

BLEANAU GWENT LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN REVIEW REPORT

This document is available in Welsh
Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The LDP was adopted by Blaenau Gwent CBC in November December 2012. The LDP sets out the Council's objectives and priorities for the development and use of land within Blaenau Gwent and its policies and proposals for implementing them up to 2021. Following adoption, the Council has monitored the delivery and implementation of the LDP through three Annual Monitoring Reports produced in 2015, 2016 and 2017; the conclusions of which have informed the review of the LDP.

This Review Report assesses the effectiveness, relevance, and deliverability of the Blaenau Gwent Local Development Plan (LDP) 2006–2021 and determines the scale of revisions required. Findings are based on monitoring reports, updated evidence, policy changes, and stakeholder engagement.

Purpose of the Review

A full review is mandated every four years and is required to determine whether:

- The LDP remains up to date
- Its strategy, policies, and allocations remain deliverable
- A short-form or full revision process is necessary

This report concludes that a full revision is required.

Key Findings

Monitoring indicates that multiple core elements of the LDP strategy are not being delivered:

- Housing delivery is significantly below target (only 1,084 completions vs. 1,900 planned by 2016; land supply has fallen to 1.27 years).
- Employment land delivery is extremely low (0.18 ha of 50 ha target achieved; unlikely to reach 2021 target).
- Retail development has not materialised as intended, with no major allocations delivered.
- Affordable housing targets are far behind (428 delivered vs. 1,000 planned; Section 106 delivery well under target).
- Brownfield development, density targets, and open space standards are not being met.
- Waste recycling rates remain below national targets.

Changing Context

There have been a number of new Acts in Wales, revisions to Planning Policy Wales, Technical Advice Notes and the publication of new or updated Welsh Government guidance that are relevant to the review of the LDP. The most significant of these to inform the review are:-

- New population and household projections show *decline* rather than growth (contrary to 2008 assumptions), greatly reducing required housing numbers.
- Economic trends and market viability constraints have limited development activity.
- National policies (e.g., PPW, TAN revisions) have changed significantly in areas including economic development, renewable energy, Welsh language considerations, and waste planning.
- Regional policy requires updated minerals provision and highlights no need for new regional waste facilities.
- Local assessments (e.g., transport plans, Gypsy and Traveller needs) introduce new requirements.

Stakeholder Engagement Findings

Around 80 stakeholders were invited to engage, which resulted in 13 stakeholders attending the workshop and 6 written consultation responses. The feedback is highlighted below:

- Broad agreement that growth levels and housing requirements must be reconsidered.
- Support for the existing spatial distribution, particularly the focus on Ebbw Vale.
- Consensus that retail strategies and town centre policies require revision.
- Need to reassess allocation deliverability, housing density, and brownfield targets.
- Support for pursuing a full LDP revision.

Required Changes

The review identifies the need to amend:

- Strategic objectives, especially for housing, retail, employment, minerals, and Gypsy and Traveller provision.
- Spatial strategy, particularly the level of planned growth.
- Policies across all themes, including climate change, accessibility, affordable housing, renewable energy, town centre management, green infrastructure, and minerals.
- Site allocations, many of which require removal, amendment, or reassessment for viability.
- Evidence base, which must be fully updated for a new extended plan period (likely beyond 2030).

Recommendation: Full Revision of the LDP

A full revision is required due to:

- The scale of changes in evidence and policy
- The inability to meet key LDP targets
- The risk posed by a low housing land supply (planning vulnerability)
- The need for an extended plan period and refreshed evidence base

A short-form revision is insufficient.

Future Collaboration Opportunities

The region is moving toward greater joint planning through the Cardiff Capital Region. Blaenau Gwent is exploring options for joint-plan working with Torfaen, Monmouthshire, and Caerphilly, though no decision has been finalised.

Overall Conclusion

The LDP is no longer fully fit for purpose due to under-delivery, outdated assumptions, and significant contextual change. A full revision is necessary to provide an effective, up-to-date, and deliverable development plan that aligns with national policy, local needs, and emerging regional structures.