



Bridgend Replacement Local Development Plan 2018-2033



Biodiversity Net Benefit & New Development

A Case Study of Two Different Scales

Table of Contents

1. Purpose of the Report	1
2. Introduction	1
3. Context – Legislative and Policy Drivers	2
4. Local Policy Context.....	7
5. Replacement LDP Site Selection Process	13
6. Case Studies.....	20
Strategic Site Level – Land South of Bridgend.....	22
Strategic Site Level – Land West of Bridgend	28
Non-Strategic Level – Land South of Pont Rhyd-y-cyff	33
7. Conclusion	39

BRIDGEND REPLACEMENT LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (LDP) 2018-2033

BIODIVERSITY NET BENEFIT & NEW DEVELOPMENT: A CASE STUDY OF TWO DIFFERENT SCALES

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 This Background Paper sets out how the Local Planning Authority has considered the environment in developing the Bridgend Replacement Development Plan (LDP) 2018-2033. It demonstrates through three case studies at two different development scales (two strategic allocations and one non-strategic allocation) how the site selection process has sought to minimise adverse ecological and environmental impacts when balanced against a range of other material planning considerations. It also demonstrates how robust ecological assessments have influenced supporting masterplans from the outset to achieve a net benefit for biodiversity in a way that hasn't been implemented in Bridgend County Borough Council before.

2. Introduction

- 2.1 Four realistic spatial options were considered and assessed to inform the Replacement LDP Strategy as detailed within the Spatial Strategy Options Background Paper. The Development Plans Manual (Edition 3) states that the Preferred Spatial Strategy should “draw on a number of key pieces of evidence, such as a settlement assessment, Local Housing Market Assessment (LHMA) and viability assessment, to make informed policy decisions on where to locate development” (WG, 2020, para 5.14).
- 2.2 The Replacement LDP Strategy is considered most appropriate to build on the successes of existing LDP strategy through prioritising the development of land within or on the periphery of urban areas, especially on previously developed ‘brownfield’ sites. Porthcawl, Maesteg and the Llynfi Valley will continue to remain regeneration priorities through their designation as Regeneration Growth Areas, accompanied by more community-based Regeneration Areas within the Ogmere and Garw Valleys. However, the existing LDP has been broadly successful in delivering development on brownfield land in other settlements. For this reason, and to ensure maintenance of a deliverable housing land supply, the Strategy also seeks to identify viable, deliverable and sustainable sites elsewhere including some greenfield allocations. Accompanying growth will therefore be channelled towards Bridgend, Pencoed and Pyle, Kenfig Hill and North Cornelly. This approach reflects the classification of these settlements within the Settlement Hierarchy, coupled with their high need for Affordable Housing, broad viability and capacity to accommodate growth in a sustainable manner. Designation of these settlements as Sustainable Growth Areas will also provide a means of supporting their existing services and facilities, enabling delivery of associated infrastructure and capitalising upon their location on the strategic road and rail network.
- 2.3 The consideration of the environment is also significantly important during site selection. National Policy emphasises that development “should not cause any significant loss of habitats or populations of species, locally or nationally and must provide a net benefit for biodiversity” (WG, 2021, para 6.4.5). Hence,

“It is important that biodiversity and resilience considerations are taken into account at an early stage in both development plan preparation and when

proposing or considering development proposals...All reasonable steps must be taken to maintain and enhance biodiversity and promote the resilience of ecosystems and these should be balanced with the wider economic and social needs of business and local communities” (WG, 2021, para 6.4.4).

2.4 As such, considerable weight has been given to ensure that existing biodiversity is protected from development (alongside other planning considerations) throughout LDP preparation and the assessment of candidate sites. This paper demonstrates that ecological conditions on-site have been thoroughly considered through robust assessment and survey work via two case studies, which involve three allocated development sites (at two different scales). The case study sites within this paper both contain local ecological designations, specifically Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs), however the site selection process demonstrates how and why their allocation within the Replacement LDP has been deemed appropriate. Comprehensive assessment has influenced supporting masterplans from the outset, which seek to adopt a green infrastructure-led and sustainable placemaking design that is fundamental to the promotion of ecological resilience and the achievement of a net benefit for biodiversity.

3. Context – Legislative and Policy Drivers

3.1 *Planning Policy Wales*

3.1.1 Edition 11 of Planning Policy Wales (PPW 11) sets out the land use planning policies and overarching sustainable development goals for Wales, revised to contribute towards the statutory well-being goals of the Well-being of Future Generations Act. PPW secures a presumption in favour of sustainable development and considers a plan-led approach to be the most effective means of securing sustainable development through the planning system. PPW has a strong focus on promoting placemaking, which is considered instrumental to achieving sustainable places, delivering socially inclusive development and promoting more cohesive communities. Placemaking is deemed a holistic approach that “considers the context, function and relationships between a development site and its wider surroundings” (PPW, 2021, p.14). PPW highlights the fundamental role of green infrastructure in shaping places and improving wellbeing, by providing multiple functions and benefits for social, economic and environmental resilience. It states that planning authorities should adopt a strategic and proactive approach to green infrastructure, which should be fully integrated into Local Development Plans.

3.2 *Future Wales: The National Development Framework*

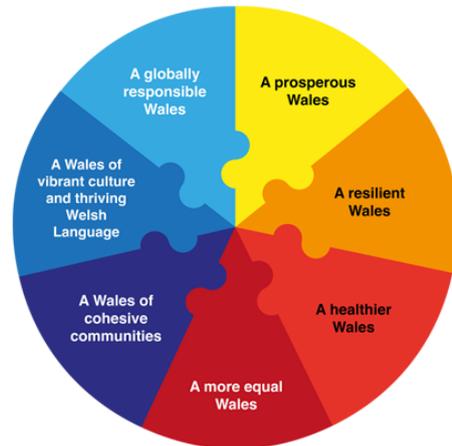
3.2.1 The National Development Framework (NDF) considers the issues significant to Wales’s prosperity and well-being, such as the economy, housing, transport, energy, and the environment. It identifies where national developments should take place, where the key growth areas are and what infrastructure and services are needed. The NDF is set in the context of a vision that will help deliver sustainable places across Wales by 2040, by supporting placemaking and ensuring our choices direct development to the right places, making the best use of resources, creating and sustaining accessible healthy communities, protecting our environment and supporting prosperity for all.

3.3 Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015

3.3.1 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 requires public bodies in Wales to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales in accordance with the principle of sustainable development. This means seeking to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

3.3.2 The Act puts in place seven well-being goals, which public authorities must work towards to ensure sustainable development:

- **A more equal Wales** - A society that enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances.
- **A Prosperous Wales** - An innovative, productive and low carbon society which recognises the limits of the global environment & uses resources efficiently and proportionately, and which develops a skilled and well-educated population in an economy which generates wealth and provides employment opportunities.
- **A resilient Wales** - A nation which maintains and enhances a biodiverse natural environment with healthy functioning ecosystems that support social, economic and ecological resilience and the capacity to adapt to change (for example climate change).
- **A Healthier Wales** - A society in which people's physical and mental well-being is maximised and in which choices and behaviours that benefit future health are understood.
- **A Wales of cohesive communities** - Attractive, viable, safe and well-connected communities.
- **A globally responsible Wales** - A nation which, when doing anything to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, takes account of whether doing such a thing may make a positive contribution to global well-being.
- **A Wales of vibrant culture and Welsh Language** - A society that promotes and protects culture, heritage and the Welsh language, and which encourages people to participate in the arts, sports and recreation.



3.4 Environment (Wales) Act 2016

3.4.1 The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 introduces the Sustainable Management of Natural Resources (SNMR) and sets out a framework to achieve this as part of decision-making. The objective of the SMNR is to maintain and enhance the resilience of ecosystems and the benefits they provide. The Act requires us to set out the challenges our natural resources and ecosystems face and the opportunities they can provide. This means looking at the ways we currently manage our natural resources and how we can reduce the pressures on them. The Act also instils a duty on Welsh Government to produce and implement a National Natural Resources Policy for the achievement of SMNR in Wales.



The Act also instils a duty on Welsh Government to produce and implement a National Natural Resources Policy for the achievement of SMNR in Wales.

3.6.2 As founding signatories to the international Nature Based Climate Action Memorandum of Understanding, the Welsh Government has committed to:

- promote investments in enhancing ecosystem resilience as part of the response to the need for mitigation and adaptation;
- **look to natural or “green” infrastructure solutions to reduce climate risk and provide wider ecosystem services whilst safeguarding biological diversity and ecosystem health;**
- the use of tools and assessments that promote the understanding of the wider value of biodiversity and healthy ecosystems in addressing climate change and providing wider multiple benefits;
- the development of tools to measure the benefits of integrated approaches to climate change (including ecosystem services, safeguarding biological diversity, carbon sequestration, and wider co- benefits that support increased resilience);
- the need for enhanced technical and scientific cooperation and measurement in relation to implementation; and,
- foster closer links between ecosystem management, climate-change adaptation and sustainable development.

3.7 Planning Act (Wales) 2015

3.7.1 The Planning Act Wales sets out a framework for sustainable development in accordance with the Well-being of Future Generations Act and has the purpose of ensuring that the development and use of land contribute to improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. The planning system is central to achieving sustainable development in Wales. It provides the legislative and policy framework to manage the use and development of land in the public interest so that it contributes positively to the achievement of the well-being goals.

3.8 Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013

3.8.1 The Active Travel (Wales) Act makes walking and cycling the preferred option for shorter journeys, particularly everyday journeys, such as to and from a workplace or education establishment, or in order to access health, leisure or other services or facilities. The Active Travel Act requires local authorities to produce Integrated Network Maps, identifying the walking and cycling routes required to create fully integrated networks for walking and cycling to access work, education, services and facilities.



3.8.2 The planning system has an important role to play in promoting and supporting the delivery of the Active Travel Act and creating the right environments and infrastructure to make it easier for people to walk and cycle, including new and improved routes and related facilities.

3.9 *Fields in Trust Guidance*

3.9.1 The Council has utilised the benchmark standards endorsed by Fields in Trust (FIT). FIT is the operating name of UK-wide organisation the National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) and has been protecting outdoor space for sport and recreation since 1925. Its mission is to safeguard and improve outdoor space for future generations.



3.9.2 Updated guidance for open space and play provision resonates with national planning policy, in particular the presumption in favour of sustainable development, the promotion of its economic, social and environmental roles and the seeking of positive improvements in the quality of the environment, and people's quality of life. In promoting healthy communities, access to high quality open spaces can make an important contribution to health and wellbeing. Such open spaces should not be built on unless any loss is appropriately replaced or outweighed by new provision.

3.9.3 Open space also plays an important role in meeting the challenge of climate change and flooding through integrating Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) and providing opportunities for conserving and enhancing the natural environment.

3.9.4 Utilising this current guidance will help to ensure that the provision of outdoor sport, play and informal open space is of a sufficient size to enable effective use; is located in an accessible location and in close proximity to dwellings; and of a quality to maintain longevity and to encourage its continued use. It is recommended that Equipped/ Designated Play Spaces be promoted in the form of:

- Local Areas for Play (LAPs) aimed at very young children;
- Locally Equipped Areas for Play (LEAPs) aimed at children who can go out to play independently; and
- Neighbourhood Equipped Areas for Play (NEAPs) aimed at older children.

3.9.5 The benchmarks relating to play space can be a useful tool to help ensure sufficient play spaces are provided to help meet the requirements of the Children and Families (Wales) Measure 2010. In addition, the provision of sufficient outdoor recreational spaces and green spaces will play an important role in helping public bodies achieve the objectives of the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) Act 2015.

3.10 *Placemaking Wales Charter*

3.10.1 The Placemaking Wales Charter has been developed in collaboration with the Placemaking Wales Partnership, which is made up of stakeholders representing a wide range of interests. The Charter reflects the collective and individual commitment of these organisations to support the development of high-quality places across Wales for the benefit of communities.



**Creu Lleoedd Cymru
Placemaking Wales**

Placemaking Wales Charter signatories agree to promote the following principles in the planning, design and management of new and existing places:

People and Community – The local community are involved in the development of proposals. The needs, aspirations, health and well-being of all people are considered at the outset. Proposals are shaped to help to meet these needs as well as create, integrate, protect and/or enhance a sense of community and promote equality.

