

## THE BRYNCOCH FARM DEVELOPMENT

### The Local Authority got it right – the first time

The UDP accorded the Bryncoch Farm green wedge status. The Local Authority opposed the objection by the owner of Bryncoch Farm, namely Mrs. Huggard, who wanted it removed from the green wedge so that it could be allocated for residential development. In this part of the document we have highlighted the arguments and the counter-arguments between Mrs. Huggard's representative and the Local Authority which were placed before the Inspector. We have, however, concentrated on the issues which relate directly to Bryncoch and we have not therefore addressed the wider issues which were also canvassed in the statement of Mrs. Huggard's representative and the response from the Local Authority.

Mrs. Huggard's representative described the Bryncoch Farm as being in an 'urban area' whereas the Local Authority responded by pointing out that it was in the countryside. It is part of the belt of countryside between the settlement limit of the built up area of Bryncoch, and Fforestgoch.

Mrs. Huggard's representative also submitted that the settlement limit should be the River Clydach. The Local Authority's response was that the existing settlement limits were already defined by the natural boundaries of the built-up area of the Bryncoch community (i.e. the end of the Main Road in Bryncoch leading onto the A474).

We (the Bryncoch Action Committee) would submit that the River Clydach might have been a natural boundary many years ago (120 or more years ago) but the road which now crosses over it, which is located beyond the Dyffryn Arms, has been built in such a way that no-one would ever be aware that there is a river flowing underneath. One cannot walk the banks of the River Clydach in that area, the river valley at that point is not wide nor is it deep, it is hidden. Although the river is there because of nature and to that extent is "natural", as it is not visible to passers-by nor indeed to those who live adjacent to it, it is not one which one would normally be described as a natural boundary defining the end of one community and the beginning of another. The natural boundary for the built-up community of Bryncoch is the Main Road leading from the top end of the village on to the A474.

The landowners representative said that the Bryncoch Farm was part of the Bryncoch village whereas the Local Authority responded by pointing out that it lies outside the boundary of the built-up area of the Bryncoch community.

The landowners representatives stated it would not cause a coalescence, whereas the Local Authority responded by stating that it would contribute to the coalescence of settlements – that there would be no separation and defining of settlements – and that any development in the belt of countryside between the Bryncoch and Fforestgoch would constitute an undesirable encroachment into the open countryside. They were firmly of the view that the Bryncoch Farm is located in the countryside.

It is quite clear that the Local Authority's response emphasised that the development would be unrelated to its rural surroundings and would be detrimental to visual amenities.

The owners' representative also seems to be putting forward an argument that by not allowing a development to the Bryncoch Farm the Local Authority are taking away the ability of prospective home owners to choose where they wish to live.

Applying the land owner's logic to its conclusion it would mean that everyone should be able to choose anywhere to live and that Local Authority planning should not interfere with such a right.

The owners representative said that the development would be sustainable. That it would reduce the need for cars. The Local Authority disagreed, and their response is so blindingly obvious it does not need further elaboration.

The tenor of the Local Authority's responses is that there is a fundamental difference of views between them and the representative of the owners on the issues which he raised on behalf of Mrs. Huggard. The Bryncoch Action Committee would support the Local Authority's stance as set out in their response to Mrs. Huggard's representative. The arguments which the Local Authority put forward were strong then and when one considers the information about traffic, landscape, biodiversity, ecology, history, and green wedge status etc. – which we have produced the case becomes even stronger. What was right then must be right now i.e. there should be no development.

We realise that it is the members who ultimately make the planning decisions but they are advised by their officers. The Inspector did not undermine any of the arguments put forward by the officers. The Inspector makes a recommendation which results in the objector being successful. The Inspector however, has not put forward any reasons for the members to conclude that their officers (and the UDP) did not get it right first time.