

**BLAENAU GWENT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN EXAMINATION
CYNGOR BWRDEISDREF SIROL BLAENAU GWENT
YMCHWILIAD CYNLLUN DATBLYGU LLEOL**

**HEARINGS PROGRAMME AND LIST OF SESSIONS – VERSION 3
(DATED 13th June 2012)**

Tuesday 26 June 2012

Day 1 1000 hours

Inspector's opening statement (five minutes)

Council's opening statement (five minutes)

All hearing sessions are open to the public. The Council will attend all hearing sessions. The names and representor references of other parties invited to speak are set out below.

SESSION 1 DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY/ VISION

1. Does the Plan provide an appropriate spatial strategy for Blaenau Gwent? To what extent can it be considered to be locally distinctive? Might the strategy be considered to be an aspiration rather than one that is credible and capable of being delivered over the Plan period? Can the spatial strategy therefore be considered to be sound?
2. What research and evidence base underpins the regeneration and growth strategy the Council has chosen (refer SD19 to SD23)? What alternative strategies could the Council have considered?
3. 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? In broad terms, would the scale, type and distribution of allocated lands in the Plan contribute to the sustainable future development of the borough?
4. How is the strategy consistent with the Wales Spatial Plan, other national guidance, regional plans and the strategies and plans of neighbouring authorities?
5. Is the proposed geographic distribution of new development proposed appropriate? What are the consequences of the proposed focus of new development in and around Ebbw Vale on the south of the county borough?
6. How have the county's settlement boundaries been designated?
7. Are the detailed policies that support the strategy locally distinctive? Do any of the policies repeat national guidance? If so, should these policies be amended or deleted? Do the policies contain an appropriate element of flexibility?

Close 1300 hours

Confirmed attendee: Welsh Govt (03)

Day 1 **1400 hours**
SESSION 2 **HOUSING (policy, numbers and phasing)**

The Council will provide a short paper on vacant housing to support this hearing session. This will be circulated to all parties in advance of this session.

1. What evidence underpins the case for the Plan's proposed housing target and phasing in the light of recent construction rates, population movements, national guidance and policy? Does the Council's current target represent a realistic and soundly based target or is it an aspirational figure?
2. How do the figures in the proposed site allocations match the various figures in Policies SP4 and SP5?
3. To what extent will the amount of new housing anticipated rely on windfall development?
4. Does the Council's target seek to promote too much housing without the increased employment base needed to support the level of population growth anticipated?
5. What are the implications of increasing the overall supply of housing in the county borough on other Council initiatives such as its empty homes strategy?
6. Should the Council's target for new housing be higher? If not, why not? Should the target be lower? If not, why not?

Confirmed attendees: Welsh Govt (03), HBF (24), Qwestedge (41)

Close 1730 hours

Wednesday 27 June 2012
Day 2 09.30 hours

SESSION 3 AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND HOUSING FOR
GYPSIES AND TRAVELLERS

Affordable housing

1. What is the evidence base to justify the Plan's target of "at least" 10% of all developments that exceed the relevant threshold? Is the term "at least" unclear? If so, what are the implications for developers when seeking planning permission?
2. What is the logic for different sites being required to provide different levels of affordable housing?
3. What is the logic for the two thresholds chosen for requiring affordable housing? Why has the Council chosen the area based threshold of 0.28 ha? What does the term "gross site area" mean? Should Policy DM8 state more clearly a mix of tenures sought that is consistent with the findings of the LHMA (SD62)?
4. Should the Council rely on a greater proportion of off site affordable housing payments to enable it to deliver other projects, for example, a reduction in the number of vacant homes?
5. Which settlements within the county would be covered by the rural exceptions sites policy (Policy DM9)?
6. Is the affordable housing target deliverable and appropriate given current economic challenges, the proportion of housing allocations on brownfield sites within the county and other items of infrastructure provision sought in the Plan?

