

**Draft Lower Ebbw and Sirhowy Valleys Masterplan
Report of Public Consultation**

Introduction

This report follows a six-week period of public consultation on the Draft Lower Ebbw and Sirhowy Valleys Masterplan. It summarises the issues raised and sets out officers' observations and recommendations.

Public consultation exercise

A six-week period of public consultation took place between Wednesday 19 January 2022 and Wednesday 2 March 2022.

Consultation emails were sent to a range of stakeholders, including public-sector organisations, equality-related groups, MSs, MPs, all CCBC elected members, town and community councils and neighbouring authorities.

Posters were displayed in the town centres of Newbridge and Risca/Pontymister, and the consultation was advertised on the Council's website and social media channels.

27 representations (22 in response to the online questionnaire, five by email) were received.

The questionnaire asked respondents to state their postcodes, and 13 of the 20 (65%) (online) who answered the question lived in the Masterplan area.

Respondents were asked to comment on the Vision, Strategic Objectives and Development Strategy of the Masterplan. They were also invited to comment on site-specific proposals and to suggest additional proposals. Only those projects on which representations were made have been included within the report.

Equalities Impact Assessment

In line with the Council's Equalities Monitoring procedures, respondents were asked whether their answers were affected by any of the following: age, disability, ethnic origin, gender, gender reassignment, marital status, religious belief or non-belief, use of Welsh language, BSL or other languages, nationality or responsibility for any dependents.

One respondent stated that they had a disability.

One respondent wrote that:

An equality impact assessment should be made the basis of detailed plans rather than the strategic vision document.

One respondent wrote that:

All the proposals will affect people in various ways however those affected should be given consideration and their objections dealt with honestly and care. However we need positive change quickly.

Sections of questionnaire

Q4 Is the 'vision' sensible and realistic?

Responses: 22

Yes: 15 (68%)

No: 7 (32%)

The following representations were made about the 'vision' statement:

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
1	Questionnaire/email	<p>'Bland and generic.'</p> <p>'Lacking in substance.'</p> <p>'Vision' statement is generic.</p> <p>'Vision' too weak on tourism – example: should promote 'Raven Way' walk to 'asset-rich walking pensioners' [Raven Walk is a 12-mile circular walk above the Sirhowy and Ebbw valleys].</p>	The vision sets out how the area will be at the end of the Masterplan period, when the projects have been implemented. It does not set out how the vision is to be achieved. That is the role of the Masterplan framework.	No change.
2	Questionnaire	<p>Too little emphasis on tourism beyond Cwmcarn Forest Drive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need more hotels, hostels, B&Bs, holiday homes, and so on. • More potential for activity-based tourism 	This is not the purpose of the 'vision'. The framework sets out the overarching aim of linking tourist, leisure and recreation activities into one marketable product.	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
		(for example, Raven Walk and mountain biking).		
3	Questionnaire	Does the area need more housing? Can it even accommodate more housing?	Many of the housing sites in the Masterplan appear in the Local Development Plan, which was adopted in 2010. The building of new houses/flats would be compatible with national policy (the borough is in a national growth area identified in Future Wales). Planning obligations (improvements to infrastructure, for example) would be sought in accordance with adopted policy and guidance.	No change.
4	Questionnaire	Too little emphasis on the Lower Sirhowy Valley.	The Lower Sirhowy Valley is repeatedly mentioned in the Masterplan. The main settlements, however, are in the Lower Ebbw Valley.	No change.
5	Questionnaire	Some projects correspond to allocations in the out-of-date LDP.	The LDP is still the adopted development plan, and its allocations remain in force.	No change.
6	Questionnaire	Masterplan should say how the natural and semi-natural environments will be protected.	The LDP, not the Masterplan, sets out policies on this topic.	No change.
7	Questionnaire	Need to prevent, or at least reduce the frequency and severity of, antisocial behaviour.	Enforcement issues are beyond the scope of the Masterplan.	No change.

Q6 Do you agree with the strategic objectives?

