

# Redevelopment of Porthcawl Waterfront

## CHAPTER 5 – Assessment of Alternatives

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# ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT

## Chapter 5 – Assessment of Alternatives

Produced by The Urbanists for Bridgend County Borough Council and the Welsh Government.

Chapter Author: EJ

Reviewed By: LH

Approved for Issue By: LH

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## CHAPTER 5 – Assessment of Alternatives

### 5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 This chapter sets out the approach taken for delivering alternative approaches to delivering the Proposed Development. This reflects on the proposed site location and the nature and scale of the Proposed Development, taking into account environmental effects.

5.1.2 The EIA Regulations 17 3(d) require an ES to include:

*‘A description of the reasonable alternatives studied by the applicant..., which are relevant to the proposed development and its specific characteristics, and an indication of the main reasons for the option chosen, taking into account the significant effects of the development on the environment.’*

5.1.3 Further, Paragraph 2 of Schedule 4 of the EIA Regulations states:

*‘A description of the reasonable alternatives (for example in terms of development design, technology, location, size and scale) studied by the applicant..., which are relevant to the proposed development and its specific characteristics, and an indication of the main reasons for selecting the chosen option, including a comparison of the environmental effects.’*

### 5.2 ‘Do nothing’ Scenario

5.2.1 Under the ‘Do nothing’ scenario, the Site would continue to be used mainly as car parks, a former caravan park and recreation space. Sandy Bay would continue as a campsite on a year-by-year basis. The benefits of the scheme i.e., provision of up to 980 homes (of which a minimum of 30% will be affordable homes), 130,000 sqft of commercial and leisure floorspace (including a hotel, open-air pool and gym / studio facilities), 6,500 sq ft of flexible community / civic space, 23,500 sqft of meanwhile leisure use space, enhancement of Griffin Park and the Harbour environment, and 20ha of open space and would not be realised in this scenario. The Proposed Development will continue to ensure Porthcawl remains a distinctive destination that draws in visitors and investment to the local economy. Further, the Local Development Plan Strategy for the area would not be implemented as intended (see section 5.3 below).

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- 5.2.2 The dune habitat present within the Site would remain affected by invasive species, which pose a threat to their stability, with no management of their use. Overall, the Proposed Development will result in an increased extent of dune habitat within the Site. Additionally, there would continue to be unmaintained footpaths and a lack of Active Travel connections to and within the Site.
- 5.2.3 The Proposed development will result in significant landscape benefits within the Site including the provision of Green Public Amenity Space and a diversified and increased green corridor from Griffin Park to the Relic Dunes. Established trees will be largely retained with habitat enhancement proposed in the Monster Park area. The Proposed Development will provide a net benefit for biodiversity. In addition, the Proposed Development will create connections on the Site between the Town Centre, Coney Beach, and Trecco Bay with key pedestrian routes and enhanced gateways. Under the ‘Do nothing’ scenario, these benefits would not be achieved.
- 5.2.4 The existing public parking arrangements within the Site would remain in a ‘Do nothing’ scenario. The Proposed Development would result in a relative reduction in this provision. Notwithstanding, the proposed quantum of public parking (600 spaces) is adequate for the ‘everyday’ peak demands and as such provides a suitable re-provision. There is a potential opportunity for an edge of centre park and ride to be provided, and this is currently being explored (though that does not comprise part of this application). Further details are included in Volume 1, Chapter 6: Transport.
- 5.2.5 In summary, the Proposed Development, compared to the ‘Do nothing’ scenario, will maximise potential benefits of the Site as an allocated Regeneration Growth Area (Policy SP2 of the LDP) as well as providing a net benefit for biodiversity and improving connectivity within and to the Site.

## 5.3 Site Location and Site Selection

- 5.3.1 The Bridgend County Borough Local Development Plan 2018 – 2033 (the LDP) (adopted March 2024) sets out ‘Key Issues and Drivers’ (at local, regional and national scale) identified through the Replacement LDP process, which directly informed the development of the LDP Vision, Objectives and Plan as a whole. In relation to the Porthcawl Waterfront specifically, these include:

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- There is a need to redevelop the Waterfront Regeneration Area, in particular in order to improve the attractiveness of the town as a place to live and work, whilst benefiting the vibrancy of the Town Centre itself.
- The Porthcawl Waterfront Regeneration Site will need to be delivered to revitalise the town as a premier seaside resort.
- There is a shortage of general employment land in Porthcawl and the Valleys.
- Porthcawl (and Bridgend, Maesteg, Pencoed, and Pyle/North Cornelly/Kenfig Hill) acts as a hub for services, employment, housing, and retail developments. Its pivotal position will prove crucial in spreading prosperity to the surrounding community, whilst contributing to the interdependent successes of both the Cardiff Capital Region and the Swansea Bay Region.

