures can be provided.**

- 12.15.1 In a number of areas traffic creates safety and amenity problems in residential and shopping streets. There is conflict between the interest of pedestrians and

cyclists, parked cars, delivery and service vehicles and people using the road as a through route. Innovative traffic management measures are being pursued to address these problems. ‘Home Zones’ (Transport Act 2000) are being promoted nationally, for residential areas where non-motorised movement is given precedence, reinforced by low speed limits, revised carriageway alignment, the location of parking bays, and new landscaping. The Council supports this initiative and will look for opportunities where it can be applied in the County Borough.

- 12.15.2 Traffic calming schemes have been carried out across the County Borough. Further schemes will be considered.
- 12.15.3 Safe Routes to School schemes encourage school pupils and staff to travel safely to school by modes other than the private car in order to promote healthy lifestyles and reduce detriment to the environment. Initial projects are being pursued in Sandfields in Port Talbot and the Cimla in Neath, where there are a number of schools that generate a high number of pupil journeys. Routes within new developments that have the potential to become part of the Safe Routes to School initiative will be identified and safeguarded from any significant adverse development as part of the enhancement of the Public Rights of Way network.

#### **12.16 POLICY T12 – FOOTPATHS, CYCLEWAYS AND BRIDLEWAYS**

- a) Proposals to improve and extend the footpath, cycleway and bridleway network will be permitted where they accord with other relevant policies of this Plan. New proposals will be expected to provide appropriate internal routes and links to the network;
  - b) Measures such as shared pedestrian and cycle routes will be encouraged where these can improve safety and convenience for pedestrians, cyclists and the disabled;
  - c) Planning permission will not be granted for proposals which would lead to the loss of footpaths, bridleways, or cycle routes unless acceptable alternative routes would be provided, or the routes affected no longer have a useful role.
- 12.16.1 The Council has a statutory duty to ensure that footpaths, bridleways and other public rights of way remain open for public usage as part of the highway network of the County Borough. The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 came into force at the end of January 2001. It includes measures to improve the rights of way network and also introduces a new right of access on foot to open countryside and registered common land.
  - 12.16.2 Walking and cycling will be encouraged for shorter journeys in order to reduce usage of the car. The provision, protection and improvement of local routes for pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders linking central areas with housing estates, areas of employment, other services and the open countryside are particularly

important. As well as providing access such routes can also provide recreation facilities and corridors for wildlife.

- 12.16.3 The County Borough Council will seek to develop a network of safe and pleasant routes for the use of residents and visitors alike. The needs of different user groups including the elderly and those with disabilities in ensuring accessibility to the network will be addressed and attention will be given to measures that would make walking and cycling safer and more enjoyable. It is recognised that cyclists may safely use some routes. Footpaths can be made available for shared use by providing features such as dropped kerbs and ramps which are also beneficial to the disabled and people with push chairs. However sharing arrangements should be clearly indicated, and should not be encouraged where the safety or comfort of users would be compromised.
- 12.16.4 Development proposals will be required to take full account of the need to protect and enhance the public rights of way network. This should include the needs of all potential users and provide any necessary alternative routes that would be suitable, safe, and accessible. Where appropriate, financial contributions through commuted sums may be used to fund necessary improvements and extensions to the Network.

## **12.17 SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL SUMMARY**

- 12.17.1 The policies in the plan seek to move towards more sustainable communities in which traffic and related pollution are reduced. Over time the policies seek to reduce dependency on the car and encourage healthier alternatives, including public transport, walking and cycling. The policies seek to achieve this through encouraging investment in infrastructure, enhancing facilities for passengers and through locating major generators of travel within urban areas to contribute to more sustainable patterns of development.
- 12.17.2 Reducing the need to travel, especially by car through provision for pedestrians, cyclists and access to public transport within new developments will have beneficial impacts on transport and energy consumption, also safety and security, health and air quality. It will also increase access to facilities such as local employment and open space and enhance local centres through greater access and safety.
- 12.17.3 The strategic highway and public transport improvements will be directed within urban areas of the County Borough to meet existing travel demand and to facilitate demand for travel to new developments.

**Proposals will be considered against any of the Plan's policies that are relevant.**

**Useful starting points are: -**

**CHAPTER 8: ENVIRONMENT**

**Policy ENV8:**      **A) Replacement dwellings; B) Conversions or re-use of buildings & C) Farm Diversification in the countryside.**

**Policy GC1:**      **New Buildings, Structures & Changes of Use**

**Policy GC2:**      **Engineering Works and Operations  
[Including Minerals and Waste]**

## **13 TOWN CENTRES, RETAIL AND LEISURE**

### **13.1 CURRENT POSITION**

- 13.1.1 The existing distribution of shopping and leisure facilities in Neath Port Talbot is based on a hierarchy of town, district, local and village shopping centres, each fulfilling its own role in the provision of retail facilities and providing a focus for local community life, employment and public transport.
- 13.1.2 Neath and Port Talbot Town Centres occupy the top of the hierarchy, serving fairly well defined catchment areas. Neath's town centre serves Neath, the Neath and Dulais Valleys and part of the adjacent Swansea Valley, and Port Talbot serves its surrounding urban area and the Afan Valley. These centres contain the largest number and widest range of shops whilst also providing a range of services complementing their main shopping role including banking, financial, offices, leisure and entertainment uses. Pontardawe performs similar functions, on a smaller scale for the mid and upper Swansea Valley.
- 13.1.3 The Town Centres are supported by the smaller district centres, which offer a range of shops, and facilities that meet the needs of a localised population. The emphasis of retailing in district centres is on food and other convenience goods and they are normally anchored by at least one supermarket or superstore. As well as shopping facilities for local residents, they generally provide high levels of accessibility to a broad range of services and facilities for all the community, as well as employment opportunities.
- 13.1.4 Below this level the Borough also contains a network of local and village shopping centres, parades and corner shops, principally concerned with the sale of food and other convenience goods to the local community in which they are located. They also provide a limited range of other services and play an important role in providing for the day to day needs of local communities. Shopping areas such as these are also vital in that they act as focal points for various community facilities. District and Local centres are particularly important for less mobile members of the community such as the elderly and non-car owners.
- 13.1.5 With their relatively small catchment areas, particularly in the case of Port Talbot, the Borough's main shopping centres continue to face very strong pressure from centres outside the County Borough. Swansea is the sub regional centre for Southwest Wales and exerts a strong attraction for facilities and other 'choice' goods both from its City Centre and out of centre developments such as the Swansea Valley Enterprise Park. Cardiff as the Capital City and regional shopping centre, is only a short distance away along the M4 corridor and with easy rail links also exerts a strong attraction. Other newer retail centres such as the McArthur Glen Factory Outlet Centre near Bridgend, the Out-of -Town Retail Park at Cribbs Causeway, near Bristol and the IKEA outlets at Cardiff and near Bristol, provide a wide variety of goods and services to a large hinterland, and act as a magnet in drawing custom away from the County Borough's shopping centres.

- 13.1.6 Schemes to enhance the environment and accessibility of centres are pursued as a rolling programme, and closed circuit television (CCTV) has been provided in many centres as part of a programme to address crime and disorder. As part of the Neath Town Centre Partnership, a town centre manager has been appointed to co-ordinate the promotion and enhancement of Neath town centre.

## **13.2 CURRENT TRENDS AND ISSUES**

- 13.2.1 Retailing is a dynamic industry and is subject to a number of differing trends. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s there was a national trend for larger stores, often selling large, bulky goods, which need a large floor area, good vehicular access and extensive car parking. This led to the creation of retail warehouses, out-of-town superstores, deep discount stores, warehouse clubs, outlet centres and retail parks. Whilst they have extended the range and choice of facilities they also placed traditional centres under increasing pressure. Out-of-centre retailing typically relies on car borne trade and is often inaccessible to groups such as the disabled, the elderly and those without access to the private car. Small and medium sized traders have been particularly adversely affected by new forms of shopping. Out-of-town stores cater for predominantly single purpose trips whereas Town Centres encourage joint trips, combining visits to shops, services and leisure facilities.
- 13.2.2 Other forms of retailing have also emerged in recent years as an alternative to more traditional forms of shopping facilities. Home Internet shopping is an emerging retail sector and it will be necessary to carefully monitor its growth and the effect it may have on diverting expenditure away from local shops.
- 13.2.3 Food operators have entered the local convenience store market by introducing stores linked to petrol filling stations. Although they can improve local shopping facilities, they can also cause adverse impacts on district and local shopping centres, damaging the health of existing retail outlets and harming a centre's role and function.
- 13.2.4 Retailers have responded to tighter planning controls by altering their trading format. Some major food retailers have introduced smaller compact stores to complement their superstore provision, which are capable of being accommodated within Town Centres
- 13.2.5 In addition to changing forms of retailing, operators have also responded to changing customers' requirements by extending their opening hours and Sunday trading levels have increased significantly over the last decade.
- 13.2.6 The Neath Port Talbot Retail Study was prepared to advise the UDP; establish the health of the local retail economy and the retail capacity and needs of the area, and assess the scope for new retail development, in accordance with current and emerging guidance.
- 13.2.7 It confirmed that the outflow of goods expenditure from throughout the Borough is high. Although with the proximity of Swansea City Centre and the ease of access to Cardiff, a considerable amount of trade loss (particularly of

high quality town centre goods) could be expected, this is compounded by out-of-centre retailing facilities, which have emerged outside the County Borough. This results in residents travelling further, generating traffic and pollution, exacerbates job losses while the centres do not fulfil their potential as centres for their local communities.

- 13.2.8 The study findings suggested that there was scope for additional retail development within the Borough to clawback expenditure leakage. Other factors could reduce this scope, including the impact of Internet shopping, developments within and outside the Borough and lower than expected population levels.
- 13.2.9 The findings (translated into retail floorspace projections) are subject to change. In particular, population trends will be closely monitored throughout the plan period to assess the level of expenditure available. Reviews of the plan will take this into account when examining retail development potential.
- 13.2.10 In assessing the scope for new retail floorspace within Neath Port Talbot it is also necessary to take account of factors such as the physical capacity of the centres to accommodate new retail floorspace, operator demand and potential impacts on other facilities. The study also suggests that in order to compete with other centres and out of town stores it is particularly important that access to parking facilities is attractive to shoppers. This will be addressed via policies in the Transport Chapter.

### **13.3 STRATEGY**

- 13.3.1 The strategy reflects the aims of the Community Plan and focuses on the protection and enhancement of the traditional centres with a broad aim of reducing the substantial amount of trade lost to other centres and outlets outside the County Borough.
- 13.3.2 Existing town centres will continue to form the main focus for retail investment and other town centre uses and the sequential approach will be applied when considering new development.
- 13.3.3 Proposals that would reduce vitality, attractiveness and viability town, district, local and village centres will be resisted.
- 13.3.4 The Authority will encourage the development and improvement of facilities in these centres and oppose the loss of facilities where they serve a vital local economic and social function. This could include village shops, post offices and pubs whose loss can be very damaging to the fabric and sustainability of local communities.
- 13.3.5 In order to make better use of under used property located within centres the Authority will encourage proposals to restore and renovate redundant buildings for a variety of uses that contribute to their vitality, viability and attractiveness.

## **13.4 PART 1 POLICIES**

### **POLICY 15**

**Neath, Port Talbot and Pontardawe, as the primary town centres, providing retail, leisure, commercial and cultural facilities serving the County Borough's communities will be protected and enhanced.**

### **POLICY 16**

**District, Local and Village Centres will be protected and enhanced provided the proposals are appropriate to the centre and would not harm the vitality, attractiveness and viability of any other centre.**

- 13.4.1 The town centres of Neath, Port Talbot and Pontardawe with their concentration of shops, commercial, leisure, cultural and social facilities, form a focus for the surrounding communities and are an invaluable resource contributing to the economic and social fabric of the County Borough.
- 13.4.2 The town centres are, however, vulnerable in a market that is constantly evolving as social and economic conditions change. Competition from, and expenditure leakage to, other centres outside the County Borough area, together with an increasing number of 'out of town' centres, threaten the economic performance of the centres. On a more local basis, the district, local and village centres meet everyday needs and provide an important community focus.
- 13.4.3 The Neath Port Talbot Retail Study completed in November 2000, prepared to advise the preparation of the UDP, illustrated the problems faced by the County Borough's town centres.
- 13.4.4 It found that 71% of comparison expenditure within the study area was spent outside the County Borough and the outflow of convenience expenditure was estimated to be 50.5% of total expenditure. Expenditure leakage within the Neath and Port Talbot zones was lower at 49%. New comparison development within Neath or Port Talbot could reduce the level of expenditure outflow. Conversely major new development in competing centres outside the County Borough could increase the level of expenditure leakage.
- 13.4.5 The study's expenditure projections assumed that existing market penetration rates within the study area will remain constant for both comparison (non-food) and convenience (mainly food) shopping. However, the development of new shopping facilities can alter shopping patterns, particularly if there is a deficiency in shopping facilities and high levels of expenditure leakage to competing centres. New development in an area of deficiency can help to reduce expenditure leakage.
- 13.4.6 The study suggested that there were a number of study area zones where the level of convenience expenditure outflow was relatively high. For example, approximately 24% of expenditure leaked from the Port Talbot area, and 66%

from the Pontardawe area. The level of leakage from the Neath area was relatively limited (10%).

- 13.4.7 The Authority is determined to “claw back” expenditure lost to other centres. The policies contained in this plan provide a mechanism to revitalise both the economy and infrastructure of the shopping centres making them more attractive as shopping locations. A superstore has replaced a supermarket at Baglan Moor, and a new superstore has been developed at Pontardawe. Further proposals will need to assess the realistic prospects of achieving a claw back of trade, and whether population change is likely to result in an increase in available expenditure if proposals are not to merely claw trade from the County Borough’s existing centres.
- 13.4.8 Growth is directed to the County Borough’s town and other centres at locations where these opportunities can be maximised. These centres are part of our heritage and securing their health helps to foster civic pride and local identity and helps deliver the objectives of sustainable development. The Council will continue to protect the vitality, attractiveness and viability of the centres within the defined retail hierarchy.
- 13.4.9 Proposals for development outside of the town shopping centres will have to justify their location and demonstrate that the sequential approach has been adopted.
- 13.4.10 Out-of-centre retail developments will not be permitted if their provision is likely to lead to a reduction in the range of local facilities or affect the diversity of shops or lead to the loss of general food retailing within the centre concerned.
- 13.4.11 For the purpose of this plan the retail hierarchy has been defined as the following:

**Town Centres** – Providing a broad range of facilities and services

*Neath, Port Talbot, Pontardawe.*

**District Centres** – Groups of shops, separate from the Town Centre usually containing at least one supermarket and non-retail services.

*Glynneath, Skewen, Taibach, Briton Ferry, Gwaun Cae Gurwen, Cwmafan, Ystalyfera, Baglan Moors, Margam, and Fairfield (Sandfields).*

**Local and Village Centres** – small groupings usually comprising newsagent, general store/post office, hairdresser and other small shops of a local nature.

- 13.4.12 The smaller local centres are not identified individually as they do not have such an extensive range of shops or facilities and services. Nonetheless they provide a very important local function and the facilities and services they provide are highly valued.

### **13.5 POLICY TRL1 –PROPOSALS IN TOWN CENTRES**

Proposals for retail and other town centre uses within the “Main Shopping Streets” and “other Shopping Streets” in Neath, Port Talbot and Pontardawe, as identified on the Proposals Map, will be favourably considered. Proposals for edge-of-centre retail development may be favourably considered, provided that no suitable site is available within the town centre. All proposals should meet the following criteria.

- a) they would integrate with and strengthen the layout, retail character and pedestrian flows to and/or within the centre;
- b) no unacceptable impacts (including those on amenity, traffic congestion, parking and servicing, environment, crime and disorder and townscape) are created;
- c) wherever appropriate an attractive retail type ground floor frontage and display is provided unless the proposal would affect the upper floors only; and
- d) within the “Shopping Streets” they would not create any unacceptable adverse impacts on the amenity, security or safety of nearby residential areas outside the shopping streets.

*Note:*

“Main Shopping Streets” represent primary retail frontages, and “Other Shopping Streets” represent secondary frontages

### **13.6 POLICY TRL2 – PROPOSALS WITHIN MAIN SHOPPING STREETS**

The retail vitality, attractiveness and viability of the “Main Shopping Streets” in Neath and Port Talbot will be protected. Key town centre uses (other than retail) which enhance the vitality, attractiveness and viability of the “Main Shopping Streets” will be allowed provided that the ground floor frontage would not create or magnify a significant gap in the retail frontage.

*Note:*

“Main Shopping Streets” are characterised by a domination of retail uses, (Class A1 uses - ‘Town and Country Planning Use Classes Order 1987’) generally on the ground floors of properties in the retail core of a town centre while “Shopping Streets” are areas of mixed commercial development including, for example, restaurants, banks and other financial institutions. Together they define the town shopping centres.

- 13.6.1 A strong retail core is essential to the vitality, attractiveness and viability of town centres in terms of providing a range of shopping facilities in an easily accessible and convenient location. It is important that new developments contribute to the continuing improvement of that strong retail core by locating within the town centres, integrating with the existing shopping patterns and

generally sustaining and enhancing the vitality, attractiveness and viability of the main shopping streets.

- 13.6.2 The key findings of the Neath Port Talbot Retail Study identified a potential need for a new food store in Port Talbot and in Pontardawe, (subsequently the Authority has granted consent for a new store in each town but outside the town centres). It identified the need for further comparison shopping in Neath to enhance its attractiveness to shoppers but there was no need for a large new food store in Neath.
- 13.6.3 In Port Talbot, the study identified a need to create space in town for further comparison shopping and resist out of town proposals. Provision has been made in the definition of the shopping centres in the towns to accommodate these needs.
- 13.6.4 Proposals within the “**Main Shopping Streets**”, which would extend choice and service to the public, make shopping more pleasant, allow more efficient retailing where such development would assist in the reinforcement and/or revitalisation of existing shopping centres will be supported.
- 13.6.5 Whilst the primary retail function of the shopping of the centres should not be compromised, it is important to encourage a diverse range of uses to complement their shopping function and increase their vitality. Some non-retail uses such as banks and building societies provide services that are frequently used by shoppers. They generate high levels of pedestrian activity and complement the main retail function. Uses, such as coffee shops, cafes and restaurants also help to maintain the vitality of the town centres throughout the day and into the evening.
- 13.6.6 They can, however, also create dead frontages, cause a loss of retail floorspace, and detract from the attractiveness of shopping streets. In considering proposals for non-retail town centre uses within the “**Main Shopping Streets**”, the following will be taken into account: the relationship of the proposal to other features which may interrupt the continuity of shopping frontage; the length of the shopping frontage; and the degree to which 'non-retail' uses are already established in the street.
- 13.6.7 Planning permissions will normally be subject to conditions requiring a ground floor internal retail type window display being maintained at all times, and any external alterations to the building facade being in keeping with the general character of the street scene.
- 13.6.8 The “Other Shopping Streets” represent the secondary retail frontages. Within the “**Shopping Streets**” it is intended that the main land use will be shopping. However suitable non-retail uses including offices, services, leisure, food and drink or entertainment related facilities including Amusement Centres, which can contribute to a successful evening economy in town centres can be suitably included within shopping streets. Careful consideration will be given to proposals to ensure that residential amenity is not unduly adversely affected by

increased noise and significant movement of pedestrians through a residential area.

- 13.6.9 It is important that the shopping façade in the “**Shopping Streets**” be maintained as these contribute to the attractiveness of the shopping facilities on offer and as such the retail frontage and display must be maintained, however this requirement may be relaxed if the Authority is satisfied that the proposal would not detract from the street’s shopping character, and the proposed use or building would be particularly unsuited to the inclusion of a shopping frontage and display, as for example in a public house.
- 13.6.10 Amusement centres and arcades will be likely to be most appropriate in the “**Shopping Streets**” and are not likely to be acceptable where they would be likely to have an adverse effect on the amenities of sensitive uses nearby including housing, hospitals, schools, offices Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings. Proposals located on the sea front at Aberavon will be considered on their merits.
- 13.6.11 Upper floors in existing buildings can often provide suitable accommodation for small businesses, which require a central location, or for housing accommodation, subject to a satisfactory relationship with neighbouring uses. Encouraging ‘Living over the Shop’ can bring additional vitality to a centre, making them safer and bringing vacant and underused space back into use. Proposals should ensure that where appropriate independent access is retained or provided to upper floors. These proposals will also be considered in terms of policy H6.
- 13.6.12 The Neath Port Talbot Retail Study identified the need to improve the accessibility of the centres including the provision of attractive parking for shoppers. This is addressed through the Transport chapter policies and developers may be required to make appropriate contributions.

### **13.7 POLICY TRL3 – NON-RETAIL USES WITHIN SHOPPING CENTRES**

**Proposals for the redevelopment or conversion of a retail, commercial, leisure or A3 ground floor use into residential or other uses within the town centre “Shopping Streets”, district, local or village centres will only be permitted where: -**

- a) the property has been marketed for at least two years and at a price reflecting a retail, commercial, leisure or A3 uses without success;
- b) the property does not form part of a continuous frontage of 3 or more retail, commercial or leisure uses;
- c) the proposal would not be likely to expose occupiers of the property to unacceptable loss of amenity or disturbance as a result of existing adjacent retail or other non centre uses; and

- d) the proposal would not result in the loss of a supermarket, shop, café or public house which is of significance in terms of providing facilities to serve the community.

