

## **WELSH GOVERNMENT**

### **Position Statement**

**Examination Hearings: June/July 2012**

**Hearing Session 1: Development Strategy /  
Vision**

**Blaenau Gwent Local Development Plan**

## **SESSION 1: DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY/ VISION**

### **Question 1.**

**1a. Does the Plan provide an appropriate spatial strategy for Blaenau Gwent?**

**1b. To what extent can it be considered to be locally distinctive?**

Yes, the Plan provides an appropriate spatial strategy for Blaenau Gwent of 'growth and regeneration' (Ch5 LDP).

LDP Wales (paras2.10-2.12) states that the spatial strategy of any LDP should: reflect the "unique economic, environmental and social characteristics, opportunities and issues of the area", seek to achieve the plan's key aims and objectives, and, indicate the broad locations for development.

The Plan appears to do this.

**1c. Might the strategy be considered to be an aspiration rather than one that is credible and capable of being delivered over the Plan period?**

**1d. Can the spatial strategy therefore be considered to be sound?**

Whilst the Plan's strategy for regeneration and growth is clearly aspirational, it is a positive approach to move the local authority forward, maximising economic opportunities to the benefit of local communities and businesses. Failure to deliver this through the plan period does not make the plan 'unsound'. Rather, it is an issue of timing but travelling in an appropriate direction.

We consider that, in the main, the evidence base does support the deliverability of the strategy; however, perhaps the greatest matter of conjecture is whether it can be delivered within the plan period. The monitoring framework provides the key to ensuring that annual monitoring and the required 4-yearly full Plan review consider whether the strategy is on target and has key triggers for taking appropriate action.

### **Question 2.**

**2a. What research and evidence base underpins the regeneration and growth strategy the Council has chosen (refer SD19-23)?**

**2b. What alternative strategies could the Council have considered?**

No comment

### **Question 3.**

**3a. Does the Plan strike the right balance between encouraging new development, seeking development contributions from investors and securing other goals such as enhancing the environment?**

Yes.

In view of its circumstances and recognised need for ongoing significant regeneration, Blaenau Gwent is an area that continues to benefit from various

national and regional strategies and funding sources, including EU and WG funding.

The Plan recognises this context and seeks to build upon ongoing initiatives by providing a sound framework for growth and regeneration.

**3b. In broad terms, would the scale, type and distribution of allocated lands in the Plan contribute to the sustainable future development of the borough?**

Yes.

The strategy seeks sustainable growth in the Northern Strategy Area, and regeneration in both the Northern & Southern Strategy Areas (SP1 & SP2). This is underpinned by the designation of principal / district hubs and local centres, and by the related spatial distribution of development sites, including regeneration schemes.

The Plan's strategy is supported by the findings of sustainability appraisal work.

**Question 4.**

**4a. How is the strategy consistent with the Wales Spatial Plan, other national guidance, regional plans and the strategies and plans of neighbouring authorities?**

Wales Spatial Plan 2008 Update (WSP) – Blaenau Gwent is within the “South East Wales - Capital Region”. In our Regulation 15 Pre-Deposit Response (18 December 2008), we commented that the strategy appears generally to provide a good fit within the Wales Spatial Plan vision for South East Wales.

Other national policy & guidance – the strategy appears to be broadly in accord with national planning policy and guidance.

Neighbouring authorities - Our Deposit Rep. Di Neighbouring Plan Areas raised this matter (LPA Ref: 3D.150 & 151). We consider that the proposed changes supported by the Report of Representations (doc SD07b) clarify the matter; i.e. MC2 re para 1.13, MC1 re para 1.1, MC28 re para 8.73, MC30 re para 8.79; Report of Reps pages 4 & 286.

**Question 5.**

**5a. Is the proposed geographic distribution of new development proposed appropriate?**

Broadly speaking, yes – it accords with the spatial strategy (see at Question 3b).

However, in our response to the proposed Focussed Changes we pointed out that whilst FC1.J (re. Plan para 6.37) goes some way to meeting our Deposit Rep B.i.i.b. Deliverability: Housing-Phasing (LPA Ref: 3D.405), we consider

that a further (minor factual) change is required to include the information contained in Table 3 of the new Housing Delivery Paper Feb2012 (submission doc: SD44) in order that the plan itself clarifies the overall spatial distribution of phased housing development (sites).

In addition, the statement in the proposed revision to para 6.37 about the phasing being “only indicative” fails to clarify what needs to happen to deliver the strategy.

**5b. What are the consequences of the proposed focus of new development in and around Ebbw Vale on the south of the county borough?**

The strategy seeks to ensure sustainable communities in the south and, through the creation of the integrated network of hubs, places an emphasis on the importance for good connections between this southern area with Ebbw Vale and the wider region (e.g. paras 5.3 & 6.16). It would appear that the strategy, if successful, would result in a win-win situation.

**Question 6.**

**6a. How have the county’s settlement boundaries been designated?**

No comment

**Question 7.**

**7a. Are the detailed policies that support the strategy locally distinctive?**

**7b. Do any of the policies repeat national guidance?**

**7c. If so, should these policies be amended or deleted?**

**7d. Do the policies contain an appropriate element of flexibility?**

*We note your request to the LPA at **doc.ED17** – to consider how the following policies are locally distinctive & whether they repeat national policy: SP6,7,9,10,11, DM1,2,3,59,15,17.*

See our Deposit Rep.Diii Policy Wording – National Policy Repetition (LPA Ref: 3D.153 & 325.); and our related Focussed Change representation on this matter.

National planning policies in Planning Policy Wales and Minerals Planning Policy Wales should not be repeated; instead the LDP should explain how they apply to the local area (PPW para.2.1.4 & 2.7).

Flexibility – there is some flexibility in the policies of the strategy, e.g. housing over provision in policy SP4 as amended by FC1.E. The monitoring framework should include appropriate milestones / trigger points to reflect changing market circumstances and indicating when / whether there is a need for review.

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