Location – Places grow and develop in a way that uses land efficiently, supports and enhances existing places and is well connected. The location of housing, employment leisure and other facilities are planned to help reduce the need to travel.

Movement – Walking, cycling and public transport are prioritised to provide a choice of transport modes and avoid dependence on private vehicles. Well designed and safe active travel routes connect to the wider active travel and public transport network, and public transport stations and stops are positively integrated.

Mix of Uses – Places have a range of purposes which provide opportunities for community development, local business growth and access to jobs, services and facilities via walking, cycling or public transport. Development density and a mix of uses and tenures helps to support a diverse community and vibrant public realm.

Public Realm – Streets and public spaces are well defined, welcoming, safe and inclusive with a distinct identity. They are designed to be robust and adaptable with landscape, green infrastructure and sustainable drainage well integrated. They are well connected to existing places and promote opportunities for social interaction and a range of activities for all people.

Identity – The positive, distinctive qualities of existing places are valued and respected. The unique features and opportunities of a location, including heritage, culture, language, built and natural physical attributes, are identified and responded to.

4. Local Policy Context

4.1 Net Benefit

4.1.1 The County Borough has a rich and varied biodiversity, in terms of species and habitats, which the Replacement LDP seeks to maintain and enhance (to provide a net benefit). For development to be sustainable, it needs to be soundly based on good environmental assessments, and to be well planned and controlled with regard to its environmental impact. In accordance with Future Wales Policy 9, the resilience of ecosystems and green infrastructure assets must be demonstrated as part of development proposals through innovative, nature-based approaches to site planning and the design of the built environment.

4.1.2 There is clear national guidance and legislation with regard to maintaining and enhancing biodiversity and taking account of ecosystem resilience the protection of species and habitats recognised in legislation, PPW and TAN5 Nature Conservation and Planning. The most relevant statutory requirements are set out in Section 61 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, Environment (Wales) Act 2016 Section 6 Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems Duty and Section 7 Priority Habitats and Species, Section 11 of the Countryside Act 1981 and Section 28G of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Annex 1 of TAN5 lists all the other relevant legislation. PPW11 responds to the Section 6 Duty of the Environment Act by setting a framework to

maintain and enhance biodiversity (providing a net benefit), whilst calling for a proactive approach towards facilitating the delivery of biodiversity and resilience outcomes.

- 4.1.3 To comply with the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 (Section 6 Duty) the LDP Strategy will seek to maintain and enhance the biodiversity and resilience of the County Borough's ecosystems to provide a net benefit for biodiversity through a proactive and resilient approach. This includes native species landscaping, careful location of development, the creation of green corridors, open space management and adopting best practice site design and green infrastructure principles. Only in exceptional circumstances, where it is in the public interest, will new development be located where it may have an adverse impact on sites designated for their importance for nature conservation. Robust mitigation and compensation will be provided wherever this situation is unavoidable, in line with considered advice from statutory and advisory organisations.

4.2 Natural Resources Wales Area Statements for South Central Wales Area

- 4.2.1 Under the Environment (Wales) Act 2016, Natural Resources Wales have a duty to produce Area Statements with the aim of informing 'place based' action. Areas statements bring together data, information and ways of engaging others to help understand the state and trends of natural resources of specific areas, the pressures on them and their benefits. Area Statements also use evidence to consider the relevance of the National Resources Policy priorities in an area. Area statements provide an evidence base for Local Development Plans, as well as feeding into Public Service Board Well-being Plans.

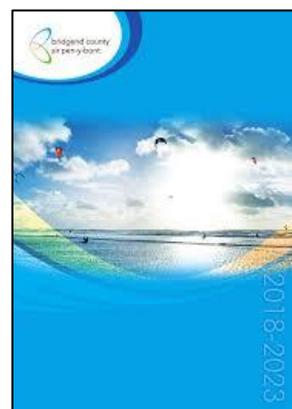
- 4.2.2 The South-Central Wales Area Statement – which consists of five key themes – sets out to address the legacies of the past along with the challenges and opportunities of the future, exploring ways we can work together to protect, value, and embrace the natural environment while also putting it at the heart of the decision-making process, in line with the Welsh Government's Natural Resources Policy of 2017.

The five key themes include:

- Building resilient ecosystems
- Connecting people with nature
- Working with water
- Improving our health
- Improving our air quality

4.3 Bridgend's Well-being Plan and objectives

- 4.3.1 In the Well-being of Future Generations Act, 'sustainable development' means the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principles, aimed at achieving the well-being goals. The well-being goals set a shared vision for Wales for the public bodies in the Act to work towards. For Wales to be sustainable it is important that all four aspects of well-being are improved. They are all equally important. Each public body listed in the Act must work to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, set well-being objectives to maximise their contribution towards the goals and take steps towards meeting those objectives.



- 4.3.2 The Well-being Plan outlines how Bridgend Public Service Board will work together over the next five years to deliver the seven wellbeing goals for Wales as referenced in the Wellbeing

of Future Generations (Wales) Act. The Plan is framed around the sustainable development principle and focusses on addressing the underlying causes of problems and helping to prevent them worsening or occurring in the future. Four well-being objectives have therefore been developed and are of relevance to Green Infrastructure, which are:

1. Best Start in life
2. Support communities in Bridgend County to be safe and cohesive
3. Reduce social and economic inequalities
4. Healthy choices in a healthy environment

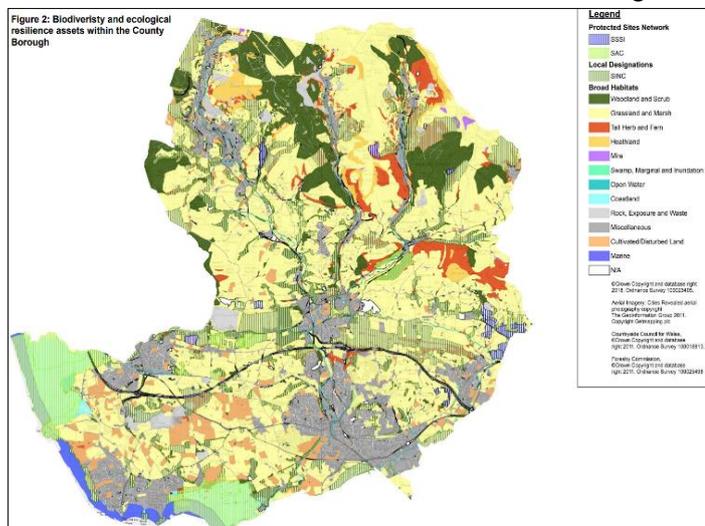
4.3.3 A well-functioning planning system is fundamental for sustainable development and achieving sustainable places.

4.4 **Decarbonisation Strategy**

4.4.1 The Council is the process of producing a roadmap to Carbon Neutral Bridgend County Borough by 2030 and will work jointly with the Public Services Board to produce a Decarbonisation Strategy to co-ordinate efforts on decarbonisation across the County Borough. The strategy will bring together a plethora of environmental projects and ensure alignment with the aspirations set out in the Council’s Climate Emergency Response Programme. The planning system has a key role to play in setting the land use framework for this broader response. As recognised in PPW, development proposals should, “mitigate the causes of climate change, by minimising carbon and other greenhouse gas emissions associated with the development’s location, design, construction, use and eventual demolition; and include features that provide effective adaptation to, and resilience against, the current and predicted future effects of climate change”.

4.5 **Green Infrastructure Assessment (2022)**

4.5.1 The Council have undertaken and prepared a Green Infrastructure Assessment aims to guide and shape the planning and delivery of green infrastructure in Bridgend. It forms the baseline for a holistic, positive and proactive approach to the management and enhancement of Bridgend’s natural assets, in particular when associated with the level of growth identified in the revised Local Development Plan (LDP). This assessment summarises the findings of the detailed ‘audit’ of the provision of Outdoor Sports and Children’s Playing Space within the County Borough of which is endorsed by Fields In Trust (FIT), whilst also adopting a holistic approach to include green infrastructure networks, cemeteries, woodlands and the Integrated Network Maps. As such this assessment will form part of the evidence base for revised LDP and will help contribute to the delivery of key national aims such as the Well-Being of Future Generations Act 2015 and Active Travel Act 2013. This assessment will also provide a mechanism to support the implementation of local planning policies on green infrastructure, with the aim of promoting a green infrastructure approach to land-use planning, design and management,



and ensuring green infrastructure forms an integral and significant part of development and wider infrastructure proposals.

- 4.5.2 This assessment gives a baseline of Bridgend's green infrastructure assets and the functions they deliver. In order to address the enhancement of the of the green infrastructure network in Bridgend, this work should be further built upon, to identify areas of need with regards to green infrastructure, and opportunities for the enhancement of green infrastructure assets in these areas. This would result in mapping of need and opportunity which could be referred to when prioritising green infrastructure projects and funding.
- 4.5.3 This assessment will be further built upon by SPG that incorporates this evidence base, but also provides further guidance and good practice case studies on ways in which green infrastructure can be protected and enhanced depending on need.

4.6 Development Management Policies

DNP6: Biodiversity, Ecological Networks, Habitats and Species

DNP6: Biodiversity, Ecological Networks, Habitats and Species

All development proposals must provide a net benefit for biodiversity and improved ecosystem resilience, as demonstrated through planning application submissions. Features and elements of biodiversity or green infrastructure value should be retained on site, and enhanced or created where ever possible, by adopting best practice site design and green infrastructure principles. Development proposals must maintain, protect and enhance biodiversity and ecological networks / services. Particular importance must be given to maintaining and enhancing the connectivity of ecological networks which enable the dispersal and functioning of protected and priority species

Development proposals that result in an adverse effect on the connectivity of biodiversity and ecological networks and/or have a significant adverse effect on the resilience of protected habitats and species will only be permitted where:

- 1) The need for development outweighs the nature conservation importance of the site;
- 2) It can be demonstrated that there is no satisfactory alternative location for the development which avoids damage to biodiversity and ecosystem functioning;
- 3) A functional connected element of the natural resource is retained as part of the design of the development to maintain and enhance biodiversity and build resilient ecological networks; and
- 4) Any unavoidable harm is minimised by effective mitigation to ensure that there is no reduction in the overall biodiversity value of the area. Where this is not feasible, compensation measures must be provided to enable habitat creation, or the provision of long-term management arrangements to enhance existing habitats and deliver a net benefit for biodiversity. Compensatory provision must be of comparable or greater ecological value to that lost as a result of the development.

A Project Level Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) must accompany development proposals on allocated sites with any identified likely significant adverse effects (pre-mitigation) in relation to SA Objective 9 (Biodiversity, Geodiversity and Soil).

- 4.6.1 Under the Environment (Wales) Act 2016, the Council is required to maintain and enhance biodiversity and promote the resilience of ecosystems to provide a net benefit for biodiversity. It is therefore essential that a balance is achieved between the need for development and the need to protect existing habitats and species which contribute to the general biodiversity of the County Borough. It is the aim of Policy DNP6 to achieve that balance between the location, design, and layout of development or redevelopment, and the need to conserve that site's biodiversity interest, whilst also taking into account the interests of any adjacent nature conservation resources.
- 4.6.2 The Bridgend County Borough Local Biodiversity Action Plan (Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services Assessment and Revision 2014) maps the existing ecological network and also identifies locations where ecological connectivity has the potential to be enhanced. Development proposals must provide a net benefit for biodiversity and promote the resilience of ecosystems through implementing a range of opportunities as identified within the Action Plan, including:
- Increasing and maintaining habitat connectivity to maintain flows and mobility of species;
 - Improving networks of hedgerows and field margins, whilst supporting flowering plants and therefore pollinators;
 - Promoting recreation linkages, allowing interactions between the population and the open areas;
 - Planting native species of flowers and trees to increase the pollination resource, promote wildlife diversity, increase vegetation carbon storage and cool and purify the air;
 - Maintaining gardens with natural soil and vegetation and incorporating green space to help maintain water infiltration and reduce flood risks; and
 - Promoting recreation and enjoyment of nature through green infrastructure networks, active travel, signage and raising awareness of local biodiversity.
- 4.6.3 A full ecological assessment must be taken to record important biodiversity features within a site prior to their displacement and ongoing management, or in the worst case scenarios, before such features may be permanently lost. The latter situation will, however, be avoided wherever possible by the Council adopting a step-wise approach to maintain and enhance biodiversity and build resilient ecological networks. DNP6 seeks to ensure any adverse environmental effects are firstly avoided, then minimised, mitigated, and as a last resort compensated for. Appropriate mitigation, compensatory and enhancement measures will be secured by means of planning conditions and/or planning obligations or agreements with developers to deliver a net benefit for biodiversity. Any proposed compensation should take account of the Section 6 Duty (Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems Duty), and the five key ecosystem resilience attributes that it outlines. It should also be accompanied by a long term management plan of agreed and appropriate mitigation and compensation measures.
- 4.6.4 The protection and enhancement of wildlife corridors and networks is considered to be essential to secure the longer-term protection of biodiversity in the County Borough. Development proposals must therefore take into account, and should not adversely affect (but seek to restore and enhance), the integrity or continuity of existing landscape features, landforms and habitats of importance to local fauna and flora. The Council will therefore expect potential developers to provide for the necessary ongoing conservation and management of wildlife corridors in their development proposals, and, as a last resort, provide for the local replacement of those features which support and provide corridors for wildlife.
- 4.6.5 Development proposals must aim to minimise detrimental impacts on protected habitats and species and ecosystem resilience. This policy should be implemented in conjunction with other

policies in this plan to ensure development does not cause any significant loss of habitats or populations of species and must provide a net benefit for biodiversity.

