

Local Development Plan

Vision & Strategy Options
Workshop - Members
19th October 2007

Draft Report of Consultation
March 2008

Executive Summary

This consultation report outlines the views expressed at a Member workshop, which was held to discuss the Vision and the Strategic Options for the Blaenau Gwent Local Development Plan. The Workshop was held on Friday 19th October 2007, at the VITCC, Tredegar and involved 11 Members. (Appendix B).

The purpose of the workshop was to:

- Share information on the Local Development Plan Vision and Strategy Options;
- Provide Members with the opportunity to share views on the Vision;
- Provide Members with the opportunity to influence the Council's preferred strategy and;
- Address any queries and questions

Vision Workshops

The first workshop task involved building consensus on where Blaenau Gwent wanted to be in 2021. This involved Members discussing the following draft Local Development Plan Vision for Blaenau Gwent.

Draft Vision

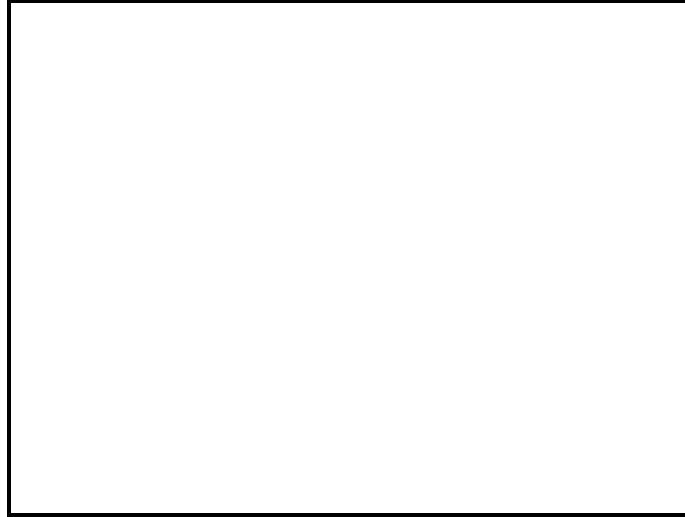
By 2021, Blaenau Gwent will become a network of sustainable vibrant valley communities; through: providing a range of good quality, affordable homes; diversifying and creating a dynamic and competitive economy; establishing safe and thriving town centres; generating a vibrant visitor destination. Its

1.0 Introduction

1.1 In November 2006, Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council made the decision to cease work on the Unitary Development Plan and start work on the Local Development Plan. The timetable for the various statutory stages of production of the Local Development Plan is set out in the Delivery Agreement (May 2007).

1.2 The first step in the process of preparing the Local Development Plan was to draft and formally consult on the Issues Paper. The Issues Paper was prepared as a d I6Nabl6NrbANeb?NoNrbAN I6Nabl6NrbANe,5NrbAN bIAE0 [NinNabNrbAN

the purpose of the workshop. Appendix C displays the slides used in the presentation. It should be noted that there were also opportunities for workshop attendees to clarify aspects of the LDP process and the workshop itself. The full agenda of the workshop is provided in Appendix D.



- 2.4 The morning was arranged around three workshop sessions. The workshop was arranged to form two groups (the yellow group and red group). See Appendix E for a list of the workshop groups. Each group had a facilitator who also acted as a scribe to ensure that discussions were focussed and comments accurately recorded. The first of which was to build consensus on the draft Local Development Plan Vision for Blaenau Gwent.
- 2.5 The second workshop was arranged around the same groups as the first workshop and discussions focussed on the advantages and disadvantages of each of the strategy options. Prior to the commencement of the discussion of each strategy option, Lynda Healy provided a summary of the strategy option. This exercise was repeated for each strategy option.
- 2.6 In the third workshop, attendees were also asked to provide an alternative option to those

Draft Vision

By 2021, Blaenau Gwent will become a network of sustainable, vibrant valley communities; through: providing a range of good quality, affordable homes; diversifying and creating a dynamic and competitive economy; establishing safe and thriving town centres; generating a vibrant visitor destination. Its unique environment, cultural and historic identity will be protected, thereby creating a place where people want to live, work and visit.

