

Design Review Report

Cefn Yr Hendy, Talbot Green

DCFW Ref: 124

Meeting of 22nd September 2016



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

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

PUBLIC

22nd September 2016
4th October 2016
Talbot Green
Residential
124
Pre-application (outline)

Declarations of Interest

The following declarations were made at the start of the review meeting and all present stated they were happy to proceed:

Mark Hallett employs WYG on another project and has a joint venture with Welsh Government.

Mark Lawton is currently working with The Urbanists on another scheme.

Consultations to Date

The team informed the panel that two pre-app consultations have been held to date and consultation with statutory bodies undertaken in accordance with an EIA screening. The LPA's screening opinion was negative; accordingly an EIA will not be required.

The Proposals

The project consists of proposals for an urban extension residential project for around 500 houses on a site of 20HA on green-field land south of Talbot Green in Rhondda Cynon Taff (RCT).

The site lies within the wider allocation of Strategic Site Allocation of Mwyndy/Talbot Green Area (Policy SSA8) within RCT County Borough Council's Local Plan, which identifies this part of the site to be developed for residential purposes, together with a new primary school and a maximum 200m² local retail centre.

The site lies immediately to the north-west of a recent housing development within Cefn yr Hendy. The A4119 dual carriageway runs to the east of the site. Coed yr Hendy is an Ancient Woodland to the north and west of the site, and together with adjacent open space, is a designated Special Landscape Area (SLA) and Site of Important Nature Conservation (SINC).

The site is a mix of unimproved and improved grassland with small areas of woodland, with moderate ecological value. There are a number of trees on the site, particularly along the site's edges. These are mainly oak and ash and some have been assessed to be of high quality, though none are subject to a TPO. Coed Yr Hendy Ancient Woodland however is covered by a blanket TPO. There are also a number of hedgerows which run across the site. There is one small derelict brick structure on the site, possibly associated with former mining activities. One public right of way crosses the site from north to south. The site slopes from south to north and commands extensive views towards the north.

Main Points in Detail

The review took place at a good, early stage when there is scope for suggestions to be incorporated and for discussions to add value to design. The following points summarise key issues from the review and should be considered to inform work ahead of making a planning application or engaging in further review.

Overall Design Approach

The clear presentation material demonstrated a thorough site and context analysis as the basis of the masterplan approach. It is encouraging that an integrated approach to urban design, landscape design and transport/highways design is being taken.

It was good to see the team's ambitions for the scheme conveyed diagrammatically. However, it is important that these ambitions are not lost or diluted as designs become more detailed and realistic. The aim for development to face outwards to get best value from the adjoining open green space and landscape views is key to the project concept.

This project has the potential to become an exemplar of good neighbourhood design if the ambition and quality can be retained through to delivery.

Landscape Design Approach

It is encouraging to see the masterplan driven and informed by landscape and, again, this should not be diluted as designs progress.

The landscape and visual impact assessment identified that there are important views out of the site to the landscape and of the site from key viewpoints in the surroundings. Retaining as far as possible the views out to the landscape offers opportunity to add value to the scheme. Screening views to the new development from the surroundings would compromise views out, therefore the scheme should be designed so that it makes a positive contribution to views and screening is not required for mitigation purposes.

Retaining existing hedgerows would add valuable mature landscape structure but there will need to be an appropriate landscape management strategy in place to ensure quality is maintained in the long term.

It would be a positive step to integrate play areas with the green infrastructure and attenuation requirements. There may also be value in making better connections between the play area and the open green space, either visually or physically.

More widely, attenuation requirements need further consideration concerning how they are integrated within the overall masterplan.

The existing Public Right of Way and how it provides connection with the countryside should also be considered in the landscape strategy.

Overall, the landscape design should be appropriate to the site and setting as it will contribute to the character of the development; having all green areas as mown grass would miss opportunities for landscape to add to a sense of place. Long term management of trees and green spaces will need to be considered at the design stage.