4.6.6 The list of habitats and species of principal importance for Wales is published under Section 7 of the Environmental (Wales) Act 2016. Factors to be taken into consideration in assessing the significant adverse effect development proposals are likely to have on habitats and species are:

- The current distribution and status of the protected habitat or species within the County;
- All likely effects, including cumulative effects and impacts during construction;
- The role of the habitats as connectivity pathways; and
- Whether effective mitigation and/or compensatory measures have been provided; and
- Maintaining and enhancing ecosystem resilience.

4.6.7 Where habitats and species are likely to be disturbed or harmed, development proposals will be assessed in accordance with National Planning Policy and Guidance. Developers will be expected to provide: an ecological survey; an assessment of the likely impact of the proposal on the protected species/ habitats; and, where necessary, make appropriate provision for their safeguarding, mitigation and/or compensatory measures. In addition, measures to enhance biodiversity, such as through habitat creation, will be expected.

4.6.8 Invasive Non-Native Species are alien animals, plants or other organisms that have the ability to spread, causing damage to the environment, the economy, our health and the way we live. They are addressed by existing legislation. If invasive non-native species are present in and around a development site appropriate action should be taken to control or remove them prior to the commencement of any approved development. Where planning permission is granted it will be subject to appropriate planning conditions and obligations to secure control, monitoring, mitigation, compensation and management.

DNP8: Green Infrastructure

DNP8: Green Infrastructure

development proposals will be required to integrate, protect and maintain existing green infrastructure assets and to enhance the extent, quality, connectivity and multi-functionality of the green infrastructure network. Where the loss or damage of existing green infrastructure is unavoidable, appropriate mitigation and compensation will be required.

All developments must seek to maximise, as far as practicable, the amount of green infrastructure on the site, as well as the interconnectedness of green infrastructure within and around the site to the wider green infrastructure network. Development must also maximise opportunities to achieve multi-functionality by bringing green infrastructure functions together.

All major developments will be required to submit a Green Infrastructure Assessment.

4.6.9 Green Infrastructure is a network of multifunctional green spaces, natural features and environmental management systems which help to provide a natural life support system for people and wildlife. They can provide opportunities for recreation and tourism, public access, education, biodiversity and ecosystem resilience, water management, the protection and enhancement of the local landscape and mitigation of and adaption to climate change.

4.6.10 Policy DNP8 seeks to ensure that Bridgend's green infrastructure assets are valued, protected, enhanced and managed through a green infrastructure network. At the landscape scale green infrastructure assets can comprise entire ecosystems such as wetlands, woodlands, heathlands and waterways. At a local scale, it might comprise of parks, fields, footpaths, Public Rights of Way, cycle ways, common land, open access land, allotments, cemeteries, landscaped areas and gardens. At smaller scales, individual urban interventions such as street trees, roadside verges, and green roofs can all contribute to green infrastructure networks. The County supports a wealth of Green Infrastructure assets that together comprise the strategic network, which is set out in the Green Infrastructure Assessment (2022).

4.6.11 When appropriately planned, designed and managed, green infrastructure has the potential to deliver a wider range of benefits for people and wildlife. By considering the multiple functions that a Green Infrastructure asset can provide simultaneously, it can significantly reduce costs for individuals, businesses and public bodies, whilst enhancing the quality of life and health of residents, workers and visitors to Bridgend.

4.6.12 Development proposals will be expected to enhance existing Green Infrastructure assets. Such schemes will be designed to take into account the existing green infrastructure assets to ensure no fragmentation or loss of connectivity whilst maximising ecosystem resilience and ecosystem services. In some instances, it may be necessary to create new Green Infrastructure and create connections to the existing Green Infrastructure network: improved connectivity through footpaths and cycle routes; space for nature that contributes to the local or sub-regional pattern of connected habitat, and imaginative recreational facilities that give educational and physical health benefits to local people. The Regeneration and Sustainable Growth Areas described in Policy SP1, and Strategic sites set out in Policy SP2 provide significant opportunities in this regard given their strategic nature and scale. In addition, all major developments will be required to submit a Green Infrastructure Assessment that demonstrates:

1. the location, quality and condition of all existing Green Infrastructure assets and landscape and ecological elements and features on, and adjacent to the site, and those subject to:
 - i) potential impacts from the development, and details of how the impacts have been avoided and minimised through specific design and protection measures;
 - ii) unavoidable impacts from the development, and details of how the impacts have been mitigated, or compensated for within the proposed development layout and landscape design scheme;
2. effective design solutions which maximise opportunities to: enhance the quality and extent of existing; and enable the creation of new Green Infrastructure assets and landscape and ecological elements and features, to enhance the connectivity and multi-functionality of the Green Infrastructure Network.

4.6.13 Further guidance on Green Infrastructure as part of development will be prepared as SPG in support of the placemaking agenda and the creation of high quality and biodiverse living environments.

5. Replacement LDP Site Selection Process

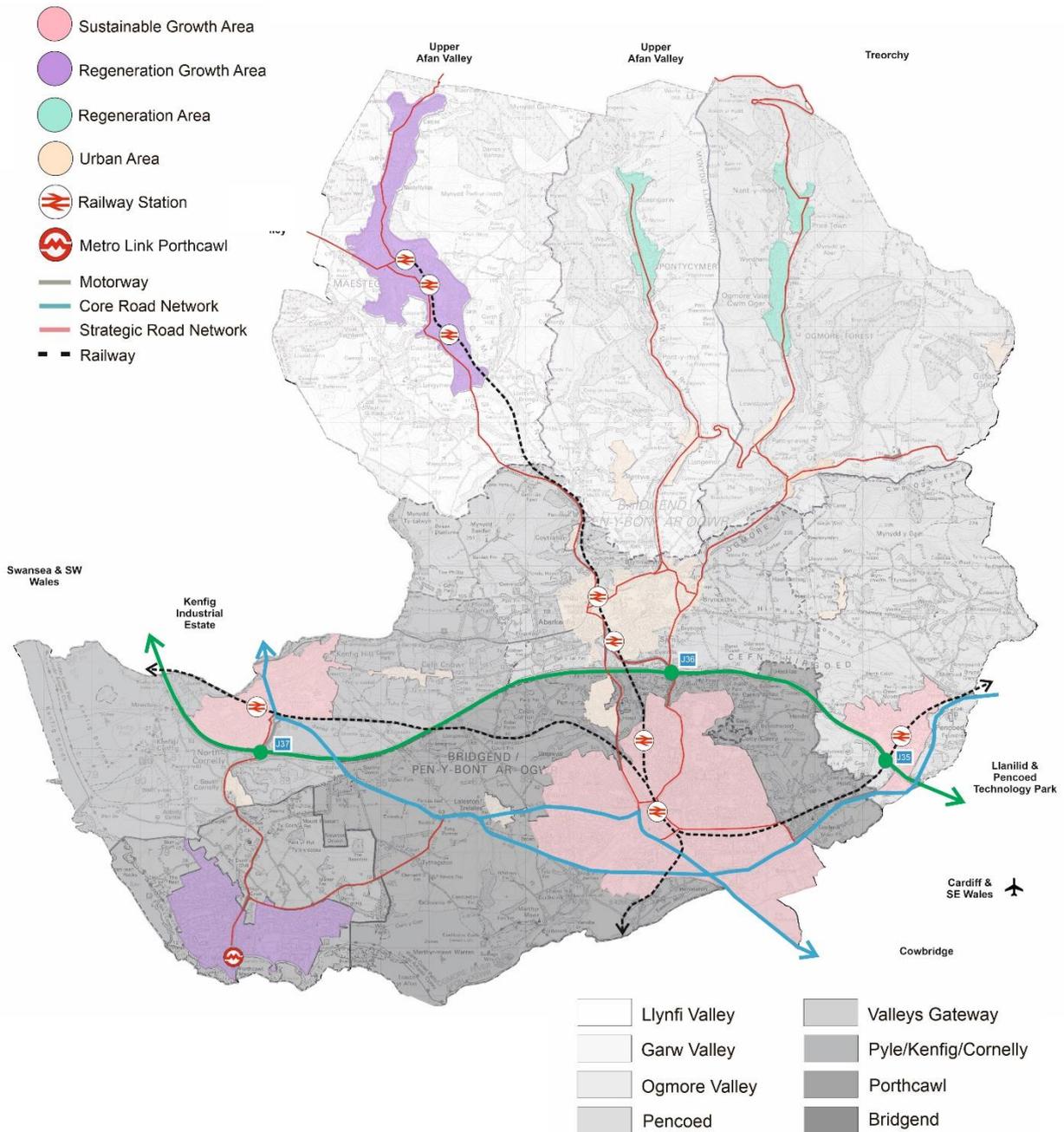
5.1 Growth and Spatial Strategy

5.1.1 The Replacement LDP has been underpinned by the identification of the most appropriate scale of economic growth and housing provision, all of which have been based upon well

informed, evidence-based judgements regarding need, demand and supply factors. A range of growth scenarios across the whole Replacement LDP period have been analysed and discussed within the Strategic Growth Options Background Paper. This has considered how the County Borough's demographic situation is likely to change from 2018-2033 and informed the most appropriate response for the Replacement LDP. As such the Replacement LDP identifies an appropriate plan requirement to enable a balanced level of housing and employment provision that will achieve sustainable patterns of growth, support existing settlements and maximise viable affordable housing delivery.

- 5.1.2 The distribution of growth is further evaluated and justified in the Spatial Strategy Options Background Paper. The strategy prioritises the development of land within or on the periphery of sustainable urban areas, primarily on previously developed brownfield sites. It continues to focus on the delivery of the brownfield regeneration allocations identified in the existing LDP, hence, Porthcawl, Maesteg and the Llynfi Valley are still denoted as regeneration priorities through their designation as Regeneration Growth Areas. The ongoing commitment to brownfield development opportunities within these settlements accords with the site-search sequence outlined in Planning Policy Wales and seeks to minimise developmental pressure on Best and Most Versatile (BMV) agricultural land. However, given the existing LDP's success in delivering development on brownfield land in other settlements (notably Bridgend and the Valleys Gateway), there are limited further brownfield regeneration opportunities remaining. Additional viable and deliverable sites (including some greenfield sites) are therefore required to implement SP1, deliver affordable housing in high need areas and ensure the County Borough's future housing requirements can be realised.
- 5.1.3 The Replacement LDP apportions sustainable growth towards settlements that already benefit from significant services, facilities and employment opportunities and are most conducive to enabling transit orientated development. As such, a Settlement Assessment has been undertaken to establish a sustainable settlement hierarchy. Based upon the consideration of a comprehensive range of variables sustainable growth will be appropriately directed towards the Main Settlements of Bridgend and Pencoed along with the grouped Main Settlement of Pyle, Kenfig Hill and North Cornelly. This Strategy seeks to ensure new development can come forward with necessary infrastructure improvements, including transport networks, utilities, green infrastructure, health, education, affordable housing and social facilities.
- 5.1.4 The scale and location of growth has also been influenced by the findings of the LHMA and Plan-Wide Viability Assessment. The LHMA revealed significant shortfalls of affordable housing provision within Bridgend, Porthcawl, Pencoed, and Pyle, Kenfig Hill and North Cornelly. Moderate housing need was also identified in Maesteg and the Llynfi Valley, as was the need to diversify the dwelling stock within Valleys Settlements. This Strategy provides the optimal means to address these shortfalls in affordable housing provision, whilst helping to counter-balance the mismatch between supply and demand. The Strategy is therefore considered most appropriate to maximise delivery of affordable housing in high-need areas as identified by the LHMA, whilst enabling sustainable forms of development that meet the LDP Objectives, minimise pressure on BMV agricultural land and provide scope to address existing infrastructure capacity issues. The Spatial Strategy Options Background Paper justifies this Strategy through evaluating a range of spatial options, each of which have also been considered as a reasonable alternative and assessed further under the SA process.

