

ES14.1



Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

Local Development Plan

**Hearing Session 14: Turning Heads – Securing Quality
Design**

Thursday 5 July 2012

Examination 2012

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council Submission

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

Introduction

This Statement has been prepared by Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council in order to help facilitate appropriate discussion at the Turning Heads – Securing Quality Design 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 responses to the representations received to securing quality design are contained in the Report of Representations (**SD07b**).

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

1. What initiatives does the Plan include to promote place making? Does criterion (a) of Policy DM2 effectively stifle innovative development?

What initiatives does the Plan include to promote place making?

The Mixed Use allocations MU1 Ebbw Vale Northern Corridor and MU2 'The Works' are exemplar projects of achieving high levels of sustainability and well designed places. This is reflected through the master planning that has been undertaken for 'The Works' and the Inspector's attention is directed to:

- **SD60:** 'The Works Masterplan
- **SD61a:** Masterplan Design and Access Statement 'The Works' Update
- **SD61b:** Design Codes

It is accepted that the plan could go further in promoting place making in policy DM2, particularly in larger scale developments for example residential proposals of 50 dwellings and more. It is therefore suggested to the Inspector that a statement be included in policy DM2 to require developers to submit comprehensive masterplans for residential proposals of 50 dwellings and over which must have regard to the need to create high quality, sustainable and locally distinct places.

Does criterion (a) of Policy DM2 effectively stifle innovative development?

In response to a representation received (**SD07b**, page 90, 21D.373), the Council amended criterion b of Policy DM2 through Focussed Change 6 (**SD10a**, pages 11-12) in order to make Policy DM2 more proactive with a view to encouraging contemporary and cutting edge design proposals that help to deliver landmark developments.

It is however recognised that criterion (a) effectively stifles development. It is therefore suggested to the Inspector that criterion (a) and (b) be merged to form one criterion so that development proposals are of good design which reinforces local character and distinctiveness of the area in terms of type, form, scale, mix and density or improves areas of poor design and layout.

2. Should the Plan identify policies in connection with the control of advertisements?

No. It is considered that the Plan should not identify policies in connection with the control of advertisements.

Planning Policy Wales (**W41**, page 38, figure 3.1 and page 95) lists the control of outdoor advertisements both within conservation areas and outside as national development control policy which should not be repeated as local policy in Local Development Plans.

3. How would roller shutters make a positive contribution to the street scene?

It is recognised that roller shutters do not tend to make a positive contribution to the street scene as stated in criterion (e) of policy DM2. It is suggested to the Inspector that reference to roller shutters is deleted from the criterion.

4. Does Policy DM18 place too much emphasis on the preservation of heritage that is not statutorily listed over the desire to promote regeneration?

In accordance with Planning Policy Wales (**W41**) Para 6.5.12 Policy DM18 seeks to ensure that buildings that are considered locally important but have not been listed are recognised. However it is acknowledged that the policy should be commensurate with the importance of the building and should not offer protection beyond that offered to statutorily listed buildings. Therefore, it is suggested that an additional criterion be added to policy DM18 to clarify when alterations to buildings which are considered of local importance but not statutorily listed will be allowed

It is also suggested to the Inspector that Paragraph 7.92 be amended accordingly to support the additional criterion.

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?

The Council has not considered it necessary to include specific policies relating to Conservation Areas as it does not intend to depart from or add to the position as laid down by legislation and/or national guidance. (PPW (W41) page 95, figure 6.1)

However document (SD86) Tredegar Townscape Initiative Conservation Area Appraisal and Design Guide (part 2) provides guidance for planning applications, Listed Building Consent and Conservation Area Consent (including consent for advertisements and demolition works) within the Tredegar Conservation Area.

For the purposes of clarity the Council accepts that to provide an appropriate policy framework reference to this document should be made in the Plan.

4. 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, Llanhilleth (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?

What is meant by the term “land reclamation schemes” in Policy ENV4?

The term “land reclamation schemes” is used to refer to reclamation of derelict land and buildings which are detrimental to the urban fabric, it can also cover the treatment of contaminated land. The Derelict Land Unit was set up a month after the Aberfan disaster in November 1966. Its aims were to lead, encourage and co-ordinate a programme of reclamation to clear away dangerous derelict sites and restore land to productive and beneficial use. Over the years unstable tips have been removed and former colliery sites reclaimed. However, a number of small schemes remain in the Borough.

The Unitary Development Plan (SD127a, page 76) identified a total of 15 land reclamation projects outstanding in Blaenau Gwent. As part of the Local Development Plan process, appropriate officers of the Council met to discuss the sites and agreed which sites should be taken forward to the Local Development Plan. Based on the assessment 4 sites were identified for inclusion in the Plan.

How will the schemes be funded?

The schemes will be funded through WG Derelict Land Grant.

By way of example, is it appropriate to identify sites such as Llanhilleth Pithead Baths, Llanhilleth (ENV4.4) without a clear indication of what the reclamation scheme might entail and how it would be funded?

The Welsh Government, through a Derelict Land Grant (DLG), has funded preparatory work for a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO). However, WG advised the Council in 2009 that funding was not available through DLG for demolition and clearance. A Project Initiation Document has been prepared and funding is being sought from the Holistic Area Regeneration Plan (HARPS) funding process (WG Heads of the Valleys programme).

General information on what the reclamation scheme might entail is identified in the site descriptions document (**SD34**) with funding covered in Chapter 9 of the Plan (**SD01**, page 133-134).

Should this site be used for other purposes including tourism, heritage or other related uses?

Discussions have been held between Regeneration Officers of Blaenau Gwent, residents and members on several occasions and the Council is aware of aspirations for the site. The planning application for the site identified environmental improvements, highway improvements and residential. There were no objections to the planning application when advertised in 2007. It should be noted that the use of part of the site for open space or community use has not been ruled out. A detailed scheme has yet to be prepared for the site to be prepared for the site.