

SD21



Blaenau Gwent

County Borough Council

Regeneration Division

Local Development Plan

Vision & Strategy Options Workshop

30th November 2007

Draft Report of Consultation

March 2008

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Executive Summary

This consultation report outlines the views expressed at a stakeholder workshop, which was held to discuss the Vision and the Strategic Options for the Blaenau Gwent Local Development Plan. The Workshop was held on Friday 30th November 2007, at the Learning Action Centre, Ebbw Vale and involved 36 attendees, representing a variety of interests and organisations from Blaenau Gwent and neighbouring authorities (**Appendix B**).

The purpose of the workshop was to:

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

Vision Workshops

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

Draft Vision

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

As each groups agreed the draft Vision required further work, each group attempted to re-write the Vision for the area.

Strategy Options Workshops

The second task involved engaging relevant stakeholders in initial discussions on the following LDP strategy Options:

Option 1: Regeneration

This option maintains the current strategy contained within the Blaenau Gwent Adopted Unitary Development Plan (1996-2011)

Option	Growth Level	Spatial Spread	Employment	Retail
Option 1:UDP	Population loss House build rate of 117	Borough wide (though more in Sirhowy and Ebbw Fawr Valleys)	Borough wide	5 centres No hierarchy Broad role

Option 2: Growth and Regeneration

Option	Growth Level	Spatial Spread	Employment	Retail
Option 2: Growth and Regeneration	Population increase House build rate of 200	Heads of Valleys emphasis	Heads of Valleys emphasis - broadening offer	4 centres Hierarchy Specific roles

Option 3: Balanced and Interconnected Communities

Option	Growth Level	Spatial Spread	Employment	Retail
Option 3: Balanced and inter-connected communities	Population stability House build rate of 157	Borough wide (equalising growth – new allocations in Ebbw Fach Valley)	Borough wide (equalising growth de-allocating sites in north)	4 centres Hierarchy Specific roles

The workshop discussions highlighted advantages and disadvantages of these options. Through these discussions, option 2 was deemed to be the most favourable strategy by the stakeholders. Option 3 was considered viable, although stakeholders considered this option failed to meet the house building need identified in the Housing Needs Assessment and had unrealistic employment goals. Although, currently in place, it was considered that option 1 would not effectively address future issues and problems facing Blaenau Gwent.

The stakeholders were also asked to suggest alternative strategy options, and the following were identified:

- Option 2, but with a slightly lower growth level than option 2 but greater than proposed in option 3.
- Option 2 but with a higher growth level - house build rate of 250 per annum
- Option 2 but with a higher growth level, with growth being backloaded until 2016. An alternative spatial spread was proposed in that the focal point of growth could be along the new railway network.

Way Forward

The Council will seek to ensure that the preferred strategy meets the expectations of relevant stakeholders and the sustainability objectives set out in the draft Sustainability Appraisal (SA) Scoping Report.

Participants gave feedback on the stakeholder workshop and 66.7% felt that the session had been very useful in developing the Vision and Strategy Options.

The findings from the workshop will be used by the Council to develop the draft Vision and draft Preferred Strategy for the LDP, which will be formally consulted on in the autumn 2008.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 In November 2006, Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council made the decision to cease work on the Unitary Development Plan and start work on the Local Development Plan. The timetable for the various statutory stages of production of the Local Development Plan is set out in the Delivery Agreement (May 2007).
- 1.2 The first step in the process of preparing the Local Development Plan was to draft and formally consult on the Issues Paper. The Issues Paper was prepared as a discussion document intended to promote debate on the issues of strategic significance for the authority. Alongside this, an Issues and Vision Workshop was held on the 27th July 2007, at the ViTCC, Tredegar. A full record of the workshop is set out in 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 www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk.
- 1.3 Building on the opinions and views expressed at the Issues and Vision Workshop, a second set of workshops was held to discuss the Vision and the Strategic Options for the Blaenau Gwent Local Development Plan. This workshop was repeated on three dates, 19th October 2007 at the ViTCC, Tredegar and the 22nd and 30th November at the Learning Action Centre, Ebbw Vale.

Purpose of the report

- 1.4 The purpose of this report is to record and analyse the information gathered at the 30th November 2007 Vision and Strategy Options Workshop and to provide the Council with a clear indication of the views and wishes of those attending the workshop.

2.0 The Workshop

- 2.1 The purpose of the workshop was to:
 - Share information on the Local Development Plan Vision and Strategy Options;
 - Provide stakeholders with the opportunity to share views on the Vision;
 - Provide stakeholders with the opportunity to influence the Council's preferred strategy and;
 - Address any queries and questions.
- 2.2 Invitations were sent to a wide range of relevant stakeholders, including various local interest groups and organisations from Blaenau Gwent and neighbouring authorities, of which 36 attended. **Appendix A** provides a list of stakeholders who invitations were sent to. In addition to Appendix A Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations (GAVO) sent 30 invitations to other voluntary organisations from Blaenau Gwent. A list of all attendees is provided in **Appendix B**.