*Note:*

*'A3' use means uses defined in the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987, Food and Drink*

- 13.7.1 The Authority would be concerned if shops remained vacant for a considerable period of time leading to a decline in environmental standards, and therefore favourable consideration would be given to the occupation of a vacant unit that has been empty for several years providing all other criteria are met. However, the loss of shops, commercial properties or leisure facilities to residential or other uses could in some instances critically affect a centre's potential to meet local needs and precipitate the overall decline of a centre and the loss of facilities and services that benefit local communities (see policy CS1). Accordingly the policy aims to control the re-use or redevelopment of important sites or premises within town, district, local or village centres for other purposes.
- 13.7.2 Applicants will need to demonstrate that the site or premises concerned are no longer viable and/or suitable for such use. This may involve details of accounts, attempts to sell the business/property for another suitable use and an investigation of the potential to use the building/site for other retail, service or A3 uses.
- 13.7.3 When considering proposals the extent to which non-retail uses can be absorbed without detriment to existing shops or to the overall retail character of the street as a whole will be a material consideration.
- 13.7.4 Within the town centre "Main Shopping Streets" proposals at ground floor level will be likely to be resisted

### **13.8 POLICY TRL4– OUT OF CENTRE PROPOSALS**

**A proposal for retail, leisure, or a use best located in a town centre, but located outside the Neath, Port Talbot or Pontardawe Shopping Centres will only be permitted provided: -**

- a) there is a need for the development;
- b) the proposal complies with the sequential approach to site selection;
- c) it would not (either individually or cumulatively with recently completed developments and outstanding planning permissions) create an unacceptable impact on the vitality, attractiveness or viability of an existing centre, or put a town centre regeneration strategy at risk;

- d) it would not create unacceptable impacts in terms of the amenities or environmental quality of the area**
- e) it would be accessible by a variety of means of travel;**
- f) it would not lead to a significant increase in traffic generation, flows or congestion; and**
- g) it would not result in the loss of land allocated for another use including housing and employment.**

- 13.8.1 This policy sets out the criteria that will be applied when proposals located outside the three town shopping centres as identified under policy TRL1 are considered. This will include changes of use, extensions, conversions, subdivision or the removal of conditions or legal obligations from an existing operation and renewals of permission.
- 13.8.2 The Authority's strategy is to guide uses best located in town centres to the town centres. Those uses, which need to be accessible to a large number of people, include retail, major leisure, office, hospital and education facilities.
- 13.8.3 District, local and village centres are the most appropriate location for smaller scale retail provision (including appropriately sized supermarkets), leisure, health centres, branch libraries, area offices and primary schools serving the local community.
- 13.8.4 The need for a proposal may be justified in quantitative terms in order to address a provable unmet demand. This assessment should take into account both the potential cumulative effects of other schemes which are allocated or have planning permission and the impacts of population change. It might also be justified in qualitative terms where a proposal would achieve a claw back of trade currently lost from the County Borough, or would significantly contribute to the vitality, attractiveness and viability of a centre and encourage joint visits to the centres.
- 13.8.5 When need has been demonstrated, the developer should be able to demonstrate that the proposal satisfies the sequential approach:
- (i) the first preference is for the identified town centre locations;
  - (ii) followed by edge of centre sites;
  - (iii) then district and local centres;
  - (iv) and only lastly by out of centre locations which are accessible by a choice of means of transport.
- 13.8.6 All proposals to which Policy TRL4 applies should demonstrate that they meet Criteria (a) – (g). In many cases, this evidence should be presented in the form of an impact assessment, to meet the requirements of TAN4. Such an impact

assessment is required for all retail proposals over 2,500m<sup>2</sup> (gross floorspace), and for some smaller developments, for instance those that are likely to have a large impact on a District Centre.

- 13.8.7 Proposals should not lead to the loss of an adequate level of food shopping in existing town, district, local or village centres. Nor should proposals be likely to lead to the loss of post offices and pharmacies in the centres.
- 13.8.8 Proposals for stores selling bulky goods should be able to demonstrate that a large showroom is required, and proposals including large scale retail and/or leisure uses would need to demonstrate why elements of the scheme could not be accommodated in more central locations.
- 13.8.9 Planning conditions may be imposed to restrict the main range of goods to be sold from out-of-town and edge-of-centre stores. They may also be used to prevent the subdivision or extension of retail units so that the development is not changed in character to become the kind of development for which planning permission would not have been granted in the first instance.
- 13.8.10 The cumulative impact of out-of-centre proposals, together with recently completed and extant permissions for retail and leisure developments should not adversely affect the overall range and quality of shopping or leisure facilities within centres. Further they should not undermine plans for, or recent investment in the redevelopment and revitalisation of centres.
- 13.8.11 Proposals should not lead to the erosion or loss of landbanks allocated for key uses including housing and employment.
- 13.8.12 Proposals for amusement centres are unlikely to be acceptable outside the town centre “Shopping Streets” and the Aberavon seafront. They are unlikely to be acceptable within district, local and village centres as a result of their likely impact on nearby sensitive uses.

### **13.9 POLICY TRL5 – PROPOSALS WITHIN OTHER CENTRES**

**Proposals for retail and other uses that would enhance district, local or village centres will be permitted provided: -**

- a) **the proposal is appropriate in terms of its character, attractiveness and size to the centre, and would not create significant harm to the vitality, attractiveness and viability of any other centre;**
- b) **wherever appropriate an attractive retail type ground floor frontage and display is provided;**
- c) **the proposal is well located and would help focus the centre and pedestrian flows within the centre; and**

- d) no significant adverse impacts would be created on residential properties, amenity, security, parking, traffic congestion or generation, or highway safety;**
- 13.9.1 District, local and village centres have a valuable role to play both economically and socially within the communities they serve. District Centres include a mix of uses including, pubs, clubs, cafes, cultural, entertainment and leisure facilities with a lively night life. Smaller local and village centres comprise small groups of shops, pubs and post offices fulfilling a role in suburbs and the more isolated village communities.
- 13.9.2 Whilst the role of these centres has been eroded over recent years sometimes resulting in vacant units and deteriorating standards of appearance they have an important role to play within their communities. Proposals within these centres involving new or improved retail facilities of an appropriate scale will be favourably considered. Account will be taken of: the role of the centre in meeting local shopping needs; the nature of the retailing envisaged; the characteristics of the site; whether the proposal could be accommodated in a better located vacant premises or site within the centre; the relationship to existing shopping facilities in the area; traffic; parking and other environmental implications.
- 13.9.3 Proposals which would be more appropriately located in a larger centre and would encourage significant levels of traffic will not be permitted. The size of the proposed development should be consistent with the scale of the centre and must not undermine the vitality, attractiveness and viability of any town, district or other local or village centres.
- 13.9.4 New residential development of a significant scale will be expected to consider the need to include local shopping provision. They should cater primarily for the needs of the new neighbourhood and should not seek to fulfil a wider role in the provision of retail facilities unless the proposal is justified by a retail impact study.

### **13.10 POLICY TRL6 – LOCAL RETAIL UNITS**

**A proposal for a local shop outside the existing centres and shops associated with petrol stations and other uses will be allowed provided: -**

- a) it would serve an identified local need;**
  - b) it would not harm an existing local centre and normally should not be within 300 metres of any shop within such a centre; and**
  - c) it would not create any unacceptable impacts on local amenities, highway safety or in terms of parking and servicing.**
- 13.10.1 The County Borough Council will support the provision of shops or public houses that would serve residential areas that are not served adequately at present. Specialist and “deep discount” stores selling a limited range of lines

would not be likely to meet the local community's needs. 300 metres is considered to be a reasonable distance in terms of pedestrians carrying convenience shopping. Generally proposals should relate to small premises of less than 1000 square metres in total which would serve the locality in which they are situated. Proposed developments that would be likely to undermine existing local centres or create other unacceptable impacts will not be allowed.

### **13.11 POLICY TRL7 – FARM, CRAFT AND FACTORY SHOPS**

**The introduction of a retail use on a farm, craft centre or at a factory will only be permitted subject to the following criteria: -**

- a) the scale and scope of retailing proposed will not harm the viability of retail facilities in any nearby settlement;**
- b) the scale and nature of building proposed for retailing and the size, design, materials and siting of any new building or extension blends with the existing buildings or the farmstead, the surrounding landscape and are compatible with adjacent land uses;**
- c) satisfactory access, parking and infrastructure arrangements can be provided in scale with the proposed retailing and the development does not create an unacceptable impact upon the highway network; and**
- d) with the exception of farm shops, the site is accessible by a choice of means of travel including public transport, bicycle and on foot.**

**Any planning permission for such a use is likely to limit the range or sources of the goods to be sold to those produced within the unit.**

- 13.11.1 Farm and craft shops can perform an important role in rural areas providing fresh produce, encouraging tourism, creating jobs and successfully contributing to the diversity of the rural economy.
- 13.11.2 Factory and craft shops selling goods produced at the unit enhance their viability and are likely to be acceptable providing they meet the policy criteria.

### **13.12 POLICY TRL8 – SHOP FRONT DESIGN**

**A new shop front will be permitted provided: -**

- a) it relates well to the building taking into account upper floors, scale, proportion, vertical alignment, architectural style and materials;**
- b) it preserves any existing separate access to the floors above;**
- c) it takes account of the design features of neighbouring shop fronts so that the development will fit in with the character of the street scene;**

- d) it uses materials which complement the street scene; and**
  - e) any security shutters are designed as to allow a view of the retail display at all times.**
- 13.12.1 Attractive shop fronts are of critical importance to a successful shopping centre. A new shopfront should not be designed in isolation but should be conceived as part of the building and the street scene. Separate access to upper floors of retail premises should be retained where possible.
- 13.12.2 The maintenance of the shopping display at all times is an important consideration in a shopping centre. Accordingly, whilst recognising the need to provide a measure of security to premises, the use of security shutters will be conditioned on the visibility of the window display being maintained at all times.
- 13.12.3 The disabled, elderly and people with young children in push chairs and prams have particular needs in accessing shop premises. Easy and safe access can often be provided as part of the design of a new shop front by avoiding the use of steps and creating a level surface between the street and the interior of the shop.
- 13.12.4 The positioning and number of advertisements on the shopfront will be subject to the controls contained in policies in the Environment Chapter. Supplementary Planning Guidance on shop front design will be produced.

### **13.13 SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL SUMMARY**

- 13.13.1 Town, district, local and village centres play a key role in influencing travel patterns and providing a focus for the local community. The policies are designed to reduce the loss of trade (with its attendant loss of employment, generation of traffic etc.) and to focus activity on the centres. This accords with sustainability principles and addresses the Plan's Vision and Strategy.

**Proposals will be considered against any of the Plan's policies that are relevant.**

**Useful starting points are: -**

**CHAPTER 8: ENVIRONMENT**

**Policy ENV8:**      **A) Replacement dwellings; B) Conversions or re-use of buildings & C) Farm Diversification in the countryside.**

**Policy GC1:**      **New Buildings, Structures & Changes of Use**

**Policy GC2:**      **Engineering Works and Operations  
[Including Minerals and Waste]**

## **14 RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE**

### **14.1 CURRENT POSITION**

- 14.1.1 Recreation and sport play a central role in community life and are increasingly recognised in terms of their benefits in achieving healthier lifestyles. The County Borough contains a wide variety of facilities for recreation and sport ranging in scale and importance from Sports Centres, Health and Fitness clubs, Country Parks and Golf Courses through to playing fields, parks and small, but locally significant areas of informal greenspace. Major sport and recreation facilities are located in the three main urban areas of Neath, Port Talbot and Pontardawe. However, most settlements have some form of sport and recreation facilities offering the opportunity for people of all ages and abilities to participate in active sport and recreation. Such facilities are provided by a range of organisations including the Council, Community Councils, Welfare Clubs, schools, the Private Sector and Voluntary organisations.
- 14.1.2 The County Borough has a large and varied Countryside resource, which supports a range of facilities and activities. Around 30 % of the land area of the County Borough is forested supporting the only Forest Park in South Wales. Afan Forest Park and Margam Country Park are of regional importance and are complemented by the Gnoll Estate and Craig Gwladys Country Parks. Other areas important to visitors and residents include the 'Waterfalls Walk' above Pontneddfechan and Cwm Du Glen in Pontardawe. Coed Morgannwg Way, a 36-mile path passes through the County Borough and connects Margam Park with Afan Forest Park and other Parks outside the County Borough boundary.
- 14.1.3 The Neath, Tennant and Swansea Canals provide important local recreational resources within the County Borough. Sections of the canals are used for boating and draw visitors from a wide area. (In 2002, the Neath – Tonna, Resolven – Glynneath, Clydach - Trebanos and Pontardawe - Ynysmeudwy sections were available for navigation).
- 14.1.4 The coastal estuaries are used as bases for pleasure boating, with a marina at Earlswood (Briton Ferry) while the Lower River Afan is used as a base for pleasure and fishing boats. The Port Talbot Docks are used for fishing and boating although commercial shipping has first priority. Many of the watercourses are used for fishing, while Eglwys Nunydd reservoir is an important centre for dinghy sailing.
- 14.1.5 The County Borough possesses a network of Public Rights of Way (PROW), which is an invaluable resource providing access to the Borough's forestry, uplands, moorland and Country Parks and is used for walking cycling, horse riding and pony trekking by local people and visitors alike. Whilst the primary use of the rural paths is for recreational purposes, they are also important for access. A substantial length of the PROW network is located within the urban and sub-urban areas and is used by the whole community, including the elderly and disabled.

- 14.1.6 A network of cycle routes extends up the Swansea, Neath, Afan and Goytre valleys. The Celtic Trail (between Kidwelly and Newport) comprising routes 47 and 4 of the National Cycle Network runs through the County Borough and the Borough is increasingly gaining a reputation as a destination for mountain biking and other sporting activities.
- 14.1.7 Leisure and tourism issues are considered in the Town Centres, Retail and Leisure and the Economy and Employment Chapters.

## 14.2 CURRENT TRENDS AND ISSUES

- 14.2.1 There is a long-term trend towards participation in a wider range of sport and recreation activities. As spare time and disposable income have increased over the years so has involvement in and expectations of recreation and leisure. This is likely to continue with increasing awareness of the importance of health and fitness.
- 14.2.2 A Sports Council for Wales participation survey (1999) indicated that the level of adult participation in sport and recreation in Neath Port Talbot was 60.4%. This figure was above the Wales average (55%). Much of the growth in participation has involved women, but increased participation has been evident across all age bands and social groupings. Health-related activities such as jogging, cycling, walking, swimming and aerobics have been growing fastest, while participation in more traditional team sports remains relatively static. This is a reflection of the general ageing of the population, which may have implications for future provision of sport and recreational facilities, as an older population requires different recreational needs.
- 14.2.3 Changes within the workplace mean that not only do fewer sources of employment involve conventional working hours, but also more people are able to take advantage of flexible working arrangements. In turn, people demand a greater degree of flexibility in the provision of recreational facilities.
- 14.2.4 There has been considerable growth in outdoor countryside pursuits as many more people enjoy informal recreational opportunities. Newer forms of leisure activity continue to emerge, encouraging and enabling wider levels of participation throughout society. This includes the Afan Forest Park Mountain bike trails, which offer a regionally important forest cycling attraction.
- 14.2.5 The Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000 came into force at the end of January 2001 and included measures to improve the Public Rights of Way (PROW) Network. This required highway authorities to produce PROW Improvement Plans. The Act also introduced a new right of access to open countryside, providing new opportunities for walking, but also potentially putting pressure on vulnerable and fragile land.
- 14.2.6 The Council's finances for recreational provision are limited. Nationally the last twenty years has seen dramatic cuts in revenue expenditure on parks and urban open spaces despite their importance to the quality of life and vitality of our communities. In the past open play space provision, particularly on large

estates, has created problems due to poor management, lack of funding for ongoing maintenance and poor location in the overall design resulting in crime, nuisance and neglect. The Authority has reassessed its provision of play and recreational facilities in the light of the needs of the users and the available resources. Changing attitudes to safety and security mean that increasingly parents are concerned with children playing unsupervised out of parental supervision. Some existing playgrounds and areas of open space are considered too small to provide adequate space, cause disturbance due to their proximity to adjacent properties and are uneconomic to maintain. Key playgrounds serving wider communities have been identified and some play areas have been removed, as they are no longer viable.

- 14.2.7 The potential for the creation of an integrated network of canals and waterways linking the Neath, Tennant and Swansea Canals via the Swansea Marina, and through the lower Swansea Valley has long been recognised. Feasibility studies have confirmed that although providing the “missing links” within the City and County of Swansea would be particularly costly, the concept is attractive and feasible. The potential to re-use the Briton Ferry Docks as a base for sea-going yachts and fishing boats has also been identified and this will be investigated as the proposals for the Baglan Bay Development are progressed.

### **14.3 STRATEGY**

- 14.3.1 A key objective of the plan is to promote a sustainable pattern of sports and recreation provision. The Authority is committed to working to achieve and maintain an optimum range of locally based recreational opportunities appropriate to the resources available to the Council and its partners. The plan seeks to achieve this through: good quality physical access to facilities and open spaces; the ongoing protection of provision; an equitable distribution of core facilities within centres or in other locations well served by public transport and the development of a network of safe walking and cycling routes connecting residential and employment areas to sports, recreation and tourist facilities.
- 14.3.2 The Council aims to ensure that adequate and appropriate land, buildings and water-based facilities for recreational purposes are available to meet the needs of the Borough’s residents, and visitors, without compromising amenities, biodiversity and the essential character of both the urban areas and the countryside.
- 14.3.3 The provision of new recreational facilities should reflect the needs of the public in locations accessible to all sectors of the community in order to address social inclusion. Major new facilities should be located within existing urban areas, or in locations that are easily accessible by the whole community and should not undermine policies to reduce traffic demand. The County Borough’s Strategy is to focus the provision of facilities in the interest of making the best use of facilities and resources. When considering new proposals the preference will be for the enhancement of existing facilities provided they would adequately meet the needs of the development.

- 14.3.4 The Authority's assessment of the adequacy of open space provision will be based on a minimum standard of provision of open space of 2.8 hectares of recreational space for every 1000 residents. This standard includes land for children's play grounds and sports fields, and is based on the widely used and respected National Playing Fields Association's (NPFA) "Six Acre Standard".
- 14.3.5 Open spaces will be protected where they have a local amenity or recreational value and a network of accessible high quality, sustainable open spaces will be developed and safeguarded. The potential of open space within urban areas and settlements to contribute to the amenity of the areas and provide wildlife habitats will be fully recognised. The potential to provide recreational facilities in the countryside and along the coast will be encouraged provided unacceptable impacts including those on the landscape, seascape and biodiversity are not created. The potential to restore the existing canal network and recreate a new integrated system will be safeguarded.

#### **14.4 PART 1 POLICY**

##### **POLICY 17**

**Provision for sport, recreation and open space will be protected and enhanced by: -**

- a) encouraging new and enhanced provision provided no unacceptable impacts would be created;**
- b) steering proposals for facilities that generate high levels of travel demand to sites in or close to town centres;**
- c) protecting existing playing fields and areas of open space that have significant recreational value to the community from development, unless it can be demonstrated that they are surplus to long term requirements or satisfactory alternative provision can be made;**
- d) ensuring that new development makes it fair contribution to meeting any additional demands which it creates;**
- e) encouraging and promoting the appropriate improvement of opportunities for access to and enjoyment of the coast and the countryside.**

- 14.4.1 Sport, recreation and open spaces are important elements of current lifestyles, and make valuable contributions towards community development and community cohesion. Participation in activities helps to improve the individual's health and enjoyment. The provision and adequacy of facilities also attracts visitors, helping to generate further economic development and raising the profile of the County Borough.
- 14.4.2 Sport includes activities that are of a formal or competitive nature, ranging from football and golf, to squash and swimming. It can take place indoors in purpose

built or converted buildings, and outdoor, on land reserved for one or more sports.

- 14.4.3 Recreation includes informal physical activity, which is generally non-competitive and of an individual, family or group nature. As with sport it can take place indoors or outdoors, but its significance arises from the large amounts of land used, in the form of general open space, playing fields, parks and allotments. These areas can also be important in providing wildlife interests, wildlife corridors and stepping stones within the urban areas and settlements.
- 14.4.4 The provision of well located new and improved sport and recreation facilities wherever possible in or near town and other centres helps to ensure that all sections of the community, has access to a range of good quality, well-designed facilities. They also enhance the vitality, attractiveness and viability of these centres. The shopping and leisure chapter identifies the different types of centre, and the type of provision which would be appropriate to the function and catchment of the centre concerned.
- 14.4.5 Country Parks, open space, parks, allotments, play and amenity spaces provide a range of more passive and informal activities. There may be scope for improving the range and distribution of such opportunities, allowing everyone to enjoy open space, the coast and the countryside as well as improving access to existing opportunities. Promoting the provision and retention of local recreational facilities and areas readily accessible by a variety of transport modes encourages sustainable communities and contributes to reducing traffic generation. In addition, footpaths, cycleways and bridleways provide a cheap and easily used recreation facility, which are accessible to all.
- 14.4.6 The provision and protection of recreational facilities and open space can help meet wider sustainability objectives including enhancing biodiversity, improving local air quality and the control of pollution, protecting natural resources, promoting social inclusion and the growth of a diverse economy. The Council will seek to protect open space that has a significant recreational or amenity value and to promote sustainable green networks of accessible, high quality open spaces for residents and visitors. New sport and recreation proposals, must embrace the principles of sustainable development to ensure the opportunities and qualities aimed for will be available not only for today's residents but also for future generations.
- 14.4.7 Facilities and services provided as a result of new development should make the best and most effective use of existing and programmed facilities and resources.

