



DESIGN
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Design Review Report

Bryngwyn Fields, Swansea

DCFW Ref: N103

Meeting of 17th March 2016



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

PUBLIC

Meeting date	17 th March 2016
Issue date	24 th March 2016
Scheme location	Bryngwyn Fields, Swansea
Scheme description	Residential Development
Scheme reference number	N103
Planning status	Pre-application, strategic site in emerging LDP

Declarations of Interest

None.

Consultations to Date

This is the first time that the Design Commission for Wales has reviewed proposals for this site. Consultation with the local community and the local planning authority has been undertaken.

The Proposals

The proposal is for residential development of approximately 750 new homes, a large primary school and associated landscape and public realm works including the creation of parks and open spaces.

An outline planning application is to be submitted for the whole site with all matters except access reserved. The site is coming forward as a potential strategic site in the emerging City & County of Swansea Council Local Development Plan.

Main Points

The design review focused on two priorities for the site: ensuring that the new development is knitted into the existing settlement so that it becomes part of it rather than being isolated from it; ensuring that the development has identity and a sense of place. The following points were raised for consideration in the context of these two main aims.

Site analysis

A considered and informative site and context analysis has been carried out and is informing the proposed layout. This step is essential in order for features of the site that can provide character and distinction to be identified and incorporated in the development. In this case the retention of trees, hedgerows and the incorporation of green spaces have contributed to the concept and must be maintained through to the detailed design.

The need to respond positively to the edges of the site has been identified in the site analysis. The proposed layout largely responds to this with the exception of the south east corner, close to the Swansea Road and A484 roundabout where the backs of properties face on to a prominent view into the site. It was agreed at the review that the orientation of these properties would be changed to better address this view.

The need to create pedestrian links to the existing settlement has been identified and an improved footpath to the north west of the site is proposed. It is important that these improvements are delivered with the development to support pedestrian movement and a viable link to the facilities of Gorseinon.

Creating a place

Place-making is about people as well as buildings – how they will use a place and interact with one another, the life-style and quality of life that the place offers, and the sense of community that is fostered. The school provides another use within the development that will create more activity. The placement of the school seems to be appropriate but further detail is needed on how the design of the school will integrate with the public realm. Locating the school on the main access route junction gives it presence and provides the opportunity to create more of a community focus in this location. However vehicular movement for school drop off and pick up needs to be considered, tested and demonstrated in more detail.

The possibility of providing for other uses within this nodal point near to the school should be explored. This could be a flexible unit(s) that could accommodate a corner shop, cafe or live-work units, for example, that would enhance the sense of place, stimulate more activity through the day and provide for those in the south east of the site who are outside of a ten minute walking time from the existing facilities. Incorporating this into the ground floor of the apartment block may be the most viable option.

Character and identity

As the site analysis has identified, the incorporation of green spaces and existing trees and hedgerows will provide identity for the development. The distribution of these throughout the site is positive as it provides a setting for each section of housing and relief from the built form. It is important that these green elements are preserved in the final layout and should be set out in the parameters plan that accompanies the outline planning application.

More detailed studies of how the green spaces are to be integrated into the development would help to set out some parameters for design. For example, how parking will be arranged around these spaces, where children's play facilities will be incorporated and

what form this will take and how footpaths will be integrated. Different spaces will have a different nature, for example the spaces around the north eastern edge of the development may be treated differently to the more formal spaces within the heart of the development. This could be more clearly defined within the masterplan to accompany the outline planning application.

The inclusion of a landscape architect in the design team at this stage is welcomed and should enable the creation of a robust and value-adding green infrastructure plan that is incorporated into the masterplan. This also provides the opportunity to integrate ecological connections, biodiversity and drainage requirements in a coordinated and positive way to add value to the overall development.

The long, direct views through the site, for example from the Garden Village northwards, are a strong feature of the proposed layout and will improve the character and legibility of the development.

Access and movement

Public transport was not mentioned in the presentation but a convenient bus stop is fundamental to ensure that this development does not depend entirely on the car. During the review consideration was given to the potential for the existing bus route to be diverted through the development and this should be followed up with further discussions with the bus company and the local authority. The proposals should be responsive to the opportunities provided in legislation via the Active Travel Act (Wales) 2013.

Vehicular access points into the site are limited, with the main route off Hospital Road serving the majority of the development. This may be sufficient for the residential development but it creates a long journey for those coming to the school from the existing settlement. Further work is required on movement to and from the school for pedestrians, cyclists and drivers. The opportunity to include a drop off point to the south of the school to be accessed via Swansea Road was discussed and should be considered as part of the travel plan for the school. If provision is not made for this it is likely that people will use this route anyway and create congestion problems in the future.

Architecture

The design of the individual properties was discussed only briefly at this stage. It is understood that this will be based on a standard house type but with scope to alter elevation treatments and some elements of the fenestration. The setting provides scope for a contemporary approach as the surrounding development does not provide a strong direction for architectural style. The Design Commission urges a distinctive development but would support a more simple design approach that could achieve this through a greater emphasis on quality and good proportions, over a more complicated design with superfluous and costly 'features'. Render has not performed well on the nearby Six Mills Avenue development and we would not wish to see this repeated on this site.

The distribution of house types across the site should support the development of character areas but also provide a balanced mix of property sizes and tenures.

Next Steps

There are some amendments to be made to the proposed layout in response to the points raised above as well as further consideration of access and mix of uses. We would recommend a return to the Commission for further review and to allow consideration of the school again in more detail, prior to a planning application being submitted.

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

Attendees

Architect:	Chris Waterworth, Chris Waterworth Architects
Landscape Architect:	Dai Lewis, EDP
Planning Consultant:	Geraint John, Geraint John Planning
Developer:	Christopher Jenkins, Persimmon Homes
Local Planning Authority:	Lucy Kelly, Steve Smith, Huw Jenkins, City and County of Swansea Council
Design Review Panel:	
Chair	Jamie Brewster
Lead Panellist	Jen Heal, Design Advisor, DCFW
Panel	Mike Gwyther-Jones Angela Williams Chris Jones