Responses: 22

Yes: 15 (68%)

No: 7 (32%)

The following representations were made about the strategic objectives:

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
8	Questionnaire	'Providing affordable housing whilst promoting a tourism culture that gives preferential treatment to a buy to let short term market is directly at odds with people trying to find realistic rental opportunities in the area. It also restricts affordable stock for first time buyers.'	As in many areas of planning and regeneration, a sensible balance must be struck. A successful tourism sector and a varied housing stock are not necessarily hostile to one another.	No change.
9	Questionnaire	Should pay more attention to Abercarn and Cwmcarn, both of which have received less investment than either Newbridge or Risca.	The Masterplan observes the adopted LDP's settlement hierarchy. Risca is a 'principal town', and Newbridge is a 'local centre'. Other settlements will have projects, too, but the Masterplan must give priority to the largest and/or most populous places.	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
10	Questionnaire	Not strong enough on tourism. Too much emphasis on CFD. Raven Walk and Sirhowy Valleys Country Park (SVCP), among others, should receive more attention.	Objective C covers tourism in general. Even objective D, which relates mainly to Cwmcarn Forest Drive and the Monmouthshire & Brecon Canal, refers to 'other attractions'. No need to mention other attractions by name in the strategic objectives.	No change.
11	Questionnaire	Lacking in substance.	The objectives relate directly to substantive issues, so it is unclear how there is a lack of substance.	No change.
12	Questionnaire	Masterplan doesn't pay enough attention to links to the Sirhowy Country Park and Mynyddislwyn from Cwmcarn Forest Drive - pertinent to walking and mountain biking. Active travel in the master plan area is disjointed and many connectivity links are unsafe.	The active-travel network is being reviewed, and the Masterplan mentions the importance of allowing people to move safely throughout area.	No change.
13	Questionnaire	CFD and mountain biking: Mountain biking is the primary attraction to Cwmcarn and the lower Sirhowy Valley for locals and visitors. However, the off-piste trails are the main attraction and not the traditional cross-country and downhill trails. This needs to be recognised and harnessed.	The Masterplan makes it clear that Cwmcarn Forest Drive is not a destination for cyclists only. It supports proposals that will	Paragraph 6.33 be redrafted to read as follows: <i>Future changes may include:</i>

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
			<p>broaden its appeal still further.</p> <p>The Cwmcarn Forest Masterplan (CFM), which sets out the detailed projects for the Forest Drive, Consequently, it is appropriate to include the relevant information from the CFM in this Masterplan. Paragraph 6.33 of this Masterplan should be amended to reflect this information.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Establishing the lake as the focal point of the site (major landscaping scheme, new picnic areas, seating, BBQ facilities, sculpture, access ramps, planting, decking, bridge, parking)</i> • <i>New parking at the pit wheel (34 spaces additional spaces further up the valley, with a new footpath providing access to the lake)</i> • <i>Three additional lodges to complete the installation on the lodge field</i> • <i>Twrch Trail Loop: additional five to seven kilometres of MTB single-track bike trail to allow riders to stay</i>

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
				<p><i>on the mountain longer</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The expansion of the site on to a 47-acre 'freehold enclave';</i> • <i>Additional tourist accommodation;</i> • <i>A forest coaster;</i> • <i>A treetop pathway and such 'adrenaline activities' as a swing, a bungee jump, a zip line and a helter skelter;</i> • <i>An improved visitor centre.</i>
14	Questionnaire	Ynsyddu Hotel needs official signposts on/from main road and cycle path.	This would be considered under the aim of making the attractions and accommodation a single product.	No change.
15	Questionnaire	Sirhowy Valley needs more leisure facilities for residents (outdoor gym equipment, skate park, mountain-bike skills area, BMX pump track).	No detailed proposals have been presented to the council, and they do	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
			not appear in current plans for the Sirhowy Valley Country Park, since the emphasis is on the area's industrial heritage.	

Q8 Do you agree with the development strategy?

Responses: 22

Yes: 15 (68%)

No: 7 (32%)

The following representations were made about the development strategy:

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
16	Questionnaire	No focus on villages of Abercarn and Cwmcarn.	See response to observation 9.	No change.
17	Questionnaire	Nothing about activities for young adults.	The Masterplan seeks to protect and enhance community facilities in general. No project is aimed at a specific group of people.	No change.
18	Questionnaire	Why is a Welsh-medium school needed? The feeder schools teach children mainly in English.	Council statement in consultation report on Ysgol Gymraeg Cwm Gwyddon: <i>Proposals have been prioritised based on a number of factors including building condition, pupil projection and local and national drivers, however, the delivery of the curriculum and the</i>	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
			<p><i>Educational agenda remains at the core. The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011, the School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013 and the Legislation (Wales) Act 2019, provide a series of standards and places a statutory duty on the Council to assess the demand for Welsh medium education in the area. One of the key standards is a requirement to develop a 5-year Welsh language strategy, with the aim of increasing the number of Welsh speakers and which will enable us to facilitate the use of the Welsh Language within the county borough. The Welsh in Education Strategic Plan (WESP) sets out Caerphilly's</i></p>	