#### **14.5 POLICY RO1-PROTECTION OF RECREATION, SPORT FACILITIES AND OPEN SPACES**

**The Council will resist the loss of playing fields, formal and informal open space, children's playgrounds, allotments and indoor facilities for development except: -**

- a) where such facilities are over-provided and under-used and there is no evident demand for the re-use for another recreational use; or**
- b) where equivalent or enhanced facilities can be provided on suitable replacement sites by the developer; or**
- c) through the contribution of a commuted sum towards the provision of new or improved recreation facilities which would serve the local community well; or**
- d) where an existing facility which serves the area well can best be retained and enhanced by virtue of development of a small part of the site.**

- 14.5.1 Sport and recreational facilities are important to the community and are difficult to replace once lost. The control of development on the edge of towns and settlements may lead to pressure to build on open land. It is therefore important to retain existing areas, and for these areas to be accessible for all. This policy will protect all types of sport and recreation facilities, both indoor and outdoor, to ensure that existing levels of provision are maintained unless the developer can demonstrate satisfactorily to the Council that the facility is surplus to requirements, or that satisfactory alternative provision is or can be made available. Where such facilities are no longer required for their original purpose, they may be able to meet other needs for recreational land and facilities in the community. This could be as a result of changing needs and aspirations, and changes in the age structure of the local community.
- 14.5.2 Difficulties may arise in maintaining facilities, including playing fields and children's playgrounds and they may become redundant. To secure the long term viability of a facility it may be acceptable to allow a small part of a site to be developed in order to provide the necessary funding to ensure that the outdoor sports facility can be retained and enhanced. Relocation may be favourably considered provided the relocation would adequately meet the users' needs. Where there appears to be a need to remove or relocate open space or a recreational facility the Authority will consult with the local community concerned before coming to a final decision.
- 14.5.3 In assessing proposals, the Authority will base its considerations on the adequacy of provision to serve the area on the Open Space Standards (see policy RO3) and will take into account its (Draft) Leisure Strategy. The amount, type, quality, location, accessibility, usage and appropriateness of existing provision, and current and anticipated demand for such facilities will also be taken into account. Where a commuted sum is considered, the Authority will take into account the potential for new provision to adequately replace the provision, which would be lost as a result of the development.
- 14.5.4 Not all open space is used for active recreation. Some areas are important for general amenity for local communities and have a major role to play in improving the quality of life in urban areas where they fulfil multiple purposes, including contributing to biodiversity, the conservation of landscape, air quality and the protection of controlled waters. In assessing the need and suitability of

land as informal open space, the extent of existing use, the availability of open space to serve the area and the contribution in terms of townscape and biodiversity will be taken into account.

14.5.5 Many attractive countryside routes extend into urban areas. These provide important greenways for public use. They contribute significantly to the environment of the Borough and can make a valuable contribution to wildlife habitats. Other green areas can be important in terms of providing a wildlife corridor or “stepping stones” and contributing to environmental amenity.

14.5.6 Land is allocated on the Proposals Map under this policy to designate the Corus Sports and Social Club ground together with an area to the north east and east, as land for recreation and sports facilities. The additional area of land is designated in order to promote its use as mitigation for land lost to the PDR.

14.5.7 Supplementary Planning Guidance will be prepared which will identify land, buildings and areas which are considered important in terms of their role for recreation, sport facilities or open space.

#### **14.6 POLICY RO2 – NEW SPORT AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES**

**A. The provision of new sport and recreational facilities will be promoted and supported provided that: -**

**a) preference should be given to previously developed land and proposals should be well located in terms of existing and proposed development;**

**b) the proposal would not create any unacceptable impacts on amenity, landscape, seascape or biodiversity and would minimise crime and vandalism;**

**c) appropriate bus, servicing, car and cycle parking is provided;**

**d) the proposal is small scale and meets local needs or, if the proposal involves significant sport and recreational facilities, the site should be located within or on the edge of town centres or in areas of high public transport accessibility;**

**e) the proposal would not generate unacceptable levels of vehicular traffic nor prejudice highway safety; and**

**f) the potential for conflict between different pursuits is minimised.**

**B. The use of land for sport and recreation outside settlement boundaries will be permitted provided it can also be demonstrated that: -**

**a) the proposal requires a countryside location;**

**b) the proposal will not create unacceptable impacts and would be accessible by a range of transport; and**

**c) any buildings, structures or car parking areas should be small scale and discreetly located and well screened to minimise the impact on the countryside.**

- 14.6.1 The County Borough Council wishes to encourage a wide range of well located indoor and outdoor sports and recreation facilities. The Authority's consideration will be led by its Open Space standards and /or its (draft) Leisure Strategy. Priority will be given to areas of local need such as in areas of open space deficiency, where there is a lack of other indoor facilities or where there is potential to use disused land as parks or greenways. Where there is a shortfall in open space these deficiencies will be addressed when need, land availability and resources allow. The private sector, new developments and schools provision are likely to play an increasingly important role.
- 14.6.2 The concentration of recreation developments in or adjacent to town, district, local and village centres will consolidate their role, help to promote urban regeneration and ensure accessibility of the facilities to all sections of the community. Previously developed land or disused buildings can provide opportunities for new sporting and recreation opportunities and suitable new development will be encouraged.
- 14.6.3 In considering proposals it will be necessary to assess the impact on the environment; whether the proposal would be better located on previously developed land (see policy ENV13); its proximity to public transport and the impact on the existing highway network. The Council will have particular regard to the need to protect the residential amenities of the occupants of neighbouring properties. While it will normally be possible to locate golf courses acceptably in a countryside location, golf driving ranges are more urban and obtrusive and will rarely be acceptable in the countryside.
- 14.6.4 Joint provision and dual use of suitable sport and recreation facilities will be encouraged, to achieve the full potential of land and resources. This provision is usually made at schools, which are well placed to serve the community. However, any extension of hours, or intensification of use may by virtue of traffic, noise, or other disturbance, have adverse impacts on the surrounding area. Therefore the Council will safeguard the residential amenity of the surrounding areas.
- 14.6.5 Demands for sport facilities can also be met through the provision of all-weather synthetic surfaces and other floodlit, multi sport, all-weather surfaces capable of intensive use. However, where it is proposed to replace a natural turf pitch, the visual and other impacts on the character of the locality will be taken fully into account. Whilst the floodlighting of existing facilities would enable increased use, such lighting will need to accord with Policies in the Environment Chapter.
- 14.6.6 The enjoyment of the countryside through informal recreation including walking, cycling and horse riding is increasing. However, some activities have

environment and amenity implications. A balance should be struck between encouraging access to the countryside and safeguarding the character and amenities of the countryside and local residents. Whilst there is a general presumption against inappropriate development in the countryside, it is recognised that certain sports and pastimes have particular requirements which can only be met outside the urban area; or can only be located where a particular resource such as land or water exists; or have an impact which would be unacceptable in the urban area. Proposals involving recreational and sporting facilities in the countryside can also play a key role in contributing towards the vitality and viability of an existing farm or settlement, and help to sustain local facilities including, guest houses, inns, post offices and tourist attractions.

- 14.6.7 Proposals which would be located out of centre or outside settlement limits will be assessed against the Plan's policies with particular emphasis on their impact on traffic generation, the vitality, attractiveness and viability of town and other centres.
- 14.6.8 Proposals that would have a significant effect on the landscape or biodiversity should be supported with an assessment of the effects of the proposed development on the landscape, seascape and archaeology environment and ecology of the area, together with measures to minimise these effects and where appropriate mitigation proposals.
- 14.6.9 The unauthorised use of land, including off-road vehicles can cause significant damage to fragile areas of land in terms of biodiversity, landscape and our historical heritage. This type of activity together with other recreational activities including gun sports and war games can also give rise to problems of noise and disturbance. In the selection of sites for such uses the potential impact of the activity on the site and its surroundings including agricultural activities, tourist and leisure and residential amenity will be important considerations.

#### **14.7 POLICY RO3 – PROVISION OF OPEN SPACE TO SERVE NEW RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENTS**

- A) Proposals for the creation of all new dwellings will be required where existing open space is inadequate to contribute towards either the improvement of existing off-site facilities in the locality through a commuted payment or make provision for additional areas of open space within the site.**
  - B) Such space or facilities should be provided in accordance with the Borough Council's adopted standard of 2.8 hectares per 1000 population. The provision should be well related to the housing that it is intended to serve, but the exact form and type should have regard to the nature and size of the development and the needs of the residents.**
- 14.7.1 New housing developments place increased demand on open space facilities. Developers will be expected to contribute to or make provision for formal and informal open space. The policy is based upon the NPFA standards for open

space provision. This includes provision for outdoor playing space at minimum ratio of 2.4 hectares per 1000 population, which comprises:

- *1.6 hectares per 1000 population for outdoor sport, of which at least 1.2 hectares should be for pitch sports, and*
- *0.8 hectares per 1000 population for children's play space.*

14.7.2 The County Borough Council's adopted standard also include provision for informal space at a ratio of:

- *0.4 hectares per 1000 population for informal open space.*

14.7.3 Informal open space includes public amenity space, residential greens, ornamental parks and gardens and corridors which contribute to the layout pattern and character of a new development

14.7.4 As a general guideline the provision of open space would be likely to represent some 10% of the area of a site exceeding 30 houses.

14.7.5 When considering proposals the adequacy of existing or committed provision will be assessed. This will include both the likely needs of the residents and the quality and suitability of the existing provision. Where a deficiency in open space is likely to occur or be worsened as a result of a proposed development, Section 106 agreements may be used to secure the provision of recreational facilities, either by financial contributions towards the enhancement of a nearby sport or recreational facility, or the provision of open space within the development itself.

14.7.6 New development which would worsen existing deficiencies in provision or create additional needs should make provision to meet these needs with first preference being to the enhancement of existing facilities. Improvements could include extensions to the range of facilities such as public parks, landscaping schemes, play facilities, the creation of areas of woodland, wildlife habitat or ecological features. Developers may wish to make financial or other contributions to allow the development to proceed. Commuted sums would be calculated on a pro rata basis using the Local Authority adopted standard for open space. The funds would then contribute to providing or improving the appropriate recreational facilities serving the community within a reasonable timescale. It may be necessary to phase developments to allow the provision of open space and facilities.

14.7.7 A considerable amount of housing development in the Borough takes place on small sites accommodating less than 10 dwellings. Where the proposal would be located in an area where there is a deficiency in provision or the proposal would help create a deficiency, the developer will be expected to make a contribution towards meeting these needs. On small sites it is unlikely to be appropriate to include provision on site and so a contribution should be in the form of commuted payments.

14.7.8 In the case of individual circumstances such as an elderly persons accommodation, or where there is a need for youth or community facilities the Council will seek an appropriate facility. This will also be considered under the policies in the Community and Social Consideration Chapter.

14.7.9 In establishing the amount and type of open space or financial contribution required, the Authority will have regard to: -

- a) the population and needs likely to be generated by the development;
- b) the likely age structure of the residents and their particular open space needs;
- c) the existing provision of open space, its type, quality and adequacy and whether it has the potential to meet the needs generated by the development;
- d) the accessibility of onsite open space and community safety;
- e) the potential to link onsite open space to other areas of open space and pedestrian networks in the locality and;
- f) future maintenance of the open space

14.7.10 When assessing the adequacy of the provision of open space the following hierarchy of provision will be taken into account:

#### **COUNTY BOROUGH WIDE**

**Country Parks** – an extensive area which serves a wide area, primarily providing for informal recreation but offers sufficient attractions to warrant people travelling to enjoy the facilities.

**Linear Open Space** - Canal towpaths, disused railways and other routes which provide opportunities for informal recreational, including nature conservation.

**TOWN / DISTRICT PARK** A large park providing for a range of formal and informal recreation which could include playing fields for organised sports and which serves a distinct town or catchment area.

**SMALL LOCAL PARK/OPEN SPACE** Usually smaller areas serving a local need which may include play or sport facilities and sitting out areas, depending on the likely types of user.

14.7.11 It is important that appropriate arrangements are in place to ensure that open space remains available and maintained in the future. Developers will be expected to ensure that adequate provision is made for the future maintenance of the facilities provided. This could include entering into obligations to ensure that commuted sums are provided to cover the maintenance costs of open space adopted by the County Borough Council, Community Council, Wildlife Trust or other appropriate body for a reasonable period of time. The design and layout

of formal and informal open space should allow long term cost effective management to take place.

- 14.7.12 When developments are being designed, they should take into account how they would provide access to the open space and walking and cycling network. Footpaths and bridleways should be sensitively incorporated into developments or diversions sought where acceptable alternative routes can be identified. This will be addressed via the policies in the Environment and Transport Chapters.
- 14.7.13 In new housing developments the opportunity should be taken to retain existing landscape and wildlife features.
- 14.7.14 Guidance on the operation and implications of this Policy will be addressed in Supplementary Planning Guidance on Residential Development and Open Space Provision.

#### **14.8 POLICY RO4 – ACCESS TO THE COUNTRYSIDE AND COAST**

**Proposals that improve and extend access to the countryside and coast including cycleway, pedestrian and bridleway networks will be supported. Proposals should take into account the following: -**

- a) **the improvement and extension to the Public Rights of Way network;**
  - b) **the reduction of conflicts between different users of the network and priority over vehicular transport;**
  - c) **no unacceptable impacts being created on the landscape, seascape, biodiversity or built environment.**
- 14.8.1 The rights of way network provides a valuable recreation resource enabling people to gain access to, and enjoy the countryside. The Authority will support schemes that improve or extend access within settlements and out into the countryside provided no unacceptable impacts are created. Priority will be given to improving routes between residential areas and recreational facilities, and circular routes from countryside attractions which are readily accessible by car and public transport.

#### **14.9 POLICY RO5 – WATER BASED RECREATION**

**Water based recreational activities and essential ancillary facilities will be safeguarded and the provision and enhancement of facilities encouraged provided that: -**

- a) **no unacceptable harm would be caused to local amenities;**
- b) **the proposal would not jeopardise flood defences;**

- c) the proposal would not have any unacceptable impacts on the landscape, seascape, biodiversity or built environment or create pollution;
- d) the facilities would be accessible by a variety of means of transport;
- e) additional traffic would not create unacceptable traffic or highway safety impacts; and
- f) appropriate bus, servicing, car and cycle parking would be available.

14.9.1 The County Borough's rivers and lakes offer many opportunities for recreation, such as angling and boating. Water based recreation should not damage nature conservation, the landscape or be detrimental to river flood defences. The undeveloped coastline although of limited extent is of particular value in terms of landscape and nature conservation interests, and proposals will be expected to demonstrate the need for a coastal location. All proposals should comply with the policies in the Environment Chapter.

#### **14.10 POLICY RO6 – CANALS**

**A. Proposals which would prejudice the conservation, restoration and operation of the Swansea, Neath and Tennant Canals will not be permitted. This will include: -**

- a) development which would adversely affect the setting of the canals;
- b) development which would prevent or discourage the use of the canals for recreation and water supply.

**B. The following routes are protected to enable the restoration of the Canal network:-**

- a) the protection of a route to enable the restoration of the Swansea Canal between Trebanos and Herbert Street, Pontardawe (as indicated on the Proposals Map);
- b) the protection of a route at Abergarwed to enable the restoration of the Neath Canal (as indicated on the Proposals Map);
- c) protection of the route of the former canal between Ysgwrfa Bridge and Oddfellows Street, Glynneath (as indicated on the Proposals Map).

14.10.1 The Neath Canal extends from Briton Ferry to Glynneath and has a statutory right of navigation. The line of the canal is largely intact and restoration for recreation and navigation is progressing. Navigation is available between Neath and Tonna, Resolven and Glynneath and for unpowered boats between Briton Ferry and Neath. The canal between Tonna and Abergarwed was seriously contaminated by minewater but de-contamination works will be complete by spring 2005. Restoration of Tonna Lock is completed and grant funding has

been secured to restore navigation to Abergarwed including a replacement aqueduct at Clyne and the restoration of three locks. A short length of the canal has been infilled at Abergarwed, while at Glynneath an isolated section retains its navigation rights although it is buried beneath an embankment.

- 14.10.2 The Tennant Canal extends from a junction with the Neath Canal at Aberdulais to Port Tenant. The canal is privately owned and there is no public right of navigation. There is potential to construct a link in the City and County of Swansea from Port Tennant via Swansea Docks, the River Tawe and sections of new canal to link with the existing Swansea Canal at Clydach. This would create a local waterway network comprising some 35 miles of canal which would provide local leisure and tourist opportunities. The canal passes through the Crymlyn Bog which is a Special Area of Conservation and restoration proposals would need to take any impacts on the ecology of the SAC fully into account.
- 14.10.3 The Swansea Canal is owned by British Waterways, but although maintained, there is no right of navigation. A lengthy section of the canal within Neath Port Talbot has been infilled between Trebanos and Herbert Street, Pontardawe. A route is safeguarded by the policy to allow restoration, but this would be particularly expensive involving a new line of canal with locks, a tunnel under the A474 and the provision of new bridges. The canal is available for navigation between Holly Street, Pontardawe and Ynysmeudwy and between Clydach and Trebanos. North of Ynysmeudwy a short length of the canal, owned by Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council, is a Local Nature Reserve.
- 14.10.4 Much of the towpath system on the canals is available for walkers, although there is no right of way along the Tenant Canal towpath. A Public Access Agreement allows permissive access but permits the canal owners to close the towpath during maintenance works.
- 14.10.5 As a consequence of the commercial disuse of the canals since the 1930's, other than for water supply, lengthy sections are of interest as habitats for nature conservation. Notwithstanding that the Neath Canal is protected by Acts of Parliament which guarantee the rights of navigation, restoration work should take into account the opportunity to retain habitats and the need to recognise the status of protected species such as water vole and otters. Nature Conservation interest will be of particular importance in terms of the Tenant Canal where it passes through Crymlyn Bog which is designated as being of international wildlife importance.

## **14.11 SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL SUMMARY**

- 14.11.1 The policies seek to protect and enhance existing provision of sport and recreation facilities, encourage the provision of a sustainable pattern of facilities to serve new developments within the County Borough and lays down criteria against which new proposals will be assessed. The retention and enhancement of facilities in communities throughout the County Borough helps to ensure all residents have the opportunity to participate in activities encouraging and

promoting healthier lifestyles, and further encouraging community development. New facilities should be located in the main urban areas, accessible by a range of transport modes including walking, cycling and public transport.

**Proposals will be considered against any of the Plan's policies that are relevant.**

**Useful starting points are: -**

**CHAPTER 8: ENVIRONMENT**

**Policy ENV8:** **A) Replacement dwellings; B) Conversions or re-use of buildings & C) Farm Diversification in the countryside.**

**Policy GC1:** **New Buildings, Structures & Changes of Use**

**Policy GC2:** **Engineering Works and Operations [Including Minerals and Waste]**

## **15 INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENERGY**

### **15.1 CURRENT POSITION**

- 15.1.1 Making the most effective use of existing and programmed infrastructure is central to Sustainable Development. This means taking the capacity of education, health, roads, water, sewerage, electricity, gas and telecommunications into account when selecting areas for new development or considering planning applications. When new facilities are planned, they should make provision for likely future needs. The UDP sets out a context for these decisions. It takes into account both the capacity of existing facilities, and identifies where new development is likely to be acceptable. It seeks to guide development to locations which make the best use of the resources.
- 15.1.2 As a result of its history of heavy industrial development and its central location within South Wales, the County Borough is well served generally in terms of the supply of services including electricity, water and gas. Local problems occur as development, or increasing use, places demands on existing infrastructure. In other areas there may be spare capacity available, but the area or location may not be attractive to investors and developers. New development may be needed to fund additional infrastructure, but the amount of development may be unacceptable in terms of other impacts including those on the environment and community. In some cases development may need to be phased or occupation related to the provision of necessary infrastructure. Some infrastructure requires a location within the countryside and this is recognised in the Environment Chapter policies.
- 15.1.3 These factors should be taken into account within the wider context of the needs and aspirations of the area and communities. The Community Plan provides strategic guidance while the UDP through its allocations, and policies provides the framework to guide development and investment decisions.
- 15.1.4 Provision of health, education and other key community facilities is concentrated in the main towns of Neath, Port Talbot and Pontardawe.
- 15.1.5 The new hospital at Baglan Moors has replaced the Neath General hospital and serve most of the area's needs. Other provision in terms of elderly, psychiatric and other specialised needs are provided through units at Tonna and the Cimla, while there are community hospitals at Gelli Nudd (Pontardawe) and Aberavon.
- 15.1.6 Local health facilities are important within the community and need to be in locations where they are easily accessible by everyone. They often provide a powerful attraction to chemists' shops. While smaller doctors' surgeries may be located within local centres, health centres which meet a broader range of patient needs, due to their size are more usually located on the fringe of centres. Dentists' surgeries are usually located within town, district, local or village centres.
- 15.1.7 Education is provided through a network of primary and secondary schools and the Neath and Afan Tertiary College which has campus facilities in Neath,

Margam and Pontardawe. These are important in providing facilities and a focus for the community. They generate considerable traffic. A range of initiatives are underway aimed at encouraging more children and parents to walk to school, and the accessibility of the location is particularly important.

- 15.1.8 There is an increasing focus on education and training for adults and throughout the community. The County Borough is developing 13 New Learning Centres serving local communities while the library network is supplemented by education and training centres in Tai'r Gwaith, Banwen (part of Swansea University), Crynant and Glynneath.
- 15.1.9 Homes for the elderly and sheltered accommodation are located within many communities where a central location, which has easy access to community facilities and shops is particularly important. Facilities and services for the elderly, disabled and others needing specialised support tend to serve a wider area and can generate significant traffic.
- 15.1.10 Infrastructure and energy related apparatus range from unobtrusive water pumps to underground service reservoirs and telecommunication masts, dishes and other apparatus. Often these need a countryside location in terms of operational requirements, or to find the necessary space. They are particularly related to developments in technology. While on the one hand the growth in use of mobile phones has led to a network of masts, a move towards digital television may make TV masts redundant.

#### Energy Generation

- 15.1.11 Neath Port Talbot continues to make a major contribution to the UK's energy generation through its coal production. This is primarily through the extensive opencast operations, while two small drift mines remain in operation in the Swansea Valley.
- 15.1.12 Much of the power used in the area is imported. A power station at BP's Baglan Bay petro-chemical works has been replaced by a major 500mw gas fired power station which provides electricity both to local industry and the national grid. As part of the waste recovery and treatment plant at Jersey Marine a waste to energy process will not only make the plant self sufficient in terms of energy but will offer the potential to provide a further 2mw, which is likely to be used for local authority street lighting and other needs.
- 15.1.13 Owing to the County Borough's mountainous and windy landscape there has been interest in developing wind farms within the County. This has been accompanied by a difficulty in identifying sites which would not be unacceptably prominent.
- 15.1.14 The County Borough contains large areas of conifer plantation, owned by the Welsh Assembly Government and managed by the Forestry Commission and Forest Enterprise (the largest percentage by area of any local authority in England and Wales). This offers the potential for timber related power generation.

