

Design Review Report

Churchlands, Residential,

North East Cardiff

Meeting of 20th February 2014



Declarations of Interest

Panel members, observers and other relevant parties are required to declare *in advance* any interests they may have in relation to the Design Review Agenda items. Any such declarations are recorded here and in DCFW's central records.

Review Status

CONFIDENTIAL

Meeting date	20 th February 2014
Issue date	28th February 2014
Scheme location	North East Cardiff
Scheme description	Residential/Masterplan
Scheme reference number	37
Planning status	Outline/hybrid application submitted

Declarations of Interest

None declared.

Consultations to Date

Extensive pre-application consultation with the Local Authority is taking place . Meetings with Lisvane Community Council were held on 28th November 2013 and 4th February 2014.

The Proposals

This site forms part of the proposed North East Cardiff Strategic Site in the deposit Cardiff LDP allocated for 4,500 new homes. A hybrid planning application - outline for 1,200 homes, with full for highways and drainage infrastructure - was submitted in September 2013. The deadline for determination has been extended. The 47.4 hectare site predominantly comprises fields separated by hedgerows, with areas of mature trees to the north. Three roads currently cross the site, with Corpus Christi High School at the south.

The site forms part of a wider masterplan which includes further housing, mixed-use and schools, as well as a public transport network.

Summary

- Further work is needed on design of the public realm, travel infrastructure and parking strategies to demonstrate how the roads and pedestrian/cycle routes work together as a network. These elements will make a strong contribution to the character of the place. Detailed cross sections of the different routes will help.

- There must be clarity in the diagrams explaining how the site is designed to relate to the wider masterplan and the rest of the city in terms of urban design, transport and education strategies. It is important that the Local Education and Planning Authorities contribute to the delivery of strategic objectives to enable the delivery of this scheme.
- The aspiration for a modal shift to 50/50 use of public/private transport is supported. Further clarity is needed in explaining how the travel and education strategies will contribute to this.
- Management of landscape elements and green infrastructure will be important. It should be clearly established which elements will be adopted by the Local Authority, what will be managed by management companies and what will be privately owned by residents.
- A strategy for parking and movement will be crucial. These will be difficult to balance, but must be well planned and realistic. The width of streets must be appropriate for the type and volume of traffic. There is doubt whether 6.1m is wide enough for the main route through the site. The use of a Manual for Streets approach is supported.
- It is important to view this scheme in the context of the wider masterplan. The Local Authority must be clear about which elements of the masterplan they will take control of and set criteria for. This will help to manage conversations and relationships with the various landowners and developers, and ensure that interfaces between phases work. There must be a level of flexibility in the masterplan, and commercial viability of mixed-use and retail elements should be tested.
- The Design Commission supports the commitment to deliver a variety of affordable housing types, distributed throughout and integrated with the rest of the development of this first phase.
- The Design Commission is keen to see the Local Authority move forward the delivery of housing on this major infill site in Cardiff. We are broadly supportive of the development, and welcome the opportunity to review and add value to this scheme. We would like to review any further information and continue to use our expertise to support delivery on this site, including more detailed layouts and strategies to maximise sustainability. These proposals represent the early stages in a long term phased development which will need to properly respond to current and future requirements around energy performance, landscape and resource management and wider sustainable development requirements.

Main Points in Detail

Wider Masterplan

It is important that any scheme on this site is considered in relation to a wider masterplan for the area, and the needs of the whole city. Although the developer for this site is involved in the wider masterplan, there are a number of other land owners; and integrated delivery of facilities and transport networks outside of the application area currently remains unresolved.

That this scheme is being presented within the context of a broader masterplan is to be commended, although the masterplan, whilst useful, is still indicative or speculative as support (or not) from other landowners is unclear. All owners / developers will be expected to contribute to the infrastructure. Therefore, it is important that the Local Authority clearly establishes its criteria for the masterplan, and then controls and coordinates strategic decisions and communication with the various owners. Conversations with all the landowners and developers must be held in earnest to ensure that development in this allocated area achieves what Cardiff needs, and to get all parties signed up to a coordinated vision for the key elements.

A variety of types of affordable housing should be spread throughout the site and the wider masterplan and be fully integrated with open market housing. The developer's commitment to deliver a proportion of this in this first phase is encouraging.

Schools will be an important element of the wider development, as the new family housing will mean more children in the area. The Local Authority Education and Planning Departments need to work together in a fully integrated manner to ensure education sites and related access routes can be resolved promptly. DCFW endorse the principle of local provision, with new schools planned within the masterplan to make walking and cycling from catchment areas easy. However, as yet unresolved Local Authority strategies for this provision require swift and detailed attention.

Access and Travel

It is encouraging that the developer and Local Authority are committed to the Manual for Streets approach to inform the design of this scheme, and that there is a desire for the network of routes to encourage walking, cycling, scooting and use of public transport. This does require that there is a match between road size and function, including local service and parking needs.

It is crucial that the Local Authority Highways Department works with the team to deliver this scheme which is underpinned by its transport and highways network. In this work a balance should be struck between adequate accommodation for the transport network and an over engineered approach. The MfS approach will assist this.

Until further phases of the masterplan are delivered, there will be one main route through the site. The width of 6.1m carriageway proposed for the busiest part of this route seems too narrow to comfortably accommodate the level of traffic. Unregulated parking and stopping could clog this important route and active parking enforcement should not be relied upon in this location.

The Design Commission supports the aspiration for a modal shift to 50/50 use of private transport/public transport, walking and cycling, which will encourage healthy living. It is not yet clear how this 50/50 aspiration will be achieved. Within the urban design it will,

as a minimum, require attractive and direct walking, cycling and bus routes throughout the wider masterplan that connect to the rest of the city.