- 2.3 As an introduction to the workshop, Lynda Healy (Development Plans Manager) provided an update on progress of the Local Development Plan (LDP). This was followed by a presentation by Hayley Spender, Planning Policy Officer, who explained the process of the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment on the Local Development Plan. Lynda Healy gave a further presentation outlining the purpose of the workshop. **Appendix C** displays the slides used in the presentations. It should be noted that there was also opportunities for workshop attendees to clarify aspects of the LDP process and the workshop itself. The full agenda of the workshop is provided in **Appendix D**.
- 2.4 The morning was arranged around three workshop sessions. Attendees were arranged to form three groups (the yellow group, red group and green group) (see **Appendix E** for a list of the workshop groups). Each group had a facilitator and a planner to ensure that discussions were focussed and comments accurately recorded. The first of which was to build consensus on the draft Local Development Plan Vision for Blaenau Gwent.



- 2.5 The second workshop was arranged around the same groups as the first workshop and discussions focussed on the advantages and disadvantages of each of the strategy options. Prior to the commencement of the discussion of each strategy option, Lynda Healy provided a summary of the strategy option. This exercise was repeated for each strategy option.
- 2.6 In the third workshop, attendees were also asked to provide an alternative option to those already proposed.
- 2.7 A summary of the discussions for workshops one and two are provided in sections 3 and 4, and the suggested alternative options are provided in section 5. This feedback will now be used to improve the draft Vision and determine the preferred strategy for the Local Development Plan.

3.0 Draft Vision

- 3.1 The aim of workshop 1 was to build consensus on the draft Local Development Plan 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, were used to inform the discussion in this workshop session.

Draft Vision

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

- 3.2 Attendees were asked to judge if the draft Vision meets the requirements for a Vision. Guidance was provided on what a vision should be. The first requirement was that the Vision should be clear, realistic, and based on the objectives, and priorities of the Community Strategy.
- 3.3 The second set of requirements was based on advice received from the Welsh Assembly Government training workshop. It was advised that a Vision should be:
- a) A succinct statement of intent;
 - b) A point of reference for all parts of the plan and all participants;
 - c) Distinct to the area.

Red Group

- 3.4 The red group considered that the draft Vision was not a succinct statement of intent as it was considered by the group that a Vision should be short and “punchy” and that the detailed issues should be incorporated into the objectives of the Local Development Plan, and not the Vision. However, it was pointed out that the Community Strategy Vision for Blaenau Gwent was too succinct.
- 3.5 It was agreed by the group, however, that the draft Vision was a point of reference for all parts of the plan and participants and that it was distinctive to the area. However, it was noted that the draft Vision could apply to Merthyr Tydfil and other valley areas in Rhondda Cynon Taf for example, because they are facing similar issues as Blaenau Gwent. So it was considered that the vision was distinct regionally but not necessarily unique to Blaenau Gwent.
- 3.6 The facilitator then outlined the second task which was to allow the attendees to suggest improvements to the draft Vision.
- 3.7 The group identified that there was one theme missing from the draft Vision and that related to accessibility to services. The group devised a vision incorporating this theme.
- 3.8 With regard to the discussions on the draft Vision, the red group devised two possible Visions for the Local Development Plan:

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.

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. with services accessible to all based on a diverse and historical environment. Promoting its Its~~ unique environment, cultural and historic identity ~~will be protected~~, thereby creating a place where people want to live, work and visit.

Yellow Group

- 3.9 The yellow group considered that the draft Vision was not a succinct statement of intent as it was considered by the group that the vision contains a heavy content and the detailed issues should be incorporated into the objectives of the Local Development Plan, and not the Vision.
- 3.10 It was agreed by the group, however, that the draft Vision was a point of reference for all parts of the plan and participants and that it was distinctive to the area.
- 3.11 The facilitator then outlined the second task which was to allow the attendees to suggest improvements to the draft Vision.
- 3.12 The group identified that there were several weaknesses to the draft Vision. Firstly, it was felt that the draft vision wasn't easy to read as one long paragraph and so it was suggested that bullet points be inserted. A further issue raised was that the language used in the Vision was not reader friendly for communities. Some participants in the group also considered that the draft Vision was bland and not dynamic.
- 3.13 The group also pointed out that the draft Vision needed to place a greater emphasis on environmental and biodiversity issues.
- 3.14 They devised the following vision to incorporate some of the proposed changes:

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.

Green Group

3.15 The green group agreed that the Vision was a succinct statement of intent and a point of reference for all parts of the plan. Some participants believed that the vision could be applicable to other local authorities in south Wales as it was recognised that other local authorities experience similar problems. Overall they considered it to be as distinctive to the area as possible, as the vision took into account the main issues associated with the area. (These requirements were set out in LDP training from the Welsh Assembly Government).

3.16 The facilitator then outlined the second task, which was to allow the attendees to suggest improvements to the draft Vision.

3.17 The green group suggested the following improvements:

- Blaenau Gwent will 'be' not 'become' a network of sustainable healthy vibrant valley communities.
- Health is an important issue and should be incorporated in the vision as in the above sentence.
- It should read 'safe communities, focused on thriving town centres' not just refer to 'safe towns' as the latter is too restrictive in its application.
- The use of the word 'through' is superfluous and should be deleted.
- Accessibility/infrastructure and transport connections are missing from the vision and should be included.
- Environment, cultural and historic identity should be 'enhanced' not just 'protected'.
- 'To create' should replace 'thereby creating' in the final sentence, as it would read better.
- Another suggestion was made to replace 'good quality and affordable' homes with 'suitable homes'

3.18 A draft Vision has been devised to try and incorporate some of these changes:

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

4.0 The Strategy Options

4.1 The aim of workshop 2 was to provide stakeholders with the opportunity to influence the Council's Preferred Strategy for the Local Development Plan. The stakeholders were asked by the facilitators to identify advantages and disadvantages of each of the three strategy options (Regeneration, Growth and Regeneration and Balanced and Interconnected Communities).

