



## Conversion of Equestrian Store to Meet & Greet, Ancillary Cafe and Playroom with Bespoke Lodges and Pods For A Tourism Park, Land at Former Abergarwed Service Station, Off B4242 Neath Road, Abergarwed, Neath SA11 4EA

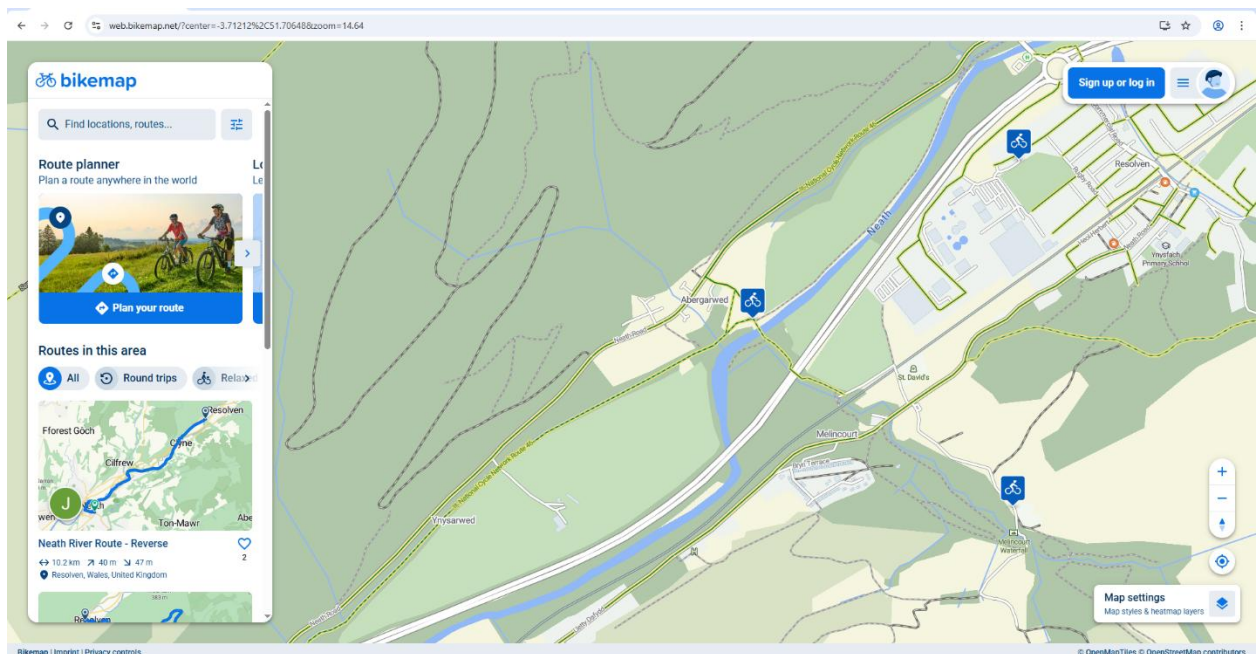
**Statement to answer request for further information from planning officer – email dated 25<sup>th</sup> September 2025 in order to comply with LDP Policy T01**

### 1. Sequential testing

Regardless of a sequential test it is thought that due to the nature of the significant brownfield site this scheme provides betterment for the land in question bringing tourist to the area who will likely spend time at other tourist attractions in the area and use shops, restaurant and places of worship in the vicinity

### 2. Modal Transport Analysis

- a. Cycle Route - Some 250m from the site entrance access is available to the national cycle network route 46 – giving access to Tonna, Abergarwed and Resolven and thus the social and recreation facilities these towns have to offer.



Full access to cycle routes can be found at bikemap.net

 Bikemap  
https://www.bikemap.net › ... › United Kingdom › Wales

### Cycling in Resolven

Discover a map of 9 cycling routes from the Bikemap community in Resolven. You can customize and navigate them or plan your own ride.

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- b. Pedestrian Route – A public footpath is available from the site and extends northeast towards Abergarwed and southwest to the Tonna area.
- c. Bus Routes – Two bus routes are available that service the Abergarwed area, route 161 Neath to Min yr Awel run by DANSA and route 906 serviced by First Cymru from Neath Bus Station to Min yr Awel.