If the modal shift is successful, the network will need to provide for large numbers of walkers and cyclists. Designs should allow for this, particularly at peak times, and established methods for safely accommodating peak flows of commuting and leisure cyclists and walkers, should be explored.

Evidence of a suitable network of safe cycle and walking routes and roads should be provided in the form of clear diagrams and cross sections. Where the Manual for Streets is used, this should be made clear so that the Local Authority can have confidence of quality, that a sense of place is being created, and that they will be able to maintain these public areas.

Parking Strategy

A well designed parking strategy will be crucial to this development. The parking strategy will have an impact on the traffic flow as well as the character of the place and quality of life for residents. Parking should be convenient and safe, and the strategy must be based on realistic numbers of spaces required for the type and density of housing proposed.

It is encouraging that the design team are working with the Local Authority to minimise the need for enforcement through an efficient design. However, the Panel expressed some concern that the cul-de-sac arrangements, with narrowed shared routes need also to accommodate service movements and off-plot parking spaces.

Parking strategies will need to provide practical solutions to the practical use of streets while securing the related street landscape strategy. The Panel would be supportive of on road parking if design for this is properly integrated, maintaining activity within the roads and ensuring that dwelling front doors act and are used, as the main entrances.

Public Realm and Landscape Design

The green infrastructure and landscape elements have the potential to provide significant lasting value and benefits for residents, wildlife/biodiversity and the wider environment. It is encouraging that substantial existing trees and hedges will be retained, and that plenty of green space for recreation and wildlife will be provided. The landscape and public realm design will contribute significantly to the overall character of the place, and should be used to encourage a sense of community.

Although a full tree survey has been carried out to assess the condition and importance of the trees on the site, a tree planting strategy should consider the long term, including plans for lifecycle replacement of older trees which will deteriorate in the future.

It will be crucial to establish at an early stage, who will be responsible for maintenance of the various elements of green infrastructure, as this important element of the scheme must well kept. Responsibilities may lie with the Local Authority, management companies or a joint venture, and the related character, function and management regime may affect the design principles. This should also consider what restrictions or requirements (if any) are placed on front gardens in order to establish and maintain the desired character for each part of the masterplan.

It would be useful to develop a coding for streets which includes trees and other planting. This would give clarity and detail, improving the Local Authority's understanding of what the developer is committing to provide and what they will be adopting. Good precedents for this exist in the UK and should be further explored.

A number of nodes have been identified along the main route through the site. These will be places where buses will stop and people will be encouraged to gather and spend time. The team identified a number of ways in which people will be encouraged to stop at the nodes: recreation space, bus stops, public spaces and village greens. The purpose of each node needs to be better defined, each with a clear character and role – currently there may be too many. Both the developer and the Local Authority are keen to explore the idea of flexible use of the buildings around the nodes, which would allow residential units to become mixed-use with retail on the ground floor in the future. The Local Authority should explore how best this can be achieved through the planning system.

There is a desire to achieve variation in character along the length of the principal route. This needs to be considered in more detail, including where the boundaries between different character areas fall, and how they relate to the nature of the site and any existing characteristics such as topography. Such boundaries should be clear, well defined and simple in treatment, so as to be effective.

Presentation

Clearer diagrammatic drawings are needed to demonstrate how this site is integrated with the wider masterplan and the rest of the city. The diagrams should clearly explain the hierarchy of routes, density, facilities and green and blue infrastructure and should demonstrate the rationale behind the layout. Cross sections through the site showing public spaces and streets of different types will help to explain the character of the place and will provide evidence that the different modes of travel can be accommodated.

Clear presentation will help in conversations with the various stakeholders and members of the public and help facilitate a confident assessment by the Local Authority.

It should be clear which aspects of the application are aspirations and to which the developer is making a commitment.

Further Work and Engagement

Further work is needed on a number of areas of the proposal. The land parcels comprising linked cul-de-sacs need to be considered in more detail to make sure that shared use is compatible with the operational requirements for servicing, access and parking.

As designs progress, sustainability strategies and energy use should be considered in more detail. Aspirations should not be stated if they are not achievable and the implications of WG policy should be carefully considered. With an estimated build period of six years, Building Regulations will change during the development, and there must be recognition in the proposed strategies that the site will need to accommodate these changing requirements.

There are useful recent precedents for successful housing developments such as Newhall, Portishead, or coded development like Upton, or Lawley Village which balance commercial budgets with a diversity of housing. These could inform investigations of parking strategies, palette of materials, street designs and how diversity in the character of housing can be improved. These also offer useful models for management and adoption matters.

The Design Commission's aim in engaging with the designers, developers and Local Authority on this scheme is to encourage and support good quality development on this site. It is important that delivery is not unnecessarily delayed, as this will increase risk and costs for the developer, which will inevitably have an impact on the quality of scheme that could be delivered.

The Local Planning Authority should set out a draft of the conditions that are likely to be imposed on any approval, as a means of identifying issues of concern now, and to allow the applicant to consider appropriate responses as the application moves forward. This will assist the authority to manage delivery of the scheme, and will also help inform further work to be done by the design team.

The Design Commission would welcome the opportunity to review any further information and continue to use our expertise to add value and assist all parties with the delivery of a good quality scheme for this site and the kind of place and neighbourhood it can become.

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

Attendees

Agent/Client/Developer:	Jane Carpenter, Redrow Tony McGorrigan, Redrow
Architectural/Urban Designer:	Ed Turner, Pegasus (urban design) Lyn Powell, RPS (planning) Mike Axon, Vectos (transport)
Local Authority:	Tim Walter, Cardiff City Council (case officer) Nigel Hanson, Cardiff City Council

Gareth Harcombe, Cardiff City Council

Design Review Panel:

Chair

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Ewan Jones

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Observing:

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