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
			<p><i>commitment to the Promotion of Welsh language and the provision of quality, attractive educational facilities. Within the WESP we are striving to stimulate demand for Welsh medium education, which we know is more sustainable for families if education provision is expanded in line with childcare available. We identified a need to invest in Ysgol Gymraeg Cwm Gwyddon, meeting the increasing demand for education through the medium of Welsh and developing shared and co-located facilities. It is this aspiration that is driving this proposal.</i></p> <p>See link below for full report:</p>	

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
			Cwm-Gwyddon-Consultation-Report-2020.aspx caerphilly.gov.uk	
19	Questionnaire	Employment sites – need to take a long-term view on industries and how each site might serve the local area.	The Masterplan does not seek to impose certain types of industries on areas. The use classes allow flexibility within specified limits, and the LDP has policies on changes in the use of ‘employment’ sites.	No change.
20	Questionnaire	‘Meaningless council-speak’.	No examples of ‘council-speak’ have been identified.	No change.

Q10 Do you have any comments to make on specific proposals?

33 responses.

The following representations were made about specific proposals:

Observation number	Proposal	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
21	A1: Land next to Bridge Street, Newbridge	email	Consider project A1 (land next to Bridge Street) as place for a visitors' centre.	Paragraph 6.2 should be amended to reflect the observation.	Paragraph 6.2 be amended to read as follows: <i>This site is inside the defined settlement boundary. Depending on the risk of flooding, it might be suitable for a job-creating use, housing, a community use, a tourism use, a riverside playground and park, or even a mix of uses.</i>
22	B3: Brooklands, Brookland Road, Pontymister	Questionnaire	Consider Brooklands, Brookland Road, Pontymister, as a base for the town council.	Paragraph 6.9 should be amended to reflect the observation.	Paragraph 6.9 amended to read as follows:

Observation number	Proposal	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
					<p><i>This site is in the defined settlement and forms part of the council's social services and educational facilities. Redevelopment options might include housing (including sheltered housing), offices, a community facility or a small hotel.</i></p>
23	B4: Caetwmpym Park, Newbridge	Questionnaire	Against any proposal that would increase traffic near Caetwmpym Park, Newbridge.	Acknowledge opposition to heavier traffic near Caetwmpym Park. The council would consider ways of preventing congestion and parking problems before it organised or permitted events in the park. A balance between traffic management and economic activity must be struck.	No change.

Observation number	Proposal	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
24	B6: Town Centre Environmental and Accessibility Enhancements	Questionnaire	Make town centres safer for people walking and cycling. Risca and Newbridge compare badly with Abergavenny, for example	The Masterplan supports the creation of people-friendly town centres.	No change.
25	C3: Waunfawr Park, Crosskeys	Questionnaire	How much can be done with Waunfawr Park? Will it really become an attraction?	Waunfawr Park could be a venue for events that attract local people and visitors alike. The frequency and scale of events would, of course, need to be compatible with the park and its surroundings.	No change.
26	C4: Pioneer Hotel, Cwmfelinfach	Questionnaire	Support reuse/redevelopment/refurbishment of Pioneer Hotel	Support noted.	No change.
	C4: Pioneer Hotel, Cwmfelinfach	email	Pioneer Hotel should be kept as a hotel – Masterplan sounds too eager for it to be turned into flats.	Project C4 (Pioneer Hotel) mentions several possible uses of the building. The key issue is bringing the building back into beneficial use.	No change.
27	C5: Sirhowy Valley Country Park; C6: Ynys	Questionnaire	Need to make sure that additional visitors do not harm environment through erosion and litter.	Erosion and littering would be considered in the preparation of	No change.

Observation number	Proposal	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
	Hywel Countryside Centre; D1: Cwmcarn Forest Drive; and D2: Monmouthshire Brecon Canal			detailed plans for sites.	
28	C6: Ynys Hywel Activity and Nature Centre, SVCP	Questionnaire	Ynys Hywel Activity Centre – owners alleged to have closed an entrance/access point that local people have used for many years.	Officers will investigate the access issue near Ynys Hywel Activity Centre.	No change.
29	C6: Ynys Hywel Activity and Nature Centre, SVCP	Questionnaire	Ynys Hywel Activity and Nature Centre hasn't been open for over 2 years and currently don't know what their future plans are. This is a private owned non council run business that cannot be used in the Masterplan as there is no influence the council has.	Noted.	Delete project from Masterplan.
30	D1: Cwmcarn Forest Drive	Questionnaire	Would like to see some form of discount/leisure card for local people so that the area is still use able and open to local families.	This suggestion has been noted and has been passed on to the relevant officers for their consideration.	No change.
31	D1: Cwmcarn Forest Drive	Questionnaire	Suspicion that many who visit Cwmcarn Forest Drive come and	The framework seeks to link all attractions	No change.

