

Design Review Report

North West Cardiff

DCFW Ref: 49

Meeting of 17th July 2014



The Design Commission for Wales extended a welcome to members of the Cardiff Liveable City Forum. The Commission hosted and chaired the meeting welcoming members of the Forum and their contributions.

The Forum is an initiative of Cardiff Council, supported by the Commission and was first convened at a meeting of 19th June 2014. The Forum stems from an initiative of the Leader of the Council and includes its officers and informed individuals, supported by the Design Commission for Wales.

Review Status

Meeting date

Issue date

Scheme location

Scheme description

Scheme reference number

Planning status

CONFIDENTIAL (Pre-App)

17th July 2014

5th August 2014

North West Cardiff

Masterplan/residential development

49

Pre-application

Declarations of Interest

None declared.

Consultations to Date

Redrow informed the meeting that informal consultation has taken place with St Fagans and Radyr Parish Councils. A formal response to the EIA Scoping report has been received from Cardiff Council, including comments from statutory consultees.

The Proposals

The site is located approximately 6-7km north west of Cardiff city centre, bounded by the A4119, Radyr Golf Course, Croft-y-Genau Road and developments at St Fagans, Fairwater and Danescourt. Two disused railway lines run through the site, and there are large areas of green space and woodlands of varying condition.

Outline proposals comprise residential-led mixed use development of up to 7,000 residential units (including affordable housing). District centres are intended to provide a range of shopping facilities as well as new schools, a library, community hall, pub, offices and healthcare facilities.

Summary

- The Design Commission for Wales welcomes the opportunity to understand proposals for this important large-scale development in North West Cardiff at this early stage and to review the development as it progresses.

- This first review was an opportunity for the presenting team to introduce the Commission to the scheme, and to discuss the wider issues associated with the development. This report highlights and discusses those wider issues – ‘headings’ – so that they can inform and help set some background principles.
- A suggested approach to the planning and development management process, which was aired at the meeting and drawn from successful precedent in North Somerset, is also outlined here.

Headings

City Wide Strategic Planning

It is important that the scheme is considered in the context of the wider city, and Cardiff's Local Development Plan. This, and other large developments in the planning pipeline, will change the shape of the city and will have a significant impact on the city's transport, infrastructure, services and communities.

Shared Vision

This will be one of the most important new parts of the City to emerge over the coming decades, and it is important that the developers and the Local Authority have a shared vision for the scheme. The vision should be ambitious and specific to this scheme and the qualities of the site which it will occupy. The overall vision should be underpinned by definable targets which cover issues such as energy, biodiversity, transport, housing, density, jobs etc.

Transport Planning

The transport strategy should provide convenient public transport routes, cycle paths and footpaths which connect important destinations. On this site, coordinating transport routes with the green infrastructure will be challenging, but existing or former routes may offer clues for alignments. The transport strategy must be considered in relation to housing densities and the location of community facilities or neighbourhood 'centres'. As far as possible, cycle and footpaths should be well connected to existing routes outside the site boundary.

Green Infrastructure

Existing green infrastructure and the undulating topography of this site present exciting opportunities to make this development special and distinct. By making the green spaces accessible, especially the large green centrepiece to the site, visitors from other parts of the city may be attracted to the area. There are also opportunities to create green commuting routes through the site.

Density and Neighbourhood Centres

Sufficient density of housing will be required to support public transport services and community facilities. Density must be carefully calculated so that an appropriate number of neighbourhood centres and associated transport links and other services can be planned for. The team presented early proposals showing four neighbourhood centres, however the type of centres envisaged will need to be carefully considered before such concepts can be fixed, and consideration will need to be given to evening/social activities, such as pubs and restaurants, to help make neighbourhood centres more

vibrant. On this site, the approach to housing and street layouts will need to take into account the sloping topography.

Time for design

It is vital that the design process is given sufficient time so that a series of scenarios are tested and discussed. The ambition for NW Cardiff must be to create a fresh approach that responds to changing patterns of living, especially in young people. It is envisaged that the traditional 'housebuilder' approach may not be appropriate here, at least for many parts of the development, and that new approaches to place-making, transportation, density and tenure will be considered.