- 3.2 Attendees were asked to judge if the draft Vision meets the requirements for a Vision. Guidance was provided on what a vision should be. The first requirement was that the Vision should be clear, realistic, and based on the objectives, and priorities of the Community Strategy.
- 3.3 The second set of requirements was based on advice received from the Welsh Assembly Government training workshop. It was advised that a Vision should be:
- a) A succinct statement of intent;
 - b) A point of reference for all parts of the plan and all participants;
 - c) Distinct to the area.
- 3.4 Both groups agreed that the draft vision was clear, realistic and based on the objectives and priorities of the community strategy (requirements as set out in LDP Wales for a Vision). It was also agreed that the Vision was a succinct statement of intent, a point of reference for all parts of the plan and participants and distinctive to the area.
- 3.5 The facilitator then outlined the second task which was to allow the attendees to suggest minor improvements to the draft Vision.
- 3.6 The red group identified that there were two issues missing from the vision, one relating to accessibility and sustainable transport, and the second relating to recreation and leisure.
- 3.7 They devised the following vision to incorporate these changes:

By 2021, Blaenau Gwent will become a network of sustainable, vibrant valley communities with a sustainable integrated transport system/links; through: providing a range of good quality, affordable homes; diversifying and creating a dynamic and competitive economy; establishing safe and thriving town centres; generating a vibrant visitor destination and developing recreation and leisure opportunities. Its unique environment, cultural and historic identity will be protected, thereby creating a place where people want to live, work and visit.

- 3.8 The yellow group also identified that the vision had not taken into account accessibility and transport. They also made amendments to the wording. The suggested changes are incorporated into the vision below:

By 2021, Blaenau Gwent will become a network of sustainable, accessible vibrant valley communities; through: providing a range of good quality,

affordable homes; diversifying and creating a dynamic and competitive economy; establishing safe and thriving town centres; generating a vibrant visitor destination, taking into account its unique environment, cultural and historic identity ~~will be protected~~, thereby creating a place where people want to live, work and visit.

4.0 The Strategy Options

4.1 The workshop 2 was to provide Members with the opportunity to influence the Council's Preferred Strategy. The Members were asked by the facilitators to identify any advantages or disadvantages of each of the three options (Regeneration, Growth and Regeneration and Balanced and Interconnected Communities) as an aid to arrive at an overall conclusion as to which of the options would be preferred.

4.2 Option 1: Regeneration (continuation of UDP Strategy)

This option maintains the current strategy contained within the Blaenau Gwent Adopted Unitary Development Plan (1996-2011), with the following features:

- Population decline from the 2006 figure.
- Continuation of the existing employment allocations and strategy, with no new housing allocations (urban containment) and a house build rate of 117 per annum.
- The main towns of Tredegar, Ebbw Vale, Brynmawr, Blaina and Abertillery would be the focus of shopping, commercial, cultural, social and leisure activity, with the main expansion of services in Ebbw Vale.

Advantages

The only advantage identified by the Members was that this option would result in less pressure on services than the alternative options whereby growth would be encouraged.

Disadvantages

A key issue raised was that there would be further decline in the area if this option were followed. For instance, there would be a lack of inward investment and town centres and communities would decline. There was also concern over the lack of job opportunities if this option was followed.

Some Members highlighted that there would be less affordable housing as there would be limited housing development, especially in comparison to the growth options. Others indicated that this option would produce an ageing housing stock and they felt that this would discourage people from moving in to the area, especially with no new housing allocations.

It was also pointed out that the population loss would continue and correspondingly less money would be received from the Welsh Assembly Government.

Also, funding would have to be spread between the five town centres and this would not necessarily be in line with market forces.

