I am the Councillor for the Aberafan Ward in which the Ministry of Justice have announced an indecent proposal to build a Prison on the land that was called ‘Clawdd Coch Uch’a in the nineteenth century tithe maps – there is a lot to be understood from that name – the Big Red Floodplain.

These are the following points I would like to make to highlight the reckless location of a proposed Prison.

*over 5000 school schoolchildren attend school within a mile radius of Clawdd Coch Ucha

*Industrial Town with Tier 1 COMAH sites and the Industrial Park has a covenant attached

*Aberafan is an impoverished ward with a thin blue line tackling high levels of Drug Addiction and Anti Social Behaviour

*C2 Floodplain

Schools

Over 5000 children attend school within a one mile radius of Clawdd Coch Ucha

That is over 25% of the schoolchildren in this vast County of Neath Port Talbot and includes 7 primary schools and 3 secondary schools – three of the schools are newly built.

Why should thousands of schoolchildren become desensitised to incarceration and all the ills that come with a prison estate?

Where else in the World have schools and Prisons been built in such close proximity? Where is the precedent?

Surely the Welsh Affairs Committee has both the clout and morals to stop this toxic proposal.

I hope that Welsh Affairs is more than a talking shop and has the morals to give this Industrial town a chance to flourish even thou we have not had the Electrification of the Railway that was promised in 2017.

Industrial Town with several COMAH sites.

Secondly I would like to add that Port Talbot is an Industrial town with probably the biggest COMAH site in Wales and indeed the UK. Tata Steelworks is gigantic and there is no Police Station with holding cells between The proposed Site and the Steelworks or BOC another COMAH site.

Clawdd Coch Ucha is part of Baglan Industrial Park and is located on the M4 Corridor (less than 50 yards away from the M4- It is about 100 yards away from the mainline railway)

Baglan Industrial Park is also part of the Port Talbot Waterfront Enterprise Zone. It is very successful and has reaped substantial business rates for the County for decades. It employs thousands and some of the business are feeling the impact of a proposal of which they have profound concerns.
Of which I would like to expand upon and give oral evidence in the Inquiry.

There is also a covenant on this land which states that it should only be used for industrial purposes.

Port Talbot unlike the other three proposed sites in England – Rochester, Full Sutton, Wigan – have no history or infrastructure to accommodate this prison. Rochester history goes back to Borstal School. We are an industrial town and we suffer with inordinate levels of pollution..

How many towns would give planning permission for Coke Ovens, Blast Furnaces Etc?

Please consider our Industrial Heritage – we have been the engine of the south Wales economy for decades.

Thirdly, the Aberafan Ward has high levels of deprivation and anti social behaviour. In fact it has the highest levels of ASB in NPT by some distance – in 2018 South Wales Police have deployed the Mounted Police in an operation to bring calm to the streets.

Aberafan has a heavy drugs problem and I have found and reported a needle nest of over 300 needles abandoned in a Lane in between terraced streets where children were playing – it made the front page of the Evening Post – not the only time Aberafan made front page news in 2017 – chemical finds, robbery, etc…..

We need a skate Park, Aberafan needs a youth club – we are desperate for recreation in our concrete jungle we really do not need a proposal which exacerbate and escalate the Anti Social Behaviour situation.

C2 Floodplain

Last but not least, when the MoJ wrote to the Welsh Government notifying them off their intentions to build new prisons and to offer submissions for any suitable sites.

Clawdd Coch Ucha was a C2 Floodplain.

THE Ministry of Justice in their criteria for suitable sites stated that Floodplains were unsuitable as were Greenfield Sites.

There has never been any development on Clawdd Coch Ucha as basically it’s a swamp ( yesterday at least half of it was submerged underwater and there was a substantial amount of Frog spawn in the marsh).

It is surrounded by houses schools, hospitals, Factories and retail units – where will all that water run off?

We have already had flooding in the area in 2018. A neighbouring Ward Cwmafan has had landslides in 2018. On Saturday just passed an earthquake stopped the game of football between Port Talbot Town and Taff’s Well. If we can have earthquakes and a landslide we can have a flood.

When the Welsh Government gave this location as a possible location for a Prison in May 2016 it was a C2 Floodplain yet in their own Planning policy TAN 15 – Floodrisk and Planning.
No Highly Vulnerable or Emergency Services Development is permitted.

This is bad Government, bad business – Clawdd Coch Ucha’s Floodplain Catergory was changed to C1 in the same month March 2017 as the MoJ announced their plans to build a Prison.

When the MoJ met with the Welsh Government, NRW and NPTCBC in August 2016 to discuss a future Flood Consequence Assessment all parties were aware that at that time this development was impossible due to planning policy TAN15- Again I would like to expand upon this in the Inquiry.

I am the democratically elected member for this site and I find it very unfortunate that the MP for the area Stephen Kinnock stood down from the Welsh Affairs Committee.

Do we really need this extra Prison provision for Wales?

Are the powers that be reckless enough to build on a floodplain in an industrial park with a covenant and so close to where thousands of children attend school?

Is there a more inappropriate location for the building of a Prison?

Once Again I would like to reiterate that I get a chance to give oral evidence at the Inquiry into Prison Provision in Wales.

February 2018