

ES10.1



Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

Local Development Plan

**Hearing Session 10: Retail Development Including
Principal and District Town Centres**

Tuesday 3 July 2012

Examination 2012

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council Submission

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SESSION 10 RETAIL DEVELOPMENT INCLUDING PRINCIPAL AND DISTRICT TOWN CENTRES

Introduction

This Statement has been prepared by Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council in order to help facilitate appropriate discussion at the Retail Development including Principal and District Town Centres Hearing Session. The Paper provides a response to the questions set by the Planning Inspector (Mr Vincent Maher).

Where the Council does not intend to provide any additional written evidence the Inspector's attention is directed to the relevant part of the Evidence Base, which in the view of the Council addresses the matters raised. The paper will not repeat evidence previously submitted for consideration.

The Council's detailed responses to the representations received to Retail Development including Principal and District Town Centres are contained in the Report of Representations (**SD07b**).

Council Response to Inspector's Questions (questions in bold)

Retail hierarchy including principal and district town centres

1. Is there a sound framework for the development of the borough's current centres? What is the logic for the hierarchy of centres set out in the plan? What is the effect of linking Brynmawr district town centre to the new retail provision at Lakeside Retail Park?

Is there a sound framework for the development of the borough's current centres?

Yes. The Plan is considered to provide a sound framework for the development of the borough's current centres. The evidence for the Council's approach to the framework for the development of the retail centres is set out in:

- **SD48:** Updated Retailing Background Paper

Pre-deposit participation (**SD16 to SD23**) undertaken on the plan provided a clear indication of those land use issues that key stakeholders consider to be of primary importance in Blaenau Gwent. One of the most significant issues identified by key stakeholders for Blaenau Gwent was to find a role and function for the town centres. In addition to this, the Sustainability Appraisal / Strategic Environmental Assessment Scoping Exercise (**SD24**) identified that a key issue for Blaenau Gwent was the high vacancy rates in the town centres.

Strategic Policies 1, 2 and 3 identifies a retail hierarchy and seeks to identify complementary roles for the town centres.

As detailed in **SD48**, the Council has undertaken a number of studies and consulted with traders, community first and local members to understand the town centres and the approach needed to enhance the vitality and viability of the centres. Policies DM6 and DM7 seek to address the issues in the town centres such as the high number of takeaways and public houses operating in the town centre and the need to identify acceptable changes of use.

In accordance with Planning Policy Wales (PPW) (**W41**, page 145, paragraph 10.2.9), the Plan identifies new sites for retail development under policy R1 having undertaken an assessment of the demand for, and the supply of retailing provision in the County Borough.

Although based on sound evidence, the Council acknowledge that the policy framework for the centres needs to be monitored and reviewed to ensure their effectiveness. Indicators are identified through the Monitoring Framework identified in Appendix 2 of the Statement of Focussed Changes (**SD10a**).

What is the logic for the hierarchy of centres set out in the plan?

The Council's evidence for the retail hierarchy is set out in:

- **SD48**: Updated Retail Background Paper

To summarise, the Blaenau Gwent Unitary Development Plan (UDP) (**SD127a**) identified five Central Shopping Areas in Blaenau Gwent namely; Abertillery, Blaina, Brynmawr, Ebbw Vale and Tredegar. The retailing aim of the Unitary Development Plan (**SD127a**, page 51) was to create a framework to protect and enhance the central shopping areas to be the focus of shopping, cultural, commercial, social and leisure activity. No retail hierarchy was identified.

In accordance with PPW (**W41**, page 143, paragraph 10.2.1), the plan establishes a retail hierarchy which seeks to define each particular type of retailing area and considers future roles for the town centres.

PPW (**W41**, page 144, paragraph 10.2.4) provides national planning policy guidance on retail and uses suitable for town centres in the context of town, district, local and village centres. These categories have been taken into account when preparing a retail hierarchy for Blaenau Gwent. National planning guidance in Wales does not specifically offer advice on how to differentiate one category from another. Guidance has therefore been adapted from Planning Policy Statement 6 (ODPM, 2005) and used in conjunction with the centre categories outlined in PPW.

Data from the annual town centre health checks has also been used to assist with the defining of the retail hierarchy, particularly with regard to the number of units and the percentage of vacant units within the central shopping area boundaries.

Table 11 of **SD48** (pages 33-34) explains the rationale behind the formulation of the retail hierarchy.

To acknowledge the role of Ebbw Vale in the Wales Spatial Plan (**W34**, page 99) as a key settlement that has a critical role to play in the success of the Capital Region, a higher level category named Principal Town Centre has been created. Ebbw Vale is an important centre in the county borough providing a range of facilities with the physical capacity to grow in its retail and service provision. This is supported in **SD78** and the Ebbw Vale Occupier Report which is attached as Appendix 1.

Tredegar, Brynmawr and Abertillery have been categorised as district town centres; and Blaina as a local town centre. The data for the Principal and District town centres reflect the larger town centres, with the number of ground floor units within the town centre boundary being 139 or more. Blaina town centre is half the size with only 61 units within the town centre boundary (**SD48**, Tables 10A, 10B, 10C, pages 30 -31).

The town centres categorised as district town centres represent that there is a greater range of retail and non retail uses, consequently they are more commercial in nature and draw comparatively larger numbers of shoppers than local town centres. This is reflected in the pedestrian flow counts (**SD48**, pages 31-32) and the results of the town centre surveys (**SD48**, pages 30-31, Tables 10A, 10B and 10C). Blaina town centre has been categorised as a local town centre as it is smaller in size, variety of uses and is of residential character.

The hierarchy also includes neighbourhood centres as a category level. Table 11 (pages 32-33) of **SD48** identifies the centres categorised as neighbourhood centres. The Plan recognises that local shops play a vital role in sustaining smaller neighbourhood centres and reducing the need for residents to travel to meet everyday needs.

What is the effect of linking Brynmawr district town centre to the new retail provision at Lakeside Retail Park?

The effect of linking Brynmawr district town centre to the new retail provision at Lakeside Retail Park is positive in that it will improve the viability of the town centre. The redevelopment of the NMC Factory and Bus Depot (MU3) is considered fundamental to the regeneration of the Brynmawr District Town Centre.

In 2001, the Regeneration Division commissioned planning consultants Macgregor Smith and DTZ to produce an Urban Design Strategy and Masterplan for Brynmawr town centre (**SD87**) based on concern that the town centre was in decline. Several subsequent updates have been undertaken, one in 2004, another in 2006 and the latest version in 2008. These updates were undertaken to reflect the current situation and recent changes in terms

of the latest economic position of the town, improvements in the town centre and the uptake of Town Improvement Grants.

The 2008 version of the Urban Design Strategy and Masterplan for Brynmawr Town Centre reflects on the construction of the Lakeside Retail Park development and its impact on the town centre. The 2008 Strategy recognises that *“whilst the new retail units help to improve the comparison and convenience goods offer... they also currently create a threat to the vitality and viability of the town centre.”*

The 2006 and 2008 updates of the Brynmawr Urban Design Strategy and Masterplan emphasises the increased importance of improving linkages between the town centre and the Asda store and adjacent units. The 2008 version states that there is *“clear scope for the two resources to complement each other”*. However, this is not working effectively at the current time and there is clearly a need for the Lakeside development to complement and enhance the attractiveness and draw of the town centre. The key to ensuring this happens is improving linkages between the town centre and existing Lakeside Retail Park.

The Brynmawr Town Centre Visioning Report for Link Sites (**SD88**), prepared by McGregor Smith and DTZ has identified that the redevelopment of the NMC Factory and Bus Depot is fundamental to the successful regeneration of Brynmawr Town Centre and that *“the redevelopment of the site will help to ensure that the town centre benefits from the presence of the Asda superstore and Lakeside Retail Park development.”* Allocation MU3 is located mid way between Lakeside Retail Park and Brynmawr Town Centre. The development of this site for residential and a commercial / leisure/ community facility opportunity would act as an active link between Brynmawr District Town Centre and Lakeside Retail Park.

2. What evidence underpins the location and quantum of new retail development sought within the lifetime of the plan identified in Policy R1? What impact will further retail development in Ebbw Vale - on top of existing commitments - have on the vitality and viability of the county’s other centres?

What evidence underpins the location and quantum of new retail development sought within the lifetime of the plan identified in Policy R1?

The Council's evidence base for the location and quantum of new retail development identified in policy R1 is set out in:

- **SD48:** Updated Retailing Background Paper
- **SD59a:** Ebbw Vale Sustainable Regeneration Framework
- **SD59b:** Ebbw Vale Sustainable Regeneration Framework Annex Documents A - H

As an integral part of the Heads of the Valleys Programme, CACI were commissioned to undertake a Town Centre Health Check (**SD78** to **SD83**) and Shopper Attitude Surveys (**SD90** to **SD94**). Using this data and other retail impact assessments produced for recent retail proposals the amount of additional convenience and comparison floorspace was identified through making an assessment of the demand for, and the supply of retailing provision in the County Borough (**SD48**, pages 40-49).

The assessment identifies that an additional 1,085 sq m of convenience and 2,960 sq m of comparison floorspace is required by 2021. In accordance with PPW (**W41**) the Council adopts a sequential approach to identifying the location of new retail development in existing retail centres.

The Ebbw Vale Sustainable Framework (**SD59a**) identifies that Ebbw Vale has the physical capacity for further growth in its retail and service provision and identifies two action areas at the Southern Gateway (AA1.1) and Market Square, Ebbw Vale (AA1.2).

The Market Street retail allocation (R1.4) is a flat paved development platform located in a prime location of Ebbw Vale town centre. The allocation is based on developer interest in the site.

To address the high vacancy rates in the town centres (**SD48**, pages 30-31, Tables 10A, 10B and 10C) it is proposed that the remaining location of new retail development will be met through vacant properties in the town centres.

What impact will further retail development in Ebbw Vale - on top of existing commitments - have on the vitality and viability of the county's other centres?

The Local Development Plan Strategy is based on regenerating the area through a hub and spoke approach i.e. building a network of district hubs around the principal hub of Ebbw Vale. The creation of an integrated network of modern and revitalised hubs provides a mechanism to co-ordinate investment and ensures the benefits of growth and regeneration are shared widely to transform the whole of Blaenau Gwent.

As acknowledged above, the allocations in policy R1 are based on the evidence that Ebbw Vale has the physical capacity to grow in its retail and service provision (**SD59a**) and acknowledges Ebbw Vale's identification as a key settlement in the Capital Region (**W34**). It should not be forgotten that the remaining retail floorspace requirements will be met through the redevelopment of vacant properties across all of the town centres which will improve their vitality and viability.

Notwithstanding this, the revitalisation of all of Blaenau Gwent's town centres is an important priority for the Council. There are town centre action plans (**SD84** to **SD89**) in place for the principal and district town centres which identify regeneration schemes. A Regeneration Action Plan covers Blaina Local Town Centre. A copy of this is attached as Appendix 2.

In 2010-11, Blaenau Gwent Council secured £12.2 million to revitalise Ebbw Vale town centre and create an attractive hub for visitors and local people. £13 million for the regeneration of Abertillery town centre has also been secured. The spending programme for both towns will be implemented by 2015.

Blaenau Gwent in association with the Welsh Government Heads of the Valleys Programme has carried out a number of regeneration projects in the Brynmawr area. These schemes included: Market Hall Cinema, Commercial Improvement Grants, Hafod Arch Improvement and Brynmawr RFC. The Council are also seeking funding to implement a number of schemes for the Brynmawr area in the near future, these include: Brynmawr Bus Station, Commercial Improvement Grants and the development of the former Welsh School site.

Over the past decade, £15 million of regeneration has been spent in Tredegar town centre.

A Strategy and Action Plan is also being prepared for the Heads of the Valleys Road Corridor which will form the basis of a bid for the next round of European Funding expected in 2014 – 2021. The bid will include town centre improvements for Tredegar and Brynmawr.

The Blaina Action Plan is intended to direct investment into the ward of Blaina over the next ten years and specifically identifies a range of projects to improve the town centre.

3. Should the information on need in paragraph 8.20 of the Plan be incorporated into specific SP or DM policies to enable a direct comparison between the needs identified and the provision sought?

Yes. The Council agree that the retail need identified in paragraph 8.20 should be incorporated into Policy SP3. This will enable a direct comparison to be made between the need identified and provision sought.

4. What is the logic for the boundaries of the primary retail areas on the proposals map for the county's principal and district town centres? Are such extensive boundaries appropriately supported in the Council's evidence base?

What is the logic for the boundaries of the primary retail areas on the proposals map for the county's principal and district town centres?

The purpose of a Primary Retail Area in the Local Development Plan is to protect the retail core of the town centres. The clustering of A1 uses is

considered beneficial for the vitality, viability and attractiveness of the town centres.

On an annual basis, the Council undertake town centre health checks which records the number and percentage of uses operating in the town centre according to the Use Class Order 1987. The health checks also monitor any changes within the use classes i.e. losses and gains.

Attached as Appendix 3 are a series of plans which show the results of the town centre health check for each town. These plans were used as a basis to drawing the primary retail areas as they help to visually demonstrate the clustering of A1 uses for each town centre.

Full consultation was undertaken with the Town Centre Managers to ensure that the boundary had been drawn appropriately and effectively in order to establish the retail core of the town.

Are such extensive boundaries appropriately supported in the Council's evidence base?

The Council acknowledge that the primary retail areas is a new development management initiative for the principal and district town centres and propose to monitor and review the effectiveness of the policy through the Monitoring Framework identified in Appendix 2 of the Statement of Focussed Changes (SD10a).

<p>5. Who will implement the measures identified in section 2 of Policy SP3? Who will pay for these initiatives to be undertaken?</p>
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Who will implement the measures identified in section 2 of Policy SP3?

The measures identified through section 2 of Policy SP3 will be implemented through the town centre action plans, which identify regeneration schemes. The Inspector's attention is directed to the following:

- **SD84:** Ebbw Vale Town Centre Urban Design Framework
- **SD85a:** Final Draft of Town Links Study, Ebbw Vale
- **SD85b:** Town Links Study, Ebbw Vale Appendices
- **SD86:** Tredegar Townscape Initiative - Conservation Area Appraisal and Design Guide
- **SD87:** The Brynmawr Urban Design Strategy and Masterplan
- **SD88:** Brynmawr Town Centre Visioning Report for Link Sites
- **SD89:** Abertillery Regeneration Strategy

Who will pay for these initiatives to be undertaken?

In 2010-11, Blaenau Gwent Council secured £12.2 million to revitalise Ebbw Vale town centre and create an attractive hub for visitors and local people.

£13 million for the regeneration of Abertillery town centre has also been secured. The spending programme for both towns will be implemented by 2015.

The Council are also seeking funding to implement a number of schemes for the Brynmawr area in the near future, these include: Brynmawr Bus Station (**ES15.2**), Commercial Improvement Grants and the development of the former Welsh School site.

A Strategy and Action Plan is being prepared for the Heads of the Valleys Road Corridor which will form the basis of a bid for the next round of European Funding expected in 2014 -2021.

6. Does Policy DM6 provide an appropriately clear set of controls to manage the county's principal and district town centres? What is the land use planning case for restricting the percentages of hot food take aways and public houses in these centres? How is the term "close proximity" to be interpreted?

Does Policy DM6 provide an appropriately clear set of controls to manage the county's principal and district town centres?

The Council's evidence base for the approach taken in policy DM6 is set out in:

- **SD48:** Updated Retailing Background Paper

Yes. The Council consider that Policy DM6 provides an appropriate set of controls to manage the county's principal and district town centres. The controls set out in Policy DM6 are relative to the issues and challenges facing the centres.

Criterion (a) – Only A1 uses will be permitted within the Primary Retail Area

A key challenge and issue identified through pre-deposit consultation was that shopping not only contributes to the vitality, attractiveness and viability of the centres but also provides benefits to the local economy and can complement the leisure and tourism objectives of the plan. It is therefore considered important to protect the retail core of the main town centres in accordance with PPW (**W41**, paragraph 10.2.7, pages 144-145) and oppose developments which harm or undermine the function. The Inspector's attention is directed to paragraphs 7.15 – 7.18 (pages 35-36) of **SD48** Updated Retailing Background Paper.

The Council acknowledge that this is a new development management initiative for the principal and district town centres and propose to monitor and review the effectiveness of this criterion through the Monitoring Framework identified in Appendix 2 of the Statement of Focussed Changes (**SD10a**).

Criterion (b) – Change of use to Hot Food Takeaways and Public Houses

A key issue identified for all town centres across Blaenau Gwent is the number of hot takeaways and public houses operating in the town centres and their impact on the vitality of the shopping areas and residential amenity (**SD48**, page 16, Tables 7 and 8).

Given that there are a high number of hot food takeaways and public houses operating in the town centres, it is considered necessary for the controls outlined in Supplementary Planning Guidance - Hot Food Takeaways and Public Houses for the Unitary Development Plan (attached as Appendix 4) to be transferred into a development management policy.

The purpose of this criterion is to enhance the vitality and viability of the town centres and to ensure that a proliferation of these food and drink uses do not undermine the function of the centre.

Criterion (c) – Restriction of the Change of Use of the Ground Floor Units to Residential

This criterion is transferred from Policy S5 contained in the Unitary Development Plan (**SD127a**, page 54). The aim of this criterion is to protect the retail function of the town at ground floor level. The town centre boundaries (**SD48**, pages 36 – 39, Table 13) have been reviewed to exclude residential properties from the boundary. It is recognised however that the conversion of vacant and redundant first and second floor storey floorspace in retail areas can provide a useful addition to the residential stock and bring new life to town centres.

What is the land use planning case for restricting the percentages of hot food take aways and public houses in these centres?

The Council's evidence for restricting the percentage of hot food takeaways and public houses is set out in:

- **SD48:** Updated Retailing Background Paper (pages 16 – 18)

In summary, Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council, as the Local Planning Authority received numerous planning applications each year to build new and change the use of buildings and retail uses to hot food takeaway establishments and public houses in the town centres.

The increase in the number of people using these facilities has led to concern being expressed by local residents, local businesses, the police and others, in terms of their impact on both the character and appearance of the area, vitality of the shopping area and residential amenity. In response to the concern raised, research was carried out to assess the situation, in particular to look at how the balance of uses in the town centre has changed, what effect this has had and whether specific planning guidance was required to

regulate new build and further proposed changes of retail units and buildings to hot food takeaway establishments and public houses in town centres.

This led to the production of Supplementary Planning Guidance for the Unitary Development Plan (Appendix 4) which employed two controls to control the number and concentration of hot food takeaway establishments and public houses.

These control mechanisms were transferred into policy DM6 for Principal and District Town Centres of the Deposit Plan (**SD01**, pages 60-61).

