

North West Cardiff Group

Responding to the concerns of our communities

Creigiau Danescourt Gwaelod y Garth Llandaff Pentyrch Radyr & Morganstown St Fagans

Amanda Sutcliffe
Development Control
Cardiff Council

Old Church Rooms
Park Road
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Cardiff CF15 8DF

By email

November 6, 2014

Dear Amanda,

Re: 14/02188/MJR : LAND SOUTH OF PENTREBANE ROAD

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 The application is for up to 290 houses on a site of 8.85 hectares. The land lies to the north-west of the edge of the Pentrebane Estate with access off Pentrebane Road, west of the point at which it reverts to being a narrow country lane.
- 1.2 This site forms part of Strategic Site C which is allocated for development in the LDP. The Group has objected to the development of this site (and the other strategic sites in North West Cardiff) before the necessary infrastructure is in place. We will continue to argue this at the forthcoming Examination. In advance of the adoption of the LDP any major land releases would be premature. We will, however, consider the circumstances relating to every application submitted for thoroughness.
- 1.3 The application is **premature** because it has been submitted only three months before the emerging LDP is subject to independent examination, before the full scale of required infrastructure has been identified and costed and before an appropriate Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) has been adopted.
- 1.4 The CIL Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule (*Report of Director: Strategic Planning, Highways, Traffic and Transportation*, Agenda Item 17, Appendix 1, Cardiff Council Cabinet Meeting 18.9.2014) proposes £100/m² for residential development. If we estimate dwelling sizes of 60-70m² (assuming a mix of unit types) at £100/m² that raises some £6-7,000/dwelling. On a development of 290 dwellings that raises £1.74-£2m.
 - 1.4.1 If consent is given to this premature application its S106 agreement should be negotiated under the current broad S106 rules and match what would be raised by the future narrower S106 + CIL. Neither the city nor the local community can afford nor should it be expected to lose this essential contribution to infrastructure through a premature application that only benefits the developer by avoiding CIL.
- 1.5 The Design and Access Statement (DAS) gives a very misleading picture, as does the Environmental Statement (ES). The latter does not consider cumulative impacts properly and ignores the potential extension of this site southwards, for which the LDP plans.

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- 1.6 We recommend that this application be **refused** but if Cardiff Council thinks it could be acceptable we would ask for the following to mitigate its hugely adverse impacts. The impacts, and thus the requirements for mitigation, for the proposed development are understated and should be addressed and include provision of the full 30% affordable housing and an enhanced level of S106 to include contributions to off-site community and transport provision (including Metro and direct pedestrian access to it). All negotiations for S106 should involve St Fagans Community Council.
- 1.7 In the past, sites have been reserved for community use under S106 but have been retained by the developers and subsequently developed for housing, leading to a dearth of community facilities in many new housing areas. In Radyr & Morganstown sites allocated for a primary school (Radyr Gardens) and for a library and residential care home (Radyr Sidings) have all gone back to developers for more housing.
- 1.7.1 The S106 agreement for this site should stipulate that land allocated for community use, but not used for that purpose within five years of grant of planning permission, should revert to Community Council ownership to ensure community use in perpetuity.
- 1.8 **We thus request that this application be REFUSED unless the requirements set out in detail below are met in full.**

2. REASONING

Local Development Plan

- 2.1 The response of the North West Cardiff Group to the Deposit LDP stated our view the Plan *“is fundamentally flawed because: (i) the transport strategy cannot provide sustainably for the scale of development proposed in North West Cardiff; (ii) that the housing is unlikely to be delivered in the 13 years remaining of the current plan period, and could well result in an unsustainable pattern of development; (iii) the plan’s details on new infrastructure required by the scale of development envisaged are vague and provide no certainty of delivery; (iv) the apparent reliance on bus rather than rail transport does not solve the existing, let alone future, road problems – construction of a new rail line from Cardiff Central to Beddau and other sustainable transport is vital, and must be provided **in advance of development in North West Cardiff.**”* (November 2013)

Planning Statement

- 2.2 The Planning Statement paints a rosy picture of a community “integrated” with Fairwater. In fact the development adjoins the most deprived ward in Fairwater (Pentrebane, one of the 10% most deprived in Wales). Whilst there are community facilities in Pentrebane, these are of poor quality and were designed to cater only for the existing population. Those in Fairwater are better, but the developers must contribute via S106 to maintaining and enhancing all of them to cope with the extra demand this development would create. The Fairwater facilities will be shared by the new development proposed under application 14/02157/MJR Land North and South of Llantrisant Road. It is quite unreasonable to expect Fairwater to do both.