Strategic Diagram



5.2 Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

5.2.1 From the outset of plan preparation, the Replacement LDP has been subject to a SA, incorporating SEA, to fulfil statutory reporting requirements. This process is key to identifying likely significant effects from the LDP Strategy along with mitigation and enhancement measures for incorporation into the Replacement LDP. This will ensure likely significant adverse effects are avoided to enhance the Plan's effectiveness, whilst examining reasonable alternatives. Given that the LDP Review is an iterative process, a SA Report will accompany each substantive element of the Replacement LDP as it emerges.

- 5.2.2 SEA Screening and SA Scoping Reports were completed early in Plan Preparation. Soil was identified as a key SEA topic, in terms of the need to conserve, protect and enhance biodiversity assets in addition to safeguarding and enhancing the green infrastructure network. The SA Scoping Report emphasised the importance of withstanding development pressure in unsustainable locations to safeguard against unacceptable significant adverse effects on the environmental topics prescribed within Schedule 2 of the SEA Regulations. For example, the Report stressed that “increased development pressures in unsustainable locations or contrary to the LDP strategy could put pressure on biodiversity, including the loss and fragmentation of habitats, whilst increases in traffic and noise could disturb sensitive species” without a timely LDP Review (SA Scoping Report, Para A.4.4).
- 5.2.3 Sustainability issues are primarily addressed within the Replacement LDP SA Framework through the inclusion of relevant objectives. These objectives have been used to assess the likely sustainability and environmental effects of the Replacement LDP as it progresses. Criteria to safeguard biodiversity assets are included within SA Objective 9 - Biodiversity, Geodiversity and Soil. This objective seeks to “conserve, protect and enhance all biodiversity and geodiversity interests, including through safeguarding important sites and species, improving green infrastructure provision and safeguarding important soil resources”. Therefore, the need to consider soil quality and agricultural land classification was identified as a key policy issue for the SA from the outset. This is particularly significant in terms of assessing potential development sites as part of the Replacement LDP process.
- 5.2.4 The substantive proposals set out within the Bridgend LDP Pre-Deposit Documents (i.e. the LDP Preferred Strategy and associated Background Papers) were also subject to SA, incorporating SEA. This included a SA of the Strategic Policies to identify the valency and significance of predicted effects from the proposed strategic policy on each of the 14 SA Objectives within the SA Framework. This analysis indicated that the majority of the proposed policies were predicted to have either Major (i.e. significant) or Minor (i.e. not significant) positive effects on the SA Objectives, and no Major Negative (significant adverse) effects. However, SP6 (Sustainable Housing Strategy) and SP11 (Employment Land Strategy) were considered to have some potential Minor Negative effects on SA Objective 9 - Biodiversity, Geodiversity and Soil. This was primarily because “these policies provide support for substantial housing and employment development, which is likely to result in localised adverse impacts on habitats and ecological interests” (para 6.3.40). Criteria to conserve, protect and enhance biodiversity assets are included within SA Objective 9 and these issues have also been considered in more detail through site-specific analysis and assessment. Clear requirements have been set for site promoters to show how their development proposal addresses key environmental and sustainability issues.
- 5.2.5 Indeed, all new candidate sites and LDP rollover sites have been subject to a proportionate SA. The full Candidate Site Assessment is included within the Appendices of the 2019 SA of Candidate Sites Report (LDP Preferred Strategy) for reference. This initial appraisal (at Pre-Deposit Stage) supported the assessment of likely significant environmental and sustainability effects from the 13 proposed growth and spatial strategy. It also ensured equal treatment of all Candidate Sites and existing LDP rollover sites as potential ‘reasonable alternatives’. In addition, the process was undertaken to:
- “Identify major environmental or sustainability constraints, which, in the absence of further information being provided to demonstrate site effectiveness, is likely to result in the rejection of some candidate sites on the basis they do not constitute a ‘reasonable alternative’ on sustainability or deliverability grounds. This provides a fair

opportunity for site promoters to provide further information (through responding to the LDP Preferred Strategy consultation) to demonstrate that identified constraints and issues can be satisfactorily overcome and addressed, before any decision is made by BCBC at LDP Deposit Stage as to which candidate sites should be allocated or rejected” (SA of Candidate Sites Report, para 1.2.2).”

5.2.6 A detailed Candidate Site Assessment Matrix was successively developed to score each site in relation to the SA Framework, to identify sustainability implications and to assist with Replacement LDP site selection. Criteria such as proximity and presence of biodiversity assets such as important habitats, species, trees, hedgerows, SSSI, SINCs, European Sites, Ancient Woodland were included within this Matrix and site promoters were required to provide additional technical information in order to justify downgrading a significant adverse effect (--) or to amend (i.e. improve) other SA scoring. The absence of any further information from site promoters was noted in this respect. In addition, a SA Mitigation Framework was developed to confirm what design and policy level mitigation should be included in the Deposit Plan to address any unresolved significant adverse effects from site allocations and to enhance their sustainability. This exercise essentially produced two overall site groupings; excluded sites (i.e. sites with one or more unresolved showstopper constraints) and Stage 2 sites (i.e. sites that have passed the SA showstopper constraints criteria). The latter warrant further assessment and consideration as appropriate. The main purpose of this exercise was to, wherever possible, remove or otherwise mitigate significant adverse effects from proposed site allocations within the Replacement LDP, including on biodiversity assets. This has served to both enhance the Replacement LDP and demonstrate compliance with core SA/SEA requirements, as documented in the Deposit Plan SA Report (2021). Minimising the loss of Biodiversity has been embedded into this process from the outset.

5.3 *Candidate Site Assessment*

5.3.1 The Candidate Site Assessment is an inter-related yet discrete process that has been conducted alongside the SA/SEA, primarily to identify potential sites suitable for allocation within the Replacement LDP. The Methodology has been developed and applied to the Candidate Sites contained within the Register, along with uncommitted and unimplemented sites allocated within the existing LDP that have been resubmitted as Candidate Sites. There are four stages to Methodology as follows:

- Stage 1: Potential to Support the LDP Strategy
- Stage 2: Detailed Site Assessment – Deliverability, Sustainability and Suitability
- Stage 3: Consultation with Appropriate Specific Consultation Bodies
- Stage 4: Sites for Inclusion in the Deposit LDP

5.3.2 Whilst the Methodology is distinct to the SA/SEA process, there are parallels between the two. Notably, sustainability criteria have been incorporated into the site assessment process based on the 14 objectives developed for the SA.

5.3.3 Stage 1 of the Assessment was completed as an initial filtering exercise to determine which sites have the potential to support the Preferred Strategy of the Replacement LDP ('Stage 2' Candidate Sites). This was reported to Development Control Committee on 24th October 2019.

5.3.4 Stage 2 of the Candidate Site Assessment involved scrutinising the sites that progressed from Stage 1 in greater detail. In order to assist with this process, Stage 2 site promoters were invited to prepare and submit a number of technical supporting studies to demonstrate each

site's deliverability. Due to the pandemic lockdown restrictions, the Council extended the deadline for submission of this information from 30th April 2020 to 7th September 2020, or 19th October 2020 for Transport and Viability Assessments. It was made clear that failure to provide supporting evidence would have a detrimental impact on each site's prospect of progressing to Stage 4 of the Assessment. Any additional candidate sites submitted post Preferred Strategy Consultation Stage were also assessed through the same mechanism for purposes of consistency.

- 5.3.5 During Stage 2, sites were examined based on their specific deliverability, general location, neighbouring land uses, existing use(s), accessibility, physical character, environmental constraints and opportunities. In addition, there was an assessment of the policy context, together with the local geographical context, including known infrastructure issues. A comprehensive matrix was used to assess each site, including the questions, "Is the site located within or adjacent to a National, Regional or Local Ecological Designation?" and "Are there protected species?" As such, considerable weight has been given to protecting biodiversity from development alongside other planning considerations.
- 5.3.6 In total, 52 Candidate Sites progressed to Stage 2 of the Assessment. The remainder either didn't pass Stage 1 of the Assessment or were deemed to be more appropriately considered by other mechanisms (i.e. through the settlement boundary review, revised small site criteria based policies or other technical studies/assessments). The Candidate Site Assessment Report (2021) provides further information on this process together with more detailed site-specific analysis.
- 5.3.7 Post application of Stages 1 and 2, the Council then sought views of a limited number of specific consultation bodies in respect of those sites identified as suitable for future development and possible allocation in the Replacement LDP. This third Stage was completed before decisions were made as to which Candidate Sites should be proposed for allocation within the Replacement LDP. This enabled all responses to be duly considered prior to determining each site's potential for allocation. Further details are provided in the separate Candidate Site Assessment Report (2021).
- 5.3.8 Evidently, a number of planning considerations have been undertaken throughout LDP preparation and the assessment of Candidate Sites of which have justified the selection of strategic and non-strategic housing allocations within the Replacement LDP including those highlighted as case studies within this document. Whilst the case study sites outlined in the next section do contain some constraints such as proximity to SINC's, the sites have not been excluded from allocation, rather the process has ensured that such constraints have been factored into the masterplanning process from the outset to achieve biodiversity net benefit in a way that hasn't been implemented in Bridgend County Borough Council before.

Candidate Sites Stage 2 Conclusions – Case Studies

PS.1 – Land South of Bridgend (Island Farm) / SP2(2) Land South of Bridgend

The candidate site is located on the periphery of Bridgend which is identified as a Sustainable Growth Area (as defined by SP1). The site has the potential to provide a new primary school and accommodate the relocation of Heronsbridge Special Educational Needs School in addition to providing 788 homes. The site could also provide significant new green infrastructure (including ecological mitigation) by fostering a multi-functional green lung between the site and Bridgend in addition to access improvements in addition to a tennis centre (which it is anticipated will be delivered separately and in advance of the LDP). This site is also well serviced by active travel routes of which will help foster and promote transit-oriented development. The site is considered to be free of any significant constraints. In light of the above, this site will be allocated as a mixed-use scheme including residential, education, commercial and leisure uses in the Replacement LDP.

308.C1 – Land West of Bridgend / SP2(3) Land West of Bridgend

The candidate site is located on the periphery of Bridgend which is identified as a Sustainable Growth Area (as defined by SP1). The site has the potential to provide a new primary school and 850 homes in Bridgend, of which possesses a wide range of services and facilities in addition to sustainable transport links. The site will make an important contribution to meeting the housing need of the County Borough. In addition, the site could also provide significant new green infrastructure in addition to capitalising on and further adding to existing active travel routes of which will foster and promote transit-oriented development. A supporting masterplan and planning statement identifies and mitigates potential adverse impacts upon the Laleston Conservation Area and indicates that there will not be any significant changes to its visual setting. Furthermore, there does not appear to be any highway related constraints. The site is therefore allocated for residential and education development in the Replacement LDPn.

287.C1, 305.C & 325.C1 / COM (2-4) Land South East, South and South West of Pont Rhyd-y-cyff

The candidate sites are located on the edge of Pont Rhyd-y-Cyff, which is identified as a 'local settlement' where new development should be contained within the existing settlement boundary. However, the sites collectively offer an opportunity for a sustainable urban extension to the existing settlement of Pont Rhyd-y-Cyff. Whilst there are a number of large regeneration sites in Maesteg and the surrounding parts of the Llynfi Valley that could accommodate mixed used development, these sites possess several constraints that need to be overcome (notably contamination and viability of sites) and will require longer lead in times than others for delivery to take place. Extension to the settlement boundary of Pont Rhyd-y-Cyff would enable sustainable development with close proximity and accessible active travel links to the town centre of Maesteg, providing access to a wide range of facilities, services and key supporting infrastructure e.g. Garth railway station. Development in this location would also foster closer integration between Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Llangynwyd and the settlement of Pont Rhyd-y-Cyff.

