

Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council
Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Castell-nedd

Democratic Services
Gwasanaethau Democrataidd

Chief Executive: Steven Phillips

Date: 12th July 2016

Dear Member

PLANNING COMMITTEE - TUESDAY, 12TH JULY, 2016

Please find attached the following addendum reports/urgent items for consideration at the next meeting of the **Planning Committee - Tuesday, 12th July, 2016.**

Item

- a) Amendment Sheet for P2015/0494 (Pages 3 - 8)

Yours sincerely

Chief Executive

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PLANNING COMMITTEE

12 JULY 2016

AMENDMENT SHEET

ITEM 7

<u>APPLICATION NO:</u> P2015/0494	<u>DATE:</u> 13/11/2015
PROPOSAL:	Outline application for 17 No dwellings together with matters of access, layout and drainage
LOCATION:	Land adjacent to Sports Centre, Tonmawr , Neath SA12 9UR
APPLICANT:	Pelenna Property Partnership LTD
TYPE:	Full Plans
WARD:	Pelenna

Councillor Martin Ellis has advised that he is regrettably unable to attend the meeting, and has asked that his representations in support of the application are reported to Members. These are summarised below:-

1. As local member I regularly have queries from young people looking for accommodation within Tonmawr wishing to remain in the village where they have friends and support from family, for example for childcare while working, there is a regular demand for homes that are simply unavailable. The houses proposed in this application would meet this demand and make a good contribution to housing needs, without environmental impact and with strong community support. Transport and distance from work and main centres for services are relatively good, mostly within a ten minute drive or bus journey.
2. The additional homes provided will contribute to the total housing requirements and in a practical way free up an equal number of homes elsewhere.
3. The original application was under the UDP and planning permission would have been very likely; however the delay in processing the application has made the period of consultation fall

under the LDP and put the application at risk. This I believe puts us as a planning authority in a position where we should be looking at the application under the rules of the UDP and with regard to the interest of the community.

4. Under the LDP there is nevertheless some flexibility under LDP para 2.5.50 to consider supporting smaller valley communities to make them resilient and sustainable to halt decline and depopulation. In this application housing that is affordable and meets local needs should be supported. A previous application in Tonna, P2015/0363, under similar circumstances did find support earlier this year.
5. The land in the application falls naturally into the settlement area of the village, between John's Terrace, Pelenna Close and the Sports Centre. It does not form a boundary with a green "wedge" is clearly acceptable to local residents and businesses and the applicants can demonstrate strong community support.

I would ask members of the committee and officers to consider in depth the benefits of supporting this application with an open mind and due regard to community interest, the positive impact on local housing stock and local economic and social impacts.

Following review of the Officer's report, Councillor Ellis makes the following additional observations: -

1. I am not fully convinced by all the arguments, particularly with regard to the open countryside description of the site. This is very clearly part of the natural settlement of the village itself, bounded by houses and other building, and members seeing this would I am sure be able to judge this for themselves.
2. I also believe that the LDP should have a flexible approach and under 2.5.50 the case for building sustainable resilient communities to halt their decline is made, and relevant here.
3. The officer's report makes too much of the need to conform to the LDP at the expense of common-sense. Members of the committee would in my view have a better feel for the site, the village and the proposed development with a site visit. Accordingly I would be obliged if this could be put forward to the meeting as an option.

4. There is also a case for consideration under Policy Planning Wales that guided the development of the LDP. Under 4.7.8 "minor extensions to settlements may be acceptable, in particular where it meets a local need for affordable housing...". Also under 9.3.2. "infilling of small gaps ...in particular for affordable housing to meet local need may be acceptable....". In my view the site does meet the LDP criteria as a minor extension to the settlement.