Gypsy and travellers' housing

7. Should the Plan make provision for the needs of travelling showpeople as well as gypsies and travellers? If not, why not?
8. Would the plan be unsound if the Council were to plan for six additional pitches for gypsies and travellers over the Plan period instead of four? Is the survey on which the Council has based its forecast up-to-date?
9. What is the logic for the focussed change (FC) to criterion (b) of Policy DM10? How is the term "primary highway network" defined in criterion (f) of Policy DM10? Should the glossary state what this term means?

Confirmed attendees: Welsh Govt (03), HBF (24)

Close 1230 hours

Day 2
SESSION 4

1315 hours
HOUSING SITES

1. Is the allocation of housing sites based on a sound process of sustainability appraisal including testing of reasonable alternatives and does it represent the most appropriate strategy in the circumstances? Have the site selection and policy designation processes been based on appropriate criteria supported by a clear audit trail?
2. Are sites H1.1 (Willowtown School), H1.15 (Warm Turn, Six Bells) and H1.20 (Land at Farm Road, Swffryd) appropriate for housing? If not, why not?
3. What is the logic for deleting site allocations H1.4 (Jesmondene Stadium, Cefn Golau) and H1.5 (Business Resource Centre, Tafarnaubach)?
4. Is there a need to identify any additional or alternative sites for housing and/or live-work activity? Are the alternative proposals put forward by other representers (for example, AS(N)17 – land at Tanglewood, Blaina; AS(N)18 – Ffoesmaen Road; and AS(N) 21 – Ty Pwdr*) appropriate and deliverable? Have these sites been subject to sustainability appraisal compatible with that for the allocated sites in the Plan?

The timetable for the discussion of individual sites, based on the comments received by other participants, is likely to be as follows:

1340 hours	H1.1 - Willowtown School
1400 hours	H1.15 - Warm Turn, Six Bells
1410 hours	H1.20 - Land at Farm Road, Swffryd
1430 hours	H1.4 - Jesmondene Stadium, Cefn Golau
1500 hours	AS(N)17 – land at Tanglewood, Blaina
1530 hours	AS(N)18 – Ffoesmaen Road

Confirmed attendees: Questedge (41 - AS(N)17), Mr W Cooksey (42 AS(N)18), Unite the Union (60 – H1.1), Mr B Brooks (72 – H1.4).

Close 1600 hours

* Ty Pwdr - site AS(N)21 - will be discussed in Session 19.

Day 2 **1615 hours**
SESSION 5 **SIX BELLS COLLIERY SITE** **(Sites H1.14 and**
ED1.2) and PARC ARRAEL GRIFFIN (Site AS(N) 23))

Six Bells Colliery Site

1. What is the logic for the proposed mix of uses and its site boundaries? Why does the Council seek to extend its boundaries (refer Focussed Change 16)?
2. Is this an appropriate site for housing given its locational attributes, highway connections and potential environmental impacts? Is this an appropriate site for a primary school?
3. Would development on this site represent an unacceptable loss of open space?
4. Should part of the site be considered for other purposes, including for leisure and tourism? If so, why?
5. ~~Is this site or parts of the site highly vulnerable to flooding? If so, what would be the implications of seeking to site the proposed mix of uses here?~~

The Environment Agency has withdrawn its flood based objection to the designation of land at Six Bells.

Confirmed attendees: Six Bells Community First (82)

~~**Attendee for question 5 only:** Env Agency (18)~~

Parc Arrael Griffin (AS (N) 23)

1. The Council has resolved not to allocate this site for tourism and leisure. It states that tourism development has been carried out at the site as demonstrated by the establishment of the Guardian on the middle plateau. Why is it therefore necessary for reasons of soundness that the site be allocated for tourism and leisure purposes?