4.2 Option 1: Regeneration (continuation of UDP strategy)

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

- Population decline from 2006 level
- No new housing allocations – urban containment
- Continue with existing employment allocations and strategy
- Main towns of Tredegar, Ebbw Vale, Brynmawr, Blaina and Abertillery focus of shopping, commercial, cultural, social and leisure activity
- Main expansion of services will be in Ebbw Vale

Red Group

Advantages

The red group considered that the option may encourage the development of previously developed land, protecting the rest of Blaenau Gwent, including important areas of Greenfield land, against major development, resulting in less environmental impacts.

It was also considered that this approach would sustain existing communities, where all town centres would have equal status and that change wouldn't have to be managed.

Disadvantages

Participants pointed out that population loss would continue and could promote further decline in all the town centres.

It was also considered that this was a negative approach for Blaenau Gwent, as it doesn't fit in with what is happening at a national, regional and local level particularly in terms of the health service plans.

It was also considered that there would be a population imbalance as this approach would result in an ageing population, which would put more pressure on services and there would be a decline in the working population, which would mean that there would be less people working. The population imbalance would also have an impact on schools as it was considered that there would be a declining school roll.

As this option focussed on urban containment, it was recognised that there could be a loss of accessible green space in the defined urban area due to pressure to build on the green space land.

One of the other features of this option was that the existing employment allocations of the UDP would remain the same. It was considered that the employment allocations in the UDP do not effectively address the needs of today especially in terms of the declining manufacturing sector and the shift towards the service sector economy.

It was also considered that there would be increased pressure on transport.

Yellow Group

Advantages

The yellow group considered that the option may encourage the development of previously developed land, protecting the rest of Blaenau Gwent, including important areas of Greenfield land, against major development, resulting in less environmental impacts.

It was also considered that this approach would sustain existing communities, where all town centres would have equal status and that change wouldn't have to be managed.

The group also pointed out that there would be less pressure on services due to the population loss associated with this strategy.

Disadvantages

Respondents considered that this option would produce an ageing housing stock and it was felt that this would discourage people from moving into the area, especially with no new housing allocations.

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

It was also considered that there would be a population imbalance as this approach would result in an ageing population, which would put more pressure on services and there would be a decline in the working population, which would mean that there would be less people working.

Another key issue was that there would be further decline in the area if this option were followed. For instance, there would be a lack of inward investment.

Green Group

Advantages

The only advantage identified by the consultees was that this option would result in all communities being served.



Disadvantages

A key issue raised was that there would be further decline in the area if this option were followed. For instance, there would be a lack of inward investment.

Some stakeholders highlighted that this option is not market-led and it results in an over-allocation of land-uses and the allocation is also inefficient in that some sites are not deliverable.

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

Others indicated that this option would not ensure enough houses are built to meet the demand identified in the Housing Needs Assessment, that town centres should be hierarchal and it does not meet the vision statement.

Conclusion

In general there was very little support for this option from the three workshop groups. Overall it was felt that it would not be appropriate to plan for the next 15 years on the basis of the UDP, as it would not effectively address the future issues likely to be faced by communities in the area.

4.3 Option 2: Growth and Regeneration

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

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

This option would address concerns with the economy by broadening the economic base by being more flexible in allowing different uses on industrial estates to those traditionally permitted. This would take into account the decline of manufacturing industry in the area and provide new employment opportunities to those currently available on industrial estates.

Discussions regarding this option identified a number of advantages and disadvantages, which are outlined below.

Red Group

Advantages

Stakeholders recognised that option 2 was a market led approach and that concentrating growth in the Heads of the Valleys could have a positive impact

on the South – provide economic driver for the rest of the Borough. It also fits in with the Heads of the Valley strategy and Wales Spatial Plan

Stakeholders also suggested that this option would increase the provision of affordable homes and would encourage a range of house types to create more choice – they emphasised that both were needed in the area.

The anticipated population increase as a result of this option was welcomed in that it would improve the population dynamic through the anticipated growth of younger people moving into the area. It was also considered that the anticipated population growth would result in an improved financial settlement for the Authority.

Stakeholders agreed that introducing a retail hierarchy and identifying a role and function for the four town centres would have positive implications, in that it would stop their decline. It was agreed that this approach would create sustainable town centres.

It was also argued that providing more flexibility on employment sites reflects the changes in the economy where there is a shift away from manufacturing towards service sector industry.

Disadvantages

Stakeholders considered that the growth level in this option was too aspirational and could impact on the South East regional housing figures for other local authorities, in that Blaenau Gwent will not be able to reach their target figure of 200 houses per annum and would result in other local authorities having to increase their housing figures.

Challenge in enforcing the new brand/ role on the town centres.

As the main expansion would be in Ebbw Vale, it was feared that this would cause the population level to decrease in other towns due to people moving into the new homes in Ebbw Vale. Another issue raised was, is there going to be enough demand for all this development?

In addition, it was also identified that this option could result in possible alienation for the South of the borough, with the growth being focussed on the Heads of the Valleys region. It was recognised that an action plan for the regeneration of the South be devised.

