

Status:

Confidential



Design Review Report: 14 December 2004

Meeting Date / Material Submitted: 1 December 2004
Location: Rhyl South East
Scheme Description: Masterplan for residential development with educational and community facilities

Planning Consultants: Nathaniel Lichfield
[Judith Livesey, M Hockaday]

Client: Denbighshire CC and Anwyl Homes

Planning Authority: Denbighshire County Council
[Jonathan Cawley]

Planning Status: Outline application lodged
Date for detailed application (if known) Unknown

Design Review Panel:

Alan Francis (chair)	Phil Roberts
Cindy Harris (officer)	Robert Firth
Howard Wainwright	Wendy Hall
Ben Sibert	Douglas Hogg

Observers:
Gillian Wulff Peter Roberts

Presentation

This proposal for 290 housing units, a new school and community centre, is the result of collaboration between two clients: a regional house builder with clear commercial requirements and a good understanding of the local market; and the local authority who wish to promote a more innovative approach to house building based on national best practice, while fitting in with the local context. Nathaniel Lichfield were commissioned to provide a vision for this development and future expansion, in the form of a contextual analysis and design statement which will form the basis of an outline planning application. It may also be incorporated into a future design brief or SPG. There has been consultation with councillors, members and the general public, including a public exhibition.

The site has been allocated for residential use in the UDP and is owned by Anwyl, who have full planning permission on about one third of it. It is relatively flat and featureless, and

currently consists of fields and a play area with a stream running north/south and good views to the east. There is an opportunity to landscape the stream corridor, which also has a gas main running north/south and is subject to risk of flooding. The design intention is to enhance this area as a feature for the whole scheme, to relocate the play area to the western corner where the new school and community centre will also be sited, and to develop footpath and cycle way connections. Anwyl have accepted the redesign of their existing approval, which enables this concept to move forward. The area allocated for housing units is 11.1 hectares [giving an average density of 30 units/hectare], with 2.7 hectares each for school/community use and open space.

The urban design principles which inform these proposals are: a hierarchy of streets, with shared surfaces and pedestrian priority where appropriate; clear distinction between private and public space; continuous frontages; formal treatment of key routes; inclusion of landmark buildings; natural surveillance and maximum amenity. Building heights will be 2-4 stories with brick-walled front gardens, garages sited behind the building line, and no blank gables facing the road. In places, house types will 'turn the corner' to create a sense of enclosure and to optimise views. A feature on the entrance from Dyserth Road might be a semi-circle of standing stones.

Parking will be in the curtilage, accessed from the front, together with small groups of rear parking spaces which are easily overlooked. Dyserth Road to the north will be realigned to remove the sharp bends along the site frontage.

The key issue for the designers in developing this scheme has been how prescriptive or radical to be in the setting of broad parameters, in order to have the desired effect of raising the design quality of house building in the area.

The local authority representative pointed out that this is a key site as there is limited potential for development around Rhyl. The development process so far has worked well, with involvement from all key stakeholders. In particular, highways issues have been addressed at the pre-application stage.

Panel's Response

The panel appreciates the thorough analysis contained in the design statement and would like to see the consultants remain involved to develop a residential masterplan, retaining the existing grid and enhancing permeability. The involvement of the developers, highways engineers and local residents in the development so far, is an example of good practice which should guide future implementation. The distinction between public and private space is not yet sufficiently defined, and security/surveillance issues need developing further. Provision for an animated streetscene will be vital to the success of this project.

The mix of use includes a proportion of one and two bedroom apartments, and the challenge here will be to create a new market, given that it was not one identified by local residents. Affordable housing will comprise 30% of the total and be located in small clusters of 20-30 units, on the advice of local Registered Social Landlords.

With regard to the stream corridor, it was suggested that the steep banks could be opened out to improve access. The Environment Agency requires a seven metre clear strip along the eastern side of the stream. Although there has been no formal EIA carried out on this

site, two small ponds with their population of Great Crested Newts will be translocated and existing hedgerows will be retained.

There is no specific reference to sustainable development in the design statement, although we were told that solar orientation has been taken into account in the indicative layouts. The panel recommends that consideration be given to the incorporation of specific sustainability measures, including the provision of infrastructure for a community heating scheme, high levels of insulation and active solar systems.

There is no retail provision within this scheme as existing shops are located close by. The scheme should respond to the overall structural plan for the area, including any longer term plans for a bypass.

Summary

The Panel considers that, as a starting point and precedent for future development, this design statement needs to become more radical and prescriptive, with strong aspirations and commitment to sustainable development principles. We appreciate the competent analysis contained in the report and welcome the links that have been established between the local authority and the developer, although we regret the latter's absence from this review. In particular:

- We recommend that the local authority take a lead, within the planning process, to establish high standards of urban design and sustainable development
- An urban type grid system based on terraces should be developed, compatible with solar gain.
- We would like to see the incorporation of renewable energy sources and consideration given to sustainable materials specification
- The clear division between public and private open space needs to be emphasised and formalised
- We are surprised that RSLs are requesting that affordable units be grouped in clusters rather than pepper potted throughout the scheme
- It is important that an overall plan for the area be developed, including any major infrastructural works

End

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