Confirmed attendees: Mr S Jones (69), Six Bells Community First (82)

Close 1800 hours

Thursday 28 June 2012
Day 3 1000 hours
SESSION 6 EMPLOYMENT

1. What is meant in Objective 9 of the Plan by the phrase "By 2021, 50 hectares of employment land and a range of premises have been delivered"? How might this term "delivered" be interpreted? Is this a precise target? What evidence base underpins this figure?
2. What are the implications of pursuing an employment land allocation of this scale in the context of forecast declines in some sectors, especially manufacturing and other Use Class B2 activity? Does the Council acknowledge that some vacant stock may not be developed for employment or other uses during the lifetime of the Plan? What actions are the Council and others taking to improve the take up of employment land within the county relative to neighbouring local authority areas?
3. Why is the Council seeking to promote the regeneration of so much employment land when other initiatives (e.g., improved transport accessibility) might improve access to jobs for local people outside of Blaenau Gwent?
4. What is the logic for the different categories of employment land use (strategic sites, primary and secondary sites and business parks)? What evidence underpins the case for retaining all of these sites for employment? How should the Plan respond to other uses that might complement employment activity (e.g., training)?
5. How will criteria (f) and (g) of Policy SP8 be implemented? Is the Council's policy and allocations for employment land use realistic and soundly based?
6. Is there an overlap between criteria (3) and (4) of Policy DM11 and criterion (3) of Policy DM21?
7. What level of support should the Plan give to the expansion of new sectors such as tourism? How do the various policies in the Plan (for example, Policy SP8 and TM1) give positive land use planning support for the development of the county's tourism offer? Has the Plan neglected any other significant potential employment-generating tourist facilities?
8. How does the Plan help implement national policies (for example, in "Economic Renewal: a new direction" (W17)) to support priority sectors including ICT; energy and the environment; advance materials and manufacturing; creative industries; life sciences; and financial and professional services)?

Close 1300 hours

Day 3
SESSION 7

1400 hours
EMPLOYMENT AND MIXED USE SITES

1. Is the allocation of employment and mixed use sites based on a sound process of sustainability appraisal including testing of reasonable alternatives and does it represent the most appropriate strategy in the circumstances? Have the site selection, policy designation and site boundaries drawn been based on appropriate criteria with a clear audit trail?

Site MU3

1. Are the boundaries for this site soundly drawn? What would be the implications of amending them to incorporate adjacent land?

Site MU1

The Council is invited to bring a large aerial plan of this site that identifies the various designations on the site and focussed changes.

1. The Delivery and Implementation section of the Plan identifies some public sector grant for the delivery of MU1, the largest allocation of employment land to be "delivered". To what extent is the delivery of this project dependent on public sector grant? Is the necessary public sector funding package in place to secure private sector investment?
2. What is the likely impact of developing MU1 on Rhyd y Blew and Bryn Serth SINCs? Will the development result in a significant loss of biodiversity and, if so, will it be necessary to conduct mitigation or compensation measures for any biodiversity loss?
3. Is it necessary to amend the site designation of MU1 including on the Proposals Map to identify green links? Are the boundaries of this site appropriately drawn?

Confirmed attendees: CCW (10), Newbridge Construction (19)

Close 1730 hours

Friday 29 June 2012

Day 4 1030 hours

SESSION 8 WASTE

1. How does the Plan translate national and regional waste policy down to the local authority level? What is the logic for seeking to allocate between 0.4 and 4 hectares of land for waste management purposes?
2. Do Policies SP13 and W1 provide sufficient sites to accommodate the county's contribution to waste management?
3. How might the siting of waste facilities in criterion (3) of Policy DM21 be consistent with other initiatives to support employment growth?
4. What does criterion (6) of Policy DM21 add that is not covered by other policies in the Plan?

Close 1145 hours

Day 4 **1200 hours**
SESSION 9 **AGRICULTURE AND SIGNIFICANT LANDSCAPE**
AREAS DESIGNATIONS

The Council is invited to present its short papers on agriculture and significant landscape area designation. This session will then address the following two questions:

1. Is the Council's proposed allocation of land for cemetery space soundly based? Would the proposed extension of Dukestown Cemetery (ENV5.2) result in the loss of high quality agricultural land?
2. Focussed Change 11 seeks to amend cycle route T1.7. What is the logic for this amendment? Has this amended route been drawn having regard to surrounding land uses including farmland used for sheep grazing and an appreciation of the number of existing gateways?

