

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL  
LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (2011-2026)



**EXAMINATION IN PUBLIC:**  
**Matter 4: Housing Provision - Allocated Sites**



Action Point 6

*For Bryn Morgrug sites (H1/24 and H1/LB/30), Council to clarify:*

- (i) The exact Affordable Housing provision / contribution, the nature of the provision, and where it will be provided; and*
- (ii) Any biodiversity assessments or work undertaken during planning application.*

Council's Response

**(i) Affordable Housing Provision / Contribution**

**H1/LB/30 Bryn Morgrug (Phase 1):** the developer provided a viability assessment that indicated that the development could not sustain the required Affordable Housing contribution / provision of 20% in accordance with option 5 of the Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Guidance adopted by the Council in July 2008 and revised in April 2010. As the financial evidence provided by the applicant demonstrated that the requirements of Policy H4 'Affordable Housing' of the Unitary Development Plan (UDP) could not be met, the application did not require the affordable units to be provided on site.

However, a Section 106 agreement was signed, which required that if after 1 year, only a proportion of approved dwellings had been constructed, the developer would be required to submit a new viability assessment every 12 months thereafter until the whole site was complete.

The site is nearing completion with only 3-4 units left to build. To-date, the Council has not received any new viability assessments from the developer justifying that the development could provide an affordable housing contribution. However, discussions are ongoing as to whether a new viability assessment will be submitted prior to the completion of the development<sup>1</sup>.

**H1/24 Bryn Morgrug (Phase 2):** a viability assessment was submitted by the applicant and assessed by the Council. This showed that the site could not support the provision of affordable housing at a rate of 20% [as required by Policy H4 of the Unitary Development Plan (UDP) and the Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG)]. However, the evidence contained within the Affordable Housing Viability Study which supports the affordable housing strategy/policies contained within the emerging Local Development

<sup>1</sup> A new viability assessment is required on 21<sup>st</sup> June 2015 [as set out within the Section 106 agreement (First schedule, Section 2)].

Plan identifies the level of affordable housing provision that can generally be supported within the Pontardawe spatial areas as 5% of the Gross Development Value (GDV) of a development.

As part of the Section 106 Agreement, on the occupation of the 28<sup>th</sup> dwelling, a financial contribution of £276,120 (which equates to 5% of the GDV of the scheme) is to be provided to the Council for the provision of affordable housing to be spent within the Pontardawe spatial area.

To date, this trigger has yet to be reached.

## **(ii) Biodiversity Assessments**

**H1/LB/30 Bryn Morgrug (Phase 1):** a Phase 1 ecological assessment was submitted as part of the application. The Assessment included an extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey which identified that the habitats which are present on the site include re-colonising ground, bracken, rush pasture and a wooded belt in the main, with some trees and scattered scrub together with areas of standing water. The rush pasture and woodland on site were identified as Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) habitat by the Biodiversity Officer.

Ecological Surveys showed that there was no badger activity recorded on site. The site was seen to be used by both common and widespread bat species and recommendations were made to increase the roosting opportunities and connectivity to ensure suitable off-site foraging habitats in the local area were maintained. No amphibians were recorded.

Although a reptile survey was undertaken and indicated that no species were recorded, the Biodiversity Officer considered that the survey was not robust enough to rule out the presence of reptiles on the site. As a consequence, the applicant submitted a Reptile Method Statement which identified a large spoil mound in the south west of the application site which may provide hibernation opportunities for common reptile species. The statement included a method for site clearance works, a capture and release programme together with an on-site receptor site. The Biodiversity Officer has considered this statement and has confirmed it is acceptable.

The ecological mitigation proposed for the site included an area to be retained and managed for biodiversity, this included retaining the woodland belt and the creation of rush pasture and ephemeral ponds. In addition, areas of wildflower planting and the provision of bat boxes / bat bricks and bird boxes were also proposed. These proposals were conditioned to be implemented as part of an ecological management plan. In addition, conditions were also placed on the consent to protect the on-site biodiversity from encroachment, including a buffer from the woodland and the construction of walls for the boundaries of certain plots.

**H1/24 Bryn Morgrug (Phase 2):** an ecological assessment, dormouse mitigation and enhancement plan and bat survey were submitted with the application.

The ecological report assessed the ecological interest of the site and wider study area as a whole. The importance of the habitats within the site was evaluated and the report identified habitats of relative ecological importance within the site. Habitats recorded included woodland, scrub, recolonizing ground, a stream and amenity grassland. The woodland and stream were identified as LBAP habitat by the Biodiversity Officer.

The report identified that only an inactive badger sett was present on site, although the need for further monitoring was identified as sett use can change. In respect of bats, only limited activity was recorded within the site and wider study area during the bat activity survey comprising of common and widespread species. However, bats were recorded emerging from one of the buildings identified for demolition as part of the development and a license from Natural Resources Wales (NRW) was therefore noted as being required. Recommendations were made in relation to a method of works for the demolition along with proposals for reducing impacts from lighting and measures to increase roosting opportunities within the site through the erection of bat boxes within the new development.

In respect of Dormice, evidence from a nut search survey indicated Dormice presence at the site. As such, a Dormouse mitigation and enhancement plan was submitted and its findings and recommendations agreed by NRW. The report identified that appropriate mitigation had been proposed to safeguard this species including sensitive vegetation clearance and management and enhancement of retained woodland.

In addition to the information presented in the ecological reports submitted, the Biodiversity Officer identified a few additional ecological issues that required mitigation. Appropriate mitigation requirements were set out accordingly, including a method statement for reptiles, a buffer from the stream and a woodland management plan.

A number of conditions relating to ecology were attached to the planning decision to address the required mitigation measures.