Yellow Group

Advantages

Stakeholders recognised that option 2 was a market led approach and that concentrating growth in the Heads of the Valleys could have a positive impact on the South – provide economic driver for the rest of the Borough. It also fits in with the Heads of the Valley strategy and Wales Spatial Plan

As town centres would be given specific roles there would be an increased opportunity to incorporate tourism etc into broadening the role of the town centres and this option would arrest their decline.

Disadvantages

Challenge in enforcing the new brand/ role on the town centres.

In addition, it was also identified that this option could result in possible alienation for the South of the borough, with the growth being focussed on the Heads of the Valleys region. It was recognised that an action plan for the regeneration of the South be devised.

As part of this Strategy Option, Blaina town centre will become a local shopping centre. The group expressed concern that reducing the status of Blaina to a local shopping centre could result in further decline and the Blaina and Nantyglo communities will be unable to access goods and services.

There were also concerns that to accommodate the level of growth contained in this option there would be pressure on developing greenfield sites, resulting in environmental impacts.

Green Group

Advantages

It was considered that this option was market-led and focused on deliverability but that it was important that the infrastructure needed to be improved to link the south to the north.

Attendees welcomed the positive approach, as this was a growth option rather than maintaining the status quo of the current regeneration strategy and would have a positive benefit on the whole area.

Disadvantages

There were concerns that Blaina would lose its status as a town centre with a corresponding detrimental effect on the environment, cultural and historic identity of Blaenau Gwent, which is to be protected according to the draft vision statement. It was felt that the south would lose out, as growth would be focused on the north.

Participants felt that development may not benefit local people or the area as a whole because the improved transport infrastructure would enable commuters to travel from the east and west to access the area, rather than benefiting those living in the area.

It was highlighted that some retail and potentially other growth sites may be identified outside the town centres and would not benefit local communities.

Conclusion

All three groups recognised that this option had a considerable number of benefits, although there were disadvantages associated with it.

4.4 Option 3: Balanced and Interconnected Communities

This option is trend based characterised by the following:

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

Red Group

Advantages

The group considered that the house build rates proposed in this option were more realistic.

Stakeholders recognised that if new employment sites were located in close proximity to the town centres, it would be more sustainable.

Disadvantages

This option was criticised for being too planned and not in line with market forces and was considered an unrealistic strategy as a whole.

Some felt that there would be unrealistic employment goals in that businesses would continue to be attracted to locations with existing transport infrastructures such as in the north, around the heads of the valleys, instead of locating elsewhere in the borough – this approach was considered to be not market led.

It was also considered that deallocating employment sites in the North of the Borough would offer limited options to the location of new businesses, and thus new businesses could be lost to other authorities with greater options.

As this option proposes equalising growth, with primarily new allocations in the Ebbw Fach Valley, it was considered that this may increase the pressure on existing transport systems and therefore have a greater impact on the environment.

Yellow Group

Advantages

It was also considered that new allocations could possibly lead to better use of land, in that employment land could be deallocated from manufacturing and reallocated for service sector uses.

Stakeholders recognised that if new employment sites were located in close proximity to the town centres, it would be more sustainable.

The group considered that the house build rates proposed in this option were more realistic, than those proposed in option 2. The group viewed this strategy option as the middle ground out of the 3 strategy options.



Disadvantages

Some felt that there would be unrealistic employment goals in that businesses would continue to be attracted to locations with existing transport infrastructures such as in the north, around the heads of the valleys, instead of locating elsewhere in the borough – this approach was considered to be not market led.

It was also considered that deallocating employment sites in the North of the Borough would offer limited options to the location of new businesses, and thus new businesses could be lost to other authorities with greater options.

As the level of growth is not considerable in this option, the group identified that there would not be as much opportunity for affordable housing as in Option 2.

Green Group

Advantages

Stakeholders believed that this option would be less divisive than option 2 as growth would be better spread and that it may stimulate more investment in the transport structure in the south.

It was felt that this option was flexible in that all communities would benefit, as there would be investment in town centres with employment and services located near town centres.

Disadvantages

Attendees pointed out that this option depends on a transport infrastructure which does not exist (in the south) and that development in the south could

have a potentially detrimental environmental impact because the shortage of land could result in the development of greenfield sites.

Others felt that this was a tentative option, especially in contrast to the bolder approach of Option 2 and indicated that it failed to meet the housebuilding need identified in the Housing Needs Assessment.

Conclusion

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

5.0 The Alternative Option

5.1 The aim of this workshop was to give stakeholders the opportunity to propose an alternative option to the 3 options already identified.

Red Group

The table below summarises the alternative option that was devised by the red group:

Option Name	Growth Level	Spatial Spread	Issues
	Population increase Slightly lower growth level than option 2 but more than option 3	As option 2	Employment – flexibility towards locating employment sites around the town centres Integrated public transport system Education and community facilities



5.2 One of the disadvantages identified when assessing the options in workshop 2 was that the level of growth was too ambitious, therefore the group proposed that the growth level should be lower than that proposed in option 2, but higher than the growth level proposed in option 3.

The group agreed that the spatial spread should remain as option 2 with growth along the Heads of the Valley, in line with market forces and regeneration in the South.

- 5.3 It was also agreed that the location of employment sites around the town centres would be more sustainable and that employment sites should broaden their offer to include provision for service sector employment, not just manufacturing.
- 5.4 The group referred to several key issues that they felt were missing from the strategy options, which focussed on an integrated transport system and education and community facilities.