It is worth noting that no objections, only two representations supporting criterion (b) of policy DM6 were received to the Deposit Plan.

How is the term “close proximity” to be interpreted?

The term close proximity is to be determined on a case by case basis due to the topography and layout of the town centres.

When preparing the Supplementary Planning Guidance (Appendix 4), the Council explored methods to help define this term, however what could be applied to one town centre could not be translated to another. It was therefore concluded that this term could only be determined on individual circumstances.

<p>7. Should paragraph 7.48 of the plan be inserted into Policy DM6 as opposed to the reasoned justification for the policy? If not, why not?</p>
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Yes. The Council agree that paragraph 7.48 of the Plan (**SD01**) should be inserted into policy DM6 as opposed to the reasoned justification for the Policy.

Appendix 1

EBBW VALE - OCCUPIER REPORT



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Contents

1. Purpose	5
2. Process & Methodology	6
3. Ebbw Vale Town Centre	7
3.1. Strategic Context.....	7
3.2. Headline Statistics.....	8
3.3. Vitality and Viability	9
4. Town Analysis Maps.....	11
4.1. Category Analysis of Occupiers - Ebbw Vale.....	14
4.2. Distinctive Clusters.....	16
5. Market Commentary.....	18
6. Demand	19
7. Gap Analysis.....	20
8. Availability	22
9. Ebbw Vale – SWOT Analysis	23
10. Appraisal of Development Opportunities.....	24
11. Role and Function	25
12. Conclusion – Key Recommendations	28

Figures

Figure 1 : Images of Ebbw Vale town centre.....	7
Figure 2: Ebbw Vale - Primary Retail Area showing vacant units as at 25 January 2011 (dark).....	8
Figure 3: Pedestrian Footfall Figures – Blaenau Gwent Town Centres.....	10
Figure 4: Location of Vacant Units, Ebbw Vale.....	11
Figure 5: Location of National Retailers, Ebbw Vale.....	12
Figure 6: Location of Non A1/Vacant Property, Ebbw Vale	13
Figure 7: Number of Units.....	14
Figure 8: Percent of Floor Space.....	14
Figure 9: Distinctive Clusters - Ebbw Vale.....	17
Figure 10: Future Timeline for Targeting Occupiers - Ebbw Vale.....	20
Figure 11: Proposed Retail Hierarchy – Role and Function –Draft Deposit Local Development Plan 2011 ...	25
Figure 12: Analysis - Role and Function - Ebbw Vale Town Centre	27

Tables

Table 1: Ebbw Vale Retail Statistics.....	8
Table 2: Occupier Analysis – Retail Category – Ebbw Vale.....	14
Table 3: Breakdown of Occupiers by Retail Sector, Ebbw Vale.....	15
Table 4: SWOT Analysis – Ebbw Vale.....	23

1. Purpose

The decline of Blaenau Gwent's town centres has been recognised and identified by Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council's strategic assessment of risks and challenges, and their revitalisation is a priority for the Council.

A number of key strategic regeneration projects are being implemented across their town centres which have a focus on environmental improvements, enhanced visitors infrastructure and the redevelopment of key sites that are close to a number of town centres. In addition to the physical investment taking place, the Council wants to promote the town centres to investors so that there is a co-ordinated approach to physical regeneration and local investment.

The key objectives of this report are therefore:

- To establish an accurate picture of the potential investors that could be attracted to the County Boroughs town centres;
- To target and attract increased retail/mixed use/other investment to the town centres utilising a professional and consistent promotion method; and
- To develop and promote the identified retail hierarchy and complementary roles of our town centres as outlined in the draft deposit BGCBC LDP.

Not a specific task of the Occupier Suitability Report, but linked to the overall project is also the need to develop a Marketing Strategy/Plan which aims to engage and attract both the private sector and members of the public towards the various opportunities within the Town Centres. There is therefore a direct relationship between the Occupier Suitability Report and the Marketing Strategy/Plan as it provides the current mix of town centre occupiers, potential targeted retailers and investors and finally how the future role and function should be projected to shoppers and to investors. This body of analysis is therefore important to how any town centre brand or marketing strategy is developed and responds to the actual investment opportunities and fulfils the respective role and function of each town.

2. Process & Methodology

In support of preparing a Marketing Strategy for the town, this Occupier Suitability Report sets out the following:

1. Current retail offering within the town;
2. Identifies potential gaps in retail offering in terms of sector and also potential specific retailer identity.

In preparing the Report, the following activities have been undertaken:

- Familiarisation/Information Gathering
 - Detailed site visits to the five town centres;
 - Photographic records of all shop fronts;
 - Obtained occupier data from the current Valuation Office Rating List;
 - Valuation Office information was cross checked with information from site visits; and
 - Categorise occupier lists and input into a database.
- Analysis/Occupier Interviews
 - Analysis of occupiers by sector, category and retailer identity using filters and sorting techniques;
 - Identify retailers with requirements for towns in South Wales and also focusing on towns in Valleys locations;
 - Analysis of other towns to identify retail gaps (Blackwood, Merthyr Tydfil, Abergavenny) as well as detailed analysis of other towns in Blaenau Gwent to identify which retailers are in one town but not others;
 - Direct contact with retailers to establish requirements for towns;
 - Contact with selected stakeholders and investors; and
 - Interviews with a sample of local businesses and business forum representatives.
- Reporting
 - Report on retailer feedback;
 - Review of existing vitality and viability data held by the Council;
 - Analysis of town centre data to identify distinctive clusters;
 - Assessment of the role and function of the town centre;
 - Identify retailers with potential requirements for the town over timescales; now, 2011-2016 and 2016-2020; and
 - The report has also considered the current development opportunities presenting themselves within the town and commented as to potential retailer suitability.

3. Ebbw Vale Town Centre

3.1. Strategic Context

Ebbw Vale is the largest town centre within Blaenau Gwent’s five town centres at approximately 268,852 sq.ft¹. Whilst the local town wards have a population of 8,944 (2001 Census) the Ebbw Vale area has a total population of 23,622 which includes communities such as Rassau, Beaufort, and Cwm. Due to its strategic focus for Council services, education, and leisure and more recently with the opening of the new hospital on the Works site, the town centre has a key role to play in providing shopping and other services for its residents. Investment in the rail link to Cardiff, dualling of the Heads of the Valleys road corridor and the ongoing redevelopment of the former Corus Steelworks, known as the Works, points to the strategic opportunities the town is working to unlock.

The town centre is contained within the A4046 with the main shopping street starting at Market Square and finishing at the junction with Armoury Terrace in physical town centre terms. However, in primary retail areaterms the main shopping offer stops at the junction with service road from the The Walk Shopping Development. In addition to retail, the main police station, library, health centre, bus station, taxi rank and public toilets are key facilities that town centre users frequent. The town centre has been enhanced through public realm improvements, a timepiece feature and the creation of a -pedestrian friendly area with the popular weekly market held in this central space.

The main free multi storey car park is accessed from James Street with other pay and display parking to the rear of The Walk Shopping Development. Some limited stay parking is available within the town centre as well as further on towards Armoury Terrace.

Out of town retail is located at Tesco off the A4046 and Morrisons and Focus at Rhyd-y-BlewRetail Park. Ebbw Vale Festival Park Factory Outlet Centre is located at Festival Park at the former Garden Festival and offers a broad range of discounted comparison goods.

Figure 1 : Images of Ebbw Vale town centre



Source: Stuart Hogg Property

¹ Stuart Hogg Property / VOA data

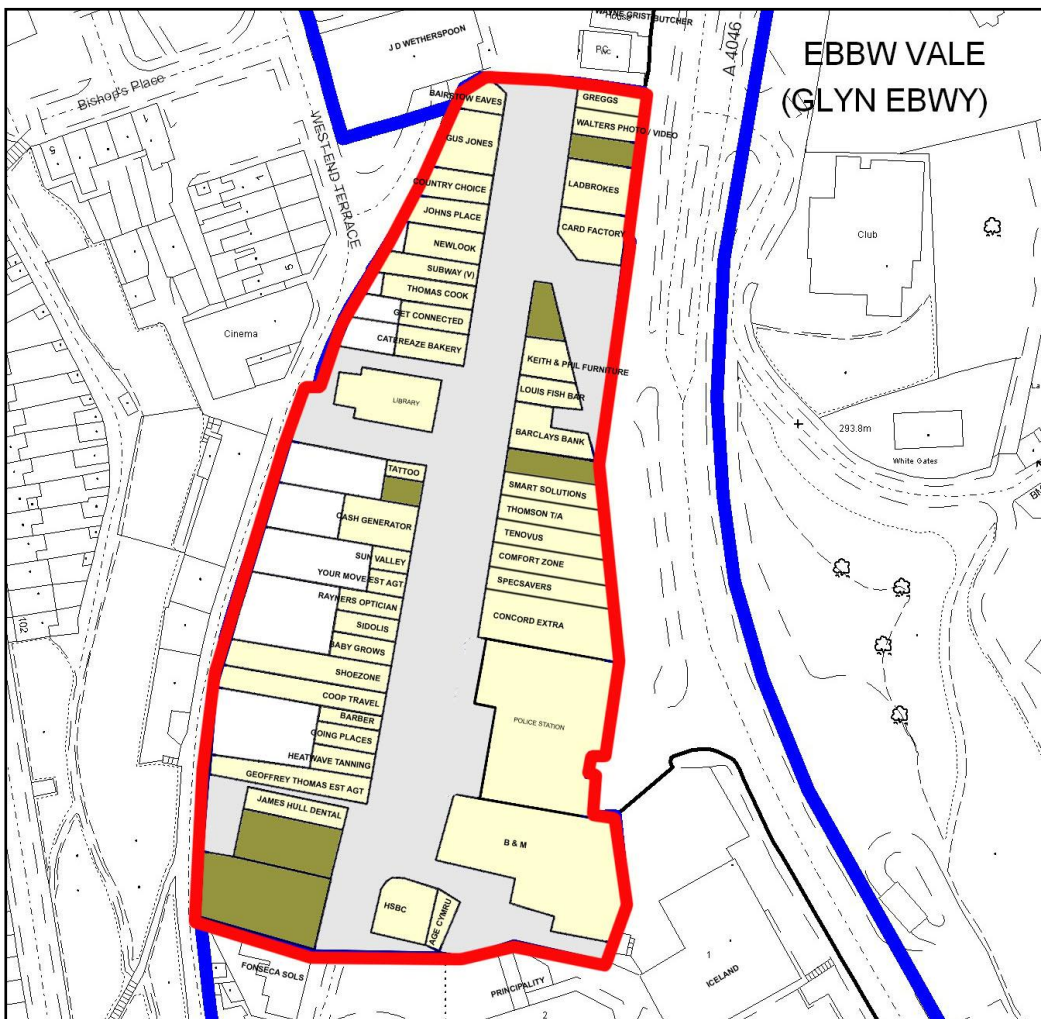
3.2. Headline Statistics

The following table presents the key retail statistics for Ebbw Vale with Figure 2 below showing the proposed Local Development Plan Primary Retail Area and the local location of vacant buildings as of 25th January 2011.

Table 1: Ebbw Vale Retail Statistics

Total floor area of retail space analysed	24,917 sq.m (268,206 sq.ft).
Number of retail units	109
39 units in Primary Retail Area	(7,451 sq.m)
70 units outside the Primary Retail Area	(17,466 sq.m)
Number of Vacant Units	13 (7 outside Primary Retail Area, 6 in Primary Retail Area) with a total of 1,573 sq.m which equates to 6.3% of the total retail space

Figure 2: Ebbw Vale - Primary Retail Area showing vacant units as at 25 January 2011 (dark)



Source: Stuart Hogg Property, January 2011

Although the Primary Retail Area is tightly drawn in the emerging LDP, the prime pitch extends northwards to incorporate Market Street and south eastwards to include the Walk Shopping Centre, which in our view should also form part of the Primary Retail Area.

3.3. Vitality and Viability

The following summary is drawn from existing retail studies² that have been provided by Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council and observations from site visits in January 2011:

Shoppers' Attitudes

CACI data compares Ebbw Vale to centres such as Blackwood and Monmouth in its rural centres classification with it ranked 6th in the Welsh ranking of Rural Centres;

- Ebbw Vale captures 7.5% of its total annual retail expenditure from its 273,698 residents within its retail catchment;
- In its core catchment, Ebbw Vale retains 34% of its market share with it increasing to 48% as you turn to its primary catchment;
- Clothing and footwear account for 15.8% of the total expenditure, with durables accounting for 12.8% per year;
- The CACI analysis concludes that Ebbw Vale is under provided for in terms of comparison goods in relation to its catchment population size.
- 41.6% of respondents to a household telephone survey indicate they conduct their main food shop at the Ebbw Vale Tesco, with 28.8% of respondents shopping at the Morrisons store in Ebbw Vale;
- In terms of locations to purchase non-food items, Ebbw Vale was the most popular at 26% with Cardiff City Centre at 22% being the second most popular;
- 88.8% of all respondents surveyed visit Ebbw Vale for their shopping. 57.7% of the 222 respondents who visited Ebbw Vale stated that the main reason was due to the closeness and or convenience to their home;
- 40% of shoppers when asked what would make them visit the area more frequently identified a better choice/range of non-food shops;
- The most popular method of transport to the town was by car / van as the driver, as almost a third of all respondents stated this (32.9%). Whereas, over a quarter (29%) of respondents travelled to the town on foot; and
- When asked what would improve people's visit to Ebbw Vale, 36.2% and 52.2% identified a better choice/range of non-food and food shops, respectively.

Accessibility

The flat nature of the town centre and close proximity of the main off street car parks and public transport/taxi ranks are key attractors to the town centre. The pedestrian-friendly nature of the main town centre helps general mobility around shops and local services. Disabled parking is provided for close to the town centre streets with buses running at regular intervals. Buses run locally to Beaufort, Garnlydan, Hilltop and Tredegar and across South Wales to Aberdare, Abergavenny, Cardiff, Cwmbran and Newport.

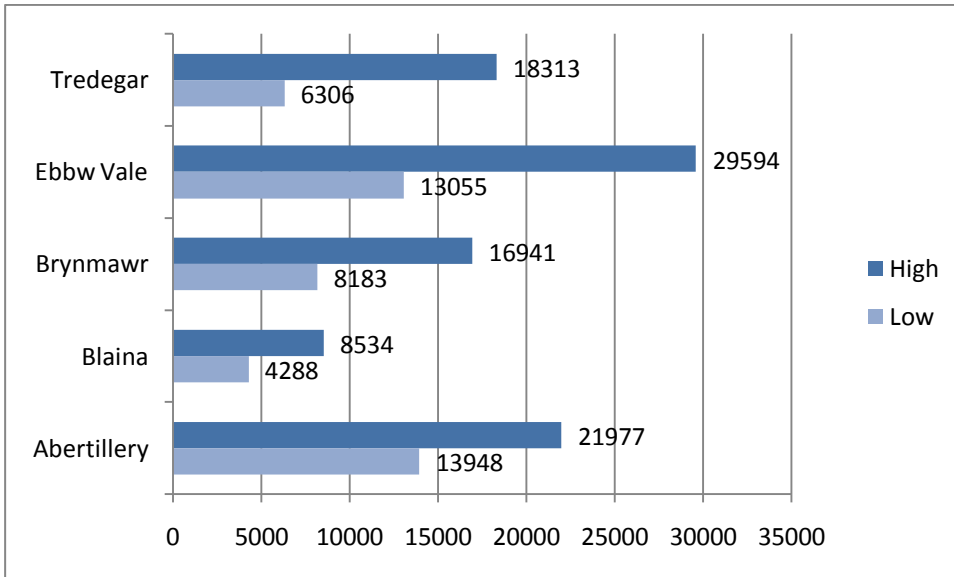
² CACI Town Centre Health Checks, January 2008

The new train station is approximately 1.5 miles away to the south of the town centre which is connected by bus and has parking provision. This would be further enhanced through the proposals to extend the line up to the Works Project Office and subsequent links to the town centre proposed.

Footfall

Due to the flat and linear nature of the town centre, it is easy to walk to and from your intended shop or destination. The wide character of the streets allows for people to dwell and engage in activities such as the weekly market. The footfall figures reflect the principal town centre focus that Ebbw Vale has with shoppers, visitors and workers using the town centre with monthly figures showing an average of 75,000 people visiting the town centre.

Figure 3: Pedestrian Footfall Figures – Blaenau Gwent Town Centres



Source: Blaenau Gwent Pedestrian Footfall Counts (April 2009 – March 2010)

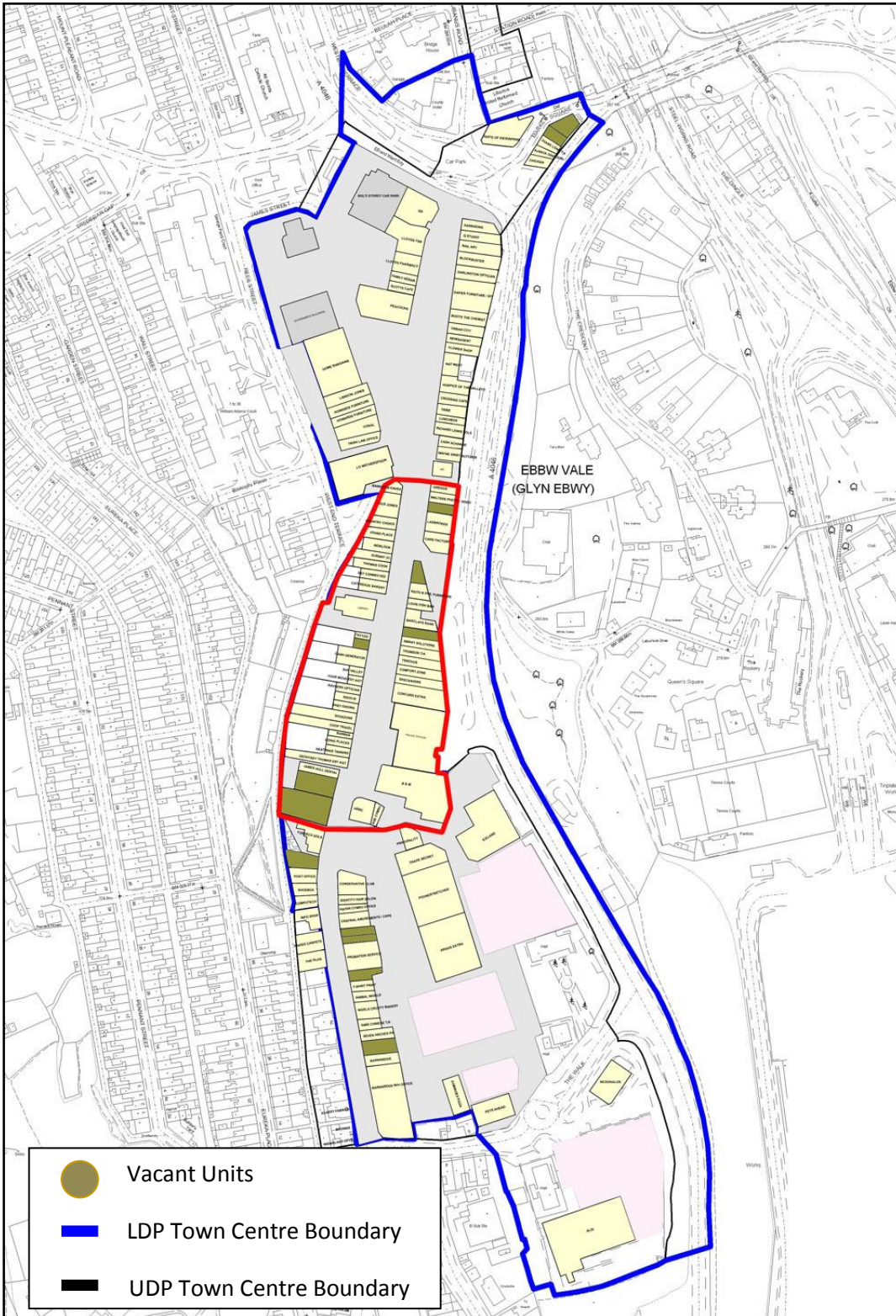
Vacancy Rates

Ebbw Vale has a vacancy rate of 11.8% (in terms of number of units, 6.3% of floorspace). Some of the vacant units are in prime sites sometimes due to tenants moving within the town centre, specific aspect and visibility of the unit, constraints on size of unit and a lack of servicing. This rate is well below the national UK average which should not be ignored, yet large voids do exist at key frontages at pedestrian nodes.

