

Pencadlys Heddlu

Heol y Bont-faen
Penybont
CF31 3SU

Mewn argyfwng ffoniwch **999**
fel arall, ffoniwch **101**

Gwefan: www.heddlu-de-cymru.police.uk

Police Headquarters

Cowbridge Road
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In an emergency always dial **999**
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24th October 2024

FAO: **Kate Glover**
Planning Department
Merthyr Tydfil CBC

RE: P/24/0224 | Construction of new skate park with associated landscape works | Land Adjacent Merthyr Tydfil Leisure Centre

Dear Kate,

South Wales Police have provided comments previously in relation to this application and I have provided a copy of this report for your information, below. I have also included updated figures as to the crime profile for the area, which evidences the reasons for the recommendations within the report. I have also removed the information in relation to Martyn's Law as this no longer impacts on the application.

The aim of the proposal is to provide a new skate park which will replace the existing, adjacent park, with a more "family friendly", accessible and modern facility. It will be situated adjacent to the main entrance of the Leisure Centre. The skate park is designed to integrate into a new public realm landscape scheme, which will incorporate the existing pedestrian thoroughfare and connect the leisure park to the town centre and river Taff.

South Wales Police have no objection to this application and are very keen to work with the Local Authority so that a Secured By Design Gold Award could be attained for the development. Constructing well designed places, buildings and communities that promote both sustainable communities and health and wellbeing is an objective that Secured by Design widely supports. However, it is imperative that they must also be safe, secure, and

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accessible. Mitigating the opportunities for crime is not only about reducing and preventing injury and crime, but it is also about building strong, cohesive, vibrant and participatory communities. Academic research findings have proven SBD to deliver significant crime reductions and cost efficiency savings for a wide range of stakeholders, including local authorities, housing associations, landlords, residents and the police service. The police service continually re-evaluates the effectiveness of Secured by Design and responds to emerging crime trends and independent research findings, in conjunction with industry partners, as and when it is considered necessary and to protect the public from crime.

Observations:

Rhydycar Leisure Village is partly owned by Merthyr Tydfil CBC, with Marvel Ltd owning the remainder of the site. It is home to a number of business premises which include McDonalds, Nandos, Frankie and Benny's to name but a few. There is also a cinema, Hotel and an indoor bowling facility situated next to the Leisure Centre. Vehicular and pedestrian access to the site is from the A4102, with the pedestrian access being adjacent to the river Taff. Any pedestrian visitors to the site will have to by-pass the proposed skate park to access other premises within the Rhydycar Leisure Village. It is therefore essential, that as well as being a more accessible facility, it must promote a feeling of community safety and reduce the opportunity for crime and anti-social behaviour. Moving the skate park to an area closer to the entrance of the Leisure Centre will help to achieve this, as it will provide a higher level of natural surveillance.

All recommendations made within this report are site specific and evidence based and relate to the proposed, likely or potential risks associated with this scheme and the current crime profile for the area.

The below crime profile has been taken from the **Police.Uk** website and relate to the Cyfarthfa Ward in which the proposal sits. They are for the period of September 2023 to August 2024;

Anti-Social Behaviour	164
Burglary	15
Vehicle Crime	28
Criminal Damage and Arson	67
Other Theft	48
Violence and Sexual Offences	266
Public Order	97
Drugs	35
Possession of Weapons	10
Shoplifting	164
Robbery	3

