Housing

1.	Does the FC figure of 3,500 new houses identified in Objective 3 of the plan refer to additional new homes built or net new houses (that is, new houses bu ilt minus houses demolished)?

The Inspector's attention is directed to the Evidence Base as follows:

SD41: Population & Housing Background Paper (page 41 Table 22: Housing Land Requirement Calculation)

The 3,500 figure refers to net new homes

5.	Why is the Council seeking to promote the figure of new housing set out in the LDP, give n the levels of vacant stock (refer SD68)? What would be the implications of increasing the supply of housing on other initia tives which seek to reduce the number of vacant houses? Do es the Council have any firm, costed proposals to reduce the number of vacant houses over the lifetime of the plan other than those set out in SD68? If so, what are they?

The Inspector's attention is directed to the Evidence Base as follows:

SD41: Updated Population & Housing Background Paper Tdcage 4 Tfable

It is considered that the Plan sets out a coherent strategy from which its policies and allocations flow. The Spatial Strategy is based on regenerating the area through building a network of district hubs around the principal hub of Ebbw Vale, whilst recognising there is a north south divide in terms of opportunities for growth.

The housing allocations flow from the spatial strategy in that most development is based in the main settlement of Ebbw Vale (52%), with fewer houses in Tredegar (22%) and Upper Ebbw

The Inspector's attention is drawn to SD41 page 32 paragraph 6.73 where earlier attempts to introduce flexibility through a range were not supported by WG.

To conclude it is considered that the policy and allocations for new housing are realistic and based on sound evidence.

Employment

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1. What is meant in Objective 9 of the LDP by the phrase "By

Recent economic events have reignited the debate on the role of manufacturing in the national economy and the need for some rebalancing to

Transport

1.	Policy T2 identifies the need to safeguard land for the extension of the railway from Ebbw Vale Parkway to Ebbw Vale town, a rail link to Abertillery and a new station at Cwm. The supporting text to this policy refers to a doubling of the frequency of rail services. How confident is the Council that these projects will be delivered during the lifetime of the LDP? Have any of these projects secured funding? If so, when are they scheduled to start and be completed?

The Inspector's attention is directed to the evidence base as follows:

SD100: South East Wales Transport Alliance – Regional Transport Plan (RTP) (pages 78 – 83 & 115)

The Welsh Government lead on the delivery of new rail infrastructure and new services. The Wales Rail Forward Programme and the Wales Transport Plan sets out the Welsh Government's current commitment to rail schemes.

Early stage development is carried out by the local transport consortia (Sewta for south-east Wales) in partnership with the Welsh Government. Once a preferred option is chosen (equivalent to Grip Stage 3 in the Network Rail stage gate process), the Welsh Government acquires the lead role.

The extension from Parkway to Ebbw Vale Town is currently at Grip Stage 4 (detailed design). The option selection report (Grip Stage 3) has recently been completed for the Ebbw Vale Frequency Enhancement (service to Newport); and Sewta, as part of the Ebbw Valley Railway Future Phases Study, are currently identifying the options for new stations and spur to Abertillery.

The phenomenal success of the first phase of passenger services on the EVR to Cardiff has exhibited the appetite that Blaenau Gwent residents have for affordable and efficient access opportunities to employment and services. Further route and frequency development on the EVR is being progressed by both the Welsh Government and Sewta, and it is hoped that these projects will be delivered within the lifetime of the LDP. The projects are all included in the Sewta Regional Transport Plan (refer to SD100 pages 78-83 & 115).

2.	How critical are the road projects identified in Policy T5 to securing new private sector investment? Has funding been secured to implement them? When will they be implemented?

The new highway links and junction improvements are key to the success of the strategic development site at 'The Works', the proposed enhancements to Ebbw Vale Town Centre (AA1.1 & AA1.2) and the Northern Corridor. The schemes (T5.1 & T5.2) development has taken into consideration the significant increases in traffic flows generated by the new development sites, the proposed reassignment of the A4046 Strategic Highway route to the new

Peripheral Distributor Road through ‘The Works’ and the implications of the dualling of the Heads of the Valleys Road.

It is anticipated that the first section of the PDR (T5.1) will be opened late in 2012, whilst on-line improvements in the Libanus Road junction (T5.2) will be complete early in 2013. The first phase of the Rhyd-y-Blew junction scheme (T5.2 the Mountain Road link) will be completed in the spring of 2012, whilst the detailed design of the second phase has recently been finalised. The preferred option for the Cemetery Road roundabout improvement (T5.2) has been chosen.

Funding for the highway schemes come from various year-on-year Welsh Government sources, however it is anticipated that improvements will be in place in phase 2 of the LDP. Both schemes are inclined in the Sewta Regional Transport Plan (SD100 page 92)

3. Has the Council commissioned any research to assess the

Another major element of the package of measures being put in place is the identification of Ebbw Vale as an Enterprise Zone. Ebbw Vale is currently one of only seven enterprise zones identified for Wales and this provides a significant opportunity for the area in terms of opportunities to bolster economic investment but also demonstrably improving the offer of the county borough for inward investment in comparison to neighbouring authorities. The Enterprise Zone will benefit from:

- A business rate discount worth up to £275,000 per business over a 5 year period
- All business rates growth within the zone for a period of at least 25 years will be retained by the local area, to support the Partnership's economic priorities and ensure that Enterprise Zone growth is reinvested locally
- Government help to develop radically simplified planning approached for the zone using, for example, Local Development Order powers
- Government support to ensure that superfast broadband is rolled out throughout the zone, achieved through guaranteeing the most supportive regulatory environment and, if necessary, public funding
- Enhanced capital allowances for plant and machinery, in a limited number of cases, where there is a focus on manufacturing
- Tax Increment Finance to support the long-term viability of the area
- UKTI support for inward investment or trade opportunities in the zone.

Blaenau Gwent is also likely to continue to benefit from the highest levels of EU Structural Fund interventions during the period 2015-2020. With the emphasis on improving economic competitiveness, the new Convergence Programme is likely to provide funding for business property development.

The proposed transport schemes alongside this wider package of actions will

[028727] Household Estimates for Wales by Local Authority, 1991-2010 NS
Statistical Directorate, Welsh Assembly Government

All households												
Year	1991	1996	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Blaenau Gwent	28,297	29,324	29,560	29,535	29,644	29,827	29,965	30,283	30,464	30,679	30,885	31,031

Appendix 1

[025025] Household Projections for Wales - 2008-2033 NS
Statistical Directorate, Welsh Assembly Government

Area	Blaenau Gwent
Year	Principal Projection
2008	30,679
2009	30,962
2010	31,246
2011	31,540
2012	31,853
2013	32,146
2014	32,437
2015	32,719
2016	32,998
2017	33,269
2018	33,526
2019	33,772
2020	33,993
2021	34,208
2022	34,418
2023	34,608
2024	34,796
2025	34,970
2026	35,139
2027	35,298
2028	35,454
2029	35,613
2030	35,769
2031	35,921
2032	36,058
2033	36,201

Table of Vacancy Rates in Sout h East Wales from 2001 Census

Topic/Factor	BG	Bridgend	Caerphilly	Cardiff	Merthyr	Mon	Newport	RCT	Torfaen	Vale	Average S.E. Wales
Vacancy Rate	5.74	3.51	3.72	3.06	5.86	4.35	3.56	4.79	2.98	4.42	3.97

Source: 2001 Census