

Design Review Report

Felindre Urban Village,
Swansea

DCFW Ref: N130

Meeting of 14th September 2017



Review Status

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

PUBLIC

14th September 2017
29th September 2017
Swansea
Residential masterplan
N130
Pre-application

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 declared.

Consultations to Date

The site is allocated in the deposit LDP and there has been consultation with the public and statutory consultees. The formal pre-application consultation process is planned for early 2018. This is the second review undertaken by DCFW; the first took place on 16th February 2017.

The Proposals

The scheme comprises the proposed development of up to 900 homes on 77 hectares of land to the north of junction 46 of the M4 near Llangyfelach. The development includes a primary school, a small local centre with amenity spaces and homes in buildings ranging from 2 to 3 stories. It is intended that an application for outline planning consent will be made later in 2017.

The proposed site sits adjacent to the serviced but currently undeveloped Felindre Business Park, which is located on the site of the old Felindre Tin Plate Works but is separated from it by 'Rhos' pasture land. Recently constructed link roads connect the Business Park to the M4 and an extension will form the access to the proposed residential development. The proposed site is currently green-field agricultural land of 3B quality but parts of it have been classified as a SINC (Site of Importance for Nature Conservation). The site has a historic field pattern with mature hedgerow lines and copses of trees that obscure extensive low-level views across it. A Grade II listed farmhouse, Tredegar-Fawr, sits in the south-west corner of the site. The topography is undulating but essentially rises from approx. 80m AOD in the south to 113m AOD in the north.

Main Points

DCFW remains supportive of the aspiration to deliver an exemplar contemporary Welsh urban village on the site, however we remain unconvinced that this will be achieved with the current proposals.

The following points summarise key issues arising from the review and should be considered to inform any further work ahead of a planning application being submitted:

Vision

The site analysis is detailed and sound, however the approach to visioning and testing could be further considered. The nature of the site, fairly enclosed without visual prominence, provides the opportunity to take a more innovative approach to architecture and form. The design team may also find value in considering the plan form of smaller Welsh towns such as Llandeilo and Aberaeron, which at the 2011 census, had populations of 1795 and 1422 respectively. Whilst the context is different, consideration should be given to the nature of this development as it will support an approximate population of 1980.

Layout

The approach of segregating land uses between a Business Park and neighbourhood are not considered to be contemporary or exemplar. A more diverse use mix throughout the two sites could demonstrate a more current approach to development.

Testing should be carried out to ensure that the required number of units can be achieved with high design quality using the layout provided.

There are many suburban characteristics such as cul-de-sacs within the plan, despite the intended village character. Additionally, the use of Mews typologies is not a built form normally associated with village plan forms.

A 'minimum' distance of 16m between building frontages lacks flexibility and the design team and LPA should review this so as to create greater diversity in plan form. Similar consideration should also be given to the use of private shared drives as these can potentially support more than 5 units. The precedents provided at the back of the submitted report demonstrate such approaches.

Movement and access

Detail must be given on the form of the mews as they appear to front onto the rear of other properties and their parking spaces, whereas the distinct character of a mews is created with frontage on either side.

The narrow roads linking the three villages are appropriate in their village character, however the suitability for bus routes and commuter flows should be discussed with highways and any subsequent amendments should maintain the desired village character. Un-adopted roads may achieve the design aspirations, but these should be tested to ensure suitability for intended use.

Given the context of the site it is likely that car ownership will be high and so a robust and varied parking strategy should be in place to prevent visual dominance of the car or a singular parking solution. Often the character of a village road is such that cars are parked to the front or side of dwellings accessed off the through road; this approach would avoid large parking courts at the rear of dwellings.

Public transport strategy

The potential rail stop to the south of the site, which is referenced in the opportunities plan, should be supported and reinforced by the design strategy given the aspiration for an exemplar development and the objective of a more sustainable business and residential area. The masterplan currently makes no reference to the stop and fails to provide convenient pedestrian routes to its potential location. If the rail connection seems unlikely, an alternative public transport strategy should be developed which guarantees the development is as sustainable as possible given the location.

Sustainable design

The access to sunlight afforded by the south-facing slope of the site can be utilised for passive design and well-being, there is little evidence of this approach in the layout and guidance. Potential for a district heating system could be explored, given the context and requirement for adjacent forest management. Innovative approaches to carbon reduction could contribute to making this development 'exemplar'.

Design development

Too little detail was provided to demonstrate how the masterplan could be interpreted and to illustrate its robustness. Three dimensional drawings of key spaces, such as the Caerau Village Centre, would help to guide high quality detailed design. Likewise, character areas could be better defined with specific principles relating to corners, built form, public spaces, parking type, street scenes and focal points explored. There are many public, undefined green spaces throughout the layout and three dimensional street scene drawings could demonstrate the scale and enclosure of the space as well as the type of use the spaces will include, such as LEAPs and playing fields. To ensure design quality is delivered, sub area masterplans at scale 1:500 could be required to be submitted and approved prior to the submission of reserved matters.

Diversity of housing

The submitted material states that a 'substantial' amount of affordable housing is to be provided on site, the specific mix and percentage of which is not stated. Ideally, a mix of housing types to encourage a diverse population should be provided, including elderly accommodation, a crèche, self build and custom build plots.

'Folk' housing

Although the Panel does not seek to dictate the architectural style of the development, the introverted nature of the site could allow for more contemporary housing typologies whilst responding to local built form and materials palette. A local residential typology study may be helpful to guide selection of house types for this site.

Delivery of employment

There is potential for the residential element to drive the development of the vacant Felindre Business Park by way of phased agreement with the developer. A precedent has

been set at Weston Airfield, North Somerset where a Section 106 agreement between developers, the Homes and Communities Agency and the Council, delivers quantities of employment development tied to each phase of the residential development. This has led to a mix of employment provision, including a start-up hub, technical college, hotel, being delivered that the Council could not envisage seeing without the agreement. Tangible measures, perhaps of a similar nature are necessary to achieve such objectives for the Felindre proposals.

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

Attendees

Agent/Client/Developer:	Alison Smith & Paul Evans, Welsh Government
Architect/Consultants:	Paul Vining, WYG Luke Craddy, WYG Chris Meddins, WYG Lee Morris, WYG
Local Planning Authority:	Andrew Fergusson & Tom Evans, Swansea Council
Design Review Panel:	
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