

Parc Mawr Update

I hope to get a newsletter written and distributed to everyone in Penllergaer in the next week or two. In the meantime, this is another update of the Parc Mawr situation.

As you are all aware, outline planning permission was granted for the whole development on the 17th July by a remote meeting of Planning Committee. The first phase of 184 houses was given full planning permission. This was the outcome of a 50 minute presentation during which I began to feel that we in Penllergaer were living in a deprived community and it was only the Parc Mawr development that was going to provide us with the paradise we deserve! The fact that we already have a solid community with a pub, church, two community halls plus a Sports and Social Club, a sports field with 2 football pitches and a cricket pitch plus a pavilion, seemed to count for nothing and was completely ignored. It's Parc Mawr that's going to provide us with the new community focus it seems we are desperately in need of!

I was then allowed a mere 5 minutes to comment on all that had been said and to make some points of my own which was an impossible task in the short time allotted. No other objector was allowed to speak although this would not have been the case had the planning meeting been held under normal circumstances.

Whilst the decision of Planning Committee was to approve the development, we had already *called in* the application to the Welsh Government and it is they who will now decide if this 'call in' is upheld. If this is the case, then it will be the Welsh Government who will determine whether or not the development goes ahead. If the request for a *Call in* is not upheld then the 'approval' decision of Planning Committee will stand.

I requested a site visit by Planning Committee so that the fields could be seen as they are now – full of golden barley or cattle – but committee members were content with the photos on screen. Disappointingly, but not unsurprisingly, the landscape ones were taken in *the bleak mid-winter* so showed just grassed fields with trees devoid of leaves and no grazing animals or growing crops. A complete contrast to what can be seen now.

What we have done since the 17th

We have not been idle! Both Dave Harris and I have been in touch with our AM's, (or MS's as they now are) Rebecca Evans and Suzy Davies, and I've also written to our MP, Tonia Antoniazzi, keeping her in the picture.

Suzy Davies and one of her staff visited the site last Thursday so they now have a thorough appreciation of what is going to be lost. They saw the sweeping landscape and the fields of barley and understood why we are fighting so hard to save Parc Mawr from development.

I've also written to senior Council officers requesting clarification on several matters within the report that went to Planning Committee and Dave has recently submitted a letter to the Post, not yet published.

What the development will mean.

Phase 1a - 184 houses

1. These will be built from Brynrhos Crescent at the top of Swansea Road. This is not what was proposed at the Public Inquiry in 2018 when the *gateway* entrance was to be from the top of Gorseinon Road.
2. Some unwanted farm buildings will be demolished as will 31 Gorseinon Road.
3. The Council will receive about £300 000 from Bellway towards the £9m new school.
4. There will be 20% Affordable Housing.

Our concern is, and as admitted in the Planning report, there is nothing to prevent Bellway walking away after the completion of the 184 houses. These will be very profitable as there are no community or infrastructure benefits to be delivered on the back of them and Bellway's original Candidate Site application was for only 250 houses anyway.

As soon as further houses are built, then costs for Bellway will rapidly accrue. For example, before the 185th house is occupied there have to be traffic lights at the Old Inn roundabout and work has to be started to the access road – what is now described as a *spine street* rather than the original *strategic relief road* to relieve congestion at J47 - from 31 Gorseinon Road. A new nursery will have to be completed by the 250th house and a road connection to the A483 by the 350th house. The new school would need to be ready by completion of the 500th house. In the meantime, though, it's not clear where all the potential children from the development will go to school given that Penllergaer Primary is already at capacity for most school years.

Future link to spine street

What is now intended, if the full 850 development goes ahead, is that the link from Brynrhos Crescent will continue to the spine street which, in turn, will link to the A483 dual carriageway and to Gorseinon Road. That will inevitably open up Swansea Road to more traffic and create a 'rat run' for those trying to avoid J47 which is likely to become even more congested. This was not in the plans that went through the Public Inquiry in 2018

Loss of Agricultural Land

Planning Policy Wales gives considerable weight to the need to preserve quality agricultural land and 44 acres of Parc Mawr are classed as Grade 3A. This makes it *amongst the best and most versatile and should be conserved for the future*. Yet it is on this land that Phase 1a is largely going to be built. This matter is being pursued.

Coal Authority

There are clearly unresolved issues in respect of the underground mine workings beneath Parc Mawr. Some of you will recall that about 18 months ago a sudden hole appeared and the Coal Authority had to fence it off for safety reasons. Apparently, underneath Parc Mawr there are Bell mines and these remain unmapped which is a concern and the Coal Authority is not yet satisfied with the development proposals.

The future?

We have to hope that our elected AM's will be able to help us by putting the case that this is an unnecessary housing development in the present context. Swansea's need for 17,000 plus new homes was based on a projected gain of 14,700 net new jobs by 2025 but Covid 19 is likely to result in many more job losses than gains. It has also demonstrated that we need open countryside and a far greater focus on 'growing local'. This is just what Parc Mawr can offer with its Grade 3A and 3B agriculture land when so much of Wales is Grade 4 and 5 and thus of a much poorer quality.

Lobby your MS's and MP?

Yes, please do so. You were excluded from taking part in the meeting of Planning Committee and all our previous protests and objections have fallen on deaf ears or have been ignored. The Parc Mawr development is being ramrodded through as it's an easy one to achieve.

Penllergaer has already had its fair share of development and we were led to believe by the Council in 2007 that they fully endorsed the need to protect land at Parc Mawr from future building. Several reasons were given for this by Planning officers at a Public Inquiry. For example: *Penllergaer is intended to be a growth area, however a significant release has already been made and there is only considered to be capacity in terms of infrastructure and **settlement identity** for one additional site of around 250 dwellings. The allocated site at Llewellyn Rd and the omission site Parc Mawr display a number of similarities in terms of convenience/accessibility: **however, the physical and visual impact of the Parc Mawr site would be far greater. It would also lead to pressure to develop more adjoining land in future impacting on the character and setting of the settlement and surrounding countryside.***

Thus it was the Llewellyn Road site that was included in the Unitary Development Plan and although this has received planning approval, it still remains undeveloped. Lots of other reasons were given as to why Parc Mawr should remain an Omission Site and we had every reason to believe its future was safe. So there is every reason to protest and protest loudly to our AM's and MP. Let's not give up just yet.

Wendy