- 15.1.15 The potential of the area's rivers and watercourses to generate power is not exploited except by a small water wheel at the National Trust's Aberdulais Falls site. The potential to use wind and tidal power through creating facilities offshore in Swansea Bay has been identified.
- 15.1.16 The potential to create power from solar energy is demonstrated by the "G8" building on the Baglan Energy Park alongside the M4. The take-up of solar power from solar panels on individual buildings elsewhere is limited.

## **15.2 CURRENT TRENDS AND ISSUES**

### Infrastructure

- 15.2.1 While the coastal belt is well served by water, sewerage, gas, electricity and telecommunications local difficulties occur, particularly where development has progressed higher up hillsides above the towns.
- 15.2.2 Water supply problems in areas including Baglan Heights above Port Talbot, Cwmafan and Bryn could constrain the potential for new development. Depending on the scale and location of the proposal, the provision of major new investment involving not only supply pipes but also an underground service reservoir might be required. Much of the area adjacent to the Neath urban area would require expensive new main sewer provision. Detailed information on the availability of services should be sought from the providers, but the Authority's planning policy team would be prepared to discuss its understanding of the position.
- 15.2.3 Where new facilities or services for the community are provided they should be well located in terms of accessibility by all. Wherever appropriate they should help support and focus the town, district, local or village centre (see the Town Centres, Retail and Leisure chapter).
- 15.2.4 As a consequence of a slow process of population loss, some valley centres have spare capacity in terms of facilities including schools, water and sewerage. Unfortunately these areas may not be well located in terms of meeting the needs and demands for new housing and other development. In addition as a result of the ageing of the area's population there is an increasing need to provide services for the elderly and disabled. While, in general, the existing facilities are able to cope with demand there is a need to refurbish and redevelop to meet current standards.
- 15.2.5 As school populations have declined, this has allowed overcrowding to be eased. Some schools, particularly in valley communities, have significant spare capacity, although others near current areas of new housing may be over capacity. In some areas the development of significant new housing might require additional provision within existing primary and secondary schools, while in others the provision of a new school may be needed.
- 15.2.6 Telecommunications and particularly mobile phones have become an indispensable feature of modern life. The provision of services to cover the

valleys is difficult and some valley communities are not fully covered. The provision of masts can be problematic in terms of the visual impact. There has also been concern over health issues where they would be close to housing or other sensitive uses, but National Assembly guidance at TAN 19 is that health concerns appear not to be justified from detailed research.

### Energy

- 15.2.7 The global and more local repercussions of climatic change caused by increasing levels of pollution are widely recognised. The need to address the problems is recognised in EU and Assembly Government regulations and guidance.
- 15.2.8 There is increasing interest in the development of energy from renewable sources. These include sources of energy other than fossil or nuclear fuels which are continuously and sustainably available: water, solar, plant material and agriculture, forestry or wood wastes or residues, sewage or energy crops. The Assembly Government has published its proposals to achieve its targets for producing Renewable Energy in its TAN 8. This includes identifying strategic areas within which major wind farm developments would be clustered. Two of these areas are largely located within the County Borough. The Authority has expressed its objections to the way the proposed clusters were identified. The Assembly Government has confirmed that emerging UDPs will not be required to address the guidance.
- 15.2.9 Investigations are proceeding into the feasibility of several sites within the County Borough for wind farms, both in terms of large commercial undertakings and smaller proposals comprising of a few turbines. The potential for a power station producing energy from forestry off-cuts has been investigated. Offshore, the potential for wind farms and tidal power has been identified. This raises exciting prospects for creating clean energy on a very large scale and, in terms of the tidal power proposal, related leisure and sport opportunities. There are also, however, important issues to be considered including impacts on the seascape, the ecology of the Bay, commercial shipping and geomorphological processes including the erosion of beaches. The proposal, being offshore, would fall largely outside planning control and would be considered by the Government and Assembly Government.

## **15.3 STRATEGY**

- 15.3.1 Development will be guided to make the most effective use of existing and programmed infrastructure and resources. Unacceptable impacts on the landscape, seascape, townscape and biodiversity should be avoided through careful siting, design and the consideration of alternatives.
- 15.3.2 When the location and design of new facilities are being considered their potential to contribute to the community's needs and aspirations, and to maximise their accessibility to everyone within the community and reduce social exclusion will be taken fully into account.

- 15.3.3 Opportunities for the area to provide renewable energy will be supported provided other impacts are acceptable. New development should take into account the opportunity to reduce energy and other demands on infrastructure and this will be addressed through the Environment policies.

#### **15.4 PART 1 POLICIES**

##### **POLICY 18**

**The plan will encourage the best and most efficient use of infrastructure and resources, but proposals which would place unacceptable demands on existing and programmed resources and facilities will be resisted.**

##### **POLICY 19**

**Opportunities to create energy from renewable resources will be encouraged provided that unacceptable impacts are not created.**

- 15.4.1 The provision of infrastructure and the creation of energy are essential to sustaining our communities, but they could cause unacceptable impacts or could create unreasonable demands. The need to address the efficient use of energy and other resources is addressed through the Environment chapter.

#### **15.5 POLICY IE1 - EXISTING AND PROGRAMMED INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Proposals that would place unacceptable demands upon existing or programmed infrastructure will be resisted, unless it is demonstrated that those demands can be addressed and satisfied through financial or other contributions.**

- 15.5.1 New development should seek to make the best use of existing and programmed infrastructure. This is a key requirement of moving towards sustainable development. When development is proposed which would be served by infrastructure provision or upgrading which is programmed, it may be necessary for conditions to be imposed phasing the development to coincide with the availability of the infrastructure. When the infrastructure would be inadequate to cope with a proposed development the applicant may wish to explore whether making financial or other contributions to enable the provision to proceed would be feasible, otherwise, the application will be refused.

#### **15.6 POLICY IE2 – INFRASTRUCTURE FACILITIES (NOT INCLUDING DRAINAGE)**

**When proposals for new infrastructure facilities are being considered the following shall be adequately taken into account:**

**A) the use of existing facilities and the opportunities to co-ordinate different types of infrastructure has been considered and maximised;**

**B) the location and design minimise risk to human health, the environment and highway safety and pays adequate regard to the landscape, seascape, townscape and biodiversity and ensure that unacceptable impacts would not be created.**

- 15.6.1 Developers will be expected to minimise visual and other impacts and to demonstrate that less damaging alternatives have been fully explored. This may include landscaping and other mitigation measures.
- 15.6.2 Some types of infrastructure have important influences on the day to day life of a community. They can attract considerable pedestrian and vehicular traffic and may need easy access for everyone within the community. This approach should complement that in the Community and Social Considerations Chapter.
- 15.6.3 The developer will be expected to minimise visual and other impacts and to demonstrate that less damaging alternatives have been fully explored. This may include landscaping and other mitigation measures.
- 15.6.4 Proposals for new power stations and other energy creation using finite "fossil" fuels will be considered in terms of the plan's policies.
- 15.6.5 Proposals including provision such as the cumulative impact of septic tanks, and surface water drainage schemes will be expected to demonstrate that they would not create any unacceptable impact in terms of the environment, amenity and public health.
- 15.6.6 In dealing with surface water disposal, developers are encouraged to incorporate sustainable drainage systems into development proposals. SUDS (Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems) are a cost-effective drainage method that can be applied to a wide range of development types and contribute to the protection and enhancement of ground water quality. They deal with run-off water as close to the source as possible and thereby minimise the pollution discharged into watercourses and reduce the quantity of water discharged to sewer or outfall. This can generate significant nature conservation, landscape and amenity benefits and contribute to sustainable development. Proposals utilising SUDS will need to be considered early in the site evaluation and planning process, as well as at the detailed design stage and must clearly demonstrate how they are to be incorporated into the proposal.

## **15.7 POLICY IE3 – MAIN SEWAGE TREATMENT**

In sewered areas planning permission will normally only be permitted where the development can be adequately served by the public foul sewerage system. Private treatment facilities within sewered areas will not normally be permitted.

- 15.7.1 New development should be adequately served in terms of sewerage disposal. It is important that sewerage disposal proposals in a development do not result in environmental, public health or amenity problems. In sewered areas, developers

must demonstrate that their proposal can connect to the nearest main sewer. In areas where this system is inadequate development will not be permitted unless a scheme to upgrade the capacity of the existing mains system is completed prior to the completion of development on site. In order to protect the environment, public health and local amenities from potential pollution and detrimental impact, it is important that development does not proceed ahead of the ability of the mains sewerage system to accommodate increased demands.

#### **15.8 POLICY IE4 – PRIVATE SEWAGE TREATMENT FACILITIES**

**The use of private sewage treatment facilities will normally only be permitted where:**

- (a) It is not feasible to connect to the public foul sewerage system;**
- (b) Ground conditions are satisfactory, in terms of drainage and porosity, and would not generate pollution;**
- (c) The plot of land is of sufficient size to provide an adequate subsoil drainage system without risk to the water environment;**
- (d) There would be no unacceptable adverse impact on the environment, amenity or public health;**
- (e) The development is not within an area which has mains drainage.**

15.8.1 There may be circumstances where connection to the public foul sewerage system is not feasible and the use of private sewage treatment facilities would be required instead. In exceptional circumstances the use of septic tanks may be permissible as a means of allowing small scale development prior to the provision of programmed new sewerage infrastructure. In such instances, developers must demonstrate that alternative arrangements proposing the use of non-mains drainage will be acceptable. Small private sewage treatment facilities within sewered areas will not normally be acceptable. Welsh Office Circular 10/99 'Planning Requirements in Respect of the Use of Non-mains Sewerage, Incorporating Septic Tanks in New Development' provides detailed advice on dealing with such proposals.

#### **15.9 POLICY IE5 – TELECOMMUNICATIONS DEVELOPMENT**

**Proposals for television, telephone, satellite antenna, radio and other masts and apparatus ancillary structures, equipment and access will not be permitted unless they have satisfactorily addressed: -**

- a) the visual impact and effect on surrounding buildings, landscapes and occupiers of nearby land, including the cumulative impact of existing antenna/masts and other equipment; and**

**b) whether an alternative such as mast sharing or the use of existing structures would be feasible, consistent with operators' requirements, and have less damaging impacts.**

**c) appropriate measures to reinstate the site (and if applicable the surrounding land) when the installation is no longer required for operational purposes and, in addition the applicant has submitted a declaration that emissions from telecommunication masts sites fall within the limits set by international exposure guidelines [International Commission on Non- Ionising Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) guidelines, (as expressed in the EU recommendation of 12 July 1999)].**

- 15.9.1 Equipment including television and mobile phones are essential parts of our way of life although the technology is changing rapidly. TV satellite antennas and dishes benefit from permitted development rights, subject to the condition that the antenna/dish should be sited so as to minimise the effect on the external appearance of the building. Proposals should demonstrate that the opportunity to share masts and infrastructure and use existing buildings has been adequately investigated and that the proposed siting would minimise the visual and other impacts. As a result of market or technical changes masts and apparatus may become redundant and the need to remove them and reinstate the land should be considered.
- 15.9.2 Some locations including Foel Fynyddau between Cimla and Cwmafan have emerged as important sites for the provision of masts and other infrastructure. However, as a result of the complex topography of the County Borough and rapidly changing technology, it is not considered feasible to allocate specific sites.
- 15.9.3 The Assembly Government has issued legislation requiring companies to ensure that emissions from telecommunication masts sites fall within the limits set by international exposure guidelines [International Commission on Non-Ionising Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) guidelines, (as expressed in the EU recommendation of 12 July 1999)]. As a consequence it will not be necessary for the Authority to consider health effects further.
- 15.9.4 In any development significant and irremediable interference with electrical equipment of any kind should be avoided.

## **15.10 POLICY IE6 – RENEWABLE ENERGY**

**Proposals for the creation of renewable energy will be supported provided their impacts are acceptable and where appropriate they include measures to reinstate the land.**

- 15.10.1 It is now widely accepted that man-made impacts are having profound and worsening impacts on the climate. The creation of energy from renewable

sources is of critical importance globally in terms of reducing the use of polluting and finite sources of fuel.

- 15.10.2 The County Borough has considerable potential for development exploiting renewable forms of energy and this could assist rural diversification. Information is available based upon a Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) model which predicts the distribution of annual average wind speeds by area and identifies those parts of the County Borough with potential for the development of wind farms. Proposals will be viewed favourably provided unacceptable impacts would not be created. This could include impacts on landscape, seascape, biodiversity, archaeology mineral resources and communities including the creation of noise, visual flicker, electro-magnetic disturbance and any safety issues. Where areas might experience cumulative and other direct and indirect effects including those created by other developments such as mineral extraction, and the provision of power lines and access roads, they will be taken fully into account.
- 15.10.3 Should a development such as a wind farm cease production, the site should be reinstated including the removal or other appropriate treatment of the turbines, foundations and associated roads, buildings and power lines.
- 15.10.4 As a result of the County Borough's topography, many mountains, hills and ridges are particularly visible within the landscape and from nearby communities. Proposals for wind farms in such locations will be considered especially carefully. The policies in the Environment chapter will be particularly relevant.
- 15.10.5 The Authority will produce Supplementary Planning Guidance which will consider the potential for the generation of renewable energy within the County Borough and provide guidance on landscape, biodiversity and community issues. In terms of sites for wind farms, the extensive mountain plateaux between Resolven, Glynneath and Glyncorrwg may offer the potential to develop a wind farm without creating unacceptable impacts.

## **15.11 SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL SUMMARY**

- 15.11.1 Addressing climate change and making the best uses of resources are fundamental to Sustainability. The chapter seeks to set out a framework for addressing the issues, and in part they are tackled through more detailed policies in the Environment chapter. There are difficult conflicts between bringing forward sources of renewable and the adverse impacts which they may create locally. These will have to be assessed on an individual basis.
- 15.11.2 On a more local level, the best use of available infrastructure should influence the location of development and this is addressed in the policies. In a similar way, the policies address how new facilities can have far reaching implications for a community and the creation of traffic.

- 15.11.3 The policies have been assessed in terms of their consistency and the extent to which they put into practice the UDP's Vision and Strategy and this was found to be acceptable.

**Proposals will be considered against any of the Plan's policies that are relevant.**

**Useful starting points are: -**

**CHAPTER 8: ENVIRONMENT**

**Policy ENV8:**      **A) Replacement dwellings; B) Conversions or re-use of buildings & C) Farm Diversification in the countryside.**

**Policy GC1:**      **New Buildings, Structures & Changes of Use**

**Policy GC2:**      **Engineering Works and Operations  
[Including Minerals and Waste]**

## **16 MINERALS**

### **16.1 CURRENT POSITION AND TRENDS**

- 16.1.1 Minerals are a natural and finite resource and are fundamental to ensuring the nation's prosperity and quality of life. Sands, gravels, crushed rocks, chalks and clays provide the construction industry with the raw materials to build and maintain buildings, transport and other infrastructure. Coal, oil and gas are vital sources of energy supply, which enable us to produce electricity and heat. Furthermore, minerals are an important element in the production of plastics, cosmetics, pharmaceuticals and glass, in the treatment of sewage and in the protection of the coast from coastal erosion. If society is to maintain its current standard of living, it is essential that there is an adequate and steady supply of minerals consistent with the current policy emphasis upon the re-use and recycling of suitable waste materials (particularly construction / demolition waste) and that we conserve the resources which we hold in trust for future generations.
- 16.1.2 The extraction of minerals is by its very nature a destructive activity, which can have a significant impact on the environment. This coupled with the fact that minerals can only be worked where they are found, means that if we are to ensure a ready supply of material, while minimising adverse impacts, their future extraction must be carefully planned. Although the extraction of minerals is transitional, operations may occur over a long period of time. Therefore, the management of mineral operations and reclamation and after use to a high standard are prime considerations.
- 16.1.3 The National Policy guidance for mineral development is contained in the Welsh Assembly Government's "Minerals Planning Policy Wales" (MPPW) published in December 2000. This guidance is currently supplemented by varying parts of most of the Minerals Policy Planning Guidance (MPG's 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9 & 10). A Minerals Technical Advice Note (MTAN 1) on aggregates was issued in March 2004.
- 16.1.4 The Assembly Government's aims relating to minerals planning (reflecting its Sustainable Development scheme) are:
- social progress which recognises the needs of everyone: to provide for the benefits of increased prosperity through an adequate supply of minerals that society needs now and in the future, together with protecting and improving amenity;
  - effective protection of the environment: to protect things that are highly cherished for their intrinsic qualities, such as wildlife, landscapes and historic features; and to protect human health and safety by ensuring that environmental impacts caused by mineral extraction and transportation are within acceptable limits; and to secure, without compromise, restoration and aftercare to provide for appropriate and beneficial after-use;
  - prudent use of natural resources: to help conserve non-renewable resources for future generations through efficient use, recycling and

- minimisation of waste; to protect renewable resources from serious harm or pollution; and to promote the use of appropriate alternative materials; and
  - maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth: to ensure an adequate supply of minerals that are needed at prices that are reasonable; and to safeguard mineral resources for future generations.
- 16.1.5 The County Borough contains mineral resources which are significant on a UK scale. They are important both in terms of their contribution to the Welsh economy and more locally in terms of employment. However, the exploitation of these resources needs to be balanced against the impacts upon local residents and communities, the landscape and wildlife habitats, the area's heritage, and good quality agricultural land.
- Coal
- 16.1.6 Virtually the whole of the County Borough is underlain by coal resources. Whilst coal outcrops throughout the area, this mainly occurs in northern and southern areas where opencast mining is prevalent. The coal is recognised as being of high quality with anthracite in the north of the County Borough and, somewhat less widespread, steam coals in the southeast. Whilst the coal industry has been in a period of decline it remains a significant part of the Country's energy source.
- 16.1.7 The scale of long term demand for coal is uncertain. It is likely to be influenced by concerns over the creation of pollution and impacts on global warming during the generation of energy, while the development of new clean-burn technology is likely to address these issues.
- 16.1.8 Coal has been mined extensively within the area for over centuries and has contributed significantly to the creation and sustenance of many of the County Borough's communities. As a result of the extent and complexity of the coal measures, the extent to which they may have been worked in the past, the amount of overburden, the value of secondary minerals, land ownership issues, processing and transport costs it is not feasible to identify the location of resources that are likely to be commercially viable.
- 16.1.9 Whilst production of coal and related employment has declined markedly in the last 30 years, the County Borough still contributes significantly to the annual coal output in Wales. In the year ending March 1999, this amounted to 2,217,094 tonnes. The County Borough produced 801,195 tonnes in the same year. Underground mining contributed 76,104 tonnes, while opencast production accounted for 48% of the total of 1,508,000 tonnes of opencast output in Wales in the same year.
- 16.1.10 Over the last 5 years there has been a steady decrease in employment in underground mining whilst employment in opencasting has increased by nearly 70%. In 1999 some 368 people were directly employed in coal mining, 246 of whom were associated with opencast mining.

- 16.1.11 Planning permission has been granted for the development of a major deep mine at Margam. The mine is anticipated to be developed at the end of opencast operations at Park Slip. The permitted reserves of steam coal are expected to provide a life span for the mine of at least 20 years.
- 16.1.12 There is considerable interest in opencast coal mining, with significant reserves remaining in the Neath Port Talbot area which are capable of being worked. Current operations, apart from Park Slip, Margam, are concentrated in the northern areas of the Neath, Dulais, Amman and Twrch valleys. Concern continues to be expressed over the impacts on local communities, with some areas having experienced working for 60 years. There is also concern over the potential erosion of priority habitats identified in the Neath Port Talbot Local Biodiversity Action Plan.
- 16.1.13 Coal mining remains an important contributor to economic activity in the area particularly in the Upper Amman, Neath and Dulais Valleys. It is the aim of the Plan to provide the necessary framework to ensure that such development can occur in appropriate areas having due regard to environmental, social and economic factors.
- 16.1.14 The presence of coal bed methane gas associated with these coal measures offers an important potential source of energy although its extraction has not been developed widely within South Wales.

#### Non Energy Minerals

- 16.1.15 The coal measures include and are capped with Pennant and other sandstones, with unconsolidated sands, gravels and clays of varying thickness in the valleys and coastal plains. Non-energy minerals in the form of Pennant sandstone and some sand and gravel deposits are extracted for different purposes including aggregates, civil engineering construction and industrial uses. Significantly the sandstone resource of the "Pennant series" contains resources of rock which have a high polished stone value (p.s.v) contributing to specialised uses in road surfacing construction. These high PSV sandstone resources are significant on a national basis. Pennant sandstone is also worked on a minor level for a variety of building products such as cladding, roofing, paving and blockstone.

#### High Specification Aggregates

- 16.1.16 High specification aggregates (HSA's) with a high polished stone value are used extensively in road surfacing, construction and maintenance particularly where high volumes of commercial traffic occur and wherever road conditions are likely to give a high risk of skidding related accidents e.g. junctions, roundabouts etc. They represent the premium products of the hard rock quarrying industry.
- 16.1.17 The availability of rock within the UK with these properties is localised and strictly limited. The two major quarries in the Neath Port Talbot area: Gilfach and Cwm Nant Lleici supply aggregates that consistently record a psv level of 65 or greater and also the relatively scarce psv 68+. In 1991 only 12% of the total output of HSA's in Great Britain, fell into the category of psv's greater than

68. "Windfall" extraction of aggregates can occur where the rock is extracted during opencast coal mining operations.
- 16.1.18 The Travers Morgan report published in 1993 by the Department of the Environment recommended that:

*"In view of the strategic importance of High Specification Aggregates in the maintenance of safety standards on Britain's most heavily trafficked road it is recommended that these materials are given special consideration in future minerals planning policies".*

#### Sand and Gravel

- 16.1.19 Sand deposits are in evidence but are generally extracted to a much lesser extent than other minerals. Marine dredged sand and gravel contributes some 80% of the sand and gravel demand of the region. Sands are supplemented through use of sandstone quarry fines as a by product of aggregate quarrying.

