

Comisiwn Dylunio Cymru	Design Commission for Wales
Design Review Report:	12 August 2004
Meeting Date / Material Submitted:	5 August 2004
Location:	Ty Glas Road, Llanishen
Architects / Design Team:	RPS: Simon Warder Wyn Thomas Gordon Lewis: Gordon Lewis
Clients:	Persimmon Homes: Andrew Crompton Bellway Homes: Gareth Jones, Mark Harris
Scheme Description:	Residential development
Public/Other Body:	City and County of Cardiff: Peter Vaughan
Planning Status:	Outline application submitted
Case Officer:	Martin Rees
Panel Members: John Punter, Chair Cindy Harris, Officer Jonathan Adams, Richard Weston, Carole-Anne Davies, CEO (observing)	Howard Wainwright, Lyn Owen, Ed Colgan, Alan Francis,

Presentation

Persimmon and Bellway Homes have been involved with this site for some time and are now the owners of the site and developers for this scheme. The current proposals allow for future links to the former AWE site to the west, and there have been joint discussions with the Ministry of Defence's planning consultants. Unlike the former AWE site, an environmental impact assessment is not required, so this scheme is ahead in the time scale of development. The AWE site is now on the market and bids are due in this month. Clearly Bellway/Persimmon will be bidding for the site to allow them to develop a comprehensive scheme.

An illustrative plan for the site prepared by WTGL, shows a density of 50-60 dwelling units per hectare. The aim is to foster a strong sense of place with an active street frontage, and a variety of tenure and house/flat types. There will be a percentage of affordable housing, located on or off the site, depending on the Council's housing strategy.

The site has no street frontage but three potential access points and each of these will be exploited to reconnect the site to its surroundings. The street space will be

narrow (twelve metres between frontages), creating an intimate layout and one where traffic calming will occur naturally. On-street car parking will be discouraged. The three intersections will each be designed as focal places in the layout and will be carefully landscaped to act as parking areas and social/play spaces. Parking will be largely confined to the rear of the buildings and rear access will be provided to each house and unit. This space will be fully landscaped as a semi public realm for the use of all residents. Standard parking ratios are allowed for, although some reduction may be possible bearing in mind that the site is well served by public transport. The design intention is to create a distinct local character with a sense of small enclosed spaces, but the design could become more formalised.

The planning authority is currently assessing applications for this and the neighbouring AWE site. They would like to see a coordinated approach for both developments. The loss of land to warehousing and industrial use has been accepted.

Panel's Response

Layout and design issues have been dealt with differently in this scheme compared with the AWE proposals, and inevitably comparisons were drawn with the design approach adopted in the scheme for the AWE site. In fact this scheme pre-dates its neighbour by two and a half years and is much further advanced in its detailed design with a real client driving the design. However it suffers by being on a much more constrained backland between big box retail and industrial buildings, and overlooked by the Inland Revenue offices to the north.

The Panel expressed concern that the number of access points might lead to an unwanted amount of through traffic trying to avoid congested main routes, although the designers felt that the narrow width of streets would minimise this risk. The proposed twelve metre street width was supported by the Panel. However, their main concern was the design of the areas to the rear of the property, and the differentiation of private, semi-public and public space from the car parking which was not at all clear from the drawings. In fact this proved impossible for the Panel and there were major concerns that the whole layout design fell apart in this respect.

Discussion ensued around the designer's claim to be creating double fronted houses and whether the 'rear' door would become the main one if most people used private transport and if so, what impact this would have on active streets fronts. Questions were also raised in relation to residents' sense of ownership of communal areas. The designer remained convinced that this concept could work and that such a step change in urban design thinking was needed to enable denser developments like this to proceed. The Panel were not convinced that the proposed free flowing design of amenity and parking space would be functional, secure, and pleasant to live in.

The Panel was told that the city's leisure services department favoured one large public open space serving both sites. The current compromise does little for either site and should be much more of a central feature of the scheme at large. The proposal to add multi-use games areas poses particular problems that need to be addressed creatively to reduce their impact on residential properties.

The Panel was very disappointed that the scheme turned its back on the stream on the northern boundary of the scheme and ignored both its biodiversity potential and the opportunity to improve the amenity of the site. Given the difficulties with the landscaping at large the scheme would benefit from more serious inputs from landscape architects.

Summary

The Panel would wish to see both sites developed as one. This would allow the public open space to be made into more of a feature of the scheme, increasing both its appeal and the development value it can generate. It would also allow the bus link to be routed through the southern part of the AWE site to serve Ty Glas station.

The Panel were not convinced by the 'picturesque Poundbury' approach to the street layout adopted in the illustrative plan and the issue of what happens at the backs of the houses remains a major concern. If both sites are acquired by the house builders the Panel would like to see the layout reworked in a more formal way, with a stronger grid pattern and associated landscaping and tree planting. At present the combination of unit types and building footprints creates a very disjointed layout, and it fails to resolve the difficult conditions created by the big box retail and leisure buildings to the north.

The Panel welcomes the proposed density and the mix of housing types (though not their layout), as well as the expressed desire for a contemporary architectural solution. Much more consideration could be given to the incorporation of sustainability features in the housing and landscaping.

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