

Merthyr Mawr Community council

60 grove road

bridgend

Dear Mrs Bowden

RE. Housing Allocation in Bridgend County Borough Council draft LDP at Island Farm, Bridgend. (see map below)

I would like to bring to your attention the allocation of a site to the south of Bridgend for housing development in the BCBC draft deposit LDP.

It is the view of Merthyr Mawr Community Council that a large housing development here, would constitute a serious negative impact on the visitor experience of tourists visiting the Heritage Coast and Porthcawl regions. It is our understanding that tourism in Wales is growing significantly and indeed, that over 9.5% of the workforce are employed in tourism related jobs making it easily the fastest growing sector of the economy. While currently lagging behind the rest of the UK in terms of spend per trip and accommodation occupancy rates, tourism is a sector with vast capacity to expand, a fact that is made clear in the current Vale of Glamorgan LDP.

The coastal stretch between Cardiff and Port Talbot has great potential to attract increasing numbers of visitors. A significant hidden gem in this region is the area around the historic and unspoilt Merthyr Mawr Village, Ogmere Castle and including the National Nature Reserve at Merthyr Mawr Sand-Dunes. This area has long been considered the jewel in the crown of Bridgend and frequently appears in tourism features in the national press. The proposed housing allocation lies just on the inland edge of this area and represents the encroachment of Bridgend town into the coastal/rural landscape. Porthcawl has traditionally been the tourism hotspot for Bridgend County and still is, but increasingly tourism in Wales takes the form of short trips (with relaxing, walking, sightseeing and visiting the beach cited as the most popular activities). The increase in numbers of short trip holidays and the activities stated above, all hugely favour this area as it is very accessible to the South of England and ticks all the boxes.

The overall experience of tourists is dependent on many factors of course but, in order to capitalise on the tourist pound, it is the contention of my council that Welsh Government needs to take an active role in strategic planning. Our view (and the views expressed by visitors to the area) is that the development allocation mentioned above (see also map below), would represent both a negative impact on the natural environment and on the tourist impression of the wider area as a desirable place to visit.

The main destinations in the area are the Heritage Coast, Porthcawl and Merthyr Mawr. The country lane, New Inn Road, links all three, incorporating the single-track New Inn Bridge (scheduled ancient monument) which is also an immensely popular swimming spot. A large housing development backing onto this road would disrupt the rural nature of the area, causing congestion at the Ewenny Road junction and on New Inn Bridge, breaking the experience of countryside and coastline which otherwise extends from Llantwit Major to Porthcawl.

It is understood that, while tourism interest in Wales is growing, the average spend is still relatively low. Marketing this region of Wales to maximise the added value to the economy means showing the area in its best light, valuing and preserving what we have that is attractive to visitors. As part on the Cardiff Capital Region, my council understands the argument for the continued population expansion of Bridgend County however we note that large companies come and go, responding to global forces, but tourism in Wales is an industry, made up of over 10,000 businesses, endlessly adaptable, with huge potential to bring prosperity and pride to local people. The nearly 800 houses planned for this site will carry a premium price tag due to their location. As such they are unlikely to be affordable to the young people that Bridgend County Borough Council is seeking to attract, nor will it alleviate affordability issues in the rental sector. It is the job of Government to ensure that the natural fabric of the area remains intact so that local people can build businesses, prosper, and have pride in their environment. Our view is that Local Plan decisions which affect the wider tourism economy should be examined by Welsh Government in that context. The value of tourism to the economy should be taken seriously and acknowledgement made of the fact that it crosses local authority boundaries i.e. a housing development in Bridgend County can have an impact on tourism businesses in the Vale of Glamorgan and reduce the value for tourism of the whole area.

My council looks forward to hearing your views on this matter.

Kind regards

Chris Taylor

Acting clerk to Merthyr Mawr Community Council



Map showing proposed housing allocation SP2(2) (green boundary) at Island Farm, Bridgend