#### Marine Dredged Sand and Gravel

- 16.1.20 Marine dredged sand and gravel has been landed at Briton Ferry for many years. In 1997, some 233,340 tonnes were landed by the dredging companies operating from the Riverside and Giants Grave Wharfs. This tonnage represents 15% of the total tonnage of 1,541 million tonnes landed in South Wales ports during the same year.
- 16.1.21 Marine dredged sand and gravel continue to be the dominant source for this type of aggregate use within the region, and represents 80% of all sand and gravel sales. The marine sources as well as land based sources consist almost entirely of fine aggregates to be used in concrete, mortar and asphalt. The South Wales Regional Aggregates Working Party (SWRAWP) considers that marine dredged sand and gravel will continue at this level and play an important role in the supply to South Wales in the short to medium term.
- 16.1.22 Concerns, however, have been expressed for a number of years suggesting that marine dredging in the Bristol Channel results in the loss and erosion of sand along the beaches and coastlines of South Wales. The Welsh Assembly Government is undertaking a review of the relative contribution of on- and offshore aggregates to South Wales and the environmental and economic implications.
- 16.1.23 Recent research undertaken by the Bristol Channel Marine Aggregates Resources and Constraints Research Project has identified resources, constraints and the hydrodynamic nature of the Channel. In addition existing dredging companies now have to monitor and measure effects on individual beaches and shorelines as part of their licence conditions. Pending the conclusion of these studies the Assembly Government's Draft TAN on Aggregates (2002) has identified areas of land-based aggregates that should be safeguarded on a precautionary basis in UDP's and without any commitment to granting consent for their exploitation.

16.1.24 Consideration of applications for marine dredging is a matter for the Welsh Assembly Government. The Local Planning Authority is a consultee in the determination of such applications and has adopted the policy of not objecting to the continued excavation of marine dredged aggregates as long as strict monitoring of operations is continued and unacceptable impacts are not identified.

#### Land Based Sand and Gravel

16.1.25 The area does not have a significant history of land based sand and gravel workings. The majority of land based sand and gravel workings were located on the dunes and foreshore at Margam Moors. However, these ceased in the early 1980's other than a small amount worked as part of operations related to the steel industry. There is also a minor land based sand and gravel pit. During the construction of the A465 Trunk road in the Vale of Neath, two large borrow pits (which are now lakes) were created to provide large amounts of aggregate. MTAN 1 on aggregates identifies two areas within the County Borough: between Margam and Pyle and Rheola and Glynneath as potential land-based resources. The Assembly Government commented that the use of marine dredged sand and gravel would probably continue for the foreseeable future where this remains consistent with the principles of sustainable development. As a result there is uncertainty over future supplies from dredging. The MTAN requires the safeguarding of these resources.

#### Secondary Materials and Recycling of Aggregates

16.1.26 In accordance with the principles of sustainable development, finite natural resources of primary aggregates should be used efficiently and whenever possible be replaced by alternative secondary materials. In this area the most prevalent use of secondary materials is of metallurgical blast furnace slag, a by-product of the steel making process. The recycling of redevelopment construction waste is making an increasingly significant contribution. Large volumes of coal mining waste in colliery spoil tips are scattered throughout the County Borough, however, little use has been made of these as sources of secondary aggregates.

16.1.27 There are limiting factors constraining the wider use of such secondary materials. They include the effects on the environment during their exploitation, the limited viable uses of such resources dictated largely by the imbalances of location, supply and demand and the nature and properties of the material.

## **16.2 STRATEGY**

16.2.1 The Authority's strategy is to regulate the exploitation of mineral resources, in order to achieve an acceptable and sustainable balance between mineral production, local or community benefits and the protection of the environment and local communities.

16.2.2 Proposals for the extraction of mineral resources which can contribute to national, regional and local requirements; provide local economic benefits;

assist the reclamation of derelict land; deliver improved restoration and after-use which benefits the local community and biodiversity; assist the provision of infrastructure and community benefits, and will not create unacceptable impacts on communities, the landscape or biodiversity will be favoured.

- 16.2.3 The Plan will identify a land bank of aggregates sufficient to meet the County Borough's contribution to local, regional and national needs. This will focus on the expansion of the two existing quarries at Cwm Nant Lleici and Gilfach. Proposals for the creation of further new quarries will be resisted. Potential resources of sand and gravel which have been identified by the Assembly Government will be safeguarded, but without any commitment to allowing their extraction.
- 16.2.4 The Plan will provide a framework to guide the preparation and consideration of coal related proposals. It provides certainty over where opencast proposals will not be allowed. Supplementary Planning Guidance will be prepared within 12 months of the adoption of the UDP, providing information and guidance on landscape, biodiversity, archaeological, community impacts and other issues to refine the areas within the coal resource zones, and exclude from areas identified under Policy M9, that should be safeguarded for future coal working.
- 16.2.5 Proposals should support the minimisation of primary mineral extraction, the most effective extraction of minerals and the maximisation of re-use and recycling of materials. The recovery of minerals from waste and the use of alternative material in substitution for primary mineral extraction, will be supported. The Authority will seek to minimise road transport of minerals and to maximise the appropriate use of rail and sea. The relevant facilities will be safeguarded through policies contained in the Transport chapter.
- 16.2.6 Through other policies, (contained in the Environment Chapter) the plan will seek to ensure that proposals by their location and design minimise the use of primary aggregates
- 16.2.7 The after-use of sites should maximise their contribution to the conservation and creation of landscape features which are characteristic of the area, and of priority habitats as identified in the Neath Port Talbot Local Biodiversity Action Plan.

## **16.3 PART 1 POLICIES**

### **POLICY 20**

- A) Proposals for coal extraction will be favoured where they contribute to the County Borough's share of local, regional or national production subject to: -**
  - a) ensuring that the impacts on the environment and local communities are acceptable; and**
  - b) securing appropriate, high quality and prompt restoration and aftercare to provide a beneficial after-use.**
- B) Aggregates and dimension stone production will be catered for by the expansion of the Gilfach and Cwm Nant Lleuci quarries.**

### **POLICY 21**

**Mineral resources will be conserved and the efficient use of aggregates and the use of byproducts and recycled materials as alternatives to primary aggregates promoted.**

### **POLICY 22**

**Proposals that would prejudice the extraction or safeguarding of the aggregate resources identified on the Proposals Map will be resisted.**

### **POLICY 23**

**The recycling and re-use of minerals and materials will be encouraged, and proposals generally should minimise the use of minerals through siting and design.**

- 16.3.1 The County Borough contains mineral resources that are significant on South Wales and national scales. Virtually the whole of the County Borough is underlain by coal resources while amongst the other minerals it also contains sandstone which is particularly important in terms of providing very high quality road surfacing materials.**
- 16.3.2 These finite resources are important both in terms of their contribution to the Welsh economy and more locally in terms of employment. However, the Authority will balance these considerations against the impacts upon local residents and communities, the landscape and wildlife habitats, and good quality agricultural land. Where mineral resources are safeguarded through allocations on the Proposals Map, proposals which would constrain the exploitation or safeguarding of the minerals will be resisted.**
- 16.3.3 The supply of aggregate and cut rock will be met through the expansion of the two existing quarries at Gilfach and Cwm Nant Lleuci. This will maximise the**

use of existing facilities, and avoid the impacts caused by the creation of a new quarry. No areas of search are therefore identified.

- 16.3.4 In working towards sustainable development, the Authority will seek to ensure that where minerals are worked the most effective extraction takes place, and that new development generally seeks to avoid the unnecessary use of aggregates.
- 16.3.5 For energy minerals the plan will provide a framework which will guide developers and the public on how proposals will be considered. The potential to recreate features or mitigate any loss or adverse impacts will be important considerations.
- 16.3.6 The impact upon local residents and communities is a key concern with some areas having experienced either long term or widespread open cast mining or both.

#### **16.4 POLICY M1 – MINERAL PROSPECTING AND EXPLORATION**

**Where planning permission is required for the exploration, search and prospecting of any mineral or fossil fuel, the local planning authority will grant consent only when the development or temporary activity does not have an unacceptable impact on the site the surrounding environment or, residential amenity. A planning permission to carry out any search or exploration will not in itself create a presumption that planning consent will be granted for the extraction or working of the mineral or fossil fuel.**

- 16.4.1 The search for minerals through exploration techniques is an essential element of the forward planning process for mineral extraction. The results from such investigations also bear important information that may be required in the evaluation and consideration of proposals by the mineral planning authority.
- 16.4.2 Certain larger scale and longer term exploration activity requires planning permission. Many small scale activities such as boreholes, trial pits and seismic surveys are "permitted development" under Part 22 of Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995. The Order also sets out limitations and controls to these operations, including their exclusion from areas of archaeological interest, from SSSI and from the National Park.
- 16.4.3 Prospecting activities will normally have a lesser impact on the surrounding amenities and environment than a fully operational mineral site. However, there will be occasions when such operations will need sensitive planning and assessment to avoid adverse effects on the environment and amenities of the area.
- 16.4.4 The criteria set out in Policy M7 will guide the appraisal of such activity. Any approval by the Mineral Planning Authority for the exploration and search of mineral resources does not imply in anyway a presumption in favour of subsequent development that involves the full exploration and extraction of the mineral explored.

## **16.5 POLICY M2 – PREFERENCE FOR SECONDARY AGGREGATES**

**The re-use and recycling of existing waste material (e.g. slag) is to be encouraged in preference to the extraction of fresh primary materials. Proposals for new quarries or any extension to existing quarries, should demonstrate that the potential supply from secondary sources has first been fully considered, and that the need could not be met at lower environmental cost through the use of secondary or recycled materials.**

- 16.5.1 When considering proposals for new quarries or any extensions to existing quarries an assessment should be carried out to ensure that the potential supply from secondary sources (i.e. slag) has been fully considered as part of the environmental assessment process. Primary aggregate development will not be permitted where it can be demonstrated that the need could be met at lower environmental cost by the use of secondary or recycled material.

## **16.6 POLICY M3 – DEVELOPMENT OF NON-ENERGY MINERALS**

**Aggregate and dimension stone extraction will take place at Cwm Nant Lleuci and Gilfach. Resources for possible future working are identified at each quarry on the Proposals Map to ensure resources are available to meet anticipated needs over and beyond the plan period.**

## **16.7 POLICY M4 – AGGREGATE AND DIMENSION STONE EXTRACTION**

**With the exception of those areas identified in Policy M3, Borrow Pits referred to in Policy M7, and windfall aggregates arising from opencast coal extraction, developments for aggregate will be resisted. Proposals for the extraction of dimension stone will be considered against policies M8 and GC2.**

- 16.7.1 The County Borough contains two major quarries at Cwm Nant Lleuci and Gilfach that make an important contribution to regional and national aggregates production, and in particular to the supply of materials with a high ‘Polished Stone Value’ which is particularly important for road surfacing. The policy allocates extensions to each quarry and this would be sufficient to maintain supplies throughout the plan period.
- 16.7.2 The reserves allocated should be sufficient to provide continuity of production in line with past and anticipated demand and avoid the need for the development of new quarries. The County Borough contains two quarries producing aggregates: Gilfach and Cwm Nant Lleuci. Based on the permitted reserves at 2003 and current production rates there was a land bank of just under 20 years. The additional reserves allocated under Policy M3 would provide a total land bank of 39 years. This does not take account of ‘windfall’ supplies of aggregates arising from open-cast coal working, which over the period 2002-2005 averaged more than 100,000 tonnes per year. The policy will also ensure that workable reserves will be safeguarded against unnecessary sterilisation by other forms of development, although any proposals will be fully considered in terms of their impacts. Proposals for dimension stone

extraction will be considered on their merit. Although, operations tend to be small in scale, the authority will be particularly aware of the risk of the impacts on landscape, biodiversity and communities of a proliferation of quarries.

- 16.7.3 As a result the Authority considers that the plan adequately provides a landbank to meet the needs which these quarries supply, and that there is no justification to allow the development of further quarries.
- 16.7.4 The areas identified in the Plan will allow continuation of present extraction rates over the plan period and act as safeguarding zones of these reserves for the future. No safeguarding zones beyond those areas are identified because there is insufficient information available. The areas allocated for expansion of the quarries (and the buffer zones identified below) have been identified having taken into account the nature of the minerals, the topography, habitats and geology and likely impacts from noise, dust vibration and visual intrusion.<sup>(IR 15.25)</sup>
- 16.7.5 Consideration of proposals will be guided by policy M8.

## **16.8 POLICY M5 – PROTECTION OF SAND AND GRAVEL RESERVES**

**Safeguarding areas are identified on the Proposals Map for potential reserves of sands and gravels at Eglwys Nunydd, Margam and Pentreclwyda, Vale of Neath. Proposals which would be likely to prevent the potential exploitation of the reserves will be resisted.**

- 16.8.1 These potential sand and gravel reserves have been identified through a desk study sponsored by the National Assembly for Wales. The reserves have not been proven. No need has been identified and Policy M4 applies.
- 16.8.2 The purpose of this policy is solely to protect the area from permanent development which would either sterilise or hinder the extraction of the potential mineral resources. It does not indicate an acceptance of working the reserves. It is unlikely that the Authority would favourably consider proposals for their exploitation during the plan period. Any grant of permission would have to fully justify what the Authority would regard as an exceptional need consistent with the principles of sustainable development and would be treated as a departure from the plan.

## **16.9 POLICY M6 – BUFFER ZONES TO QUARRIES**

**Buffer zones are identified at Cwm Nant Lleuci and Gilfach Quarries within which new sensitive development or mineral extraction will be resisted.**

- 16.9.1 Sensitive development is defined as any building occupied by people on a regular basis. The objective is to protect land uses that are most sensitive to the impact of mineral operations by establishing a separation distance between potentially conflicting land uses. The zones identified on the Proposals Map are regarded as the minimum distance necessary to achieve this. There may be circumstances where this minimum distance may need to be greater because of

topography or other local details, and this will be considered on the merits of individual proposals. Proposals for developments which would be less sensitive to the impacts of mineral development will be considered on their merits and in terms of the plan's policies.

#### **16.10 POLICY M7 – BORROW PITS**

**Proposals for Borrow Pits related to the needs of particular construction projects will be considered favourably only where there are clear environmental benefits as opposed to supply from secondary or recycled aggregates, or from established mineral working sites. Proposals should not create any unacceptable impacts and will be considered in terms of the Plan's policies.**

- 16.10.1 A “Borrow Pit” is a temporary quarry or similar site used exclusively to supply aggregate materials over a limited period, to a particular construction project such as the construction of a new highway, Sites are usually located within or adjacent to the project, with the mineral supplied directly usually without the need to use public roads. A Borrow Pit may offer the potential to create new environmental and leisure resources but the impacts on the landscape, biodiversity, neighbouring land and communities will be fully considered.

#### **16.11 POLICY M8 – CRITERIA FOR THE ASSESSMENT OF COAL AND ALL MINERAL APPLICATIONS INCLUDING OIL AND GAS**

**Proposals for mineral extraction and associated development, including the tipping of mineral waste and the reworking of tips, will only be permitted when all of the following criteria, where relevant have been satisfied:**

- a) an assessment has been made of the possible impact on:**
  - (i) pollution or disturbance to ground or surface water supply or drainage;**
  - (ii) the landscape;**
  - (iii) biodiversity with particular regard to sites or species designated as being of national or international importance;**
  - (iv) farm holdings or high quality agricultural land;**
  - (v) sites of archaeological importance, historic buildings or Conservation Areas;**
  - (vi) ground stability; and**
  - (vii) the likely generation of pollution or contamination and measures provided to reduce damage and disturbance to the environment caused by those issues to acceptable levels.**
- b) an assessment has been made of the possible impact on:**

- (i) noise, dust, blast, vibration arising from the methods of working;
- (ii) health
- (iii) traffic generated to and from the site; and
- (iv) public rights of way or road severance.

and measures provided to reduce damage, harm or disturbance to individuals, communities and land uses caused by those issues to acceptable levels.

- c) satisfactory proposals have been submitted for:
  - (i) the effective and sustainable extraction of any associated hard rock, aggregate or other minerals;
  - (ii) the duration, method and phasing of operations;
  - (iii) restoration;
  - (iv) beneficial after-use;
  - (v) after care;
  - (vi) to adequately mitigate any significant adverse impacts on local communities; and
  - (vii) adequate sump capacity is in place to trap sediment-laden run-off
- d) an assessment has been made that demonstrates that it would not be feasible to supply the mineral from secondary sources.

#### **16.12 POLICY M9 – OPENCAST COAL**

Proposals for opencast coal operations (i.e. the extraction or storage of minerals or overburden) will not be permitted within the following areas or sites:

- 1) i) a buffer zone of 200 metres from a Settlement Limit;  
 ii) a landscape, park or garden identified by Cadw as being of Special Historic Interest, or designated as a Country Park.  
 iii) land designated as of national or international importance in terms of ecology or geology (i.e. SSSIs or SACs), refer to ENV4;  
 iv) a scheduled ancient monument or Conservation Area, refer to ENV19;

These sites and areas are shown on the Proposals Map.

- 2) a buffer zone of 200 metres from a ‘sensitive building’ which is not in the ownership or control of the applicants.**
- 3) a listed building.**

*Notes*

*A “Sensitive Building” is defined as a house, hospital, school or other building occupied by one or more persons on a regular basis. It is recognised that in exceptional circumstances a proposal may be able to justify it being considered favourably despite it being in conflict with the policy. In such exceptional circumstances it would be open to the Authority to treat the proposal as a “departure” from the development plan and undertake the necessary public advertisement and referral to the Welsh Assembly Government procedures.*

- 16.12.1 The policy identifies where opencast coal mining would be resisted. The circumstances of each proposal for open-casting will be carefully examined and this is likely to include assessment of all the environmental impacts in an Environmental Impact Assessment.
- 16.12.2 The policies set out criteria against which all mineral applications will be assessed including the reworking of mineral tips for their mineral contents and complements policy GC2. They do not preclude other policies being taken into account where relevant, and where criteria are not relevant for those not to be taken into account.
- 16.12.3 Existing commitments and allocations made in this plan for the extraction of aggregates or dimension rock will be sufficient to meet the area's needs for the plan period. Proposals to exploit the sand and gravel reserves safeguarded under policy M5 will be considered within the light of the Assembly Government's emerging advice.
- 16.12.4 The policy sets out, in accordance with guidance contained in Minerals Planning Wales, where opencast mining operations would not be acceptable. It identifies nationally designated features and a minimum distance from “sensitive buildings” that should not form part of an opencast scheme except in exceptional circumstances that would if appropriate be considered as departures from the Development Plan. Proposals located outside this area would be the subject of detailed scrutiny and proposals would be likely to be required to be accompanied by an Environmental Impact Assessment. This will need to be assessed in each situation in terms of the topography, nature and timescale of the proposed extraction, the likelihood of noise, dust, blast, vibration or visual intrusion, any mitigating measures and the importance in the local, regional or national interest of the mineral resources. Proposals that would be likely to damage wildlife sites of international significance (Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas and Ramsar sites) and of national significance (Sites of Special Scientific Interest) will also be specifically assessed in terms of Environment Chapter policies. Supplementary Planning

Guidance will be prepared to provide information and guidance on landscape, biodiversity, archaeological and other issues to guide the preparation and consideration of proposals.

- 16.12.5 In accordance with Assembly Government guidance, wherever appropriate a Health Impact Assessment will be required. This is likely to form part of any Environmental Impact Assessment submitted with the proposal.
- 16.12.6 When assessing proposals economic, social and environmental impacts will be fully considered and balanced. This will include placing due weight on biodiversity, landscapes, archaeological features, historic buildings. Impacts on communities and groups within communities, including local or community benefits will be fully considered. More detailed criteria are provided in the Environment and Community and Social Considerations Chapters.
- 16.12.7 In assessing transportation, proposals will be expected to avoid creating or worsening unacceptable impacts on communities and highway safety. Greater weight will be given to developments that provide for the transportation of minerals by methods other than the use of public highways.
- 16.12.8 In opencast coal sites, the coal to be extracted may be overlain by hard rock or aggregates. Where these resources can be won without prejudicing the final restoration or adversely increasing the environmental effects of the development in the interests of sustainability, the Authority will expect the development to include this. Developments that are not primarily for the purpose of winning opencast coal will be resisted.
- 16.12.9 Proposals involving the re-use and recovery of waste materials produced as part of the extraction of the minerals will be supported provided they would not create any unacceptable impacts.
- 16.12.10 Restoration proposals should be phased to commence as early as possible, and the Authority will, where appropriate, encourage progressive restoration at the earliest opportunity. After-uses should favour the creation of landscapes which are characteristic of the area, and priority habitats identified in the Local Biodiversity Action Plan. Often away from the coast, land is of poor agricultural quality, while there is a need to recreate priority habitats (as identified in the Neath Port Talbot Local Biodiversity Action Plan). Where appropriate, public rights of way should be reinstated or created. The effective and co-ordinated management of minerals sites is particularly important. Where operators are able to demonstrate that their proposals will be subject to management through an accredited management system such as ISO 14001 the Authority will view this as helping demonstrate the effectiveness of the management proposals.
- 16.12.11 Wherever appropriate the Authority will require the creation of mechanisms to promote liaison between the operators, the Authority and the local community, including complaints procedures and site liaison groups.

