Written evidence submitted Neil Hopkins on behalf of an employee group (PPW0013)

We are signing this letter as a way to provide written evidence which explains our opposition to the proposed Category C Prison at Baglan Industrial Park.

We believe that locating a prison in Port Talbot will have a very negative effect on the community and will negatively impact on every person within the town. We outline the concerns we have below:

- **Social Housing**

  Neath Port Talbot is already lacking in housing for social tenants. In April 2017 Tai Tarian/NPT Homes closed their waiting list until September 2017 as due to the excess demand for social housing in this area they could no longer accommodate any more applications for housing due to the number of people currently waiting for housing in the area.

  As of 14 February 2018 there were 3,000 people on the waiting list for social housing that is provided by Tai Tarian (previously NPT Homes). It takes a minimum of 5 weeks for an application for housing to be processed onto the waiting list and priority for housing is given to those that are homeless. A single unemployed person with no dependents would not be prioritised and it could take a number of years before a suitable property for them is found. However a newly released inmate would find themselves given priority for housing due to their circumstances as they would be classed as homeless.

  As stated on the Tai Tarian website, currently there are over 1000 applicants on the waiting list for 1 bedroom properties, and on average they advertise only 7 one bedroom properties a month.

  There are local people having to wait a number of years before they are housed by a social landlord. The demand will become significantly worse again if a prison is built in the area.

  Upon release from prison, many inmates find themselves homeless and in need of social housing as they are unable to afford private rented accommodation. Given that there is already a housing shortage for those unable to afford to buy a home or rent privately in Port Talbot, this will put extra strain on social housing providers.

- **Impact on house prices in the area**

  The average house price in Port Talbot in February 2018 was £120,908 (according to Zoopla).

  Online estate agent Housesimple carried out a survey which asked prospective homeowners if they would be willing to live near a prison. More than a third of respondents answered that they would live by a prison – but half of this number would only do so for a 30% or higher price cut on the price of a property. This would mean that a £120,000 house located in the immediate area surrounding the prison (such as Abbotsmoor) would lose value to £84,000. This would have a domino effect impact on other house prices in the area and
would bring the overall average house price down.

While this may help those not on the property ladder, this will have an impact on those who have already purchased a house in the area as their property will decrease in value, potentially leaving them in negative equity.

- **Visual Impact**

  The proposed prison in Port Talbot is to be based on the same design as HMP Berwyn. This prison is a six storey building surrounded by five metre high fencing which is topped with barbed wire.

  The prison itself will be a significant eyesore from houses that overlook the proposed site. This could mean that householders will look to move away from the area, however as per the potential impact on house prices as described above, this may make selling a house in a location near to the prison very difficult.

- **Proximity to schools/child safety**

  We have concerns regarding the impact on local child safety in the surrounding area as the proposed prison location is within a one mile radius of the following schools:

  - Ysgol Bae Baglan – 1519 pupils (opened September 2016)
  - Baglan Primary School – 271 pupils
  - Blaen Baglan Primary School – 297 pupils
  - St Josephs Comprehensive and Primary School - 1032 pupils
  - Sandfields Primary School – 385 pupils
  - Awel Y Mor Primary School – 314 pupils
  - St Therese’s Catholic Primary School – 237 pupils
  - YGG Rhosafan (Primary) – 360 pupils
  - Ysgol Gyfyn Bro De (Welsh Medium School under construction) – 650 pupils
  - Twyyn Primary School – 448 pupils

  Total school pupils within one mile of the proposed prison = 5513 children

  Ysgol Bae Baglan is located just 482 metres from the proposed prison location, with St Josephs Comprehensive and Primary schools 775 metres away, and Baglan Primary School 830 metres away.

  Many local children walk to and from school on a daily basis and local residents’ fear that a prison on the school route will pose an obvious danger to children.
Impact on the Community through increase in problems related to the prison

It has been widely reported in the news recently that drug problems in prisons are rife and there have been many arrests in relation to people trying to smuggle drugs into prisons. One example of this in the South Wales area is the case of three men who were found guilty and each given prison sentences, after they were stopped by plain clothes Police Officers outside Parc Prison in Bridgend. A package containing legal highs had been thrown over the wall of the prison. All three were arrested outside the grounds of the prison.

Are these the kind of people we want outside of a prison in Port Talbot, in such close proximity to schools, the local hospital and a busy medical resource centre?