Conclusion

In general there was very little support for this option, with a limited number of advantages being highlighted. Overall it was felt that it would not be appropriate to plan for the next 15 years on the basis of the UDP, as it would not effectively address the future issues likely to be faced by communities in the area

4.3 Option 2: Growth and Regeneration

This is a growth strategy, which has the following aspects:

- stems out-migration leading to an increase in population to 71,000
- a house build rate of 200 per annum
- emphasis of growth would be in the Heads of Valleys and a regeneration focus in the south of the borough
- a new hierarchy of towns with Ebbw Vale becoming the regional centre, with Tredegar, Brynmawr and Abertillery becoming district shopping centres. Blaina would become a local shopping centre.
- Specific roles would be provided for town centres, which are currently in decline, in an attempt to encourage their Vy

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The anticipated population increase as a result of this option was welcomed in that it would result in more customers and more trade and schools would benefit.

Other advantages identified by the Members were that the roles of the areas would be complementary to each other and that there would be good quality of regeneration throughout the whole borough.



Disadvantages

There were concerns relating to the implications that this option would have for environmental areas as it encouraged further development, which could put pressure on developing Greenfield sites.

Some were concerned with the difficulty or challenge in adapting the retail centres for specific roles.

Conclusion

Both discussion groups recognised that this option had a considerable number of benefits, which outweighed any disadvantages associated with it.

4.4 Option 3: Balanced and Interconnected Communities

This option is trend based characterised by the following:

- stems out-migration and stabilises population at 2006 levels.
- the emphasis is to spread growth according to the share of population, which would mean de-allocating some employment sites in the north and relocating them borough wide.
- the house build rate would be 157 per annum.
- no retail hierarchy but the number of town centres in the borough would be reduced from five to four (Abertillery, Brynmawr, Ebbw Vale and Tredegar) by excluding Blaina.
- new roles for the town centres, for example, one town may specialise in tourism.

Advantages

Some Members felt that all communities would benefit from this option as it promotes an equal spread of development throughout the whole of the borough, especially in comparison to Option 2, where growth would be more concentrated.

It was also highlighted that this option would stop the decline in population and this would bring associated benefits to the area.

Disadvantages

Attendees pointed out that under this option there would be limited growth, especially in comparison to option 2.

Some felt that there would be unrealistic employment goals in that companies would continue to be attracted to locations with existing transport infrastructures such as in the north, around the Heads of the Valleys, instead of locating elsewhere in the borough.

Participants also highlighted that there might be a danger of overdevelopment in the south as there is currently a lack of available land for development in that area and referred to the challenge in finding a complementary role for the town centres.

Conclusion

Although the Members considered this a better alternative to the existing UDP strategy, they still favoured option 2.

5.0 The Alternative Option

- 5.1 The aim of workshop 3 was to give Members the opportunity to propose an alternative option to the 3 options already identified.
- 5.2 Participants considered Option 2 as being acceptable and did not suggest an alternative option to those presented for assessment.
- 5.3 A general issue raised during the workshop was the threat of Blaenau Gwent becoming a 'commuter borough' as it was considered that the proposed Ebbw Valley railway would result in a number of people living in the area but travelling outside to places like Newport and Cardiff for employment and shopping purposes. This issue has been recorded as part of this workshop although in reality the rail link will be developed regardless of any of the

preferred strategy for the LDP, which will be formally consulted on in the autumn 2008.

