

## **BLAENAU GWENT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN EXAMINATION**

### **SESSION 7: EMPLOYMENT AND MIXED USE SITES**

#### **THE COUNTRYSIDE COUNCIL FOR WALES' RESPONSE TO THE INSPECTOR'S QUESTIONS (REF NO:10)**

## SESSION 7 EMPLOYMENT AND MIXED USE SITES

***1. The Delivery and Implementation section of the Plan identifies some public sector grant for the delivery of MUI, the largest allocation of employment land to be “delivered”. To what extent is the delivery of this project dependent on public sector grant? Is the necessary public sector funding package in place to secure private sector investment?***

No comment.

***2. What is the likely impact of developing MUI on Rhyd y Blew and Bryn Serth SINCs? Will the development result in a significant loss of biodiversity and, if so, will it be necessary to conduct mitigation or compensation measures for any biodiversity loss?***

### **Bryn Serth SINC**

Bryn Serth SINC has been identified for its Biodiversity Action Plan and Local BAP habitats. These include purple moor-grass and rush pasture (M23), dwarf shrub heath (H12), acid grassland (U4), standing water, swamp and a mosaic of some of these habitats.

The site is an important breeding site for lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*), skylark (*Alauda arvensis*) and brown hare (*Lepus europaeus*), all of which are UK BAP species and Section 42 species\*.

In addition, other Section 42 species recorded Linnet (*Carduelis cannabina*) and Reed bunting (*Emberiza schoeniclus*).

The total extent of the SINC is 37.17 ha.

### **Assessment of the effects of development on Bryn Serth SINC**

Bryn serth SINC is subject to an existing outline planning permission first granted in 2002 and extended for a further 3 years in 2010. This outline permission for commercial development relates to the land on the northern part of the site to the south of Bryn Serth Road.

The implementation of this permission will result in the loss of approximately 48% of the SINC. Of particular note is the loss of the purple moor-grass rush pasture habitat (8.5 ha) which is a priority BAP habitat. A map showing the extent and anticipated loss of this BAP habitat and other habitats is shown on the attached map.

*\* Natural Environment & Rural Communities Act 2006: Section 42 list of Species of Principal Importance for Conservation of Biological Diversity in Wales*

There will also be a loss of species rich acid grassland at the northern most end of the site along with an area of grassland described as 'other grassland'. This grassland has colonised bare ground and on which lapwing, skylark and brown hare have been recorded as breeding. Since the last SINC survey of the SINC in 2007 when 50% was grassland, this area will have become less suitable to these species as vegetation has colonised and vegetation has become more dense.

As a result of the focussed changes, a small reduction in the extent of the allocation is proposed (FC10.B). This relates to increasing the size of the green wedge ENV1.2. The habitat directly affected and benefiting from this proposed change is species rich acid grassland.

Whilst this change is welcomed, CCW consider that on account of the size and nature of the habitats that will be lost as a result of the proposed development, the impact on the Bryn Serth SINC will be significant. As a result, CCW consider that appropriate mitigation should be sought for the loss of the BAP habitats. This should include better management of that part of the SINC that will remain unaffected by the proposed development. To compensate for the loss of purple moor-grass and rush pasture a priority BAP habitat, consideration may need to be given to mitigation off site.

### **Rhyd y Blew SINC**

Rhyd y blew supports an artificial landscape due to past re-grading of the site, yet natural regeneration has established a mosaic of habitats with the central main plateau area (65% of the site) consisting of dry and damp grassland and rushes with areas of scrub and woodland around the periphery of the site.

The site is of historical important for its breeding lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*), which continue to breed on site and is the main reason for the SINC designation. Prior to levelling of the site in 1996 Rhyd y blew supported 55 pairs. Lapwing continue to nest on the site though in much reduced numbers.

Other breeding birds recorded that are included on the Section 42 list include redshank, reed bunting, common snipe, skylark, meadow pipit, jack snipe and stonechat.

### **Assessment of the effects of development on Rhyd y Blew SINC**

The allocation of MU1 within the LDP will effectively result in the loss of the entire SINC which extends to 26.3 ha.

Whilst this will not be significant in terms of BAP habitats, it will result in the loss of habitat that has developed to support a number of protected and declining bird species including lapwing that are listed on the Section 42 list. The habitats present are of local value and their loss would also have implications for habitat connectivity in the local area (see comments below).

In-combination with the loss of habitats at the adjacent Bryn Serth SINC, CCW consider the proposed development of Rhyd y Blew as significant and that it is

important that mitigation and/or compensation measures are applied to any future development at the site.

***3. Is it necessary to amend the site designation of MU1 including on the Proposals Map to identify green links? Are the boundaries of this site appropriately drawn?***

In the context of the County Borough, Bryn Serth and Rhyd y Blew SINC provide an important area of natural green space between the urban settlements of Ebbw Vale and Tredegar and lie in close proximity to other SINC sites such as Waun y Pound and Sirhowy Hill Woodlands & Cardiff Pond SINC to the south and Hirgan Fields SINC to the west.

As outlined above, the implementation of proposed development at allocation MU1 will have significant impact on both of these SINC sites and will result in the loss of BAP and other habitats.

The development of all of the area of Rhyd y Blew SINC as currently included within the MU1 allocation will have a negative impact on the habitats that have developed on the site. Planted woodland and naturally developing scrub along its northern boundary not only provides a buffer between the site and the residential development to the north but provides a valuable green link to the River Ebbw SINC to the east and other SINC sites to the west.

The focussed changes (FC5.H and FC5.I) refer to a network of green links and the need to consider the inclusion of such a network within the development of allocation MU1 to allow the effective integration of the SINC sites and other key habitat areas.

CCW support the enlargement of the green wedge ENV1.2 at the northern end of Bryn Serth allocation as it will not only increase the size of the green wedge which under the original proposals map for the LDP forms a narrow 'pinch-point' but will also improve the green links and connectivity to habitats in the southern part of the Bryn Serth SINC and habitats to the west.

Whilst CCW appreciate that the proposed commercial development within Bryn Serth SINC has the benefit of outline permission (C/2002/0061), the conditions attached to the permission provide the opportunity to consider both the retention of habitats and the creation of green links. The relevant conditions in this respect are 1, 8 and 13.

Therefore, CCW support both the retention of key habitats where possible including appropriately drawn green links within the MU1 allocation. Where habitats particularly BAP habitats are lost to development, consideration should be given to mitigation and compensation for the loss of Biodiversity. In addition, CCW feel that consideration should be given to the reduction of the MU1 allocation at the Rhyd y Blew SINC to help conserve existing habitats. The site is not subject to any existing extant planning permission. CCW consider that it would be particularly helpful if an indicative master plan for development within MU1 was prepared showing how habitat connectivity and green links are intended to be retained across the allocation as a whole.



# BGCBC LDP SINC Assessment Map



Produced by CCW on: 31 May 2012

Scale 1:5000

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