6. Case Studies

- 6.1.1 This section of the Paper introduces three case studies involving three allocated sites at two different development scales (two strategic sites & one non-strategic site), highlighting how both scales seek to ensure any adverse environmental effects are firstly avoided, minimised, and mitigated against. All of the case study sites contain ecological constraints, specifically SINC, however these constraints have been factored into the masterplanning process from the outset and seek to achieve biodiversity net benefit in a way that hasn't been implemented previously in Bridgend County Borough Council.
- 6.1.2 Planning Policy Wales identifies SINC as local non-statutory protected sites that carry less weight than statutory designations, however it is acknowledged that they can make a vital contribution to delivering an ecological network for biodiversity and resilient ecosystems, and they should be given adequate protection. Outright loss of SINC should be avoided, but there are some occasions where pragmatism is required depending on site-specific circumstances. These case studies exemplify how development can be planned carefully around existing habitats, based upon robust survey work and a detailed body of evidence.
- 6.1.3 The case study sites are all under private ownership at present and future management is outside of the Council's direct control. As such, there is no guarantee that any of the sites would be preserved in their current form. However, carefully planned development that includes mitigation and conservation measures will ensure areas of higher ecological value will be protected and actively managed going forward. Management plans will be required to be submitted and agreed with the Council as part of any future planning application/S106. This will ensure careful management of the areas with higher ecological value.



- 6.1.4 All three allocations are key examples of multifunctional schemes that adopt green infrastructure and placemaking principles which seek to mitigate, protect and enhance biodiversity:
- **Land South of Bridgend (Island Farm)** – demonstrates how a large mixed-use strategic site can come forward and positively integrate a SINC and existing habitats and wildlife corridors as part of a broader strategic approach to providing a multifunctional green lung between the site and Bridgend town centre.
 - **Land West of Bridgend** – demonstrates how a large mixed-use strategic site can come forward and positively integrate a SINC as part of a sustainable green infrastructure-led scheme.
 - **Land South of Pont Rhyd-y-cyff** – demonstrates how a smaller housing allocation come forward within a SINC, carefully conserving areas of higher biodiversity value and only developing on areas of lower biodiversity value. Sustainable green infrastructure-led design is key to the success of the scheme.

Case Study Locations...



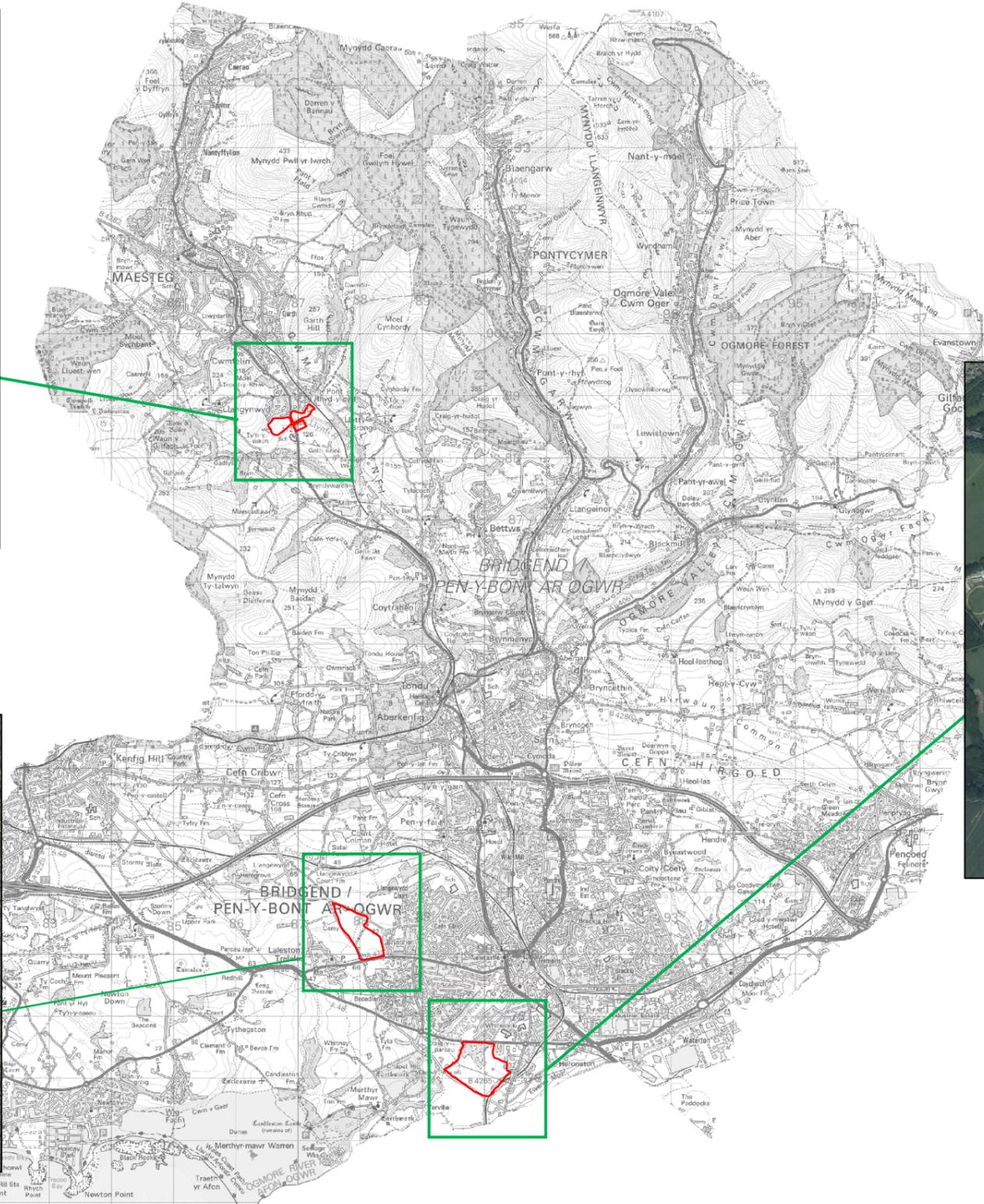
Non-Strategic Housing Allocations

- COM1(2) Land South East of Pont Rhyd-y-cyff
- COM1(3) Land South of Pont Rhyd-y-cyff
- COM1(4) Land South West of Pont-y-cyff



Strategic Housing Allocation

- PLA3/SP2(3) Land West of Bridgend



Strategic Housing Allocation

- PLA2/SP2(2) Land South of Bridgend (Island Farm)

6.2 Strategic Level Scheme

PLA2/SP2(2): Land South of Bridgend (Island Farm)

The site is located 1.5km (0.9 miles) to the south-west of Bridgend Town Centre, south of the A48, and close to the boundary with Vale of Glamorgan Council. It comprises approximately 49.95 hectares of tree and scrub land to the north, arable farmland to the south and east and grazing land to the northeast. The site is bordered to the northeast by the Bridgend Science Park, and to the east by a nursing home. The site contains a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) (The Island Farm POW Camp) of which covers 14.03 hectares of land within the allocated site. The site will provide significant new green infrastructure (including ecological mitigation), resulting in a unique and existing setting for residential development.



Ecological mitigation measures already implemented

6.2.1 As part of the existing consent, a mitigation strategy was produced in 2009 to offset the impacts of the development. It was proposed that the SINC and south west field would become a wildlife conservation area within the new development. Surveys at the site found dormice *Muscardinus avellanarius* to be present, both within the woodland and scrub in the SINC and in the hedgerows of the agricultural fields. These areas are also known to be used by bats for foraging and commuting purposes, and the SINC area contains a roost site for lesser horseshoe bats *Rhinolophus hipposideros* and brown long-eared bats *Plecotus auritus*.

6.2.2 As part of the development process some areas of these habitats were to be lost, and modification to the remaining areas due to the impacts of the development, including noise and light spillage. Part of the mitigation strategy to counter these losses included the creation of new habitats suitable for the relevant species. As such, habitat design was guided by the requirements of the protected species of which had the potential to utilise the site. In addition to dormice and bats, a further condition of the existing consent required the habitat requirements of Great Crested Newts *Triturus cristatus* to be taken into account.

6.2.3 The habitat design for the consented scheme included:

- **Tree and Scrub Planting:** translocation and planting new trees and scrub in the south-west field, providing an alternative for displaced animals, including dormice, bats, and shelter for reptiles and amphibians.
- **Hedgerow Enhancement:** enhancement and translocation of hedgerows from the centre of the site to the eastern site boundary has been undertaken, to create continuous hedge lines which help to buffer the expanded SINC site, and to filter out noise and light from development. Additionally, it provides a continuous flight line for bats and allow dormice to disperse more easily along the hedgerows.
- **Bat Roosting Building:** a purpose-built bat roost building has been constructed within the south-west field, providing a suitable roost site for both lesser horseshoe and brown long-eared bats, which have both been found roosting in the old hut within the SINC. The building was constructed on the lesser horseshoe key flight line to enable them to rapidly locate it, and also be close to good feeding habitats on the Merthyr Mawr and the River Ogmore.
- **Dormouse Nest Boxes:** 35 dormouse nest boxes placed within the field, to provide shelter for dormice that are to be displaced from other areas of the site. Placed within the north-east and south-east hedgerows, at approximately 10m interval.
- **Pond creation:** two new ponds have been created within the south-west field, with the primary aim of providing habitat for Great Crested Newts.



- **Grassland Creation:** rough grassland created around the pond to mitigate loss of existing grassland.

Proposed mitigation

- 6.2.4 As part of the proposed development of Strategic Allocation PLA2: Land South of Bridgend (Island Farm), an ecological appraisal of the site has been prepared by Ethos Environmental Planning in order to:
- To establish baseline ecological conditions and determine the importance of ecological features present within the specified area;
 - To identify the existing habitats on site;
 - To identify the potential for protected species;
 - To identify if any further surveys are required with regards to protected habitats or species; and
 - To identify any key ecological constraints and make recommendations for design options to avoid significant effects on important ecological features/ resources.

General habitat – Existing

- 6.2.5 The site was found to be comprised predominately of arable land in its winter stubble with very few plant species noted. The arable field margins provide good habitat for a range of species and buffer the existing hedgerows.
- 6.2.6 There were numerous hedgerows across the site which ranged from mature hedgerows with trees and hazel coppice, to intensively managed species-poor hedgerows which dissected the arable fields. Two hedgerows had been translocated recently to the eastern boundary and appeared to show new growth.
- 6.2.7 Two ponds which were created as part of the previous applications' ecological mitigation works were noted; however, neither was holding much water. Whilst there was very limited aquatic vegetation in the pond, vegetation in the immediate area included large swathes of tall ruderal and ephemeral/short perennial.
- 6.2.8 Part of the site, in the northern section, was designated as a SINC partially due to the mosaic of grassland, woodland and scrub. This area is proposed for retention within the current masterplan, with the exception of an access road. Part of the site had been subject to clearance to enable works from the previous development proposals. The area cleared was not within the SINC identified on site. Detailed surveys will be undertaken to consider the botanical diversity of this area.
- 6.2.9 Part of the area was brownfield land and whilst it was not an appropriate time of year for botany surveys, it was apparent that there were varied nutrient levels and areas of disturbed ground which are likely to result in higher botanical diversity.
- 6.2.10 Built structures were also noted. These included 'Hut 9' a former prisoner of war camp from World War 2 located within the woodland in the north of the site and a dedicated bat roost located in the south-west of the site.

6.2.11 A number of sink holes were noted across the site. These ranged from those which had apparently been present for a long period of time and had mature trees growing within them, to those very recently emerging and just comprising of small areas of collapsed earth.

6.2.12 Natural Resources Wales (NRW) states that consideration will need to be given to protected species (Hazel Dormice, Lesser Horseshoe Bats, Brown Long Eared Bat records on site). Furthermore, NRW states that consideration will need to be given to impacts on the SINC, and habitat – ancient mature hedgerows and woodland.