Appendix A – Invitations sent to Members

Name
Councillor S Bard
Councillor K E Barnes
Councillor G Clark
Councillor B K Clements
Councillor M B Dally
Councillor N J Daniels
Councillor D Davies
Councillor W H Davies
Councillor D L Elias
Councillor D Hancock
Councillor K Hayden
Councillor D Hillman
Councillor M Holland
Councillor J J Hopkins
Councillor P Hopkins
Councillor G J Hughes
Councillor D Hughes
Councillor M J Lewis
Councillor Y Lewis
Councillor J E Mason
Councillor H McCarthy
Councillor J C McIlwee
Councillor C Meredith
Councillor E G L Moore

Appendix B - Workshop Attendees

Name
Councillor K E Barnes
Councillor D L Elias
Councillor K Hayden
Councillor P Hopkins
Councillor D Hughes

Environment

**Sustainability Appraisal /
Strategic Environmental
Assessment**



SA/SEA



Environment

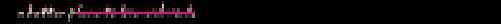

Sustainability Appraisal

Aims to promote sustainable development through the integration of social, environmental and economic considerations into the preparation of the Local Development Plan

Mandatory requirement from WAG and EU Legislation



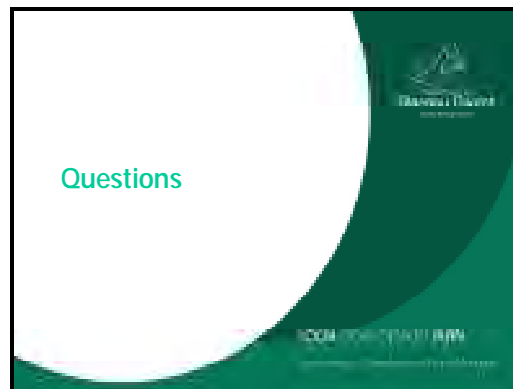
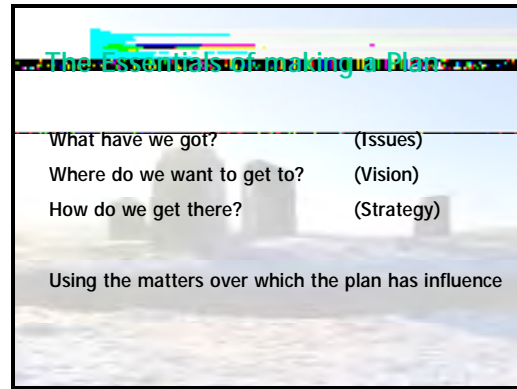
SA/SEA



Environment

SA/SEA





Main Issues

The implications of the decline in the manufacturing sector and the shift in favour of the services sector and technological industries

Find a role function for town centres

Create a balanced population stemming out-migration

Provide a range of housing opportunities to meet aspirations including the need for affordable housing



Other Issues] TRTo



Option 2: Growth and Regeneration

Settlement	Share of population	Share of housing	Approx No. of houses
Upper Sirhowy Valley (Tredegar)	25%	27%	700
Ebbw Fawr (Ebbw Vale)	33%	45%	1200



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Appendix D – Workshop Agenda

9.45 – 10.00	Registration with Tea and Coffee
10.00 – 10.05	Welcome and Introduction Councillor Dennis Owens – Executive Member for Regeneration
10.05 – 10.15	Presentation – LDP Update Lynda Healy – Development Plans Manager
10.15 – 10.25	Presentation - LDP Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment Hayley Spender – Planning Policy Officer
10.25 – 10.35	Presentation – LDP Process Lynda Healy – Development Plans Manager
10.35 – 10.45	Questions and Answers
10.45 – 10.50	Presentation - Introduction to Workshop 1- Vision Lynda Healy– Development Plans Manager
10.50 – 11.05	Workshop 1 – Vision
11.05 – 11.20	Break – Tea and Coffee
11.20 – 11.35	Presentation – Introduction to Workshop 2 – LDP Strategy Options Lynda Healy– Development Plans Manager
11.35 – 12.35	Workshop 2 – LDP Strategy Options (including short presentations to introduce each option) Members to discuss the following options (20 minutes per option) Option 1:

Appendix E - Workshop Groups

Red Group

Name
Councillor D Wilkshire
Councillor K Barnes
Councillor K Hayden
Councillor Dennis Owens
Councillor B Sutton
Hayley Spender (Facilitator)

Yellow Group