4. Town Analysis Maps

The following analysis develops the initial retail statistics in relation to the distribution of vacant units, presence and location of national retailers and where non A1 uses tend to be situated.

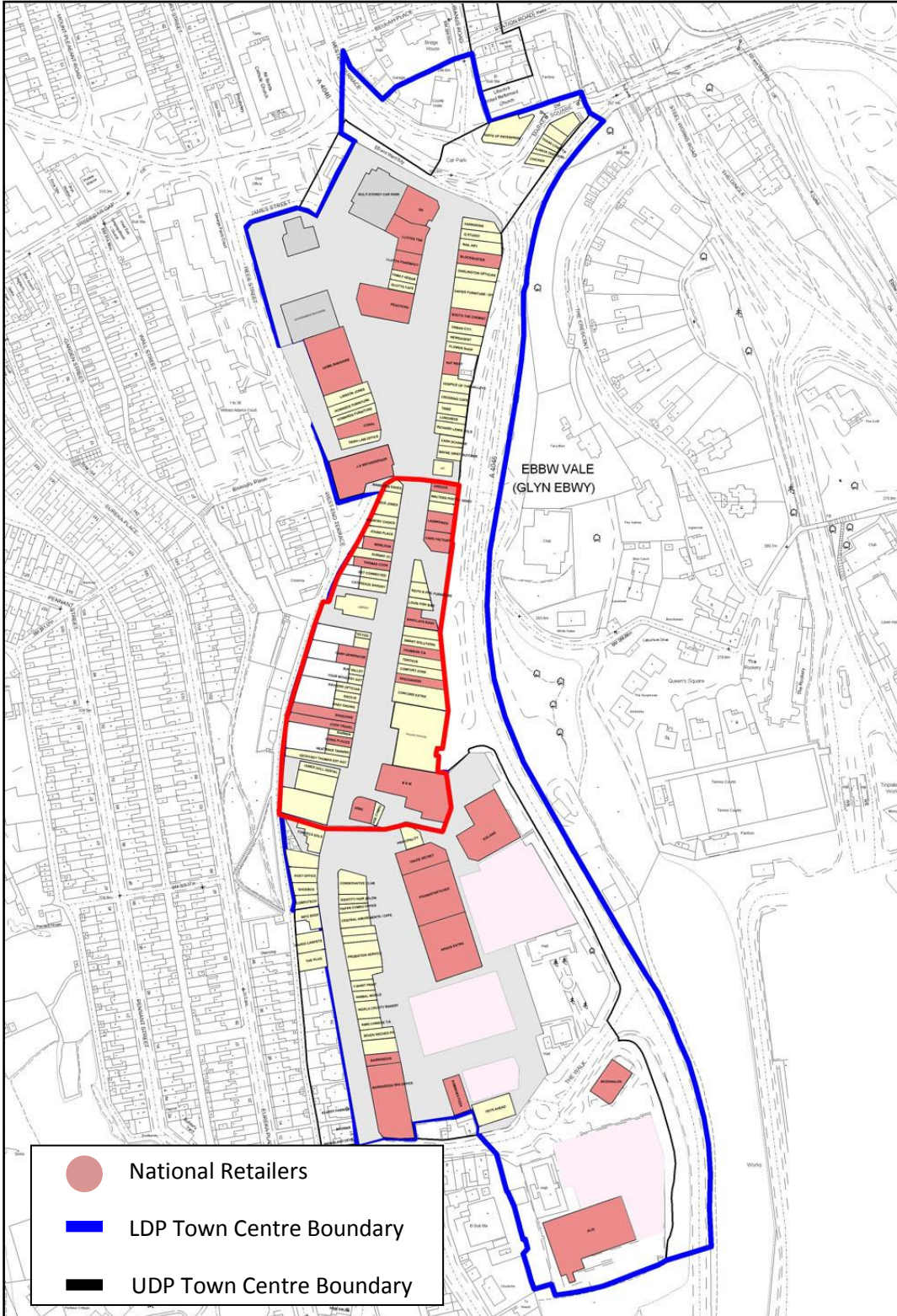
Figure 4: Location of Vacant Units, Ebbw Vale



Source: Stuart Hogg Property, January 2011

The Vacant Unit Analysis Map shows a high level of occupancy both in the Primary Retail Area and also outside. The northern end of Bethcar Street in particular is shown as being well occupied with no void units. The large void units at the southern edge of the core reflect how the prime area in town has tended to move northwards although they are in good proximity to the entrance to the Walk Shopping Centre.

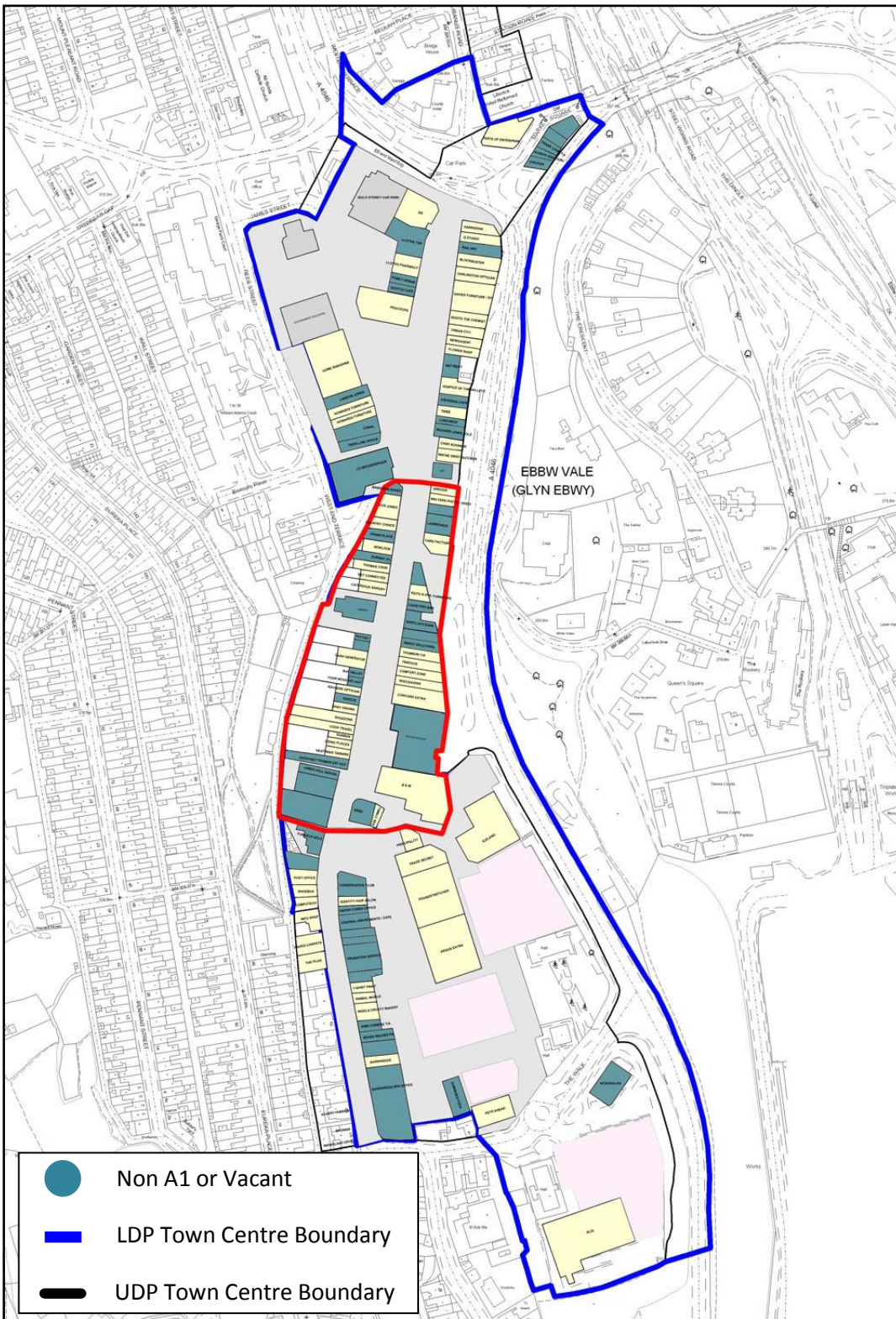
Figure 5: Location of National Retailers, Ebbw Vale



Source: Stuart Hogg Property, January 2011

The National Retailer Analysis Map shows a high proportion of national retailers, reinforcing the town as a principal centre in the retail hierarchy. In addition to the retail area, there are national retailers represented in the northern part of Bethcar Street and also, larger units at the Walk Shopping Centre.

Figure 6: Location of Non A1/Vacant Property, Ebbw Vale



Source: Stuart Hogg Property, January 2011

The Non A1 and Vacant Analysis map shows a reasonable mix of uses. The southern end of Bethcar Street is characterised by non-A1 uses and is unlikely to be a suitable location for most A1 retailers.

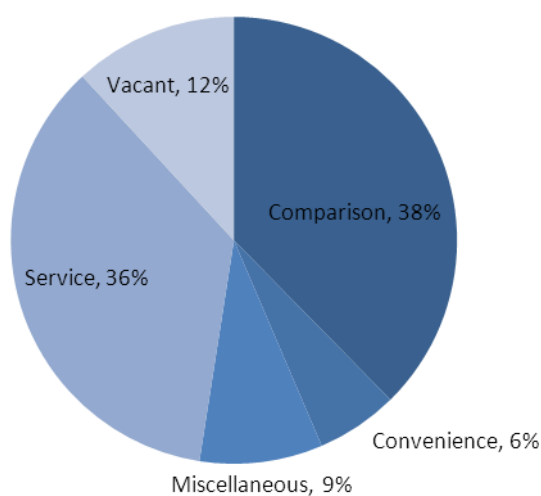
4.1. Category Analysis of Occupiers - Ebbw Vale

The following table presents the key retail statistics for Tredegar with Figure 2 below showing the draft deposit Local Development Plan retail area and the local location of vacant buildings as of 25th January 2011.

Table 2: Occupier Analysis – Retail Category - Ebbw Vale

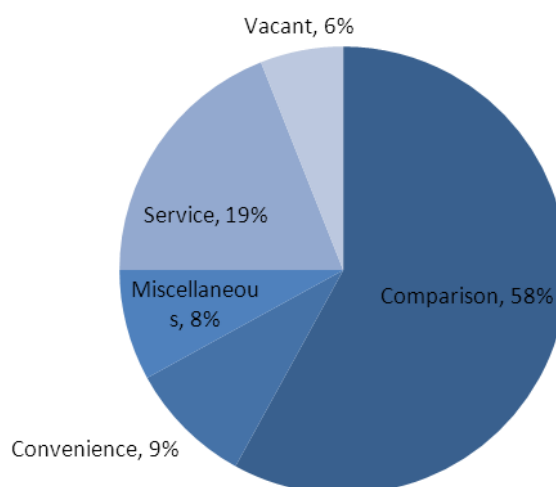
Category	Data	Total
COMPARISON	Count of Occupier	42
	Sum of Total area m2	14,787
CONVENIENCE	Count of Occupier	7
	Sum of Total area m2	2,257
MISCELLANEOUS	Count of Occupier	10
	Sum of Total area m2	1,917
SERVICE	Count of Occupier	40
	Sum of Total area m2	4,730
VACANT	Count of Occupier	13
	Sum of Total area m2	1,625
Total Count of Occupier		112
Total Sum of Total area m2		25,316

Figure 7: Number of Units



Source: Stuart Hogg Property, January 2011

Figure 8: Percent of Floor Space



Source: Stuart Hogg Property, January 2011

The following tables show the breakdown of occupiers (as at January 2011) by specific uses (total ground floor area and number of units). Dominant retail sectors are highlighted in the table.

Table 3: Breakdown of Occupiers by Retail Sector, Ebbw Vale

Sectors	Sum of Total area m2 Total	Count of Occupier Total
ART / BOOKS / STATIONERY	585	1
BABYWEAR	82	1
BAKER	249	3
BETTING OFFICE AMUSEMENTS	532	4
BUTCHER	87	1
CAFÉ	604	5
CHARITY	927	4
CHEMIST / OPTICIAN	832	5
CTN	58	1
DENTAL	168	1
ELECTRICAL	429	4
ESTATE AGENT	258	3
FINANCIAL SERVICES	1,061	7
FLORIST	91	1
FOODSTORE	1,834	2
FOOTWEAR	359	2
FURNITURE	3,573	6
GENERAL CLOTHING	1,404	5
GIFTS	284	1
GREENGROCER	126	1
HARDWARE	340	1
JEWELLER	160	1
OFFICE	926	6
PETS	289	2
PUB	935	3

RECRUITMENT	56	1
SALON	345	6
TAKEAWAY	752	9
TRAVEL	308	4
VACANT	1,573	13
VARIETY	4,901	6
WOMENS CLOTHING	1,135	2
Grand Total	25,316	112

4.2. Distinctive Clusters

Figure 9 shows that there is a strong service sector within Ebbw Vale including travel agents, estate agents, financial services and hair and beauty.

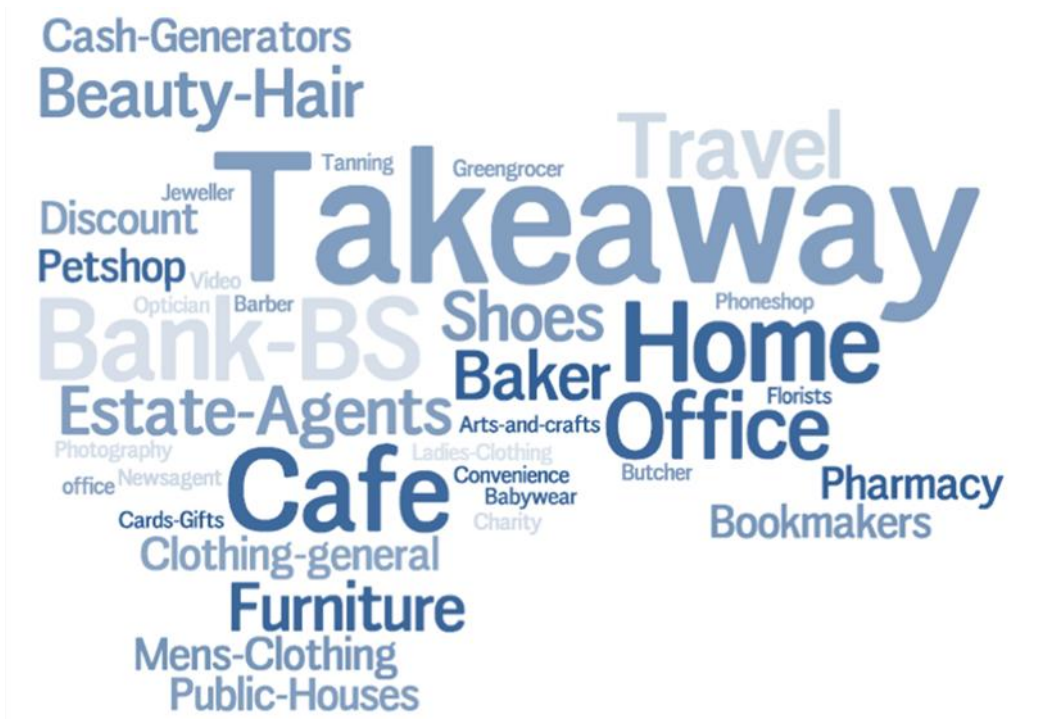
When looking for distinct clusters there are some traditional cafes such as Sidolis, the Crossing with Louis' Fish Bar supported by other cafes and sandwich bars, being a local draw. As with some of the other district centres, furniture and home-ware emerges as a strong sector with Davies, Howards KP Furnishers and Comfort Zone creating a good range and choice. These are further supported by hardware stores, e.g. Harrisons and the carpet shop. With regard to single distinct retail lines, Pins and Things offers specialist needlecraft goods, babywear provided by Baby Grows and Wayne Grist being the only butcher in the town centre.

In terms of specialist stores in the town, Harrison offers hardware and DIY with Walters providing specialist photographic equipment. The Taste of Enterprise centre provides a place to showcase the best of local arts and crafts but due to it being divorced from the main town centre, has not really stimulated any artisan or specialist feel to the town centre.

As recognised by the Council there is a dominance of takeaways within Ebbw Vale town centre, although the town centre has the least number of takeaways across the five town centres and are predominantly concentrated in Market Square.

The key challenge in Ebbw Vale is that there is no critical mass of distinct retail groupings due to the physical nature of the town and the presence of neighbouring vacant properties as well as some poorer quality businesses being present. There is however a breadth to the retail offer in terms of comparison shopping that attracts shoppers and this is a key selling point that needs to be developed through the marketing strategy.

