



Design Review Report

Malthouse Lane, Llantarnam

DCFW Ref: N170

Meeting of 12th July 2018



Review Status

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

PUBLIC

12th July 2018
25th July 2018
Cardiff
Residential
N170
Reserved Matters

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.

Steve Smith declared that he has worked with both Enzo Homes and Powell Dobson Architects on schemes within Swansea, in his role at Swansea Council. This work was unrelated to the scheme brought to design review. All attendees were happy to proceed on this basis.

Consultations to Date

A pre-application meeting was held in December 2017 with Torfaen CBC and a following meeting took place in May 2018 to discuss submission of Discharge of Conditions applications.

The Proposals

The proposal is to create a high quality residential development that uses traditional forms and materials to respond to the mature landscape setting of the surrounding woodland, the retained key landscape features across the site and the site topography.

The proposal includes provision of 180 dwellings, associated roads, drainage, other services infrastructure, open space and landscape provision. The application seeks to enhance the character of the site and ensure due regard to the setting of the Grade II Registered Historic Park and Garden and the listed historic assets which are located adjacent to the site. The units are spread over two parcels of land that are referred to as Malthouse North and Malthouse South. An existing outline consent is also in place for the site.

Main Points

DCFW commends the aspiration to deliver a high quality residential development which sits comfortably within the unique landscape setting, whilst responding sensitively to the adjacent Llantarnum Abbey. Further work is needed to maximise the value afforded by the distinctive setting and fulfil the potential of the site in manner that responds to the ambition and quality being sought by the local authority.

The following points summarise key issues arising from the review and should be considered to inform further work ahead of reserved matters applications being submitted:

Development Brief

An effective vision and development brief for the site will be critical in guiding and controlling future development to ensure that the key design objectives are delivered. The legal status and weight of such a brief is important to the delivery and the use of a Section 106 agreement is considered an appropriate method to provide greater control and status for the development brief. The Section 106 agreement could also imbed the need for regular design team workshops so that the evolution of the design is discussed at an early stage with the LPA.

Distinctiveness

The potential to create a distinctive development which relates to the adjacent heritage and green assets has not yet been fully realised. The north eastern edge closest to the Abbey could be better considered to ensure this is of the highest possible design quality and makes a positive contribution to the setting of the Abbey.

Likewise, opportunities to work with the existing green infrastructure and incorporate a green strategy throughout the site have not been utilised. Further consideration could be given to the edges of the site to the north and how these can be designed to optimise the benefits of adjacency to green infrastructure. The greater potential for bringing the green landscape into the site to enhance its character and strengthen its distinctiveness and sense of place, should be more thoroughly explored. The proposed village green is currently unconvincing and further consideration should be given to ensuring that it can be active and well used.

Views and vistas

No views of the site from surrounding landscape and heritage assets were presented as context analysis. Presentation of these views would allow the panel and the local authority to better understand design rationale and how the proposals will impact upon the setting of the heritage asset and views from the adjacent green space.

An assessment of potential views and vistas of the surrounding green infrastructure from the site could also help to create a place which feels better connected to its context, by optimising views and vistas as residents move around the site.

Density and topography

A strategic approach to topography and density should be further tested to ensure that the development sits comfortably within the site and makes the most of its unique assets. Higher densities could be located along the primary streets or closer to the village centre for example, however the selected approach and rationale should be based on thorough testing, clearly demonstrated in the material presented.

Site sections would aid better understanding of how the proposed layout responds to the topography of the site. We understand that these are currently being developed for inclusion in the development brief and it would be helpful to see these in due course.

Movement strategy

Desire lines across the site and to surrounding destinations should be mapped to inform pedestrian and cycling routes, helping to promote activity and active travel opportunities. It is important to note that the movement strategy for this site and the surrounding development, including the roundabout serving this site, pre-dates the Active Travel and Wellbeing of Future Generations legislation. This means that the proposed development must work harder to encourage active travel within the context of the consented outline plans. These routes could link to the surrounding green areas to encourage active travel for both regular journeys and recreation. It will be important to consider the duty the legislation places on the local authority now and in the future and take the opportunity to explore any flexibility that may be possible in the conditions inherited from previous decision making and proposals. This may be a means of improving the access to and movement throughout the site.

Direct frontage

The current framework plan suggests that Malthouse Lane will not have any direct frontage. Direct access off this lane could better connect the proposed development with its context and create a more active street.

House types

We understand that house types for the site are still being developed and discussion is ongoing with Torfean CBC. Consideration could be given to the architectural approach and whether 'traditional' house types are most appropriate for this sensitive site, and whether a more contemporary architectural language which responds to the context would be more appropriate to offer greater choice and respond to the expressed ambition and site potential.

Extent of the proposal

The design team could explore whether the site to the south west of the development could be considered as part of this scheme. Incorporating this area into the site boundary could help to better connect the proposals to the village centre to the west of the roundabout.

Next steps

DCFW appreciates the opportunity to comment on the proposals at this stage and the current planning context. We would welcome further dialogue and encourage the team to take advantage of further design review meetings as the proposals and development brief evolve.

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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:	Enzo Sauro – Enzo Homes
Architect/Consultants:	Bernadette Kinsella – Powell Dobson Architects
Planning Consultant:	Robin Williams – Asbri Planning
Local Authority	Rebecca McAndrew & Adam Foote – Torfaen County Borough Council
Design Review Panel:	
Chair	Carole-Anne Davies, Chief Executive, DCFW
Lead Panellist	Steve Smith Jamie Yeoman Kedrick Davies Wendy Maden, Design Advisor, DCFW
Observers:	Nada Anwar