Designing the spaces between buildings, before or at least in tandem with, the design of buildings, will help ensure that the principal driver in good urban design – the public realm – is given sufficient priority, and that this will help determine the nature and space needed for the important prime networks. Further consideration also needs to be given to existing constraints and opportunities - streams and hedgerows can help underpin qualities of place. Key views could become important focal points. The woodlands need considerable thought to ensure they can become a well-used resource. How will people best use them? What management do they need?

Critically, the team will need to assess what will make NW Cardiff different and more distinct from mainstream housebuilder development.

Benchmarks

The team mentioned locally distinct areas, including Rhiwbina, that were helping to inform a character for the site. This was welcomed, but the team were urged to explore exemplars from much further afield, UK wide and potentially throughout Europe.

Liveability

The neighbourhood centre(s) could take many forms and be diverse, but whilst they need to be interesting and attractive, they must above all, be viable. The team need to consider appropriate targets for them, based on successful comparables and a considered brief. Flexibility is likely to be the key.

Sustainability targets will need to be set and clearly defined.

The team need to consider how the development will aid communication between residents, and help ensure a strong community ethos can be created.

The Planning Process – A Suggested Route

The following notes describe a suggested approach to planning this development:

The Local Planning Authority (LPA) can use the Planning Process to drive higher design quality. This journey has been started, but delivery is dependent on the developer and LPA engaging with the design process and acknowledging that it is an evolutionary, iterative process that requires appropriate time to be allocated to it. The LPA should acknowledge the importance of outline consent and the evolutionary nature of development, and plug into this to achieve higher design quality. A suggested process is shown in the attached diagram.

The visioning masterplan is the foundation of the process and identifies overall character areas and targets to be achieved (biodiversity, carbon neutrality, water neutrality, homes, facilities, traffic and transport, for example), followed by sub-area master plans and the relationship of these to the planning process itself.

Sub Area Masterplans (scale 1:500 suggested so that the actual nature of places being created can be better assessed) should address land uses and road, footpath and cycle networks. Design concepts for each character area should include urban design and architectural aims, layout, public spaces, building/space massing, street scenes, focal points and key buildings, materials palette, views in and out, 3D visualisation, public art strategy, affordable housing, open space/landscape concepts and allocated self build plots.

In addition, Section 106 Agreements can be used effectively to achieve significant planning, education, recreation, social housing, environmental and transportation objectives.

There needs to be a LPA planning project team with key members such as, project coordinator, urban designer, development control, highways liaison and other officers as required. Section 106 Agreements should spell out the above and the need for regular design workshops (every 2 to 4 weeks).

The 'modification' of the planning process being suggested provides an outline consent early in the process, but is linked to much more detailed Sub Area Master Plans that need to be discussed, negotiated and submitted for the approval of the Council prior to the submission of Reserved Matters Applications. This planning process forms the Pre-Application stage and provides a 'brake' on a rush of reserved matters being submitted. It also allows the design professionals greater time for the evolution and consideration of design; and it builds trust between the LPA and developer consultants. All of these assist all parties in using resources more effectively and gaining a better understanding and awareness with Planning Council Members.

This approach could be applied to this scheme, and delivered through the existing planning system. In creating 'Time for Design' it has the potential to enhance the quality of development. The approach was preceded several years ago at Portishead with Crest and Persimmon and the feedback from these developers was positive. It was also seen as a positive approach by elected members who then became more aware and engaged with the planning process. This is essential, particularly when dealing with large projects that will take many years. The approach was also tested on appeal, and the role of the Visioning and Sub-Area Masterplans was instrumental in the Inspector dismissing proposals that did not comply with the aforementioned documents.

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

Attendees

Agent/Client/Developer:	Jane Carpenter & Wayne Rees, Redrow Mike Lawley, Cooke & Arkwright
Architectural/Urban Designer:	Edward Turner, Pegasus Gareth Williams, NLP Jon James, Scott Brownrigg
Local Authority:	Amanda Sutcliffe, Case Officer Lawrence Dowdall Andrew Gregory (for part of the meeting)
Design Review Panel:	
Chair	Alan Francis
Lead Panellist	Kedrick Davies Steven Smith Amanda Spence, Design Advisor, DCFW Carole-Anne Davies, Chief Executive, DCFW
Cardiff Liveable City Forum:	Andrew Gregory Emma Parsons Sue Essex Geraint Talfan Davies Mark Barry