~~**Presentation of papers on agriculture and significant landscape area designations**~~

~~CCW (10) and Torfaen CBC (12) are invited to attend this session or else to prepare written representations in response to the Council's papers. *Written representations submitted from CCW and Torfaen.*~~

Confirmed attendee (Question 1): Mr R W Thomas (73)

Close 1315 hours

Day 5
SESSION 11

1400 hours
BLAINA LOCAL TOWN CENTRE

1. Is the Council giving unfair priority to development in centres such as Ebbw Vale, at the expense of Blaina and other centres?
2. Does Policy DM7 provide an appropriate set of controls to manage changes of use within Blaina local town centre?
3. What is the land use planning case for restricting the percentages of hot food take aways and public houses in Blaina?
4. Does criterion (b) of Policy DM7 clearly indicate when a change of use of the ground floor premises to housing would be supported?

Confirmed attendee: Cllr Garth Collier (71)

Close 1600 hours

Wednesday 4 July 2012

Day 6 1000 hours
**SESSION 12 COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL LIFE (open space,
play, community cohesion)**

1. Does the Plan provide an appropriate policy framework for considering the provision for and planning of social and community infrastructure to address the changing needs of the population?
2. Does the Plan make adequate provision for sheltered housing and care centres for the elderly? What role should the Cartref Aneurin Bevan site (H1.2) play over the lifetime of the Plan? Is this a suitable site for family housing? If not, why not?
3. Does Policy DM12 provide a satisfactory definition of community facilities? How would criterion (a) of this policy be assessed?
4. What is the logic for requiring developers to provide 2.4 hectares of recreational space per 1000 projected population in developments of 10 or more homes to comply with Policy DM13? Which parts of the county have a quantitative deficiency in open space? How should the term "qualitative deficiency" be interpreted?
5. Why should the Council seek to protect all open space within the county? Does criterion (c) of Policy DM14 provide a clear indication of when it may be appropriate to allow development on some open space?
6. What does Policy SP9 seek to achieve? Has the Council allocated sites in such a way as to increase the percentage of the population within 400m of green space?
7. What measures are in place in the Plan to support the Welsh language?

Close 1230 hours

Day 6 **1330 hours**
SESSION 13 **SECURING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**
(environmental assets, water quality, flood risk, climate change)

CCW has been invited to present a paper on the Usk Bat Sites SAC. This will be circulated to all parties invited to this session.

1. How has the Plan translated national policies into local action and does it provide adequate policy support for protecting the borough's environmental assets? Would the Plan be unsound if SSSIs and LNRs were not shown on the supporting proposals map?
2. What constraints are there on development within the county given its proximity to the Usk Bat Sites SAC and other European designated sites (Cwm Clydach Woodlands, Aberbargoed Grasslands; Sugar Loaf Woodlands)?
3. What is the likely cumulative effect of developing a range of sites for employment use (for example, MU1; EMP1.5 - Rassau Platform B; and EMP1.8 - Crown Business Park Platform A) and transport projects (for example, T6.1) on the commuting and foraging opportunities for bats? Does the Plan provide sufficient policy guidance to address any significant potential impact such development might have on protected species?
4. What is the purpose of Policy DM5? What does it seek to achieve that is not covered by other policies?
5. What plans are in place to increase the amount of the county's electricity and heat requirements from renewable and low/ zero carbon technologies to support Policy SP7? Should the Plan make site allocations for new renewable and low/ zero carbon development including wind energy? Should the Plan require development sites (e.g., MU1) to deliver on site energy through microgeneration to meet the needs of future residents and workers?
6. Does Policy SP7 provide sound guidance on when it may be appropriate to release greenfield land for new development?
7. Why has a new criterion (b) been added to Policy DM3? Does FC criterion (c) of this policy repeat Policy DM1?
8. Is there any conflict between the siting of development and infrastructure identified in the Plan and the areas of flood risk identified as Zone C (refer TAN 15)?
9. Do Policies SP10 and DM3 provide clear guidance on how development should aspire to improve water quality and protect and enhance the county's natural environment?

Confirmed attendees for Questions 3 and 5 relating to Site MU1:
Newbridge Construction (19)

Confirmed attendee for Question 9: Newbridge Construction (19)
Envt Agency (18).