Design and Access Statement

- 2.3 Much of the text of the DAS could relate to any site in Cardiff. DAS 2.46 fails to point out that the adjacent housing is mainly poor quality council housing which is in need of environmental upgrading and enhanced landscaping. This would make a much needed “step change” in the environment of the whole area.
- 2.4 Paragraph 2.7 claims that the site is “deliverable in isolation from” Strategic Site C and is entirely consistent with emerging masterplanning principles. The masterplanning principles are so general that it is very easy for the developers to claim to have met them. In fact, a good deal more work and adjustments will be necessary to meet the principles in full. For example, with care, via adjustment to the layout and mitigation over a wider area, the landscape and other impacts could be managed to reduce the impact of this 290 house development to acceptable levels. However, the DAS fails to mention that the adjacent site to the south is likely to come forward for another 290 houses with access via the same road network and also totally dependent on existing local facilities. This should have been considered as an important part of the assessment of cumulative impacts, but has not been.
- 2.5 Paragraph 2.29 says there is good bus frequency and claims a journey time of 20 minutes to the City Centre. The main bus service (no: 61) does have good frequency during the daytime (every 10 minutes Monday to Friday) but this drops to every quarter of an hour on Saturdays and half hourly every evening and Sundays. The Cardiff Bus timetable gives 30 minutes to the Bus Station at peak times: 50% more than the 20 minutes claimed. The quoted journey time takes no account of walking and waiting times. The latter is important because the regularity of service suffers because of heavy passenger loadings, with standing passengers on some journeys, and congestion. The service runs on single carriageway roads with parking and winds through the suburbs of Pentreban, Fairwater, Llandaff, Pontcanna and Canton before reaching the City Centre.
- 2.6 Neither of the rail stations mentioned in paragraph 2.32 (Fairwater and Waungron) is within reasonable walking distance of 800m or 10 minutes of the proposed development. Whilst there is a half hourly rail service to Coryton via the City Centre (southbound) or Radyr (northbound) Monday to Saturday daytimes, this drops to hourly in the evening and there is no service at all on Sundays.
- 2.7 There is no certainty that access will be provided from the site to bus stops and rail stations via safe and direct pedestrian and cycle routes **from the outset** unless the bus turning facility is built so that it can be used from the date the first house is occupied. Information on bus/rail services should also be provided to every resident when they move in, if the target of 50/50 modal split is to be achieved. It may not be sensible for the bus turning circle to be located at the extreme south of the site unless development proceeds from that point.
- 2.8 The claim in para 2.34 that the electrification of the Valleys Lines will be complete by 2019 is also wildly optimistic. 4.6 envisages that it will “foster a step change in travel in this part of Cardiff for both existing and future residents”. This site, and every other site in the City, must give a financial contribution to achieving this goal because creation of a “vibrant and healthy community” cannot be achieved simply by providing new housing (DAS 5.40).

- 2.9 The applicants propose three storey housing over most of the site (DAS 7.14) but these should not be allowed near the western or northern boundaries to reduce the adverse impact this would have on views from surrounding areas.
- 2.10 A percentage of 30% affordable housing is envisaged. It is important that this percentage is maintained because there is a need for more affordable houses and the relatively good public transport and community facilities in the vicinity make this better than more remote sites for people without access to a car. The developer should be required to work with a housing association to ensure that the houses are delivered. These houses should remain in the affordable category in perpetuity and not be allowed to be sold out of it.
- 2.11 Landscaping outwith any gardens appears to be limited (DAS 7.7-7.11) to narrow “buffer” strips around the edges of the site, with a widening at two points to provide informal open space. The good quality agricultural value of the site (most of which is Grade 3a and should be protected as such) could be maintained if part was allocated for allotment gardens. This is supported by the Welsh Government’s commitment to increase the availability of land for allotments.

Highway Plans

- 2.12 The highway layout shows Pentrebane Road reducing in width from about 6m to 4.1m with localised widening on the sharp bend at the entrance to the development. 4.1m is just sufficient for two cars to pass each other on a straight road. On a bend such as this the road should widen somewhat to facilitate passage, which is what is proposed. However, it is intended to operate a bus service along this section of road, which is too narrow for a car and a bus to pass each other. A straight road needs to be at least 5.5m wide for this traffic, but even then two buses could not pass each other. As it is a sharp bend, it should be wider. The spine roads of the estate, which is where the bus will travel, are shown to be 6.1m wide. This width would allow two buses to pass, or a bus and a lorry.