Observation number	Proposal	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
			go in a single day. Should be more supporting/peripheral businesses (such as those that you'd find at and near a ski resort).	together and develop new ones that will improve the overall tourism offer. The Masterplan supports economic activity in many forms. New businesses that overlap with activities at CFD would be compatible with the Masterplan's vision and objectives. No detailed proposals have been submitted for inclusion in the Masterplan.	
32	D1: Cwmcarn Forest Drive	Questionnaire	Need to protect the historic environment – example: Twmbarlwm (scheduled monument) – any plans for CFD need to protect Twmbarlwm – discuss with Cadw and NRW?	Specific plans for Cwmcarn Forest Drive have been developed and implemented with the support of Cadw and Natural Resources Wales. Heritage assets would also be protected through the formal application process if planning	No change.

Observation number	Proposal	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
				permission is required.	
33	D1: Cwmcarn Forest Drive	Questionnaire	Need to reduce or stop off-road use of motorbikes and quad bikes – blight on CFD.	This is an enforcement issue. A Masterplan cannot prevent or reduce the off-road use of motorcycles and quad bikes.	No change.
34	D2: Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal	Questionnaire	Brecon and Monmouthshire Canal: support for plans, especially creation of link to Torfaen.	Support noted.	No change.
35	E2: Active Travel	Questionnaire	Support for active travel – cyclists, especially, should be able to avoid main/arterial roads.	Support noted.	No change.
36	F5: Newbridge Leisure Centre	email	Newbridge Leisure Centre: 'basically a school swimming pool' – public cannot swim during the day in term time?	At the time of writing, the pool timetable permitted members of the public to swim at varying times between 6.30 a.m. and 10 p.m., whether during term time or school holidays. In addition to the swimming pool, Newbridge Leisure Centre has a health	No change.

Observation number	Proposal	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
				<p>suite, a multi-purpose sports hall and a full-size artificial-turf pitch.</p> <p>Also, in November 2018, the Cabinet endorsed a 10-year Sport & Active Recreation Strategy (SARS) that identified Newbridge Leisure Centre as one of four strategically located leisure centres across the county borough.</p>	
37	n/a	Questionnaire	Need more emphasis on converting buildings into hotels, hostels, holiday homes, and so on.	A key element of maximising tourism is the provision of, and support for, accommodation. The LDP has policies on finding new uses for vacant buildings.	No change.
38	n/a	Questionnaire	Should say something about improving water quality of rivers (old mine works and badly connected sewerage).	These issues are beyond the scope of the Masterplan, which is a framework	No change.

Observation number	Proposal	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
				for the economic recovery and growth. The council and its partners will continue to look at these issues, however.	
39	n/a	Questionnaire	Need a strategy on roadside litter.	This issue is beyond the scope of the Masterplan, which is a framework for the economic recovery and growth. The council and its partners will continue to look at this issue, however.	No change.
40	n/a	Questionnaire	Improve appearance of Abercarn and promote its industrial heritage	These aims are compatible with the Masterplan, but no detailed projects are ready to be included in the document.	No change.
41	n/a	Questionnaire	Improve environments for wildlife and fish.	Biodiversity would be protected through the formal planning process. The Masterplan mentions the importance of the natural environment, but it is not a policy	No change.

Observation number	Proposal	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
				document. It cannot introduce new policies on ecology or stipulate that certain things should be done.	

Q14 Are there any additional proposals that should be included in the Masterplan?

13 responses.

The following representations were made about additional proposals:

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
42	Questionnaire	Improve roads.	<p>Planning Policy Wales (Edition 11, February 2021) says that:</p> <p><i>The Welsh Government is committed to reducing reliance on the private car and supporting a modal shift to walking, cycling and public transport. Delivering this objective will make an important contribution to decarbonisation, improving air quality, increasing physical activity, improving the health of the nation and realising the goals of the Well-being of Future Generations Act.</i></p> <p>The highway authority and/or Welsh</p>	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
			Government must identify and oversee improvements to public highways. The Masterplan merely sets out a strategy and identifies possible (re)development projects. Planning obligations would be sought through formal planning procedures.	
43	Questionnaire	Traffic-calming measures in Newbridge.	The Council does not currently have any plans for traffic-calming measures in Newbridge, but it has already used contrasting paving at various locations. If a need for traffic-calming measures should arise, the Council will consider the position at that time.	No change.
44	Questionnaire	Removal of litter.	See response to observation 39.	No change.
45	Questionnaire	Charging points for electric vehicles.	The Masterplan recognises the importance of creating charging points for electric vehicles.	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
46	Questionnaire	Stop, or at least reduce the frequency and severity of, antisocial behaviour.	This issue is beyond the scope of the Masterplan, which is a framework for the economic recovery and growth.	No change.
47	Questionnaire	'Development opportunities' for young people.	The Masterplan seeks to protect and enhance community facilities in general.	No change.
48	Questionnaire	Something for Wattsville – perhaps a woodland path?	The Masterplan does not prevent the creation of a woodland path, but there are not currently detailed proposals to develop one. Incidentally, Sirhowy Valley Country Park is in the same valley.	No change.
49	Questionnaire	Flood-prevention scheme for Waunfawr Park.	The Masterplan is not a policy document. It should not propose flood-prevention schemes for specific sites.	No change.
50	Questionnaire	Mountain-biking area/facility between Wyllie and Ynysddu.	One of the principles of the Masterplan Framework is the enhancement of the tourist/leisure offer throughout the area. A facility of this type would	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
			be compatible with the Masterplan.	
51	Questionnaire	Improve access to Twmbarlwm and the SAM at its summit.	<p>One of the principles of the Masterplan Framework is the enhancement of the tourist/leisure offer throughout the area.</p> <p>Specific plans for improved access will be considered through more detailed projects. For example, the Cwmcarn Forest Masterplan (written by Tomorrow's Tourism) discusses existing access points and walking routes. It also says that 'additional walking routes could be considered that link between specific view-points and/or localised areas of interest within the Park'. Improved access to Twmbarlwm</p>	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
			would certainly be consistent with the aims of the Lower Ebbw and Sirhowy Valleys Masterplan.	
52	email	Risca cuckoo – some people would like to see this moved to a more prominent location.	Townscape improvements will be considered through more detailed projects that are in accordance with the Masterplan.	No change.

Q15 Do you have additional comments?

11 responses.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
53	Questionnaire	Residents should be consulted on specific projects.	Residents will be consulted on projects as they are brought forwards.	No change.
54	Questionnaire	Tourism economy depends largely on dry weather. The area gets a lot of rain. What happens in wet weather?	Those who wish to run tourism businesses are best placed to decide how the weather might affect their livelihoods.	No change.
55	Questionnaire	Some elderly people are excluded from an increasingly technology-based society.	Though non-digital methods were used in its consultation period, the Masterplan cannot resist changes in society and technology.	No change.
56	Questionnaire	Improve 'historic knowledge' of the area (events, industries, sports heroes, teams).	Pontywaun Garden Suburbs are identified as an attraction. Other projects that might make people more aware of local history would accord with the Masterplan.	No change.
57	Questionnaire	Masterplan is repetitive.	Noted.	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
58	Questionnaire	Why does the area need more housing?	See response to observation 3.	No change.
59	Questionnaire	Sirhowy Valley Country Park should be identified and promoted as a tourist attraction. It has more to offer than the canal.	Sirhowy Valley Country Park is identified as a tourist attraction (see project C5).	No change.
60	Questionnaire	Reuse empty buildings.	Broadly speaking, reusing empty buildings would accord not only with the Masterplan's objectives but with national and local planning policy.	No change.
61	Questionnaire	Advertise links to valleys-wide cycle paths.	These paths are identified on the Council's Integrated Network Map (Active Travel). They are important links between the attractions and will be included in promotion and marketing of the tourism/leisure offer.	No change.
62	Questionnaire	Cwmcarn Forest Drive – narrow – some drivers do not leave safe gaps when overtaking cyclists (against the Highway Code) – should have a separate cycle lane.	Cwmcarn Forest Masterplan (Tomorrow's Tourism) has been approved by the Council and sets	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
			out detailed proposals (including potential changes to access arrangements) for the Forest Drive.	
63	Questionnaire	Mistakes in the Future Wales 'Ways of Working' section.	Section A1.3 reflects the position prior to the consultation on the draft Masterplan. This should now be updated to the current position. As a result Section A1.3 should be redrafted.	<p>Paragraph A1.3 be redrafted to read as follows:</p> <p><i>The Masterplan has been prepared in line with the five ways of working:</i></p> <p>Involvement – <i>The Masterplan proposals are subject to consultation with the local community and have been developed through engagement with such stakeholders as ward members and community councillors.</i></p> <p>Collaboration – <i>The development of the Masterplan has drawn on the expertise from key</i></p>