Yellow Group

- 5.5 The table below summarises the alternative option that was devised by the yellow group:

Option Name	Growth Level	Spatial Spread	Issues
Balanced Sustainable Communities	Population increase Higher growth level than option 2 – increase house build rate to 250	As option 2 - Emphasis of growth would be in the Heads of Valleys and a regeneration focus in the south of the Borough	Town centres to adopt complimentary roles Increased opportunity for tourism throughout Blaenau Gwent Protecting, enhancing and utilising biodiversity and the environment Integrated public transport system

- 5.6 The group recognised the importance of increasing population and therefore aspired for a high growth level. They proposed a higher growth level than option 2 – a house build rate of 250 per annum.
- 5.7 The group agreed that the spatial spread should remain as option 2 with growth along the Heads of the Valley, in line with market forces and regeneration in the South.
- 5.8 In terms of retail, it was agreed that the number of retail centres should be reduced from 5 to 4. It was also accepted, as option 3, that the towns should look to find new roles that complement each other.
- 5.9 The group referred to several key issues that they felt were missing from the strategy options, which focussed on an integrated transport system and increased opportunity for tourism throughout Blaenau Gwent.

5.10 Although the red group emphasised the need for a high level of growth, the group also pointed out that there is a need to protect, enhance and utilise biodiversity and the environment.

Green Group

5.11 Participants considered Option 2 as generally being acceptable, although some did suggest a higher growth level than option 2, with growth being back loaded until 2016. An alternative spatial spread was proposed in that the focal point of growth could be along the new railway network.

6.0 What Next?

6.1 The Workshop was useful to improve the draft Vision and for discussing the perceived advantages and disadvantages of the strategy options proposed by the Council. These will be taken into account as the Council determines the preferred strategy for the LDP, which will be formally consulted on in the autumn 2008.

Appendix A – Invitations sent to stakeholders

Name	Organisation/Section
Elaine Townsend	
G Bartlett	Abertillery & Llanhilleth Community Council
Ernie Pitt	Base Handling Products
Dennis Owens	BGCBC
Alan Reed	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Alison Hoskins	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Alun Evans	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Alwyn Hughes	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Andrew Long	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Andrew Parker	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Alyson Tippings	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Bethan Cartwright	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Catherine Ashby	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Chris Engel	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Clive Rogers	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Deborah Beeson	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Dave R Cook	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Dave Watkins	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Eirlys Hallett	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Emma Cashmore	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Frank Olding	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Ged McHugh	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Edward Robinson	Blaina Senior Citizens
A Davies	Brynmawr Town Council
Cllr John Davies	Brynmawr Town Council
Carl Woods	Capita Symonds
Gill Clark	Chair Cwmtillery Partnership
Frank Callus	Coleg Gwent
David Llewellyn	Co-ordinator for Cwmtillery Partnership
Darren Lewis	Co-ordinator for Rassau & Garnlydan Partnership
Anna Chard	Co-ordinator for St Illtyds Partnership
Claire Stonelake	Department of Enterprise and Innovation Network
Chris Cox	DTZ
Dr Jane Layzell	Local Health Board
Gemma White	Local Health Board
Cllr David Britton	Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council
Brian Walters	National Assembly for Wales
D Gronow	New Tredegar Community Council
Anita Thomas	Princes Trust
Glyn Davies	Ramblers Association - North Gwent
Colin Stevens	Rassau Tenants & Residents Association & Blaenau Gwent Federation of T & R Associations
Andrew Jenkins	Rhyd Development Ltd
A Edwards	Town Centre Partnership Brynmawr Traders
Brian Kember	Tredegar Development Trust
G Powell	Tredegar Development Trust
Alyson Hoskins	Vice Chair, Abertillery Communities First
Garth Collier	Vice Chair, Blaina Communities First
Graham Bartlett	Vice Chair, Cwmtillery Communities First
Gareth Matthews	Working Links

Name	Organisation/Section
	United Welsh
Greg Paulsen	Co-ordinator for Cwm, Waunlwyd & Victoria Partnership
Gwyn Smith	Sustrans
Hayley Selway	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Heidi Carter	Secretary of the Youth Forum
Helen Madden	Co-ordinator for Blaina Partnership
Helena Hunt	Community Safety
Huw Lewis	GAVO
Huw Lewis	Vice Chair, Rassau & Garnlydan Communities First
J Morgan	Tredegar Town Council
J P Williams	Rhymney Community Council
James Eades	Linc Cymru
Jane McNeil	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Janice Tse	Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council
Jayne Nicholas	Chair Tredegar Central & West & Sirhowy Partnership
Jeff Harris	ARPP
Jeremy Gass	University of the Valleys
Jessica Daley	Chair of the Youth Forum
Jessica Osbourne	Co-ordinator for Tredegar Central & West & Sirhowy Partnership
Jim Allen	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
John Davies	Ebbw Vale & District Development Trust
John Howells	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
John Millard	Melin Housing Association
John Morgan	Vice Chair, Communities First Tredegar Central & West & Sirhowy
John Wedlock	Vice Chair, Ebbw Vale North & South Communities First
Julian Bosley	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Karin Lamb	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Kate Terrell	Chair St Illtyds Partnership
Kayna Tregay	Environment Agency
Keith Dykes	Chair Abertillery Partnership
Keith Rogers	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Kelsey Watkins	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Keren Bender	Chair Cwm, Waunlwyd & Victoria Partnership
Kerry Diamond	Continental Teves
Leanne Connor	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Louise Horner	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Lyn Evans	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Lyn Harber	Vice Chair, Six Bells Communities First
Lyn Maloney	Vice Chair, St Illtyds Communities First
Lynn Phillips	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
M Phillips	Ebbw Vale Trades Council
Mair Sheen	Co-ordinator for Six Bells Partnership
Margaret Retallick	Tredegar Town Council
Mark Hopkins	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Mark Price	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Michelle Evans	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