Environmental Statement (ES)

- 2.13 Paragraph 8.11 of the Non-Technical Summary is cavalier in saying, in relation to Landscape and Visual Impacts, that “No significant cumulative impacts have been identified, which is attributable to the widespread developed context of the theoretical future baseline.” Strategic Site C, of which this site forms part, is currently in agricultural use. Its whole character will change when it is developed. Whilst this part of the site is closest to existing development, that development stopped at the current boundary for a reason: to limit the impact on the skyline and not encroach on the setting of the adjacent St Fagans Conservation Area.
- 2.14 The section specifically on cumulative impacts concludes that most impacts are minor or negligible. However, for example for “Landscape and Visual”, “Transportation” and “Agriculture and Soils” this is not supported by the facts. Individual sites such as this will inevitably make a contribution to the impact of the whole of Strategic Site C so that, if allowed, more mitigation will be necessary to reduce Site C’s impact to acceptable levels.
- 2.15 In fact, Cardiff Council changed its mind about the requirement for Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). Originally, in March 2014, it was not considered

necessary. In May 2014 this view was revised in a letter to the applicants that required them to prepare an Environmental Statement that would “*address the potential cumulative effects of the whole of site C, and also sites D and E where necessary, to allow the application to be properly considered.*” (Letter to Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners from Head of Planning, 28 May 2014).

- 2.16 It is thus disappointing that the applicants have not fully assessed the cumulative impact of their development with the rest of Site C, leave alone sites D and E. In some cases (as pointed out above in relation to the bus route) the information presented is wrong and/or misleading. Adverse impacts are deliberately reduced by referring to the effect compared with the whole of Cardiff.
- 2.17 All applications approved before the adoption of Cardiff’s Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) will avoid a CIL and rely on S106 arrangements. In our experience, local communities often lose out on S106 projects which are negotiated by well-resourced developers who are not concerned with the long-term interests of the area. The CIL is intended to be a non-negotiable levy to provide essential infrastructure for the wider community with a percentage due to any affected Community Council. At a time of increasing budget cuts and loss of community facilities across the city it is Cardiff Council’s obligation to secure as much public benefit from development as it can.

ES Chapter D – Transportation

- 2.18 This document relies heavily on the methodology set out in the Guidelines of the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, rather than any policy of either Cardiff Council or Welsh Government. Whether this input from a quasi-professional organisation has any validity is something to question. Both this document and its accompanying Transport Assessment are unduly long and the content largely otiose.
- 2.19 The developers propose to create a junction with the eastern section of Pentreban Road and provide a bus turning circle at the southern end of the spine road into the site to allow the existing bus service to be extended. We have argued at 2.7 that the turning circle needs to be where sited it can be used from the outset.
- 2.20 The rail crossing at St Fagans brings traffic to a stand-still, throughout the day, for 28 minutes in each hour. This will worsen when the new automatic signalling system starts and the crossing is closed for longer than it is open.
- 2.21 We are aware that when the whole of Site C is developed, a potential solution to the problems caused by increased traffic is to close Crofft y Genau between Pentreban Lane and Llantrisant Road, forcing more traffic back onto the Llantrisant Road.
- 2.22 D3.20 PICADY, ARCADY and LINSIG are junction-design computer programmes and here it is claimed that they demonstrate that the majority of junctions are operating within capacity during the am and pm peaks. The difficulty with this statement is that Llantrisant Road itself does not operate in this way. Road capacity is calculated assuming that the traffic on the road is free flowing at its official speed limit. The am peak traffic on Llantrisant crawls along and thus traffic surveys show considerably fewer cars passing the census point in any given period than would

happen in free flow. The result of this is to conclude wrongly that the lower numbers show the road operating below capacity. The capacity problem with Llantrisant Road is caused by the flow bottleneck in the centre of Llandaff. This is incapable of being improved without the demolition of property in the centre of historic Llandaff.

2.23 Para K4.3 shows that Plymouth Estate has down-graded the use of this land for the past twenty years. Most of the site (5.5ha) is in fact Grade 3a (Best and Most Versatile) which according to Planning Policy Wales “should be conserved as a finite resource for the future”. Loss of this site from agricultural production is considered “minor adverse” and no mitigation apart from a “soil protection strategy” is proposed. The sale and development of the land is considered “beneficial”. This would only be so if sufficient S106 contributions are made from the proceeds to fully mitigate the development’s adverse impacts. We challenge these assessments, and consider that part of the land should be allocated for use for allotments to ensure its continued use for food production. This would be an amenity for new residents and useful for existing residents who live in an area of high deprivation and meet Welsh Government policy on increasing allotments.

2.24 As part of Strategic Site C, this site should make a contribution, via S106, to the conversion of the City Line for tram-train operation. This, rather than electrification of the Valleys Lines, is likely to be the favoured option. The line would be most accessible from a new bus-rail interchange at Waungron Park.

2.25 Linked with the point in para 2.19 above, the site should contribute from S106 to building a bus-rail interchange at Waungron Park. This would also enable bus users to link with bus services (Bay Circle 1/2) to and from the Heath Hospital (a District General and Teaching Hospital), Cardiff Metropolitan University Llandaff Campus, the City Centre and the Bay: all of which are key employment and student destinations, with the former also being a destination for outpatients and visits to in-patients.

