

Statws/Status:
Cyhoeddus / Public



Adroddiad Adolygu Dylunio: 13 July 2006
Design Review Report:

Dyddiad Cyfarfod / Cyflwyno'r Deunydd: 5 July 2006
Meeting Date / Material Submitted:

Lleoliad/Location: Llanwern, Newport

Disgrifiad o'r Cynllun Regeneration scheme
Scheme Description: Mainly residential

Developer/Datblygwr: St Modwen [Rupert Joseland]

Architect/Pensaer: Stephen George & Partners
[Ian Yallop]

Ymgynghorwyr Cynllunio: GVA Grimley [Tim Gent]
Planning Consultants:

Consultants/Cynllunio: Halcrow Group [Chris James]
Munro & Whitten [Don Munro]

Awdurdod Cynllunio: Newport CC [Andrew Dawe]
Planning Authority:

Statws Cynllunio: Outline application submitted
Planning Status: March 2006

Y Panel Adolygu Dylunio/Design Review Panel:
John Punter (cadeirydd/chair) Ewan Jones
Cindy Harris (swyddog/officer) Phil Roberts
Michael Griffiths Kedrick Davies
Howard Wainwright

Lead Panellist: John Punter

Sylwedyddion/Observers: Anna Lermon, DCFW

Cyflwyniad/Presentation

The western part of the former Corus steelworks site at Llanwern was sold to St Modwens in 2004. Since then site investigation works have proceeded, alongside discussions with the Local Authority, leading to an outline application being submitted in March 2006 accompanied by an environmental statement and other supporting material. The focus currently is on strategic direction rather than detailed design.

The Llanwern regeneration site lies within Newport's eastern expansion area proposed in the UDP and is a top priority for development in the Wales spatial plan. It has been identified as one of four key regeneration sites in Wales. The eastern expansion area also provides for residential development on greenfield land to the north of this site, and for the extension of the southern distributor road along the southern border of the site [Queens Way] to the M4. The site itself covers 395 hectares, is flat and relatively unconstrained by topography. Ground contamination is being addressed on site and the flood risk threat is dealt with by on-site water attenuation, with the approval of the Environment Agency. The site is bordered by Queens Way to the south, the existing steelworks to the east, the main railway line to the north, and a retail park, fishing lakes, and sports pitch to the west. St Modwens has the first option to buy for the whole of the steelworks site, including land to the east and south-east of this site.

The aim of these proposals is for a comprehensive masterplan based on integrated mixed uses, creating a strong sense of place and supporting truly sustainable development. The buildings and landscape will be designed to a high quality and employment opportunities will be created. Over a development period of 20 years, 4,000 dwellings will be created with a range of house type, density and tenure. The built environment will be fully integrated into the 'green grid' of parkland, play areas and open spaces. Three lakes provide a landscape and amenity feature, and form part of the flood prevention strategy and sustainable drainage system. This framework of lakes and greenways is seen as the skeleton of the development. The main views from the site are to the hills in the north.

The movement framework for the site is based on a distribution loop, which will be treated as an urban boulevard to the north and less formal lanes to south, linking to a network of secondary routes and pedestrian linkages. The main access point is to the west via a new road and roundabout off Queens Way. A second access is to the south directly off Queens Way. A dedicated bus route will serve the site and all properties will be within 400 metres of a bus stop.

A new District Centre comprising a primary school and other community facilities will be established to the west, next to the main access road and roundabout. East of Monks Ditch will be a new commercial development for B1, B2 and B8 uses, well screened from the residential properties to the west and itself forming a buffer from the steelworks. Other 'character zones' within the site are defined as 'the boulevard', 'the waterside', 'the urban village', and each residential area will have a 'hamlet' as its focus with a public space and perhaps a commercial/community use.

The sustainability strategy emphasises the reuse of one of Wales' largest brownfield sites, and the creation of new habitats on what is now a barren plain. The transport

strategy and the approach to water use and drainage are important sustainability features. The design development will be informed by BREEAM and EcoHomes assessments and will take account of developing technologies. There is the potential for pockets of environmental excellence within the development as a whole.

The implementation will be in four phases, driven by Highways requirements, but each phase will include a range of house types. Residential plots will be packaged up and sold on, with development briefs and design guidance. It is hoped to start work on site next year. Public consultation has been conducted via a public exhibition and questionnaire and although response was small it was largely supportive. Other relevant organisations, such as CCW, the local archaeological trust and churches have raised no objections, although some issues remain to be resolved with the local wildlife trust.

The Local Authority recognises that this is a key site which is important for the regeneration of the whole area. They support the mix of uses and the local plan provides for 600 dwellings on this site within the plan period to 2011. The draft SPG for East Newport will be used to assess the application, including landscape issues and the relationship with the reens. The authority supports the proposal for a new railway station and wishes to see a north/south pedestrian link across the railway line.

Ymateb y Panel/Panel's Response

The Panel was told that, compared with the draft SPG, the principles of this 'masterplan' were very similar in terms of the mix of uses, quantum of development and general site layout. Although the East Newport Development Framework (ENDF) document suggests 2500 homes on this site, the developer asserted that, with an average density of 35 du/ha, the site has capacity for 4,000 homes while still leaving a generous area for open space and amenity. The presenting team thought that the ENDF figure was not intended to cap residential development on this site, and that it would be preferable to increase the density on this site rather than develop greenfield sites to the north. The Panel noted that the proposed masterplan had a very different street and block layout from that suggested in the framework document, being essentially curvilinear, inward looking and enclosed rather than rectilinear, to follow the previous drainage pattern, and open to connections beyond the site.