Response:

Many of the issues raised have already been addressed in the Officer's report to Committee, but the following additional points are made in response: -

- The LDP does allow for exceptions to development outside of or adjacent to settlement boundaries, but this site and proposed development do not meet the criteria for such exceptions
- Whether or not the site has a countryside appearance, it is as a matter of fact outside the LDP settlement limits
- There are no conflicting development plans. The LDP is the development plan and the UDP has now been superseded.
- It is suggested that there is flexibility within the LDP to supporting smaller valley communities to make them resilient and sustainable to halt decline and depopulation. The LDP recognises (at 2.5.32) that the valley communities have a long tradition of strong cultural heritage and community identity, and that some of the valley areas have faced more challenging times.

In response, it notes that the Valleys need to become more economically resilient and provide new opportunities for growth, investment and job/wealth creation. Accordingly the LDP strategy seeks to reinvigorate the valleys principally through the identification of two growth areas, namely Pontardawe and the Upper Neath Valley. It further states that whilst the majority of large housing allocations are focussed around the growth points, in remaining areas growth will be delivered on smaller sites within the identified settlement limits.

It further states (at 2.5.53) that a flexible approach will be taken with appropriate employment and 'live-work' units being acceptable outside of, but immediately adjacent to, settlement limits.

Having regard to the above, the Officers report makes it clear how the settlement limits have been drawn and agreed by the LDP Inspectors, and the proposed development fails to accord with the Policies or with the Strategy of the LDP for the reasons expanded upon in the Officers report.

The applicant has offered the following (summarised) comments on the Officers report

- 1) The following sections from Policy Planning Wales, the guidance document for the LDP and the national planning policy:

4.7.8 Development in the countryside should be located within and adjoining those settlements where it can be best be accommodated in terms of infrastructure, access and habitat and landscape conservation. Infilling or minor extensions to existing settlements may be acceptable, in particular where it meets a local need for affordable housing, but new building in the open countryside away from existing settlements or areas allocated for development in development plans must continue to be strictly controlled. All new development should respect the character of the surrounding area and should be of appropriate scale and design.

9.3.2 Sensitive infilling of small gaps within small groups of houses, or minor extensions to groups, in particular for affordable housing to meet local need, may be acceptable, though much will depend upon the character of the surroundings and the number of such groups in the area.

We therefore feel that the site still meets the criteria of the LDP planning policy as a minor extension to the settlement area having regard to the policy criteria of infrastructure, access, habitat and landscape.

- 2) Within the LDP, section 2.5.50 - a flexible approach to development - ensure protection of vulnerable rural communities
- 3) In the conclusion the site is described as being "edge of settlement" and "represents an unsustainable and unjustified form of residential development in the countryside that would detract

from the character and appearance of the surrounding area". The boundary of the site is adjacent to two settlement boundaries. It is not open countryside.

- 4) In the planning history of the site, no mention is made of the many and substantial applications involved with the Tonmawr 2000 project totalling nearly 20,000sq ft, the last application being made in 2005 for the front extension again adjacent to the site.
- 5) Raises concerns over why the Henfaes Road application was progressed under UDP when the difference in validation dates of Henfaes and Tonmawr was only 20 days.

Response:

It is considered that the above issues have largely been addressed in the Officer's report to Committee or the response to Councillor Ellis above, but the following additional points are made in response: -

- The LDP Policies allow for flexibility in development outside of settlement boundaries to reflect advice in PPW, and as noted above this site would not meet such criterion nor, for the reasons in the report, would there be material considerations of sufficient weight to override the policy objection to the development
- In policy terms the site is 'countryside', being located outside of the village settlement boundaries.
- The Tonmawr 2000 project is not considered to have any material bearing on determination of this application
- The Officers report has already noted the different circumstances between this and the Henfaes Road application.

An additional letter of support has been received from Dan-y-Coed Community Association which states that the village has been devastated by the closure of the local school and demise of Tonmawr 2000 Enterprise. The Community Centre is run by volunteers of the Association which provides a venue for 7 named local groups. As the population is getting older and fewer in number an increase in people living in the village is required to ensure its sustainability. The building of new houses would benefit the aforementioned groups and provide greater opportunities for employment and enhance the local area.

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