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Cyngor Bwrdeisdref Sirol

Blaenau Gwent

County Borough Council

Regeneration Division

Local
Development
Plan

Visioning Report

March 2008

Contents

	Page Number
1.0 Introduction	3
2.0 Purpose of the Report	3
3.0 Integration with the Community Strategy	3
4.0 Visioning Workshops	4
5.0 Conclusions	7
6.0 Preferred Vision Statement	7
7.0 Next Stage	9
 Appendices	
Appendix 1 – Stakeholders who attended the Issues and Vision Workshop – Friday 27 th July 2007	10
Appendix 2 – Examples of generated Vision Statements at the Issues and Vision Workshop	11
Appendix 3 – Members and Stakeholders who attended the Vision and Strategy Options Workshops	12
Appendix 4 – Examples of generated Vision Statements at the Vision and Strategy Options Workshop	15

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 In November 2006, Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council made the decision to cease work on the Unitary Development Plan and to start work on the Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council Local Development Plan (LDP). The timetable for the various statutory stages of the Local Development Plan is set out in the Delivery Agreement (May 2007).
- 1.2 The first step in the process of preparing the Local Development Plan was to draft and formally consult on the 'Issues Paper'. The Issues Paper was prepared as a discussion document intended to promote debate on the issues of strategic significance for the Authority. Alongside the Issues Paper, an 'Issues and Visioning' Workshop was held on the 27th July 2007, at the ViTCC in Tredegar, with LDP steering Group Sub-Group members and the LDP Forum Members. A full list of attendees is provided in Appendix 1. The purpose of this workshop was to build consensus on where we were (issues) and where we wanted to be (vision).
- 1.3 Building on the opinions and views expressed at the Issues and Vision workshop, a second workshop was held to further develop and build consensus on the vision statement for the Local Development Plan. The 'Vision and Strategy Options' Workshop was held on the 19th October 2007 at the ViTCC, Tredegar and the 22nd and 30th November at the Learning Action Centre, Ebbw Vale.

2.0 Purpose of the Report

- 2.1 The purpose of the report is: firstly, to record and analyse the information and opinions gathered over the four workshop sessions; and secondly; to record the views of those that attended the workshops to provide a clear indication of the way in which the Vision Statement for the LDP has been developed.

3.0 Integration with the Community Strategy

- 3.1 Preparatory work indicated that a key starting point in preparing a Vision for the Local Development Plan is the Community Strategy Vision. Local Development Plan Wales 2005, (para. 2.10) states "***The LDP should be based on a Vision of the future which should be clear, realistic and based on the objectives and priorities of the relevant community strategy***". It is further identified by the Local Development Manual 2006 (para. 2.3.3) that the "***challenge is for LDP's to provide the land use expression of the shared vision of the Community Strategy of how an area will develop, change or be conserved. The Vision should be well rounded so that there is a balance between economic, social and environmental objectives***".

- 3.2 As part of the consultation on the Issues Paper, respondents were asked to comment on whether the Community Plan for Blaenau Gwent should provide the Vision and objectives for the Local Development Plan. The overwhelming majority of respondents recognised that there is a need to identify a suitable vision (and objectives) for the LDP and that this should link to the Community Plan. The draft LDP Vision reflects the Community Plan Vision as suggested by the respondents.
- 3.3 For more detailed information on the consultation of the Issues Paper refer to the Issues Paper – Report of Consultation (September 2007) which is available from the Planning Policy Team or from the planning policy pages of the council's website at www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

4.0 Visioning Workshops

Issues and Vision Workshop July 2007

- 4.1 The aim of the Issues and Vision workshop was to build consensus on where we are (issues) and where we want to be (vision). The workshop was held on Friday 27th July 2007, at the ViTCC, Tredegar and involved 27 attendees representing the LDP Steering Group Sub-group members and LDP forum members (see appendix 1 for a list of attendees). The morning was arranged around three workshops sessions. Attendees were arranged to form three groups.
- 4.2 Workshops 1 and 2 involved the attendees discussing different topic areas, to agree and then prioritise the main issues that needed to be addressed by the Local Development Plan. The two most significant issues identified by the attendees were:
- the implications of the decline in the manufacturing sector and the shift in favour of the service sector and technological industries; and
 - the need to find a role/ function for the town centres.
- The following two housing issues were close behind:
- the need to create a more balanced population, stemming out-migration; and
 - the need to provide a range of housing opportunities to meet aspirations including the need for affordable housing.
- 4.3 The third workshop involved building consensus on where Blaenau Gwent should be in 2021. The first task of this workshop involved attendees discussing whether or not the Community Strategy vision '**A better place to live, work and visit**' was appropriate for the LDP. All 3 groups reached agreement that, although succinct, it was not distinctive to Blaenau Gwent. It therefore failed to meet the criteria for a LDP Vision Statement, i.e. that it should be a succinct statement of intent, a point of reference for all parts of the plan and all participants, distinct to the area.
- 4.4 As all 3 groups considered that the Vision of the Community Strategy was not appropriate for the purposes of the LDP, the attendees drafted new visions

(Appendix 2 lists the vision statements generated in the Issues and Vision Workshop).

