

# Design Review Report

Felindre Village, Swansea

**DCFW Ref: N130**

Meeting of 16<sup>th</sup> February 2017



## 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

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

### PUBLIC

16<sup>th</sup> February 2017  
7<sup>th</sup> March 2017  
Swansea  
Residential Masterplan  
N130  
Pre-application

## Declarations of Interest

---

Steve Smith of City and County of Swansea made a declaration that he is a serving Design Review Panel Member for the Design Commission for Wales. All attendees were happy to proceed with Steve in attendance.

## Consultations to Date

---

The site is allocated in the deposit LDP and there has been consultation with the public and statutory consultees. The formal pre-application consultation process is planned for late 2017.

## The Proposals

---

The scheme comprises the proposed development of up to 800 homes on 77 hectares of land to the north of junction 46 of the M4 near Llangyfelach. The development includes a primary school, a small local centre with amenity spaces and homes in buildings ranging from 2 to 3 stories. It is intended that an application for outline planning consent will be made later in 2017.

The proposed site sits adjacent to the recently serviced but currently undeveloped Felindre Business Park, which is located on the site of the old Felindre Tin Plate Works but is separated from it by 'Rhos' pasture land. Recently constructed link roads connect the Business Park to the M4 and an extension will form the access to the proposed residential development. The proposed site is currently green-field agricultural land of 3B quality but parts of it have been classified as a SINC (Site of Importance for Nature Conservation). The site has a historic field pattern with mature hedgerow lines and copses of trees that obscure extensive low-level views across it. A Grade II listed farmhouse, Tredegar-Fawr, sits in the south-west corner of the site. The topography is undulating but essentially rises from approx. 80m AOD in the south to 113m AOD in the north.

---

## Main Points in Detail

---

The following points summarise key issues from the review and should be considered to inform further work ahead of a planning application being made:

### **Principle of Development of the Site**

The Panel was concerned to see development proposed on this greenfield site which is isolated from other developed land, in a location where sustainable access and transport is very difficult to provide. Therefore, development of this greenfield site for housing, given the current lack of connection to Swansea city centre, needs to be especially well justified if it is to proceed. Given the location and nature of the site, it is difficult to see how it will not become a car-dependent and car-dominated place.

As the authority's LDP develops the context will change. It will be useful to map potential future development to demonstrate how the proposal might better relate to existing and planned development.

### **Opportunity for Exemplar Development**

If substantial justification is made and development of the site does take place, the opportunity should be taken to design and deliver exemplar housing and place-making and a model for sustainable development of greenfield sites. Both the Welsh Government and the local authority have a responsibility to ensure that this happens.

A strong design vision for the development will be crucial. This will concisely set out what a contemporary Welsh village should be like.

Achieving the vision will require innovation in both design of the homes and public realm and in the way the scheme is delivered, but the innovation needs to be based on good analysis and evidence.

The following issues will need to be resolved to an exemplary standard:

- Strong parameter plans at outline application stage
- Achievable public transport (operating at convenient hours, safe and affordable)
- Active Travel and connectivity – convenient, safe and attractive routes for walking and cycling for everyday journeys
- Environmental performance and sustainability – passive design, low energy, low carbon, minimise waste, green infrastructure, sustainable drainage, comfort conditions for residents
- Layout and orientation – to maximise environmental performance and well-being
- Appropriate 'village' character – road sections, density, building heights, layout, landscape design
- Viable and attractive village centre
- Reducing risk for developers by providing good level of certainty at outline application stage

It will be useful to benchmark exemplar schemes elsewhere in UK. The design team, local authority, Welsh Government and potential developers could learn from visiting them.

## **Overall Layout**

It is encouraging to see that analysis of the existing landscape and ecology surveys are informing the layout and quantity of development. The analysis helps to justify some loss of (In full) SINC. A three-dimensional model (physical or virtual) and site sections would help to explain the topography and context and could be used to demonstrate how the design responds to it.

The listed building is handled well.

The proposed access and road strategy is sensible, but further thought will need to be given to provision of convenient, safe, attractive foot and cycle routes for everyday journeys within and outside of the site to encourage active travel.

The access to sunlight afforded by the south-facing slope of the site can be utilised for passive design and well-being. The current indicative layout does not take advantage of this, giving priority to a 'housebuilder-friendly' arrangement. In many traditional villages, buildings were oriented to make the most of sunlight; taking this approach could also contribute to the village character.

## **Built Form, Roads and Character**

In order to achieve a contemporary village character careful consideration will need to be given to the design of roads, built form and orientation, landscape design and public realm.

Studying the layout and built form of nearby Felindre and other local villages could help the team capture the 'essence' of a village in the outline application.

The current proposed road sections are very suburban in character and do not fit with the vision for a contemporary village on a greenfield site. The character of the streets should differentiate the primary route from other streets.

In terms of building heights, nestling the taller buildings in low-lying areas and amongst trees and hedges might help with the visual impact of the development.

## **Public and Open Space**

The following issues should be considered in relation to the provision of green and public spaces:

- Parking for playing fields
- Long term management
- Local engagement in use and management
- Interaction with habitats
- Innovative play spaces
- Visibility and integration of retained hedgerows

## **Inclusion and Access**

The Design Commission expects to see inclusive design considered from the outset and consultation with access and disability groups is encouraged. Design and place-making for ease of use by everyone requires consideration of the following:

- Children and places for play

- Physical and hidden disabilities
- People of all ages
- Navigation aids (layout, colour, wind, aroma)
- Pedestrians and cyclists, and the potential conflict between them

### **Planning and Procurement Process**

The planning process should be used to ensure that quality, performance, character and detail are delivered. Sub area plans, agreed under reserved matters will be useful; as will regular developer-design team meetings.

The division of the site into land parcels for different developers to bring forward could make it difficult to achieve consistent quality and character. Disposal strategies should be explored and it may be better to take a consortium approach.

The local authority should ensure that a stage for discussion of the detailed design of the development is clearly built into the consent and conditions approval processes. Further consultation at a second meeting with the Commission may be valuable and should be planned for as soon as possible.

**Comisiwn Dylunio Cymru Design Commission for Wales is the trading name of DCFW LIMITED, a Private Limited Company established under the Companies Act 1985 and 2006, Company No: 04391072 incorporated in England and Wales as a wholly owned subsidiary of the Welsh Government. Registered office: 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Cambrian Buildings, Mount Stuart Square, Cardiff CF10 5FL T: 029 2045 1964 E [connect@dcfw.org](mailto:connect@dcfw.org). The comment recorded in this report, arising from formal Design Review through our Design Review Service, is provided in the public interest for the consideration of local planning authorities as a material consideration, and other users of the Design Review Service. It is not and should not be considered 'advice' and no third party is bound or required to act upon it. The Design Review Service is delivered in line with DCFW's published protocols, code of conduct and complaints procedure, which should be read and considered by users of the service.**

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

## Attendees

---

Agent/Client/Developer:	Paul Evans, Welsh Government
Architect/Planning Consultant:	Paul Vining, WYG Jonathan Vining, WYG Luke Craddy, , WYG Chris Meddins, WYG Lee Morris, WYG
Local Authority:	Steve Smith, Tom Evans & Andrew Ferguson, Swansea CC

Design Review Panel:

Chair

Lead Panellist

Ewan Jones

Michael Griffiths

Maria Asenjo

Jamie Brewster

Kedrick Davies

Helen Kane

Amanda Spence, Design Advisor, DCFW

Carole-Anne Davies, CE, DCFW

Observing:

David Jeffrey, WYG