

Design Review Report

Pantlasau Farm, Swansea

DCFW Ref: 58

Meeting of 20th November 2014



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

CONFIDENTIAL

Meeting date	20 th November 2014
Issue date	8th December 2014
Scheme location	Pantlasau Farm, Swansea
Scheme description	Residential
Scheme reference number	58
Planning status	Candidate Site in the LDP

Declarations of Interest

None declared.

Consultations to Date

This is a candidate site in the Local Development Plan. Consultation has been undertaken with the local authority. Public consultation will be undertaken in line with the LDP preparation process.

The Proposals

The masterplan is for 600-900 homes, a primary school and other community and commercial uses. The masterplan is being prepared in support of this as a candidate site. A nature reserve is proposed to the north of the site on land with a high bio-diversity value which also provides a buffer between the development and the M4 motorway.

600 to 650 dwellings are proposed on the candidate site with the potential for additional development of 200 to 250 dwellings on adjacent land that is currently occupied by a golf course. The proposed layout allows for phased development of the masterplan and associated infrastructure.

Main Points

The Design Commission for Wales welcomed the opportunity to consider this strategic site during the masterplanning process. This is an important potential allocation for Swansea and presents an opportunity for a transformational scheme that could help to raise design quality within the city.

A strong vision from the landowner seeks to create a development that is distinctive and which could provide an ambitious legacy for the area – something the original

developments in Morriston also sought to achieve. The desire to bring together the 'traditional benefits of suburbia' – house, garden, privacy, quietness - and the 'shared benefits of higher densities', that include public infrastructure and resources, is a sound basis for a sustainable approach to the development of such a site. The Design Commission fully supports the ambition of the landowner to achieve higher quality development. The comments provided in this report are made to help ensure that this ambition is maintained and carried through to delivery.

The analysis of the site was clear and well presented in the pre-review material and the masterplan is responding to the analysis and the vision. However, the concept is not yet fully developed in response to the context of the site and its location on the very northern edge of Swansea. The concept needs to be informed by a commercial analysis as soon as possible to determine what is deliverable in this location. This analysis will influence the sort of place this *can* be, and the masterplan can then support this concept in creating an appropriate sense of place.

Protecting Development Quality

The Design Commission recognises that this proposal is at the pre-deposit stage of LDP preparation, and that there remains a considerable amount of time before the site will be developed. Nevertheless, the landowner and design team need to think now about how the site will be delivered and how control of the vision and design quality can be maintained.

A 'project development board', that establishes a partnership between the land owner, future developers and local authority, could be one option to explore. Coed Darcy was suggested as a local example of such a delivery model.

In addition to the delivery model, a design guide or code would establish the key design principles to support the masterplan and which could be adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG). These measures should be considered in addition to the emerging proposals from the development/design team regarding land disposals, and the retention of an architect, in order to achieve the right level of control.

Deliverability

The landowner/design team stated that their next step would be to talk to developers and potential occupiers to gauge interest. This analysis is critical to understanding the potential type and quantum of both residential and commercial floorspace as this will influence the overall nature of the development. A commercial area with a hotel, several cafes, restaurants and shops will have a very different function to a local shop and community building and the layout will need to respond to this. There is the potential to lock into existing footfall at the DVLA site so as to maximise viability, in which case the scheme will need to clearly demonstrate how that footfall would be encouraged to use the site and its facilities.

Similarly, the development cost and values of the residential element need to be tested in the local context to determine what can be achieved. Some of the residential is proposed in the form of tall (3 and 4 storey) apartment blocks, which would be untested in this location, and where car parking could be difficult to incorporate economically and sensitively.

The local authority and landowner need to understand the impact of the proposed increase in design quality on land values, and the potential for s106 contributions which may need to be adjusted to reflect these additional construction costs.