## **16.13 POLICY M10 – PLANNING PERMISSION AND AFTERCARE REQUIREMENTS**

**Where planning permission is granted for coal mining, the Authority will require the deposit of a financial bond or other agreed means of financial security capable of securing satisfactory landscaping, restoration and aftercare.**

**In all other cases where the Authority is minded to grant planning permission for mineral development, the Authority will where appropriate, seek to ensure, by agreement or other means, that adequate resources are available to secure compliance with landscaping, restoration and aftercare requirements.**

- 16.13.1 The Authority is concerned to avoid mineral sites being abandoned or left unreclaimed. The West Glamorgan County Council Act 1987 enables the Authority to attach a planning condition requiring the deposition of a financial bond to secure restoration and aftercare to any non British Coal Corporation (and their successors) coal mining planning permission. The Authority is firmly of the view that the only means of guaranteeing that resources are available to ensure satisfactory restoration is through the provision of adequate financial security.
- 16.13.2 For other mineral development, the Authority will, where appropriate, seek agreements to secure both satisfactory restoration and aftercare, usually through Section 106 Agreements.

## **16.14 POLICY M11 – REVIEW OF OPERATIONS**

**When reviewing mineral planning permissions in the process of its duty under Section 96 (schedule 13 and schedule 14) of the Environment Act 1995, the local planning authority will, in the interests of protecting the environment and surrounding amenities, seek to ensure the imposition of: -**

- a) modern and updated site operating controls;
  - b) modern conditions to ensure the satisfactory restoration and aftercare of the site; and
  - c) when applicable, statutory powers for the revocation, modification, discontinuance, prohibition or suspension of mineral workings .
- 16.14.1 Mineral operations have a number of impacts on the surrounding amenities and environment. Following the Stevens Report in 1977, it has been recognised that the review of mineral workings is an appropriate way to ensure that such operations maintain updated and enhanced environmental controls.
  - 16.14.2 The Planning and Compensation Act 1991 has the provision to modernise and update the planning permissions granted under Interim Development Order (IDO) permissions granted between 1943 and 1948. Only one such permission

remains in the County Borough and forms part of the Gilfach Quarry complex. The relevant part is considered "dormant", however a scheme of conditions would need to be approved by the Authority if the winning and working of minerals in this part of the site were to be commenced.

- 16.14.3 The provisions of Section 96 of the Environment Act 1995 requires all Mineral Planning Authorities to review and update old mineral planning permissions every 15 years. The statutory procedure under the 1995 Act is a continuing process and is independent of the UDP Plan process. The need for any revised conditions of planning permission will be assessed in accordance with all relevant policies within this Plan in order that modern standards of environmental control are adopted for the protection of the environment and surrounding amenities.

## **16.15 SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL SUMMARY**

- 16.15.1 The County Borough contains considerable mineral resources including coal, aggregates and dimension-stone. Some of these resources are not only significant in terms of local needs but also at the Welsh and UK levels.
- 16.15.2 The policies (supported by policies in other chapters) seek to achieve a balance between economic, community and environmental interests. This will involve weighing the needs to: maintain a landbank of resources to meet our needs; safeguard resources for future generations; minimise the unnecessary use of aggregates, and minimise adverse impacts on biodiversity, landscape, seascapes, communities and the generation of traffic and pollution.
- 16.15.3 The policies are largely criteria-led and care will be needed in monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the policies, in order to assess the need to amend or replace them. Further information is needed on the extent and significance of priority habitats and species within areas with potential for mineral extraction.

**Proposals will be considered against any of the Plan's policies that are relevant.**

**Useful starting points are: -**

**CHAPTER 8: ENVIRONMENT**

**Policy ENV8:** **A) Replacement dwellings; B) Conversions or re-use of buildings & C) Farm Diversification in the countryside.**

**Policy GC1:** **New Buildings, Structures & Changes of Use**

**Policy GC2:** **Engineering Works and Operations [Including Minerals and Waste]**

## **17 WASTE**

### **17 CURRENT POSITION**

17.1.1 Dealing with waste in ways that are less harmful to the environment is one of the most urgent environmental issues facing local authorities in Wales. This is not only in terms of reducing the pollution that is currently caused but also to meet the requirements of the European Union's Waste Framework and Landfill Directives.

#### 17.1.2 The Key Drivers

Article 5 of the Framework Directive requires the UK to establish an integrated and adequate network of waste facilities. This network should include all necessary waste management facilities including provision for waste transfer, storage, treatment and disposal.

#### 17.1.3 The Landfill Directive requires the UK to:

- reduce the volume of bio-degradable waste going to landfill;
- introduce a ban on the co-disposal of hazardous and non-hazardous wastes in landfill sites by 2004;
- introduce a ban on the landfill of tyres by 2003 (and of shredded tyres by 2006); and
- introduce a ban on the landfill of liquid waste, infectious clinical waste and certain types of hazardous waste phased in from 2001 onwards.

(Note: the Landfill Directive classifies landfill sites into three categories: inert, hazardous and non-hazardous)

#### 17.1.4 The Welsh Assembly Government's strategy "Wise about Waste" (June 2002) is based on the Waste Hierarchy. It sets out the options in order of priority:

- reduction of the waste generated;
- re-use of materials;
- recovery which can reduce demand for aggregates or energy from fossil/fuels through recycling or composting;
- energy recovery when recovery is not possible, and
- disposal to landfill should be the last resort for waste which cannot be further treated, including residues from heat treatments.

#### 17.1.5 It sets out targets for Wales which have important implications for the UDP:

- to reduce the amount of biodegradable municipal waste landfilled to 75% of that produced in 1995 by 2010, to 50% by 2013 and 35% by 2020;
  - to recycle or compost 15% of municipal waste by 2003/04; 25% by 2006/07 and 40% by 2009/10.
- 17.1.6 The strategy aims to stabilise and reduce the amount of waste produced by households and businesses; to divert biodegradable waste from landfill and to increase the proportion of construction and demolition waste that is reused or recycled. It seeks to reduce the amount of hazardous waste generated, and by 2003/04 all civic amenity sites should have facilities to segregate the storage of hazardous household wastes(such as oils, solvents and fluorescent light tubes).
- 17.1.7 Waste production is currently increasing by some 3% per year, and the strategy aims to reverse that trend.
- 17.1.8 The EU Directive on Hazardous Waste sets out the requirements for its management. Hazardous Wastes are those which carry a risk to health or the environment (including those which are flammable, toxic or poisonous).
- 17.1.9 Responsibilities for addressing waste issues are as follows:
- Regional Waste Planning is undertaken by the South West Wales Regional Waste Planning Forum (of which the County Borough is a member);
  - the Waste Planning Authority is the County Borough as local planning authority;
  - the Waste Collection and Disposal Authority is the County Borough, and
  - the Waste Regulation Authority (issuing and controlling waste permits) is the Environmental Agency.
- 17.1.10 The Assembly Government's Technical Advice Note 21: Waste requires the preparation and adoption of a Regional Waste Plan (RWP). The South West Wales RWP provides the necessary framework detail for local planning authorities to develop their UDP's and move towards site specific policies which clearly demonstrate that the necessary waste management capacity provision is made to meet existing and future national and international obligations. The RWP specifies the type, capacity and approximate location of waste management facilities required within the Region, each local planning authority is required to address these findings and determine potentially suitable locations of facilities needed to manage waste arising within its own area.
- Waste Arisings Within Neath Port Talbot
- 17.1.11 The latest data available for waste arisings within Neath Port Talbot can be summarised as follows:

<b>Municipal Solid Waste: 2001/02</b>	<b>(Tonnes)</b>
<b>Collected Domestic Refuse</b>	<b>51 043</b>
<b>Collected Commercial Refuse</b>	<b>2 535</b>
<b>Civic Amenity Waste</b>	<b>16 204</b>
<b>Street Cleansing Waste</b>	<b>3 668</b>
<b>Gulley Emptyings</b>	<b>683</b>
<b>Highway Waste</b>	<b>6 980</b>
<b>Building Waste</b>	<b>1 977</b>
<b>Grounds Waste</b>	<b>469</b>
<b>Recyclables (Bring &amp; Collected Kerbside)</b>	<b>1 981</b>
<b>Green Waste</b>	<b>4 815</b>
<b>Total:</b>	<b>90 355</b>

*Source: Strategic Assessment Report for South West Wales November 2002.*

<b>Other Waste Streams: 2000/01</b>	<b>(Tonnes)</b>
<b>Commercial (including special waste):</b>	<b>39 604</b>
<b>Industrial (including special waste):</b>	<b>1 486 329</b>
<b>Construction &amp; Demolition Waste:</b>	<b>237 879</b>
<b>Agricultural Waste (controlled):</b>	<b>563</b>
<b>Total:</b>	<b>1 764 375</b>
<b>Special Waste:</b>	<b>15121</b>

*Source: Regional Waste Plan for South West Wales November 2003.*

#### **Waste Treatment and Disposal Within Neath Port Talbot**

##### **17.1.12 Waste Disposal to Licensed Landfill During 2000/01:**

	(Tonnes)
<b>Municipal Solid Waste:</b>	<b>121 726</b>
<b>Commercial &amp; Industrial Waste:</b>	<b>237 022</b>
<b>Inert / Construction &amp; Demolition Waste:</b>	<b>61 064</b>
<b>Special Waste:</b>	<b>53 565</b>
<b>Total:</b>	<b>473 377</b>

*Source: Environment Agency 2002 (Forthcoming revision of SWMA: Wales).*

##### **17.1.13 Currently, landfill remains the most significant waste management method accounting for nearly 60% of all ‘controlled’ waste managed within the Region. Neath Port Talbot had the highest amount of waste disposed of at licensed**

landfill. This was dominated by the amount of industrial and commercial waste; principally due to the waste generated at the Corus steel works.

- 17.1.14 In 2001 there were a total of 5 non-inert and 2 inert licensed landfill sites within Neath Port Talbot and 7 licensed waste transfer stations. In 2002/3 18,898 tonnes of municipal waste were collected from Civic Amenity sites, compared with 6,581 in 1995/96.
- 17.1.15 In terms of recycling municipal waste, in 2003/04 8,493 tonnes (or 8.23%) were recycled, compared with 1,458 in 1995/96 (1.5%). This was collected from 3 Civic Amenity sites, 23 "bring sites" and a kerbside recycling scheme (introduced in September 2003) serving 93% of all households within the County Borough.
- 17.1.16 In 2001, non-industrial landfill within the County Borough related to two large landfill sites.
- Giant's Grave, Briton Ferry. This was operated by the Neath Port Talbot Waste Management Company, a local authority waste disposal company. 101,000 tonnes were disposed of in 2000/2001. This included some trade waste collected from businesses, and municipal waste from the adjacent authorities. The site's planning permission will expire in 2007, but landfill ceased in 2002;
  - WRG operate a large landfill site at Abernant (Cwmgors). It is licensed to take both municipal and special wastes. In 2000/1 it accommodated between 115,000 and 180,000 tonnes per year. Approximately 26% of the imports to the site were household waste, 28% were non-hazardous material and around 15% were contaminated soil, classified as special waste. At current rates of input, the site is likely to be full by the end of 2005.
- 17.1.17 In terms of the Commercial & Industrial waste disposed to landfill, this was predominantly within the Corus, BP Llandarcy and Baglan Bay industrial complexes, which have their own landfill sites. With the closure of Llandarcy as a refinery and the substantial reduction of the Baglan Bay chemicals work, two of the sources of this waste may substantially reduce or disappear. In 2000/01, 176 274 tonnes of Commercial & Industrial waste was disposed of at the Corus landfill site. Although this figure remains high, the amount of Corus waste to landfill has decreased over recent years. This reflects technological improvements coupled with recycling of waste streams and it is anticipated that there will be a continuing decline in such waste generation.
- 17.1.18 Substantial amounts of mineral waste are generated as a result of the mineral activity within the County Borough. This includes open cast and underground coal mining and quarries. The waste is dealt with within the sites as a requirement of the planning permissions.
- 17.1.19 Inert waste is also deposited on a number of sites which are exempt from licence by the Environment Agency, but normally require planning permission.

### Waste Flows In and Out of the County Borough Area

- 17.1.20 Little information is readily available. It is apparent, however, from comparison of the waste arisings and landfill within Neath Port Talbot that there are substantial inflows of waste into the County Borough. The Environment Agency has produced estimates of flows, but detailed analysis is needed of individual site returns to identify the extent and nature of flows.
- 17.1.21 With regard to South West Wales as a whole, a recent survey for the Welsh Assembly Government suggested that for 2000/01 the region was a net exporter of all controlled wastes by some 45 320 tonnes, over half of which was municipal solid waste. The findings of the study can be summarised as follows:

Description	Imports	Exports	Net Import
Municipal Waste	2 571	31 802	- 29 231
C & I Waste	39 248	29 942	9 306
Inert Waste	2 571	12 126	- 9 555
Special Waste	13 727	29 567	-15 840
Total:	58 117	103 437	- 45 320

*Source: Waste Import and Export Study for Wales  
May 2003*

- 17.1.22 During 2000, the shipping of waste material (slag) from the Corus steel works in Port Talbot by sea was commenced. It represents the recovery of an industrial waste material for future use, and by shipping it at sea the adverse environmental effects of transportation are minimised. The re-use of industrial slag from the Corus steel works at Port Talbot has created an important industrial activity and has helped to fund the opening of the docks in Port Talbot.

## **17.2 CURRENT TRENDS AND ISSUES**

- 17.2.1 Formerly the European Union Regulations allowed the co-disposal of waste (i.e. the disposal of more than one category of waste in the same landfill). Under the regulations however, from July 2004 this changed. Since July 2001 when determining applications for landfill, the Environment Agency has been required to exercise its powers, as far as possible, the requirements of the regulations. From July 2004 only certain wastes can be accepted at the appropriately classified landfills and all of the waste must be treated before landfilling and some wastes will be prohibited completely. By no later than July 2009 all landfills must comply in full with the regulations.
- 17.2.2 The County Borough's Municipal Waste Management Strategy (adopted by the Authority in November 2004) sets out the authority's approach to addressing the Assembly Government's targets for municipal waste. It comprises an integrated approach including raising public awareness of the need to minimise the creation of waste, and promote recycling and composting.

- 17.2.3 In response to the new requirements placed on Collection and Disposal authorities, the Authority has developed in partnership with Bridgend County Borough Council an integrated waste treatment plant at Crymlyn Burrows. This Materials Recovery and Energy Centre became operational in 2005.
- 17.2.4 The plant has the capacity to treat 151,000 tons of waste per year, with planning permission to deal with 261,000 tons. Of the tonnage treated, no more than 35% will go to landfill. Of the remaining 65%, no more than 42.7% will be converted to energy and the remainder will be recycled and composted. As a result of this and related waste management initiatives, it is anticipated that the County Borough will improve on all of the targets set out in the Government's Waste Strategy 2000.
- 17.2.5 The plant will generate up to 25,000 tonnes of waste ash per year, while there may be a need to landfill bulky items which are unsuitable for recycling or incineration. As a result, there will still be a significant need to landfill waste from the municipal waste stream, to which commercial, industrial and construction wastes will have to be added. New legislation and recycling measures will, however, increasingly help to reduce the generation of waste.
- 17.2.6 Landfill is likely to remain an important disposal option for the life of this plan. Landfill normally relates to land raising or the filling of existing voids (for instance quarries or valleys). The risk of creating pollution is a particular concern. While smell, dust and other air-borne pollution is a concern of any site, the prevention of the escape of water and leachate is a particular problem, which can require expensive engineering works, and this will be influenced by the area's hydro-geology. Even with waste minimisation and increased levels of reuse and recovery there will be a need for landfill. This will include incineration residues and other wastes where landfill is the most practical option. In future, individual landfill sites will not be able to accept hazardous and non-hazardous or inert waste unless they have been specifically designed and engineered to cater for them separately.
- 17.2.7 The Environment Agency has estimated that in 2004, the remaining life of all licensed void for biodegradable waste within the City and County of Swansea, and Neath Port Talbot was 4.9 years (as at 1<sup>st</sup> April 1999 and compared with a figure for the whole of Wales of 6.4 years).
- 17.2.8 In view of the serious shortfall in landfill void, the Authority has resolved to approve an extension to the existing site at Pwllfawatkin, Abernant. This extension will meet the RWP's requirements for the County Borough.
- 17.2.9 Prior to July 2004 some 50% of special waste arisings in Wales was landfilled in co-disposal sites. There is now an urgent need to assess how and where this waste is best treated. This will include treatment prior to landfill.
- 17.2.10 The impact of the new regulations will cause difficulties in the short term, but should have an increasing effect of reducing pollution of watercourses and the atmosphere. The increased emphasis on recycling and recovery will create

opportunities for new jobs and enterprises as it becomes an increasingly important part of modern economic activity.

- 17.2.11 Over the years a number of landowners have sought to improve agricultural land or facilities through the deposit of waste. This can lead to undesirable impacts on local amenities, highway safety, the landscape and biodiversity.

### **17.3 STRATEGY**

- 17.3.1 The UDP seeks to address the minimisation, collection, treatment, disposal and management of waste in an integrated and sustainable manner. This includes not only the provision of facilities, the waste generated by users of new development but any construction and demolition waste created by the development itself. Where new development is proposed, the Authority will (through policy GC1) seek to ensure that these issues are taken fully into account.
- 17.3.2 The management of waste to meet local needs and which contribute to meeting the needs and potential new demands within the regional framework will be promoted, provided it does not create unacceptable impacts on communities or the environment.
- 17.3.3 Proposals for agricultural improvements involving the deposit of waste materials will be assessed under the policies in this chapter and the Environment Chapter as appropriate.
- 17.3.4 In developing the RWP for South West Wales a detailed assessment was carried out of several potential waste management options, ranging from a ‘do nothing’ option to more aspirational options (i.e. meeting 2020 targets by 2013). The assessment was implemented using a range of environmental, socio-economic, operational and waste policy criterion.
- 17.3.5 The aspirations of the RWP are to achieve the 2020 targets by 2013 (a ‘do more option’). The RWP considers that waste produced in the region will be disposed of in the region and the regional requirements shared pro rata between the individual authorities. The RWP for 2013 indicates, for the ‘do more’ option, that minimal landfill capacity will be required, it should however be noted that this does not take account of the landfill requirements as a result of secondary residual treatments.
- 17.3.6 Whilst the RWP elects Option 6: a ‘do more’ MBT led strategy as the preferred option, the plan expects that the UDPs of the individual Authorities include, as a minimum, the requirements of Option 1: a meet the 2013 targets - MBT led strategy.
- 17.3.7 The Crymlyn Burrows recovery facility is an example where the potential to combine capacity requirements between two or more authorities has occurred.
- 17.3.8 In light of the requirements set out by both the TAN 21 Waste and the RWP, the UDP sets out as a minimum the preferred types of locations for the

provision of facilities and will provide enough land use provision for dealing with the waste arisings that are likely to be experienced within the County Borough until 2016.

- 17.3.9 The existing commitments within Neath Port Talbot, namely the MREC facility and Pwllfawatkin, provide sufficient infrastructure for meeting the needs of the County Borough as required by TAN 21 and set out in the RWP. As a result, any further proposals for the landfill of waste will be resisted. However, the potential for a regional contingency site at Giants Grave is identified.

## **17.4 PART 1 POLICIES**

### **POLICY 24**

**New development will be expected to incorporate processes and facilities to minimise the creation of waste, and to include measures to ensure the re-use and/or recycling of the waste which they generate. As far as is feasible, waste generated on site should be treated on site.**

### **POLICY 25**

**The creation of a network of waste management facilities will be promoted through the plan in order to:**

- a) meet the existing and future needs of the County Borough; and**
- b) contribute to meeting the needs and potential new demands of the region.**

### **POLICY 26**

**Proposals for the collection, treatment or disposal of waste will be considered in terms of whether they would represent a sustainable approach to waste management, and would not create any unacceptable impacts.**

- 17.4.1 Every community generates waste as a result of virtually all activities. This causes impacts locally in terms of pollution and impacts on the landscape, wildlife and local communities, and globally in terms of contributing to global climate change.
- 17.4.2 The Authority will encourage and bring forward proposals for the management of waste. These are likely to include civic amenity sites, waste transfer stations and material recovery facilities serving the requirements of the County Borough.
- 17.4.3 With regard to the region, the RWP summarises the required aspirations in terms of future land use planning provision for waste and in particular, provides a regional assessment and identification of the implications for each waste stream.
- 17.4.4 Policy GC1 will ensure that waste minimisation, treatment and collection is considered as part of the design of proposals generally.

17.4.4 The framework outlined in the RWP translates into a commitment by the region and each of its constituent Authorities, to provide enough infrastructure capacity to manage ‘controlled’ waste arisings up to 2013.

17.4.6 The level of contribution required by the County Borough towards achieving such a commitment remains uncertain. Further work is necessary by the Regional Waste Group in order to inform the process. Indeed the current work programme relates to the production of an Addendum to the RWP, which when completed, will provide further guidance on the suitable location and distribution of sub-regional facilities. The County Borough is committed to examining future co-operative arrangements in respect of meeting the needs and potential new demands of the region.

17.4.7 In terms of the provision of waste management facilities, the UDP provides a balance of site specific and criteria based policies to provide as much information as possible in order to guide the industry and the public on the locations likely to be acceptable for such development and how proposals will be considered. The impact upon local residents, communities and the environment will be a key concern.

17.4.8 Development proposals, where applicable, will need to demonstrate how waste will be managed and will be considered under Policy W4. Policy GC1 will ensure that waste minimisation, treatment and collection is considered as part of the design of proposals generally.

## **17.5 POLICY W1 – PROPOSALS FOR THE COLLECTION, TREATMENT, TRANSFER AND DISPOSAL OF WASTE**

**Proposals for the collection, treatment, transfer or disposal of waste will be given priority on;**

- a) industrial and commercial land (within sites listed for B2 employment use in Policy EC1)**
- b) derelict, contaminated and despoiled land;**
- c) previously used (“brownfield”) land;**
- d) former mineral workings;**
- e) existing or former waste management facilities; or**
- f) or as part of a land reclamation and improvement scheme**

17.5.1 The policy sets out criteria by which proposals will be assessed. They will be considered in terms of their likely impacts on the environment, economy and local communities in accordance with national policy as set out by the Assembly Government in the Planning Guidance Wales and Waste TAN (21)and as described earlier in this topic.