Current crime rates – In December 2017 the Aberavon ward had the second highest crime rate in Neath Port Talbot, and the highest in Port Talbot.

The main Police Station in Port Talbot was closed in July 2015, with a small neighbourhood policing team now working out of Sandfields Police Station. This means that the nearest Police Station is now at Neath.

Local residents are opposed to a prison

The Port Talbot Super Prison Protest Group submitted a petition to the Senedd / National Assembly for Wales on 24 October 2017 with a total of 8,791 signatures. The petition calls
on the Welsh Government not to release or sell land to the UK Government for the purpose of development of a prison.

This petition continues to be under consideration by the Petitions Committee, which was expected to give some feedback by 6 December 2017.

- **Infrastructure within Port Talbot is not adequate**

  Hospital services – Neath Port Talbot Hospital has a Minor Injuries Unit only, which operates limited hours between 7:30am to 11:00pm. It does not have a major A&E.

  A&E services are provided by both Morriston Hospital in Swansea and Princess of Wales Hospital in Bridgend. Both hospitals are already under strain of providing an adequate health service to the local community.

- **Issues regarding the electricity capacity available within the grid.**

  The company that we work for has experienced difficulties in increasing its electricity capacity to 2,500kVa and has had to invest in distribution works to allow extra capacity into its site just to maintain its current production output.

  If the prison utilises power from the existing infrastructure then this could take away any available capacity for future planned expansion for the 34 sites operating at Baglan Industrial Park or other businesses in the area and hinder future potential developments on Baglan Industrial Park due to the available capacity of electricity.

- **Surface water in the area**

  The company we work for is very concerned about the localised drainage of surface water (rain water).

  We rely on the nearby brook to transport our surface water to the pumping station. Currently the water at the proposed prison site is absorbed into the land (like any other field). If this is concreted over to build the prison, drains will need to be added to transport water away but if they use the brook in its current state, it could break its banks which could flood the whole area.

- **Unemployment and Job Opportunities in Port Talbot**

  Current unemployment in Wales is 4.9% for the quarter ended November 2017. This is up 0.8 percentage points from the previous quarter.

  We all understand that Wales needs additional jobs and there has been speculation over how many jobs could be created if the prison is given the go ahead. There are however, many unanswered questions in relation to this.

  For example, the building of the prison will be based on prefabricated material, as was the case in HMP Berwyn. This means that exclusively prefabricated fitters can perform the building work to be done.

  In 2015 the Government announced plans to close ‘old Victorian prisons in city centres’ so
therefore if the proposed prison at Port Talbot went ahead, it is highly likely that both Swansea and Cardiff Prisons would be closed as they are both Victorian prisons in prime city centre locations. Therefore jobs at Port Talbot prison would be absorbed from jobs taken from Swansea and Cardiff Prisons.

- Traffic problems in the area

The area around Baglan Industrial Park, Baglan Moors and Sandfields is already very busy at peak times of the day and week.

The Rutherglen roundabout on Seaway Parade is a particular congestion point as it is the exit route to the M4 east and westbound from the area. How can an already congested traffic area cope with the additional traffic created by visitors, workers and deliveries to/from the prison?

Additional traffic in the area could restrict access to the prison in the event of an emergency, such as a medical problem or fire, etc. The fact that it is a prison means that there will be a demand for access to emergency service support at all times, due to the risk of rioting, fighting and arson in the prison, which is becoming an increasing common occurrence in Prisons in the UK.

Information Sources:

- Social Housing:
  https://www.taitarian.co.uk/find-a-home/register/ / Phone calls

- House Prices:
  https://www.zoopla.co.uk/house-prices/port-talbot/
  http://www.thisismoney.co.uk/money/mortgageshome/article-2710901/Would-live-near-prison-rubbish-tip-cliff-discount.html

- Impact on Community through increase in problems related to the prison:
  https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/three-men-jailed-throwing-drugs-11147050

- Crime Rates:
  http://www.ukcrimestats.com/Neighbourhood/South_Wales_Police/Aberavon

- Proximity to schools/child safety:
  Map Attached

- Local residents are opposed to a prison:

- Infrastructure within Port Talbot is not adequate:
  http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/863/page/39370

- Unemployment and Job Opportunities in Port Talbot:
Traffic problems in the area:

http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/12/16/prison-riot-breaks-hmp-birmingham/


https://www.liverpoolecho.co.uk/news/liverpool-news/two-days-riots-walton-prison-13680716


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