- 4.5 For more detailed information on the Issues and Vision workshop refer to the Issues and Vision Workshop Report of Consultation (August 2007) which is available from the Planning Policy Team or from the planning policy pages of the council's website at www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk
- 4.6 Following this workshop, Planning Policy Officers drew on the opinions and visions created at this workshop to create a draft vision. The following draft vision was devised:

Draft Vision

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

Vision and Strategy Options Workshops November 2007

- 4.7 The second set of workshops held on developing the Vision was the Vision and Strategy Options Workshop. This workshop was repeated three times in order to engage a wide range of relevant stakeholders, including various local interest groups, organisations from Blaenau Gwent and neighbouring authorities (see appendix 1 for a list of attendees on the individual dates).

Meeting:	Date:	Venue
Members of Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council	19th October 2007	ViTCC, Tredegar.
Stakeholders	November 22 nd 2007	Learning Action Centre, Ebbw Vale
Stakeholders	November 30 th 2007	Learning Action Centre, Ebbw Vale

- 4.8 The Vision and Strategy Option Workshops were arranged around 3 workshops. In the Members sessions, the attendees were arranged to form 2 groups, whilst in the stakeholder sessions the attendees were arranged to form 3 groups.
- 4.9 The aim of workshop 1 was to build consensus on the draft Local Development Vision for Blaenau Gwent. The draft Vision that had been prepared by planning policy officers, following views received on the Issues Paper and the Issues and Vision Workshop held in July 2007, was used to inform the discussion in this workshop session.
- 4.10 Attendees were asked to judge if the draft Vision meets the requirements for a Vision. Guidance was provided on what a vision should be. The first

requirement was that the Vision should be clear, realistic, and based on the objectives, and priorities of the Community Strategy. 4 out of the 8 groups commenting on this requirement, all considered that the draft Vision met this requirement.

4.11 The second set of requirements was based on advice received from the Welsh Assembly Government training workshop. It was advised that a Vision should be:

- a) A succinct statement of intent;
- b) A point of reference for all parts of the plan and all participants;
- c) Distinct to the area.

4.12 When considering if the draft Vision was a succinct statement of intent, a mixed response was received. Over half (5 out of the 8) of the workshop groups stated that the draft Vision was a succinct statement of intent. The 3 remaining workshop groups considered that the draft Vision contained a heavy content and that it should be 'short' and 'punchy'. All 3 of these groups commented that the detailed issues contained in the draft Vision should be incorporated into the objectives of the Local Development Plan, and not the Vision.

4.13 7 out of the 8 workshop groups commented on requirement b), that a Vision should be a point of reference for all parts of the plan and all participants. All agreed that the draft Vision satisfied this requirement.

4.14 In terms of considering if the draft Vision was distinct to the area, all 8 groups accepted the Vision was distinctive to the area. However, 2 groups pointed out that the draft Vision could be applicable to other Local Authorities in South Wales such as Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Cynon Taf, as these areas face similar issues as Blaenau Gwent. Overall, the draft Vision was considered to be as distinctive as possible, as the draft Vision takes into account the priority issues associated with the area.

4.15 The second task of this workshop was to allow the attendees to suggest improvements to the draft Vision.

4.16 Firstly, the workshop groups identified a number of strengths to the draft Vision, in that it was a positive statement with a good range of detail and not too general. It was also distinct to Blaenau Gwent in that it had a local focus and covered many of the significant issues facing Blaenau Gwent. It was also considered that incorporating the community plan vision at the end of the draft vision was a good idea.

4.17 However, 2 of the workshop groups pointed out that the draft vision wasn't easy to read as one long paragraph and so it was suggested that bullet points be inserted.

4.18 A further weakness identified by one of the workshop groups was that the language in the vision was not reader friendly for communities and that the

draft vision was bland and not dynamic. All the workshop groups suggested word improvements to the draft Vision.