5.3.2 Accordingly, Porthcawl Waterfront was identified as a Regeneration Growth Area (Policy SP2 (1)) and allocated as a Strategic Mixed-use Regeneration Site within the LDP for:

- 1,100 residential units
- 30% affordable housing
- 1.8ha 1 Form Entry Welsh Medium Primary School & 4 classroom block extension at the existing English Medium Primary School
- Approx. 2,000sqm food store
- Outdoor Recreation Facilities and Public Open Space
- Active Travel Routes

5.3.3 It should be noted that the LDP was subject to a Sustainability Appraisal (SA), including a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). The Inspector's Report on the Examination into the Replacement LDP 2018 – 2033 found that the SA/SEA of the RLDP's allocations had considered reasonable alternatives, both in terms of scale, siting, and design options, and that the reasons for selecting site allocations and rejecting others were clear and logical.

5.3.4 As the Proposed Development is seeking to redevelop the Porthcawl Waterfront Regeneration Area in accordance with the adopted LDP, alternative sites were not considered as part of the EIA process. It should also be noted that the Site was allocated as a mixed – use Regeneration Area within the previous Bridgend LDP (2006 – 2021). Notwithstanding, the EIA process has influenced the iterative design process of the Proposed Development through the identification of constraints, responses to consultation undertaken to date, and identification of environmental effects. The design evolution of the Site is presented within Section 5.4, below, with further detail provided in the Design and Access Statement accompanying the application.

## 5.4 Design Iterations

### Key Design Iteration 1 - 2022



*Plate 1: Key Design Iteration 1 – Porthcawl Placemaking Strategy (Austin Smith Lord)*

5.4.1 In 2022, architects, Austin Smith Lord were appointed by BCBC to provide a framework for the development of Porthcawl for the short, medium and long term, highlighting key areas for development. This resulted in the Porthcawl Placemaking Strategy, which was also supported by a series of technical reports and studies, including:

- Open Space Concept Design
- Infrastructure Plan
- Landscape & Seascape Visual Impact

5.4.2 The Placemaking Strategy laid an early approach to how 1,100 homes could be delivered on the Site. The Placemaking Strategy highlighted key areas for improvement, these included: connectivity, open space, uses, scale, and sustainability. Throughout the study, six principal areas of future development were identified, which contained sub-areas that represented development opportunities in their own right.

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5.4.3 The Placemaking Strategy outlined key criteria for each area (but did not detail specific works), providing a framework on which to develop further research and analysis, building upon the ideas that had already been set out, these included:

- Proposed leisure-led use including a hotel in the south of Salt Lake in proximity to the Harbour, building on the success of the existing Harbour.
- A defined block in central Salt Lake, with a direct relationship to the Eastern Promenade, which was identified as a large, hard landscape public space.
- Enclosure of the existing Aldi in the north of Salt Lake with residential development.
- Enhancing the use of the existing Hillsboro car park (though this was identified as multi-storey at this stage).
- Use of podium parking to keep vehicles out of the proposed public space on the Eastern Promenade.
- Improved connections to the town centre, including a new public space south of Hillsboro car park.
- A development front on the south of Coney Beach, enabling the creation of a green corridor to the north of Coney Beach.
- A prominent green park extending from Griffin Park to Sandy Bay.
- A new vehicular access from the Eastern Promenade to Sandy Bay (via Coney Beach and the Monster Park).
- A continuous pedestrian and cycle connection from Trecco Bay in the east to the Esplanade to the west of the Harbour.
- Development of Sandy Bay for residential use.
- Protection of land for the future expansion of Newton Primary School.

5.4.4 Public engagement was held in Winter 2021 to share and inform the Placemaking Strategy and strategic opportunities for regeneration. Further engagement took place in Spring 2023 in relation to the Open Space Concept Design; this included public exhibitions, stakeholder workshops, and sessions with local primary schools to shape early ideas for open space and play provision.

