3. Planning Strategy

Sustainable Development

3.1 The planning strategy applies the sustainable development principles contained in national planning policy guidance and which are summarised in Chapter 2. It seeks to integrate economic, social and environmental goals and accords with the Council's Local Agenda 21 action programme. Future land development land needs are satisfied in a controlled and incremental manner and new development is balanced against the interests of conservation and rehabilitation. Environmental and financial costs and dependence on long distance car journeys are minimised.

Countryside, Landscape and Biodiversity

3.2 In parallel with the need to provide for future built development, the strategy seeks to safeguard the County Borough's natural environment and particularly those landscapes, individual sites and habitats which have been identified as having specific visual or ecological importance. The strategy is therefore consistent with the aims of the Council's Biodiversity Action Plan (see Appendix III).

3.3 The County Borough contains extensive areas of high quality agricultural land. The strategy recognises the importance of maintaining the productive capacity of these areas and this is taken into account in the detailed land allocations and other proposals put forward in Part 2 of the Plan.

Settlement Growth

3.4 Large scale extensions of settlements which occurred in the past are no longer appropriate. The strategy therefore seeks to safeguard the amenity of settlements and secure economy and efficiency in the use of land resources through the regeneration of built-up areas together with limited outward growth. The strategy is applied within three policy sub-areas as follows:-

a) Wrexham. This is the principal town in the County Borough. It is the hub of the local transport network and is where most of the main retailing, employment, leisure and public services are concentrated. It is therefore the location most suited to significant additional development. Nevertheless, growth in every direction is not appropriate. The town adjoins areas of high quality agricultural land; landscapes of historic and amenity importance including Erddig, the Clywedog Valley and Cefn Park; sites of nature conservation interest; and extensive sand and gravel deposits to the north and east. There is also a need to prevent coalescence of the town with nearby villages. The strategy takes these constraints into account, particularly in relation to the allocation of land for new development.

b) The Urban Villages. These comprise the larger settlements to the north, west and south of Wrexham Town. While their range of services is narrower than Wrexham, they are capable of supporting some additional growth, particularly on derelict or underused land. However, in some urban villages (including Gwersyllt, Penycae and Rhostyllen), recent developments have been rapid and extensive. As a result, environmental thresholds have been reached and services and facilities are under pressure. In addition, many of the urban villages are separated from each other by narrow areas of open countryside. The strategy aims to safeguard the individual

character of the villages by maintaining these open areas and this is reflected in the allocation of land for development. It is therefore considered inadvisable to promote further major development on the edge of the urban villages beyond existing commitments.

c) The Rural Villages. The range of services available in these settlements is generally confined to those meeting purely local needs. The settlements themselves are surrounded by attractive countryside and some are not conveniently accessible by public transport. New development is therefore restricted to small sites.

3.5 With the exception of the smallest hamlets, development boundaries have been defined for all settlements. These boundaries establish a clear limit beyond which new development will not be allowed. Inside settlement boundaries, development will normally be acceptable provided it accords with the built environment policies in Part 2 of the Plan and complies with the Council's supplementary planning guidance and adopted standards listed in Appendix III.

3.6 The strategy reflects the potential which some settlements have for further development while recognising that, in others, development opportunities are severely constrained by the capacity infrastructure or services or by the need to safeguard the environment.

Housing

3.7 The housing element of the strategy reflects the overall approach towards settlement growth set out above. In essence, the aim is to allocate most new housing development to a range of sites within and adjacent to existing built up areas; to make optimum use of previously developed or vacant land; to make use of spare capacity in infrastructure and services; and to focus on locations with reasonable public transport, walking and cycling links.

Part 1: Strategic Policies

THE BROAD LOCATION OF DEVELOPMENT

Policy PS1 New development for housing, employment, and community services will be directed to within defined settlement limits/employment areas.

Policy PS2 Development must not materially detrimentally affect countryside, landscape/townscape character, open space, or the quality of the natural environment.

Policy PS3 Development should use previously developed brownfield land comprising vacant, derelict or underused land in preference to the use of greenfield land, wherever possible, particularly so where greenfield land is of ecological, landscape or amenity value, or comprises agricultural land of grades 1, 2 or 3a quality.

Policy PS4 Development should maintain the existing settlement pattern and character and be integrated with the existing transport network to help reduce the overall need to travel and encourage the use of alternatives to the car.