

## **FC16: HG1.17 Caerphilly Miners Hospital, Caerphilly**

### **Representations by the Caerphilly Miners Community Centre Management Committee (formerly known as Caerphilly Miners District Miners Hospital Steering Group)**

The Management Committee strongly supports the principle of the proposed change to the proposed allocation HG1.17 to residential led mixed-use scheme. However we do not agree to the mix of uses that include a leisure element. We set out our reasons below:

**What is leisure?** - Firstly, we consider the inclusion of 'leisure' to be ambiguous. The Officer's Report to the Council's meeting of the 15<sup>th</sup> September and the minutes of the 15<sup>th</sup> September meeting seem to relate to the provision of open space rather than provision of 'leisure' facilities. This is significant as the reason for the proposed focused change is quoted - to ensure the plan is in line with the Council Resolution of September 15<sup>th</sup> (see Statement of Focused Changes document, page 9).

The term 'leisure' is not defined within national policy guidance but Planning Policy Wales (2002) suggests that the term relates to facilities such as cinemas, bowling alleys etc rather than it relating to open space. The provision of open space and recreation facilities is covered by Technical Advice Note 16 and it seems as though the analysis within the Officer's report (informing the 15<sup>th</sup> September meeting) implies that the Council Committee is seeking the provision of open space rather than specific leisure facilities. Notwithstanding this, Planning Policy Wales seeks to ensure that such leisure uses are sustainably located within town and local centres and therefore the provision of leisure facilities in this out-of-town location would not be appropriate.

Any application that is submitted for the development of the site should include open space provision commensurate with Statutory Development Plan requirements.

Therefore, if as suggested by the Officer's report the term leisure in this context refers to open space, therefore seems to be limited value in specifying 'leisure' as an element of the proposed mix at Site HG1.17 and should therefore be deleted.

**Impact on Viability** - secondly, the prescription of an additional use such as 'leisure' has the potential to seriously jeopardise the viability of development on the site.

The Management Committee has been working closely with United Welsh Housing Association to formulate a scheme for affordable housing across the majority of the site in line with the Welsh Assembly Government's protocol for maximising the use of public land for affordable housing.

The evolving plans include the retention of the original hospital building "The Beeches" for a community facility. This will consequently impact upon the ability of the scheme to deliver any additional uses such as leisure or large areas of open space. As far as we are aware, there are no current plans by any individual or organisation to promote a specific 'leisure' use on the site nor have there been any discussions or agreements made which include the provision of a substantial level of open space.

Any scheme which includes this level of leisure or open space will adversely impact upon the ability to deliver the community facility which is close to the heart of the local community and has received a significant level of support.

### **Planning Obligations for the site**

Related to this point are the planning obligation requirements that were set out in the Deposit Local Development Plan. We have previously made representations that the obligations should not be stipulated by the allocation and instead be negotiated at the time of an application. Planning Obligations cannot be used to put right existing problems. The nature and scale of the contributions required by the local authority will be dependent on the scheme that is submitted to the Council in due course. The reference to obligations are not stated in this Statement of Focused Changes but it is appropriate to reiterate this previous point as this also directly relates to the viability of the scheme.

### **Provision of Community Facilities**

Over the past 18 months, the Management Committee has undertaken a number of local surveys examining local need for a community facility. The Committee has also prepared a detailed Business Plan which sets out the vision for 'The Beeches' as well as a strategy for its delivery. Towards this, the Management Committee has applied to the Key Fund for funding for a Community Facility Feasibility Study which is scheduled to be completed May/June 2010. This purpose of the study is to ascertain the feasibility, financial viability and sustainability of a centre providing for the benefit of the community as the basis of our business case to take the project forward.

The Management Committee recognises the importance of ensuring the development remains viable and is committed to working with United Welsh Housing Association to deliver a sustainable, viable and feasible community facility for the wider community, whilst ensuring that the building itself is conserved as part of the legacy of the Caerphilly and District Miners.

As part of the evidence for the Local Development Plan, we attach our Business Plan. It provides further information on the progress that the Management Committee has made and the strategy for the future of the

community facility. This document should go some way towards responding to the Officer's comment regarding the evidence for this community facility.

For further information on the Management Committee's activities please visit:

- Caerphilly Miners Community Centre Management Committee Facebook group (221 members on 29 October 2009)
- Caerphilly Miners Community Centre website: <http://caerphillymcc.weebly.com/> (200 unique views within 2 weeks of going live)

**Proposed Change:** remove reference to leisure as part of the mix of uses at the site. Allocate the HG1.17 site for residential led mixed use scheme which includes the provision of a community facility.

**Attend the Examination:** Yes. To enable detailed examination of the issues raised.