

# Design Review Report

Maes Gwern, Mold

Flintshire

**DCFW Ref: N117**

Meeting of 24<sup>th</sup> October 2017

## Review Status

Meeting date	24 <sup>th</sup> October 2017
Issue date	6th November 2017
Scheme location	Mold, Flintshire
Scheme description	Residential
Scheme reference number	N117
Planning status	Application submitted

## PUBLIC

## 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.

None.

## Consultations to Date

The scheme was presented at design review in June 2016 following a workshop that was undertaken by DCFW with Flintshire CBC to explore the potential of development briefs for key sites. The Commission was not consulted again on the full proposal between June 2016 and the planning submission date of April 2017.

## The Proposals

The site is a greenfield site to the south of Mold. It was previously allocated as an employment site in the UPD but is now identified as a housing site in the emerging LDP. It is located adjacent to school playing fields and existing residential development. The proposal is for residential development consisting of 160 dwellings on a greenfield site. The site is one of several that are part of a partnership between Flintshire and Wates Residential to provide more affordable housing across the county borough. 30% of properties on the site are to be affordable and development of this site will help to cross-subsidise other affordable housing sites.

A planning application for the proposed development was submitted in April 2017 and was considered by the Planning Committee in October 2017 who made the decision to defer it.

DCFW was contacted by the Planning Authority regarding the deferment and agreed to consider the project again, despite it being so far post-application submission. The Commission was also asked to consider any issues relating to an extant energy consent of which no previous mention had been made in material submitted to the Commission.

## Main Points

This is a significant development for Mold and a key proposal for the partnership between Flintshire County Council and Wates. It should set the tone for future development and strive to be an exemplar of sustainable residential development and place-making. It is a challenging site as it is somewhat disconnected from the centre of Mold and a single-use development, and more considered and creative approaches to creating a great place are needed.

The Commission has no concerns regarding the proximity to the wind turbine/energy consent given the studies that have been undertaken and subsequent response to the findings of these studies.

### **Changes since previous review**

A second vehicular access point, reorientation of some residential units to overlook the open space along Maes Gwern Road and a direct pedestrian link to the school are positive changes that have been made since the previous review. However, much of the layout remains broadly the same as the 'testing layout' that was presented at the previous review. Other negative aspects, such as more cul-de-sacs, have been incorporated which creates a disconnected layout and results in the need for multiple turning heads.

### **Design process and consideration of place**

More comprehensive information about the design development was presented at this design review meeting than was evident in the Design and Access Statement (DAS) provided in advance of the meeting. This analysis and design development information should have been contained in the DAS. As it stands, the DAS is a weak document, insufficient to describe and support the planning application and we are surprised it was considered sufficient at the time of submission. See the Welsh Government guide to Design and Access Statements prepared by DCFW for further guidance <http://gov.wales/topics/planning/policy/guidanceandleaflets/design-and-access-statements-in-wales/?lang=en>.

It is clear that additional constraints such as the badger setts have been identified late in the design process but they have not been influential on the layout beyond simply omitting units. The identification of constraints such as this requires a more comprehensive review of the layout to positively incorporate accommodate them and may require wider changes to create a coherent layout.

### **Character**

A garden village is identified as a precedent and aspiration for the site but the idea is not sufficiently explored or developed to be reflected in the design. Within the site the proposed layout has very little distinctive character with fairly standard house types arranged around traditional estate roads. There appears to be little distinction between the Estate road and the Mews streets which you would expect to be tighter and more intimate.

The Panel are very concerned that the local authority's highways department is relying upon out of date highways standards and not promoting Manual for Streets, which is the current national standard. The effect of an outdated approach regarding highways which does not respond to the Manual for Streets is significant and precludes opportunities for genuine place-making in the interests of a good neighbourhood. Creating distinctive streets and spaces is a key element of a distinctive development and is very difficult to achieve using the highway design parameters that are employed here. This approach must be reviewed and challenged within the local authority to enable better place-making.

There is no narrative for public open space and the spaces seem to be disparate and disjointed. There are a number of undefined spaces which could become a management burden.

More consideration needs to be given to how corners are turned to ensure that all streets and spaces have sufficient natural surveillance. Windows from inhabited rooms must be sufficient to allow spaces to be overlooked. Footpath links also need to be better integrated to ensure they are overlooked.

A parking design strategy should identify an approach to parking that will prevent it from dominating the environment. This may include some on-plot parking (with a limited amount in front of properties), small parking courts and on-street parking. It is accepted that reducing car ownership is likely to be challenging for this site so a design strategy is needed to ensure that cars are accommodated well. A well thought out landscape and parking approach should be a key design feature of the site.

More detailed studies and drawing of each of these aspects would help in the design development.

### **Landscape design**

Further information is needed about the design of the public open space to establish what this space will be like and how it will contribute positively to the residential development and respond to Maes Gwern Road. It was disappointing to hear that there has been no landscape architect input to the scheme to date, and this is reflected in the quality of the proposals. The input of a landscape architect will help to inform the nature of the spaces, how they link to one another and their qualities. The quality and nature of the landscape strip with the attenuation ponds alongside Maes Gwern Road is currently unclear. Play provision may be incorporated through this space to provide a variety of play options.

The long sections do not give sufficient clarity on how the topography of the site has been dealt with. Typical or best and worst case sections at a larger scale would help to show how the levels work and demonstrate that any retaining structures have been discretely incorporated into the design.

### **Sustainability**

This is not a particularly sustainable location for development, being on the edge of the settlement and car focused. Therefore to achieve a sustainable development greater

consideration needs to be given to what can be achieved on the site. The potential for a bus link is positive but this does not seem to be certain at this stage. Other considerations could include orientation, green infrastructure, renewable energy, community heat and power, community growing space, space for co-housing, self-build plots, flexible units for onsite working, or incorporating other facilities that may be required onsite. This development should seek to be an exemplar in sustainable development.

This partnership has the potential to change for the better the availability of good quality homes in Flintshire. Given that potential, it is disappointing that a more current, distinctive and place-focused proposal has not been brought forward. It is particularly concerning that Manual for Streets is not being employed by the highways department as this is a national guidance document, superseding DB 32 many years ago and promoted in Welsh planning policy guidance.

**Comisiwn Dylunio Cymru Design Commission for Wales is the trading name of DCFW LIMITED, a Private Limited Company established under the Companies Act 1985 and 2006, Company No: 04391072 incorporated in England and Wales as a wholly owned subsidiary of the Welsh Government. Registered office: 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Cambrian Buildings, Mount Stuart Square, Cardiff CF10 5FL T: 029 2045 1964 E [connect@dcfw.org](mailto:connect@dcfw.org). The comment recorded in this report, arising from formal Design Review through our Design Review Service, is provided in the public interest for the consideration of local planning authorities as a material consideration, and other users of the Design Review Service. It is not and should not be considered 'advice' and no third party is bound or required to act upon it. The Design Review Service is delivered in line with DCFW's published protocols, code of conduct and complaints procedure, which should be read and considered by users of the service.**

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

## Attendees

Agent/Client/Developer:	Ian Sharroks, Wates Residential
Architect/Planning Consultant:	David Halliday, Halliday Clark Architects
Local Planning Authority:	Glyn Jones, Flintshire CC
Design Review Panel:	
Chair	Ewan Jones
Lead Panellist	Jen Heal, Design Advisor, DCFW Mark Lawton Carole-Anne Davies, Chief Executive, DCFW Amanda Spence, Design Advisor, DCFW