

# Design Review Report

Former Stadium Site, St Athan

**DCFW Ref: 287**

Meeting of 13<sup>th</sup> October 2022



**Review Status**

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

**PUBLIC**

13<sup>th</sup> October 2022  
19<sup>th</sup> October 2022  
Residential  
St Athan  
N287  
Pre-application

## Declarations of Interest

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Panel members, observers and other relevant parties are required to declare ***in advance*** any interests they may have in relation to the Design Review and meeting Agenda items. Any such declarations are recorded here and in DCFW's central records.

## Consultations to Date

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The proposals have not previously been reviewed by DCFW.

During the review comments and questions were raised by, we understand, a colleague of the Welsh Government. However, this report reflects the material comment of the National Design Review Panel of the Design Commission for Wales, and as such may form material considerations in the planning process or be referred to as evidential documents in the event of planning appeals. As the comments of the colleague in question were detailed and more appropriate to later stages of design evolution, and as that colleague is not a member of the Design Review Panel, they have not been included in this report. Any arrangements for feedback from Welsh Government in relation to the sale of the site should be undertaken outside of the DCFW design review process.

## The Proposals

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The proposal is to deliver circa 80 residential units, of which 50% will be affordable, on a former Ministry of Defence site in St Athan. The site is located to the north of the main settlement of St Athan, and approximately half a mile to the south of the agricultural village of Flemingston in the Vale of Glamorgan. It was previously used as a sports ground by the Ministry of Defence, however more recently the site has been laid to grass and remains vacant. To the south and east is the St Athan Golf Course; the agricultural and wider green setting is a strength of the site location. There are established hedgerows to the north, south and west boundaries.

## Main Points

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The panel appreciated the clearly communicated nature of the presentation. Overall the proposed development is compliant in meeting the standards required by Welsh Government but lacks a creative vision that responds specifically to the opportunities and challenges of the site and the commercial challenge.

### **Context Analysis**

Very little context analysis was presented to set the scene for the proposed development and show how the proposals respond to the unique setting of the site. The design team would benefit from exploring the wider story of the development, as well as its relationship with its immediate neighbours, and desire lines through the site. The day-to-day nature of living on this site should be considered through the medium of day in the life studies to help understand the needs of future residents.

The panel noted that the design team intend to use the RIBA social value toolkit on this scheme, and that they want to build a post occupancy evaluation into the exercise which is positive.

It is important to explore how the development connects to adjacent villages, and how people would be able to belong to a greater community beyond the site. The panel understands the challenges relating to the location of the site relative to facilities and public transport routes, but potential responses to this should be further explored in further iterations of the design. It is important to be honest about the anticipated level of car ownership and ensure that this is appropriately handled in the layout. All opportunities for reducing car use and ownership should be explored.

It emerged through the discussion that there is likely to be other change in the local area that must be taken account of. Whilst the development of the site on its own provides limited scope for improving the sustainability of the location, when considered in the context of wider change there may be a greater opportunity. The local authority, Welsh Government and Wates should seek to collaborate with other landowners and stakeholders to explore these opportunities.

### **Engagement**

Community engagement is a critical part of the development of proposals for the site and it is particularly important that the immediate residential neighbours to the west, and the golf course are consulted. Wider consultation should have a broad reach to ensure that communities are effectively engaged.

## **Central green**

It is encouraging that further thought is being given to the purpose of the central green space, including the integration of play provision. The space would benefit from further design exploration and a definition of spaces, as well as consideration of how it will be programmed and maintained. Opportunities to deviate from the formal requirements of a LAP or LEAP should be explored further with the Vale of Glamorgan Local Authority.

## **Architecture**

Although the current design includes walk up flats that each have private outdoor space at ground level, the panel encourage the design team to ensure that flats have balconies as well.

The central green space could benefit from stronger enclosure and an exploration of an increase of density in the buildings surrounding the square, and this should be further explored.

It is important to fully explore, and define the local character, and consider this alongside the vision for sustainable homes in this context. The current context analysis doesn't fully explore the built character and cultural elements of the local communities and wider context. The design team would benefit from exploring St Athan's history beyond the Ministry of Defence developments, as St Athan has a history dating back to the Norman period.

Once the additional context and character analysis has been undertaken a clearer narrative can be established for the proposed development – and what living in this place means for the day-to-day lives of those living here. This would provide the rationale for all of the aspects discussed in the review including density, the nature of external space, parking arrangements, footpath connections, tenure mix, and architectural response.

## **Next Steps**

The Commission would welcome further engagement on this scheme in advance of a planning application being submitted.

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

## Attendees

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Agent/Client/Developer:	Stuart Jones, Wates Brooke Navin, Wates
Architect/Design Team:	Bernadette Kinsella, Powell Dobson Lee Morris, Tir Collective
Local Authority:	Ian Robinson, Vale of Glamorgan Council
Representing Welsh Government:	Karle Burford, AHR

### **DCFW Design Review Panel**

Chair:	Jen Heal, DCFW, Design Advisor
Lead Panellist:	Michael Gwyther Jones
Panel:	Steve Smith Angela Williams Efa Lois, DCFW, Place Advisor