Close 1800 hours

Thursday 5 July 2012

Day 7 1000 hours
SESSION 14 TURNING HEADS – SECURING QUALITY DESIGN
(urban design, place making, heritage, environmental
improvements)

1. What initiatives does the Plan include to promote place making? Does criterion (a) of Policy DM2 effectively stifle innovative development?
2. Should the Plan identify policies in connection with the control of advertisements?
3. How would roller shutters make a positive contribution to the street scene?
4. Does Policy DM18 place too much emphasis on the preservation of heritage that is not statutorily listed over the desire to promote regeneration?
5. Does the Plan provide an appropriate policy framework to assess development proposals in the borough's two conservation areas and any prospective conservation areas that may be created?
6. What is meant by the term "land reclamation schemes" in Policy ENV4? How will these schemes be funded? By way of example, is it appropriate to identify sites such as Llanhilleth Pithead Baths (ENV4.4) without a clear indication of what the reclamation scheme might entail and how it would be funded? Should this site be used for other purposes including tourism, heritage or other related uses?

Close 1200 hours

Day 7 **1300 hours**
SESSION 15 **TRANSPORT**

1. Which of the various transport projects in the Plan are aspirations and which ones have a realistic chance of being delivered over the lifetime of the Plan*? Which transport projects are critical to the delivery of the spatial strategy and the other targets in the Plan? Are there robust plans in place to deliver them? When will they be delivered?
2. Does the Plan give sufficient emphasis to the desire/ need to promote sustainable forms of transport including cycling?
3. How will Policy SP6 be implemented?
4. In the absence of an adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance note, how would the Council secure appropriate levels of on site car parking, cycling and the facilitation of public transport that might be associated with new development?

Confirmed attendee: Welsh Govt (03)

Close **1445 hours**

* The Council is directed to present its evidence in response to Question 1 in a table showing when the various projects in the Plan are planned to proceed. The table should indicate any firm funding pledged towards their delivery.

Day 7
SESSION 16

1500 hours
DELIVERING INFRASTRUCTURE

1. Is there a clear delivery and implementation plan including funding arrangements to guide the policies and delivery of site allocations set out in the Plan?
2. What measures are in place for the Council and its partners to deliver the infrastructure pledges in the Plan? Are delivery mechanisms and responsibilities clearly defined between partners?
3. Are there any "show stoppers" that would jeopardise the spatial strategy and the implementation of policies to support it if they were delayed or not delivered through a lack of funding? Are the dependencies and the implications of any delay understood and provided for? What contingency measures are in place?
4. Is it always viable to impose requirements on developers for contributions that will add to the cost of development (e.g., affordable housing, provision of open space) on top of other site costs associated with the redevelopment of brownfield land? Should the Council prioritise where it will seek to secure S106 contributions where such contributions put into doubt the viability of a development?
5. How does the Plan cater for the county's need for telecommunications development?

Confirmed attendee: Welsh Govt (03)

Close 1730 hours

Monday 9 July 2012

Day 8 1000 hours

SESSION 17 MINERALS (Policies SP12, DM19 and M4)

1. How does the Plan translate national minerals planning policy down to the local authority level? Should the Plan seek to identify a **minimum** 10 year landbank? Is there merit in seeking to pursue up to 6 million tonnes of minerals and aggregate extraction over the lifetime of the Plan? Should the county accommodate a proportion of the minerals allocated to the Brecon Beacons National Park? If not, why not?
2. Does the Plan adequately distinguish between energy generating and non-energy minerals and aggregates?
3. What is the logic for the minerals safeguarding areas? Are they soundly drawn?
4. What is the logic for the Minerals Buffer Zones identified in Policy M2 and the sites identified in Policy M4? Why are these zones identified in different policies? Are these buffers soundly based?
5. What is the logic for the identification of areas in Policy M3 where minerals or aggregates working will not be acceptable? In identifying areas where minerals and aggregates working would not be acceptable, should the Council have taken account of the county's proximity to the Brecon Beacons National Park? If not, why not?
6. Should mining legacy areas or coal mining referral areas be shown on the constraints map?
7. Is the drafting of Policy SP12 soundly based? What is the logic for criterion (e) of this policy? Is the term "acceptable proven safe limit" clear in its intention? Why does the FC version of the Plan distinguish between residential areas and areas that are "deemed exceptions"? Should the policy state more positively that prior extraction will be encouraged on appropriate sites including housing sites? If not, why not?
8. Does Policy DM19 contain significant overlaps with other national policies? If so, what does this policy add in its current form that is not contained elsewhere?