17.5.2 The waste management facilities needed to comply with the RWP will be provided in the main by the private sector. The scale, complexity and operational characteristics of modern waste management facilities are substantially the same as that of manufacturing industry. Accordingly, the most appropriate locations for many of the future waste facilities are on those industrial estates which are suitable for general industrial development. The employment landbank contains a total of some 320 hectares and this is adequate provision to accommodate anticipated needs.

17.5.3 Waste processing and treatment facilities, transfer stations and possibly mechanical biological treatment, in-vessel composting and anaerobic digestion would all be suited to industrial land listed for B2 employment use.

17.5.4 Certain types of waste management facilities are however, unsuited to an industrial estate location by reason of space requirements (e.g. windrow composting) and incompatibility with adjoining uses (e.g. landfilling). Landfill is considered under Policies W2 and W3, whereas windrow composting is more suitable on farms as part of farm diversification. Such proposals will be considered under the General Considerations policies (GC1 and GC2).

17.5.5 Proposals for hazardous waste will be considered against the criteria set out in this policy, the General Considerations policies (GC1 and GC2) and other relevant policies.

17.5.6 Key criteria and methods which, wherever appropriate, should be taken into account when considering proposals include:

- the Proximity and Self Sufficiency Principles: waste should be treated and/or disposed of as near to the source of origin as possible to minimise the environmental impacts of transporting it;
- the Best Practical Environmental Option (BPEO): the option that provides the most benefits or the least damage to the environment as a whole, at acceptable costs, in the long and short term;
- Sustainable Waste Management Options: assessing the best options in terms of the whole range of sustainability issues, including:
  - efficient and prudent use of primary resources including water;
  - reduction of emissions with more than a local impact;
  - minimisation of local air quality impacts;
  - conservation of landscape and significant townscape;
  - protecting local amenity;
  - protecting habitats and species;
  - minimisation of transport impacts;
  - employment creation;
  - impacts on the local economy;
  - accidental risks;
  - public acceptability;

- social impacts;
  - financial feasibility.
- Health Impact Assessment: which will take account of health impacts both on the population as a whole, or groups or different parts of it. It uses similar methods to Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). Where there are health issues related to a proposal, and an EIA is required to accompany a planning application, an assessment of the health issues should be included. The preparation and use of HIA's is developing and guidance is available: The Assembly Government's: "Developing Health Impact Assessment in Wales" 1999, and "The Merseyside Guidelines for Health Impact Assessment" University of Liverpool.
- 17.5.7 Wherever feasible and compatible with other criteria, the movement of waste by rail or water will be encouraged.
- 17.5.8 The criteria set out in the General Considerations (GC1 and GC2) policies will also be used to assess the proposal.
- 17.5.9 Proposals for the improvement of agricultural land involving the deposit of inert waste brought into the agricultural holding from outside will be considered under Policy W3 and the General Considerations policies (GC1 and GC2). Where the proposal primarily relates to the disposal of waste the policies contained in this chapter will be given additional weight.
- 17.5.10 The Authority will bring forward proposals for further waste collection and treatment facilities, to secure better local provision in accordance with the Environment Protection Act 1990, and they will be considered in the light of the policy.

## **17.6 POLICY W2 – PROVISION OF LANDFILL AND RECYCLING AND TREATMENT FACILITES**

**The disposal of domestic, commercial and non-hazardous industrial waste will take place at Pwllfawatkin, Abernant. The existing commitments, including the MREC recycling and treatment facility, will provide sufficient capacity to meet anticipated needs over the plan period. Further proposals for the landfill of waste will be resisted.**

- 17.6.1 Even with the fully operational Materials Recovery & Energy Centre at Crymlyn Burrows, landfill will remain an important disposal option for the life of this plan.
- 17.6.2 The aspirations of the RWP are to achieve the 2020 targets by 2013 (a 'do more option'). The RWP considers that waste produced in the region will be disposed of in the region and the regional requirements shared pro rata between the individual authorities. The RWP for 2013 indicates, for the 'do more' option, that minimal landfill capacity will be required, it should however be noted that this does not take account of the landfill requirements as a result of secondary residual treatments.

17.6.3 Whilst the RWP elects Option 6: a ‘do more’ MBT led strategy as the preferred option, the plan expects that the UDPs of the individual Authorities include, as a minimum, the requirements of Option 1: a meet the 2013 targets - MBT led strategy.

17.6.4 An assessment has been carried out and considers the following two scenarios:

1. Option 1 plus the MREC: the achievement of the targets of the Wales Waste Strategy (WWS) together with the achievement of the 2020 Strategy targets for municipal waste through the Materials Recovery and Energy Centre; and
2. Option 6 plus the MREC: the achievement of the aspirations of the RWP together with the achievement of the 2020 Strategy targets for municipal waste through the Materials Recovery and Energy Centre.

17.6.5 Both scenarios recognise the considerable investment in waste treatment infrastructure within the County Borough (the Materials Recovery and Energy Centre (MREC) at Crymlyn Burrows) and the significant improved performance as a result of this investment allowing the Authority to achieve the 2020 targets by 2006/07 therefore considerably reducing the landfill requirement for municipal waste well beyond the RWP aspirations.

17.6.6 Achievement of the aspirations for waste streams other than the municipal waste stream will mainly be driven by commercial factors. As such achievement of the aspirations of the RWP or even the targets of the WWS are beyond the control of the Authority.

17.6.7 The assessment was also based on the following further assumptions:

- that waste produced in NPT will be disposed of in NPT and will include disposal of municipal waste generated within Bridgend County Borough Council.
- that Phase II of the Materials Recovery and Energy Centre (MREC) will come on line during the life of the UDP and that the MREC will achieve its performance target of 68% diversion from landfill; and
- waste tonnages and forecasts are based on those contained in the Regional Waste Plan (waste arisings from the Strategic Assessment Report, Report 1 of the Regional Waste Plan).

- 17.6.8 The assessment has indicated the following total landfill void requirement to 2016:

<b>Waste Stream</b>	<b>Void Requirement (m<sup>3</sup>)</b>	
	<b>Option 1 WWS + MREC</b>	<b>Option 6 RWP + MREC</b>
<b>Municipal Waste*</b>	<b>794,641</b>	<b>794,641</b>
<b>Commercial/Industrial Waste</b>	<b>940,788</b>	<b>669,513</b>
<b>Construction and Demolition Waste</b>	<b>180,016</b>	<b>38,185</b>
<b>Agriculture Waste</b>	<b>2,337</b>	<b>510</b>
<b>Hazardous Waste</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>N/A</b>
		<b>1,502,849</b>

*\* MREC performance enables the achievement of 2020 targets for municipal waste by 2006*

- 17.6.9 The assessment has identified that for the life of the UDP there is a need for the landfill capacity in the order of 1,500,000m<sup>3</sup> assuming the Commercial and Industrial, Construction and Demolition and Agriculture sectors achieve the targets of the Regional Waste Plan or in the order of 1,920,000 m<sup>3</sup> assuming these sectors achieve the targets of the Wales Waste Strategy.

- 17.6.10 Whilst an agreement exists that Pwllfawatkin will accommodate both Neath Port Talbot's and Bridgend's municipal waste, an element of the tonnage disposed of at the site will originate from further afield.

- 17.6.11 The existing commitments within Neath Port Talbot, namely the MREC facility and Pwllfawatkin, provide sufficient infrastructure for meeting the needs of the County Borough as required by TAN 21 and set out in the RWP. As a result, any further proposals for the landfill of waste will be resisted.

## **17.7 POLICY W3 – CRITERIA FOR THE ASSESSMENT OF THE DEPOSITION OF INERT WASTE MATERIAL ON AGRICULTURAL LAND FOR LAND IMPROVEMENT OR OTHER AGRICULTURAL ENGINEERING OPERATIONS**

**Proposals for the deposition of inert waste on agricultural land, will only be permitted when all of the following criteria, where relevant, have been satisfied:**

- a) an assessment has been made that demonstrates that there are no practicable recycling opportunities of such material;

- b) it can be demonstrated that the proposal is reasonably necessary for the purposes of agriculture, the waste material is suitable to that purpose and the minimum amount of material is used to achieve the required end result.**
- c) it can be demonstrated that the agricultural characteristics of the land would be significantly improved by the deposition of waste and that the improvement could not be achieved by traditional methods of agricultural improvement, such as land drainage**
- d) an assessment has been made of the possible impact on:**
  - i. pollution or disturbance to ground or surface water supply or drainage;**
  - ii. the landscape;**
  - iii. biodiversity and earth heritage, with particular regard to sites or species designated as being of national or international importance;**
  - iv. sites of archaeological importance, historic buildings or Conservation Areas;**
  - v. the likely generation of pollution or contamination;**
  - vi. noise, dust and vibration arising from the methods of working;**
  - vii. health**
  - viii flooding and flood risk**

**and measures provided to reduce damage, harm or disturbance to the environment, individuals and communities caused by those issues to acceptable levels.**

- 17.7.1 Inert materials are not being re-used and recycled for the most beneficial uses. Inert materials are valuable resources and as such recycling opportunities should be investigated. It is anticipated that in the future recycling facilities for inert waste will become established and therefore it is likely that the demand for the need to landfill such waste will diminish.
- 17.7.2 Supplementary Planning Guidance will be prepared to provide information and guidance on landscape, biodiversity, archaeological and other issues to guide the preparation and consideration of proposals.

## **17.8 POLICY W4 – PROPOSALS FOR THE MINIMISATION, RECOVERY AND RECYCLING OF WASTE**

**Proposals for the minimisation, recovery and recycling of waste will be promoted and encouraged. Proposals should not create any unacceptable impacts and will be considered in terms of the Plan's policies.**

- 17.8.1 The Council will encourage and bring forward proposals for the management of waste. This will include civic amenity sites, waste transfer stations and material recovery facilities. It is anticipated that the Materials Recovery and Energy Centre at Crymlyn Burrows, will allow the County Borough to improve on all the targets set out in the Government's Waste Strategy 2000.
- 17.8.2 As a contribution to waste minimisation, re-use and recycling, all development proposals should demonstrate (via a waste minimisation plan or similar formal statement) that they will incorporate and implement measures at the construction

stage (and, where possible, at the site clearance stage) to minimise waste and to separate wastes for recovery, re-use and recycling. In order to achieve the objectives of sustainable development, address waste minimisation and to ensure that appropriate provision is made for the recycling of waste, proposals for major new development, including retail, industrial, commercial and housing, should include details of the means of waste collection and proposals for waste minimisation and recycling. The provision should be well-related to the development that it is intended to serve, but the exact form and type will be determined having regard to the nature and size of the development. Such arrangements should be promoted in all major development proposals in order to maximise recycling possibilities.

- 17.8.3 All proposals will be considered in relation to their impact upon local residents, communities and the environment and policy GC1 will ensure that waste minimisation, treatment and collection is considered as part of the design of proposals generally.
- 17.8.4 Hazardous and special wastes are those that carry an intrinsic risk to health or the environment. Such waste requires special treatment facilities where it can be processed to make it acceptable for disposal. Such facilities have the potential to cause significant adverse effects and therefore need to be located in areas which have been carefully assessed to minimise any adverse impact.
- 17.8.5 It will be necessary to develop new facilities for managing such waste in South Wales but it is likely that only a few locations will be required. The RWP has identified the capacity requirement for such waste but has not provided adequate guidance on this issue to enable the planning of such sites within the region.
- 17.8.6 Whilst the need for such sites is acknowledged, it is anticipated that an early review of the RWP, in relation to the land use provision of sites for managing hazardous waste, will be undertaken to provide a sound basis for local planning authorities. Consequently, the County Borough is committed to monitoring the situation and will undertake an early review of the UDP if appropriate.
- 17.8.7 The policies are designed to meet the requirements of Article 7 of the Waste Framework Directive concerning identifying suitable sites or installations in order that an integrated and adequate network of waste facilities may be created.
- 17.8.8 The Plan's policies will promote the re-use and recycling of waste to meet National Waste Strategy for Wales (2002) and Regional Waste Plan targets for waste arising. This will include:
  - Municipal Solid Waste: by 2010 waste arisings per household to be no greater than those (for Wales) in 1997/98. By 2010 achieve at least 40% recycling. By 2013 no more than 50% of the biodegradable waste produced in 1995 to be land filled.
  - Industrial and Commercial Waste: by 2010, to achieve a reduction in the Public Body and Business Waste produced equivalent to at least 10% of the 1998 arisings. By 2010 to reduce the amount of waste going to landfill to less than

80% of land filled in 1998. By 2010 to reduce the amount of biodegradable waste going to landfill to 80% of that land filled in 1998.

- Construction and Demolition Waste: by 2010 to re-use or recycle at least 85% of the waste produced.
- Hazardous Waste: by 2010 to reduce the amount of hazardous waste generated by at least 20% compared with 2000.
- End of Life Vehicles: no later than 1<sup>st</sup> January 2015 for all End of Vehicles, the re-use and recovery shall be increased to a minimum of 95% by an average weight vehicle and year and the re-use and recycling shall be increased to a minimum of 85% by an average weight per vehicle and year.
- Packaging Waste: since 2002 companies have been obligated under the Packaging Regulations to recover 59% of packaging waste and recycle at least 19% of each material.

## **17.9 POLICY W5: CONTINGENCY LANDFILL SITE AT GIANT'S GRAVE**

**Land at Giant's Grave is identified as a potential contingency landfill site that could be developed provided a regional need is justified, and site planning issues as set out in policy GC2 are satisfactorily addressed taking fully into account the consequences of the site flooding.**

- 17.9.1 The Giant's Grave landfill site provided the main landfill facility serving not only the County Borough but a wider area until its closure in 2002. Its planning permission expires in September 2007 and represents the potential for a further cell with a capacity of up to 2 million cubic metres. Before considering releasing the site for development as landfill the Authority would need to be satisfied that the regional need is justified and that the site offers the best alternative.

## **17.10 POLICY W6: RECYCLING OF INDUSTRIAL WASTE**

**Proposals for the recycling of industrial waste will be promoted and encouraged. Proposals should not create any unacceptable impacts on the environment or local communities and will be considered against the Plan's policies.**

- 17.10.1 The recycling of industrial waste can both prevent the creation or expansion of landfill with its adverse impacts on the environment and can generate economic and employment benefits. When considering proposals for the recycling of industrial waste, the potential impacts will be carefully considered and in relation to existing tipped material this will include whether important ecological habitats have been created.

## **17.11 SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL SUMMARY**

- 17.11.1 The chapter seeks to place dealing with waste at the core of the plan. In addition to setting out criteria by which new proposals will be assessed, it requires developers to demonstrate how waste will be dealt with (including the construction phases, any processes or activities undertaken, and recycling, composting, collection and treatment by users and occupiers). This is achieved through the policies in this chapter, and also the policies in the Environment chapter.
- 17.11.2 The potential for a regional contingency at Giants Grave is identified but its release would only be allowed following a rigorous assessment of the needs and impact.
- 17.11.3 The policies have been assessed in terms of how comprehensively they address the UDP's Vision and Strategy and, subject to the comments made above were found to be acceptable.

**Proposals will be considered against any of the Plan's policies that are relevant.**

**Useful starting points are: -**

**CHAPTER 8: ENVIRONMENT**

**Policy ENV8:**     **A) Replacement dwellings; B) Conversions or re-use of buildings & C) Farm Diversification in the countryside.**

**Policy GC1:**       **New Buildings, Structures & Changes of Use**

**Policy GC2:**       **Engineering Works and Operations [Including Minerals and Waste]**

## **18 LLANDARCY URBAN VILLAGE**

### **18.1 CURRENT POSITION AND STRATEGY**

- 18.1.1 The Llandarcy Urban Village (Coed Darcy) comprises approximately 526 hectares (1300 acres). The site was first developed as an oil refinery in 1921 and employed 3,000 people at its height. The site was closed as a refinery in 1999, with the exception of a bitumen terminal employing 15 people. In 1987, in response to an earlier restructuring at the plant, BP D'Arcy was set up. This provides workspace and managed support for small and medium sized enterprises, with 1000 people currently employed.
- 18.1.2 The former refinery site at Llandarcy forms part of the Objective 1 strategic site known as the Swansea Bay Arc of Opportunity. Following the inclusion of this as a preferred strategic site in the Consultation Draft of the UDP, a Strategic Framework plan and Outline Funding Strategy has been prepared for the whole of the Llandarcy site. This identifies the “urban village” concept as the most appropriate way to secure holistic, locally based regeneration by providing high quality, well designed, mixed use neighbourhoods which provide for a wide range of activities and opportunities, with a particular emphasis on including a high proportion of appropriate forms of locally based employment, building on the success of BP D'Arcy. This will be a complimentary development to the industrial park developments at the Energy Park, Baglan, Margam and elsewhere.
- 18.1.3 The proposal is for the first new urban village in Wales demonstrating mixed use development on a large area of contaminated brown field land, and become a flagship project to underpin economic development and investment.
- 18.1.4 The aim is to promote a distinctive approach to the re-use of brownfield land to create, inclusive, sustainable mixed-use neighbourhoods. This seeks to facilitate locally based regeneration and to strengthen the health and economy of a much wider area.
- 18.1.5 This approach will create a benchmark of best practice in the creation of new and revitalized neighbourhoods, which will help to raise the aspirations for development and regeneration across Wales.
- 18.1.6 The viability of the Urban Village is based upon establishing a very well integrated mix of uses – bringing homes, schools, shopping and other activities closer together within the context of a walkable neighbourhood. The creation of new public transport linkages, and ensuring streets are designed in such a way to encourage cycling, will cater for some longer journeys. This combined approach will encourage a shift in modes of transport, one which moves away from the reliance on the private car. The development will be particularly expensive, involving extensive decontamination as well as the provision of all the services, facilities, infrastructure and mitigation works needed to meet the scheme's Sustainability objectives. As a result there is a need to confirm a commitment to develop 4,000 houses over a 20 year period.

- 18.1.7 Whilst the site is adjacent to Junction 43 of the M4 motorway, this will not in itself determine the nature and form of development, as the whole transportation movement strategy for Llandarcy is predicated on improving and strengthening local street connections and public transportation network.
- 18.1.8 Other features of the urban village are as follows: -
- a mix of well-integrated uses, which can bring amenities close together;
  - a range of tenures, both residential and commercial, to encourage social and economic cohesion and opportunity;
  - a density of residential development sufficiently high to encourage sustainable mixed development and bring basic amenities within walking distance;
  - a high quality of urban design and architecture;
  - a continuing input from local stakeholders in the planning, design and onward management of the area.
- 18.1.9 This will bring forward a range of tenure, including affordable housing size and house type. The site because of its size, and through a development programme to bring forward sites, will also provide a range of sites to cater for development needs in the Greater Neath area. This will avoid the need to release large greenfield developments on the fringes of the Neath urban area. In addition to concerns over the loss of greenfield sites in terms of the impacts on the landscape and wildlife, the sites face a range of infrastructure capacity problems (including highways, schools, sewerage, and water supply).
- 18.1.10 Through the creation of the Urban Village, a range of important sustainability concerns are addressed: helping fund the decontamination of the site, making full use of previously developed land, minimising the loss elsewhere of greenfield sites, making the most effective use of infrastructure investment, encouraging the shift from use of the car towards use of public transport, cycling and walking, and enabling substantial habitat conservation and creation.
- 18.1.11 Because of its strategic location, it will also provide for an element of the housing needs in the Port Talbot area.
- 18.1.12 Of critical importance in the design will be ensuring that the setting of the Llandarcy Village Conservation Area is enhanced, and that the environmentally sensitive areas of the site and in particular the adjacent Crymlyn Bog, which is a SSSI, SAC and Ramsar site, are not damaged. Following a ruling by the European Court of Justice in October 2005 concerning the transposition of the European Habitats Directive into UK law, it has become clear that development plans which might have a significant effect on any SAC or Ramsar site must be subject to an Appropriate Assessment to investigate whether the proposals would have an adverse effect on the integrity of the SAC(s). Consequently, the likely effects on the three SACs located within the County Borough (Crymlyn

Bog, Kenfig and Coedydd Nedd a Mellte) have been considered and an Appropriate Assessment has been undertaken. It concluded that the UDP would have no adverse effect on the integrity of any SAC. A further Appropriate Assessment will be required in relation to any relevant planning application submitted.

18.1.13 A development Code and Design Guidance will be prepared, to control the design. This will set out:

- details of road hierarchies, widths and layout (setbacks, car parking arrangements etc.);
- urban form – height massing and scale;
- features required to enhance key intersections;
- proposed materials and boundary treatments;
- street furniture (positioning of service boxes, street lighting details and signage);
- landscaping (i.e. surfacing materials, strategic street trees) and where appropriate public art; and
- the integration of uses and tenures;
- energy efficient techniques (i.e. orientation, drainage (SUDS), planting of shelter vegetation, passive solar gain and solar water heating).
- sustainable drainage (SUDS).
- water efficient techniques and conservation measures

18.1.14 This will also provide an important stimulus to encourage the application of the principles to appropriate developments across the County Borough.

## **18.2 PART 1 POLICY**

### **POLICY 27**

**A new urban village will be created at Llandarcy providing a mixed use development on brownfield land as an extension to the Neath urban area at Skewen.**

18.2.1 It is proposed to create an Urban Village comprising housing, employment, with supporting community facilities, infrastructure and transportation including public transport at Llandarcy as an extension to the Neath urban area. The development offers the opportunity to meet the majority of Neath's and (to a less extent) Port Talbot's housing needs in a development which embraces and promotes sustainable forms of living.

- 18.2.2 A series of alternative locations to meet the housing needs were described and considered in the pre-deposit Consultation document. This included four greenfield sites together with this mainly brownfield site. Each of the greenfield sites would have involved considerable infrastructure costs. While this is also the case at Llandarcy, the proposal provides the means to regenerate a well located but severely contaminated, brownfield site.
- 18.2.3 The site is uniquely located at the heart of the travel patterns within the Swansea Arc of Opportunity. As a result of the single ownership, it offers the potential to deliver an integrated approach focussing on sustainable development principles.