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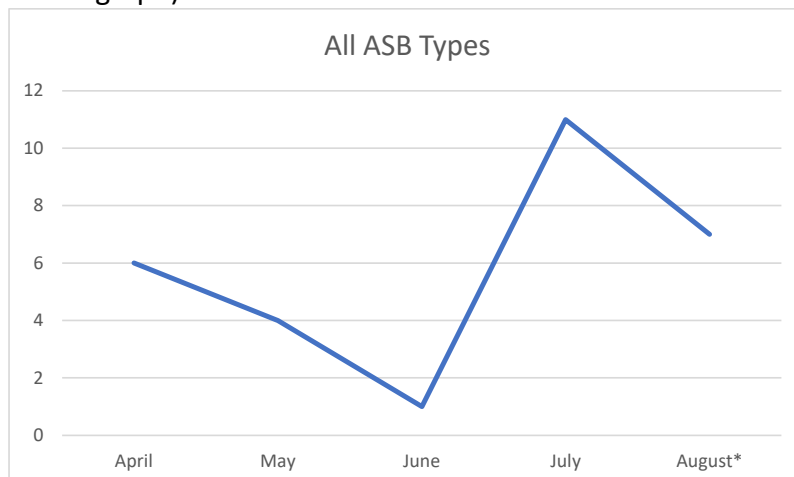
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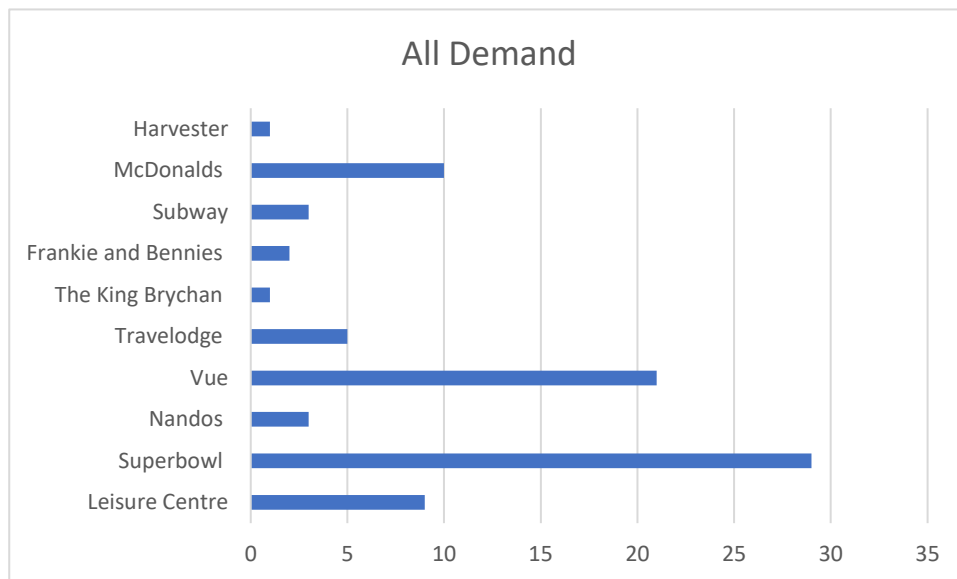
Other Crime	14
Bike Theft	2
Theft from the Person	1

Following details are from the report, previously submitted to Merthyr Council Regeneration Team in September 2023.

As can be seen from the above table, anti-social behaviour is a particular issue within this area. It is worth noting that there are currently two multi-agency Problem Solving Plans in place for Rhydycar Leisure Village. One plan is aimed specifically at the level of anti-social behaviour at this location, while the other has been set up to target individuals frequenting this area, who are involved in Gang Culture. Some complaints made to the police related to incidents of drugs, theft, violence, concern for safety and verbal abuse against staff. As a way of mitigating the anti-social behaviour, the local Neighbourhood Policing Team set up a Friday night football club which took place on the 3G pitch, adjacent to the Leisure Centre. This took place between March and June 2023. This was a great success, however due to other demands, the initiative has come to an end and since then, the level of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) at this location has increased dramatically (as can be seen from the below graph).



The below graph highlights the level of demand on South Wales Police in relation to incidents involving young people associated with a local Gang.



A recent Environmental Survey of the site also showed evidence of vehicle nuisance within the car park, with circular tyre marks within the car park, near to the proposed site of the skate park. Vehicles have also been seen to drive through and around the bollards in front of the main entrance of the Leisure Centre, so that the drivers and passengers can meet under cover of the sheltered entrance. A path has also been created near to the Leisure Centre that leads through trees, to the riverbank and an old sub-station, where litter and evidence of drug use could be seen.

This type of crime and ASB can have a negative impact on the site as a whole and unless crime prevention methods are included within the environmental design of the skate park, any future incidents of this kind could prevent legitimate users wanting to use the facility, or even attend at the site.

Recommendations:

(i) Lighting.

1. Lighting in all public spaces must meet the British Standard 5489:2020.
2. Lighting around the skate park must be effective and complement CCTV.
3. Bollard Lighting should only be considered for decorative purposes as they do not provide facial illumination.
4. Further information can be found on the SBD website www.securedbydesign/lightingagainstcrime.

REASON: To enhance community safety.

(ii). Skate Park and Boundary Identification.

The boundary of the skate park is open and has clear lines of sight from the Leisure Centre which helps to promote natural surveillance and a feeling of safety. However, there is a concern that without a clear, physical boundary of the skate park, there could be a risk to pedestrians if a person was to consider the footpath as an extension of the facility. Parts of the boundary of the skatepark abuts the main car park of the site. It is proposed that there is to be an area of grass and shrubbery directly in front of the car park spaces which lead to a bank covered with artificial grass. This bank will form the outer face of the concrete skatepark. Due to the incidents of anti-social driving that has been evidenced within the car park of the Leisure Village, it is important that the height of the bund/bank is considered, as this will protect users of the skatepark and add to the level of community safety at the site.