The Panel was concerned about the apparent lack of any relationship between the proposal and the landscape of the Gwent levels to the south. The designer stated that the views to the northern hills was the more dominant landscape reference, and that the site was a transitional area from the coastal plain to the lower hills. The site had been raised by land fill as a base for the steelworks and would now be recontoured, and given a new topography, partly because there was a need to create water storage capacity in the event of a flood. It was pointed out that only a small part of the site's southern boundary directly abuts the levels, but there is an opportunity to restore more of the levels on the south side of Queens Way in the future. The Panel noted that despite the massive impact of the steel works upon the area, the length of its influence has been comparatively short, whereas the function and geometry of the reens and field system of the Gwent Levels have influenced the character, flora and fauna for many centuries. The Panel felt strongly that this

site should acknowledge and be influenced by the levels and bear some physical relationship to them.

The Panel considered the site plan to be introverted and this was reinforced by the enclosed loop plan, the existence of only two access points from Queens Way, the lack of a road link to the north, or to commercial developments to the east. We thought that a link across the railway line to Llanwern village was essential and should inform the layout. The site for the proposed railway station was peripheral [although we were told that the location had been agreed with Newport CC] and had no apparent effect on the design of surrounding areas, which we thought was a missed opportunity. The developer stated that there were constraints on the link to the north and this could only be sited at the east end of site in the commercial zone. The development team accepted that the scheme was inward looking but pointed out that the new infrastructure created would be one of the biggest civic spaces in the area and would draw in the general public. Each residential zone was linked with its neighbours and connections within the site were good. It was agreed to revisit the bus route with a view to keeping it within the site, avoiding Queens Way and reinforcing the hamlet nodes on the south side of the lakes.

The Panel suggested that more analysis be carried out into the interface between the lakeside and the adjacent built forms, to create a more urban solution. The team agreed that there could be more commercial uses located at the lakeside and that the distributor road could have a more direct link with the lakes at certain points to reinforce commercial and recreational opportunities.

The Panel was reassured that the creation of different levels on site would not lead to the importation of bulk fill material. In fact, efforts would be made to generate topsoil through on-site composting. While supporting the intention to remain flexible in adopting renewable energy and energy efficiency technologies, the Panel urged the development team to commit to installing the pipework for a district heating scheme as part of the general infrastructure works prior to the disposal of development plots.

The Panel sought assurance that the implementation and delivery mechanism would ensure the desired quality of layout, facilities, landscape and design. We were told that the design guidance would indicate, for instance, building heights and focal points but we thought this was inadequate. Although the ENDF proposes a detailed masterplan and design code as the appropriate control tools to ensure quality, the developer does not favour the use of a design code and wishes to allow for variety and initiative, albeit within strong parameters. The Panel disagreed and thought that a design code was necessary for a scheme of this scale and importance, and could be written to allow for the requisite variety. An alternative would be to link an outline consent to a masterplan and ensure that sub-area masterplans are agreed prior to the approval of reserved matters applications.

As regards the management and maintenance of the generous landscape and complex hydrology and SUDS system, the developers signalled their intention to use a community interest company, with an annual levy on each house to provide management funds. The example of a St Modwens development in Dursley was cited and the Panel welcomed such an approach, although there are complexities with regard to the stated intention to make the lakeshores a 'grand civic space for Newport'.

Crynodeb/Summary

The Panel was pleased to have the opportunity to review this important regeneration proposal for a key strategic site. We support the commitment to a high quality, sustainable development and are impressed with the investment that has already been made in developing strategies for landscape and environmental improvement. In relation to the proposals so far, we would make the following observations:

- We consider that the site has been planned largely in isolation from the rest of the development that will take place in East Newport, and that a wider look at potential development patterns, constraints and infrastructure is necessary. This view is reinforced by the new information that St Modwen have preception rights on the future sale of Corus land and already hold other lands around the site.
- We are concerned that although the developer has an option on other adjacent sites, the current proposals make no allowance for future masterplanning of these sites (routes, land use and plan forms).
- We are not convinced that the proposed masterplan is compatible with the requirements of the END Framework document in terms of the overall site layout.
- We remain concerned about the relationship of the site to the nearby reens and the Gwent levels, and we are not convinced by the argument that the landscape to the north should be addressed to the exclusion of the landscape to the south. A transition within the site would form a more convincing landscape solution and offer more variety and potential for varied living environments.
- We would like to see the rather introverted site plan opened up, especially with an accessible north/south link across the railway, more pedestrian linkages to the residential areas to the west and to the wider footpath network. There should also be more connections to Queensway, to reduce the potential for congestion at peak times and to reduce car movements within the site, and these should consider future development patterns to the south and east.
- We support the idea of a Community Interest Company to ensure management and maintenance of the landscape and hydrology. We commend the commitment to ecology, sustainable drainage and high quality landscape and recreation facilities, and we look forward to the detailed design of these matters.
- We are not convinced that the proposed means of delivery will be sufficiently prescriptive to ensure the desired quality on the 18 projected residential developments and the district centre. The guidance currently offered by the plan is minimal. Following the ENDF and best Welsh practice (Llandarcy) we would prefer to see the use of a design code with clear, strong urban design principles to set layout and urban form requirements. We suggest that the Local Authority consider whether this should be a condition. We are not advocating an architectural code but we would seek a commitment to Ecohomes and BREEAM 'Excellent' in construction.

We would very much like to see this outline scheme again as soon as possible. This will enable the Panel to discuss issues that were not fully covered in the time

available for this review, including those listed above and the specific concerns of the local authority.

Diwedd/End

NB A Welsh language copy of this report is available upon request.