

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (2011-2026)



STATEMENT OF COMMON GROUND



Policy H1 (Housing Sites) - H1/LB/13 Blaenbaglan Farm

The Council to confirm the position in respect of the Council's role in the provision of appropriate access to the site.

The Council to liaise with Mr Forse of Harmers, who is acting on Mr Williams' behalf, and produce a Statement of Common Ground, ideally setting out the agreed position in respect of:

- *how, where and when access to the site will be provided;*
- *a timetable indicating how many dwellings are forecast to be completed at Blaenbaglan Farm each year during the plan period.*

Introduction

This Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) sets out the agreed position of Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council (*the Council*) and Mr. B Williams (*the landowner*)¹ regarding the site at Blaenbaglan Farm, Baglan, Port Talbot.

This statement has been produced in response to a request from the Inspectors seeking further clarification on the deliverability of the Blaenbaglan Farm Site following receipt of objections received from Mr. B Williams in respect of the proposed deletion of the site from Policy H1 (MAC33).

Context

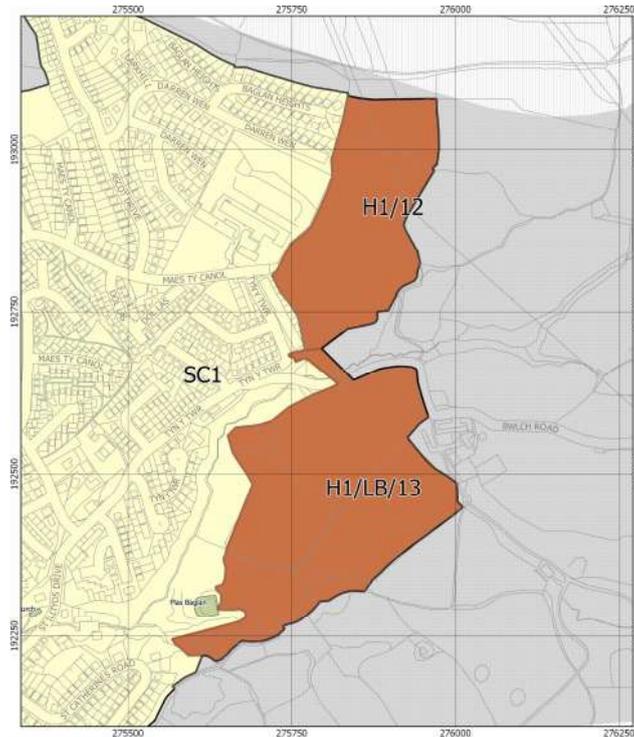
The Blaenbaglan Farm site benefits from an extant full planning permission for 219 units dating back to 1992. The site was included within the Deposit LDP as a Landbank Housing Allocation (Ref: H1/LB/13) under Policy H1 - Housing Sites (Proposals Map extract overleaf).

Whilst the site was initially allocated for 260 units within the Plan period, the Council subsequently proposed a reduction of the allocation to 160 units as part of the Focused Changes Consultation (i.e. FC14) to reflect anticipated build rates.

The allocation of the site was discussed further at the Housing Provision - Allocated Housing Sites session held on 19th March 2015 where the Council defended its position to allocate the site for housing in the LDP.

¹ Mr. Forse of Harmers Ltd is acting as agent on behalf of the landowner.

Deposit LDP Proposals Map Extract - H1/LB/13 Blaenbaglan Farm



Following the hearing session however, the Inspectors issued a note in preparation for the Matters Arising Changes Hearing Session². The note stated that the Inspectors remained unconvinced that the development of the site was likely to commence before the end of the Plan period (2026) and it was the Inspectors intention to remove the housing allocation from the site at Blaenbaglan Farm for the following reasons:

- *'The extant planning permission for 219 dwellings dating from 1992³, which was confirmed by the positive outcome of the lawful development appeal⁴ in November 2000, does not reassure us. Indeed, it leads us to the view that, there having been little interest in the site for over 20 years, the likelihood of any being generated in time for dwellings to be completed within the plan period is small'. (¶2).*
- *'Furthermore, having seen on-site how little connection there is with the parcel of land to the rear of Blaenbaglan School, we are not confident that the marketing and development of the considerably more realistic allocation there, H1/12, would revive interest in, or enable the development of, Blaenbaglan Farm'. (¶3).*

Whilst the Council maintained the view that the site (at least in part) is deliverable within the Plan period, reflecting the findings of the Inspectors (Document Ref: ED037), the Council proposed to de-allocate the site and remove the Blaenbaglan Farm housing allocation from Policy H1 (Housing Sites). Importantly however, the land in question was proposed to be retained within the settlement limit, thereby not compromising the ability of the site to come

² Examination Document: ED037 - REVISED Note for Matters Arising Changes Hearing - Session 22 (Inspectors Jun-15).