Recommendations:

5. Insert a shallow entry “V” ditch on the approach side of the bund/bank as this will help to draw any hostile vehicle down into the ditch.
6. Construct the bund/bank to combines with the ditch. This will need to be of appropriate dimensions at the defence side of the ditch and must present a raised level to a hostile vehicle on the approach side of the ditch. The bund will improve further the chance of vehicle impact on the bund, minimise penetration and prevent encroachment. For dimensions of ditches and bunds, please see the information provided by the Centre for the Protection of National Infrastructure (CPNI) “ Hostile Vehicle Mitigation – Guidance Note: Earthworks & Landscaping”
<https://www.npsa.gov.uk/resources/hvm-earthworks-and-landscaping>
7. The plans show that there will be an area of “new paving” at both entrances to the skatepark. This paving should be of a kind that would make using a skateboard very difficult, thereby ensuring that the users of the facility only skate within the skatepark itself.
8. Extend the grassed area at both entrances to the skatepark as this will also define the facility and prevent anyone skating onto the footpath and colliding with pedestrians.
9. Insert areas of cobbled stone or other type of paving within the main footpath, that would make it difficult to use a skateboard. This should be inserted at regular intervals along the footpath adjacent to the entrance of the skatepark.
10. The whole of the skatepark should be covered by CCTV and lit as at recommendation 1. above.
11. Vehicle mitigation should be inserted into the gaps between the bollards at the main entrance to the Leisure Centre to prevent vehicles driving up to the main doors. Gaps should be no more than 1.2m in width. This can be done using concrete planters, bolted into the floor, or bollards that meet IWA 14/ PAS 68 standard.
12. Consultation with users of the current skatepark will provide valuable information to the design, if this has not already taken place. Taking part in the design process will provide a sense of ownership and they will be more likely to take care of the facility.



REASON: To define the boundary of the skatepark for users and provide protection against any possible hostile vehicle encroachment. To also prevent any conflict and collision between skateboarders and pedestrians on the main footpath and to prevent crime and disorder.

(iii). Landscaping and planting.

Poor landscape design proposals can compromise the safety and security of people and properties. Hiding places can be created and visibility significantly reduced if trees and shrubs are poorly positioned, and species inappropriately chosen and maintained. This may increase the opportunity for crime and increase a person's sense of vulnerability, which ultimately will affect the level of use.

13. Overgrown shrubs and other thick barriers that are in close proximity to public areas must be avoided and clear sightlines must be maintained over long distances.
14. Planting must not obstruct any CCTV.
15. Landscaping features and trees in public areas must not have any foliage below 2 metres from the ground.
16. Trees and other landscaping features must not be positioned where they could create hiding/entrapment spaces, obscure signage and lighting or provide a potential climbing aid into properties.
17. Planting schemes should take into account growth rates, height and spread and regular maintenance should form part of a "Maintenance Plan".

REASON: To enhance community safety.

(iv). Seating areas.

Seating areas have been included in the plan and will help to promote a more family, friendly environment. However, seating has been proven to add to the issues of ASB as they can encourage groups to gather and loiter in an area, which can sometimes seem to be intimidating for other legitimate users. The current plans show seating areas that contain 11 separate benches. Due to the level of ASB at this location, we would consider this level of seating to be excessive for this area.

Recommendations:

18. Reduce the number of benches to a more appropriate level.
19. Consider single seating and curved, uneven benches (similar to those used at Merthyr Bus Station) as an alternative to standard bench seating. If longer benches are to be used, consideration should be given to inserting arm rest dividers, as this will help to prevent rough sleeping. Examples of seating below;





20. All seating areas should be in view of the windows of the Leisure Centre and covered by CCTV. This will increase the surveillance and help to prevent crime and ASB.

REASON: To increase natural and formal surveillance and help prevent loitering, ASB and rough sleeping.

(v). CCTV.

21. The whole of the skatepark and Leisure Centre should be covered by CCTV.

22. The CCTV should be monitored and linked to the current CCTV system of the Local Authority.

23. Signage should accompany any CCTV as this can also act as a deterrent against crime and anti-social behaviour.

REASON: To reduce the opportunity for crime and disorder and to assist any possible police investigation.

I would be happy to work with the developer to achieve the Secured By Design Gold Award.

Any further detailed information can be found on the Secured by Design website

www.securedbydesign.com

Policy Support:

- The Crime & Disorder Act 1998 created a statutory partnership between local authorities, the police and other key partners to work together in reducing crime and disorder in all aspects of their work.
- Section 17 of the Act states:
“It is the duty of the authority to exercise its various functions with due regard to the likely effect on crime and disorder in its area and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent crime and disorder.”
- TAN 12 Design. Para 5.17.1 “Local authorities are required to have due regard to crime and disorder prevention in the exercise of their functions

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under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. Consideration should be given to practical ways in which the design of development can reduce opportunities for crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour.”

- Planning Policy Wales
- 4.10.12 Local Authorities under Legal Obligation to consider the need to prevent and reduce crime and disorder.....
- 8.2.1. – Transport – Provision of safe, convenient and well signed routes
- 9.1.1. –Housing – Objective to provide homes that are in good condition, in safe neighbourhoods and sustainable communities
- 9.1.2. Housing – Greater emphasis on quality, good design, and the creation of places to live that are safe and attractive

Yours sincerely

Joy Nicholls
Designing-Out Crime Officer
South Wales Police

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