Figure 9: Distinctive Clusters - Ebbw Vale



Source: Miller Research (UK) Ltd

5. Market Commentary

Ebbw Vale is seen as a regionally significant town although is competing against new out of town retail developments at Cyfartha in Merthyr Tydfil and the Festival Shopping Centre at Ebbw Vale. There is also competition from the out of town stores of Tesco and Morrison to the north which undoubtedly attract trade from a large catchment but do not connect with the town centre.

Nevertheless, the traditional high street has been resilient to the difficult market conditions over the last four to five years and this is reflected in the relatively few vacant units. There is also a high proportion of national retail representation that is not present in other Blaenau Gwent town centres. However, the town is hampered by a significant number of small units in the high street that are too small for many requirements and it is therefore difficult for national retailers to get representation in the prime area. There is, however, a number of potential development sites identified that provide opportunity for larger format units that are close to the primary retail area.

Bethcar Street, north of its junction with the Walk Shopping Centre and Market Street to the north has performed well and the Walk Shopping Centre itself, not currently shown as being within the primary retail area, but performing the function of the town's prime shopping area is perceived to be trading reasonably well. The southern end of Bethcar Street struggles from a retail perspective and is characterised by non A1 uses and a relatively high level of vacant units.

Zone A rents - a measure of value for retail space are currently in the region of £230 per sq.m for prime units, which is currently being achieved within the primary retail area.

Lettings in Ebbw Vale over the last 5 years include (non-exhaustive):

- 12 Market Street (Urban City Clothing)
- 18 Market Street (Tribe Clothing)
- 20a Market Street (Cash Xchange)
- 24/25 Market Street (Ladbroke's)
- 25a Market Street (Card Factory)
- 23 James Street (Coral)
- Former Kwik Save, James Street (Home Bargains)
- 13 Bethcar Street (Subway)
- 19 Bethcar Street (Catereaze Bakery)
- 6 Bethcar Street (Keith & Phil Furniture)
- 16 Bethcar Street (Smart Solutions - Recruitment)
- 23 Bethcar Street (Tattoo)
- 27 Bethcar Street (Cash Generator)
- 31 Bethcar Street (Your Move Estate Agents)
- 37 Bethcar Street (Baby Grows)
- 32 Bethcar Street - former Woolworths (B&M)

6. Demand

The current / recent national requirements for Ebbw Vale that have been identified are:

- Ramsdens (Pawnbrokers) - 600 to 800 sq.ft
- Wilkinsons - currently looking at options within the town.

We are also aware of a number of smaller, independent requirements for Ebbw Vale derived from our recent marketing of units in the town (accountants, phone shop, furniture shop).

A number of the lettings that have taken place over the last 5 years have been to discount or value retailers (B&M, Home Bargains, Cash Xchange, Cash Generator). This is a trend that has been repeated across other towns in South Wales and indeed the UK as a whole as traditional high streets face competition from retail parks and on-line sales at a time when consumers are focused on getting value for money.

Interviews with agents suggest that there are few current national requirements for the town and the perception is that requirements will tend to favour the Festival Shopping Centre rather than the town centre. However, despite not appearing on retailers active requirement lists, the town's size and existing retail offering will undoubtedly appeal to a number of retailers that could be targeted as part of the Marketing Strategy. It is also reasonable to assume that in the medium and longer term, provided the town centre continues to be a focus for investment, that other retailers will have requirements for the town centre.

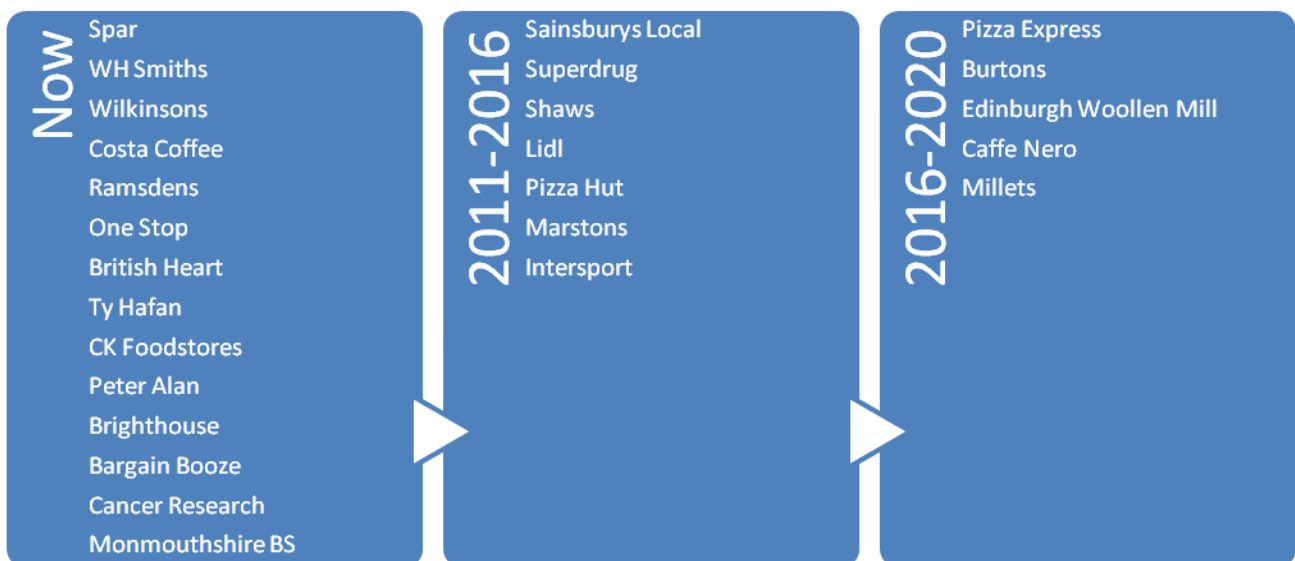
7. Gap Analysis

Retailers / types of retailers that are not represented or under-represented in the town that could be targeted:

- Butcher (only one currently)
- Cafe
- Confectionary / tobacco / news (only one currently)
- Off licence (no representation)
- Toys
- Sports
- Gifts (only one card shop)
- Motor spares (although one currently on the periphery of the town)
- Jeweller (only one currently)
- Florist (only one currently)
- Phone shop - only one currently
- Quality Charity Shops (currently 4)
- Book Shop
- Camping / outdoor
- Estate Agents
- Restaurants (evening economy)

Having carried out the gap analysis and retailer consultation, examples of the retailers that could be targeted over the short / medium / longer term would be as follows:

Figure 10: Future Timeline for Targeting Occupiers - Ebbw Vale



The feedback from our enquiries of retailers and experience in the market is that there is a tendency for the more up market brands to want to be located in the Festival Shopping Centre if they are going to come to Ebbw Vale, unfortunately often at the cost of the town's ability to pull in other retailers.

Sainsburys Local has an aspiration to expand their representation significantly and whilst they looked at the former Woolworths, they felt that the demographics were not appropriate. They do confirm, however, that as they grow their representation they will need to revisit some of the locations previously discounted.

Costa Coffee has confirmed that they would consider a prime location in town.

Wilkinsons have confirmed that they have a current requirement for the town and are considering options.

8. Availability

Properties that are currently being actively marketed are as follows:

- 55 Bethcar Street - this vacant unit (formerly Ethel Austin) comprises ground floor sales of 3,020 sq.ft and a first floor ancillary of 2,036 sq.ft - the quoting rent is £27,000 per annum.
- 23 Market Street - this vacant unit comprises a ground floor sales area of 715 sq.ft plus a first floor of 336 sq.ft. The quoting rental is £15,000 per annum and the Rateable Value £11,000 (£4,499 payable 2010/11).
- 14 Bethcar Street - this vacant unit comprises a ground floor sales area of 876 sq.ft plus a basement stores of 519 sq.ft. The quoting rental is £15,000 per annum and the Rateable Value £11,500 (£4,090 payable 2010/11).
- 2-4 Bethcar Street - a freehold property, formerly Darlington Opticians available at £99,950 or rental at £10,000 per annum - no floor areas quoted (approximate GF sales 500 sq.ft).
- 48/48a Bethcar Street - GF sales 584 sq.ft plus first and second floor rooms available to let at a quoting rent of £10,800 per annum.
- 66 Bethcar Street - lock up shop (no size given) - available at £2,400 per annum.

As with other towns, there are a number of vacant units that do not appear to be currently actively marketed.

9. Ebbw Vale – SWOT Analysis

Table 4: SWOT Analysis - Ebbw Vale

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>High representation of National Retailers at the Walk</p> <p>Availability of parking</p> <p>Diversity of tenants</p> <p>Recognised as an important regional town</p> <p>Relatively low rents</p> <p>Free parking</p>	<p>Large visible vacant units at southern end of Bethcar Street</p> <p>Southern end of Bethcar Street not functioning for retail</p> <p>Shutters create dead frontages</p> <p>Limited spending power</p> <p>Small units – not suitable for national retailers</p> <p>Current linkages between the Walk and the rest of the town centre</p>
Opportunities	Threats
<p>Development land owned by Sterling Estates</p> <p>Market Square development site</p> <p>Identified development sites</p> <p>Better linkage with the Walk Shopping Centre</p> <p>Potential links with The Works Site</p> <p>Develop shopping experience</p> <p>Festival Shopping Centre - joint marketing</p> <p>Action Area at the Southern Gateway</p>	<p>Competition from neighbouring centres outside of the County Borough</p> <p>Festival Shopping Centre</p>

10. Appraisal of Development Opportunities

The Triangle Site - This is located at the northern end of Bethcar Street and adjacent to existing national multiple retailers (Peacocks, Lloyds TSB, Lloyds Pharmacy). It should provide an opportunity to create additional retail space and has the ability to create modern units of an appropriate size. The site is currently in private hands (Sterling Estates) and in our view represents an obvious future development opportunity that would enhance the northern end of Bethcar Street.

Police Station - this site (approximately 0.25 acres) is located in a strong retail pitch with traditionally high levels of footfall. In the event of the Police deciding to relocate, it would represent an opportunity to create a well-designed addition to the retail area of the high street and would also remove a dead frontage. There could be an opportunity to attract a mid range quality food retailer to this site.

Former County Hotel Site to North of Market Street - this site is shown as being with the town centre area (although outside the primary retail area). Physically, it is separated from Bethcar Street by the A4046 and is, in our view, unsuitable as a retail location, especially given the current highway configuration. It is also on the periphery of the town centre and therefore currently unlikely to be suitable for retail requirements. The redevelopment of this site should also be considered within the context of the strategy for the Northern Corridor as it may facilitate the relocation of some public sector buildings, as well as other suitable uses, leading to a mixed use development. Any would need to consider the redesign of the junction arrangement with improved pedestrian movements.

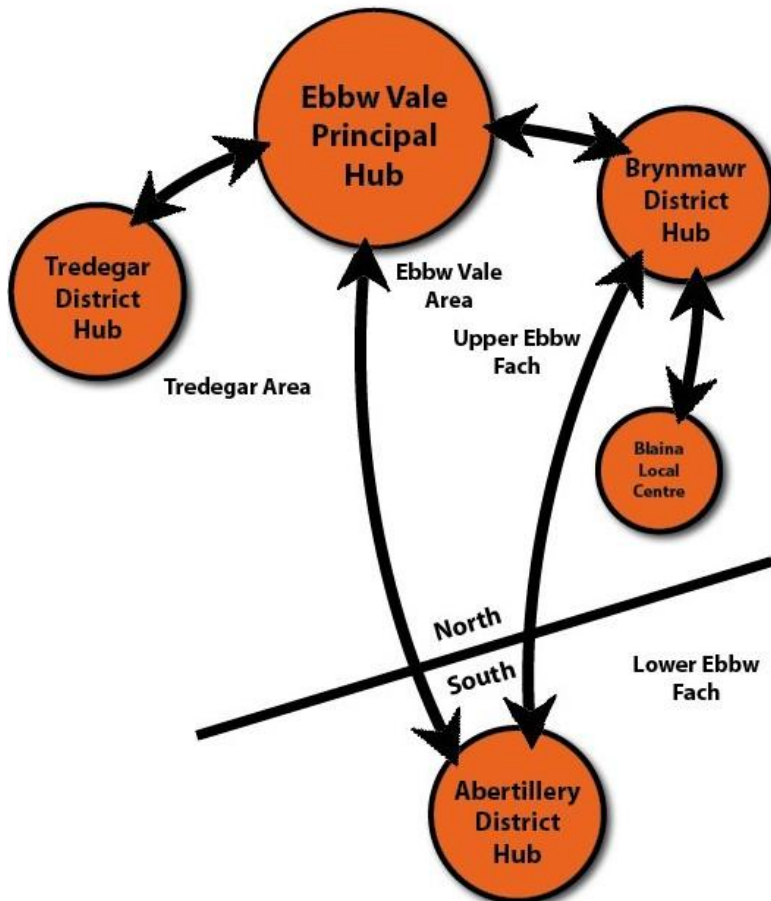
Link Proposals - these involve the potential development of a significant scheme linking the Walk Shopping Centre (and in turn Bethcar Street) with new transport links from the Works. They involve potential creation of retail space of two units around 10,000 sq.ft and 6,500 sq.ft plus upper floor commercial space. These size units could cater for unsatisfied demand for the town (for example Wilkinsons) and also build on the success of the Walk Shopping Centre. In our view they will add further critical mass to the retail centre and help to retain more trade within the town centre and improve the retail offering.

Northern Corridor Strategy – there will be opportunities to capitalise on town centre regeneration opportunities as a consequence of the relocation and redevelopment of some of the public sector buildings in the Northern Corridor which has been identified through the Ebbw Vale Sustainable Development Framework.

11. Role and Function

The Council has sought through this study to further develop specific and complementary retailing roles and functions for each of the five town centres that can be utilised in the development of the town centre branding and associated marketing material.

Figure 11: Proposed Retail Hierarchy – Role and Function –Draft Deposit Local Development Plan 2011



Ebbw Vale town centre is identified as a principal town centre in the draft Deposit Local Development Plan. Its strategic location within the County Borough and within the Heads of the Valleys sub region does lend itself to a town centre that is significant in terms of serving a significant resident population and catchment, is located close to key administrative functions and services and its connectivity to key strategic roads, rail and other infrastructure. The town centre compared to other Blaenau Gwent retail centres has a higher proportion of national retailers with some well known brand names, accommodated within the main Market Street and in new development within the Walk Shopping Centre.

The town centre has located within it a range of community facilities such as a Library, Learning Action Centre, Police Station alongside a number of High Street banks and other key services. The strategic investment taking place on the Works site, with new facilities such as the Aneurin Bevan Hospital and planned Learning Campus developments and new accommodation for Gwent Records and Genealogy Centre adds to the town being a key service and administration hub. There is also additional scope along the Northern Corridor towards the A465 for potential development that adds to the critical mass of services and infrastructure for Ebbw Vale. The town is also in proximity to attractions such as the Festival Shopping Centre placing Ebbw Vale as a principal town centre within the County Borough as well serving shoppers from neighbouring local authority areas. The town also has a number of cultural facilities

including Ebbw Vale Institute and nearby Beaufort Theatre, which add to the wider attraction of the town centre.

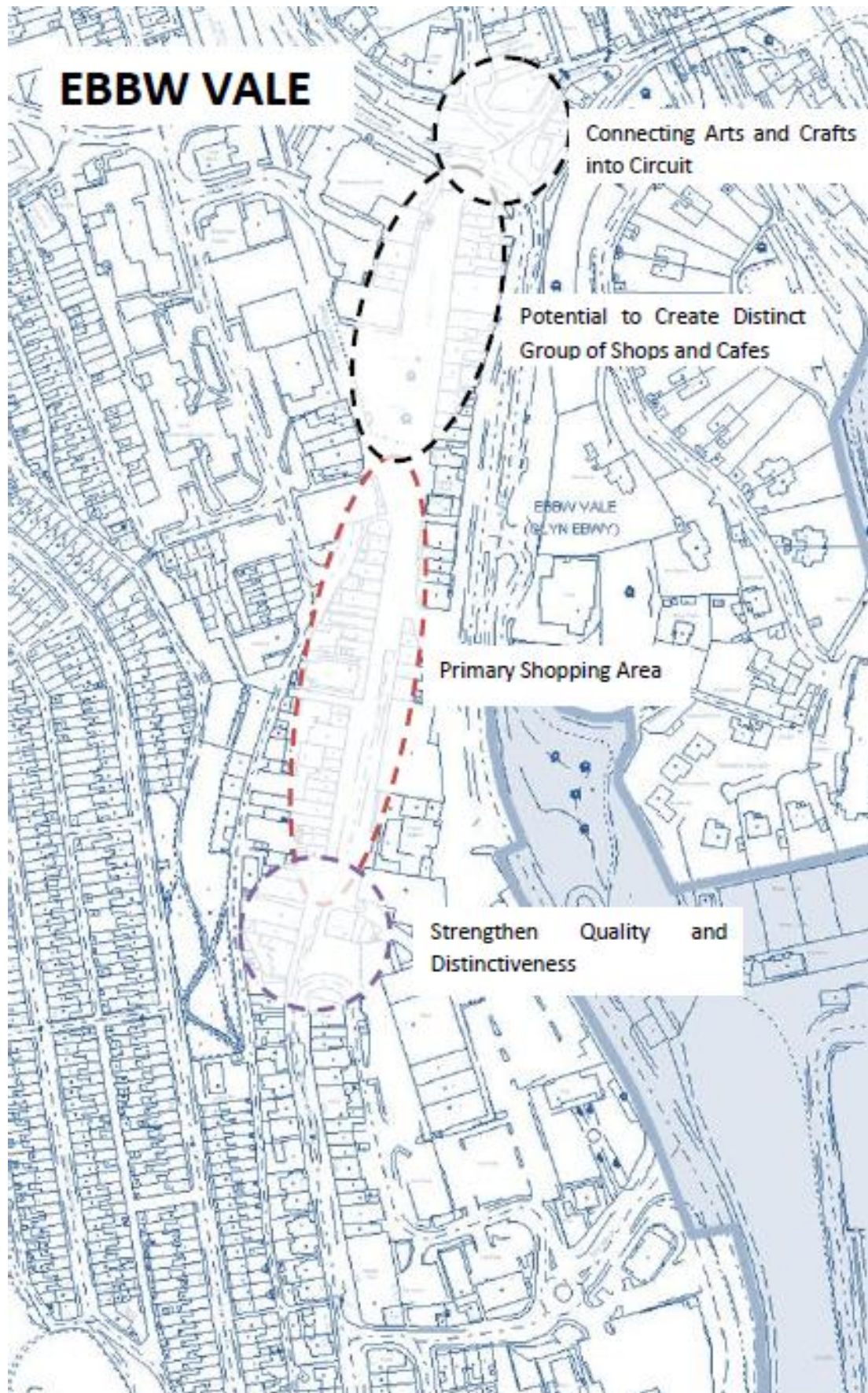
To fulfill its role and function as a principal town centre, it needs to develop a consistent and quality offer and provide a broad range of shopping. With the majority of convenience shopping at the out of centre locations such as Tescos off the A4046 and Morrisons at Rhyd-y-blew, there is a need to improve the quality of comparison shopping within the town centre. This needs to be addressed through occupying key strategic buildings and sites that works towards creating a more cohesive and confident offer. Medium to large format stores need to be provided for with missing or under represented retailers targetted such as sports, books, motor spares with additional support for the independent retail sector so that a balanced offer is achieved. To ensure a balanced town centre offer, the provision of a small “community” type food stores within the town centre would assist in providing basket type food shopping, appealing to town centre workers and shoppers as well as animating the primary retail area of the town centre.

