

ES9.1

**BLAENAU GWENT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN EXAMINATION**

AGRICULTURE PAPER

1. Quantify the role of agriculture in county's economy (number of farms, estimate of jobs (SIC), type of agriculture)

Figures produced by the Welsh Government in 2011 identifies that as of 2010 there were 51 full time farmers in Blaenau Gwent. The survey further identifies that this is predominantly sheep farming (See Appendix 1).

2 Categorise the quality of agriculture land (using relevant government land quality classifications)

The attached plan (Appendix 2) identifies the classification of agricultural land within the borough. This plan clearly identifies that the majority of agricultural land within Blaenau Gwent is grade 5 with areas to the southern end of the borough being grade 4. The borough does not have any grade 1, 2 or 3a land.

Also attached (Appendix 3) is a plan, which identifies the extent of common land in Blaenau Gwent.

3 Subsequently considers whether there is a need to develop a policy around the rural economy and agriculture consistent with national planning policy including TAN 6 covering matters such as re-use of agricultural buildings, farm diversification and if not why not.

Agriculture was not identified as an issue for the area at Pre-deposit participation stage. The Issues Paper (**SD16**) did not identify agriculture as an issue nor was it raised in the consultation process. Neither was it raised in the Issues and Visions workshop (**SD18**). When the County Landowners and Business Association, National Farmers Union and The Campaign for the Protection of Rural Wales were consulted at Preferred Strategy stage and Deposit Plan stage no responses were received.

Using the National Statistics Rural Urban Classification to Output Areas (July 2004) to determine whether settlements in Blaenau Gwent are urban or rural, with urban areas being defined as those with a population of 10,000 or more. All wards in Blaenau Gwent are classified as urban with the exception of Cwm and Llanhilleth, which are classified as Town and Fringe.

Whilst the majority of Blaenau Gwent lies outside the settlement boundary its population is concentrated in the towns. As a result Blaenau Gwent is characterised by a close association between densely urbanised communities and large tracts of open countryside. However, it should be noted that all

'rural' areas (i.e. countryside beyond the settlement boundary) in the County Borough are in close proximity to existing settlement boundaries.

Technical Advice Note 6 (TAN 6): Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities (2010) (**W55**) supplements Planning Policy Wales (PPW) providing additional guidance to support the delivery of sustainable rural communities. It is not considered that the principle aims of TAN 6 of delivering sustainable rural communities can be strictly applied to Blaenau Gwent given the urban nature of the settlements. However, consideration of development within the countryside has been addressed by criterion (e) of policy SP8.

The above information supports the Council's view that agriculture is not an issue for Blaenau Gwent. Therefore no specific policy with regards to the rural economy and agriculture has been included within the Plan (**SD01**).

PPW paragraph 7.1 states that it is not necessary to repeat national policy in Local Development Plans in respect of:

- x Employment developments within or adjoining rural settlements
- x Agricultural development proposals
- x Reuse and adaptation of rural buildings

Whilst PPW states that farm diversification should be considered for inclusion the Council have determined that, as it has not been considered to be an issue within the plan process then a specific topic based policy does not need to be included.

Notwithstanding this criterion (e) of Policy SP8 provides broad support for rural enterprise and will assist in determining applications alongside development management policies within the Plan. Where necessary national policy will be used to assess applications, which fall outside the scope of these policies.

PPW (**SD41**) at paragraph 7.3.3 advises local planning authorities to "adopt a positive approach to development associated with farm diversification in rural

In addition advice in Tan 6 (**W55**) paragraph 3.2 re-use/adaptation of rural buildings, paragraph 3.3 agricultural buildings, paragraph 3.7 farm diversification will also be used to determine applications.

The Council considers that there is no need to include a specific policy however to ensure clarity it is suggested to the Inspector that reference is made on Policy SP8 to applications being assessed in line with national policy.

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