School and Community Place-making

The new school and local centre offer a valuable opportunity for good place-making to contribute to a sense of community and well-being. Careful consideration, based on market research and experience, will need to be given to decisions about other appropriate and viable uses at the local centre. A facility such as a small cafe might offer good opportunities for people to meet and socialise in their own neighbourhood. There may also be opportunities to provide community uses within the school building and grounds.

An integrated approach to landscape design within the school grounds would add value. For example, an integrated attenuation pond could contribute to a wildlife learning garden for the school.

The contribution made by the school through design to the public realm will be important. There are opportunities to design in exemplar traffic management, amenity spaces and places for friendships to form within the community. A non-standard approach to public realm design may be required to achieve this.

The design, placement and management of security fences and boundaries of the school site will be crucial and, if not integrated at an early stage, could compromise the positive contributions the school makes to the new community. Using the building as part of the boundary can reduce the amount of security fencing required. It may be beneficial for a proportion of the school grounds to be outside of the secure boundary so that it makes a stronger link with the public realm. Out-of-hours community use should also be considered in the planning of security for the school.

Layout and Sustainability

The Commission would like to see the layout designed with regard to orientation and environment. At the outline design stage it is possible to build in value and opportunities to maximise benefits from solar gains in buildings and sunny gardens. This would have advantages for property values, energy use and the well-being of occupants. It would be best practice to make orientation and sustainability a priority in the layout of the development.

Streets, Parking Strategies and Building for Life

The diagrams of the scheme show a clear hierarchy of streets, with a main spine road and minor roads off of it. The detail design of the streets, surface materials, footpaths, landscape design and the arrangement and scale of buildings will be important to achieving this hierarchy when the scheme is delivered. Street design conventions may

need to be challenged to achieve the more informal, shared surface environments which are proposed.

Appropriate parking strategies will be essential to delivering good streets and public spaces, these may need to vary for different parts of the scheme.

Single-sided streets are proposed, which allow outward facing development to make the most of views over the countryside. The team should consider mechanisms which will protect this feature through to delivery of the scheme, as future developers may aim to maximise the number of properties served by each street. Critically, the open edged perimeter treatment of the proposals, providing residents with unfettered access to the surrounding landscape, is a fundamental aspect of the scheme, which needs to be clearly captured in the design and access statement.

Building for Life (BfL) 12 Wales is now available on the DCFW website <http://dcfw.org/building-for-life-12-wales/>. It has been endorsed by Welsh Government and DCFW and has been adapted to fit with the Welsh planning policy context. Built for Life accreditation would be an appropriate target for this development and consideration of the 12 questions now will ensure that it is achievable. DCFW offers Building for Life workshops and is also the organisation through which independent assessment for accreditation is undertaken in Wales. We recommend that a further engagement with DCFW on Building for Life is undertaken en route to assessment.

Integration of Active Travel

The ambition to build in routes which encourage active travel is commended. However, it is important that these routes are carefully planned and considered. To best encourage walking and cycling for everyday journeys, routes should feel convenient, safe and desirable.

Further Review

The Design Commission would welcome the opportunity to review this scheme again once designs have progressed, either before the outline planning application is made or at the stage when reserved matters are being designed in detail.

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

Attendees

Agent/Client/Developer:	Paul Williams, South Wales Projects, Welsh Government
Architect/Planning Consultant:	Matt Russell, Vectos Peter Waldren , WYG James O'Donnell, The Urbanists Gareth Howell, The Urbanists
Local Authority:	Jim Bailey, Development Services Manager, RCT
Design Review Panel:	
Chair	Jen Heal, Design Advisor, DCFW
Lead Panellist	Richard Woods Mark Hallett Mark Lawton Michael Gwyther-Jones Amanda Spence, Design Advisor, DCFW Carole-Anne Davies, CE, DCFW
Observing:	Oliver Hanney, WYG