The independent sector has no strong distinct clusters of retail but there are a number of well known businesses, shop-keepers and specialist products that attracts people to the town for specific purchases and for their personal services. This contributes to its key selling points and adds to the objective of consolidating and strengthening its comparison offer.

To ensure the town is welcoming to families, marketing the town centre for toys and general clothing is required with family friendly restaurants such as pizza need to be promoted. In terms of the evening time economy, opportunities for bistro/pub food should be explored so that the town has a more diverse evening time offer for families and visitors.

Finally, in strategic terms, the accessible and extensive nature of the town centre and closeness to the Works site and the Heads of the Valley road need to be marketed as key selling points for retailers and complementary operators.

Figure 12: Analysis - Role and Function - Ebbw Vale Town Centre



12. Conclusion – Key Recommendations

Ebbw Vale is functioning reasonably well as a retail location and has the opportunity to grow in importance as a regional town and to enhance shoppers' experience by improving retail mix.

Specific opportunities and issues to address include:

- The redevelopment of the Sterling Estates site within the main high street -
- Promotion of the Link site as a development opportunity that will accommodate larger format retail units;
- Limiting the number of further non A1 uses in the primary retail area so that a more cohesive range of retail goods and services is presented to shoppers;
- Shutters - discourage external shutters so that the key frontages are attractive during the daytime and in the evening and that the town appears to be open for business;
- Developing a solution or identity for the Southern end of Bethcar Street;
- The town needs to find its identity to compete against neighbouring centres out of the County Borough such as Merthyr Tydfil and Cwmbran so that people perceive Ebbw Vale as destination that has some key brand names, a good range and choice of comparison goods and can meet local shoppers need in terms of convenience and other needs;
- Revision of the Primary Retail Area contained in the draft Deposit LDP to include The Walk development. Consideration should be given to removal of the Former County Hotel site out of the proposed retail area in the LDP to facilitate non-retail uses such as residential, which we would consider a more appropriate use and would help consolidate the existing retail area.
- Further revisions made to the LDP town centre boundary and primary retail area, reflect some of our analysis and recommendations made within this report (see appendix 2).

Appendix 1

A1 – Retailer Feedback

Retailer Consultation - Blaenau Gwent

Feedback

Feb-11

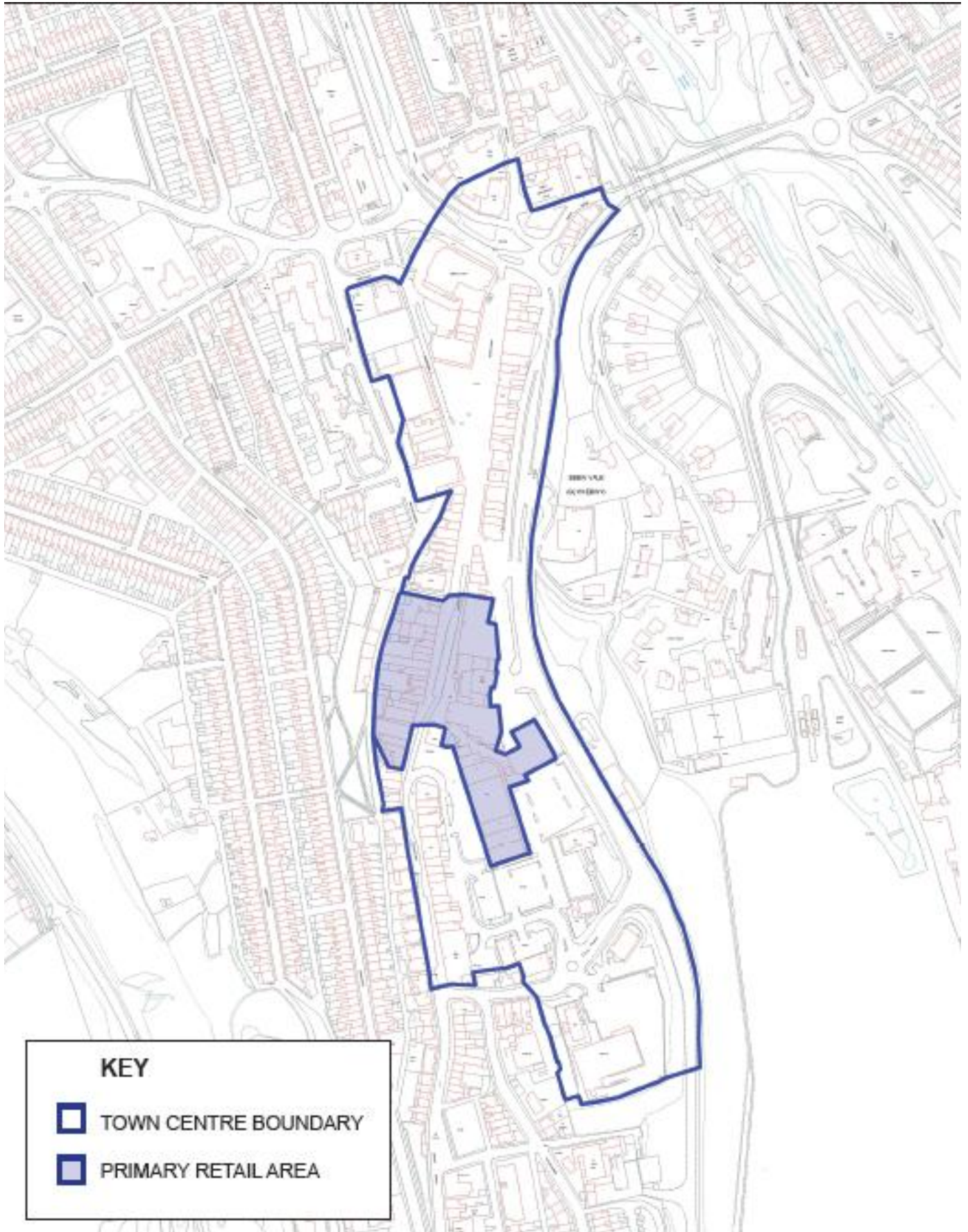
Retailers			Ebbw Vale	Tredegar	Brynmawr	Abertillery	Blaina
Name of Company	Would you consider units in any of the 5 towns? If so, which and what is the requirement?	If not, why not?					
Wilkinsons	Considering Ebbw Vale - requirement is for a unit of around 10,000 sq.ft	Looked at Tredegar but discounted due to size of town and other towns too small.	Yes	No	No	No	No
Greggs	Are in all towns apart from Blaina	Would not consider Blaina as too small	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Timpsons	Going into the Tesco store as a kiosk.	Other towns too small. Looked at Tredegar but felt it was covered by neighbouring towns.	Yes	No	No	No	No
Ladbrokes	Currently in all towns but would not consider Tredegar as there was too much competition.	Too much competition - already catered for.	No	No	No	No	No
Burton / Top Shop	No to all towns.	Market too small in all towns.	No	No	No	No	No

Retailers			Ebbw Vale	Tredegar	Brynmawr	Abertillery	Blaina
Name of Company	Would you consider units in any of the 5 towns? If so, which and what is the requirement?	If not, why not?					
BHS	No to all towns.	Market too small in all towns.	No	No	No	No	No
Coffee No.1	No to all towns.	Demographics not affluent enough.	No	No	No	No	No
Caffe Nero	No to all towns.	Demographics not affluent enough - towns too small and their targets are larger towns and cities.	No	No	No	No	No
Shaws	No to all towns.	Currently in Tredegar but trading poorly. No appetite for expansion in these locations. Felt that town centres were not performing well.	No	No	No	No	No
Costa	Would consider Ebbw Vale - would need a unit of 1,300 sq.ft plus in a prime location in town.	Ebbw Vale is a possibility but other towns not perceived to be attractive enough at the moment.	Yes	No	No	No	No
New Look	In all towns except Blaina	Too small	In	In	In	In	No
Subway	In Ebbw Vale, but need new franchisee to reopen	Other towns too small and not affluent enough	In	No	No	No	No
Marstons	Yes to Tredegar, Ebbw Vale requiring circa 1 acre of land on main arterial routes	Abertillery & Blaina too small	Yes	Yes	In	No	No

Retailers			Ebbw Vale	Tredegar	Brynmawr	Abertillery	Blaina
Name of Company	Would you consider units in any of the 5 towns? If so, which and what is the requirement?	If not, why not?					
Cash Generators	In Ebbw Vale, and no to all other towns	Catchment population too small to justify another branch in the vicinity	In	No	No	No	No
Superdrug	Awaiting feedback			In		In	
Marks & Spencer	Awaiting feedback						
Card Factory	In Ebbw Vale and Tredegar. Would consider trialling Abertillery for a 6/12 month period to see if sufficient demand	Blaina is too small. Unsure on Brynmawr and proximity to Tredegar/Ebbw Vale	In	In	Unsure	Trial	No
Lidl	In Tredegar and no to other towns	Other towns have too small a catchment to get board approval at present. This may change in the next 2 years, but is the reason Brynmawr was rejected.	No	In	No	No	No
Aldi	In Ebbw Vale and recently closed Tredegar.	Insufficient population to justify another store in the vicinity.	In	Closed	No	No	No
One Stop	They would consider all towns but each opportunity is considered on its merits and dependent upon competition analysis. Would need a unit of 2,000 to 2,500 sq.ft.	Blaina is unlikely due to existing offering from Co-op and Premier.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Unlikely
Tesco Express	Awaiting Feedback						

Retailers			Ebbw Vale	Tredegar	Brynmawr	Abertillery	Blaina
Name of Company	Would you consider units in any of the 5 towns? If so, which and what is the requirement?	If not, why not?					
Sainsburys Convenience	Not meet their demographics at present. Looked at Woolworths in Ebbw Vale and turned it down, However demand to take 1000 across the country in next few years so will have to consider less desirable opportunities. Therefore if 3500/4000 sq.ft became available in next couple of years would need to consider.		Future	Future	Future	Future	No
Edinburgh Woollen Mill	In Festival Park but not a great success. However landlord gave them a good deal to stay last year and new landlord is working hard on the factory outlet scheme to make it a destination.	The socio demographics of the region and core customer penetration are far too low in Blaenau Gwent. They require 30% ccp whilst Ebbw Vale, Tredegar and Abertillery currently only have 1%ccp.	No	No	No	No	No
Store Twenty One	In Ebbw Vale and Brynmawr. Would take Abertillery and Tredegar. Want between 3000 and 5000sqft ground floor sales and 1500sqft back up. In prime position but difficulty finding size.		In	In	Yes	Yes	No
Sports Direct	In Festival Park and also Merthyr. No other requirements	Not sufficient population to sustain another store in the region. Would not want to relocate from Festival park to town centre as trades satisfactorily at present time	No (in Festival Park)	No	No	No	No
Bargain Booze	In Tredegar and Rassau. They are led by the franchisee coming to them and wanting to become a Bargain Booze store. Cannot be any closer than 1.5 miles from another store	Ebbw Vale too close to Rassau store so franchisee is protected	No	In	Yes	Yes	Yes

Appendix 2



Appendix 2

BLAINA WARD REGENERATION ACTION PLAN



**Prepared by:
Regeneration Department
Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council**

**Final Draft
October 2011**

Contents

	Page Number
Section A: Introduction	3
Section B: Background	4
Westside & Forgeside	5
Cwmcelyn	5
Blaina South	6
Town Centre	6
Section C: Issues and Opportunities	8
Section D: Implementation	11
Section E: Action Plan Projects	12

Section A: Introduction

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council has prepared this action plan to guide physical regeneration activity in Blaina in the next decade.

This document sets out the actions to be taken in Blaina based on research and consultation with stakeholders and service delivery partners. This plan is not a summary of actions for Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council. BGCBC is a key player and catalyst for many of the projects but many of the projects will be led by other organisations active in the Blaina area.

The table of projects sets out projects proposed with suggested lead organisations and funding sources. A comprehensive action plan is vital in guiding and co-ordinating regeneration activity in the area and attracting external funding from a wider range of funders.



Section B: Background

Blaina is located in the Ebbw Fach Valley. It is a small town serving local needs. The settlement is bi-sected by the A467 which runs along the valley. The town centre is to the east of the A467.

Blaina ward has a population of 4,800 and is made up of a number of discrete areas – Westside to the west of the A467, Cwmcelyn on the higher ground west of the town centre and Blaina South incorporating East Pentwyn & Southlands in the south of the ward adjacent to Bournville.

The ward has a mixture of public and private sector housing, the privately owned Rising Sun industrial estate, a small supermarket, medical centre housing doctors and dentist practice, library and learning action centre, a range of shops servicing local needs, a police station, community facilities and areas of open countryside.

Thirty seven percent of the population are recorded as economically inactive which is higher than the Blaenau Gwent average at 34.8%. The ward also has a slightly higher percentage of the population on Employment & Support Allowance and Incapacity Benefit at 14.8% in comparison to the Blaenau Gwent average at 14.3% and double the GB average at 6.7%. Blaina ward is a Communities First area.

Westside & Forgeside

This area consists mainly of streets of privately owned terraced housing. The area has the river Ebbw Fach running through it. The TRA has recently completed a riverside walk starting by the allotments running to the pavilion and park.

This area has a TA centre, bowls pavilion and a small play area. Pedestrian access to this area is via a pelican crossing by the Blaina roundabout on the A467 or via an underpass near the Library at the southern end of the town. Vehicular access is off the roundabout on the A467 and a turning off the A467 to access the Bowls Club and other facilities.



Cwmcelyn

This area is located above the main town of Blaina, it is a mixture of public and private sector housing including a development of older persons housing. Candystripes Day Nursery is located in a former Victorian school adjacent to Cwmcelyn Pond. The backdrop to this area is mountainside and forestry. Cwmcelyn Ponds is a popular local resource which is managed by Cwmcelyn TRA and the pond by Cwmcelyn Angling Association.

The issues for this area relate to ongoing upkeep of the area, improvements to pedestrian access to the town and anti-social behaviour in specific areas.



Blaina South

Blaina South comprises of streets of privately owned terraced housing. The TRA is not currently active.

Residential parking is an issue on the streets of terraced housing with insufficient space for the number of cars. There are limited community facilities in the area and a number of years ago the TRA worked up a proposal for a new community centre in East Pentwyn. This development did not proceed.

The consultation also highlighted a request for a children's play area local to Blaina South.

Blaina Communities First have been involved in discussions regarding facilities for young people and an area has been identified which may be suitable for the construction of a BMX track.

Town Centre

Blaina Town Centre comprises of a small number of commercial and residential properties primarily located on the main street known as High Street. Also located within the Town Centre are community venues such as the Institute, Learning Action Centre and Heritage Centre. The retail offer is limited, however the Town does benefit from a local Co-operative supermarket.

An issue for the Town Centre is the high commercial property vacancy rate of 29.5% (18 properties). This is well above the national average. The poor condition of the vacant properties adds further to the negative image of the Town, in particular The Kings Head property which has been derelict for a very long time. Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council has recently commissioned Miller Research Ltd to produce occupier suitability reports & business investment packs to target investors back into the Town Centre.

The quality of the Town Centre environment both built & natural requires attention. The only significant improvements to the town centre in recent years has been the creation of the Square at Lower High Street in 2008 and the refurbishment of Salem Chapel in 2010/11. The rest of the Town Centre looks tired and needs regenerating.

A Chamber of Trade exists however does not meet regularly, there is a need to strengthen this group. A marketing group was established in 2008 by the Town Centre Manager in partnership with Blaina Partnership & Communities First. Representatives

from a wide range of Town Centre stakeholders are involved. The groups main focus is events and promotion of the Town Centre. A number of successful events have been organised in the Town Centre since the groups formation. Footfall figures are captured through an electronic counter on High Street which monitors visitor numbers into the Town Centre.

The Town benefits from a main car park opposite the Co-op and several smaller car parks including Hope Street, bottom of High Street and by the public toilets at the Laurels. Despite this there is still a major problem with illegal parking throughout the length of High Street.

Section C: Issues and Opportunities

An understanding of the main issues existing in Blaina is essential for the production of an action plan that will target the right areas. This understanding has been developed following key meetings with BGCBC Councillors, representatives from Blaina Communities First Partnership, representatives from Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council, officers from Council departments.

A walkabout the Blaina ward was also undertaken to familiarise the authors with the issues and the potential projects. A public consultation exercise was held during Blaina Fun Day in August 2010.

A SWOT analysis has been undertaken to assimilate the information from the baseline research and establish the main strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. These results are presented in the table below.



<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural setting • Potential tourism interest in the Chartist movement • Strong and active community • Tourism interest from the development of the Ebbw Fach trail • New primary school 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor condition of built environment gives a negative image • Limited retail offer • Contracting town centre • Lack of civic space in the town centre • Functional issues in the High Street re illegal parking, off street parking • Fragmented and poorly maintained community facilities, some in unsuitable locations
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing tourism offer through the development of a Chartist Information and Visitor Centre • Improve pedestrian and cycle access with Brynmawr and Abertillery • More people into the town centre through activities and facilities • Reuse of vacant buildings for community/positive uses 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure to stop the contraction of town centre due to draw of larger supermarkets and stores • Failure to address empty properties and continued poor appearance of the area

The key issues to address through this action plan area:

- Poor quality environment built and natural
- Contracting town centre
- Fragmented community facilities



The key opportunities are:

- Attractive rural setting and location on the Ebbw Fach trail
- Heritage interest
- Active and supportive community



These issues and opportunities can be grouped into themes from the Community Strategy under which the various regeneration projects will emerge.

Theme 1: Creating communities that people enjoy and want to live in

Theme 2: Offering opportunities, support and resources in our communities for people to thrive

Theme 3: Improving our environment today for tomorrow

Section D: IMPLEMENTATION

This Action Plan has been produced in response to a recognised need in the ward of Blaina for a co-ordinated approach to the regeneration issues facing the area. The production of this Action Plan should be the start of a period of focussed action in the community.