Name	Organisation/Section
Mike Garland	M & J Europe
Mike Johnson	The Campaign for the Protection of Rural Wales (Newport & Valleys)
Mike O'Brien	Chair Rassau & Garnlydan Partnership
Mike O'Dowd	Vice Chair, Nantyglo Communities First
Neil Maylan	Glamorgan Gwent Archaeological Trust Ltd
Nick Landers	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Nigel Collins	Co-ordinator for Abertillery Partnership
Pat Tagg	Job Centre Plus
Patrick Lewis	Heads of the Valleys Programme
PC Andy Harris	Police Architectural Liaison Officer
Peter Woodhead	Vice Chair, Communities First Cwm, Waunllwyd & Victoria
Phillip Hackling	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Reg Arnold	
Rhian Deakin	Blaenavon Town Council
Richard Bevan	Local Health Board
Richard Crook	Corus Project Team
Richard Jones	Countryside Council for Wales
Richard Price	The Home Builders Federation
Rob James	Co-ordinator for Ebbw Vale N & S Partnership
Rob Murray	Torfaen County Borough Council
Rob Thompson	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Roderic Jenkins	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Roger Hewett	Chair Blaina Partnership
Roger Leadbeter	
Ruth Sinfield	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Sarah Fotheringham	Glamorgan & Gwent Housing Association
Sharn Anett	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Sharon Hill	Co-ordinator for Nantyglo Partnership
Simon Dobbs	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Steve Harford	Careers Wales
Steve Herridge	Chair Six Bells Partnership
Steve Smith	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Tony Chivers	Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
Tracy Nettleton	Brecon Beacons National Park
Trevor Neatherway	Blaenau Gwent Local Health Board
Trish Law	AM
Vic Parkin	Chair Nantyglo Partnership
Victoria King	Coleg Gwent
Wayne Thomas	RISE

Appendix B – Workshop Attendees

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 C – Presentation



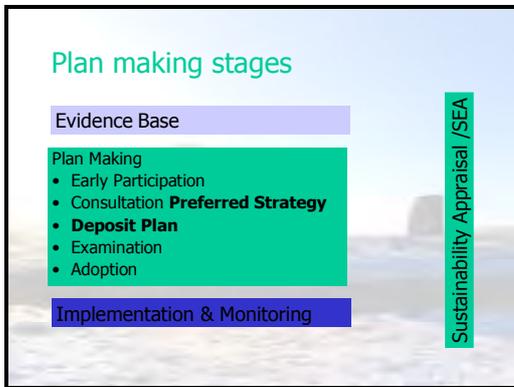
- Local Development Plan (Presentation)
- Sustainability Appraisal / Strategic Environmental Assessment (Presentation)
- LDP Process (Presentation)
- Workshop 1 - Vision
- Tea/Coffee Break
- Strategic Options (Presentation)
- Workshop 2 - Options
- Workshop 3 - Alternative Options

What is a Local Development Plan?

a Local Development Plan is....

A Plan and policy document that:

- Manages Change in Land Use over a period of time
- In a way that meets the needs of the area
- Whilst Protecting the Environment



Timetable

Evidence Base	On-going
Early Participation	Apr-Dec '07
Preferred Strategy	Sep-Nov '08
Deposit Plan	Sep-Nov '09
Examination	Dec-Feb '11
Adoption	Aug '11

Soundness Test

"The presumption is that the LDP is sound unless it is shown to be otherwise as a result of evidence considered throughout the examination. There are 10 criteria for testing soundness which fall into 3 categories."

- Procedural
- Consistency
- Coherence & Effectiveness

To date....

- Develop the Evidence Base
- Invitation for Expressions of Interest (Candidate Sites)
- Consultation on Issues Paper
- **Spatial Strategy and Preferred Options**



**Sustainability Appraisal (SA)
Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)**

Hayley Spender – Planning Policy Officer



What is Sustainability Appraisal of the Local Development Plan?

Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 – Section 39 (2)

A Sustainability Appraisal is a systematic process that is designed to evaluate the predicted social, economic and environmental effects of development planning.



What is the Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Local Development Plan?

European Union Directive 2001/42/EC
Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulation 2004

The systematic and rigorous assessment of the 'significant environmental impacts' of Development Plans



Link between SA and SEA

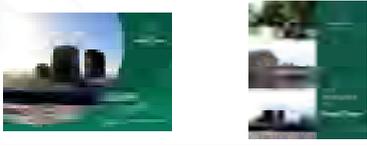
The major differences between the SA and SEA processes is in their scope and depth of environmental issues



However, guidance from the Welsh Assembly Government recommends that Authorities take an integrated approach to SA/SEA.

