

# Design Review Report

Edlogan Wharf,

South Sebastopol

**DCFW Ref: N153**

Meeting of 24<sup>th</sup> November 2017



**Review Status**

Meeting date  
Issue date  
Scheme location  
Scheme description  
Scheme reference number  
Planning status

**PUBLIC**

24<sup>th</sup> November 2017  
7<sup>th</sup> December 2017  
Torfaen  
Residential Development Brief  
N153  
Outline submitted

## Declarations of Interest

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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.

Panellist, Toby Adam works at Gaunt Francis who are working with Soltys Brewster on a different, unconnected scheme. All present were content to proceed with the review following the declaration.

## Consultations to Date

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Consultation on this phase is expected to commence in December 2017.

The scheme for the wider masterplan area and other character areas have been before the DCFW Design Review Panel on 3 previous occasions, the last being 16<sup>th</sup> February 2017. This report should be read in conjunction with previous reports.

## The Proposals

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The site for the wider masterplan is/was open countryside site with many natural features, including watercourses, woodlands, established field patterns and hedges. The Brecon and Monmouth Canal runs through the site for which around 1200 houses are proposed.

This review is for the Development Brief for the uplands area of the masterplan which includes a large area of conserved landscape and woodland. It will accommodate approximately 216 dwellings, sports pitches, public open space and a bus route. The site is the 3rd phase of a larger urban infill/town expansion scheme that will eventually join Sebastopol to Cwmbran/Pontnewydd.

## Main Points

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The following points should be considered to inform further design work:

**Planning and design process**

The Design Commission is keen to see that the planning and design processes for all stages of the South Sebastopol development are working together to achieve the best design quality possible. The Commission aims to add value through its Design Review

Service and, therefore, much of the discussion at this review explored the best way to do so at this stage of the project.

The overall layout and character areas have already been set out and to a certain extent fixed in the outline planning permission for the wider site. The Development Brief document reviewed here, is intended to guide and control design quality for the individual character area. To be of best value and use to the Local Planning Authority (LPA) it should provide them with the tools to secure and enforce quality at the more detailed level of design, at reserved matters stages and through to delivery. It needs to provide sufficient detail to provide that control without being so detailed that it is overly prescriptive.

This process will be most useful if a number of strategic issues are dealt with in more detail. These are considered below.

### **Value from lessons learned**

It is planned that over 1000 homes will be delivered through this development across all the phases. Given the time this will take, there will be useful lessons to be learned from the early phases which can inform both the design and planning process of later phases.

The Commission would welcome the opportunity to visit the first completed areas of development in order to work with the LPA, design teams and developers to identify strengths and areas for improvement and to add value to later phases.

Benchmarking visits to successful, exemplar developments elsewhere in the UK would also provide useful lessons. Schemes which have recently won architecture awards would be a good starting point.

### **Strategic design**

The following strategies could usefully be addressed in the Development Brief document:

- Sustainability strategy – this could include orientation for passive design, energy strategies, energy/carbon targets, integrated green and blue infrastructure, biodiversity, sustainable drainage and materials.
- Dealing with topography – a number of acceptable options for dealing with level changes could be considered and specified. Effective level changes may occur at boundaries between properties/gardens, across individual properties or gardens, along street edges and in public open spaces. Consideration should be given to the quality and usefulness of spaces resulting from level changes both in the public realm and private properties.
- Dealing with cars – the location and nature of this development means that there will be many cars. A good mix of parking strategies will be crucial to avoid cars dominating streetscapes, and this should be made more explicit. Strategies should be 'tested' by drawing a realistic number of cars in perspective images. It will be useful for the LPA and highways authority to discuss the design approach to the scheme, and the Manual for Streets Quality Audit may be a useful tool for enhancing street design, evaluating and learning from earlier phases. As well as parking, it will be important to design for efficient, convenient public transport

use and Active Travel to help manage car use. Links to the nearest train station should be considered.

- Landscape character – the existing landscape is probably the most valuable asset of the site. There are more strategic approaches that could be made to make the most of landscape connections, whether physical or visual. In this character area, most of the woodland is edged by back gardens. The relationship between gardens and wider landscape could be designed to add value to properties. Where there are public rights of way or other foot and cycle paths, the nature and experience of these should be considered and designed in.
- Architectural character – defining architectural character is one of the biggest challenges for this Development Brief. The team have stated that it should be informed by traditional local architecture, but modern house building does not usually reflect the scale (ceiling heights), proportions, detailing, craftsmanship and use of local materials found in traditional houses. If different architects were to design each house or cluster of houses a more authentically 'traditional' and 'evolutionary' approach might be achieved through the phases. We live differently today than we previously have done and new 'traditions' ought to be stimulated.
- Dealing with the everyday – strategies to integrate everyday necessities such as refuse and recycling bins, utility boxes/meters and services should be set out.

### **Building community**

The document should encourage and enable a real sense of community to develop. The design of spaces between buildings and spatial relationships will be important to this. Open spaces should be designed and described in more detail to protect them through delivery, and they should have defined uses and be named to help strengthen a sense of ownership.

Opportunities for residents to personalize their properties and front gardens could be designed in. Engaging artists or other creative professionals to work with residents to help shape identity for shared spaces would help build a sense of community. An enabling programme of events and activities through the management organisation/s would maintain this. It may also be useful to involve residents in the management of the landscape.

The sports pitches will be a key focus for the community. More detail is needed to ensure these relate well to their surroundings, parking is integrated and there are good connections to foot and cycle paths from the surrounding residential areas. The changing rooms/pavilion provides an opportunity for exemplar architectural design. This opportunity should be better exploited.

We look forward to a resolved document that works for the LPA, design and delivery teams alike and would welcome the opportunity to contribute to the learning and evaluation process via site visits with the LPA and team.

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

## Attendees

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Agent/Client/Developer:	Richard Price, Taylor Wimpey
Architect/Planning Consultant:	Emma Harding, Asbri Planning Simon Brewster, Soltys Brewster Gareth Howell, The Urbanists
Local Planning Authority:	Helen Smith & Adam Foote, Torfaen CBC
Design Review Panel:	
Chair	Andrew Linfoot
Lead Panellist	Steve Smith Toby Adam Maria Asenjo Jen Heal, Design Advisor, DCFW Amanda Spence, Design Advisor, DCFW Carole-Anne Davies, CE, DCFW