Confirmed attendees: CCW (10), Gryphonn Quarries (26) Confederation of UK Coal Producers (45), Coal Authority (50), Welsh Govt (03).

Close 1300 hours

Day 8 **1400 hours**
SESSION 18 **MINERALS SITE ALLOCATIONS**

Brecon Beacons National Park Authority has been invited to prepare a short paper on the protection given to the Park and the implications of any development taking place adjacent to it. This will be circulated to all parties in advance of the hearing session.

Review of sites

1. What are the consequences of identifying land adjacent to Trefil Quarry (M4.1) for expansion on the local environment including heritage interests and the Brecon Beacons National Park? Is this site allocation soundly based?
2. What is the logic for identifying Tir Pentwys Tip (M4.2) as a preferred area for aggregates? Is this site allocation soundly based?

Confirmed attendees: CCW (10), Gryphonn Quarries (26), Torfaen CBC (12), Brecon Beacons NPA (46).

Mr Andrew Muir, Harmers Ltd, is invited to give evidence in connection with both questions.

Close **1700 hours**

Tuesday 10 July 2012
Day 9 1000 hours
SESSION 19 CWMTILLERY SETTLEMENT BOUNDARIES

1. Are the settlement boundaries for Cwmtillery soundly based?

The discussion at Session 19 will cover the Cwmtillery area and will consider the merits of Ty Pwdr (AS(N)21) and AS(SB)3.

Mr Ian Roberts' submission (on behalf of Mr Idris Watkins) in connection with Ty Pwdr specifically refers to the possibility of live/work development. This session will therefore provide an opportunity to discuss the merits of planning for this type of development in the county as well as the merits of including Ty Pwdr within the list of allocated sites either for housing and/or live/work.

Mr Watkins (and his agent) will also have an opportunity to pass comments on the process the Council adopted in completing its list of allocated housing sites in the LDP, that is, Question 1 of Session 4.

Confirmed attendee: Mr Idris Watkins (80 - AS(N)21)

Day 9
SESSION 20

Tuesday 10 July 2012
MONITORING INDICATORS

1. Is the monitoring framework for the Plan (as amended by the Council's focussed changes) fit for purpose?

All representors are invited to attend this session.

It is anticipated that the Inspector will review the progress of the examination before closing for the day.

Confirmed attendee: Welsh Govt (03).

Close 1330 hours

The Inspector will conduct site visits for the rest of the week.

He has already toured the county but will go to all sites allocated in the Plan as well as alternatives suggested by other participants.

He expects to conduct all site visits unaccompanied but would like to conduct accompanied site visits to the Six Bells colliery site, MU1, Trefil Quarry, Tyr Pentwys and Jesmondene Stadium. Jeanette John will contact relevant participants in the examination to arrange times for a visit. At this stage, it is hoped that all these visits could be carried out on 11 and 12 July 2012.

The Council will be expected to use the rest of this week to review any changes they may wish to make following the two weeks of hearing sessions.

Tuesday 17 July 2012

Day 10 1000 hours
SESSION 21 RESERVE SESSION

This is a reserve session. It will be kept free in the event that any of the other hearing sessions overrun.

Tuesday 17 July 2012
Day 10 1330 hours
SESSION 22 CLOSING ISSUES

The agenda for this session will be finalised closer to the end of the examination in public.

This session will be used as an opportunity to address any other outstanding soundness matters not raised in earlier sessions of the examination.

The Council will have an opportunity to explain any matters arising changes (MACs) that it may wish to promote as a result of the hearings. It will also confirm the arrangements for publicising any MACs. The Council will then be invited to make a closing statement.

All representors are welcome to attend this session.

Close 1730 hours