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
				<p><i>representatives across local authority departments, including Planning, Regeneration, Housing, Engineering and Countryside. The delivery of the projects identified within the Masterplan will involve collaboration between the public, private and third sectors, and the Council will work closely with these partners to deliver schemes in a collaborative manner.</i></p> <p>Long term – <i>The objectives identified, and the projects that will deliver these objectives, are part of a longer-term vision of enhancing the role of the</i></p>

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
				<p><i>Masterplan area. The Masterplan recognises the need for development to support economic growth but recognises that this development should be of a sustainable nature, both in terms of its purpose and its location.</i></p> <p>Integration – <i>The Masterplan projects will help to deliver several objectives of A Foundation for Success (as set out within Section 7 of this document), as well as proposals contained within the adopted Local Development Plan. They will also deliver against the Council’s own well-being objectives by identifying projects that will lead to job</i></p>

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
				<p><i>creation and training opportunities, promote more healthy and active lifestyles and reduce the carbon footprint through improved Active Travel routes and facilities locally.</i></p> <p>Prevention – <i>The Masterplan seeks to improve local quality of life so that existing problems do not get any worse and so that any future problems will be manageable.</i></p>
64	Questionnaire	None of the strategic objectives relates to the 'Future Generations' goal of a 'resilient Wales'. What can be done?	'Resilient Wales' goal – development proposals will have to accord with the adopted LDP and national planning policy. The Masterplan is not a policy document and cannot introduce policies on biodiversity.	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
65	email	'Masterplan' is a misleading title. The document is a 'summary study of potential project opportunities'.	This document is part of a series of 'Masterplans' which contribute to the delivery of A Foundation for Success - the Council's regeneration Strategy.	No change.
66	email	Not clear what makes the Masterplan area a distinct area in the borough.	The Masterplan areas were identified several years ago. The Masterplan explains that the area consists of two valleys. Also, the area's employment sites, tourist attractions and leisure facilities are similar in nature.	No change.
67	email	Too little analysis of the area – document should say more about economy, landscape, history, culture, Welsh language, and so on.	The Masterplan is not intended to be a record of the current character of the area. It is a regeneration document.	No change.
68	email	How does the Masterplan fit in with other policy documents?	This is explained in the introduction (see paragraphs 1.1 to 1.9).	No change.
69	email	Demography – how will Masterplan help to attract people to the area? How will it help to	The Masterplan will help to attract people to the area by stimulating	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
		solve such problems as 'low growth' and an ageing population?	economic activity. The issues of low growth/ an ageing population etc, will be addressed through the 2nd Replacement Local Development Plan which is currently in preparation.	
70	email	Masterplan mentions scarcity of developable land but doesn't go into much detail. How might the flooding problems be solved?	Flood alleviation works have been completed in Risca /Pontymister, but this does not completely alleviate the issues of flood risk throughout the Masterplan area. This is part of the reason there is little developable land in the area. All proposals will need to comply with national and local flood risk policy.	No change.
71	email	List of projects – not clear who will be responsible for these, when they will happen, which ones will be treated as priorities, and so on.	Many of the projects involve private land. The council cannot make people (re)develop the sites. A list of priorities would	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
			not change the situation.	
72	email	What needs to be done to unlock 'stalled' sites?	Welsh Government initiatives, such as the Development Bank of Wales, the Stalled Sites Fund, and the Land for Housing scheme, may form part of the funding mechanisms for projects in the area.	No change.
73	email	Putting projects in such categories as 'housing' and 'employment' may go against place-making principles.	In a formal planning assessment, development proposals are considered against place-making principles. It makes sense to put similar proposals in categories. The categories do not prevent developers from considering a mix of uses.	No change.
74	email	Disappointed that the initiatives listed in the Crumlin Arm Action Plan (Caerphilly County Borough Council 2015) have not been carried forward into this plan.	Project D2 covers improvements to the Crumlin Arm of the canal. Specific projects will be set out in more	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
			detailed documents, one example of which is the Crumlin Arm Action Plan. There is no need to restate detailed projects in this Masterplan.	
75	email	Other than those already funded and mostly implemented via The Canal Adventure Triangle there appear to be no new initiatives relating to the canal within this Masterplan.	Improvements to the canal will be considered as more detailed projects are brought forwards.	No change.
76	email	Previous idea: marina and associated hotel at former quarry at The Darran.	Because navigation on the canal is currently limited, a proposal for a marina is not feasible. In general terms, however, the Masterplan seeks an improved tourist economy, an important part of which is accommodation. If circumstances at the canal should change, the Masterplan will offer broad support for tourism-related development.	No change.

