





## Executive Summary

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			

## 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 27<sup>th</sup> 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](http://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 22<sup>nd</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> 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 22<sup>nd</sup> 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 20 attended.









3.15 As the green group did not consider the original vision statement to be succinct, the draft vision was modified to produce the following:

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 in a~~ unique environment, ~~cultural and historic identity will be protected, thereby creating 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

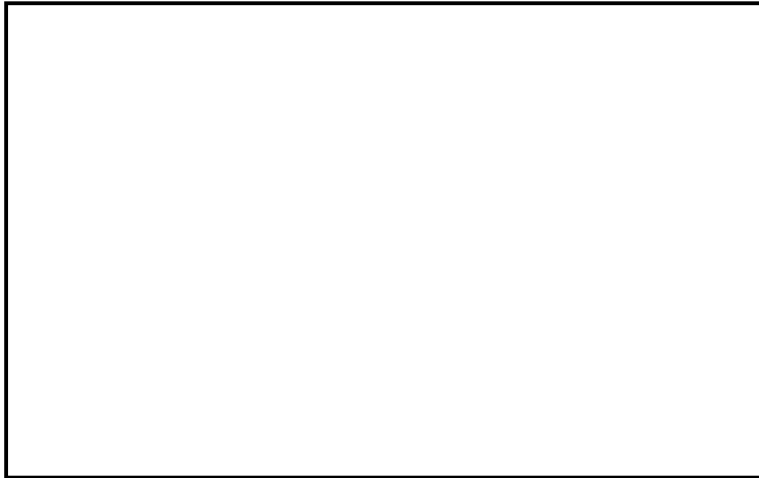
The red group considered that the option may encourage the development of previously developed land, protecting the rest of Blaenau Gwent, including important areas of Greenfield land, against major development, resulting in less environmental impacts. It was also considered that this approach would sustain existing communities.

It was also considered that this approach would possibly limit travel as it would be more sustainable as the main expansion of services would be in Ebbw Vale, in close proximity to the railway line.

#### 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.



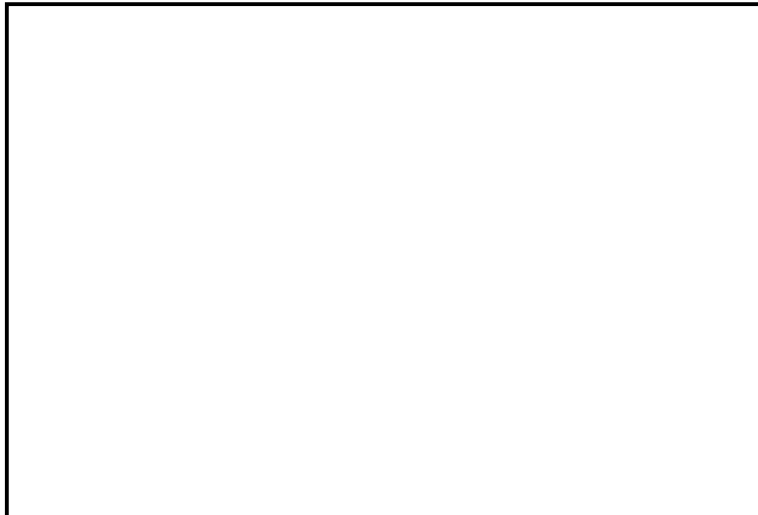
It was also considered that there would be a population imbalance as this approach would result in an ageing population, which would put more pressure on services and there would be a decline in the working population, which would mean that there would be less people working.

One of the features of this option was the 5 town centres as prescribed in the UDP would continue to have a broad role. The group considered that the town centres would continue to decline, as they would be competing against each other within Blaenau Gwent and neighbouring larger centres such as Cardiff, Newport and Cwmbran.

### Yellow Group

#### Advantages

The only advantages identified by the consultees were that this option would result in more places to play (due to less development pressure) and less urban sprawl, which could lead to coalescence of places.



### 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 and town centres would continue to decline. Also, communities would suffer, as local people would have low aspirations.

Some stakeholders highlighted that the population loss would result in school closures, and consequently less choice of schools and increased journeys to school. As there would be a reduction in services there would be increased distances to travel for services.

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 have a positive effect on the G.D.P.

### Green Group

#### Advantages

The only advantages identified by the consultees were that this option would result in less pressure on services and open spaces.

#### Disadvantages

In general the stakeholders highlighted that the current UDP strategy would maintain the 'status quo' and not effectively address the issues that the Borough faces. One example cited by participants was that there would be further decline in Blaina, as this option did not address the issues faced by the town.

Another disadvantage identified related to the amount of land allocated for manufacturing, although it was in decline. It was felt that this option did cater for other types of employment on allocated land and did not therefore allow for a diversification of the economy.