4.19 In addition, all the workshop groups considered that there were a number of key issues missing from the draft Vision. These included:

- Accessibility and sustainable transport
- Health and well-being
- Education and skills
- Recreation and leisure
- Accessibility to services
- The need to place a greater emphasis on biodiversity and environmental issues.

5.0 Conclusions

5.1 The Visioning exercises have provided a valuable insight into the land use issues facing the County Borough that are of importance to the stakeholders who attended these events.

5.2 Whilst the issues raised at these sessions span across service areas and organisations, there was a general consensus in terms of the key land use issues that need to be considered as an integral part of plan preparation. There was also a general recognition that many of these issues are inter-related and that many have implications beyond the boundaries of Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council, for neighbouring local authorities and other partner organisations.

5.3 There were a number of key issues that reoccurred throughout each of the workshop sessions and it is recommended that these are the issues that should serve to revise the vision statement for the LDP. Taken together they express the need to develop a vision for Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council which promotes:

- Provision of land to provide for **employment opportunities**, supported by appropriate **housing** and ancillary **facilities and services** (including community facilities, recreation and leisure etc) – promoting a mix of uses where appropriate;
- Establishing safe and thriving **town centres**;
- **Sustainability** – protecting the environment as a whole whilst balancing the need for development with the need to conserve valuable resources;
- **Health and well-being** – enhancing the vibrancy of communities;
- **Green transport policies** – including the provision of an integrated public transport system in close proximity to new and existing development;

- Improved **education** facilities to 'up skill' the population.

6.0 Preferred Vision Statement

- 6.1 There is a need to ensure that the preferred vision statement for the LDP:
- Is derived from the Community Strategy and that there is a transparency in its development; the Visioning Workshops seek to ensure that this is the case;
 - Sets out a clear vision for the County Borough over the plan period;
 - Is distinctive to the Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council: and
 - Informs the development of alternative spatial strategies for consideration at subsequent stages of plan preparation.
- 6.2 A number of vision statements were generated in the LDP Visioning Workshops. Appendix 4 lists the 8 vision statements prepared by the 8 workshop groups.
- 6.3 Outlined below is a brief comment in respect of the appropriateness, or otherwise, of each of the vision statements generated:
- 6.3.1 **Vision Statement 1:** There are no adverse comments to be made on this vision. It makes limited changes to the draft Vision but identifies that there are two key issues missing from the draft Vision, one relating to accessibility and sustainable transport, and the second relating to recreation and leisure. It is accepted that accessibility and sustainable transport is a key issue missing from the draft Vision.
- 6.3.2 **Vision Statement 2:** There are no adverse comments to be made on this vision statement, but a few wording improvements are suggested and it identifies accessibility as an issue missing from the draft Vision. These suggestions are understood and accepted.
- 6.3.3 **Vision Statement 3:** It is considered that this vision is overly prescriptive, as inserting three further adjectives into the first sentence is too detailed and bland. However, it is accepted that the three key themes of health and well-being, accessibility and education and skills are important themes and should serve and help to shape the Vision.
- 6.3.4 **Vision Statements 4, 5, 6 and 7:** These do not present a clear vision for the County Borough. Although the vision statements are succinct, it is not distinctive to the area.
- 6.3.5 **Vision Statement 8:** There are no unfavourable comments to be made on this Vision statement. It makes limited changes to the draft Vision and identifies that there are two key themes missing from the draft Vision; health and accessibility and sustainable transport. These suggestions are understood and accepted.

- 6.4 In developing the Vision for the LDP, it is vitally important that the proposed vision statement does not constrain any future discussion in terms of the Strategic Development Options for the plan. As a result of this analysis, the Planning Policy Team have prepared the following draft Vision as a working Vision for the early stages of plan preparation:

Through collaborative working, by 2021, Blaenau Gwent will become a network of sustainable, vibrant valley communities, where people have the skills, knowledge and opportunities to achieve a better quality of life and residents will live in safe, healthy and thriving communities, with access to a range of good quality affordable homes and thriving town centres. Its unique environment, cultural and historic identity will be protected and enhanced to create a place where people want to live, work and visit.

- 6.5 It is important to recognise that, as the preparation of the LDP progresses through the various stages, there will be a need to review the Vision as an integral part of the process to ensure that the Vision reflects the preferred strategy of the Development Plan for the County Borough. This is a legitimate part of the plan preparation process and it recognises that it is an iterative process. It is therefore recommended to resolve that the “*vision statement, as an integral part of the plan preparation process, be reviewed and refined as and when necessary throughout the progress of the plan.*”

7.0 Next Stage

- 7.1 If approved by the LDP Forum and Steering Group, the comments on the Vision, outlined in this document, will be invited as an integral part of the public consultation work that will be undertaken in the autumn 2008.

