

**ES9.4**



**Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council**

**Local Development Plan**

**Hearing Session 9: Agriculture and Significant  
Landscape Areas**

**Friday 29 June 2012**

**Examination 2012**

**Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council Submission**

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## **SESSION 9            Agriculture    and    Significant    Landscape    Areas Designations**

### **Introduction**

This Statement has been prepared by Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council in order to help facilitate appropriate discussion at the Agriculture and Significant Landscape Hearing Session. The Paper provides a response to the questions set by the Planning Inspector (Mr Vincent Maher).

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

The Council's detailed response to the representations received to the Agriculture and Significant Landscape Areas are contained in the Report of Representations (**SD07b**).

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

- 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?**

#### **Is the Council's proposed allocation of land for cemetery space soundly based?**

The Council's evidence for the future provision of cemeteries is set out in:

- **SD49:** Community Facilities Background Paper

In accordance with Planning Policy Wales (PPW) (**W41**, page 20, paragraph 2.4.4) local planning authorities are required to make provision for community facilities of which a cemetery is one such facility. In order to address demand in the County Borough it is necessary to allocate further cemetery provision.

The Council has undertaken a review of the current cemeteries capacity within Blaenau Gwent. Dukestown Cemetery has approximately 5 to 6 years burial capacity left at the cemetery based on existing burials (**SD49**, pages 20-21, Table 5). Also the proposed Heads of the Valleys dualling (T6.1) could result in the Council having to exhumate a number of graves for re-burial which would reduce future burial capacity. Therefore a future extension option is required to ensure there is continuity of burial service in Dukestown.

Appropriate officers of the Council met to discuss potential land to accommodate the required cemetery extensions and agreed what land should be allocated in the Local Development Plan. As a result of this, 3 land allocations were identified for inclusion in the Plan (**SD01**, page 106, Policy

ENV5.2). The land identified is considered a logical extension to the existing cemetery.

**Would the proposed extension of Dukestown Cemetery (ENV5.2) result in the loss of high quality agricultural land?**

No. PPW (**W41**, page 56, paragraph 4.9.1) states that the best agricultural land (grades 1, 2 and 3a) should be preserved. Appendix 2 of the Council's Agricultural Paper (**ES9.1**) grades the quality of agricultural land in Blaenau Gwent.

The site in question is low grade agricultural land (grade 5). Therefore there is no requirement under national planning policy for the site to be retained in its current use.

**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?**

**What is the logic for this amendment?**

The logic for the change is that the route identified in the Plan (**SD01**) proved to be unacceptable due to ecological issues, the Equality Act and difficulties with the landowner. It is worth noting that the alignment identified in Focussed Change 11 was the original alignment.

The route identified in the Plan (**SD01**) was one of the options considered by Caerphilly County Borough Council when considering all possible alternatives. At the time it was thought to be an acceptable route but further investigation revealed issues with biodiversity, compliance with the Equality Act and difficulties with the landowner.

Investigation by Caerphilly County Borough Council found that the only acceptable alignment is that being proposed through Focussed Change 11 (**SD10a**, page 15). CCBC commissioned Captial Symonds to undertake an obligation review to assess alternative routes. This involved consideration of the road which was ruled out for safety reasons, and a number of other routes.

**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?**

As already stated, Caerphilly County Borough Council investigated a number of routes before determining this route as the preferred alignment.

It should be noted that over a third of the alignment of the cycle route is on a former railway line.

The design of the cycle route will be able to address surrounding land issues, as there are design solutions that can be implemented to cater for all eventualities. Options for the route include:

**Option 1:** Route to be fenced off completely effectively splitting the land but crossing points would be provided for the owner.

**Option 2:** Route can be fenced off but with always-open links for stock provided. Users of the route would cross via cattle grids and self-closing gates. (This has recently been implemented on Brynmawr to Blaenavon cycle route)

**Option 3:** No fencing of the route, just access gates at the beginning and the end again via cattle grids and self-closing gates.

The option to be chosen will depend on the requirements of the landowner.