SA/ SEA and the LDP Process

- Informs the production of the LDP
- Mitigates against the worst environmental effects
- Key indicator in the 'soundness' of the LDP



SA/SEA – The Main Stages

Stage A: Setting Context and Scope

Stage B: Developing and refining options and assessing effects

Stage C: Preparing the SA report

Stage D: Consulting on the Preferred Strategy option of the Development Plan and the SA report; and

Stage E: Monitoring and implementation of the plan

WAG guidance also requires the preparation of a Scoping Report and Sustainability Appraisal Report

The Essentials of making a Plan

What have we got? (Issues)
Where do we want to get to? (Vision)
How do we get there? (Strategy)

Using the matters over which the plan has influence

With a Process that :

- Is understandable
- Engages stakeholders and the community

Why are we here this morning?

Build Consensus on:
Where we want to go?
- Vision Workshop

Establish best way to get there?
- Options workshops

Questions

Workshop 1: Vision

Vision

It 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. (LDP Wales)

A succinct statement of intent
A point of reference for all parts of the plan and all participants.
Distinct to the area
(LDP Training workshop)

Community Strategy

'A better place to live work and visit'

Draft LDP 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."

Created from work undertaken at workshop in Summer (Officers and LDP Forum)

Workshop 1: Vision

Task 1
Judge if draft vision provided meets the requirements for a vision

Task 2
Suggest minor improvements to draft vision

Workshop 2: Strategic Options

How do we get there?

Due to requirements of Strategic Environmental Assessment must look at a number of options

Variables

- Demand and Supply
- Specific Location

Not forgetting that we are attempting to resolve the issues identified

Growth Options

Estimating population is important as it will have a major influence on future land requirements

Housing development is principal consumer of land

Identified 3 strategic growth options

Growth Options

Share of Growth

Settlement	Share of population	Share of housing	Approx No of committed houses
Upper Sirhowy Valley (Tredzgar)	22%	27%	500
Ebbw Fair (Ebbw Vale)	33%	54%	1000
Upper Ebbw Fach (Brynmawr, Nantyglo and Blaina)	21%	12%	220
Lower Ebbw Fach (Aberillery)	24%	7%	120



Growth Scenarios

Strategy	Assumed annual build rate	Additional Dwelling Requirement	2021 Population
UDP	117(1755)	0	68,000
Growth	200 (3000)	800	71,000
Trend	156 (2340)	200	69,500

Spatial Options

UDP = Urban Containment
 Growth = Heads of Valleys
 Trend = Equalise Growth (Ebbw Fach)



Strategy Options

Option 1:UDP Regeneration (UDP)
 Decline - Urban Containment

Option 2:Growth and Regeneration
 Growth - Heads of Valleys focus

Option 3: Balanced and Inter-Connected Communities
 Trend - Equalise Growth

Employment Land

Landbank of 64 ha - annual take-up 2 ha
 Sufficient land - but is it suitable for new business opportunities and is it developable
 Do we need a new Strategy?

Option 1: Retain existing borough wide
Option 2: Broaden offer through new mixed-use sites in Heads of Valleys area
Option 3: Borough wide de-allocate some in Heads of Valleys



Retail

Do we need a retail hierarchy?
 Option 1 (UDP) – no (all 5 equal)
 Option 2 (Growth) – yes
 Option 3 (Balanced) – no

Should we have 5 town centres?
 Option 1 (UDP) – yes (includes Blaina)
 Option 2 (Growth) – no
 Option 3 (Balanced) – no

Should we look for new roles?
 Option 1 UDP – no (broaden)
 Option 2 Growth – yes
 Option 3 Balanced – yes



Strategic Options

Option	Growth Level	Spatial Spread	Employment	Retail
Option 1: UDP	Population loss House build rate of 117	Borough wide (though more in Sirhowy and Ebbw Fach Valleys)	Borough wide	5 centres No hierarchy Broad role
Option 2: Growth and Regeneration	Population increase House build rate of 200	Heads of Valleys emphasis	Heads of Valleys emphasis - broadening offer	4 centres Hierarchy Specific roles
Option 3: Balanced and inter-connected communities	Population stability House build rate of 157	Borough wide (equalising growth - new allocations in Ebbw Fach Valley)	Borough wide (equalising growth - new allocations in north)	4 centres No Hierarchy Specific roles



Main Issues

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

Find a role function for town centres

Create a balanced population stemming out-migration

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



Other Issues

- Environment
- Leisure and Tourism
- Education and Skills
- Renewable Energy
- Waste
- Transport



Transport Links

Blauenau District Council Strategic Planning
 Local Development Plan




Workshop 2: Options

The aim of this workshop is to establish the preferred strategy

Task

Identify the advantages and disadvantages of each option



Option 1: UDP Regeneration

Population decline from 2006 level

No new housing allocations – urban containment (117)

Continue with existing employment allocations and strategy

Main towns of Tredegar, Ebbw Vale, Brynmawr, Blaina and Abertillery focus of shopping, commercial, cultural, social and leisure activity

Main expansion of services will be in Ebbw Vale



Option 1: UDP Regeneration

Settlement	Share of population	Share of housing	Approx No of committed houses
Upper Sirhowy Valley (Tredegar)	22%	27%	500
Ebbw Fawr (Ebbw Vale)	33%	54%	1000
Upper Ebbw Fach (Brynmawr, Nantyglo and Blaina)	21%	12%	220
Lower Ebbw Fach (Abertillery)	24%	7%	120

Option 2: Growth and Regeneration

Growth Strategy – stemming out-migration leading to increase in population to 71,000

