

Statws/Status:
Cyfrinachol / Confidential

DESIGN
COMMISSION
FOR WALES
COMISIWN
DYLUNIO
CYMRU

Adroddiad Adolygu Dylunio: Design Review Report:	1 August 2007
Dyddiad Cyfarfod / Meeting Date:	25 July 2007
Lleoliad/Location:	Aberkinsey Park, Rhyl
Disgrifiad o'r Cynllun Scheme Description:	Residential, with some mixed use
Developer/Datblygwr:	Anwyl Homes
Pensaer/Architect:	Astle Planning and Design Ltd [Tim Astle]
Awdurdod Cynllunio: Planning Authority:	Denbighshire CC [Mark Dakeyne]
Statws Cynllunio: Planning Status:	Outline permission granted. Pre-reserved matters application.
Y Panel Adolygu Dylunio/ Design Review Panel: Wendy Richards (cadeirydd/chair) Cindy Harris (swyddog/officer) Lyn Owen	Elfed Roberts Gerard Ryan
Lead Panellist:	Lyn Owen
Sylwedyddion/Observers:	Terry Stevens, DE&T Ian Stevens, DE&T Sian Wyn Jones, DenbighshireCC Sarah Stubbs, Denbighshire CC

Cyflwyniad/Presentation

The site is a large, gently undulating, greenfield area on the south east edge of Rhyl with wide views to the Clwydian Hills. It is allocated in the UDP for residential use. The long term masterplan proposal includes a primary school, community centre, play areas and public open space, as well as 335 residential units, in three phases, and is based on a masterplan produced by Nathaniel Litchfield in 2004. Outline planning consent was granted in November 2006, with the condition that a more detailed design brief was produced to inform the reserved matters application.

This design brief has now been prepared by the developers who believe that it is based on the original masterplan. It covers: road layout and hierarchy; phasing; design principles; site layout; a landscape framework; and includes the realignment of Dyserth Road to the north to remove the existing acute bend. A spine road is proposed through the site from north to south with pedestrian links. We were provided with a detailed plan of phase 1 only. The position of open spaces and play areas were identified, suggesting that every area of open space has an active frontage. The central public square will be fronted by three storey dwellings. The public realm treatment is still to be determined.

The Local Authority representative confirmed that the design brief had not been adopted, but simply submitted to discharge the condition of the consent. The authority had not requested any further information. The original masterplan had been submitted alongside the outline application, for illustrative purposes only. It was intended that each of the three phases would be dealt with by a separate reserved matters application.

Ymateb y Panel/Panel's Response

The Panel was informed that no detailed context plan for the site and surrounding area had been prepared. We discussed the possibility of including some retail use, especially given the lack of any existing shops in the area and the planned future development to the south. We thought that this basic element of mixed use was fundamental to the viability of any future community and that if necessary the Local Authority should specify this requirement as a condition.

It was confirmed that the proposed community centre and school could be combined, although it was pointed out that there is as yet no funding for either.

No details were available of the likely scale of potential adjacent development, but we were informed that it was unlikely that it would be

serviced primarily through this site. The intention is to bring forward employment and residential land at a future date. The Panel thought that more contextual analysis needed to be done, as a framework for Aberkinsey Park.

The Panel regretted that the current proposal in fact bore very little relationship to the illustrative masterplan. The aim of establishing good connectivity had not been well translated, and play areas were unfortunately shown with virtually no natural overlooking from active frontages. The views out of the site, particularly to the south and south east, appeared not to have been considered or to have influenced the layout. The treatment of the main entrance with its ornamental setback and suburban style housing resulted in a lot of undefined space and a lack of definition of public/private spaces. We thought that concepts such as 'spine road' and 'access road' were outdated terminology and the focus instead should be on the way routes related to human activities alongside. A much greater recognition is needed of the importance of the central green corridor featured in the masterplan. Boundary links should be better overlooked to provide natural surveillance.

The Panel emphasised the importance of this first phase of development setting a high standard which subsequent phases would follow. In particular the design principles contained in TAN 12, Manual for Streets and the POSW residential guide, concerned with establishing a sense of place, enclosure and continuity, have not been addressed and should now be used to inform the design development. We thought that the general site layout was too dispersed and extravagant in land use terms, and should be developed with a tighter grain and varying densities to continue the evolution of the masterplan. Above all, a suburban design approach should be avoided and the rich ecological potential of the green corridor should be exploited. We urged the design team to go back and consult with the authors of the masterplan and take their advice on how best to carry it forward.

The active frontages had not been transposed from the masterplan to the design brief, and yet these were vitally important to the design concept, and not optional. We thought that there were too many 'dead' spaces, culdesacs and rear courtyards. Footpath links, if included, should be well-overlooked by dwelling frontages and should not compromise the security of rear gardens and parking courts. The Panel found the conventional building design approach was uninspiring and not good enough to satisfy the aspirations of the original brief.

The Panel asked about future maintenance of the public open spaces and was told that a commuted sum would be included for maintenance and the areas would then be adopted. It was confirmed that they would be

covered in the reserved matters applications. We noted the lack of any strategy for sustainable drainage, despite the obvious risk of flooding.

The design team stated that the spine road would be fully completed within phase 1, and that one bus stop would be provided within the site. The Panel emphasised the importance of establishing sustainable transport options from the outset, and of providing footpaths within and out of the site. We were told that the distribution of the 30% affordable housing would be agreed in consultation between Anwyl Homes, the relevant RSL and the Local Authority Housing Department.

The Panel noted the lack of any strategy relating to sustainability, landscape or biodiversity, despite the recommendations in our previous report for 'strong aspirations and commitment to sustainable development'. We thought that a high BREEAM rating should be specified for this development and the environmental advantages of a single heating system for the whole site should be considered. Any opportunity for on-site renewable energy generation should be explored.

Crynodeb/Summary

The Panel recognised the importance of this development for the future expansion and regeneration of Rhyl and would have liked to see more planning policy guidance to establish the context for this site and to steer future development. We think there should have been a representative from Anwyl Homes at this review, to address such matters as development strategy and landscaping. We think that this design brief and phase 1 proposal have failed to realise the aspirations and design quality embodied in the earlier masterplan and we consider that major revisions are necessary. In particular:

- The design team should consult Nathaniel Litchfield and take their advice on how best to translate the original masterplan principles into a revised design brief.
- The design guidance contained in TAN 12, the Manual for Streets and the POSW guide should be referenced and implemented.
- The site layout should be tighter, with varying densities, a more economical use of land, and a stronger landscape framework maximising the potential of the existing stream which runs through the site. Suburban references should be avoided.
- A more distinctive and high quality architectural approach should be developed for the buildings, and exemplary standards should be established in the first phase to influence subsequent development.
- Particular consideration should be given to visual and physical connections out of the site, infrastructure, a landscape strategy, and the integration of play areas and green spaces.

- A sustainable development strategy should be adopted and integrated into the design from an early stage. This should exploit the ecological potential of the site, and ensure a minimal carbon footprint by specifying an Excellent EcoHomes rating and a single site-wide heating and energy system. Options for on site renewable energy generation should be explored.
- The question of the location and design of the affordable units needs to be addressed together with the planners, the Council's Housing Department and local Housing Associations.
- The potential for the inclusion of some retail provision should be considered, to provide greater local services and community identity.

Diwedd/End

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