

Bridgend Local Development Plan

Examination

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Wednesday 28 November 2012 10:00am

Session 6 – Island Farm Strategic Employment Site

Inspector's Agenda with Matters and Issues

1. ALLOCATION STATUS

[Figures in brackets identify a Representor and their representation number eg 1248.1 refer to Representor 1248 and representation 1].

- 1.1 Island Farm - SP9(2) - is one of four Strategic Employment Sites that are proposed to be allocated by Policy SP9. It was previously allocated as a Special Employment Site in the UDP. According to Appendix 3 it has a total area of **25.95ha** but of that only **11ha** are available for employment (apparently because of environmental constraints). Delivery is described as in the 'medium' term which Chapter 9 indicates as phasing in the period 2011-2021. Policy PLA8(5) provides for an associated development-led new road junction on the A48.
- 1.2 HD Ltd considers that there is a plentiful supply of employment land elsewhere in the County Borough and questions the site's allocation for employment in Policy SP9. They consider the site 'unviable' for such development as only 11ha out of 25.95ha is considered by the Council to be developable. HD Ltd accordingly seek that Island Farm should be de-allocated as a Strategic Employment Site and instead allocated as a Mixed Use Regeneration Site in Policy PLA3 of the LDP 'to reflect the current planning status of the site' (1248.1; 1248.2). In that regard the site is said to be the subject of a planning application (P/08/1114/OUT) for mixed use development on **6.56ha** of land. The site area proposed for the PLA3 allocation would extend to the south of the SP9 allocation as far as New Inn Road and HD Ltd considers that the PLA1 settlement boundary at Island Farm should also be extended 'to reflect the current planning status of the site' (1248.3).
- 1.3 The Council refers to its response to Alternative Site 044. The Council's Delivery and Implementation Background Paper 10 (SD44) describes the allocation as 'part of a larger area which has planning consent (subject to a section 106 agreement)' for the mixed uses. These include a rugby stadium and training facilities together with other leisure, commercial and office uses.

Qn1a. Would HD Ltd provide details of the 2008 planning application including what part of the allocation it does and does not cover and an update on progress towards completing the S106 agreement?

Qn1b. How likely is it that that sports/leisure/commercial development will be implemented in its proposed form?

Qn1c. Does the Council's apparent support for that proposal make the delivery of 11ha of high technology business improbable?

Qn1d. What part of the site is controlled by the Council and by other landowners?

Qn1f. Would the whole site up to New Inn Road be included in that settlement boundary?

Qn1g. If the site were allocated as a PLA3 mixed use site, what would be the content of the mixed use development including the amounts of housing, employment and other uses and how would that be represented in the plan's text?

- 1.4 The Representor considers that PLA3 should include an element of supporting text to encourage early engagement with the owners of allocated sites, especially those sites which are allocated for Regeneration and Mixed Use Development Schemes. This they consider would enable the identification of the most suitable and viable options for their delivery, especially when there are multiple land owners – as is the case in the instance where Bridgend CBC are also a land owner (1248.4). The Council responds that it has been proactive in their engagement with land-owners with respect to demonstrating delivery of sites in the LDP. The Council welcomes early engagement on proposed development however it is not considered that such an approach needs to be expressed in the text of the LDP.

Qn1g. How is 'early engagement' to be defined (the LDP period commenced in 2006)? Why is the change needed to make the plan sound?

2. ROAD ACCESS

- 2.1 Bridgend Town Council fear the route for the proposed road through the Island Farm site and science park will have a detrimental affect on business and encroach on the back gardens of residents in Island Farm Close (35.10; 35.11). Residents of Island Farm Close consider that the proposed road by Hegerty Developers through Island Farm is unsound. It is situated too close to residents of Island Farm violating their privacy and also impacting on the Science Park which will have a serious effect on the peace and tranquillity for which the site for employment was chosen (1251.3 written reps). Island Farm Campaign for Action objects to the proposed road from the A48 through Island Farm (1252.3).
- 2.2 The Council responds that the LDP does not detail the internal road network associated with Island Farm Strategic Employment Allocation allocated under Policy SP9(2). These representations refer to an issue which is not specifically outlined in the LDP and would more appropriately be addressed at the planning application stage of development. Policy PLA8 (5) Access to Island Farm Strategic Employment Site details the requirement for a new junction to be constructed on the A48 to allow the effective and safe access of the site. It is acknowledged in the LDP that careful consideration must be given to this development to ensure that it introduces mitigation to overcome any adverse effect on the efficiency of the surrounding highway network. Therefore, the internal road layout will be assessed when detailed planning applications are submitted.
- 2.3 In respect of the Representors' objection to the internal road through Island Farm, this is in association with Planning Application P/08/1114/OUT for new mixed-use

sport, leisure, commercial and office based development which is approved subject to the signing of the appropriate legal agreements.