The Action Plan has not identified one major physical intervention for the ward of Blaina. Instead a range of projects is proposed which together will improve the settlement and tackle different issues in different areas.

Co-ordination between those who will be implementing the different projects in this plan is fundamental. To this end an Implementation Group will be established and representatives from the lead organisations will be invited to be part of this group. As new projects emerge the membership of the Implementation Group will change.

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council will be an important driver of the Action Plan and the lead on specific projects. However, where projects are driven by other organisations, BGCBC will take more of an enabling and supporting role by assisting the community and partners agencies to deliver the project. Blaina Communities First will be crucial in working with the community throughout the delivery of many of the projects.

The Action Plan is intended to direct investment in the ward of Blaina over the next ten years. Some of the projects are linked and should be co-ordinated in terms of timing. However, in most cases the sequence in which the projects are undertaken is not a fundamental factor. The projects have been categorised in to short term projects (1-2 years) which have been coloured green, medium term projects (3-5 years) which have been coloured amber and long term projects (over 5 years) coloured red.

ACTION PLAN PROJECTS

THEME 1: CREATING COMMUNITIES THAT PEOPLE ENJOY AND WANT TO LIVE IN

No	Project Title	Location	Description	Key partners	Funding	Priority	Timescale
B1A	Strengthen Blaina Chamber of Trade	Town Centre	To bring together town centre business to promote the town and retail offer to residents and the wider area	BGCBC Traders	BGCBC	High	Short
B1B	Kings Head	Town Centre	To improve the appearance of the town by the removal of this dilapidated building	BGCBC UWHA	BGCBC HOVP UWHA	High	Short
B1C	Invest in town centre properties	Town Centre	To target commercial improvement grants to town centre businesses	BGCBC Traders	BGCBC HOVP	High	Short/Medium
B1D	Street Art	Town Centre	To create artwork on hoardings to brighten boarded up shops	Communities First BGCBC Shopowners	BGCBC CF	High	Short
B1E	Improve cleansing	Throughout ward	To improve cleansing throughout the ward in particular the town centre	BGCBC TRA	BGCBC	High	Ongoing

No	Project Title	Location	Description	Key partners	Funding	Priority	Timescale
B1F	Boundary improvements	Town Centre	Improve boundary fences and walls to enhance the environment. To include fence alongside medical centre and repainting steel railings by northern roundabout.	BGCBC Medical Centre	Private HOVP BGCBC	High	Short
B1G	Improve signage	Town Centre	Replace/clean highway signs	BGCBC Town Council	BGCBC	Medium	Short
B1H	Public Art	Throughout ward	To commission public art	BGCBC CF TRA	HOV Arts Council	Medium	Medium
B1J	New uses for key vacant buildings	Town Centre	There are a number of vacant and underused buildings in the town centre. New sustainable uses are to be investigated	BGCBC CF Owners Housing Assoc.		High	Medium
B1K	Town Square	Town Centre	To create a space for events and for people to gather. This space also needs to bring people into the town with the inclusion of a feature/facility.	BGCBC Town Council Traders	HOVP BGCBC Traders Town Council	High	Long

B1L	Gasworks Site	Westside	Bring former gas works site in to use	Transco BGCBC		Low	Long
B1M	Integrated Childrens Centre	Blaina South	Should the building become available to consider alternative uses	BGCBC CF		Medium	Long
V1A	Manage Car Parking	Town Centre	To improve signage and existing car parking provision in the town centre To enforce existing traffic orders To investigate excessive speeds in the car park	BGCBC Gwent Police Traders	EU HOV BGCBC	Medium	Short
V2B	Pedestrian Signposting	Town Centre	To update finger signposting from the main car park to the facilities within the town centre	BGCBC Traders Town Council		High	Short
V3C	High Street	Town Centre	To improve the High Street for all users – pedestrians, retailers and vehicles. This project links with the Town Square project in Theme 1. To include consideration of narrowing pavements, on street parking, traffic calming and one way system	BGCBC Highways BGCBC Regeneration Blaina Chamber of Trade Town Council	EU HOV BGCBC	High	Medium

V4D	Residential Car Parking	Throughout ward	To investigate opportunities to alleviate parking problems in residential streets	BGCBC Housing Associations		Low	Medium
L1A	Community Building	Westside	Provision of a new community building	WAFTRA Communities First Housing Assoc.		High	Short
L2B	Replica Signalbox	Westside	To create a replica signalbox on the line of the Ebbw Fach Trail	WAFTRA Communities First Ebbw Fach Trail group		Low	Short
L3C	Skate Park	Town Centre	To improve the use of the skatepark including lighting and more ramps.	CF BGCBC		High	Short
L4D	Upgrade play area at the Pavilion	Westside	Play area at the pavilion is in need of modernisation	CF BGCBC		Low	Medium
L5E	Youth Facilities	Town Centre	To provide a youth shelter in the Town Centre and to provide adequate youth provision across the ward	BGCBC CF Safer Blaenau Gwent		High	Medium

L6F	Lighting at MUGA	Town Centre	To provide adequate lighting	BGCBC CF, Safer Blaenau Gwent		High	Medium
L7G	Rugby Ground		To improve facilities at the Rugby ground	Blaina RFC CF BGCBC	Lottery WRU CF	Short	Medium
L8H	Provision of a new play area in the town centre to bring people into the town	Town Centre	To consider a play area as part of a town centre square	BGCBC CF		Medium	Long
L9J	Review of community centre provision	Throughout ward	To investigate current provision and agree a long term plan for repair, replacement and closure	CF BGCBC		High	Long
L10K	Play area	Blaina South	To consider improved provision in this area	CF BGCBC Town Council		Medium	Long
L11L	BMX track	Blaina South	To investigate the feasibility of providing a BMX track	CF BGCBC		Medium	Medium

THEME 2: OFFERING OPPORTUNITIES, SUPPORT AND RESOURCES IN OUR COMMUNITIES FOR PEOPLE TO THRIVE

No	Project Title	Location	Description	Key partners	Funding	Priority	Timescale
2A	Chartist Information Centre	Town Centre	To provide a good quality visitor experience in the refurbished Salem Chapel and to promote the facility	Nantyglo & Blaina Charter Group Ebbw Fach Trail Group BGCBC Town Council	VRP BGCBC	High	Short
2B	Promote and sustain fishing at Cwmcelyn Ponds	Cwmcelyn	To work with other angling associations to jointly promote facilities	Angling Association Cwmcelyn TRA	SPLASH	Ongoing	Short
2C	Ebbw Fach Trail	Westside & Cwmcelyn	To promote the trail to residents of Blaina	Ebbw Fach Trail Group		Ongoing	Short
2D	Interpretation Panels	Main Car Park, Town Centre	To design and install a heritage interpretation panel in the main car park	Charter Group Town Council BGCBC Blaina Heritage Action Group	HOVP	High	Short
2E	Heritage Centre	Town Centre	To improve promotion of the Heritage Centre	Blaina Heritage Action Group		Medium	Short
2F	Community Farm and Trekking Centre		To commission a feasibility study of establishing a community farm and trekking centre	BGCBC CF		High	Short
2G	BUZZ	Town Centre	To develop the BUZZ social enterprise and promotion of bike hire	BUZZ CF BGCBC		Medium	Short

2H	Links between the town and Ebbw Fach Trail	Town Centre	To ensure that users of the Ebbw Fach Trail are encouraged to visit the town. Use of information panels and good links to play a role	Ebbw Fach Trail Group CF BGCBC	VRP	High	Short
2J	Camping Site	Throughout	To investigate the feasibility and location of creating a camp site within the ward	Private individual BGCBC Town Council CF		Medium	Medium
2K	Visitor Accommodation	Throughout	To encourage and support establishing suitable visitor accommodation	BGCBC Visit Wales Private sector		Medium	Medium

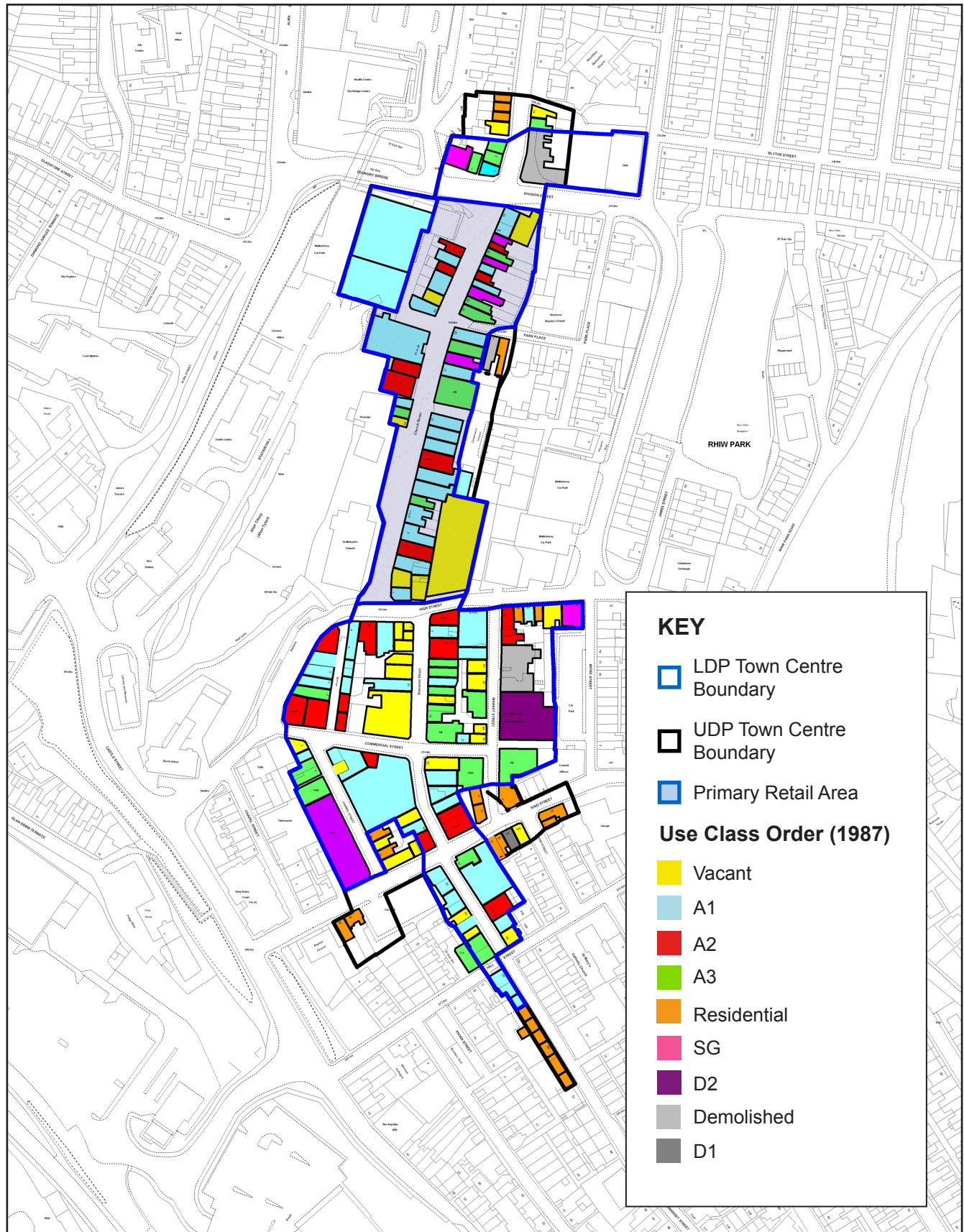
THEME 3: IMPROVING OUR ENVIRONMENT TODAY FOR TOMORROW

No	Project Title	Location	Description	Key partners	Funding	Priority	Timescale
3A	Ebbw Fach river	Westside	To improve biodiversity	BGCBC TRA Environment Agency	VRP Keep Wales Tidy Splash	High	Short
3B	Increase biodiversity	Ward wide	Creation and enhancement of habitats to improve biodiversity in line with local and national biodiversity targets	BGCBC CF Forestry Commission		Medium	Medium
3B	Improve greenspace	Throughout ward	To identify key areas of open space that have or require improvement and to identify appropriate maintenance or improve the area	TRA CF BGCBC	HOVP VRP	Medium	Medium

Appendix 3

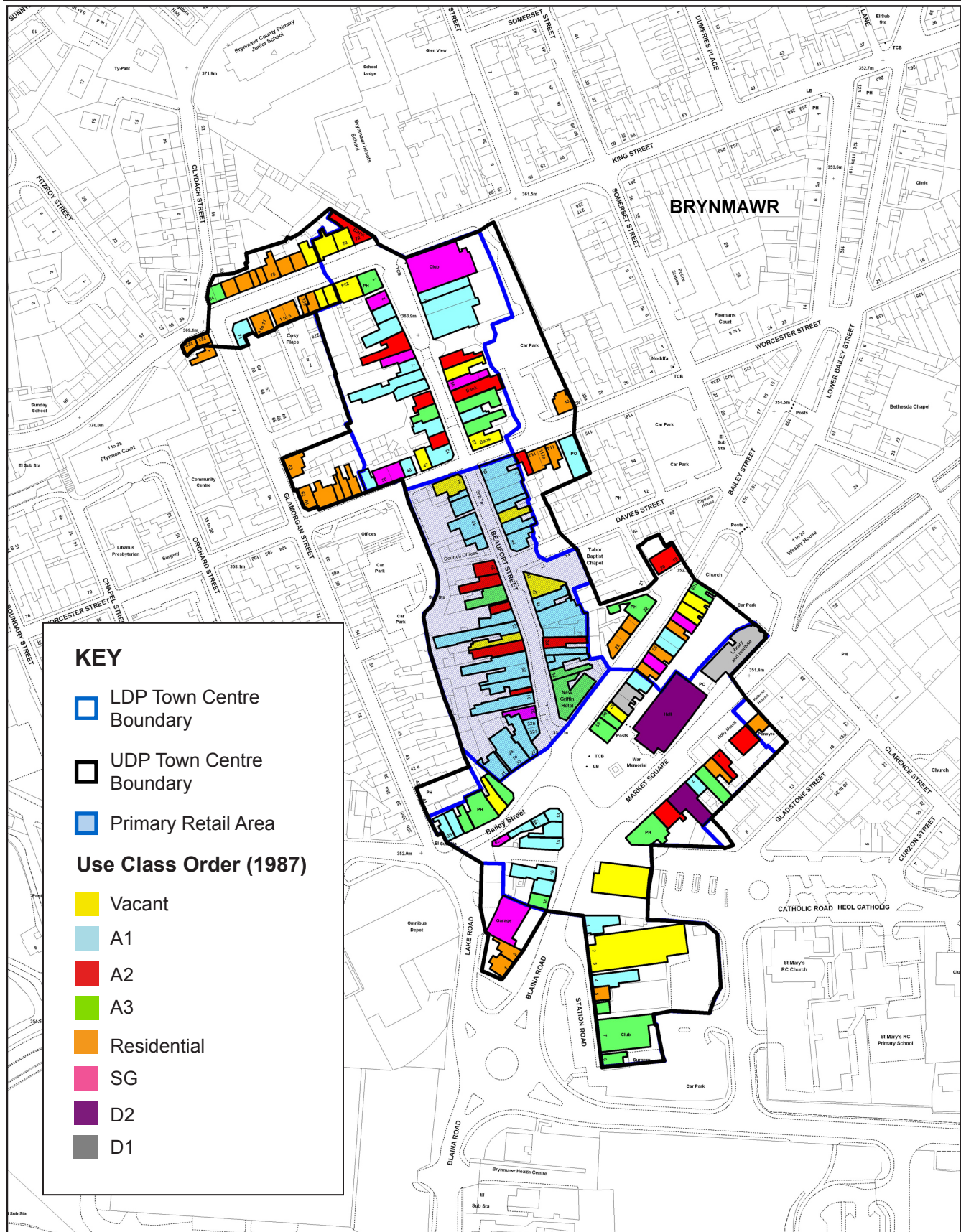
Date : 06/06/2012	Blaenau Gwent Local Development Plan	 Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council Regeneration Division
Scale : 1:2000	Results of the Town Centre Health Checks (2009)	

Town Centre: Abertillery



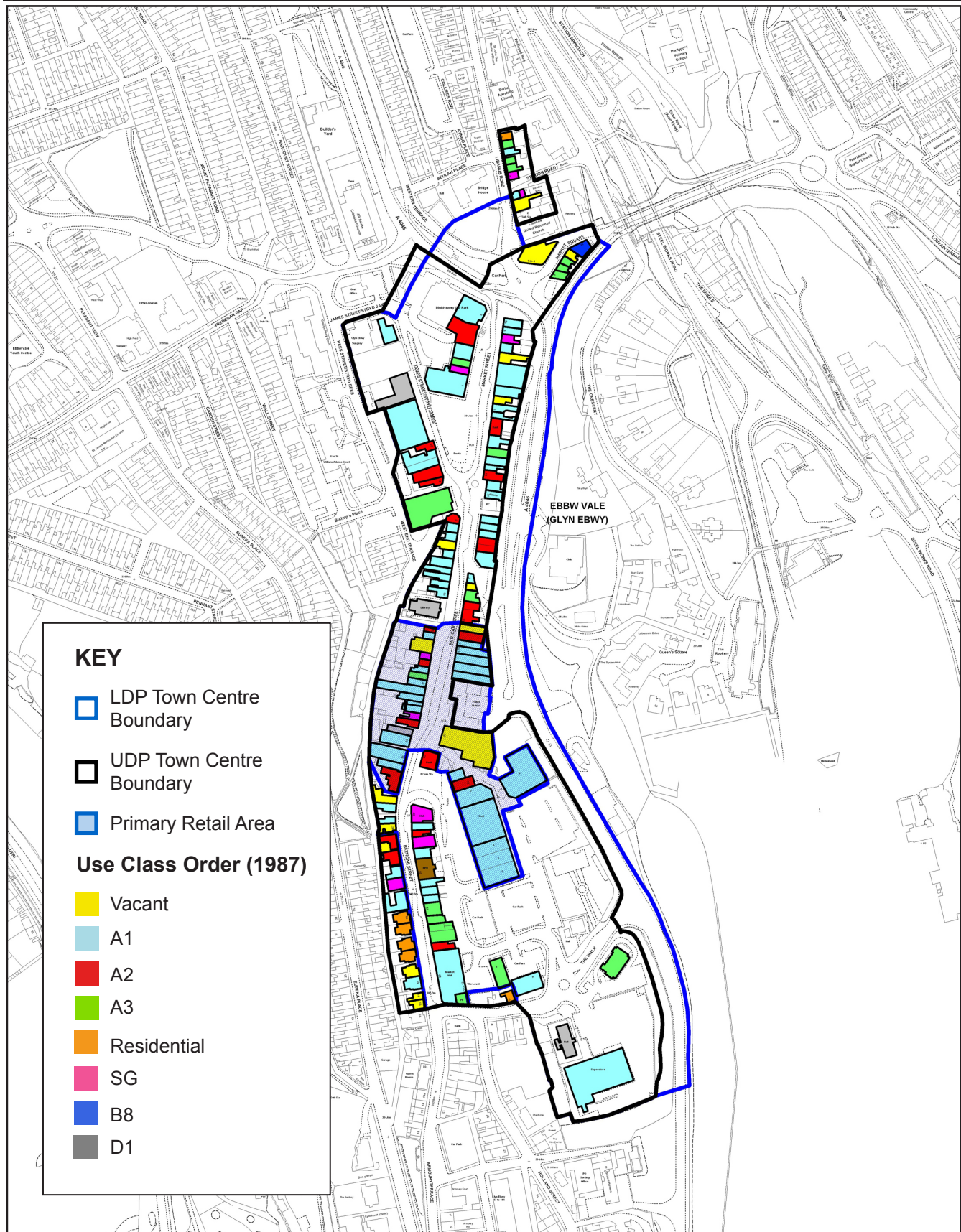
Date : 06/06/2012	Blaenau Gwent Local Development Plan	 Ddyngor Blaenau Gwent Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council Regeneration Division
Scale : 1:2000	Results of the Town Centre Health Checks (2009)	

