Design Review Report

St Cyres School Site

DCFW Ref: 132

Meeting of 16th March 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
16th March 2017  
30th March 2017  
Vale of Glamorgan  
Residential Development  
N132  
Pre-application

Declarations of Interest

None declared.

Consultations to Date

This is the first time that DCFW have been consulted on proposals for this site.

The Proposals

Redevelopment of the former St Cyres School site incorporating 225 residential properties and associated community recreation land.

Main Points

The Design Commission welcomed the opportunity to review the emerging development brief for this site at the concept stage while there is an opportunity to enhance the proposals. The following key points were raised in the review.

Concept Development

The draft development brief document presents a good summary of the aspects that have been covered in the site and context analysis, however there is currently a missing link in the narrative between the analysis and the concept plan. The explanation of the process that has been undertaken in working through the ecology considerations and community requirements with NRW and the local authority explain some of the decisions that have been made. This gap should be addressed in the final document.

We recognise that some of the requirements for the site are still unknown, particularly in relation to the community uses. This presents a challenge to successfully integrate these elements and provide certainty about place making opportunities, including the quality of the central space that the scheme concept is based upon. Clarity is required as soon as
possible to enable the design team to move forward with the approach to the edges of
the area of the community hub. We suggest that possible options that may come
forward for the Community Hub are explored to maximise good place making and
establish parameters for designs, especially where secure sports pitch provision may
present some challenging interfaces.

Review the Vision

Now that a significant amount of work has been undertaken understanding the
requirements of the site and its constraints, it is an important time to revisit the vision
for the development. Taking a fresh look at how the constraints can be considered
positively to give the development character, interest and distinctiveness will enhance
the proposals and will be more compelling for the community as well as prospective
buyers. The vision should move on from the general commitments currently expressed
in the development brief to be more specific about what type of place this will be, what it
will be like to live there and how it will form the new edge to Dinas Powys. The present
design narrative describes “village core” and “village edge” development and this should
be reviewed. The location of the proposed development suggests that it should establish
an attractive residential area on the edge of the existing settlement that draws on the
wealth of local assets on the site.

Addressing the Woodland

It is important that future residents understand the importance of the ecology of the
area and buy into being custodians of this important resource. Further work is required
to ensure that the woodland that has been identified as important dormouse habitat is
positively integrated into the development. The current arrangement of rear gardens
facing onto the woodland presents management and security issues and does not
maximise the site’s potential. The tree cover is one of the key assets of the site that
should contribute to the sense of place. Addressing this woodland edge more positively,
for example with a footpath along the edge or a portion of the estate road with
properties facing onto the woodland, will provide a better setting for the properties and
will help to prevent unwanted issues that can occur at the back of properties such as
rubbish being dumped over the fence and insecure boundaries.

Further exploration of the potential to open up the woodland in a controlled way that
would allow important pedestrian connections to be made across the site is required.
Looking at examples of what has been done elsewhere such as the former Hellingly
Hospital site developed by Persimmon Homes and an application recently submitted at
Crowborough by Catesby Strategic Land could be useful to explore more flexible
approaches to integrating appropriate dormouse habitat mitigation / protection and
public access. A more creative dialogue with NRW that recognises the presence of
protected species and habitat as well as exploring opportunities for local education,
information, appreciation and ownership of the ecological asset should be explored.
Consideration could then be given to whether this space could contribute towards the
open space requirements for the site.

Developing Character

The vision should inform the next stage of design of the streets and spaces which will
enhance the character and identity of the development.
The topography has a significant impact on the land to the west of the site and the design must respond appropriately to this area in the house types that are selected and how they are arranged. Although this presents a challenge, it can also contribute to the creation of a great setting for the development if addressed positively. Retaining more of the field boundaries could further enhance this character. The design solution for these spaces needs to be worked through and evidenced in plan, elevation and section.

**Balancing Requirements**

Negotiation will inevitably be required regarding the delivery of affordable housing, retaining the important ecological habitat, providing the required community space, creating a great new part of Dinas Powys and generating a capital receipt for the site. Long-term quality and placemaking implications must be taken into consideration in this ongoing process. Development of high quality and design must be delivered on this prominent site.

It is positive to hear that DQR compliant house types have been designed that can be easily pepper-potted through the development. We welcome the principle of integration of affordable housing across the site.

**Next Steps**

We would like to see proposals for the site again to see how the vision and principles have been translated into the layout. Early scheduling of this is important to secure a date at an appropriate time.

DCFW also act as the assessing organisation for Building for Life 12 Wales and should be contacted for assessment when the application has been determined.

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

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**Attendees**

**Architect/Design Team:** Rob Hammonds, Hammonds Yates Architects
Consultants: Darren Parker, RPS
Helen Donnelly, RPS

Client Team: Zoe Aubrey, Barratt David Wilson Homes
Stephen Butler, Vale of Glamorgan

Local Planning Authority: Mark White, Vale of Glamorgan

Design Review Panel:
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Lead Panellist Alister Kratt
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Simon Carne
Jen Heal, Design Advisor, DCFW
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