



IHP Design Review Report

H-Factor, Aberfan

DCFW Ref: IHP AF

Meeting of 11th July 2018

Review Status	PUBLIC
Meeting date	11 th July 2018
Issue date	18 th July 2018
Scheme location	Aberfan
Scheme description	Residential
Scheme reference number	IHP AF
Planning status	Pre-application

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.

The panel Chair was advised that Gayna Jones, Chair of the Design Commission for Wales, chairs the IHP Group. Gayna was not present in the meeting. All present at the review were content to proceed following the declarations.

The Proposals

The proposal is an Elderly Homes Exchange (EHE). The idea is to build 16 single story 'power-homes' in a community setting for elderly people who can no longer maintain their own terrace homes. The elderly participants will exchange their 2-3 bedroom homes for a zero carbon property in a community living setting. Their homes will be rented by the community co-operative to families needing 2-3 bedroom properties. The rental income will cover the cost of their zero carbon modular home. The power-houses use their own renewable energy and the aim is they produce more energy than they use. The EHE releases under-utilised homes enabling 1 home to become 2, 10 to become 20 and 20 to become 40 and so on. It is a model that can be replicated in any area. It can be scaled down to $\frac{3}{4}$ properties and scaled up for use on bigger sites including intergenerational living.

The Elderly Home Exchange Project was developed to address the social and financial issues faced by a high percentage of elderly homeowners who, because they have their own homes are not eligible for supported housing. Having an asset prevents them claiming any form of housing benefit to help pay for residency in a sheltered environment. As a result of this policy elderly homeowners face financial stress and anxiety and are forced to stay in homes they cannot look after, do not utilise as far as size is concerned, and face the worry of fuel poverty and low income. Many are suffering managed health conditions and would greatly benefit from a community living environment where they interact with their peer group and form support networks. The community living aims to counteract secondary social well-being concerns associated with loneliness and isolation.

Elderly people who own their own terrace homes do not qualify for supported housing and either remain in a home they cannot look after or pay an average of £550 per month to live in sheltered flats outside of their home village. This financial cost is a major worry particularly to residents who have been mortgage free for many years.

The terraced homes they own in MTCBC are valued at 60-75K, so downsizing, even if one bedroom bungalows were available to buy is not an option. Elderly people face the worry of having to sell their property and use the funds to cover the cost of alternative rents. Their biggest worry is they will out-live their funds and become a burden on families and benefits. In this proposal the rental of their existing home covers their living costs and the maintenance of their asset until their final check out or they need to leave independent living for more specialist care. On final check out their home reverts to their family, allowing them to provide for themselves and their future generations.

Main Points

This report is not minutes of the full discussion that took place during the review, rather a summary of the key points that have been identified that would help to improve the project and any concerns regarding the funding of the project.

Urgent Design Concerns

- Lack of professional design input to date, although it is understood that this is because funding has not been available for design input.
- Once a site has been confirmed, design input from an integrated team of consultants on the layout, orientation, routes and landscape design will be crucial to getting the best value from the site and project.
- The layout presented at the review was poorly considered, although it is understood that the project is at a stage where the site is not yet fixed.

Placemaking

Informative site and context analysis

Once a site has been confirmed, it is important that good analysis of the site and context is undertaken so that opportunities and constraints can be identified early and inform the design process. This will enable the team to get best value from the site.

DCFW's guide for Welsh Government, *Site and Context Analysis: Capturing the Value of Site*, can be found here:

<https://gov.wales/topics/planning/policy/guidanceandleaflets/site-and-context-analysis-guide/?lang=en>

Testing site layout

Following site analysis, it will be useful to establish a set of criteria against which different layout options can be tested.

In designing the layout of the development a number of important issues should be considered. These include, but are not limited to:

- Entrance, access, connections and movement through the site
- Parking/car pool/shared transport strategy
- Communal open space
- Relationships with surroundings, including the river
- Public-private hierarchy
- Orientation of units for solar and views
- Deliveries, servicing and maintenance
- Landscape strategy which means every outdoor space is purposeful and adds value
- Gardens of manageable size

- Inclusion of allotments
- Treatment of corners
- Views of, from and through the site
- Density (seems too low on option presented)
- Should the development be only for elderly?

It may be useful to compare layouts with precedent exemplar projects.

Masterplan and phased approach

If the site is large or has a number of sections, it would be useful to develop a masterplan for the whole site which would allow for phased development, ensuring that the valuable community facilities are available for residents of the first phase.

Design and business plan

The layout, and density in particular, will have an impact on the project's business and cost plan. The scale of the site and potential density of development will need to be carefully considered in relation to the business plan model.

It is also important that risks are managed, and design can have an impact on this. For example, the hall could be designed to maximise revenue opportunities.

Integration of innovation

Innovation approach: The proposed elderly home exchange model aims to deliver a number of community and social benefits, particularly providing affordable, manageable accommodation which is suited to older people whilst freeing up larger homes for families at affordable rents. Both the new properties and the upgraded existing homes aim to reduce carbon and fuel poverty.

The fabric first approach to construction of the new homes with simple user controls is appropriate. The ambitions to use local materials and supply chain and provide skills training are also commendable. A sequential approach to selection and procurement of local materials and contractors might be the best way to achieve this.

Next Steps

- Aim to secure a site and appoint an integrated design team
- DCFW would welcome the opportunity to review the scheme again through our regular design review service

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

Attendees

Agent/Client/Developer: Gary Colston & Lynne, H-Factor

Design/Planning Team: Jonathan Williams, SPECIFIC

Design Review Panel:

Chair

Panel

Kedrick Davies
Angela Williams
Jamie Brewster
Amanda Spence