

## **Pyle Garden Centre: Position Statement- C.Patten**

The Statement is provided at the request of the Inspector and reiterates and adds to the representations made at the Hearing Session and in response to the Councils Position Statement.

- A garden centre has been trading for over 35 years in this location and as conceded by the Council the current buildings benefit from an open A1 retail consent and the use of these building to sell A1 goods has continued throughout that period and is continuing today. There is approximately 2250m<sup>2</sup> of accommodation.
- The sale of goods from these premises, throughout that period has had little impact upon the viability of the current District Centre. It is considered that the establishment has been an important attraction to the District Centre attracting customers from a wide area. The proposed designated Centre has no frontage site, but the inclusion of this site would retain and give the Centre a prime focal point which would enhance its attractiveness. The LDP proposes extending the District Centre to the opposite side of the road to the garden centre because retail occupiers have occupied the buildings at the front of Village Farm Industrial Estate. There would appear to be no reason not to extend the Centre to include all the existing retail uses which have contributed to the vitality of the existing Centre.
- In the proposed Pyle District Centre there is little opportunity for further growth.
- Whilst it is accepted that the site would be physically capable of accommodating a large convenience store, the council would still retain control over the scale of redevelopment. Any such proposal would have to be assessed via the Sequential Test and its cumulative effect, if they considered that a proposal would affect an existing Town Centre, such as Porthcawl, then they could justifiably refuse. This would not therefore make the Plan unsound.
- The previous occupier was a tenant, who occupied the premises on a lease for 25 years expiring September 2011. The lease provided an option to extend that lease for another 25 years. The landowners were uncertain until the tenants served notice to vacate whether they would have vacant possession of the site. In the interests of good estate management the Landowners have maintained a dialogue with the Council for many years as to the future potential of the site for this very reason. It is only since February 2012 that the landowners have had overall control of the site. They have not pursued a firm redevelopment route because the main priority was to keep the premises occupied to avoid security costs and vacant building liabilities and to protect the “goodwill” of the previous tenant.
- The landowners would be happy to discuss the redevelopment of the whole of their site for a mixed use development at any appropriate stage and ensure an element of B1, B2 and/or B8 accommodation is provided.

- The Council have conceded that they would be happy to consider a discount food store on site with a qualitative need and, in the plan generally, that there is a need for bulky good retail provision.
- If the site remained within the employment allocation any redevelopment along the above lines above would not sit well within policies REG 2 and 3. Any proposals would have to be complementary/and or ancillary to the main use for industrial purposes or suitably located on industrial land. It is considered that any such redevelopment would be more compatible with a District Centre allocation and the scale can be determined through the Sequential and Cumulative Tests and Retail and Transport Assessments.
- There would appear to be sufficient land available within the existing Village Farm Estate and elsewhere within the Plan area to cater for anticipated industrial development over the Plan period. The site has never been used for “employment” uses and vacant sites remain on the Village Farm Industrial Estate. Employment sites specifically to serve Porthcawl should be located closer to the town. This site is 4 miles away from the town which is only slightly less than distances to Kenfig and the Bridgend Area’s Industrial Estates all of which have vacant land available. Road Improvements have recently been carried out to serve the Kenfig Industrial Estate which would enable further developments to be carried out without objections from both Bridgend and Neath Port Talbot Councils.
- The Council had reservations as to the suitability of the site as a garden centre but this would appear to be unfounded from the landowner’s current experience from running the garden centre. Indeed they have been greatly encouraged by the interest from concessions and franchises and are currently fitting out to cater for that interest. However the buildings are old and it is considered that the enterprise would, in the foreseeable future, benefit with a reduced footprint and new buildings designed to meet modern trading practice.
- It is considered that the retention of the A1 use or redevelopment of this site would provide more diverse uses within the Centre and add significantly to its attractiveness, vitality and viability and the removal of this site from retail uses would adversely affect the Centre, thus making the Plan unsound.