House build rate of 200 per annum

Emphasis of growth in Heads of Valleys with a regeneration focus in the south of the borough

Option 2: Growth and Regeneration

New employment opportunities to broaden offer

The identification of a few large sites will provide the opportunity for new/improved service provision

New hierarchy of towns with Ebbw Vale becoming the regional centre. Tredegar, Brynmawr and Abertillery district shopping centres

Option 2: Growth and Regeneration

Option 2: Growth and Regeneration

Settlement	Share of population	Share of housing	Approx No of houses
Upper Sirhowy Valley (Tredegar)	25%	27%	700 (200)
Ebbw Fawr (Ebbw Vale)	33%	45%	1200 (200)
Upper Ebbw Fach (Brynmawr, Nantyglo and Blaina)	21%	29%	520 (300)
Lower Ebbw Fach (Abertillery)	24%	8%	220 (100)

Option 3: Balanced and Inter-connected Communities

Trend Based – stemming out-migration and stabilising population at 2006 level

House build rate of 157 per annum

Emphasis is to spread growth according to share of population

Equalise employment through de-allocating of manufacturing and concentrating on business close to towns

Tredegar, Ebbw Vale, Brynmawr and Abertillery will find complimentary roles

Workshop 3: Alternative Option

Alternative Option

Task
To identify an alternative Option

Variables
Growth
Location
Issues (Employment, Retail)

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What Happens Next?

- Prepare a Report of the Workshops
- Consider the findings of both workshops to help us identify the preferred strategy - SA will also assist in this process
- Prepare Preferred Strategy Document
- Report back to Steering Group and LDP Forum
- Seek Council Support
- Consult in Autumn 2008

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Close

Thanks
Evaluation Form

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Appendix D – Workshop Agenda

9.45 – 10.00	Registration with Tea and Coffee
10.00 – 10.05	Welcome and Introduction <i>Gareth Jones – Chief Regeneration Officer</i>
10.05 – 10.15	Presentation – LDP Update <i>Lynda Healy – Development Plans Manager</i>
10.15 – 10.25	Presentation - LDP Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment <i>Hayley Spender – Planning Policy Officer</i>
10.25 – 10.35	Presentation – LDP Process <i>Lynda Healy – Development Plans Manager</i>
10.35 – 10.45	Questions and Answers
10.45 – 10.50	Presentation - Introduction to Workshop 1- Vision <i>Lynda Healy– Development Plans Manager</i>
10.50 – 11.05	Workshop 1 – Vision
11.05 – 11.20	Break – Tea and Coffee
11.20 – 11.35	Presentation – Introduction to Workshop 2 – LDP Strategy Options <i>Lynda Healy– Development Plans Manager</i>
11.35 – 12.35	Workshop 2 – LDP Strategy Options (including short presentations to introduce each option) Stakeholders to discuss the following options (20 minutes per option) Option 1: Regeneration (continuation of UDP Strategy) Option 2: Growth and Regeneration Option 3: Balanced and Interconnected Communities
12.35 – 12.55	Workshop 3 - Alternative Option?
12.55 – 13.00	Close and Evaluation
13.00	Lunch

Appendix E – Workshop Groups

Yellow Group

Name	Organisation
John Millard	Melin Housing Association
Deb Beeson	Blaenau Gwent CBC
Andrew Parker	Blaenau Gwent CBC
Julian Bosley	Blaenau Gwent CBC
Tracy Nettleton	Brecon Beacons National Park
Brian Kember	Tredegar Development Trust
Councillor John Davies	Brynmawr Town Council
Huw Lewis	GAVO (Facilitator)
Bethan Cartwright	Blaenau Gwent CBC
Darren Lewis	Co-ordinator for Rassau & Garnlydan Partnership
Rob James	Co-ordinator for Ebbw Vale N & S Partnership
Kelsey Watkins	Blaenau Gwent CBC

Red Group

Name	Organisation
Dr Jayne Layzell	Local Health Board
Karin Lamb	Blaenau Gwent CBC
Alison Hoskins	Blaenau Gwent CBC
Jane McNeil	Blaenau Gwent CBC (Facilitator)
Hayley Spender	Blaenau Gwent CBC (Planning Policy Officer)
Reg Arnold	BGBC Compact
Sharon Hill	Co-ordinator for Nantyglo Partnership
Richard Jones	Countryside Council for Wales
Eirlys Hallett	Blaenau Gwent CBC
Richard Price	Home Builders Federation
Lyn Phillips	Blaenau Gwent CBC
John Davies	Ebbw Vale and District Development Trust

Green Group

Name	Organisation
Trevor Neatherway	Blaenau Gwent CBC
Brian Swain	Blaenau Gwent CBC (Planning Policy Officer and Facilitator)
Councillor David Britton	Nantyglo & Blaina Town Council
Mike Johnson	The Campaign for the Protection of Rural Wales (Newport & Valleys)
Rob Murray	Torfaen County Borough Council
Alan Reed	Blaenau Gwent CBC
Tony Chivers	Blaenau Gwent CBC

Jessica Osbourne	Co-ordinator for Tredegar Central & West & Sirhowy Partnership
Neil Maylan	Glamorgan and Gwent Archaeological Trust Ltd
Helen Madden	Co-ordinator for Blaina Partnership
Vic Parkin	Chair of Nantyglo Partnership
Edward Robinson	Blaina Senior Citizens