6.2.13 As such the ecological appraisal also considered the following species:

Dormouse

6.2.14 The site contains hedgerows and woodland of which were assessed to hold high value for dormice. The previous surveys identified the presence of dormice within the SINC located in the north of the site. It was therefore assessed that further surveys would be required to update the status of the site for this species and to inform detailed proposals for the site.

Riparian mammals

6.2.15 The River Ogmore was present along the eastern edge of the Craig-Y-Parcau, with records of both otter and water vole found south of the site. However, the previous surveys identified no evidence of riparian mammals within the development area. Considering the presence of previous records in the area and suitable habitat directly adjacent to the site, it is recommended surveys are undertaken for these protected species and to inform detailed proposals for the site.

Great crested newt

6.2.16 The previous surveys assessed the ponds to be unsuitable for great crested newt (GCN) and that GCN were absent from the site. Since then, it is understood that the previously surveyed ponds have been removed and new wildlife ponds created in the south-west of the main site area. The two water bodies identified during the walkover had relatively low water levels and limited aquatic vegetation. The current proposals indicate the retention and protection of the ponds. Nevertheless, they could provide suitable breeding habitat for amphibians, and it is recommended that a Habitat Suitability Index of each of the ponds within 500m of the development site to inform detailed planning application.

Birds

6.2.17 There was a mix of permanent pasture and arable land providing suitable habitat for farmland birds. Also, the hedgerows and their margins within the fields was assessed to provide potential habitat for ground nesting birds. The woodland, hedgerows, scrub and scattered trees were assessed to have high potential for breeding birds. Evidence of barn owl was found in a stable in the south-east of the site. Further surveys for breeding birds have been recommended within section 5 to inform detailed proposals for the site.

Bats

6.2.18 The previous surveys identified roosting lesser horseshoe and brown long-eared bats within Hut 9 in the woodland in the SINC. Since the previous surveys were undertaken, a dedicated bat roost has been created in the south-west of the main site. Additionally, the built structures within the Craig-Y-Parcau area were in extremely poor structural condition and a wide range of bat roosting features were visible for the external walkover. They were assessed to hold

high potential for roosting bats. Therefore, it was assessed that an updated assessment of the structures should be undertaken to assess their status for roosting bats. Additionally, emergence/re-entry surveys are recommended. The habitats within both sites contained woodland and hedgerows, offering potential commuting, foraging and roosting habitats for bats may provide potential commuting and foraging habitats for bats. A number of mature trees were also noted which could have potential roosting features for bats.

Badgers

6.2.19 The habitats on site were comprised of woodland, grassland and arable land which have potential to support badgers. However, it should be noted that the previous survey identified badgers to be absent from the site.

Reptiles

6.2.20 Much of the site was comprised of arable land and agriculturally intensified grassland providing negligible potential for reptiles. The key features were assessed to be the sections of grassland and scrub located at the woodland edges. The site was comprised of common and widespread habitats providing low potential habitats for invertebrates. No detailed surveys will be required.

SINC Review – Island Farm POW Camp

6.2.21 A SINC review undertaken by the Wildlife Trust indicates that the on-site SINC does not appear to have changed significantly since 2011's survey and therefore still qualifies as a SINC. The small section of woodland in the field to the south-east is worth removing from the citation as it is isolated and does not appear to add to the site's value. The woodland varies in quality but appears to offer habitat for dormice and bats and there are numerous woodland indicator species. The grassland is not particularly species-rich but adds to the site as a whole. The site suffers from antisocial behaviour including fly-tipping, frequent drug use and signs of semi-permanent habitation that is detrimental to the biodiversity of the site.



6.2.22 The review recommended that dormouse tubes are replaced and monitored and that antisocial activities are reduced where feasible. Although the grassland areas are not very diverse, they add to the diversity of the site and some scrub control to stop their loss is recommended though not a priority.

6.2.23 The masterplanning for the site has been significantly guided by a green infrastructure strategy which responds to the ecological constraints and opportunities of which have been identified within the site. In total over 24 ha is proposed for blue and green infrastructure, ecological enhancement and public open space. The existing hedgerows have been retained. They have been allowed for within the public realm, rather than to rear gardens, thus helping to create a mature landscape setting. The hedgerows create green movement corridors within the site for people and wildlife. They can also, through the introduction of swales, form part of the sites sustainable urban drainage system. As per the development concept, the existing sink hole areas have also been retained, which will be within the public realm so that they can contribute

to the setting of the development. The development of the site also offers the opportunity to establish green links by providing a multi-functional green lung between the site and Bridgend town centre (via Newbridge Fields). The western boundary also has potential for establishing green links. These could include public access which the A48 footpath with a wider network of connections towards Merthyr Mawr to the south.

Overall

- 6.2.24 There is considered to be an overriding need for the development. Re-allocation of this site will enable accommodation of sustainable growth enshrined in placemaking principles, deliver affordable housing in the highest need part of the County Borough and enable delivery of two schools on the site, including relocation of Heronsbridge Special School. It will also enrich active travel and green infrastructure networks within Bridgend through the creation of a 'green lung' that will connect the site to the Town Centre via Newbridge Fields. Development of this edge of settlement site would accord with the LDP Strategy, channel growth to the Primary Key Settlement of the County Borough and make a significant contribution to the housing need identified in the LHMA. The site promoter has also provided extensive supporting information to evidence the site is both viable and deliverable.
- 6.2.25 The masterplan relating to allocation PLA2: Land South of Bridgend (Island Farm) has included a number of measures to address previously identified ecological constraints including the retention of the majority of the SINC and protection of the artificial bat roost and hedgerows. Furthermore, the masterplan for Island Farm has indicated the retention of the SINC within the site boundary, with the exception of the access road from the A48. Areas of ecological value are proposed for retention including existing sink holes; which offer value for a range of invertebrates, and an ecological enhancement area located in the south-western field; previously enhanced for ecology in relation to the 2008 sports village application. The masterplan also indicates retention and enhancement of continuous green areas to ensure a continued network of green and blue infrastructure.
- 6.2.26 Further work and surveys are to be undertaken from an ecological perspective in line with the recommendations of the ecological report. However, there were no 'show-stoppers' found at this stage, with appropriate mitigation measures available to ensure that the development of the site is acceptable, and any related impacts can be minimised.
- 6.2.27 NRW support the commitment for the future development of the site to follow a high-quality Green Infrastructure led approach so that the mixture of uses will be fully integrated and designed around the SINC.
- 6.2.28 Overall, the site has an extensive planning history which has demonstrated that the site can be developed in an ecologically sensitive way through careful scheme design and the use of mitigation measures. Policy PLA2 will ensure that the proposed uses through outlined development requirements are fully integrated into the future development of site.

6.3 Strategic Level Scheme

PLA3/SP2(3): Land West of Bridgend

The site (36.86ha) is located immediately adjoining the western boundary of Bridgend, and the built development at Bryntirion. The smaller settlement of Laleston is further to the west. Bridgend Town Centre is approximately 2.2km away. The site is bordered by the A473 to the south; an un-named country lane to the west; Llangewydd Road to the north; and the settlement edge of Bryntirion to the east. There are existing properties on the edge of Bryntirion, which form part of the south eastern boundary of the site and three dwellings at the south western boundary which are accessed via the country lane. The majority of the site comprises open farmland pasture with an area of woodland with enclosed marshland fields to the north east. The open farmland comprises irregular shaped, small to medium fields of improved grassland with vegetated field boundaries. The wooded part of the site to the north east is covered by the Laleston Meadows SINC, a local ecological designation. The site and its internal field boundaries in the open farmland include livestock fencing, maintained hedgerows and hedgebanks, a tree belt and a stone wall. The site will provide significant new green infrastructure, resulting in a unique and existing setting for residential development.

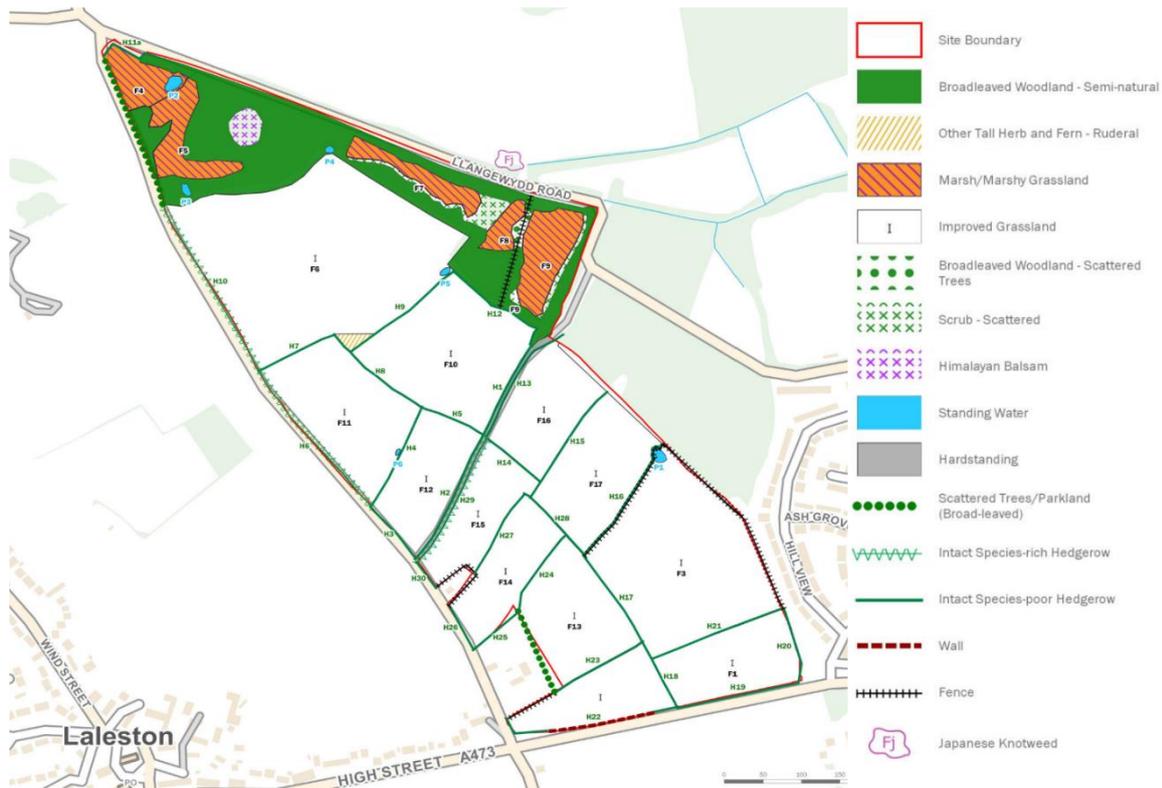


Existing Site Conditions

6.3.1 An ecological desk study and Extended Phase 1 survey has been undertaken by EDP on behalf of the site promoter. The site itself comprises several field parcels predominantly grazed by sheep, and subdivided by mature tree lines and native hedgerows reinforced in places with post and wire fencing due to their occasionally defunct nature. The northern extent of the site encompasses four fields which together are designated as a SINC, hereafter referred to as 'Laleston Meadows SINC.' Here, woodland habitat and pockets of marshy grassland dominate. Six waterbodies are scattered throughout the site in association with field boundaries.



6.3.2 A desk study has identified several statutorily designated sites present within the site's zone of influence the most pertinent of which includes Cefn Cribwr Grasslands SAC and Waunfawr, Cefn Cribwr SSSI both of which are located 1.8km north-west of the site, both of which are designated for populations of marsh fritillary butterfly and/or grassland habitat with potential to sustain such populations. Given the potential suitability of marshy grassland habitat associated with Laleston Meadows SINC to sustain metapopulations of marsh fritillary, potential indirect effects upon qualifying features of designated sites may therefore arise as a result of proposed development. Such effects are likely to be associated with the loss or degradation of habitats potentially supporting such species.



6.3.3 An Extended Phase 1 survey was undertaken in February 2020, supplemented by further roosting bat works in March 2020. The Phase 1 survey assessed a range of habitats within

and around the site including arable, improved grassland, marshy grassland, semi-natural broadleaved woodland, scattered broadleaved trees, native hedgerows, continuous and scattered scrub, tall ruderal vegetation and standing water. The survey also assessed the presence or likely absence of protected/and or notable faunal species within the site including breeding birds, bats, badger, dormouse, otter and water vole, great crested newt, common reptiles, invertebrates, and other species potentially supported.

