



## Penderfyniad ar yr Apêl

Ymweliad safle a wnaed ar 9/9/08

## Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 9/9/08

gan/by Hywel Wyn Jones BA (Hons) BTP MRTPI

Arolygydd a benodwyd gan y Gweinidog  
dros yr Amgylchedd, Gynaliadwyedd a  
Thai, un o Weinidogion Cymru

an Inspector appointed by the Minister for  
Environment, Sustainability and Housing,  
one of the Welsh Ministers

Dyddiad/Date 06/10/08

**Appeal Ref: APP/Y6930/A/08/2074990**

**Site address: Land adjacent to Maes y Gwilog Farm, Crymlyn Road, Skewen, Neath, SA10 6NL**

**The Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing has transferred the authority to decide this appeal to me as the appointed Inspector.**

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant outline planning permission.
- The appeal is made by Mr Keith Miller against the decision of Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council.
- The application (ref: P2007/0887), dated 8 June 2007, was refused by notice dated 7 January 2008.
- The development proposed is residential development for up to 18 dwellings.

### Decision

1. For the reasons set out below I dismiss the appeal.

### Reasons

2. The application was submitted in outline and all matters, save for the means of access, are reserved for subsequent approval. Access is shown as being at the point of the present driveway to Maes y Gwilog. I have treated a plan showing a plot and road layout as being for indicative purposes only.
3. The main part of the site is a paddock which lies adjacent to Maes y Gwilog and its range of outbuildings. The main issue in this case is whether the site is a suitable location for the proposed housing development, particularly in terms of any effect on the character and appearance of the surrounding area, having regard to the Council's strategy for new housing. Since the determination of the planning application the Council has adopted the *Neath Port Talbot Unitary Development Plan* (UDP), March 2008.
4. There is no dispute that the site lies outside the development boundary of Skewen as defined in the UDP, and that the scheme does not fall within a specific exception to the generally restrictive approach of the Plan to new housing in such areas. Along the north side of Crymlyn Road the built form of Skewen extends from its centre to a railway line that also runs on the western boundary of the appeal site. Development along this side of the road has been recently consolidated by a large new housing estate which is being constructed on rising ground north of the appeal site. In contrast, the built-up edge of Skewen on the south side of the road terminates significantly closer to the heart of the

settlement. Thus the site lies within an area mainly characterised by open countryside of woodland and fields enclosed by mature hedgerows. Whilst the buildings at Maes y Gwilog appear as a farm complex which sits comfortably in its rural setting, the proposed development would inevitably appear as an incongruous urban feature. Given its degree of separation from Skewen it would be poorly related to the present spatial pattern of development. The consequential erosion of the rural character would be compounded by the significant alterations to the access and the attractive roadside hedgerow necessary to create a suitable access.

5. On the main issue I conclude that the scheme would conflict with the UDP strategy of strictly controlling new housing in the countryside and would cause harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding area. Thus, the scheme would conflict with Policies ENV1 and ENV3.
6. The appellant opines that the UDP strategy for the delivery of new housing places undue emphasis on one major scheme, the Llandarcy Urban Village. It is suggested that there are practical obstacles to its development which are unlikely to be resolved within the anticipated timescale, and that there is a shortfall in the 5-year housing supply target set out in *Technical Advice Note 1: Joint Housing Land Availability Studies*. Whilst I have noted the results of the Joint Housing Land Availability Study produced in 2006, the subsequent adoption of the UDP would suggest that its findings are out-of-date. Indeed an updated table provided by the appellant, dated November 2006, seems to show a supply in excess of 5 years on the basis of one scenario.
7. The appellant contends that the site ought to have been included within the development boundary as defined in the UDP, but this is not a matter for me to assess in the context of this planning appeal. He also points out that *Planning Policy Wales*, March 2002 (PPW) advises that a "*minor*" extension to a settlement "*may*" be acceptable; the same paragraph acknowledges the importance of strictly controlling development in the open countryside. In my view the scale of development proposed is larger than that envisaged by PPW. In any event, such a consideration does not outweigh the clear local planning policy objection which is based on a Plan prepared in the light of PPW.
8. I have noted all the other matters raised in support of the scheme, including the availability of infrastructure; the absence of detailed development control objections on matters such as highway safety and nature conservation; the national housing shortage; and the suggested benefits arising from self-build plots. None justify permitting the scheme.
9. I am mindful of the matters raised in objection to the scheme by local residents, including highway safety, localised flooding and disturbance during the construction period. Given the scope to address certain matters at the reserved matters stage or through planning conditions, none of the concerns would have justified withholding permission for the project had I found it acceptable in relation to the main issue.

*Hywel Wyn Jones*

INSPECTOR