³ 92/8571

⁴ AP4.14.

forward for development. Consequently, this proposal was set out within the Schedule of Matters Arising Changes (MAC33)⁵.

During the consultation on the Schedule of Matters Arising Changes, the Council received representations to MAC33 on Mr. B Williams' behalf expressing concern at the somewhat misleading impression which had been given to the Inspectors in respect of the land at Blaenbaglan Farm. Stating that one of the matters which had delayed the delivery of the site was the fact that the Council own a section of land which is necessary to deliver access to the site.

The Council's Position

At an officer level, 'Heads of Terms' were agreed for an option agreement with the landowner of Blaenbaglan Farm which, if approved would allow the landowner to obtain an access to their site that would allow residential development to be delivered. However, as was made clear at the time and during subsequent discussions, the agreed terms did not mean that the Council guaranteed that the landowner would be granted access over its land as it would need Member approval. Notwithstanding this point, if the land were to be allocated for residential use, Council officers would present the opportunity to Council Members' for approval to proceed with a formal agreement for an option.

Currently, the site lies outside of the settlement limit as defined by the adopted Unitary Development Plan (UDP) and development at this juncture would be contrary to policy. Consequently no option agreement has been entered into.

The Council, as landowner, considered the negotiations in respect of access to be confidential and consequently officers were unable to provide full details of any negotiations.

The Issues

There are two main issues that need to be addressed as part of the Statement of Common Ground:

- A. Access into the Blaenbaglan Farm Site; and*
- B. The timetable for development and number of dwellings projected to be delivered on the site within the plan period (up to 2026).*

Statement of Common Ground

The Council has liaised with Mr. Forse of Harmers Ltd and discussed the issues set out above. In relation to these issues, both parties agree the following matters:

A. Access into the Blaenbaglan Farm Site

How? The landowner has confirmed that the land needed to create an access to the public highway has been assessed and plans have been prepared illustrating the alignment and profile of the road to be constructed on an embankment. The preliminary plans presented in **Appendix**

⁵ Document Ref: ED038.

1 illustrate the design of the embankment to provide an access road into the site together with a series of sections demonstrating the proposed profiles of the embankment.

Where? The location of the proposed site access, along with an illustration of Council land ownership, is presented in **Appendix 2**.

The Council and landowner are in agreement that the proposed means of access is feasible and acceptable in principle.

When? Once it is confirmed that the site is included for development in the LDP and the Plan has been formally adopted, officers will present the opportunity to Council Members for their consideration. This will be actioned as soon as feasible after LDP adoption.

B. Timetable for development and number of dwellings projected to be delivered on the site within the plan period (up to 2026)

Taking into account the above considerations, both parties agree that the following represents a feasible and probable timescale for development of the site:

- Adoption of LDP: Jan/Feb 2016;
- Agreement of Council to sale of land required for access purposes: July 2016;
- Conclusion of arrangements for purchase of land required for access purposes: Late 2016;
- Commencement on site following conclusion of design and planning stages: Late 2017 (earliest).

Policy H1 of the Deposit LDP allocated the site for 260 units within the Plan period, this figure was later reduced to 160 units as set out within the Focussed Changes (FC14) consultation to reflect anticipated build rates. It is agreed between the parties that the following table sets out a realistic projection of the number of dwellings likely to be delivered on the site within the Plan period.

Proposed Housing Trajectory

Units	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25	25/26
160	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	20	30	30	30	30	20

Conclusion

It is considered that the above demonstrates that the anticipated number of dwellings can readily be delivered on the Blaenbaglan Farm site, subject to the site being identified for development in the Adopted LDP and the subsequent agreement of the Council to the sale of the necessary land to allow construction of the access road.

APPENDIX 2

Access Road Location Plan & Council Land Ownership