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
77	email	Suggestion: 'For example with the potential for synergy with the Cwmcarn Forest Drive the section of canal from its current terminus at Pontywaun to the blockage at Darren Road could be used for navigation. A trip boat and/or restaurant boat could operate along this section.'	See response to observation 76.	No change.
78	email	Suggestion: 'small mooring basin with an associated café and facilities such as boat electricity charging point and water and waste disposal facilities, which would allow a trip boat to operate'. – possible locations: near Cwmcarn Aqueduct or further south.	See response to observation 76.	No change.
79	email	Suggestion: turning head or 'winding hole' should be created in same location as above and at the end of Whysoms Wharf, [Darran] Road.	See response to observation 76.	No change.
80	email	Problem: lack of water during dry weather – council should 'investigate additional sources of water such as mountain streams, and/or the enlargement of the Cwmcarn Forest Drive Lake and its use as a feeder reservoir for the canal in times of drought'.	Noted.	No change.
81	email	Para. 2.7: No mention of: SVCP; 'heritage site'; cycle track that runs from Newport to Pembroke (going through Risca, Crosskeys and SVCP).	Whilst paragraph 2.7 references the Valley's Country Park, it could include reference to the national cycle route. The paragraph should	Paragraph 2.7 be amended to read as follows: <i>The area has a strong leisure and tourism offer, being</i>

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			be amended to reflect this.	<p><i>home to the nationally significant tourist attraction of Cwmcarn Forest Drive, the Crumlin arm of the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal, and the prestigious Newbridge Memorial Hall and Institute. The area also contains significant leisure opportunities including several public parks, Sirhowy Valley Country Park, two leisure centres, open commons, walking trails, and a cycle track (National Cycle Network Route 47) that runs from Newport to Pembroke (going through Risca, Crosskeys and Sirhowy Valley Country Park).</i></p>

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82	email	<p>Para. 2.9: Bus service in Lower Sirhowy is hourly, not half-hourly.</p> <p>How does the council propose to improve it? Lower Sirhowy, not just the Ebbw valley, needs an 'improved evening and night-time service'.</p>	<p>Noted. The area has an hourly bus service.</p> <p>The Masterplan would support not only improvements to bus services but the use, and improvement of, active-travel routes.</p>	<p>Paragraph 2.9 now reads:</p> <p><i>The Lower Sirhowy Valley lacks a railway line but has an hourly bus service. Overall, its public-transport links to other parts of the borough are weaker than those of the Ebbw Valley.</i></p>
83	email	Masterplan should say more about the area's heritage sites.	Para. 6.24 mentions SVCP's heritage assets. It is not necessary to discuss specific heritage assets in detail.	No change.
84	email	'Challenges' section should mention unemployment (higher than average).	Ward-level evidence from 2011 Census does not suggest that involuntary/unwanted unemployment is a significant problem in the Masterplan area.	No change.
85	email	Topography should be seen not as a challenge but as an opportunity for tourism (walking, cycling, climbing, water-based activities).	The opportunities created by topography are implicit in the document. Cwmcarn Forest Drive, for	No change.

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			instance, is popular because of its topography. At the same time, it is reasonable to point out that topography limits certain types of development in the Masterplan area.	
86	email	Opportunities: cycle routes 47 and 465; shape landscape with NRW ('tree harvesting' project); what evidence suggests that people will travel from International Convention Centre to Masterplan area?	<p>The Masterplan neither proposes nor manages long-distance cycle routes (national routes are the responsibility of Sustrans). Instead, it seeks to promote transport routes in the area to improve connectivity and accessibility.</p> <p>In addition, the Masterplan promotes the tourist offer in the county borough and seeks to attract visitors from a wider area.</p>	No change.
87	email	What will Masterplan do about ageing population and movement of young people to other areas?	The local development plan is the document	No change.

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			that must consider this issue.	
88	email	'Competition from larger retail and leisure centres – this is not a threat as this the way that society has been moving it means that town centre[s] are not shopping centres anymore and need to adapt.'	Officers maintain that this is a threat. The Masterplan draws attention to the threat and suggests proposals that may help town centres to adapt to changing circumstances.	No change.
89	email	No detail of new tourist attractions – what might they be?	The Masterplan provides a framework to realise new and enhanced tourist attractions as and when opportunities arise. It neither specifies nor predicts the nature of future attractions but provides the environment for them to come forward.	No change.
90	email	Too many references to '240,000 visitors' to CFD – also, who are they? Are they local people repeatedly visiting the place?	This is a major attraction and warrants significant mention throughout the Masterplan. Detailed tourist information has been sourced for the	No change.

