

Addroddiad Adolygu Dylunio Design Review Report

Review Status: **Public**

Meeting date:	3rd November 2010
Issue Date:	12th November 2010
Scheme Location:	Parc Llanilid, Bridgend
Scheme Description:	Residential
Planning Status:	Application submitted in August 2010

Part1: Presentation

This proposal is for a new residential development of up to 1850 houses, with a new village centre located to the south of the A473 which bisects the site. The land to the south of this road was previously an open cast coal mine; land to the north is agricultural land with a railway line running along its northern boundary. The site has been identified as a strategic site for a major mixed use development in the deposit LDP. A new link road along the southern boundary has been partially constructed.

The site layout has been developed as a series of perimeter blocks, with small rear courtyards. There is a high degree of permeability and green corridors provide a landscape structure. The first phase will be built on compacted land to the south east of the site, adjacent to a development already under construction. It will include a neighbourhood hub which could revert to residential use, once the village centre is completed in phase 2. The average density across the site will be 35-40 dwellings per hectare.

The Local Authority is supportive of the site allocation, which will play a significant part in their housing strategy, and of the permeability and nature conservation aspects of the masterplan. They support the strong aspirations for this flagship development, which will define quality for smaller schemes in the future. They have concerns about the split of the A473, and the convoluted route of the distributor roads which change direction frequently to achieve the traffic calming required by guidance provided by the Highway Authority. The planning application includes outline permission for the whole site, and a full application for an access road, development plateaux for phase 1, and infrastructure works.

Summary of key points arising from discussion, to be read in conjunction with Part 2 of this report.

The Panel welcomed the aspirations for this strategic site, and acknowledged the local importance of its 'flagship' status. However, the material presented is not an adequate reflection of these aspirations, and major issues remain to be resolved. In summary:

- The proposed layout is inward looking and lacks a clear spatial hierarchy and sense of focus and structure.
- The claim for a high degree of permeability is not demonstrated and there is a consequent loss of legibility.
- The site layout appears uniform and lacks differentiation. Character areas should be developed further, and greater intensification in some areas would help develop more character and increase green space.
- The village centre should provide a sense of place and social focus, ideally with a greater connection with the A473 [although not necessarily straddling it], especially given the opportunity presented by the downgrading of the road.
- The primary road network within the site should be redesigned to be more legible, and integrated with pedestrian routes.
- The 'green fingers' need to be more visibly connected and form legible links to a central space, or to the enhanced public realm of the village centre.
- We would like to see a greater commitment to low carbon development which delivers more than the statutory minimum standards. The lack of a site wide energy strategy, installed at the infrastructure stage, would be a lost opportunity.
- We think that some sort of design coding would help to deliver design quality and maintain consistency.

Part 2: Discussion and Panel Response in Full

The Panel understood that this is a very significant site and a critical element of the sub regional investment strategy. There is a correspondingly huge opportunity to create a cohesive sustainable neighbourhood which could serve as a flagship for subsequent development, bearing in mind that this site is one of a number of strategic allocations.

On the basis of the material presented however, the Panel had no confidence that this proposal would deliver the desired quality. The Design and Access statement does not provide a clear vision for the site supported by a strategic concept. The submitted material therefore appears without focus, lacks detail, and does not show essential components dealing with boundaries, such as connectivity or frontages, that would help interpret the intentions. We were informed that existing planting to the south of the A473 will be removed to allow a series of development blocks to front on to the road.

The site plan appears homogeneous and lacks a clear spatial hierarchy that would provide a setting for the development and different character areas. In spite of the claims made by the design team, the Panel thought that this was not a particularly permeable layout and many secondary routes were disconnected. The design team stated that where there is disconnection, for instance by the green corridor, routes will be joined up. The permeability may not have been sufficiently well illustrated, but it is definitely part of the concept.

The Panel noted that the earlier masterplan by David Lock in 2002 showed the village centre located either side of the A473, which we thought could form the basis of a strong concept plan and present an opportunity for better integration of the whole site. It was not clear how the connections across the A473 would be achieved in this proposal. We were informed that the A473 will eventually be downgraded, as the southern bypass takes more traffic, although it will remain as a through route.

Ideally the village centre should be included in the first phase of development. The Panel feared that, even with an undertaking to deliver the centre 25% of the way through the development, this area could remain undeveloped for many years to come, leaving Phase 1 isolated and disconnected from the rest of the site.

The road layout is unnecessarily convoluted and should be challenged. By shutting off long distance views, it contributes to an inward looking development, and gives rise to other problems such as awkwardly shaped, unresolved spaces. Alternative traffic calming measures should be explored, and these could provide a layout more in keeping with current good practice, as outlined in Manual for Streets, delivering streets as connected and sociable spaces.

The Panel accepted that the 'green fingers' proposed in the landscape strategy provide a framework for the development design but, without the central connection or 'palm' joining the fingers, the strategic objective remained unresolved. The Panel was concerned that play areas were not located close to each of the character areas, nor were they of a scale that would make them a significant focus in their own right. The current location, adjoining the school site, lacks impact and appears peripheral.

While the village centre is shown as a series of perimeter blocks around a public square, good connections are not apparent. The enclosed spaces appear to depend upon a significant intrusion by traffic, while the frontage to the A473 is limited. The Panel was not clear how the layout provided connections that emphasised the focal role of the centre, and there was insufficient information for us to judge the quality of the public open space that would be created.

Given the size and local significance of this scheme, the Panel was disappointed to learn that nothing more than the statutory minimum sustainability standards was being offered. Although it is intended that the masterplan should 'apply passive solar design principles' there is little indication that the site layout has been influenced by considerations of optimising orientation for solar gain. We would like to see a commitment to achieve at least Code Level 4, and a recognition that low carbon heating systems, renewable generation and rainwater recycling need to be integrated into the infrastructure works from the beginning, rather than being left to future retrofits.

The Panel advised that more work needed to be done to develop a sense of local distinctiveness that pays regard to the site context. The precedents cited, such as Upton and Poundbury, are quite different and the lessons they offer need to be selectively interpreted to fit this particular site and correspond with local market demand. Whilst some appraisal of local character has been undertaken, the Panel could not see any informatives arising from that, even though strong Welsh traditions were evident.

It was confirmed that Cofton as developer would be the sole provider of infrastructure works, public open space and the local centre for phase 1. Reserved matters applications would then be brought forward for each development parcel. It is likely that several different developers and architects will eventually be involved and the importance of maintaining design quality and consistency was agreed. The Panel suggested that a series of area frameworks for each phase, backed by simple design codes, would help to achieve this.

The Design Commission for Wales Design Review Panel and staff welcome further consultation and will be happy to provide further feedback on this report and/or where appropriate, to receive further presentations. Thank you for consulting the Commission and please keep in touch with us about the progress of your project.

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

Appendix 1: Attendees

Asiant/Client/Datblygwr: Agent/Client/Developer	Cofton [Wales] Ltd [Leigh Pudge, Andrew Stanton]
Pensaer/Architect:	Davies Landscape Architects [Mike Davies]
Consultants:	Savills [Geraint John, Paul Williams]
Awdurdod Cynllunio/ Planning Authority	Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC [Jim Bailey, Robert Chiat, Simon Gale]
Y Panel Adlygu Dylunio: Design Review Panel: Alan Francis [Chair] Cindy Harris [Officer] Martin Knight	Roger Ayton, Toby Adam Richard Keogh Simon Carne
Lead Panellist:	Roger Ayton
Sylwedyddion/Observers:	Julia Podedworny [student, Cardiff University]