Appendix 1 - Stakeholders who attended the Issues and Vision Workshop – Friday 27th July 2007

Name	Organisation
Angela Chard	BGCBC Chief Accountant - Corporate Service
Alan Reed	BGCBC Head of Environment Management & Highways Services
Alun Evans	BGCBC Transportation Strategy Manager
Alwyn Hughes	BGCBC Business Development Officer
Alyson Tippings	BGCBC Tourism Officer
Andrew Long	BGCBC Team Leader, General Services
Andrew Parker	BGCBC Research Officer
Bernadette Elias	BGCBC Head of Policy Performance & Development
Bethan Cartwright	BGCBC Ebbw Vale and Tredegar Town Centre Manager
Dave Thompson	BGCBC Team Leader, Grants Policy & Operations
Eirlys Hallett	BGCBC Principal Planning Officer Planning Control
Ged McHugh	BGCBC Head of European and Economic Policy
Gemma White	NHS Local Public Health
Jane Layzell	Local Health Board
Jane McNeil	BGCBC Community Development Manager
Jenny Turner	BGCBC Strategy & Policies Officer
Jeremy Gass	University of the Valleys
Jim Perry	Glamorgan & Gwent Archaeological Trust
Joanna Rhead	BGCBC Group Auditor
John Howells	BGCBC Divisional Head - Development Division (Education)
Kate Rodgers	CCW
Leanne Connor	BGCBC Business Development Support Officer
Louise Horner	BGCBC Senior Estates Officer
Lyn Evans	BGCBC Grounds Maintenance & Countryside Manager
Mark Hopkins	BGCBC Engineer
Wayne Thomas	RISE
Will Beer	NHS Local Public Team
Brian Swain	BGCBC Facilitator
Hayley Spender	BGCBC Facilitator
Lynda Healy	BGCBC Facilitator

Appendix 2 - Examples of generated Vision Statements at the Issues and Vision Workshops

Group 1

By 2020 Blaenau Gwent will offer a valleys experience that will benefit local people, visitors and those who work in Blaenau Gwent by providing:

- *quality housing*
- *a sustainable, diverse economy*
- *towns that have specific roles*
- *lifelong learning opportunities*
- *a vibrant visitor destination*

Group 2

By 2021 Blaenau Gwent will be a network of sustainable, vibrant valley communities, providing a high quality of life.

Group 3

Blaenau Gwent, vibrant valley communities, where people feel proud, happy, valued and included.

Blaenau Gwent, rich past, dynamic future.

Blaenau Gwent, communities for the future.

Appendix 3 - Members and Stakeholders who attended the Vision and Strategy Options Workshops

Members who attended Vision and Strategy Options Workshop – Friday 19th October 2007

Name
Councillor K E Barnes
Councillor D L Elias
Councillor K Hayden
Councillor P Hopkins
Councillor D Hughes
Councillor J E Mason
Councillor E G L Moore
Councillor D J Owens
Councillor B M Sutton
Councillor D W White
Councillor D H Wilkshire
Lynda Healy – Development Plans Manager
Hayley Spender – Planning Policy Officer
Brian Swain – Planning Policy Officer
Marie Chislett – Administrator Officer

Stakeholders who attended Vision and Strategy Option Workshop - Thursday 22nd November 2007

Name	Organisation
Roger Leadbeter	
Alun Evans	Blaenau Gwent CBC
Catherine Ashby	Blaenau Gwent CBC
Louise Horner	Blaenau Gwent CBC
Mark Hopkins	Blaenau Gwent CBC
Simon Dobbs	Blaenau Gwent CBC
James Watkins	Blaenau Gwent CBC
Marie Chislett	Blaenau Gwent CBC (Administration Officer)
Lynda Healy	Blaenau Gwent CBC (Development Plans Manager)
Andrew Parker	Blaenau Gwent CBC (Facilitator)
Dave Rees	Blaenau Gwent CBC (Facilitator)
Ged McHugh	Blaenau Gwent CBC (Head of Economic Development)