Commercial and Community Focus

In addition to the commercial analysis some further *urban* analysis is needed to help shape the 'boulevard' area. Currently it is not clear how this area will work as a commercial centre being set a street back from Clasemont Road. The Design Commission has reservations regarding the feasibility of the proposed double frontage retail units as most retail units do not function in this way and it could cause problems with servicing. A design approach that allows greater flexibility may also be required to respond to potential for change over the lifetime of the development.

Layout and scale

The design team set out how the treatment of Clasemont Road will vary along its length. Where the road is edged by residential properties the existing perimeter wall and hedgerow will be retained and improved with any boundary fence set behind them. This landscape led approach is feasible in principle but will need further analysis and may also need to be secured through a design guide/code.

The Design Commission supports the retention of the avenue of trees along Clasemont Road.

As noted above the Design Commission has concerns regarding the double fronted commercial units and, therefore this section of Clasemont Road frontage may need to be reconsidered.

The corners and edges of the built form in the masterplan appear a little weak at this stage. It is understood that the intention is for the development to connect with the green space beyond but, whilst we support this aspiration, this is not yet well articulated. Giving open vistas down streets to the landscape beyond may be an interesting idea, but the intersection of hard and soft landscaping needs to be more convincing.

Some of the development proposed takes the form of apartment blocks rising to four storeys, and some drawings suggest basement car parking. A development on those lines will be expensive to construct and is likely to be unviable if ambient residential values are used in any appraisals. Whilst the Commission is very supportive of maximising densities, this site is some way from the City Centre, in a very sub-urban, almost rural setting, where low rise independent housing is the more usual model. We fully appreciate the idea that this will be a transformational development, and would not wish to dilute that ambition, but there are significant risks in adopting such a model in this location. The Commission is pleased that the developer is taking advice from a specialist independent property surveyor, and that appraisals are being developed.

Highways

Adoptable highway standards have the potential to erode the design vision (for example corner radii, lighting, kerbs and materials). Further discussions are still required to

achieve buy in from the local authority highways department to this proposal, and to therefore determine whether the design vision can be delivered.

Secured by Design

The proposed layout presents a departure from some Secured by Design principles, particularly the way some of the perimeter properties aim to avoid secure fencing, and create a blurring between public and private space. The Commission supports the ambitions of the masterplan, but we sense that some major challenges will need to be overcome.

Additionally the likely fencing requirements for the primary school should not be overlooked.

Affordable Housing

Any affordable housing requirement should be integrated into the development rather than concentrated in one area. This scheme is adventurous and different, and the developer will need to ensure buy-in from any RSLs before committing to the architecture proposed.

Conclusion

The Design Commission for Wales is fully supportive of the ambition to create a sustainable development with a different and distinct character and high quality design. The emerging masterplan has many points of merit but the urban form proposed (particularly its edges and corners) need further work to be fully convincing, and the scale needs to be tested in viability terms. The concept for the commercial area is not clear and unless it can rely solely on support from existing neighbouring properties, it may need to be developed in a highly flexible way so that its full viability can emerge over time.

Protecting design quality in the delivery of the masterplan is equally important to ensure that the vision of the landowner is realised. The formation of some kind of stakeholder Development Company/entity may help with this, as might carefully considered design codes and SPG.

The Design Commission would welcome the opportunity to review this masterplan again as the proposals are developed over time and in relation to the LDP process, along with any design codes as the proposals progress.

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

Attendees

Architectural Designer:	Simon Gould, Mitchell Taylor Workshop Kris Eley, Mitchell Taylor Workshop
Landscape Designer:	Lorraine Corscadden, Corscadden Associates
Developer/Landowner:	Henry Dart, Morris Estate
Property Consultant:	Simon Davis, Urban Delivery
Highway Consultant:	Alun Rees, Acstro
Local Authority:	Tom Evans, Forward Planning Steve Smith, Urban Designer
Design Review Panel:	
Chair	Alan Francis
Panel	Phil Roberts Angela Williams Jen Heal, Design Advisor, DCFW
Observing	Rosie Brace, WG