

RESIDENTS ARE ANXIOUS OVER DARREN FARM PLAN

ANXIOUS Cowbridge residents voiced concern this week over an outline planning application for the controversial Darren Farm development.

Boyer Planning, agents for Bellway Homes have submitted the application to the Vale Council, even though it has not yet decided whether the land is suitable for development.

The company proposes to build a residential development and associated public open space and to include the provision of a link road between the A48 and the Llantwit Major Road.

A Vale Council spokesman said: "The Vale of Glamorgan Council, in its draft of the Unitary Development Plan, categorised Darren Farm as outside the structural boundary. As part of the consultation process we asked an independent inspector to review this draft and his recommendations for this area differ to our own."

"The Unitary Development Plan and the

inspector's recommendations will be considered at a special meeting in October. A planning application has been received and we are giving it all appropriate consideration."

A Cowbridge and Llanblethian residents group spokesman said: "The outline planning application is for 37 hectares, which comprises all the farm area up to Llanfrynach lane and

church, which is twice the area specified in the inspector's report.

"We have received widespread support for our campaign to prevent the housing development in the form of a 1,270 signature petition and support from many outside bodies."

The plans are now on display at the Town Clerk's Office at Cowbridge Town Hall between 9am and 1pm Monday to Friday.

The residents group is urging all those who wish to oppose the planning application to write (before August 23), to Mr D Robert Thomas, Head of Planning and Transportation, Docks Office, Barry Docks, Barry, CF63 4RT.

** A spokesperson for Boyer Planning was unavailable for comment at the time The GEM went to press yesterday (Wednesday).*

'ENOUGH LAND IN EASTERN VALE' - CLAIM

LOCAL AM SAYS THAT DARREN FARM SCHEME IS NOT NEEDED

21/11/02

A local AM has claimed that a new report shows there is no need for housing developments on green-field sites in the Vale of Glamorgan.

David Melding, AM, says that the land division of the Welsh Development Agency (WDA) has looked at land in the Vale and identified enough 'brown-field' sites to build 2,844 dwellings, mainly in the Barry area.

The WDA report consulted

house builders, the Vale Council and housing associations, as well as the WDA's own specialists.

Mr Melding said: "I believe this report shows that the Vale can meet the National Assembly's objective of achieving a five-year supply of housing."

"Indeed, there seems to be enough land to cater for house building for the next eight years."

He continued: "Areas including Barry, Rhoose and Penarth will benefit from

exploiting this 'brown-field' or previously-developed land.

"There is no need for huge-scale green-field developments, such as the proposed Darren Farm scheme, in the western Vale."

A spokeswoman for the WDA said: "This was a purely technical study, confined to a five-year period."

"Longer term issues, such as the contents of the Vale's Unitary Development Plan, were not part of its brief."

5/6/03

Darren Farm inquiry takes a short break

THE planning inquiry into the proposal to build 145 houses at Darren Farm has taken a three-week break, with only the Vale Council left to present its case.

It will reconvene on June 24, and the following day it will leave Cowbridge Town Hall when the inspector appointed by the National

Assembly, Mr David Wilks, will conduct a site visit. He hopes that Wednesday, June 26, will be enough for final submissions from the various legal representatives.

Chris Pearce, the spokesman for the Cowbridge Residents' Group, told The GEM: "I have been impressed by the way that the inspector, Mr Wilks, has handled the inquiry.

"He has asked a number of his own questions which, to my mind, shows that he is well aware of all the local issues that are relevant to the inquiry."

The Cowbridge Residents' Group put their case on Thursday (May 29), when Chris Pearce was questioned, first by the residents' group's barrister, Irena Sabic, and then cross-examined by the barrister for the developers.

Afterwards, he said: "I felt that I had been well-prepared for the occasion, and for that I would thank Ms Sabic, who has acted for us on a no-fee 'pro bono' basis."

One of the last speakers was Vale MP John Smith, who said: "If such plans are given the go-ahead, it will undermine the settled will of the Vale of Glamorgan planning policy.

"It has been a considerable achievement to get town and country to agree on the best strategic housing policy for the Vale. Indeed, there is cross-party consensus on the issue."

He added: "I have never known a community to be so united in their objections."

AMs, Jane Hutt, David Melding and Owen John Thomas spoke at the inquiry. Mr Thomas spoke about the rich agricultural history of the Vale and urged the inspector to protect it.

There were local supporters of the scheme: Coun Vince, from Llandow Community Council, spoke about the need to stop heavy lorries from coming through the village of Llysworney.

Mrs Shaw, of the Llysworney Road Action Group, also addressed the inquiry on this issue.

However, the majority of Cowbridge-based speakers were against the plans. Mr George Haynes concentrated on the issue of whether local schools could cope.

He told the inspector that Cowbridge Comprehensive was already over-crowded and was forced to operate in inadequate buildings.

There was also a video presentation from Mr Mike Lewis, who showed the inquiry footage of a badger on the site.

The inspector has indicated that he will make his decision public in August. The matter is then passed to the National Assembly, which will make the final decision on the appeal. This may not come before the end of the year.

Residents will oppose Darren Farm plan

THE overwhelming tide of local opinion opposing the proposed allocation of 390 houses on Darren Farm, Cowbridge, is well demonstrated by the fact that over 1,500 people signed our petition to oppose the proposal in just six days at the end of last month when the news broke.

Our opposition and petition is based on the public inquiry report, ruling and reasons ratified by the Wales Assembly Government:

1. A National Assembly Inspector has ruled against development of the site following a full public inquiry and report in 2003.

2. The proposal is an unnecessary extension of development into the open countryside on a

productive greenfield agricultural site.

3. The proposal would harm the main livelihood and amenity of the life-time tenant of Darren Farm.

4. The proposal would cause a substantial change in the special landscape character of the site from a rural to urban, including the setting of Llanblethian Hill Fort, a scheduled ancient monument.

5. The proposal would increase the already high proportion of Cowbridge population who commute to work, which is contrary to the sustainability principle at the heart of planning policy.

It appears that the tenant farmer (whose family have farmed this land for three generations) with a productive dairy herd has no status in the current LDP and faces eviction if this allocation is approved.

Development on greenfield sites is contrary to National Planning Policy. Once built on, farmland can never be recovered.

The LDP Policy to develop Darren Farm is MG2(20). Those wishing to respond to the LDP Draft in the six-week publication consultation period only from November 8 – December 20 can do so on standard representation forms (with attachments if needed) which will be available from council offices, public libraries and to download from the Vale Council website www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/ldp.

**Chris Pearce,
Co-ordinator,
Cowbridge and
Llanblethian Residents
Group**