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Bridgend LDP: Further Representations in Response to the Inspectors Questions Sarn Park Services, Bridgend

Prepared for:

Welcome Break

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Savills, on behalf of Welcome Break, have previously submitted representations in relation to Sarn Park Services. As summarised in section 8 of the Inspector's Agenda with Matters and Issues Note for Session 7, the Council accept the need for improved facilities on the site but considers that this should be negotiated in the context of an operational brownfield site in the countryside and subject to a masterplan development brief to include the adjacent employment site.
- 1.2 As guided by the Inspector's Questions posed, this note sets out Welcome Break's response to the Council's comments and proposed suggestion.

2. Question 9a: What form of retailing does the representor seek given that Policy REG9 applies to the regeneration of sites in existing town and district centres and out of centre bulky goods are included in REG11?

- 2.1 The main priority for Welcome Break is to maintain a flexible position with respect to future uses and initiatives. There are a number of challenges and opportunities facing Motorway Service Areas and all roadside development. At Sarn, the current area's condition and position (and profile) mean that it needs to be able to respond positively to commercial requirements as well as planning policy. This is primarily a result of the:
- a) current layout, established uses and quality of facilities
 - b) the space available for new development and activity
 - c) competition from other more modern areas
 - d) rapidly changing requirements
 - e) its accessibility (see later)
 - f) its urban context and neighbouring uses or proposals (including the business park and park and ride)
- 2.2 In this context, the reference to retail uses – although it reflected past interest – was designed to allow future proposals to explore and capture interest (and to reflect current uses and planning history). This demand or interest cannot be anticipated accurately at this time (or at any one time) and this was the reason behind our request at the deposit stage. To confirm however, we are not looking for a specific retail allocation under REG9 or REG11.
- 2.3 Significant change is expected in the surrounding area including a new prime site for offices and the park and ride. This will mean the area around junction 36 could become a new (or better) hub which will trigger interest and improve potential.
- 2.4 There may also be the scope to include higher value uses as part of an overall package of projects to improve the overall performance of the MSA. This is, however, likely to be deliverable through the masterplan approach that the Council has suggested (see below).

3. Question 9b: What is the Representor's response to the Council's suggestion?

- 3.1 We have previously noted that there is a need for the comprehensive redevelopment of the existing MSA site, surplus land owned by Welcome Break and the land to the west of the site – due to the separate land ownership of site. This approach is necessary to provide the commitment and security Welcome Break requires in order to attract investment to the site and subsequently, rationalise and improve the existing MSA. As the site is located outside of settlement limits, Welcome Break requires certainty and assurance that the existing site and the proposed site allocation can, and will be, developed comprehensively.
- 3.2 The Council have suggested that they consider the most appropriate way forward for the site would be through the formulation of a comprehensive masterplan / development brief for the site (including the employment allocation) which would provide a rational and agreed framework for the development of the areas as a whole in the context of the LDP. We welcome the Council's willingness to work with the landowners in producing a Masterplan Development Brief.
- 3.3 Overall, the Council's suggestion to prepare a Masterplan Development Brief is supported and we are aware of the merits of this approach. Given the complicated and unique land use implications on the site and the MSA use, as we have previous reiterated, crucially, Welcome Break require flexibility and certainty in order to deliver the renewal of existing facilities and development of new facilities.
- 3.4 In this instance, a development brief will provide an appropriate way of resolving the site-specific planning issues for the site. It will provide a means of minimising uncertainty, whilst allowing for a level of flexibility (and therefore potential attractiveness to new occupiers). The provision of a development brief provides an opportunity to promote development and stimulate new interest in the site.
- 3.5 On the basis of the Council's recognition that there is a need for improved facilities at Sarn Park Services and their commitment to working with the landowners to prepare a development brief, we would like to withdraw our representation that the MSA should be included within the adjacent employment allocation.

4. Question 9c: If this is a prime development site and ideal for office development and ancillary development, why does the allocation include B8 storage and distribution?

- 4.1 The LDP Proposals Map shows that allocation REG1(22) extends into Welcome Break's site to include an area of vegetation to the north western part of the MSA and hotel. Whilst currently underutilised, this area is clearly forms part of wider site and therefore is evidently within the same planning unit as the MSA and hotel. On this basis, it is considered appropriate that this area is included within the proposed development brief / masterplan area – as agreed is a suitable approach above.
- 4.2 Therefore it is proposed that the area of Sarn Park MSA and hotel which is currently included within allocation REG1(22) is removed so that the description of the site is 'Land adjacent to Sarn Park Services'.