Town Centre: Brynmawr



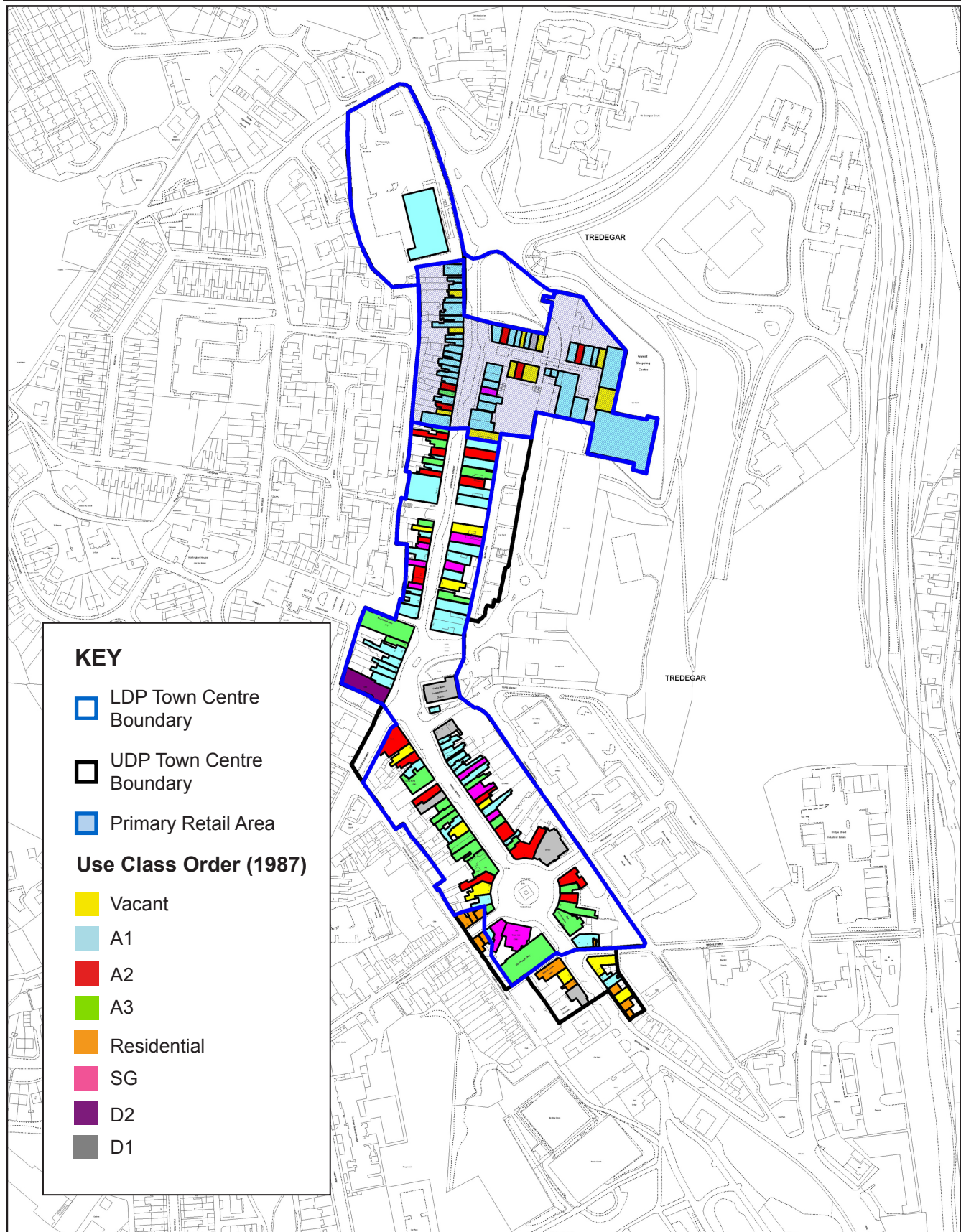
Date : 06/06/2012	Blaenau Gwent Local Development Plan	 <p>Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council Regeneration Division</p>
Scale : 1:4000	Results of the Town Centre Health Checks (2009)	

Town Centre: Ebbw Vale



Date : 06/06/2012	Blaenau Gwent Local Development Plan	 Dyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council Regeneration Division
Scale : 1:4000	Results of the Town Centre Health Checks (2009)	

Town Centre: Tredegar



Appendix 4



Hot Food Takeaways & Public Houses in Town Centres Supplementary Planning Guidance Note 9

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council Unitary Development Plan

September 2008



Contents

	Page
1.0 Introduction	1
2.0 Background	1
3.0 The Policy Context	2
4.0 The Need for Planning Permission	3
5.0 Appropriate Locations for Food and Drink Uses	4
6.0 Detailed Guidelines	5
7.0 Other Legislation	8
8.0 Monitoring and Review	8
 Tables	
Table 1: Examples of specific A3 uses included and excluded from this SPG	2
Table 2: The current position in terms of the number of hot food takeaways and public houses in the town centres	5
 Appendices	
Appendix A: Relevant Policies of the adopted Blaenau Gwent Unitary Development Plan	9
Appendix B: Useful Contacts	10
Appendix C: Abertillery Town Centre	13
Appendix D: Blaina Town Centre	14
Appendix E: Brynmawr Town Centre	15
Appendix F: Ebbw Vale Town Centre	16
Appendix G: Tredegar Town Centre	17

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Supplementary Planning Guidance

HOT FOOD TAKEAWAYS AND PUBLIC HOUSES IN TOWN CENTRES

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) is to expand upon the Council's existing planning policy on food and drink uses contained within the adopted Blaenau Gwent Unitary Development Plan. It will outline how the Council will treat planning applications for hot food takeaway establishments and public houses in town centres and the specific policy issues which will be considered in the determination of such applications.
- 1.2 Following adoption by the Council, this SPG will be a material consideration in the determination of all planning applications for hot food takeaway establishments and public houses in the town centres, including applications for renewal of consents.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council, as the Local Planning Authority receive numerous planning applications each year to build new and change the use of buildings and retail units to hot food takeaway establishments and public houses in the town centres. In recent years, there has been a significant increase in the number of hot food takeaway establishments and public houses within the town centres. The increase in the number of people using these facilities has led to concern being expressed by local residents, local businesses and others, in terms of their impact on both the character of the area, vitality of the shopping areas and residential amenity. However, food and drink uses are considered to be more appropriately located in town centres, rather than outside as they add to the vitality of the town centres, providing diversity and support to the daytime retail and evening time leisure economies.
- 2.2 In response to this, research has been carried out to look at how the balance of uses in the town centres has changed, what effect this has had and whether specific planning guidance is required to regulate new build and further proposed changes of retail units and buildings to hot food takeaway establishments and public houses.
- 2.3 This has led to the production of this guidance, which provides a detailed planning policy framework in which future decisions on individual applications can be made. The overall aim of the guidance is to ensure that an appropriate balance of food and drink businesses with other uses is retained, to support the retail function and to protect residential amenity.
- 2.4 For the purpose of this SPG 'Hot Food Takeaway' establishments are defined as any use falling within the Use Class A3 of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes Order) 1987 where the primary purpose of the business is the

sale of hot food for consumption off the premises. Table 1 below gives an indication of the uses which are included and excluded from this definition and which are covered by this SPG.

Specific Use included in this SPG	Specific use excluded from the SPG
Chinese / Indian / Other Takeaways	Restaurants/ Bistros
Kebab House	Coffee Shop
Fish and Chip Shop	Night Clubs
Pizzeria	Café (predominantly day-time opening)
Drive-Through Premises	
Public Houses	
Wine Bars	

Table 1: Examples of Specific A3 uses included and excluded from this Supplementary Planning Guidance Note

- 2.5 This SPG takes into account the imminent changes that are expected to the Use Class Order, where separate use classes will be created for restaurants and cafes, drinking establishments and hot food takeaways.
- 2.6 The Council would urge anyone seeking to submit an application for a hot food takeaway establishment or a public house within the town centre to read this SPG and to contact the Local Planning Authority (see Appendix B for contact details) in advance of submitting an application to discuss the issues which are raised in this document on a site specific basis.

3.0 THE POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 This note has been prepared in accordance with guidance contained in Planning Policy Wales, Technical Advice Notes and the adopted Blaenau Gwent Unitary Development Plan.

National Planning Policy

- 3.2 National Planning policy (as contained in *Planning Policy Wales 2002 and amended by the Ministerial Interim Planning Policy Statement 02/2005: Planning for Retailing and Town Centres*) seeks to:

- “promote established town and district centres as the most appropriate locations for retailing, leisure and for other functions complementary to it”; and
- “enhance the vitality, attractiveness and viability of town, district, local and village centres.

- 3.3 Paragraph 10.1.3 of Planning Policy Wales (as amended) states that:

“Vitality is reflected in how busy a centre is at different times and in different parts, attractiveness in the facilities and character which draw in trade. Viability, on the other hand, refers to the ability of the centre to attract investment, not only to maintain the fabric, but to also allow for improvement and adaptation to changing needs.”

- 3.4 However, paragraph 10 of Technical Advice Note 4: *Retailing and Town Centres* states that:

“Changes of use can create concentrations of single uses, such as restaurants and takeaway food outlets, where cumulative effects can cause local problems. Such proposals should be assessed against development plan policies on their contribution to diversification and on the cumulative effects on matters such as parking and local residential amenity.”

Local Planning Policy

- 3.5 Policy S6 (see Appendix A) of the adopted Unitary Development Plan sets out particular criteria by which individual proposals for food and drink establishments within the defined urban area will be assessed. The broad aims of the policy are:
- To help maintain the viability and vitality of the designated central shopping areas as outlined in the Unitary Development Plan proposal maps; and
 - Locate hot food takeaways where they would not have a detrimental impact on the highway network, highway safety and ensuring acceptable amenity standards to residents of nearby properties.

4.0 THE NEED FOR PLANNING PERMISSION

- 4.1 The Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 subdivides different types of use classes into separate classes of use. In general, any proposal to change the use of premises from one use class to another class requires planning permission.
- 4.2 Part A of the Use Classes Order covers three classes of use which are generally found in shopping areas:
- A1 Shops
 - A2 Financial and Professional Services
 - A3 Food and Drink
- 4.3 Use Class A3 broadly covers the following uses: restaurants, cafes, snack bars, wine bars, public houses and hot food takeaways. Planning permission is not required to change the use of premises already in the use class to a hot food takeaway, e.g. fish and chips to one selling a different type of hot food, e.g. Chinese takeaway. However, in some cases, conditions attached to a planning permission may restrict the particular uses which are allowed at a property. For example, a restaurant or a café may be prevented from operating as a hot food takeaway, wine bar or public house, if the additional noise and nuisance likely to arise from such uses would be unacceptable to nearby residents.
- 4.4 However, if it is intended to use the property for a food and drink business and is currently not used for that purpose then a change of use planning application will be required.

4.5 In addition to permission to change the use of the premises, planning permission will be required for:

- Extensions to a property and may be required for external alterations (including shop front alterations and external shutters. Further guidance is available on what is acceptable in Supplementary Planning Guidance Note 1 – Design Guidance for Shopfronts, Abertillery Design Guidance and policy S7 of the adopted Unitary Development Plan – see Appendix A.)
- New or altered signs may require advertisement consent; and
- Special consent may be necessary for certain proposals affecting listed buildings or buildings in conservation areas.

5.0 APPROPRIATE LOCATIONS FOR FOOD AND DRINK USES

5.1 Proposals to locate a food and drink use in a town centre is generally acceptable and encouraged, subject to them not leading to a concentration of non A1 uses within the town centre (see Appendix C-G for town centre boundaries as defined in the Unitary Development Plan). However, the number and concentration of such uses should not detract from the overall character and function of the centres. Particular care needs to be exercised in locating such uses in or near primarily residential areas, including residential accommodation above or adjacent to the proposal.

The number and concentration of uses

5.2 Generally, in Blaenau Gwent, food and drink uses are dispersed. However, there are pockets where there is a concentration of such uses, including premises such as public houses and hot food takeaway establishments, which have a distinctive character and late night opening. In order to minimise the impact on vitality and viability, concentrations or clusters of hot food takeaways and public houses should be avoided as they often have an adverse impact on the character of the area.

In order to minimise the impact on vitality and viability, no more than 3 hot food takeaways and/ or public houses should be located within close proximity to each other in the town centres*. Advice should be sought from the architectural liaison officer and the planning policy team (see Appendix B for contact details) and each application will be assessed in terms of the crime and police incident records and the town centre land use survey.

*Close proximity will be defined on a case-by-case basis due to the difference in the topography and layout of the town centres.

As far as the town centres are concerned, the number of hot food takeaway establishments should be equal to or no greater than 7.0% of the total number of retail units/ buildings in the town centre and the number of public houses should be equal to or no greater than 4.0% of the total number of retail units/ buildings in the town centre.

- 5.3 A working group comprising of Planning Policy, Planning Control, Regeneration, Environmental Health and the Police was established to create the thresholds for hot food takeaways and public houses. The thresholds are based on local knowledge and extensive survey information undertaken by the Police and Planning Policy. The survey undertaken by the Police analysed A3 premises compared with locations of anti social behaviour.
- 5.4 A town centre land use survey was conducted in April 2008. The table below shows the current position (April 2008) in terms of the number of hot food takeaways and public houses occupying the retail units and buildings in the town centres.

Town Centre	Number of Ground Floor Units	A3 Uses	Hot Food Takeaway Establishments	Public Houses
Abertillery	162	23 (14.2%)	12 (7.4%)	7 (4.3%)
Blaina	66	13 (19.7%)	6 (9.1%)	7 (10.6%)
Brynawr	155	20 (12.9%)	11 (7.1%)	7(4.5%)
Ebbw Vale	140	20 (14.3%)	12 (8.6%)	4 (2.9%)
Tredegar	173	25 (14.5%)	12 (6.9%)	6 (3.5%)

Table 2: The current position (April 2008) in terms of the number of hot food takeaways and public houses in the town centres

- 5.5 Applications relating to a combination of A3 uses, for instance the mixed use of public houses and restaurants or restaurants and takeaway use will be considered on their own merits, and where appropriate, the guidelines contained within this SPG will be applied. Where an A3 use is ancillary to the primary use of the proposal this too will also be considered on a case-by-case basis and if necessary, the guidelines contained within this SPG will be applied.

Ground Floor Land Use Survey

- 5.6 One of the products of the research has been a survey of the ground floor uses along the shopping frontages of the five town centres of Abertillery, Blaina, Brynawr, Ebbw Vale and Tredegar. This in itself will assist with the consideration of future proposals in the town centres. However developers will be required to carry out an up to date survey of the ground floor uses of the town centre at the time of the application. The Planning Policy Team will assist where necessary (see Appendix B for contact details).

6.0 DETAILED GUIDELINES

- 6.1 This section provides detailed guidance on other considerations against which all planning applications for food and drink establishments are assessed. The

relative importance attached to these factors varies according to the precise nature and location of the proposal. It is therefore important that applicants provide as much detail as possible about their proposals, especially in relation to the requirements outlined in the following section of the guidelines.

- 6.2 The other main considerations in relation to hot food takeaway establishments and public houses are summarised below:
- Highway matters;
 - Smells / Discharge of fumes;
 - Litter;
 - Noise and disturbance;
 - Hours of opening; and
 - Crime and Disorder (section 17 considerations) / Anti-social behaviour.

Highway Matters

- 6.3 The effect, which a proposed use is likely to have on Highway Matters, is an important consideration. Planning permission is unlikely to be granted where increased traffic flows would cause or aggravate congestion or otherwise affect highway safety. Concurrently, pedestrian access must be safe and convenient to all highway users and not be prejudiced by any such proposal.
- 6.4 A feature of hot-food takeaways is their tendency to generate short-term on-street car parking, directly outside the premises and on adjacent side streets. This can cause obstruction on main roads and inconvenience to local residents, especially in the evenings when residential areas are fully parked. Proposals, which might encourage short-stay car parking near to junctions, traffic lights, pedestrian crossings, bus stops and double yellow lines, are likely to be unacceptable. It follows therefore that they may be best located on secondary roads or on sites not fronting directly onto the highway. Policy T4 (see Appendix A) of the adopted Unitary Development Plan requires that new development be adequately served from the existing highway network, if it cannot the scheme should be designed, to ensure that highway safety will not be prejudiced; and environmental harm is avoided.
- 6.5 Public Houses on the other hand, generate longer-term parking requirements, and applicants must show that adequate arrangements exist for customer and staff parking, either on site where appropriate or in the vicinity of the proposed site within established shopping areas. If an area is already congested with parking in the evening, the proposal may increase this problem to an unacceptable degree.

Smells and Discharge of Fumes

- 6.6 Smells and smoke resulting from the preparation and cooking of hot food can cause nuisance to nearby residents. Problems relating to smells should be mitigated by the installation of suitably designed extraction systems. The actual design of the extraction system will vary from premises to premises, but most should be located to the rear of the property. Modern equipment, combined with high-level ventilation is adequate to reduce smell to prevent nuisance at any sensitive location. Advice on the design, suitability and

installation of the extraction system should be sought from Environmental Health (see Appendix B for contact details).