### **18.3 POLICY LL1 – LLANDARCY URBAN VILLAGE**

**Llandarcy is allocated for the development of an Urban Village with the following outputs;**

- a) up to 4,000 dwellings (2,000 during the plan period and the remaining 2,000 by 2026)**
  - b) up to 30,000 sq. metres of B1 uses (within the plan period and capacity for 49,000 sq. metres); and**
  - c) up to 5,500 sq. metres of commercial floorspace (within the plan period and capacity for 8,600 sq. metres) including retailing for the Village in accord with Policy TRL4.**
  - d) The Urban Village will also contain associated recreational and open space, secondary and primary schools, facilities for continuing education, community halls, health care facilities and a library.**
  - e) Legal agreements and planning conditions will be used wherever appropriate to ensure that the necessary infrastructure, public transport, cycling and walking links are provided before development commences and appropriately managed following development and that the scheme's design and sustainability principles are applied throughout the development.**
- 18.3.1 An Urban Village is defined as a very well integrated mix use development – bringing homes, schools, shopping, work and other activities closer together within the context of a walkable neighbourhood, and with good quality public transport linkages
  - 18.3.2 It is important that the development is seen as a whole with the development value of sites being used to underpin the achievement of that whole. This will be captured through partnership, but using Legal Obligations if necessary.
  - 18.3.3 The Urban Village will be developed within the lands allocated on the Proposals Map in accord with a Master Plan which will be considered as supplementary planning guidance, and it is anticipated that not all parts of the

allocation would be developed. The Master Plan will address layout, access, built form issues and highway standards.

- 18.3.4 Planning permission will only be granted where it accords with the principles of the Urban Village, and this will include developer contributions towards the provision and maintenance of the infrastructure, facilities and services identified in the overall Master Plan. This will be achieved through Section 106 undertakings or through a partnership involving the public sector.
- 18.3.5 The UDP identifies the expected outputs from the scheme over the Plan period. Housing sites will become available for development from 2006 and will provide a range of sites to provide choice for developers and house buyers throughout the Plan period. It is anticipated that approximately 200 dwellings per year would be developed within the Urban Village. This is related to the anticipated rate of building and market demand. The allocation included in the Deposit Plan was for 1450 houses, although it was noted that the site had capacity for 2500. Following an assessment of the scheme's viability it was identified that a firm commitment for 4000 houses is needed to ensure that the scheme including its Sustainability credentials is fully viable. This allocation extends beyond the plan period (2001-2016) until 2026, but it is required to provide certainty. This increased level of housing enhances the scheme in enabling secondary school provision and enhanced retail and community transport facilities to be provided
- 18.3.6 A southern highway access from Jersey Marine will be provided early in the plan period. This proposed road, which is an integral part of the Urban Village infrastructure, is considered in the Transport chapter (policy T8) and the Sustainability Appraisal to that chapter. Following a ruling by the European Court of Justice in October 2005 concerning the transposition of the European Habitats Directive into UK law, it has become clear that development plans which might have a significant effect on any SAC or Ramsar site must be subject to an Appropriate Assessment to investigate whether the proposals would have an adverse effect on the integrity of the SAC(s). Consequently, the likely effects on the three SACs located within the County Borough (Crymlyn Bog, Kenfig and Coedydd Nedd a Mellte) have been considered and an Appropriate Assessment has been undertaken. It concluded that the UDP would have no adverse effect on the integrity of any SAC. A further Appropriate Assessment will be required in relation to any relevant planning application submitted.
- 18.3.7 The Authority resolved in July 2002 to grant planning permission for a 4.9 hectare portion of the site for housing, employment and related uses. This was seen as forming part of the redevelopment of the site in terms of industry and employment and as the provision of an extension to the existing settlement at Llandarcy.

## **18.4 SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL SUMMARY**

- 18.4.1 The strategic Sustainability Appraisal aspects have already been considered in terms of the Strategy, and individual topic chapters.

- 18.4.2 The detailed assessment of the site proposals will await the availability of detailed development proposals. Particularly important features will include:-
- accessibility within the site;
  - accessibility by public transport, cycling and walking to the surrounding urban area and in particular, Skewen, Neath and Birchgrove/Trallwn/Port Tennant;
  - the identification of best practice in terms of design relating to energy retention, solar gain, minimisation, collection and treatment of waste;
  - the provision of facilities to serve the community and reduce the need to leave the community for everyday needs;
  - protecting the ecosystems, habitats and species of Crymlyn Bog, Pant Y Sais Fen and Crymlyn Burrows;
  - taking the opportunity to create a “green lungs and / wildlife corridors within the site”
  - protecting the important landscape setting of the Green Wedge between Swansea and Neath;
  - the southern highway access from Jersey Marine

**Proposals will be considered against any of the Plan’s policies that are relevant.**

**Useful starting points are: -**

**CHAPTER 8: ENVIRONMENT**

**Policy ENV8:** **A) Replacement dwellings; B) Conversions or re-use of buildings & C) Farm Diversification in the countryside.**

**Policy GC1:** **New Buildings, Structures & Changes of Use**

**Policy GC2:** **Engineering Works and Operations [Including Minerals and Waste]**

## **19 PORT TALBOT DOCKS AND INDUSTRIAL ESTATE**

### **19.1 CURRENT POSITION**

- 19.1.1 The Port Talbot Docks and Industrial Estate site comprises the Old Port Talbot Docks, the Port Talbot Tidal Harbour and the area known as the Port Talbot Industrial Estate comprising the former Byass steel plant and North Bank and Llewellyn's Quay area.
- 19.1.2 The Port Talbot Dock had, until recently, been closed for some twenty six years and the area has been used for a variety of industrial and commercial use during that time and has suffered from haphazard estate development, bad neighbour uses and poor access.
- 19.1.3 The site is adjacent to the Port Talbot Town Centre and separated from it by the Mainline Swansea - Paddington railway with Port Talbot Railway Station overlooking the site. In many ways the area could be described as one of the Gateways to Port Talbot and the run down derelict state of the site is reflected in the poor image enjoyed by Port Talbot Town and its centre.
- 19.1.4 Large areas of land surrounding the actual docks have lain vacant for many years due to the closure of the docks and the gradual movements of the steel industry to the south as new technologies have replaced the plant etc. formerly occupying the lands adjacent to the Steelworks Wharf. The Industrial Estate area contains a variety of uses occupying in the main former industrial buildings.
- 19.1.5 Access to the site is poor, via the river crossing off Afan Way to the north west of the site, and the level crossing adjacent to the railway station to the east of the site.

### **19.2 CURRENT TRENDS AND ISSUES**

- 19.2.1 The catalyst for the regeneration of the area is the construction of the Port Talbot Peripheral Distributor Road (PDR) which will provide direct access to the M4 motorway. The PDR will pass through the site and access can be gained from the M4 from the West and East of Port Talbot. The PDR will relieve traffic pressure on the M4, provide direct road access to the Port Talbot Steelworks and the Docks and Tidal Harbour.
- 19.2.2 Coupled with the development of the PDR, Associated British Ports (ABP) have reopened the old Port Talbot Docks to commercial use and the opportunity now exists to attract development that would require or benefit from access to shipping.
- 19.2.3 The designation of Objective 1 status for the area, providing the highest level of European grant aid geared towards improving economic competitiveness, job creation, skill development and community regeneration offers opportunities for the complete regeneration of the area benefiting not just those businesses

locating at the site but also the overall image of Port Talbot and its Town Centre.

- 19.2.4 The vision for the area is led by a partnership comprising the land owners, including ABP, the DEIN and Corus, together with the local authority.

### **19.3 STRATEGY**

- 19.3.1 The area including the Docks and Industrial Estate will be promoted as a focus for economic and environmental regeneration. It will form a growth point within the County Borough and in particular for the town of Port Talbot. It will contain a variety of uses including port related industrial, commercial, offices, leisure, retail (non-town centre) and housing. Environmental enhancements will be a priority and these will include the corridor along the River Afan.

### **19.4 PART 1 POLICY**

#### **POLICY 28**

**The potential of the Port Talbot Docks and adjacent areas as a key regeneration area for the County Borough will be promoted.**

- 19.4.1 The potential of the Docks with its extensive waterside areas as an exciting focus for regeneration has been identified for many years. The construction of the PDR will transform the area's accessibility and image. Already its economic and marketing prospects have been influenced by the reopening of the docks in 2000 for commercial shipping and the successful development of new housing along the nearby seafront.

### **19.5 POLICY PT1 – REGENERATION INITIATIVE**

**The area comprising the Port Talbot Docks, Tidal Harbour, and Port Talbot Industrial Estate will be the subject of a comprehensive regeneration initiative providing an important gateway development site to Port Talbot and its Town Centre centred around: -**

- a) the construction of the Peripheral Distributor Road;**
- b) the operation of the docks and tidal harbour;**
- c) a range of mixed residential, leisure and retail development opportunities;**
- d) potential for high quality business and commercial development for small scale industrial and office users maximising the advantage of proximity to the town centre; and**
- e) the environmental regeneration of the area.**

- 19.5.1 Existing low grade operations in the area which do not match the higher profile and visibility achieved will be relocated as they remain important sources of much needed local employment. These relocations will be handled with a view to maintain operations, and suitable decant locations have already been identified for this purpose. Sites for development are also identified adjacent to the Tidal Harbour.
- 19.5.2 The proposals for the area provide for a prime gateway site located adjacent to the town centre with opportunities that will benefit both locations. An important element of the initiative will be environmental enhancement of the area, including the River Afan downstream of the Town Centre
- 19.5.3 Mixed developments including residential and leisure with the potential for a waterfront location would coincide with significant environmental improvements and upgrades. Commercial and office opportunities linked to the town centre and the existing magistrates courts provide viable development opportunities, while in terms of the Sequential Approach the site can only be considered at best as edge of centre, the area nearest the town centre offers considerable potential to accommodate bulky goods uses which are unable to find a location in the centre. An allocation for 50 dwellings has been included in Policy H1. Although the site has the potential to accommodate substantially more than this number, air pollution remains a concern in this particular area. The Air Quality Management Plan for Margam/ Taibach sets out its strategy and measures to address these matters. It would, however, be premature to increase the allocation as it is not clear how quickly the problem will be overcome. The site is well located in terms of sustainability and the plan's strategies and should this and any other issues be overcome before the housing land bank is re-addressed in the Local Development Plan proposals could be considered on their individual merits and as "windfall" sites.
- 19.5.4 All developments proposed must be considered in the light of the operational requirements of both ABP and the steel industry however this still leaves the potential for waterborne recreational facilities.
- 19.5.5 Overall the proposals provide a significant opportunity together with other nearby redevelopment opportunities such as Green Park and the Burrow's Yard, to enhance the environment of the town centre and its setting to the benefit of the community as a whole and the long term viability of the centre.
- 19.5.6 Supplementary Planning Guidance including a strategy for the co-ordinated development of the area will be produced.

## **19.6 SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL SUMMARY**

- 19.6.1 The policy directly addresses sustainable development principles in seeking to bring forward the development of a centrally located, brownfield urban development, without compromising the Dock's commercial shipping role.

**Proposals will be considered against any of the Plan's policies that are relevant.**

**Useful starting points are: -**

**CHAPTER 8: ENVIRONMENT**

**Policy ENV8:**      **A) Replacement dwellings; B) Conversions or re-use of buildings & C) Farm Diversification in the countryside.**

**Policy GC1:**      **New Buildings, Structures & Changes of Use**

**Policy GC2:**      **Engineering Works and Operations  
[Including Minerals and Waste]**

## **20 BAGLAN BAY**

### **20.1 CURRENT POSITION**

- 20.1.1 The petro-chemical works at Baglan Bay for decades was both a key source of employment and a major feature in the landscape. Following its decision to progressively close the complex, BP in partnership with the DEIN and County Borough Council embarked on an ambitious programme to regenerate one of the largest brownfield sites in South Wales as an employment site of regional significance. This very large site extends from the edge of the housing areas in Sandfields and Baglan to the banks of the tidal River Neath and the coastal sand dunes. The significance of the site is recognised in the Wales Spatial Plan which identifies the Baglan Bay Development as providing part of a major opportunity to revitalise the whole area.
- 20.1.2 The Baglan Energy Park (which lies within the eastern portion of the Baglan Bay development area) has been developed as a model for 21<sup>st</sup> Century business development where low density development with ample space for expansion is provided for the development of quality buildings, providing opportunities for sustainable development and renewable energy initiatives. The Development includes a high level and quality of landscaping. The Energy Park is the first stage of the Baglan Bay Development that has a strategy of attracting a diverse range of manufacturing and service industries to the site.
- 20.1.3 By November 2004, the development of the Energy Park was well underway. The GE power station was fully operational offering cheap power to employers within the site, and a range of high quality manufacturing and office developments proposed, under construction and completed.

### **20.2 CURRENT TRENDS AND ISSUES**

- 20.2.1 In 2004 the closure of the remaining operational parts of the petro-chemicals plant was announced. This enabled the potential for the site to include housing and other uses to be assessed. The site's potential to contribute to the regeneration of the Area is set out in the Wales Spatial Plan.
- 20.2.2 Investigation work has focussed on the best mix of uses to maximise the potential of the site together with detailed assessments of decontamination, traffic and other impacts including the adequacy of school provision. The site is very well located in terms of the Plan's sustainability-led criteria for assessing sites for housing and industry. Not only is the site located near the urban area, public transport and facilities including a comprehensive school it would extend the housing available near the major source of employment.
- 20.2.3 Ecological issues are particularly important with the site including priority coastal habitats. In addition the clearance of the former works and preparation of sites for development created areas that attracted nesting lapwings. Recognising the need to accommodate the lapwings temporary areas were identified within the development site and in 2004 a permanent area was identified.

## **20.3 STRATEGY**

20.3.1 The Baglan Bay area, including adjacent land currently occupied by industrial uses that should form part of the development, will be promoted as a major integrated regeneration scheme based upon sustainability principles and incorporating employment, housing, leisure and appropriate community and transport facilities while protecting important nature conservation interests.

## **20.4 PART 1 POLICY**

### **POLICY 29**

**The potential of the Baglan Bay area as a key regeneration area for the County Borough will be promoted.**

## **20.5 POLICY BB1- REGENERATION INITIATIVE**

**The area will be the subject of a comprehensive regeneration initiative providing key employment and housing provision. It will include:**

- a) major employment provision both within the Energy Park and land released following clearance of the remainder of the petro-chemicals works;**
- b) a major housing allocation (see Policy H1);**
- c) associated facilities, services and infrastructure, and**
- d) the protection and conservation of nature conservation interests.**

20.5.1 Development of the Energy Park is well underway and the site's regional role and significance is set out in the Wales Spatial Plan. The policy and its allocations recognises the potential of the larger Baglan Bay site to make a very important contribution to Port Talbot's needs while maximising sustainability benefits. These include co-locating housing and employment in a very well located and accessible location and helping fund the maximising the re-use of contaminated brownfield land.

20.5.2 The scale of the housing allocation is substantial (444 houses) and development would be accompanied by appropriate facilities and infrastructure provision. Despite the considerable level of development that has taken place some 75 hectares remained available for employment in November 2004.

20.5.3 A masterplan to guide the development is in preparation and is likely to form Supplementary Planning Guidance. It will include consideration of the best ways in which nature conservation interests can be protected and conserved. Proposals will be required to make their contribution to the provision of facilities, services and infrastructure. This is likely to include education, highways [both on and off-site], affordable housing and public open space. If

some or all of the existing playing fields are developed their replacement in a locations or locations to meet the needs of both the existing community and the residents of the new housing will be a requirement.

- 20.5.4 The Baglan Bay allocation aims to promote sustainable development through encouraging rail use. As a result of the increased pressure from the development on the nearby rail halt, proposals may be required to make contributions towards its improvement.

## **20.6 SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL SUMMARY**

- 20.6.1 The policy and its allocations addresses sustainable development principles. The development allocations would not only meet needs that otherwise could involve the development of greenfield land but help fund the decontamination of much of the land.

**Proposals will be considered against any of the Plan's policies that are relevant.**

**Useful starting points are: -**

### **CHAPTER 8: ENVIRONMENT**

**Policy ENV8:** **A) Replacement dwellings; B) Conversions or re-use of buildings & C) Farm Diversification in the countryside.**

**Policy GC1:** **New Buildings, Structures & Changes of Use**

**Policy GC2:** **Engineering Works and Operations [Including Minerals and Waste]**

## **Appendix 1: Supporting Information**

(All available from the Development Policy Section unless indicated otherwise)

1. Sustainability Appraisal Summaries and Information
2. Housing Land Supply Annual Survey  
(available from the WDA)
3. Shopping Survey (Annual, June)
4. Habitat Impacts Survey (Annual, June)
5. Industrial Land Bank Survey (Annual, June)
6. Archaeological Sites and Monuments Record  
(available from the Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust).
7. Listed Buildings  
(available from Development Control Section)
8. Conservation Areas  
(available from Development Control Section)
9. Tree Preservation Orders  
(available from Development Control Section)
10. Planning Application Records  
(available from Development Control Section)
11. Hazardous Substances Application Records  
(available from Development Control Section)
12. Contaminated Land Survey  
(available from Environmental Health and Trading Standards Section)
13. Planning Appeals  
(available from Appeals and Enforcement Section, Planning Services).
14. Enforcement Actions  
(available from Appeals and Enforcement Section, Planning Services).
15. Public Rights of Way Network  
(available from Countryside Section, Planning Services)
16. Traffic Management Schemes, Traffic and Public Transport Information  
(available from Transport Section, Technical Services Directorate)
17. Census Information

(available from the Office of National Statistics website – [www.statistics.gov.uk](http://www.statistics.gov.uk) or the Development Policy Section)

18. Employment and Unemployment figures, Vacant Industrial Property Availability, Business Databases and Information  
(available from Business Support Section, Economic Development Unit)
19. European Structural Funds / Funding Programme (e.g. Objective One Programme, Interreg III and Community Initiatives) and information on European Union Policies  
(available from European Office, Economic Development Unit).
20. Neath Port Talbot Housing Needs Assessment.

## **Appendix 2: Existing and Proposed Supplementary Planning Guidance**

- Access and Parking / Servicing
- Design
- Landscape
- Biodiversity
- Archaeology
- Public Open Space and Green Spaces within Urban Areas
- Community and Welsh Language Impacts
- Provision of Infrastructure to Serve Developments and Developers Contributions
- Coastal Management Plan

### **Appendix 3: Related Strategies, Plans and Guidance**

- **Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council**  
(available on the Authority's website: [www.neath-porttalbot.gov.uk](http://www.neath-porttalbot.gov.uk) or contact the Planning Policy Team for Information)
  - Aberavon Seafront Development Brief
  - Agenda 21 Strategy (2001-2006)
  - Briton Ferry Strategy
  - Children's Services Plan
  - Communities First Programme
  - Community Care Plan
  - Community Plan (2002-2012)
  - Contaminated Land Strategy (Draft)
  - Countryside Strategy
  - Crime and Disorder Strategy (2002-2005)
  - Disability Equality Strategy
  - Economic Development Strategy (2002-2005) in preparation
  - Education Strategic Plan (2002-2005) in preparation
  - Environmental Strategy (2002)
  - Home Energy Conservation Act Strategy
  - Health Improvement Plan
  - Lifelong Learning Strategy
  - Local Air Quality Strategy – “Air Wise – The Way Forward to Cleaner Air”
  - Local Transport Plan (2000-2005)
  - Neath Estuary Management Plan
  - Port Talbot Docks & Industrial Estate – Economic Regeneration Strategy
  - Race Equality Scheme (2002) Draft
  - Social Care and Housing Plan (2000-2003) (incorporating the Housing Strategy and Operational Plan)
  - Swansea Bay Shoreline Management Plan
  - The Future of Leisure in Neath Port Talbot (2002-2006) (Draft Leisure Strategy)
  - Tourism Study – Strategy and Action Plan (2000)
  - Waste Management Plan
  - Welsh Language Scheme
  - Youth Justice Plan
- **CADW**
  - Register of Landscapes, Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in Wales
- **Countryside Council for Wales**
  - Action for Wildlife (Biodiversity Action Plans - The Challenge in Wales)
  - The Landmap Information System Manual (CCW with Wales Landscape Partnership Group, 2002 as amended)
  - Priority Habitats of Wales – a technical guide (CCW, 2003)

- Dulais Valley Partnership Ltd
  - Dulais Valley Regeneration Strategy
- Environment Agency
  - Local Environment Action Plans:
    - Swansea and Llanelli (covering Swansea Valley) and
    - Neath, Port Talbot and Bridgend.
  - Corporate Plan Wales 2002-2003
- Neath Port Talbot Local Biodiversity Forum  
 (available on the Authority's website)
  - Neath Port Talbot Local Biodiversity Action Plan
- Neath Port Talbot Council for Voluntary Service
  - Neath Port Talbot Voluntary Sector Objective 1 Strategy
- Neath Town Centre Forum
  - Neath Town Centre Strategy
- South Wales Police
  - Local Policing Charter
  - Race Equality Scheme 2002-2005
  - Policing and Performance Plan
- South West Wales Strategic Planning Group
  - Regional Planning Guidance (2000)
- South West Wales Regional Waste Planning Forum
  - Regional Guidance in preparation
- Welsh Assembly Government  
 (available on the National Assembly for Wales website: [www.wales.gov.uk](http://www.wales.gov.uk))
  - Plan for Wales 2001
  - A Sustainable Wales - Learning to Live Differently
  - Wales Spatial Plan (in preparation)
  - “A Winning Wales” - The National Economic Development Strategy
  - Planning Guidance Documents:
    - Planning Policy Wales (March 2002)
    - Planning Guidance (Wales) Technical Advice Notes (1-21)
    - Minerals Planning Policy Wales
    - Unitary Development Plans Wales, 2001
  - Waste Strategy – Wise about Waste
- Welsh Development Agency
  - Learning to Work Differently – Sustainable Development
  - Entrepreneurship Action Plan for Wales “The Sky is the Limit”
  - Corporate Plan – Making a Difference (2002-2005)