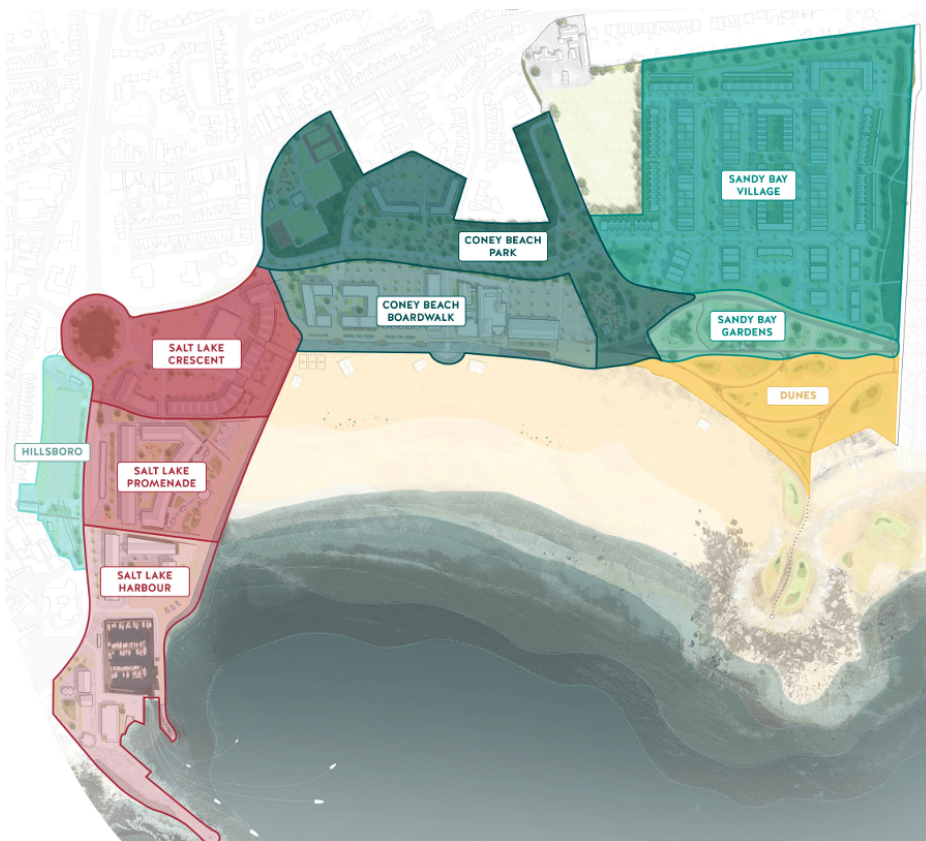
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### Key Design Iteration 2 – February 2025



*Plate 2.1: Key Design Iteration 2 - Early Illustrative Masterplan (The Urbanists)*



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#### *Plate 2.2: Key Design Iteration 2 – Character Areas (The Urbanists)*

- 5.4.5 Following the preparation of the Placemaking Strategy, the land ownership within the masterplan area changed, with the Welsh Government becoming a joint landowner. This opened up new opportunities to refine the design.
- 5.4.6 The second design iteration sought to build on the work of the Porthcawl Placemaking Strategy, resulting in an Illustrative Masterplan which was the subject of a 30-day non-statutory consultation in February 2025. The Masterplan is built on the key approaches outlined above.
- 5.4.7 The masterplan was guided by a ‘Vision’ for Porthcawl which was supplemented by five core themes to facilitate the creation of a distinctive, high-quality place, which included: enhancing Porthcawl’s unique natural setting, encouraging social integration, encouraging permeability, fostering the identity of Porthcawl, and positioning Porthcawl as a seaside town destination. The work was based on a thorough analysis of the local area, further scrutinisation of site constraints and informed by a multi – disciplinary technical team.
- 5.4.8 At this stage, eight distinct character areas were identified, which reflected the existing features and uses in the Waterfront area (refer to Plate 2.1). It was intended that the character areas would shape the future design of the development and the type of activities that take place across the Site. The masterplan set the basis for 1,100 homes.
- 5.4.9 The key differences between the Placemaking Strategy (Key Design Iteration 1) and Key Design Iteration 2 are set out below.
- 5.4.10 The route connecting Sandy Bay through Coney Beach and Monster Park was re-aligned to the southern edge of the Site to create a more continuous and linear stretch of open space extending from the existing Griffin Park. The proposed green park was also increased, with a new link proposed from Griffin park to the Relic Dunes. The revised access road alignment along the southern edge allowed for the maximum possible retention and enhancement of the existing Griffin Park.
- 5.4.11 The development line along the Sandy Bay dune front was relocated further north to accommodate the provision of a natural park creating additional natural space between the proposed residential development and the Relic Dunes. The space offers amenity and wellbeing potential as well as having a sustainable drainage function. It is the intention that this space will include multiple pedestrian connections as an extension of the Proposed Development.