Litter

- 6.7 No matter how careful the owner of the hot food take-away, there is a tendency to generate litter, resulting in nuisance to the nearby residents, as well as the area looking unsightly. Where appropriate, the applicant may be required to provide a litterbin(s) outside the take-away premises as part of a condition of the planning permission.
- 6.8 Proposals should include adequate facilities on the premises for the storage of refuse generated by the business. Refuse bags or receptacles should not be left outside the premises or nearby streets (except for collection purposes) as this can attract rodents and create a public health hazard. Suitable access must be provided for the collection of refuse.

Noise Disturbance

- 6.9 The proximity of a proposal to residential premises is also important because of the nuisance which can be caused to residents by noise and increased activity associated with customers and their cars or taxis arriving and leaving premises. In general, proposals are unlikely to be acceptable where residents live immediately above or next-door. However, should planning permission be granted under such circumstances, applicants will need to demonstrate the provision of satisfactory noise insulation of all equipment and soundproofing between floors or walls before the use commences.

Hours of Opening

- 6.10 Most businesses usually operate on a 9:00am-5:30pm basis, for example a coffee shop located in a town centre. However, premises wishing to provide hot food or drink between 11.00 pm and 5.00 am require a premises licence issued in accordance with the Licensing Act 2003. The types of premises that may require a licence would include hot food takeaways, public houses, night-clubs etc. An application for a premises licence must be submitted to the Council's licensing section (see Appendix B for contact details) and if, no objections are received, a licence will be granted for an indefinite period. If objections are received, the Council's Licensing Committee would decide if a licence can be granted and on what terms. Opening for other uses may also be subject to environmental health and other legislation. All hours of opening in Blaenau Gwent are controlled by the licensing regime.

Crime & Disorder / Anti-social Behaviour

- 6.11 Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1988 imposes a statutory duty on local and police authorities to consider the impact that their daily functions and services will have on crime and disorder. The aim is to anticipate the likely consequences on crime of decisions and look to ensure that any negative impact is avoided and positive outcomes are promoted. This guidance has been prepared in consultation with the police authority.

6.12 A3 uses by their very nature attract large numbers of people. Statistics show that where there is a gathering of people during the evenings/nights there tends to be instances of Crime & Disorder/ Anti-social behaviour. Concentrations of A3 uses in a particular area exacerbate the problem, particularly when hot food takeaways are situated in close proximity to licensed premises such as public houses. These factors and figures for Crime & Disorder / Anti-social behaviour must be taken into account when an application is made. Blaenau Gwent has a formal protocol with Gwent Police. They will be consulted on every application for an A3 use. The view of the police will be key to determining every planning application for uses covered in this SPG.

7.0 OTHER LEGISLATION

7.1 Proposals will also require any approvals under other legislation e.g. environmental protection, licensing and building regulations. Applicants are responsible for compliance with these requirements.

8.0 MONITORING AND REVIEW

8.1 The Council will need to ensure that the guidelines set out in this document continue to be relevant, and to do this the SPG will be kept under review through annual land use retail surveys in the town centres and monthly retail take up surveys. In this way, it will be possible for the Council to ensure that the SPG remains effective as a land-use planning document.

APPENDIX A: RELEVANT POLICIES OF THE ADOPTED BLAENAU GWENT UNITARY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

S6 FOOD AND DRINK

WITHIN THE DEFINED URBAN AREA, FOOD AND DRINK ESTABLISHMENTS WILL ONLY BE PERMITTED WHERE:

- (A) THEY WOULD NOT BE DETRIMENTAL TO THE AMENITIES OF OCCUPANTS OF NEIGHBOURING RESIDENTIAL PROPERTIES; AND**
- (B) THERE IS NO DETRIMENTAL IMPACT ON THE HIGHWAY NETWORK OR HIGHWAY SAFETY; AND**
- (C) THE PROPOSAL DOES NOT HARM THE VITALITY, VIABILITY AND RETAIL MIX OF THE AREA AS A RESULT OF A PROLIFERATION OF THIS TYPE OF USE.**

S7 SHOP FRONT ALTERATIONS

ALTERATIONS TO SHOP FRONTS WILL ONLY BE PERMITTED WHERE:

- (A) EXISTING VICTORIAN, EDWARDIAN AND OTHER SHOPFRONTS OF QUALITY AND HISTORIC VALUE ARE RETAINED OR RESTORED;**
- (B) THE STYLE AND DESIGN OF NEW AND REPLACEMENT SHOPFRONTS ARE COMPATIBLE WITH AND RESPECT THE STYLE OF THE BUILDING INTO WHICH THEY ARE INSERTED AND THE CHARACTER OF THE STREET SCENE IN WHICH THEY ARE SITUATED.**

T4 HIGHWAY CONSIDERATIONS IN NEW DEVELOPMENT

NEW DEVELOPMENT WILL BE PERMITTED PROVIDED THAT IT CAN BE ADEQUATELY SERVED FROM THE EXISTING HIGHWAY NETWORK. IF IT CANNOT, THE SCHEME SHOULD BE DESIGNED TO ENSURE THAT:

- (A) HIGHWAY SAFETY WILL NOT BE PREJUDICED; AND**
- (B) ENVIRONMENTAL HARM IS AVOIDED.**

APPENDIX B: USEFUL CONTACTS

Planning Control

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Planning Control
Blaina District Office
High Street
Blaina

Tel: (01495) 355555

Planning Policy

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Regeneration Division
Business Resource Centre
Tafarnaubach Industrial Estate
Tredegar
NP22 3AA

Tel: (01495) 355538

Commercial Improvement Grants

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Regeneration Division
Business Resource Centre
Tafarnaubach Industrial Estate
Tredegar
NP22 3AA

Tel: (01495) 355540

Building Control

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Building Control
Blaina District Office
High Street
Blaina

Tel: (01495) 355520

Environmental Health

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Environmental Health
Abertillery Council Offices
Mitre Street
Abertillery

Tel: (01495) 355011

Trading Standards and Licensing

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Trading Standards and Licensing
Brynmawr District Office
Beaufort Street
Brynmawr
NP23 4AG

Tel: (01495) 356138/355050

Community Safety

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Community Safety Partnership
Bedwellty House
The Lodge
Tredegar

Tel: (01495) 356145

Highways and Transportation

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Highways and Transportation
Baldwin House
Victoria Business Park
Ebbw Vale
NP23 8ED

Tel: (01495) 355371

Police Architectural Liaison Officer

Suite 2
Newbridge Police Station
High Street
Newbridge
NP11 4FH

Tel: (01495) 232479

Ebbw Vale and Tredegar Town Centre Manager

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Regeneration Division
Business Resource Centre
Tafarnaubach Industrial Estate
Tredegar
NP22 3AA

Tel: (01495) 355539

Abertillery, Blaina and Brynmawr Town Centre Manager

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

Regeneration Division

Business Resource Centre

Tafarnaubach Industrial Estate

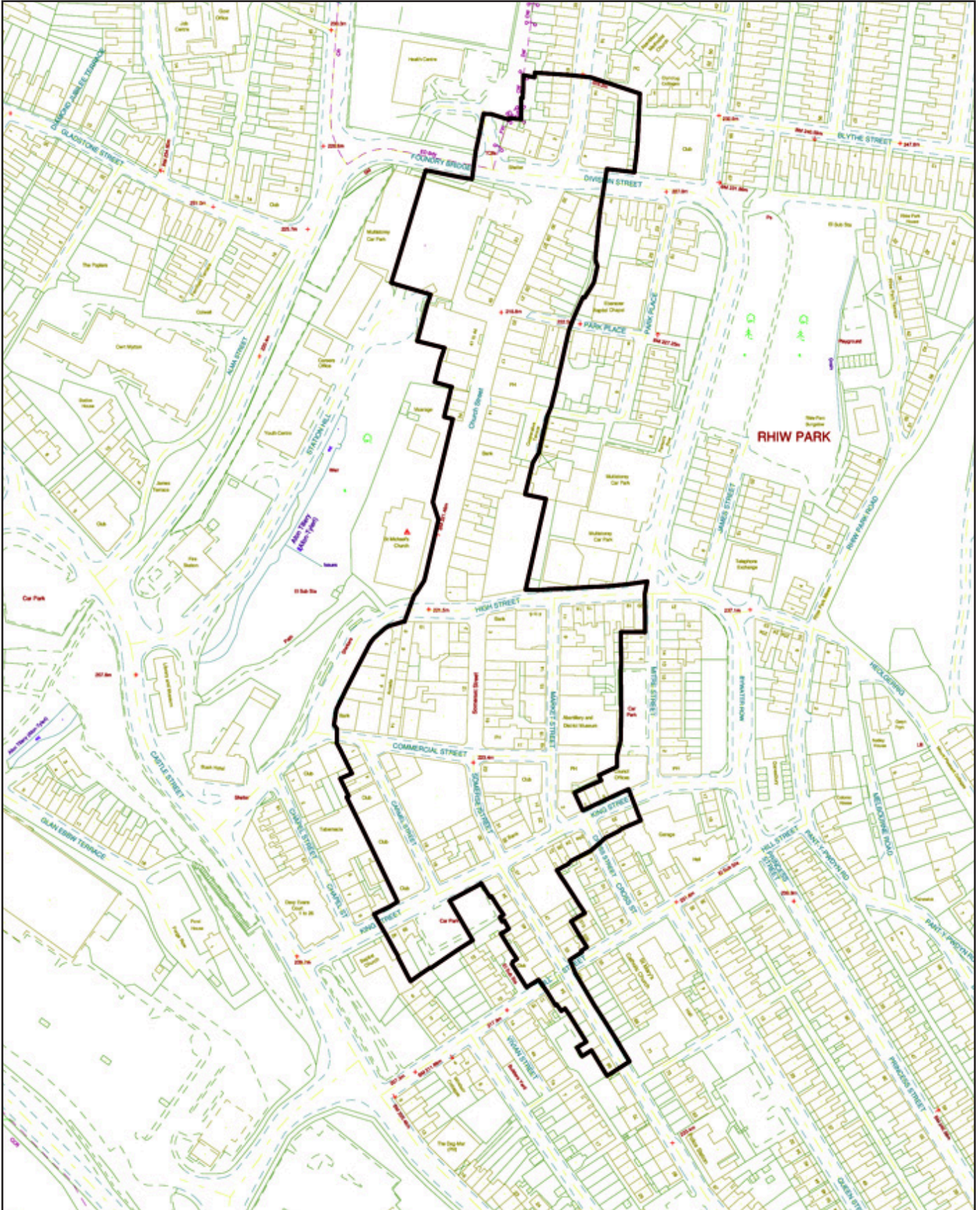
Tredegar

NP22 3AA

Tel: (01495) 355565

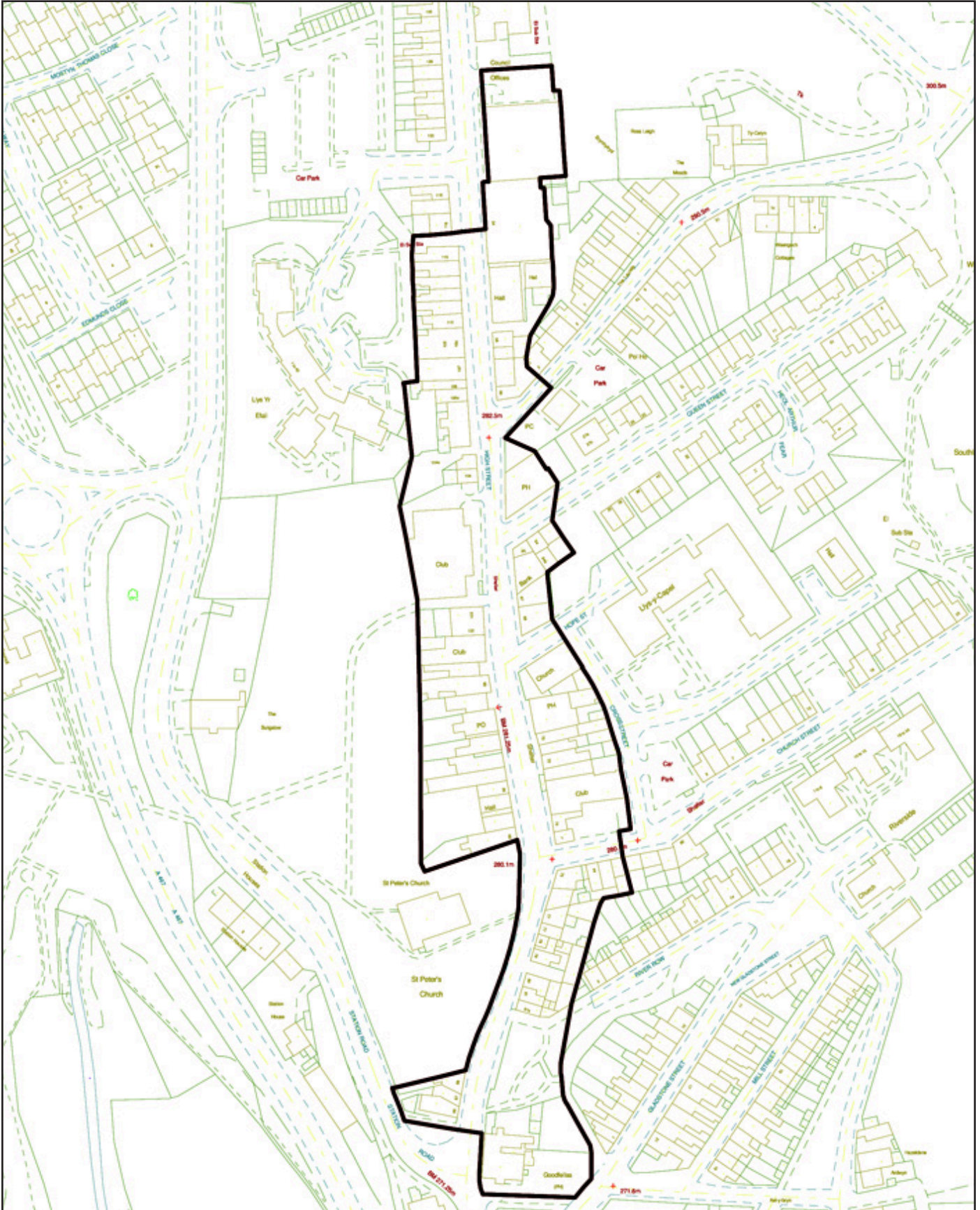


Title : **Appendix C - Abertillery Town Centre** (as defined in the Blaenau Gwent Unitary Development Plan) Scale 1 : 2200



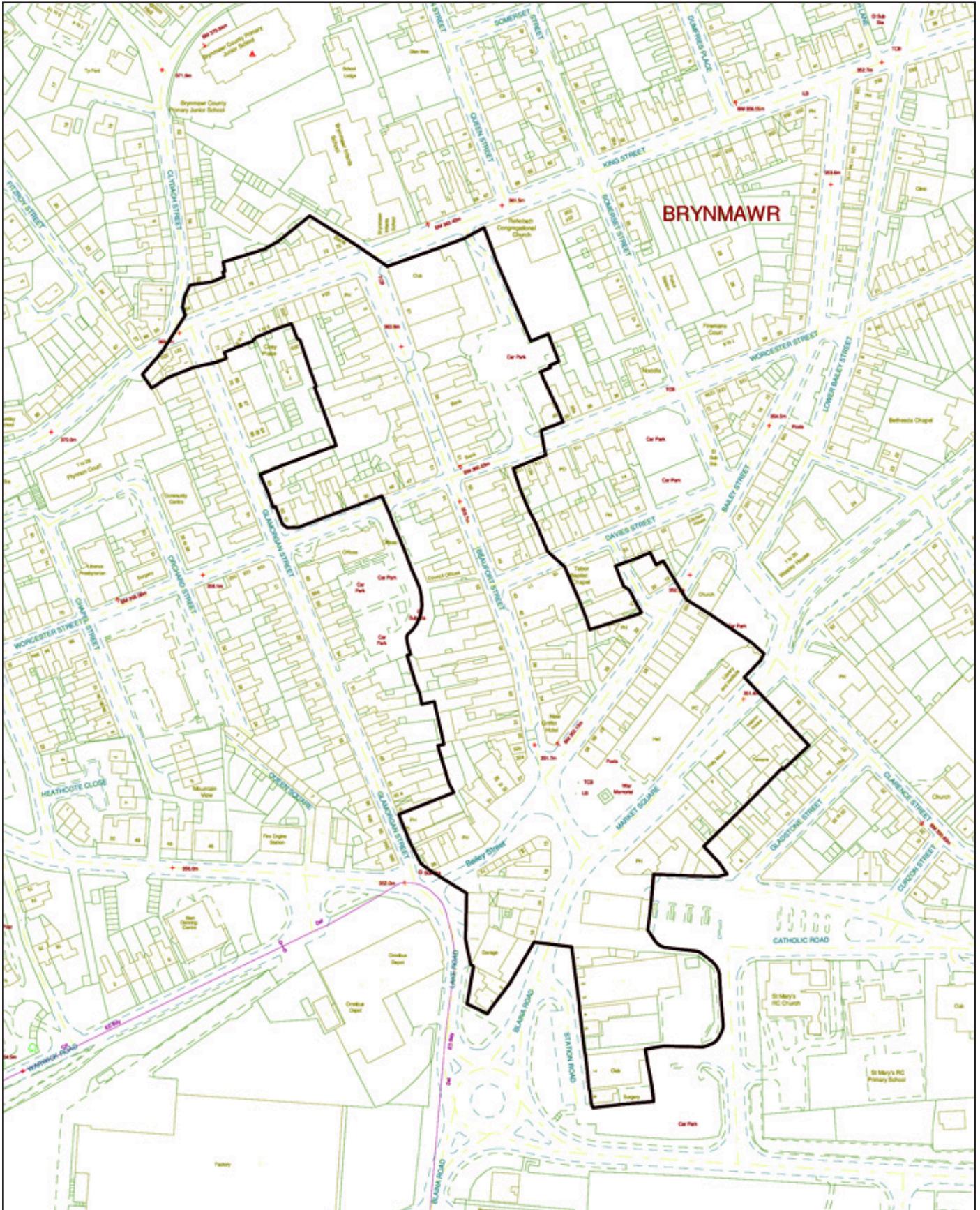


Title : **Appendix D - Blaina Town Centre** (as defined in the Blaenau Gwent Unitary Development Plan) Scale 1 : 2000





Title : **Appendix E - Brynmawr Town Centre** (as defined in the Blaenau Gwent Unitary Development Plan) Scale 1 : 2200





Title : **Appendix F - Ebbw Vale Town Centre** (as defined in the Blaenau Gwent Unitary Development Plan) Scale 1 : 3500

