

Comisiwn Dylunio Cymru	Design Commission for Wales
Design Review Report:	12 August 2004
Meeting Date / Material Submitted:	5 August 2004
Location:	Former AWE site, Llanishen
Architects / Design Team:	RPS Chris Hancox Lyn Powell
Scheme Description:	Residential development
Public/Other Body:	City and County of Cardiff Peter Vaughan Eluned Jones
Case Officer:	Jenny Vince
Planning Status:	Outline application submitted
Declaration of interest:	Howard Wainwright: Powell Dobson has completed a capacity study of this site.
Panel Members:	
John Punter, Chair	Howard Wainwright,
Cindy Harris, Officer	Lyn Owen,
Jonathan Adams,	Ed Colgan,
Richard Weston,	Alan Francis,
Carole-Anne Davies, CEO (observing)	

Presentation

This is a former industrial/defence site and remediation work has been carried out. An environmental impact assessment (EIA) has also been prepared to accompany this outline application for residential development. Density is planned at 50-55 units per hectare and the affordable housing component is assumed to be 20-25%.

Caerphilly Road is an important north-south arterial route on the western boundary, and most desire lines run east-west across the site. The block length on Caerphilly Road reflects the blocks across the street and street landscaping with linking spaces will be used to soften the impact of the main road on residential use. There are industrial units to the south and vistas of rising hills to the north. The design layout is intended to refer to characteristics of the nearby garden village of Rhiwbina, rather than the more immediate 'relentless' townscape.

With regard to the outline application, all matters are reserved except for access. The planning authority has no preconceived ideas, and is neutral towards this proposal. The principal issue is whether residential use is appropriate for this site. Within the environmental statement, certain issues are fixed, such as the single road access; the nature of the public open space; pedestrian linkages; and bus

routes. It is possible that issues such as building heights and density could be the subject of planning conditions.

Panel's response

This proposal is really a capacity study designed to establish a density and a market value for this site. It is a 'safe option' in design terms, but it is not necessarily an accurate predictor of any future development. It establishes the base conditions from which further design work will proceed.

With regard to the wider policy context of this application, the planning authority will rely on the advice of their policy team. The area is designated as an Action Area in the new Unitary Development Plan but no further planning advice is available yet, and no design guidelines for this area are envisaged. For DCFW, the major concern is to ensure that the future development of this and the adjacent Ty Glas site deliver a housing development appropriate to this mature suburban context, and at densities that reflect its accessibility to public transport and retail and personal services.

The consultants had completed an environmental assessment which identified all the key site planning issues and which should be used to structure development on both sites. For the AWE site the designers had conducted some valuable contextual analysis, including the study of Rhiwbina Garden Village as an appropriate model. Regrettably neither the street grid, the formality of the layout, the disposition of open space, or the landscaping had driven the proposed layout which had adopted a less perimeter block form, with a series of secondary 'streets', parking courts and play area focal spaces. The site plan was complex and quite intimate, but the footprint of the units was misleadingly small and thus it was difficult to fully assess design quality at these medium densities.

The Panel were keen to see the provision of direct pedestrian and cycle access to both railway stations (Birch Grove and Ty Glas) though this involves land outside the developers' control. Parking ratios of 1.5 per dwelling unit have been assumed, although these could be reduced given the accessibility of the site to public transport. Parking courts to the rear of the blocks and serving a limited number of dwellings have been designed to encourage an element of passive surveillance.

Despite the fact that the client is a public body, there are unfortunately no plans to include a requirement for sustainability measures in any future brief and the site is simply to be sold on the open market.

Summary

The panel supports the intended density of this scheme, which is likely to rise when a full planning application is made if past experience is any guide. However, it has reservations about the proposed layout, and considers that a more linear grid with a stronger formal layout and landscaping would be more appropriate for the context and be better able to accommodate the density with the necessary public and private amenities. The particular qualities of Rhiwbina identified in the contextual analysis could be integrated into the character of this development, despite the much higher densities proposed. Placing the public amenity space at the heart of the development would improve the scheme's quality though the Panel recognise that the provision of a multi-use games area poses problems for

adjacent residential units with noise and lighting. These difficulties need to be specifically addressed in a detailed application.

The Panel supports residential use for this site and the adjacent Ty Glas site. Hopefully they will be designed as one with a legible, traffic calmed street network that allows bus penetration and easy pedestrian and cycle movement. The public art strategy for Cardiff, due for adoption, should be used to inform integrated interventions within the eventual design and layout.

End