**CONSULTATION RESPONSE: COUNTRYSIDE AND ENVIRONMENT LANDSCAPE**

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| To / I: | Operational Manager Development & Building Control |  | From / Oddi Wrth: | Landscape Team  Countryside and Economic Projects. |
| FAO | Steven Rennie |  | Christine Smith |
| Date / Dyddiad: | 310117 |  | Tel / Ffôn: | Landscape Officer (01446) 886769 |
| Your Ref / Eich Cyf: | 2016/01427/OUT(SR2). |  | My Ref / Fy Cyf: |  |
| Location | Land off of Cowbridge Road, St Athan. | | | |
| Proposal | Residential Development of up to 300 units and Associated Works | | | |

1. **Siting of the Development- Visual Impact and Mitigation.**

**SLA**

This area of land currently lies within a Special Landscape Area – The Lower Thaw Valley. I am aware that this site is likely to be removed from the SLA designation in the new LDP, however its implications on the character of the surrounding landscape still needs to be considered.

**Visual Impact / Mitigation Measures**

A Strategic Landscape and Visual Appraisal has been provided, however this has not been carried out in accordance with Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment – (Third Edition). Because of the sensitivity of the area we require a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment so any landscape mitigation measures can be properly assessed.

1. **Landscape Site Layout – General Points**

**Public Open Spaces**

The public open spaces are not evenly distributed throughout the site (these spaces are currently sited along the boundary of Cowbridge Road). There should be provision of public open space to the north east of the site to serve the houses in this area.

**Play Areas**

The proposed Play Areas should also be distributed evenly throughout the site. If provision of a Public Open Space is made to the north east of the site then a play area should also be sited there to serve the houses in this area.

**Footpaths Access Through the Site**

Footpath access should be extended to link the three sections (The original fields) of the site with each other. The larger fields to the north east and the north west of the development should have pathways through the existing hedgerows linking them together and linking them to the smaller area in the south east of the site. These connections should also follow through if possible to the existing housing estate to develop continuity of access across the sites. This will provide a sustainable means of access from the new development.

1. **Reserved Planning Matters**

**Property Boundaries**

In the planning submission it would be helpful to have all boundaries of properties clearly marked so all public open spaces are identified and ownership of hedgerow features etc are clearly defined.

**SUDS Feature**

Proposed SUDs features are to be designed in accordance with current guidance to ensure that they meet current safety standards. Design of maintenance access is to be considered to ensure the SUDs feature is effectively maintained in future. As a part of the process we would like to see further details of the proposed flooding and planting plans to ensure biodiversity/aesthetics is considered in the design of this feature.

**Footpaths**

The existing footpath route appears to have been redirected. I am concerned the route of the proposed footpath is not clearly defined through the centre of the site. A continuous pathway would provide a better footpath link. Ideally a surfaced footpath of approx 2m open 3ms is required and preferably through a green space.

**Existing Trees**

The existing trees should be retained where possible. I am concerned about proposed construction of new features too close to existing trees. Consideration should be given to this at detailed design stage.

**Proposed Trees**

Consideration on the siting of new trees will have to be given at design stage to ensure that when they grow to their mature size they do not damage existing structures and buildings.

The planting needs to be more carefully considered so it provides aesthetic and amenity value to the Public Open Spaces and Play Areas.

**Existing Hedgerows in the Development**

As stated before it is unclear whether the fence is on the inside or outside of the hedge. If the fence were on the outside of the hedge I would have concerns about the change in character of the development from the surroundings and how the continuity of the hedgerow as a landscape feature could be retained. I would suggest the existing and proposed boundary hedges stay outside the curtilage of the properties. Ideally properties should look onto the hedgerows where possible as it ensures they do not become ‘dead spaces’ behind back gardens where rubbish is dumped and anti social behaviour occurs.

There needs to be clarification of how and who will be responsible for managing the hedgerows in future to ensure they are retained and continue to provide effective screening of the proposed development.

**Housing**

The housing does not relate directly to the public open spaces. It is unclear if the properties overlook or back onto the sites. In general sites/open spaces which are overlooked by housing are often safer and are maintained to a higher standard.

**Play Areas**

As stated before a new play area should be sited in the north east section of the site to provide for the residents in this area. There are two play areas in very close proximity of each other No.5 and No.7. (a LAP and a LEAP).The LAP would need repositioning as it is extremely close to an adjacent property.

The LEAP play area No.6 has been sited under an existing tree canopy. Care in siting the Play area will have to be taken to ensure construction would not damage the existing trees. I am concerned that if the play area can’t be seen this could lead to antisocial behaviour or the play area not being used at all.

Final detailed designs of all of the play areas are to be submitted for comment.

**Guidelines for Open Space and Play Area Design**

The Developer will be responsible for designing Open Spaces in accordance with The Vale of Glamorgan Plan 2011-2026. Open Space Background Paper.

The developer will be responsible for all aspects of the design layout of the play area works, design and installation of all site equipment, surfacing, fencing and gates and for ensuring that all items meet the requirements of current European Play Standards EN1176 and EN1177.

The aim of play area design is to: create an innovative environment for play that is exciting and accessible and suitable for children of all abilities.

It will include:

• A range of play experiences

• Are accessible to disabled and non disabled children

• Allow children of different ages to play together

• Make best use of the location

• Opportunities for risk and challenge

The play area is to incorporate bitumen macadam surfacing and approved safety surface, defined by the types of play equipment and manufacturers recommendations for impact zones; with linking hard surfaces in between.

Seating is to be included in the design for the site. This must be accessible for all abilities.

The design layout shall take account of grounds maintenance requirements and shall ensure that grass areas around the perimeter of the new playground can be well maintained. Designs are to always including the installation of concrete ‘mowing margins’ beneath fencing and concrete pin curb edging or similar approved adjacent to grass areas. The Contractor shall eliminate in his design proposals, small areas of grass and awkward corners.