#### Conclusion

There was very little support for this option, with a limited number of advantages being highlighted by the three 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

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in some developments the wrong mix of houses could be encouraged, resulting in fewer affordable homes.

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.

One stakeholder also raised the question if four town centres were viable in a small area like Blaenau Gwent.

### Yellow Group

#### Advantages

It was considered that this option promoted sustainable transport, as development would take place close to existing and planned transport infrastructure i.e. the Heads of the Valley Road and Ebbw Valley Railway.

Attendees welcomed the positive effect of this option which would result in increased vibrancy throughout the area with more money spent and it would benefit local firms as well as provide higher skilled jobs.

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

Consultees were of the opinion that this option would provide more opportunity for planning gain and ensure the provision of more affordable homes.

Stakeholders recognised the benefit of encouraging population growth, as it would lead to additional income from the Welsh Assembly Government, increased G.D.P. and higher school rolls.

It was highlighted that there would be less poverty in the area although some indicated that this depended on local people benefiting from increased employment opportunities in the area.

#### Disadvantages

There were concerns that by accommodating the level of growth contained in this option there would be pressure on developing Greenfield sites, as well as pressure on providing health (and other services) and infrastructure.

### Green Group

#### Advantages

Stakeholders recognised the benefit of encouraging population growth, as it would lead to additional income from the Welsh Assembly Government and also there would be a more balanced population.

As town centres would offer different types of services they could reinvent themselves and this broadening of their role would arrest their decline. It was felt that the town of Ebbw Vale would become the catalyst for town centre activity and that there would be a trickle down effect of prosperity, which would benefit other town centres.

It was considered that this option would address concerns with the economy, as it would broaden the economic base with a more flexible approach being adopted in allowing different uses on industrial estates to those traditionally permitted.

Consultees were of the opinion that this option would provide more opportunity for planning gain and ensure the provision of more affordable homes.

#### Disadvantages

There were concerns that by accommodating the level of growth contained in this option there would be pressure on the existing infrastructure and developing Greenfield sites. Also, some indicated that the decline of Blaina as a town centre would continue.

#### Conclusion

All three discussion groups considered this option to be proactive and recognised that it had a considerable number of benefits, which outweighed any 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

Participants considered an advantage of this option was that there would be an Ebbw Fach Valley focus.

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.

#### Disadvantages

Stakeholders referred to this option as “not ambitious enough” in terms of the growth level, especially in comparison to option 2.







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	

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	Tredegear 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 Tredegear Central & West & Sirhowy Partnership
Jeff Harris	ARPP

Name	Organisation/Section
Mike Garland	M & J Europe
Mike Johnson	

## Appendix B – Workshop Attendees



Name	
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## Appendix C – Presentation



**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

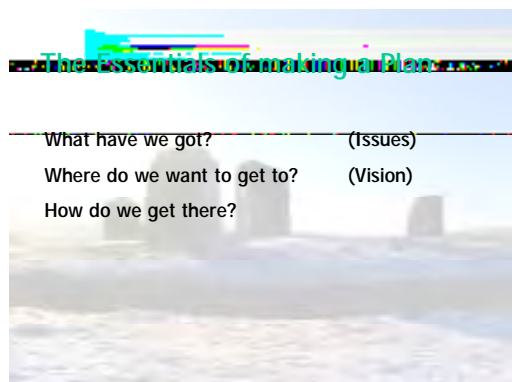


SA/SEA













**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



**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 Blarney)  
 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	Borough wide (through more in Sirhowy and Ebbw Fawr Valleys)	Borough wide	5 centres



### Option 1: UDP Regeneration

Settlement	Share of population	Share of housing	Approx No of committed houses
Upper Sithow Valley	22%	27%	500
Upper Ebbw Fach (Brynmawr, Nantyglo and Biana)	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 74,000

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

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 Sithow Valley (Tredegar)	25%	27%	700 (200)
Ebbw Fawr	33%	45%	1200 (200)

**Alternative Option**

**Task**  
To identify an alternative Option

**Variables**  
Growth  
Location  
Issues (Employment, Retail)

Blaenau Gwent  
LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

## Appendix D – Workshop Agenda

12.15 – 13.00	Lunch and Registration
13.00 – 13.05	Welcome and Introduction Ged McHugh – Head of Economic Development
13.05 – 13.15	Presentation – LDP Update

## Appendix E – Workshop Groups

### Yellow Group

Name	Organisation
Simon Dobbs	Blaenau Gwent CBC
James Watkins	Blaenau Gwent CBC
Dave Rees	Blaenau Gwent CBC (Facilitator)
Brian Swain	Blaenau Gwent CBC (Planning Policy Officer)
Greg Paulsen	OT:7