- 6.3.4 The Phase 1 survey concluded that the site is dominated by agriculturally improved grassland of limited botanical interest and thus of low inherent ecological value. Habitats of greatest ecological importance include the native hedgerows delineating the northern boundary and internal field boundaries in addition to woodland habitat and marshy grassland associated with Laleston Meadows SINC. The roosting bats surveys identified several trees with low to high potential to support a bat roost whilst onsite ponds have been considered for their potential to support great crested newt.

Mitigation Measures

- 6.3.5 The results of the desk study and Extended Phase 1 survey have influenced the masterplan which has sought to locate development across those habitats of predominantly limited ecological value whilst retaining boundary habitats as far as possible. Where retained, such features have been accommodated within proposed informal open green space and sustainable transport links, which ultimately enhances connectivity throughout the site and contributes to the wider green infrastructure resource.
- 6.3.6 The emerging masterplan proposes the retention of designated features associated with Laleston Meadows SINC, although some minor impact is anticipated to accommodate the creation of new emergency access to the site from its northern boundary. Such retained features will be further protected from potential harm/damage/disturbance through the sensitive design of built development away from SINC boundaries and the inclusion of suitable buffers. The inclusion of Laleston Meadows SINC within the site boundary will, however, provide substantial potential for a balanced provision of areas of informal public open space and wildlife zones which, when linked with proposed public open space and play areas across the developable site, this provides a significant benefit to both visual and recreational amenity, conservation and biodiversity enhancement. In respect of the latter, the SINC provides a potential space to accommodate ecological mitigation and biodiversity enhancements and thus offset ecological impacts that may arise during development and occupation of the site and sensitive long-term management of sensitive habitats are likely to improve the existing condition of the SINC and facilitate its restoration to some extent, further compensating for habitat loss elsewhere across the site.
- 6.3.7 The development will also seek to implement a sustainable strategy comprising attenuation features to manage and remediate surface water runoff, so as to ensure no detrimental impacts upon the water quality and hydrological regime of designated sites and sensitive habitat features within close proximity to the site. Such features are proposed for integration with areas of public open space, maximising opportunities for formal/informal play areas (where appropriate) or otherwise delivering further strengthening the green infrastructure network present onsite through provision of biodiversity enhancements, including species-rich grassland creation and/or new native tree and shrub planting.
- 6.3.8 The masterplan has also sought to locate development across those habitats of predominately limited ecological value whilst retaining boundary habitats as far as possible. In particular, on-site hedgerows of which qualify as 'Important' in accordance with the *Wildlife and Landscape*

criteria of the Hedgerow Regulations 1997 Act, are proposed to be retained in full. This is in addition to the retention of several other existing hedgerows which are notably species-rich and those which are likely provide key wildlife corridors across the site as those associated with onsite waterbodies.

6.3.9 Where retained, such features have been accommodated within proposed informal open green space and sustainable transport links, which ultimately enhances connectivity throughout the site and contributes to the wider green infrastructure resource.

6.3.10 Where avoidance is not possible, however, and will result in the loss of internal field boundaries albeit predominantly species-poor or defunct), the site is considered to be of sufficient size and extent to enable future development proposals to flexibly avoid and/or mitigate for any significant ecological constraints and compensate for the unavoidable loss of ecologically valuable habitats through the enhancement and long-term management of retained habitat features of value to protected and notable species in addition to new habitat creation. This will be in addition to the sensitive positioning of built development away from retained boundary features to minimise damage.

SINC Review – Laleston Meadows

6.3.11 A SINC review undertaken by the Wildlife Trust indicates that the on-site SINC does not appear to have significantly changed since 2011's survey and therefore still qualifies as a SINC, although there is now sheep grazing as opposed to horse grazing in the western fields which may affect the quality of the sward. There is a marshy grassland field bordering the northern edge of the SINC that appears worthy of consideration for SINC status. There is some Himalayan Balsam and Japanese Knotweed along with some fly-tipping and potential nutrient enrichment from a slurry heap across the road from the north-western end of the site.



6.3.12 Recommendation is that a further survey visit is carried out during the summer in order to assess how sheep grazing has altered the floral diversity of the meadows that was recorded during the previous survey. Control of scrub in the easternmost section would also be beneficial as the remnant meadow is becoming heavily encroached. Removal of INNS and fly-tipping along with prevention of nutrient enrichment from slurry would benefit the suite. Continued cutting of scrub beneath the overhead lines is maintaining potentially good habitat for dormice – surveying is recommended.

6.3.13 The masterplan adopts a green infrastructure-led design of which responds to the ecological constraints and opportunities of which have been identified within the site. The masterplan sets out a network of 2.87ha of attractively landscaped Green Streets and Spaces provided across the development which will accommodate and link the essential green infrastructure for the site. Moreover, landscaped SUDS features will be integrated to manage surface water

and create an aesthetically pleasing area to travel through. Other 'green elements' including generous gardens, hedges, trees, street trees and planting will provide further amenity space and help increase habitat and biodiversity.

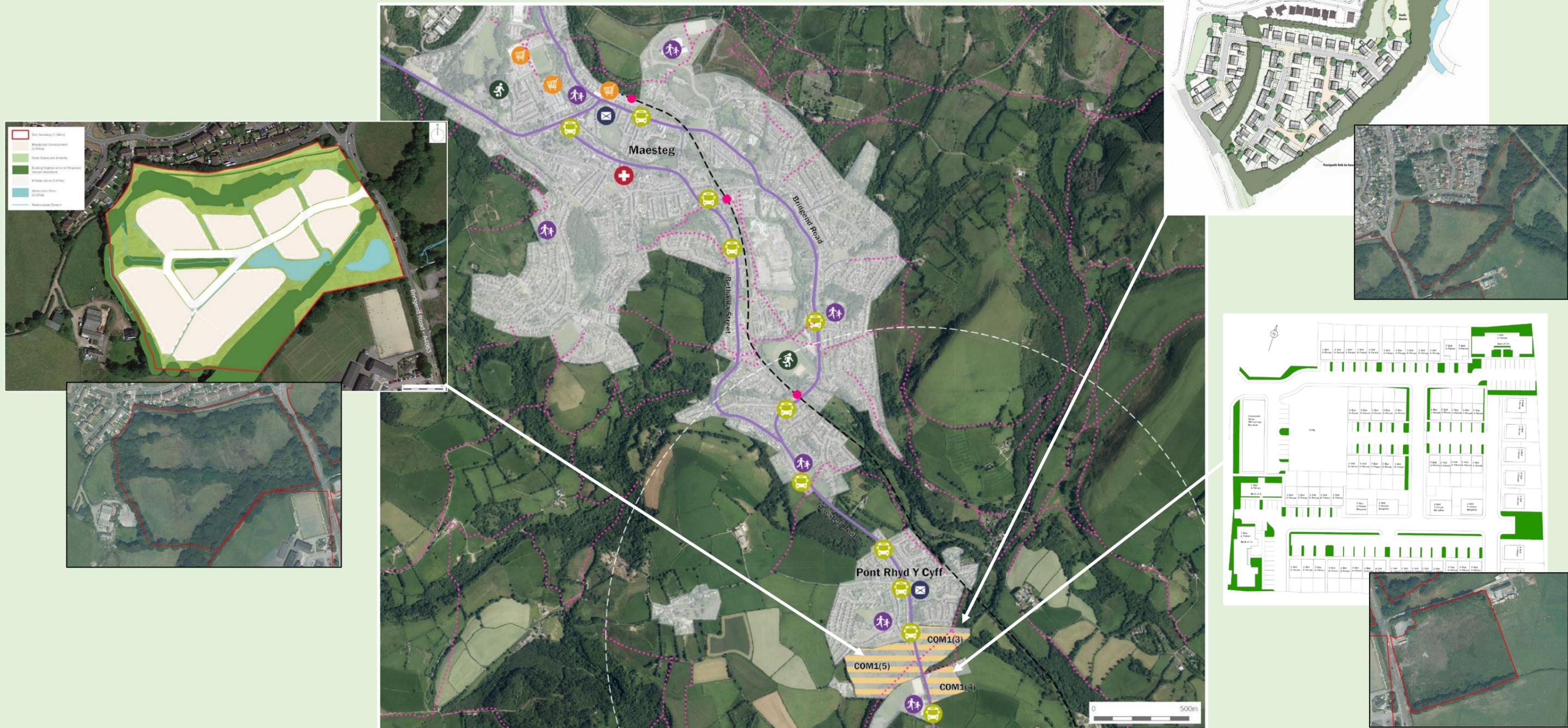
Overall

- 6.3.14 There is considered to be an overriding need for the development. This proposal would contribute to local education needs, maximise affordable housing provision in the highest need part of the County Borough and deliver sustainable growth in accordance with placemaking principles. There are very limited alternative opportunities of this scale within Bridgend that would be as suited to creating sustainable places where people want to live, work and socialise without impacting on BMV agricultural land. A number of technical supporting studies have also been prepared by the site promoter to clearly demonstrate the site's deliverability to this end. The importance of this site as a sustainable, deliverable and viable strategic allocation for residential development is evident following due assessment of the other Stage 2 Candidate Site proposals within this settlement.
- 6.3.15 The masterplan relating to allocation PLA3: Land West of Bridgend has included a number mitigation measures to address ecological constraints including the retention of the existing Laleston Meadows SINC, of which will be protected by ensuring that the built development will be positioned away from the SINC with the inclusion of suitable buffers. The site will also retain existing hedgerows of which will provide key wildlife corridors across the site. The masterplan also illustrates an extensive network of green and blue infrastructure throughout the site.
- 6.3.16 Further detailed habitat and species surveys recommended will be required to inform a planning application and ensure proposed mitigation is appropriate and proportional. However, there were no 'show-stoppers' found at this stage, with appropriate mitigation measures available to ensure that the development of the site is acceptable, and any related impacts can be minimised.
- 6.3.17 Overall, the site can be developed in an ecologically sensitive way through the incorporation of appropriate inherent avoidance, mitigation and enhancement measures that ensure the scheme is in accordance with national and local planning policy. Policy PLA3 will ensure that the proposed uses through outlined development requirements are fully integrated into the future development of site.

6.4 Non-Strategic Level Scheme

COM1(2) Land South East of Pont Rhyd-y-cyff, COM1(3) Land South of Pont Rhyd-y-cyff & COM1(4) Land South West of Pont Rhyd-y-cyff

The three sites located just south of Pont Rhyd-y-cyff (approximately 2 miles from Maesteg) will form an overall wider strategic opportunity as three interconnected sites. The sites benefit from pedestrian access along the A4063, which links the sites to the existing settlement. The sites are bound by the existing settlement to the north, and green fields to the east, south and west. The sites are bisected by the A4063 with two allocations sited to the east of this arterial road, and one to the west. The sites currently comprise a mix of undeveloped green field land (containing two SINC: Ty'n-y-waun & Lletty Brongu) and an area of brownfield land comprising an area of tarmacadam hardstanding located immediately adjacent to the road. The sites will provide significant new green infrastructure (including ecological mitigation), resulting in a unique and exciting setting for residential development.



COM1(2): Land South East of Pont Rhyd-y-cyff

- 6.4.1 The site comprises approximately 5.5ha of agricultural land situated to the south-east of the existing built-up area of Pont Rhyd-y-Cyff, Llangynwyd. It consists of three large, irregularly shaped fields bounded by existing, mature vegetation, while the westernmost field bounds the public highway along Bridgend Road (A4063) and Parc-Tyn-y-Waun. The site is partially designated as a SINC (Lletty Brongu). There is a larger, wooded area in the northeast corner of the site, which abuts the Llynfi River to the east. In terms of topography, the site slopes gently downwards towards the east and north. There is an existing Public Right of Way (PRoW) that runs through the site from Bridgend Road to a level rail crossing in the north-east corner of the site.

SINC Review - Lletty Brongu

- 6.4.2 A SINC review undertaken by the Wildlife Trust indicates that the on-site SINC does not appear to have significantly changed since 2011's survey. The woodland is varied in structure and type with wet woodland being predominant in the flatter areas. There are a number of woodland indicator species throughout and good amounts of deadwood. The woodland and river appear of sufficient quality to support otters and bats with the river looking clean enough to support fish. Adjacent rush-dominated fields are grazed, though not currently, and livestock are able to access the woodland. There are signs of fly-tipping and garden waste being put into the woodland from adjacent houses and potential impacts to the river from the equestrian yard. There is frequent Himalayan Balsam in the woods and occasional Montbretia along with patches of Japanese Knotweed on the riverbank.