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## Abergarwed

**Stops in Abergarwed** [Map](#)

|                                                       |                                                   |
|-------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| <a href="#">Edwards Terrace (o/s 18) →</a><br>161 906 | <a href="#">Stag Terrace (opp 6) ↗</a><br>161 906 |
| <a href="#">Edwards Terrace (o/s 21) ←</a><br>161 906 | <a href="#">Stag Terrace (o/s 7) ↙</a><br>161 906 |



### Start Your Journey

**Bus services**

|                                                             |                                                                                                            |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <div>161</div> <a href="#">Neath - Min yr Awel</a><br>DANSA | <div>906</div> <a href="#">Neath Bus Station - Min-yr-Awel Turning Circle via Neath ...</a><br>First Cymru |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

### 3. Site Location Assessment - 5.2.54 Policy TO1 Tourism Development in the Countryside

- a. Criterion 1 – It is demonstrated that the proposal is viable and contributes towards the quality and economic sustainability of the tourism industry

The proposed development will make better use

- b. Criterion 2 – It is demonstrated that either the proposal requires a countryside location or it could not be accommodated within an existing settlement
- c. Criterion 3 – The proposal would not have an adverse impact upon the landscape, ecology, and cultural heritage and would not adversely impact upon the social, economic, environmental or residential amenity of the area
- d. Criterion 4 - The proposal does not create unacceptable levels of vehicular traffic, cause a detriment to highway safety and access can be provided by a range of transport modes.

The supporting text to the policy explains the following:

*'This policy offers flexibility in providing new, high quality tourism facilities outside of settlement limits in locations which would not normally be considered for development. Since a large concentration of tourism facilities are located within the valleys area, allowing development outside of settlement limits will provide scope for the tourism sector to grow and contribute to reinvigorating the valley communities.'*

*Proposals will be required to demonstrate that they are economically viable, will promote sustainable development and enhance economic growth in the tourism sector. The valley areas, with their rural setting have the potential to continue to build on the growing tourism industry and can integrate rural diversification into tourism schemes. Evidence required to accompany applications may include business plans and local data, including information on existing and projected visitor numbers for the area and an assessment of the position of the proposed development within the current tourism market.*

*Certain proposals, by their very nature will require a countryside location and may include activities such as golf, fishing and mountain biking. Such activities will need to be designed in a manner to ensure the environmental impact is fully assessed and is minimised.'*

The proposal would positively contribute to the rural tourism economy and help reinvigorate the valley community. The applicant owns the land and the proposal affects significant previously developed land. The applicant simply wishes to exchange the existing equestrian use with a tourism use, both activities relate to the outdoors and quite often require a countryside location.

The proposal would not have an adverse impact upon the landscape, ecology or cultural interests of the area. It is argued that the proposal can be satisfactorily integrated into its sensitive valley setting and any environmental impacts can be avoided, mitigated and indeed enhanced with the GIS.

The proposal would achieve positive social and economic impacts, through the provision of high-quality holiday accommodation units and in so doing, leading to healthier lifestyles with outdoor recreational and related activities. Therefore, contributing the Well-being goals of national policy and legislation.

The proposal would not create unacceptable levels of vehicular traffic, cause a detriment to highway safety and access can be provided by a range of transport modes. This is addressed further later in this Statement.

## **Tourism Statement**

The application involves a modest tourism development, comprising a total of 20 holiday lodges together with some ancillary facilities. The lodges would be run for holiday letting and occupation all-year round by the applicant.

The first part of Policy TO 1 requires an applicant to demonstrate that a proposal is viable and contributes towards the quality and economic sustainability of the tourism industry, with the supporting text advising that a business plan may be required. However, given the modest scale of the development proposed, this application is accompanied by some general tourism background information which provides support for development involved.