Hayley Spender	Blaenau Gwent CBC (Planning Policy Officer)
Brian Swain	Blaenau Gwent CBC (Planning Policy Officer)
Keith Dykes	Chair Abertillery Partnership
Greg Paulsen	Co-ordinator for Cwm, Waunlwyd & Victoria Partnership
Chris Cox	DTZ
Kayna Tregay	Environment Agency
Huw Lewis	GAVO (Facilitator)
Frank Callus	Heads of Valley Strategic Programme Co-ordinator (Education)
John Howells	Local Education Authority
Janice Tse	Merthyr Tydfil CBC
Gemma White	NPHS
Anita Thomas	Princes Trust
Colin Stevens	Rassau Tenants & Residents Association & Blaenau Gwent Federation of T&R Associations
Andrew Jenkins	Rhyd Developments Ltd
Mike O'Dowd	Vice Chair, Nantyglo Communities First

Stakeholders who attended Vision and Strategy Option Workshop – Friday 30th November 2007

Name	Organisation
Jessica Osbourne	Co-ordinator for Tredegar Central & West & Sirhowy Partnership
Tracy Nettleton	Brecon Beacons National Park
Alan Reed	Blaenau Gwent CBC
Alison Hoskins	Blaenau Gwent CBC
Bethan Cartwright	Blaenau Gwent CBC
Eirlys Hallet	Blaenau Gwent CBC
Julian Bosley	Blaenau Gwent CBC
Karin Lamb	Blaenau Gwent CBC
Kelsey Watkins	Blaenau Gwent CBC
Lynn Phillips	Blaenau Gwent CBC
Tony Chivers	Blaenau Gwent CBC
Richard Jones	Countryside Council for Wales
Dr Jayne Layzell	Blaenau Gwent Local Health Board
Brian Kember	Tredegar Development Trust
Mike Johnson	The Campaign for the Protection of Rural Wales (Newport & Valleys)
Rob Murray	Torfaen County Borough Council
John Millard	Melin Housing Association
Vic Parkin	Chair of Nantyglo Partnership
Sharon Hill	Co-ordinator for Nantyglo Partnership
Darren Lewis	Co-ordinator for Rassau & Garnlydan

	Partnership
Rob James	Co-ordinator for Ebbw Vale N & S Partnership
Helen Madden	Co-ordinator for Blaina Partnership
Deborah Beeson	Blaenau Gwent CBC
Edward Robinson	Blaina Senior Citizens
Councillor David Britton	Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council
Trevor Neatherway	Blaenau Gwent Local Health Board
Andrew Parker	Blaenau Gwent CBC
Neil Maylan	Glamorgan Gwent Archaeological Trust Ltd
Councillor John Davies	Brynmawr Town Council
Reg Arnold	BGBC Compact
John Davies	Ebbw Vale and District Development Trust
Richard Price	Home Builders Federation
Hayley Spender	Blaenau Gwent CBC (Planning Policy Officer)
Brian Swain	Blaenau Gwent CBC (Planning Policy Officer and Facilitator)
Lynda Healy	Blaenau Gwent CBC (Development Plans Manager)
Jane McNeil	Blaenau Gwent CBC (Facilitator)
Huw Lewis	GAVO (Facilitator)

Appendix 4 - Examples of generated Vision Statements at the Vision and Strategy Options Workshops

Vision Statement 1

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

Vision Statement 2

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

Vision Statement 3

By 2021, Blaenau Gwent will become a network of healthy, accessible, sustainable, safe vibrant valley communities; through:

- providing a range of good quality, affordable homes;
- diversifying and creating a dynamic and competitive economy;
- establishing safe and thriving town centres;
- generating a vibrant visitor destination.

Its unique environment, cultural and historic identity will be protected and enhanced, thereby creating a place where people want to live, work and visit.

Vision Statement 4

By 2021, Blaenau Gwent will become a network of sustainable, vibrant valley communities in a unique environment where people want to live, work or visit.

Vision Statement 5

By 2021, Blaenau Gwent will become a network of sustainable vibrant valley communities; creating a place where people want to live, work and visit.

Vision Statement 6

By 2021, Blaenau Gwent will become a network of sustainable vibrant valley communities with services accessible to all based on a diverse and historical environment. Promoting its unique environment, cultural and historic identity, thereby creating a place where people want to live, work and visit.

Vision Statement 7

By 2021, Blaenau Gwent will become a network of sustainable vibrant valley communities; creating a place where people want to live, work and visit.

Vision Statement 8

By 2021, Blaenau Gwent will be a network of sustainable, healthy vibrant valley communities; providing a range of suitable homes; diversifying and creating a dynamic and competitive economy; establishing safe communities, focussed on thriving town centres; generating a vibrant visitor destination. Its unique environment, cultural and historic identity will be protected and enhanced, to create a place where people want to live, work and visit.