

# **BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

## **REPORT TO COUNCIL**

**18 SEPTEMBER 2019**

### **REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR – COMMUNITIES**

#### **DEPARTURE FROM DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

#### **PLANNING APPLICATION P/19/140/FUL - DEVELOPMENT OF A POLICE LEARNING CENTRE, GYMNASIUM, SITE REGRADING, ACCESS, CAR PARKING AND ASSOCIATED WORKS**

##### **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 On 12<sup>th</sup> September, 2019, the Development Control Committee considered planning application reference P/19/140/FUL, which represented a departure from the Local Development Plan. The scheme related to the construction of a Police Learning Centre, gymnasium, site regrading, access, car parking and associated works for use by the South Wales Police.
- 1.2 The building is to be sited to the north-west of the recently approved and constructed “Y Bont” café building (P/16/939/FUL).
- 1.3 The application site forms part of a wider residential allocation in the Bridgend Strategic Regeneration Growth Area for approximately 138 units (including 28 Affordable Housing Units) under Policy COM1 (5) of the Local Development Plan (LDP) (2013).
- 1.4 The Development Control Committee resolved not to refuse planning permission as the development forms part of the Police rationalisation strategy to invest in their Headquarters site at Cowbridge Road which will allow the early release of their land at Waterton Cross as part of the wider Bridgend Strategic Regeneration Growth Area. As such the application is referred to Council which is requested to approve the application subject to conditions.
- 1.5 A copy of the Development Control Committee report is attached at Appendix 1.

##### **2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Plan / Other Corporate Priorities**

- 2.1 The delivery of the County Borough Council’s planning functions has direct links to two of the three corporate priorities as outlined in the Corporate Improvement Plan 2016-2020, namely Supporting a Successful Economy and Smarter Use of Resources.

##### **3. Background**

- 3.1 The application relates to the construction of a Police Learning Centre and gymnasium (with associated works) on previously developed land within the South Wales Police Headquarters (HQ) site.

- 3.2 The proposed building is located within an allocated site in the Bridgend Strategic Regeneration Growth Area for approximately 138 residential units under Policy COM1 (5) of the Local Development Plan. South Wales Police are currently undertaking a large-scale rationalisation programme of their existing facilities and assets and, up until recently, their original rationalisation proposals involved the release of the entire northern part of their existing HQ facilities for alternative development.
- 3.3 South Wales Police (SWP), through their agent, have reiterated that they have re-assessed their assets as part of their ongoing rationalisation programme. They are pursuing an alternative strategy which entails carrying on with their programme of refurbishment and improvement works and retaining the whole of their existing HQ site at Cowbridge Road.
- 3.4 On the basis that the SWP rationalisation strategy has evolved since the adoption of the LDP in 2013, the fact that they have invested in the main HQ site and their asset plan going forward is now to consolidate their activities and facilities at their existing site at Cowbridge Road, there is no realistic prospect of the delivery of housing under Policy COM1(5) on this site.
- 3.5 Notwithstanding the loss of the housing allocation, the investment in the site and its comprehensive redevelopment is welcomed as the applicant has made a firm commitment to consolidate and retain its operations within the County Borough. The strategy will ensure that a highly prestigious HQ facility will be retained within Bridgend, thereby retaining and creating highly skilled employment opportunities as well as providing a valuable social and community service to the residents and communities of Bridgend.
- 3.6 Furthermore, the new facilities at the Cowbridge Road site will probably facilitate an earlier than previously anticipated release of SWP's land holding assets at Waterton Cross, which also forms part of the larger mixed use allocation under Policy PLA3(4) Parc Afon Ewenni - including the delivery of an estimated 650 new dwellings. The concentration of the facilities at SWP's HQ at Cowbridge Road will now allow at least part of the Waterton Cross site to be released in a timely manner within the LDP plan period (2013-2021).
- 3.7 The development is, therefore, broadly in line with the LDP's Regeneration-Led Spatial Strategy and Strategic Policy SP1 of the LDP which aims to maximise regeneration benefits and to particularly focus development within Strategic Regeneration Growth Areas. The current and wider proposals for the HQ site and the Waterton Cross site are inextricably linked and both are located within the Bridgend Strategic Regeneration Growth Area. The current proposal, as part of a wider strategy by SWP, is therefore maximising the regeneration benefits of both sites.
- 3.8 Given the wider regeneration, economic and social and community considerations as outlined above, there are no overriding objections to this proposal from a development planning perspective. Additionally, as the housing allocation under Policy COM1(5) is wholly within the demise of SWP's land holding at their Headquarters site, Cowbridge Road, the proposed rationalisation of their facilities and operations from Waterton Cross will not prejudice any third party land and future developments. In fact, it is expected that this change in direction will allow land in and around the Waterton Cross site to be brought forward for development sooner than expected.

- 3.9 On this basis, BCBC as the Local Planning Authority can grant permission for development which does not accord with the provisions of the development plan in force in the area in which the land to which the application relates is situated under the provisions of Article 20 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Wales) Order 2012 subject to ratification by Council.
- 3.10 Therefore, as the application lies within the allocated housing site as defined in the LDP, this application is required to be assessed as a departure to the LDP and, once considered by the Development Control Committee, referred to Council for approval.

#### **4. Current Situation**

- 4.1 The application site is located within an allocated site in the Bridgend Strategic Regeneration Growth Area for approximately 138 residential units under Policy COM1 (5) of the LDP. The LDP was adopted on 18th September 2013 and is a guide for development in the County Borough up to 2021.
- 4.2 Paragraph 1.2.1 of Planning Policy Wales (10<sup>th</sup> Edition December, 2018) states that “Planning applications must be determined in accordance with the adopted plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.”

#### **5. Effect upon Policy Framework & Procedure Rules**

- 5.1 Whilst the application does not strictly accord with the policies of the Bridgend Local Development Plan, South Wales Police have reaffirmed that they are not going to pursue the release of this land (or any part of the land) for residential development and the proposal forms part of the overall rationalisation strategy to concentrate their facilities and operations at their Headquarters, Cowbridge Road. Furthermore, the development does not represent a precedent and will not compromise the integrity of the development plan.

#### **6. Equality Impact Assessment.**

- 6.1 A screening for Equality Impact has been undertaken and no negative issues have been identified.

#### **7. Financial Implications**

- 7.1 There are no direct financial implications as a result of this report.

#### **8. Recommendation**

- 8.1 That if Council is minded not to refuse the development then, after the Section 106 Legal Agreement between the South Wales Police and the Council has been signed, the Group Manager – Development and Planning Services (within the Communities Directorate) be given delegated powers to issue a decision notice in respect of this proposal to include the standard 5 year time limit for implementation and the conditions attached to the recommendation.

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**Group Manager – Development and Planning Services**  
**18<sup>th</sup> September, 2019**

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