- 6.4.3 The review recommends that fencing should be introduced to prevent livestock entering the woodland, ideally a metre or so from the current woodland edge to provide a buffer. Some light thinning/coppicing would improve the structure of the woodland and some of the timber could be used to create an otter holt near the river. Removal of invasives and liaison with locals to raise awareness of the deleterious effects of dumping garden waste would benefit the woodland. Bat and otter surveys are also recommended.

Ecological Assessment

- 6.4.4 Hawkeswood Ecology carried out a Preliminary Ecological Assessment (PEA) on behalf of the site promoter. The assessment identified agriculturally improved grassland which is heavily grazed, woodland and hedgerows within the site boundary. A small section of the site is designated as a SINC (Lletty Brongu), relating to areas of woodland on the southern and eastern sections of the site. It is bounded to the south and east by a river and a tributary stream. The grazed pasture has little biodiversity value, however the woodland and hedgerows contain mature trees that may support features suitable for roosting bats. In addition, they are

also suitable habitat for dormice which has been recorded approximately two miles from the site. The riverside woodlands and hedgerows represent UK Biodiversity action Plan Priority Habitats, and although the woodlands are not designated as ancient, they support a tree and ground flora that suggests they are of some age. The hedgerows are relict and consist of rows of trees and mature shrubs.

- 6.4.5 The masterplan for the site confines development to the agriculturally improved grassland areas of which is considered to be of low biodiversity significance. The grasslands are heavily grazed by sheep and do not offer a significant biodiversity benefit. The high biodiversity wooded areas and mature trees in the relict hedgerows will be retained with the provision of close boarded fencing in addition to an appropriate buffer zone to prevent dumping of garden waste or other domestic rubbish. However, these will



be required to be protected during construction. Given the viable network of woodland and hedgerows connecting the site to other localities and the suitability of habitat on site the presence of commuting dormouse cannot be ruled out. There is also potential for the site to support both breeding and foraging bats. Direct impacts on both the wooded habitats and protected species will be limited. However, there is potential for indirect impacts and further survey is required to properly assess the impacts of the development on both habitats and protected species in addition to invasive species. Integral bat and bird boxes are recommended for use in the new construction. The locations of bat and bird mitigation will be such that they are not vulnerable to attack from cats.

- 6.4.6 The existing PRow that runs through the site from Bridgend to a level rail crossing in the north-east corner of the site will be diverted but retained and integrated into the design of the development through wet grassland. However, this will need further habitat assessment at a more appropriate time of year when the majority of grassland flowers are visible.
- 6.4.7 Surface water runoff from the site will be managed using SUDS in accordance with the sustainable drainage hierarchy via restriction to greenfield runoff rates prior to discharge in the River Llynfi.

COM1(3): Land South of Pont Rhyd-ycyff

- 6.4.8 The site consists of a number of co-joined fields, which are bounded by a railway line to the East, further agricultural land to the south, Ysgol Gwyfyn Gymraeg Llangynwyd to the West (and A063 which abuts the western boundary of this specific site). It is a partially brownfield site and previously accommodated a petrol filling station, which has since been



de-commissioned. The site is bisected by the A48. It is allocated for a residential led development.

- 6.4.9 An ecological appraisal of the site has been undertaken by I&G Ecological Consulting. The combination of desk and field surveys undertaken at the site identified that the majority of the area within the planning site boundary has negligible ecological value (brownfield). However, the scrub and trees have higher ecological interest, supporting a more diverse range of species and are likely to provide nesting opportunities for birds, cover for small mammals and invertebrates and flight lines for bats.
- 6.4.10 The boundary hedgerows and trees will be retained, with a fringing vegetation of scrub to provide connectivity to adjacent habitats, including the two adjacent SINC sites to the north. Loss of scrub habitat and trees will be mitigated for by suitable new planting, detailed in the landscape scheme and approved by the LA ecologist.
- 6.4.11 The existing green infrastructure would be retained and enhanced accordingly. Linking this with appropriate green walkable corridors (connecting an existing PRow network in the field to northern development parcel which would link both developments) and blue areas of rich biodiversity areas which would form a focal point or destination for residents to reach for their informal and recreational use. The site will accommodate a dedicated area of public open space which would be primarily informal in its nature and would bring together the green and blue infrastructure of the site and associated biodiversity enhancements of such features.

COM1(4): Land South West of Pont Rhyd-y-cyff

- 6.4.12 The third site, southwest of Pont Rhyd-y-cyff is the most constrained out of the three sites from an ecological perspective as the entirety of the site is designated as a SINC (Ty'n-Y-Waun). The site consists of a number of co-joined fields, which are bounded by the A4063 to the east, further agricultural land and Ysgol Gwyfyn Gymraeg Llangynwyd, to the south and a farm to the west. The northern boundary is bounded by the Llangynwyd settlement boundary.

SINC Review – Ty'n-Y-Waun

- 6.4.13 A SINC review undertaken by the Wildlife Trust indicates that the on-site SINC still qualifies as a SINC due to the quality of its native broadleaved woodland and associated ground flora. The grassland itself is not currently of SINC quality and shows signs of nutrient enrichment and attempts at agricultural improvement. These have not established particularly well, probably due to the wetness of the ground. As part of these activities the farmer has cleared encroaching



young trees which has maintained open grassland/rush pasture. The farmer is currently grazing with cattle but having spoken to them it is clear that they consider them scruffy and would like to revert them to agriculturally improved 'productive' land.

6.4.14 The review recommends that attempts are made to improve the quality and diversity of the marshy grassland by decreasing nutrients and maintaining low intensity cattle grazing along with selective scrub control. The woodland would benefit in places from selected thinning and invasive non-native species control along the watercourse would potentially be of great benefit as the stream runs both directions along the railway cutting so could be a good place to start catchment-scale Himalayan Balsam and Japanese Knotweed clearance.

Ecological Assessment

6.4.15 I&G Ecology attended the site to undertake a Phase 1 Habitat survey. The combination of desk and field surveys undertaken at the site identified that the majority of the area within the planning site boundary has high ecological value. The majority of the site is designated as a SINC, and the size and range of habitats and their linkage to other SINCS and habitats in the borough, provides corridors for dispersal and will support a more diverse range of species, provide nesting opportunities for birds, cover for mammals, reptiles, amphibians and invertebrates and flight lines for bats. No signs of European protected species were observed.

6.4.16 Significant consideration of the SINC has been undertaken by the site promoter. The ecological survey identified:

- Large areas of marshy grassland ‘are of moderate quality and the lack of appropriate management is leading to succession to willow and birch scrub’;
- Trees and hedgerows that line the to the west and south west possess the greatest value, whereas the intensively managed hedgerow to the north – loss or damage to this habitat would be severe. The east is considered to be of lesser value;
- The broadleaf woodland and stream corridors are of high ecological interest and should be retained for connectivity; and
- Two blocks of poor semi-improved grassland are of low ecological interest.



- 6.4.17 Recommendations from the ecological appraisal suggest the following:
- In the absence of appropriate management the marshy grassland is declining in quality, and the low grazing pressure is leading to its succession to wet woodland. Loss of the habitat cannot be mitigated for on site. Should the site be developed then it is recommended that the drainage ditches be retained to provide habitat connectivity. Their incorporation into an appropriate SuDS scheme for the site, together with ponded areas would provide partial mitigation;
 - The western hedgerow and trees should be retained in their entirety with an appropriate offset from the development boundary. Protection of trees and hedgerows through the use of Root Protection Zones and appropriate working methodology as well as proximity of development boundary must be considered;
 - The broadleaf woodland and streamside corridors should be retained in their entirety, with an appropriate offset from any development boundaries to protect both the root zones and any polluting run-off from the development during both the construction and occupation phases; and

- Bat and dormouse boxes should be provided throughout the development.



6.4.18 The masterplanning for the site has been significantly guided by a green infrastructure strategy. It has equally been influenced by its ecological features outlined within the ecological appraisal in addition to being with the landscape and environmental issues at the forefront of the design process with an aim of working with the site's unique characteristics, habitat and wildlife corridors. Such characteristics make this scheme a unique example of how to positively deliver development in an integrated manner, while retaining the high ecological value of a SINC.

6.4.19 The key environmental objectives which have guided the scheme include:

- Retain and enhance existing site features, such as the streams, hedgerows and woodland;
- Create a GI network which connects, retains and enhances north-south and east-west connections across the site form a 'green grid' of habitat routes and spaces;
- Knit the scheme into the wider GI network to preserve habitats and where appropriate create new green corridors to connect areas of existing ecological value; and
- Design SuDS features and a drainage strategy to provide recreational, visual and ecological benefit.
- Provide amenity space
- Create a network of footpath links to existing community footpaths; and
- Include a number of bat boxes, and dormouse boxes.

Overall

6.4.20 Site promoters of housing allocations COM1(2) Land South East of Pont Rhyd-y-cyff, COM 1(3) Land South of Pont Rhyd-y-cyff & COM1(4) Land South West of Pont Rhyd-y-cyff have all demonstrated site deliverability through provision of supporting technical information and site-specific viability assessments. There are no other comparably deliverable candidate sites within Maesteg and the Llynfi Valley. There are a number of large regeneration sites in the Maesteg and surrounding parts of the Llynfi Valley that could accommodate mixed used development, however, these sites possess several constraints that would need to be

overcome (notably contamination and viability of sites) and will require longer lead in times than others for delivery to take place.

6.4.21 The local settlement of Pont Rhyd-y-cyff is sustainably located on the edge of the Regeneration Growth Area of Maesteg and Upper Llynfi Valley. Extension to the settlement boundary of Pont Rhyd-y-cyff would enable sustainable development with close proximity and accessible active travel links to the town centre of Maesteg, providing access to a wide range of facilities, services and key transport infrastructure e.g. Garth Railway Station. Development in this location would also foster closer integration between Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Llangynwyd and the settlement of Pont Rhyd-y-cyff. As such, these sites are considered to exhibit the greatest opportunities to deliver sustainable socio-economic growth that will be of benefit to the locality. This is consistent with the LDP Strategy and would result in the re-development of some brownfield land through a sustainable urban extension that would also not result in the loss of any BMV agricultural land. Delivery of these sites will also enable affordable housing to be secured that will contribute to the need identified in the area, along with supporting infrastructure.

6.4.22 The consideration of biodiversity and ecology has also been a key factor in the selection of these sites. As highlighted above, the site promoters have undertaken robust ecological surveys to gain an understanding of the existing biodiversity and ecological conditions present on site. Whilst there are local ecological designations present on two of the sites in the form of SINC's, the information and detail captured from the survey work has fed into the development of each masterplan from the outset to create a scheme that minimises adverse environmental impacts on habitats and species. The supporting masterplans illustrate how the scheme will carefully conserve areas of higher biodiversity value, with development restricted to areas of lower biodiversity value in addition to a number of enhancements provided on site. As such, the adoption of a green infrastructure-led approach will be key to the development of the sites to integrate successfully with the existing environment whilst seeking to promote ecological resilience and achieve biodiversity net benefit.

7. Conclusion

7.1 This Background Paper has set out how the Local Planning Authority has considered the environment and biodiversity in developing the Bridgend Replacement Development Plan (LDP) 2018-2033. It demonstrates how the Replacement LDP strategy and site selection process has sought to minimise the impact upon the environment when balanced against a range of other material planning considerations.

7.2 Evidently, considerable weight has been given to the protection of the environment from development (alongside other planning considerations) throughout LDP preparation, particularly through the SA/SEA and Candidate Site Assessment process. This paper demonstrates how such consideration has been applied highlighted through three case studies at the strategic and non-strategic level, justifying their allocation within the Replacement LDP. The case studies demonstrate how the Local Planning Authority, in collaboration with the respective site promoters, has been actively involved in overcoming biodiversity and ecological constraints (amongst other constraints) from the outset seeking to achieve a net benefit for biodiversity in line with national policy. Such constraints have been factored into the masterplanning process which sets out multifunctional development incorporating a green infrastructure approach and placemaking principles in a way that hasn't been implemented in Bridgend County Borough Council before.