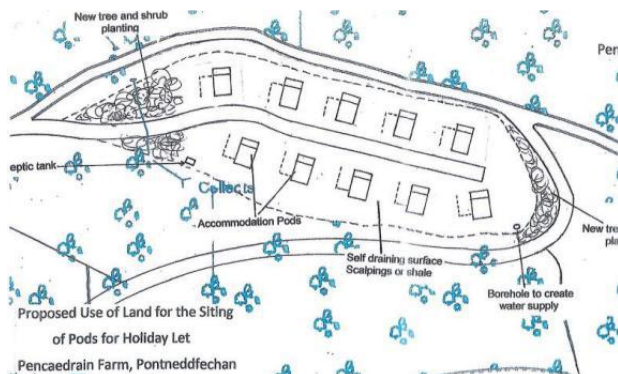
- The site is close to Neath, midway between the Brecon Beacons and the Gower and is perfectly located for tourism accommodation and near many tourist attractions as well as existing sports and outdoor pursuits, and will utilise local countryside for walks, bridleways and cycleways.
- At the national level, the latest domestic tourism statistics (Great Britain Tourism Survey and Domestic Tourism Statistics, March 2024) outlined that Great Britain residents took 6.79 million overnight trips in Wales between January to September 2023, equating to 19.46 million nights during these trips, with there being an increase in overnight trips rising from 6.53 million in 2022, an increase of 4%.
- Domestic and overseas travel intentions in 2024 are relatively positive, with intentions to take a spring (April to June) and summer (July to September) holiday or short break are higher than the equivalent period in 2023.
- In terms of more localized demand statistics, Neath Port Talbot had a total of 1.51 million tourism visits in 2019 (pre-Covid levels/latest data publicly available) which equates to 10.3% of all tourism visits to South West Wales. Of the 1.51 million tourism visitors about 0.36 million were staying visitors with 1.15 million day -visitors. From 2010 to 2019 visitor days and visitor numbers (combining day trips and overnight stays) have both increased by more than 11% (Neath Port Talbot Destination Management Plan 2023 – 2028).
- In terms of visitor profiles, the Neath Port Talbot Visitor Survey 2022 found that the main reason for visiting the area was to take part in outdoor and sporting activities (65%). The survey also found that 65% of visitors came from Wales, with 31% from England, 1% from Scotland and N Ireland and 3% from overseas.
- Overall, from the statistics, including available accommodation, there is a large demand for tourism in Neath Port Talbot which appears to be on an upwards trajectory and that the Welsh tourism industry appears to have recovered from both Covid and cost of living effects on the industry.
- The Destination Management Plans undertaken by many LPA's undertook a recent SWOT analysis of the tourism industry and found that there is a current lack of high-quality accommodation and limited private sector engagement. The proposal before the Council would represent a modest and high-quality tourism development that would contribute positively to the local tourism accommodation offer. Indeed, as part of its Action Plan, the document acknowledges that individually, each project has the potential to make a difference to the tourism sector in the County Borough area.
- Finally, the site is within 500 yards of the Abergarwed Rheola Forest managed by Natural Resources Wales and offers recreation and walk areas.

We are aware of a planning permission, granted in October 2024 for this practice, for the establishment and expansion of an existing tourism glamping site in a location further north along the Neath Valley. This permission (reference 23/0659/FUL) relates to a development known as Waterfall Glamping Pods at Pontneddfechan, a short distance from the settlement of Glynneath. Although this site is located within the adjacent Borough of Rhondda Cynon Taf, it is close to the administrative boundary of Neath Port Talbot and within the same Neath Valley setting. It therefore has some relevance and is argued to provide some support to the principle of the current proposal at Abergarwed.

This site is situated in countryside and was established as a glamping site with some 10 pods following permissions in 2018 and 2021. The later permission in October 2024 sought an expansion of the glamping site under Phase II with an additional 4 timber lodges and a meet and greet building on a different part of the site. Some details of the development are provided below:



### Locational Context



### Previously Approved and Recently Approved Developments



**Phase I Glamping Pods**



**Phase II Timber Lodges**

In finding the proposal to be acceptable, the reason for granting permission was stated as follows:

*'The proposal would facilitate an extension to an existing holiday-let business through the provision of 4 no. lodges and a meet and greet office. The proposed tourism/leisure use has already been established through the granting of a previous planning permission (ref. 20/1380) and the proposed extension/additional lodges are of a modest scale which would ensure that the use would remain compatible with the surrounding countryside. Furthermore, taking into account the modest scale of the overall development and also the modest scale of the proposed lodges, the proposed development is considered acceptable in terms of its impact upon the character and appearance of the area...'*

On the principle and location of development, Officers stated in the Planning Committee Report the following:

*'The application site consists of a parcel of land that is located outside of the defined settlement boundary, in open countryside, and close to the boundary with Bannau Brycheiniog National Park. Whilst development outside defined settlement boundaries would not ordinarily comply with the sustainability objectives of Policy AW2, national policy does not hold this as a barrier to development associated with tourism, particularly as rural areas are typically associated with this kind of use. National policy is supportive of sustainable tourism proposals in rural areas on account of the fact that it contributes to a*

healthy, diverse economy. It notes that diversification of rural enterprises can strengthen the rural economy and bring additional employment and prosperity to rural communities

It is considered that the proposal would be supported by Policy CS1 of the Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development plan which encourages a strong, diverse economy and promotes new forms of employment in the leisure and tourism sectors and Chapter 5 of Planning Policy Wales (Edition 12). As such, there is no policy objection to the principle of tourism-related development in this location and the principle of the development is considered to be acceptable, subject to an assessment of other material planning considerations set out below.'

The important point to highlight here is that the above relates to a similar form and scale of development as that proposed at Abergarwed (although the latter relates to a previously developed site rather than open countryside), that this type of proposal can typically be acceptable in countryside locations and which can play an important role in supporting the rural economy, including the Neath Valley which is becoming increasingly important for tourism.

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