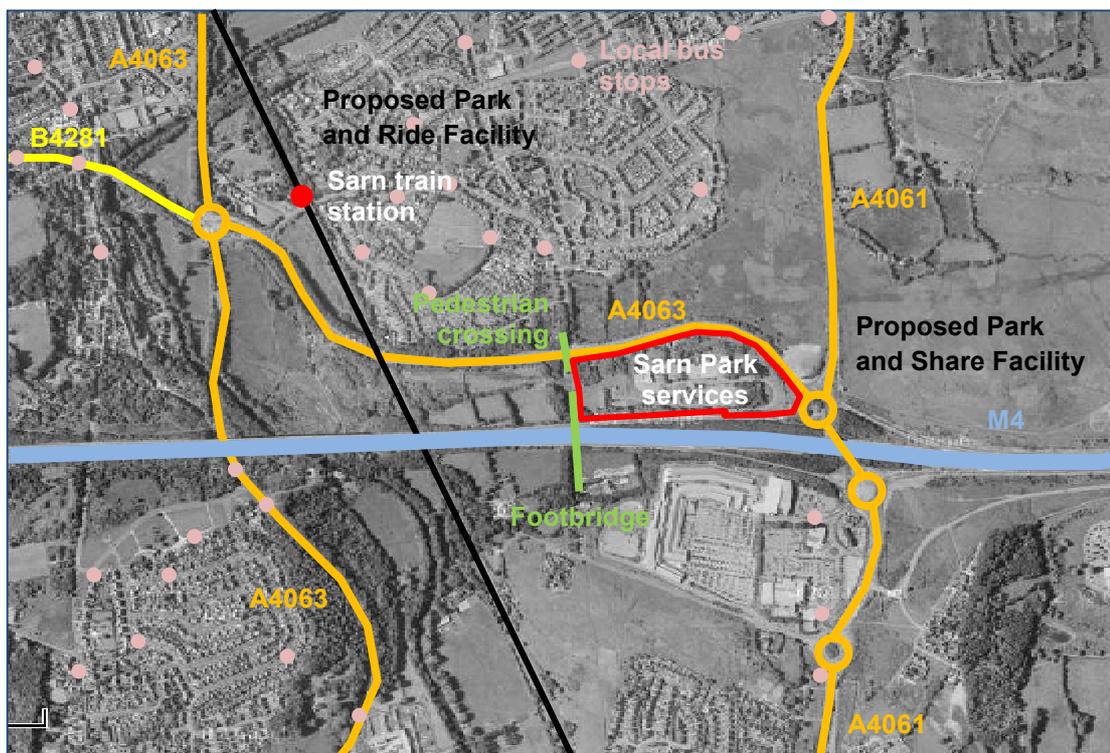
4.3 In terms of the type of B Class Uses included within the (revised) REG1(22) allocation, this is a point for the Council to consider and respond to the Inspector on.

5. Question 9d: How accessible is the site by means other than the car?

5.1 The A4063 (a dual carriageway) runs east to west across the immediate north of the site, providing entrance and egress from the Sarn Park services. The A4061 runs north to south to the east of the site crossing the M4, and forming Junction 36 of the M4. East bound access only to Sarn Park services is provided off the slip road. The site is therefore very accessible to the highway network.

5.2 The 'Greyhound' coach service, operated by First Group, stops on the opposite side of the M4 by the Bridgend Designer Outlet and connects Cardiff to Swansea, up to every hour during peak times. Local bus services, also operated by First Group, run in close proximity to the site, with numerous bus stops within the residential areas of Sarn to the north and Wildmill to the south. Bus services operating past, or in close proximity to the site, currently include service no.'s 3, 11, 12, 13, 14, 32 and 36. These provide regular weekday services, as well as some weekend services, to locations such as Bettws, Blaengarw and Cymmer. There is potential for a new bus stop along these routes in order to serve any new employment and mixed use development.

Figure 1: Access and transport surrounding the site



5.3 Sarn train station is located to the north west of the application site, approximately 800m away from Sarn Park services. Wildmill and Bridgend train stations are located to the south, approximately 1.50km and 3.00km respectively. Train services through Sarn run to various

stations including Maesteg, Bridgend, Cardiff and Swansea. These larger stations provide greater connectivity to additional stations across the Valleys, south Wales and regionally. Services from Sarn train station are frequent and provide both weekday and weekend services.

- 5.4 Furthermore, it is noted that the LDP proposes a new Park and Ride facility (PLA7(23)) at Sarn train station and a new Park and Share facility (PLA7(24)) to the east of the site at Junction 36 of the M4 Motorway. As referred to above, the site is positioned between these two new facilities which will mean the area around junction 36 could become a new (or better) hub.
- 5.5 Pedestrian accessibility internally within the Sarn Park services is good with footpaths and pedestrian crossings. By virtue of the large roads surrounding the site, pedestrian accessibility is constrained. However, the pedestrian access to the site is enhanced by a footbridge over the M4 to the immediate west of the site, linking the lane to the south of the M4 to Bryncoch Road on the north of the M4. A recently introduced pedestrian crossing to the west of the site provides a signal controlled crossing over the A4063 leading up into the residential area of Sarn and beyond.

6. Summary

- 6.1 Sarn Park is a very accessible and well positioned site located at Junction 36 of the M4 Motorway. It currently operates as a MSA and hotel, but there is a clear need for the rationalisation, renewal and improvement of the facilities and the wider site. Fundamentally, Welcome Break seeks a flexible planning position with respect to future uses and initiatives – in order to capture interest and demand from new occupiers.
- 6.2 We agree with the Council that the site should be brought forward for redevelopment by virtue of a comprehensive masterplan / development brief for the site. This approach will provide the commitment and security Welcome Break requires in order to attract investment to the site and subsequently, rationalise and improve the existing MSA. Moreover, it is an appropriate way of reconciling the complicated and unique land use implications of an MSA and its potential ancillary uses.
- 6.3 On this basis, Welcome Break are comfortable that the redevelopment of Sarn Park services can be managed and promoted through a development brief / masterplan and therefore withdraw our previous objection that the site should be included within allocation REG1(22). Rather, to reflect the development brief / masterplan approach (and its potential inclusion of land adjacent to Sarn Park Services), it is considered that the part of the site currently included within the allocation (REG1(22)) is removed – on the condition that reference is made to the need for a masterplan approach to the existing MSA and Welcome Break land ownership. This means that allocation REG1(22) will refer to land adjacent to Sarn Park Services only.