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			improvement proposals, and the patronage is a combination of local and external people.	
91	email	Should mention 'valley regional parks work at Cwmcarn and Penallta and desire to link the 2 parks using Sirhowy Valley Country Park'.	Project E2 (Active Travel) makes it clear that active-travel routes should connect various parts of the Masterplan area, and project C5 (SVCP) mentions a route between Sirhowy Valley Country Park and Penallta. The Council's Active Travel Network Map identifies routes that provide links to the various parts of the Valleys Regional Park.	No change.
92	email	NRW wants to direct those visiting CFD to SVCP, too – why isn't this mentioned?	This is covered by the principle of linking the Masterplan area's attractions and marketing them as a package.	No change.
93	email	Section 4.2: Marketing shouldn't be a 'campaign' – it should be an ongoing exercise.	Officers will change the wording and emphasis.	Throughout the document, 'marketing campaign'

Observation number	Source of observation	Observation	Officer response	Recommendation
				has been replaced with 'marketing exercise'.
94	email	Section 5.9: The area doesn't already have a 'strong tourism base'.	The tourism base is relatively strong but can be enhanced.	No change.
95	email	Too much emphasis on CFD and 'downhill cycling' – other places can also help the local economy.	The Masterplan makes it clear that Cwmcarn Forest Drive is not a destination for cyclists only. It supports proposals that will broaden its appeal still further. The Masterplan seeks to promote economic activity throughout the Masterplan area.	No change.
96	email	'Vision' for Sirhowy Valley Country Park: 'from a document produced by the council in 2018, which has not been enacted upon'.	The Masterplan will help to bring about the council's 'vision' of Sirhowy Valley Country Park.	No change.
97	email	Lower Sirhowy: 'There are already conversations with Council, NRW, and Cadw about the short term and long-term options of Lower Sirhowy which have not been brought into the "Masterplan".'	No formal strategy has been prepared yet.	No change.

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98	email	Abercarn is not mentioned much in this "Masterplan" except to put housing on a historic school site. I suppose that means demolition?	<p>See response to observation 9.</p> <p>The Masterplan merely identifies Ysgol Gymraeg Cwm Gwyddon as a redevelopment opportunity. A planning application would be required for the redevelopment of the site and this would include detailed plans for the development, including identifying any demolition.</p>	No change.
99	email	You write, "due to demand in housing" but who would demand a house in Abercarn when there is nothing of substance there?	New housing is needed throughout the county borough. A significant new private sector housing site was developed near Abercarn in 2014 evidencing demand for housing in this area.	No change.
100	email	The only parks for children I know of in Abercarn are hidden out of sight. One, at the top of Llanfach, one, over at the distillery and one up against a mountain out of sight in West End.	One of the key principles of the Masterplan is to improve connectivity	No change.

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			and accessibility between assets in the Masterplan area, as well as seeking a comprehensive promotion of all assets to increase awareness and accessibility.	
101	email	When Caerphilly took over from Islwyn, funding was spent entirely over there for a long time. Then some funding was spent on Blackwood and Risca and Cwmcarn Scenic. In all this time, Abercarn has been overlooked.	The Masterplan does not prevent people from proposing development in Abercarn. Funding has been allocated for, projects outside Caerphilly.	No change.
102	email	Instead of spending £4million on Cwmcarn Scenic Drive, couldn't the Scenic Drive be extended into Abercarn for instance?	Proposals at Cwmcarn Forest Drive are in conjunction with Natural Resources Wales, Welsh Government and several Public Services Board partners. The benefits of development will probably be felt beyond Cwmcarn Forest Drive.	No change.

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103	email	We have extensive mountain range on the Rhsyg and I'm sure there must be a way to drive over that direction from Cwmcarn Scenic route.	See response to observation 102.	No change.
104	email	We could also have an entry point from Abercarn to drive toward Cwmcarn via scenic route. Nice surprise when they reach Cwmcarn.	See response to observation 102.	No change.
105	email	My other thought is why isn't anyone promoting these areas to the film and drama industry for use?	Welsh Government and all local authorities in the area would like to see this happen. At the time of writing, however, no specific proposals had been brought to the council.	No change.
106	email	And Ysgol Gwyddon could be a fantastic use of building for the film industry or maybe it could be used for people who wish to do evening classes in art, pottery, learning Welsh, cake decorating, St John's ambulance. These classes used to take place in Newbridge school many years ago and was cancelled but many people attended.	See response to observation 105.	No change.