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# Design Review Report

Pennard Road, Swansea

**DCFW Ref: N169**

Meeting of 16<sup>th</sup> August 2018

## Review Status

Meeting date	16 <sup>th</sup> August 2018
Issue date	28th August 2018
Scheme location	Gower, Swansea
Scheme description	Housing
Scheme reference number	N169
Planning status	Pre-application

## PUBLIC

## 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.

It is understood that part of this scheme, the Down to Earth units, has been submitted to the Welsh Government's Innovative Housing Programme. Gayna Jones, Chair of the Design Commission for Wales, chairs the IHP Group. Gayna was not present in the meeting.

## Consultations to Date

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Pre-application consultation with the local planning authority is underway.

Statutory pre-application public consultation is being undertaken in July and August.

## The Proposals

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The proposal is to provide 69 residential dwellings with a wide mix of house types with 51% of the units being affordable. It is intended that the house types reflect guidance contained within the Gower AONB Design Guide. The affordable housing will be delivered by Coastal Housing Group; a Registered Social Landlord. The remaining dwellings are proposed as market housing and will be delivered by Pennant Homes, who are Coastal Housing's private sale arm of the organisation. There is a clear synergy between the two which makes for clear advantages in the delivery of the project.

## Main Points

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DCFW supports the aspiration to deliver a high-quality residential development for local people on this rural exception site, with a good mix of house types and tenure, which is sensitive to the location within the Gower AONB.

The following points summarise key issues from the review and should be considered to inform any further design work:

### **Design narrative**

The submitted material could have better presented the design development to date. There were a number of claims in the submitted design statement which were not evidenced in the drawings.

The design and access statement submitted as part of the planning application should have a clear narrative which explores the opportunities and constraints, an options study and finally a justification for the selected layout.

DCFW's guide for Welsh Government, Site and Context Analysis: Capturing the Value of Site, can be found here:

<https://gov.wales/topics/planning/policy/guidanceandleaflets/site-and-context-analysis-guide/?lang=en>

### **Concept**

The design concept of incorporating a focal point of open space at the centre of the development seems well supported by a study of Gower settlement patterns. However, design revisions have diluted this concept and the plan now lacks the clarity of the initial idea.

### **Site layout**

The masterplan should be tested and various options presented which explore the key priorities and design objectives. These design objectives should be addressed holistically in the masterplan to create a great place to live. A circular road route through the site could be explored as it may improve legibility and avoid so many routes through the valuable hedgerow. This approach to the street layout may also help to prevent large turning heads.

### **Street hierarchy**

The hierarchy of streets and their various characters should be better defined. Including adoptable streets need not mean that design quality and placemaking should suffer as a result. Manual for Streets should be used by both the design team and the Local Authority whilst considering the types of street suitable for a residential development of this type. The inclusion of street sections may help to demonstrate the scale and character of the different types of streets across the site.

### **Landscape approach**

It should be made clear how the character appraisal has informed the landscape strategy for the site. Open space provision appears to be a key design driver, however through each revision of the scheme the shared open space is reduced. The small patches of green space remaining are unlikely to be used and will be difficult to maintain. Further testing of the layout with different public open space configurations and explorations of edge conditions should be undertaken to achieve the most appropriate landscape solution.

The LEAP would benefit from more natural surveillance and may be better used by local children if it was more central to the site. Locating the LEAP centrally along the eastern boundary of the site may make the scheme more legible and increase use, whilst allowing a softer transition between the development and open countryside. This may offer the opportunity to create the usable and central open space that is part of the design aspiration.

Opportunities to enhance the landscape strategy with SUDs and swales should be explored as part of the landscape design and environmental strategy.

### **Architectural approach**

The Local Planning Authority have expressed a preference for a more 'traditional' approach to architecture on this site. Traditional housing typologies in the area should be studied to understand the vernacular architectural language of simple form and materials. These lessons, along with the Gower AONB Design Guide, can then be interpreted by the architect to design simple, contextual and high-quality house types which suit contemporary ways of living. This approach need not include unnecessary decorative elements which do not serve a function and will be costly to deliver. The adjacency to a 1960s housing estate provides the opportunity to deliver something different in this location.

A broad range of house types have been proposed, however the design team should consider designing types which are suitable for corners and the entrance to the development. This would provide greater definition and aid legibility throughout the site.

Elements such as window reveals, porches and stone plinth layers, if included, should be well considered and detailed to ensure they are of the highest standard and deliver a contemporary interpretation of the local vernacular. Exploration of some of these details at 1:20 scale may help to demonstrate this quality and could be included in the planning submission.

The size and location of windows should be better considered to achieve the optimum solution in terms of environmental and sustainability performance. Where apartments are incorporated into a building which appears as a single dwelling, care should be taken with the window hierarchy to avoid smaller windows in the first floor apartment and the resulting impact on the quality of the internal spaces.

### **Environmental strategy**

The environmental strategy should be considered from the outset of the design process in order to avoid the use of 'bolt-on' solutions at the end. The scale of the site provides an opportunity to make a difference and set a precedent for environmental performance on a relatively large site.

The Down to Earth units have been positioned to the corner of the site when they could be more central and celebrated for their sustainability credentials. They demonstrate the use of local larch which could be an opportunity to consider across the site.

Passive design and orientation does not appear to have driven the masterplan. With this in mind, the design team should ensure that spaces created inside the buildings will be comfortable in terms of both sunlight and temperature.

### **Next steps**

The Commission would welcome further opportunity to review the scheme with the aim of improving design quality through constructive dialogue.

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

## Attendees

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Agent/Client/Developer:	Joanna Williamson, Coastal Housing Group
Architect/Planning Consultant:	Phil Baxter & Hywel Purchase, Asbri Planning Jaime Moya & Samuel Cheung, Spring Design
Contractor:	Andrew Bowen, Jehu Group
Local Authority:	Tom Evans, City & County of Swansea
Design Review Panel:	
Chair	Kedrick Davies
Lead Panellist	Amanda Spence Toby Adam Lynne Sullivan Simon Carne Wendy Maden, Design Advisor, DCFW