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- 5.4.12 A green corridor was introduced along the Sandy Bay development, incorporating north–south green routes to break up the built form and establish a natural buffer between the new development, nearby residential areas, and Trecco Bay. This can be a key ecological resource within the Site. Further, a different design approach was taken to the residential layout by applying a grid structure that offered all new homes either a view towards the coast, or the green hills that form a backdrop to Porthcawl. A series of innovative housetypes was also defined, which respected local vernacular whilst allowing a suitable density to be achieved.
- 5.4.13 A new building block was introduced around the Aldi store to further screen its rear elevation from key viewpoints along the promenade, boardwalk, and beach.
- 5.4.14 Key stakeholders were consulted and engaged during the progression of the masterplan design. Once a draft was finalised, a month of non-statutory consultation was undertaken via the Project website, and a public event was held with nearly 1,000 attendees. The engagement boards that were produced for this consultation are included at Volume 3, Appendix 5.1: Key Design Iteration 2 Consultation Boards.

#### Final Design Iteration

- 5.4.15 Whilst the design principles of the Final Design Iteration are consistent with Key Design Iteration 2, a series of amendments were made to the masterplan following the non-statutory engagement in direct response to the feedback received and further technical scrutiny.
- 5.4.16 At this stage, the provision of housing was reduced from up to 1,100 homes to up to 980 homes to ensure the deliverability of the Proposed Development, including the other key proposed uses within the Site.
- 5.4.17 The proposed building heights were reduced in response to feedback from the public consultation, particularly within the Salt Lake area and the apartments proposed in the south of Sandy Bay. For example, the Salt Lake apartment blocks were reduced from 5 / 6 storey to primarily 3, with some areas of 4. Similarly, additional variation in the height and massing of buildings proposed within the Salt Lake area seeks to break up the built form and reduce the sense of high density at street level.
- 5.4.18 The final design iteration includes a broader range of leisure activities including an open-air pool, pump track, play areas and a funfair (reflecting the historic character of the former Coney Beach amusement park). These facilities are distributed throughout the Site to encourage activity across the whole area.

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- 5.4.19 The proposed leisure area in South Salt Lake has been diversified, including space for the provision of new community uses.
- 5.4.20 The use of a multi-storey on the existing Hillsboro car park is no longer proposed due to cost grounds, but a series of new public parking areas are identified in the Coney Beach and Salt Lake character areas to ensure appropriate levels of public parking are provided.
- 5.4.21 The final design iteration provides space for motorhome provision to offset the loss of existing provision Sandy Bay.
- 5.4.22 The school land allocation has been increased slightly in the final iteration from 2 ha to 2.2 ha.
- 5.4.23 The design of frontages along the new Sandy Bay access road has been enhanced to provide greater surveillance and a higher quality public realm. Parking areas have been repositioned behind buildings to ensure this key active travel route is not dominated by vehicles.
- 5.4.24 New shower and changing facilities are proposed near the dunes, alongside flexible units for potential food and beverage operators to improve the beachfront experience and community opportunity.
- 5.4.25 The final iteration responds to the drainage strategy resulting in refinement of the sizing of infiltration basins within the Site. Further, the provision of play facilities and the quantum of vehicular parking have been informed by a refined understanding of housing need as the design has evolved.
- 5.4.26 In respect of the commercial space, it has been focussed into key areas of activity to ensure vitality whilst also ensuring that there is not over provision that could potentially remain vacant.
- 5.4.27 The Transport Assessment has informed the arrangement of the spine road junction which has been amended to show the integration of a mini roundabout.
- 5.4.28 In response to feedback that Porthcawl must remain a destination, an open-air pool and gym / studio is proposed within Salt Lake harbour. In addition, a flexible meanwhile leisure space is proposed within the Salt Lake Crescent area that can be utilised for fairground rides and seasonal events.
- 5.4.29 The red line boundary of the Site has been subject to a minor amendment on the western edge to include the full area associated with the proposed spine road.

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5.4.30 The final design iteration results in a significant increase in open space provision which includes the extensive and diverse public space proposed on the Eastern Promenade.

5.4.31 Accordingly, the Final Design Iteration provides:

- Up to 980 homes.
- Approximately 20 ha of open space including a series of new significant public open spaces with different offers.
- 2.2 ha of land for educational use.
- Approximately 130,000 square feet of commercial and leisure floorspace including retail uses, a Hotel, Lido and Gym / Studio Space
- Enhancement of Porthcawl Harbour environment
- New coastal defence works.
- A flexible meanwhile leisure use space (approximately 23,500 square feet).
- Approximately 6,500 square feet of flexible community / civic space.
- Provision of up to 600 public parking spaces within the site area.
- New spine road access from the Eastern Promenade to Sandy Bay.
- Enhancement of the Griffin Park and proposed new facilities including MUGA.



*Plate 3: Final Design Iteration*