

POSITION STATEMENT PYLE GARDEN CENTRE, PYLE

This statement is provided by the Council at the request of the Inspector. It provides a Position Statement commenting on the history of the site, previous negotiations and what the Council consider it would or would not support on the site.

- The Council maintains its position that the exclusion of the Pyle Garden Centre (relating to AS 038) from the Pyle District Centre and the site's designation for employment purposes as part of Village Farm Industrial Estate is entirely appropriate and is not a matter of soundness for the LDP Examination.
- The Council's position is that although the current buildings on the site benefit from an unrestricted retail A1 use this is 'self-limiting' given the nature of the existing buildings and their inappropriateness for other forms of retailing other than for garden centre purposes. Any demolition of the existing structures would extinguish existing use rights and would therefore have no bearing on future planning applications in particular for future direct floorspace replacement or expansion of A1 retail floorspace, which the Council could resist, and are currently able to resist, if this was of a scale and type that would threaten the vitality and viability of existing town centres and the adjacent district centre in Pyle.
- The inclusion of AS 038 within Pyle District Centre would result in a situation where the Council would have very little control over the type and volume of retail floorspace that could be delivered on this site in the future, given the fact that there would be no requirement to demonstrate retail need. The site is 2.4 hectares in extent, which is equivalent to the existing Co-operative Supermarket (and associated units) site. The site is also comparable to other large-scale convenience retailing sites within the County Borough, notably the Bridgend Asda Store (2.78 Ha), Tesco Store, Maesteg (2.48 Ha), Sainsbury Store, Bridgend (2.6 Ha excluding the petrol station) and Tesco Store, Cowbridge Road, Bridgend (2.93 Ha excluding the petrol station). AS 038 is considerably larger than the Tesco Store at Brewery Lane, Bridgend which is only 1.72 Ha in extent.
- Large scale convenience retailing currently commands the highest alternative land values and it will undoubtedly be the case that the inclusion of AS038 within the commercial centre boundary will be a highly attractive proposition to one of the big four supermarkets, especially given the site's prominent and accessible location on the main highway network close to junction 37 of the M4.

Such an outcome would in the opinion of the Council render the LDP unsound on the basis that the significant amount of convenience retail floorspace that the site could accommodate - the 'need' for which is entirely contrary to the Plan's supporting evidence, would threaten the Regeneration-Led Strategy of the Plan to promote the vitality and

viability of the County Borough's town centres; in particular the Porthcawl Regeneration Strategy, an integral part of which is the delivery of an enabling large-scale supermarket within the defined boundary of Porthcawl Town Centre. The future delivery of this store and its associated regeneration would be put at considerable risk if this site were to become an alternative development option in the future.

- The Council in the preparation stages of the LDP had engaged with the existing land-owners of this extensive and important site at the entrance of the Village Farm Industrial Estate on the basis that the site was soon to become vacant and potentially derelict with a view to providing an opportunity for regeneration, that would promote economic activity and local job creation.

It was the view of the Council at that time that a limited scale enabling convenience retail development justified on the basis of qualitative need only maybe acceptable, provided this also promoted an element of B1, B2 and B8 employment to the east of the site, on land in the applicant's control. This small-scale qualitative retail convenience food provision could also have been supplemented by other uses justified by Policies E7 (of the UDP) as being complementary and ancillary to the wider employment use of the estate. The 'mix' of potential uses that would have been acceptable at that time would have been dependent on the site coming forward on a comprehensive basis in order that the Council could properly assess highway and any retail impact.

The landowners have chosen not to pursue this redevelopment route, and on the basis that the garden centre is now the subject of a new lease and different management and trading successfully, no imperative exists to pursue the comprehensive redevelopment of the site at this time. Although should the trading situation change detrimentally in the future the Council would again be receptive to an appropriate and viable scheme that could deliver enhanced job opportunities and investment in the area. This, the Council maintains, can be achieved in the context of the site being retained in its current employment designation; bearing in mind the flexibility provided by Policies REG2 and REG3 of the LDP and the site's 'edge-of-centre' location, which could justify an element of retail provision, provided it was supported by an appropriate retail impact assessment and in light of the LDP's evidence base relating to the need for bulky retail provision, the site could also support such an element of restricted bulky goods retail use in the future

The balance of such a pragmatic approach however also needs to be considered in the context of the wider need for employment land provision within the western part of the County Borough, especially serving Porthcawl and as a highly accessible prime frontage site would also be suitable for B1 office purposes. This can best be achieved by retaining the site within the Village Farm Employment designation in the LDP.