

Council references: 2634.D.3
2634.D.4
2634.D.5



**Caerphilly County Borough
Local Development Plan Examination**

Hearing Session 4: Housing Sites

**Submissions on behalf of
Rhondda Development Company Limited
North West of Cherry Trees, Markham**

**5069/ARM/LEM
Harmers Limited
March 2010**

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1 Is the Council's decision not to allocate the site for housing based on a robust and rational site selection process?

1.1 There are three main site specific issues which need to be considered in relation to this site, these are as follows:

- (i) its suitability for housing;
- (ii) the suitability of the site to be included within the settlement boundary;
- (iii) the suitability of the site to be included within SINC NH3.31;

The fourth issue, which may be described as "General Housing Issues", will be dealt with in a separate submission for Hearing Session 2: Housing Provision

1.2 Issues (i) to (iii) will be addressed below by way of responding to the Council's objections to this site and are based on the premise that the LDP is not sound because there is an inadequate overall level of provision for new housing over the plan period.

1.3 (i) Suitability for Housing

In their submissions the Council refer to the fact that this site was allocated for housing in the Islwyn Local Plan. The allocation also included the undeveloped strip of land adjoining the north-eastern boundary of the site. The allocation of the site clearly indicates the view of the former Islwyn Borough Council that the site forms a logical area for development which relates well to existing built form. The Council state that the allocation of the site would extend into open countryside and 'would amount to unnecessary intrusion into the open countryside'. The satellite image attached shows that the site, which is surrounded by existing development on three sides, would comprise a logical rounding off/extension to existing built up limits and the view of the former Islwyn Borough Council that the site is suitable in locational terms for housing is supported.

1.4 (ii) Settlement Boundary

The Council comment that the site is located outside the defined settlement boundary for Markham and that the location of the settlement boundary is based on a robust assessment using a defensible boundary; which in this location comprises the line of existing development. It has been noted above that the proposed site is surrounded by existing development on three sides and that this area has previously been allocated for residential development by Islwyn Borough Council. The satellite image shows that the allocation of this site would comprise a logical rounding off of existing settlement form and would extend the settlement boundary up to logical limits.

1.5 (iii) Nature Conservation

As part of its review of SINC designations this site was subject of inspection in 2007 and amongst other species identified the presence of wood bitter-vetch. It is understood that some of these plants were found within the boundaries of this site. The location of these plants has not been precisely defined and as the plant is not winter green it is not possible at this point in time to precisely locate the position and extent of this species. It is considered that this site can be developed for housing whilst protecting nature conservation interests and it is proposed that the site would be subject to detailed survey work in season, to establish the exact location of the wood bitter-vetch, which will be retained within an area of open space. If this site were to be removed from the SINC the remaining area of SINC 3.31 would still cover an extensive area.

The above measures allow for the protection of biodiversity interests within and around this site whilst allowing for housing needs to be met.

1.6 This site would complement the existing housing allocation on the eastern periphery of Markham, helping to meet ongoing housing needs throughout the LDP period in a sustainable location, close to urban facilities, public transport and within the Heads of the Valleys Regeneration Area. The allocation of the site would conform with the LDP strategy which seeks to direct development to this strategic area. It would add to the range and choice of housing sites in this settlement, considered suitable by the Council to accommodate additional housing and would be compatible with the Council's strategy. Further, site HG1.5 was allocated for development in the Caerphilly UDP but has not yet been developed. It is categorised as Category 3i in the 2007 Housing Land Availability Study, which casts doubts on its deliverability and its ability to provide affordable housing.

1.7 On the basis that there is a requirement to allocate additional land for housing, in order to make the LDP sound, a robust and rational site selection process would indicate that the site to the north west of Cherry Trees should be allocated for housing.

2 Why is the allocation of the site concerned required in order to make the plan sound?

2.1 The overall level of housing provision for the Plan period is unacceptable and there is a requirement to allocate more land for housing. The allocation of the site to the North West of Cherry Trees would contribute to the shortfall in the housing allocations and provide a better range and choice of sites and contribute towards meeting affordable housing needs.

3 Has a Sustainability Appraisal been carried out and what was the outcome?

3.1 A sustainability appraisal of this site has been carried out and submitted in relation to this site. This shows that the site has a similar Sustainability Assessment to site HG 1.15 allocated on the eastern periphery of Markham. The inclusion of the site would not require any re-assessment of the SEA/SA.

4 Consequential Amendments

4.1 The allocation of the site for housing will require a consequential amendment to the settlement boundary and the removal of part of the site from the SINC designation.

5 Concluding comments

5.1 The site comprises a logical rounding off of the existing urban area and is suitable to accommodate residential development; the site should be allocated for housing and the retention of a nature conservation area. This would allow for the provision of housing to help meet needs, including those of affordable housing in the Heads of the Valleys Regeneration Area throughout the LDP period.