2.26 D4.21 gives Fairwater Station at 2km and Waungron Station at 2.7km as accessible by bicycle or on foot. Both stations are well beyond the recommended standard distances of 1200m (15 minutes walk) yet are said to be easily accessible. Neither station has parking facilities.

2.27 D5.35 shows the percentage change in highway use as a result of the development. However, we notice that the baseline figures for Waterhall Road (7,467) are very different from the baseline figures for the same road quoted at D5.35 in application 14/02157/MJR: North and South of Llantrisant Road (10,665). This is a key route in the area yet one number is 43% greater than the other. Which is right?

2.28 D5.36 says that Table D5.3 ‘demonstrates that Pentrebane Road to the east of the site is the only link where the potential impact is great than 30%.’ Yet no reference is made to Pentrebane Road west of the site. It is misleading, at best, to ignore westward travel which leads away from congestion and gives access, via St Fagans, to the A4232. No one from the site will access the M4 west-bound via Waterhall: they will use Crofft y Genau to reach the A4119.

2.29 D5.46 gives an additional 94 cars at the Pentrebane Road/Waterhall Road/Plasmawr Road junction during peak period. Where is the evidence for this? The figures of 1,283 and 1,377 referred to do not appear in the baseline or baseline+ tables. This also needs to be reassessed in the light of our point at 2.28 above. At a

conservative figure of one car/household, if 65% travel east out of the site (see Table D5.3) 188 extra vehicles will travel towards the junction. Appendix G3 Schedule of Effects notes more than once that roads local to the proposed site are 'currently heavily used by traffic'. ES Chapter I, Appendix I2 Traffic Data, gives 1,222 AADT at Site Access 1 by 2019. Does this number reflect the site's use after occupation? If so, a lot more explanation is needed of the effect of the site on local traffic. The developers' assessment is unrealistic and perhaps flawed.

2.30 At its western end, Pentrebane Road intersects with Crofft y Genau Road. This is a heavily used route for peak time traffic taking a short-cut to and from Culverhouse House cross and beyond. If 65% of traffic is expected to turn east out of the development, 35% seems likely to turn west, although no reference is made to it. As at 2.30 above, extra vehicles on the road is significant. The affect of the proposed development on Crofft y Genau Road should be added to the data and considered.

ES Chapter G Landscape and Visual

2.31 The woodland edge to the west of the proposed site is acknowledged at 4.16, 8.5 and 8.9 as reducing the 'intervisibility with the wider landscape'. As part of the SLA, this woodland should be protected from damage during development. It should be protected against future destruction to provide a green boundary between Pentrebane and St Fagans.

2.32 5.13 assesses the sensitivity of the site as medium because it is in the urban fringe. We argue that for exactly that reason the western woodland block should be protected. If development of Site C continues as set out in the LDP and the site immediately to the south of the proposed development is built then the remaining green space in the SLA become hugely more valuable. This should be recognised and planned for.

ES Chapter E Water Resources

2.33 E4.3 dismisses any chance of flooding. Detailed knowledge of the area shows that roads around the proposed development are prone to flooding and closure during heavy rain, partly from run-off from adjacent fields. The fields of Strategic Site C, which includes this application, have a naturally high water table. Development of Site C will dramatically increase run-off and thus a realistic assessment should be required with detailed mitigation measures and an assurance from developers that residents will not suffer flooding such as occurred in St Asaph in November 2012.

ES Chapter J Heritage

2.34 This chapter is largely dismissive of the historic and archaeological importance of the area and consequently the impact of development. We believe the developers assessment conflicts with the latest research carried out by the National Museum of Wales using Lidar technology. The National Museum has not been consulted yet has probably carried out the most recent examination of the area. We believe this illustrates a lack of depth to the developers' research and understanding of the area.

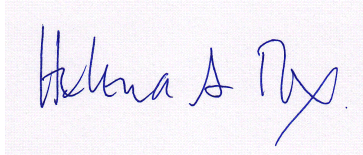
We will make additional comments on this application when the Masterplan for Site C is received.

The lengthy documents attached to this application show that the developer has not taken into account the wider context of Site C. They do not show a good understanding of the reality of the site's locale. The questionable methodologies and figures do not convince us that reliable data has been submitted.

This response is itself very long. That we have so many concerns and see so many discrepancies in the application speaks to its unreliability.

This application should be **refused** to allow time for a sustainable plan for NW Cardiff to be developed, including the Metro, as suggested by us and Cardiff Civic Society.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Helena A. Fox', is displayed on a light-colored rectangular background.

Helena Fox
Clerk and Proper Officer to R&MCC on behalf of the NW Cardiff Group

cc Mark Drakeford, AM; Kevin Brennan, MP