- 2.4 The above HD Ltd site boundary drawing suggests submitted with their representations indicates that it may be intended to take some access from Technology Drive or Ewenny Road. The site would also front New Inn Road.

Qn2a. Has the Council supported the road in the 2008 application to which the resident's object?

Qn2b. How does that affect any remaining SP9(2) land and the implementation of PLA8(5)?

Qn2c. How would HD Ltd propose to provide access for their expanded allocation site?

3. SITE OF IMPORTANCE FOR NATURE CONSERVATION (SINC)

- 3.1 Given the biodiversity interests within the site the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) argue that the LDP should make provision to ensure that development at this site will be required to protect the Island Farm POW SINC and any European Protected Species interests within the site. CCW recommend that this requirement is identified in Chapter 9.0: Delivery and Implementation of the LDP (54.15; 54.27).
- 3.2 HD Ltd also comments that it is misleading not to represent the environmental designation in the allocation.
- 3.3 The Council considers that Section 9 (Delivery and Implementation) of the Deposit LDP gives sufficient information to enable the reader to ascertain the general status and likely implementation dates of a site or proposal allocated in the Plan. However, it also recognises that the deliverability of a site is an ongoing, evolving process. Specific site details are constantly changing and new issues may arise after the plan-making stage. To this end, it is proposed that an online LDP Site Database is established which is kept up-to-date and formally published once a year as part of the LDP Annual Monitoring Report (AMR). This database will outline the current status of the site and its likely implementation timescales with links to any relevant planning applications, planning / environmental studies which have been undertaken and any further constraints which have been identified. Where relevant it may also indicate likely section 106 requirements associated with the site. Land ownership details will also be included to facilitate contact between interested parties. The Delivery and Implementation Background Paper SD44 includes a reference to protection of the Island Farm SINC and any European Protected Species. It does not include land ownership details.

Qn3a. Would the Council please provide a plan which defines the extent of the SINC and how it relates to the 25.95ha site allocation and the 11ha of employment land. Should the SINC be shown on the Proposals Map?

Qn3b. Should the allocation exclude the SINC land?

- 3.4 In the light of the above comments and their concerns of the over-allocation of employment land within the LDP, CCW also have concerns about the allocation of Island Farm Prisoner of War SINC for employment purposes. Whilst CCW note that an outline planning permission for mixed use comprising sport/ leisure /commercial /offices was granted conditional planning permission in June 2011 subject to the applicant entering into a section 106 agreement (which included the management and retention of parts of the SINC), the current employment allocation makes no reference to a requirement to protect the SINC or the European Protected Species interests within the site. CCW therefore recommend that the allocation is deleted from the plan or amended to reflect the planning permission that the authority has been minded to approve for the site. Should the authority/inspector decide that the allocation as currently proposed in the plan should be retained, CCW recommends that reference is made to the need for development proposals to maintain the favourable conservation status of EPS within the site, and to accommodate the SINC. (To meet Tests of Soundness C2 and CE2) (54.70).

4. GREEN WEDGE

- 4.1 Island Farm Campaign for Action considers that a Green Wedge allocation should be 're-instated' at this location to restrict further development and act as a continuation of the Green Wedge at Herenston and Merthyr Mawr. They also consider that it would reduce disruption to the existing Science Park (REG1(24)) (1251.2). Residents of Island Farm Close also consider that a green wedge should be designated to the south of the Island Farm allocation. This would prevent encroaching developments infringing on the Historic Village of Merthyr Mawr (1252.1 written reps). The area proposed for Green Wedge allocation covers the land which HD Ltd seeks as an extension to the settlement boundary and for allocation for mixed development.
- 4.2 The Council's response to this proposal (Alternative Site AS063) refers to its methodology for designating Green Wedges as set out in Background Paper 4 (SD38). That analysis apparently concluded that no Green Wedge should be designated between Bridgend and Porthcawl as the width of the gap was excessive at 2.49 miles and well in excess of the usual 1 mile maximum width between settlements. Merthyr Mawr does not appear as a defined settlement in the LDP Settlement Hierarchy.

Qn4a. Has the subject land previously been the subject of any green wedge or other landscape protection as none is shown on the 2005 UDP Proposals Map?

Qn4b. What has happened to the Sand & Gravel Resource Safeguarding Area shown on the UDP Proposals Map but not shown on the LDP Proposals Map?

Qn4c. Should Merthyr Mawr be considered as a settlement and would it otherwise qualify for separation by a Green Wedge?

Qn4d. If there is no Green Wedge (and if the site is not allocated for development and settlement extension as proposed by HD Ltd) would other LDP policies and designations (including PLA1 and ENV1) adequately control development in this location?