



Design Review Report

Parc Mawr, Penllegaer

DCFW Ref: N97

Meeting of 28th January 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

28th January 2016

15th February 2016

Penllegaer, Swansea

Strategic site masterplan

N97

Pre-application

Declarations of Interest

None declared.

Consultations to Date

Several meetings have been held with the local authority and public consultation was being undertaken at the time of the review.

This is the first time that the Design Commission for Wales (DCFW) has been consulted on the proposals.

The Proposals

The proposal is for up to 1,000 homes for the whole masterplan area with approximately 300 in Phase 1. Also proposed are a three form entry primary school plus nursery, open space and a mixed use neighbourhood centre.

A hybrid planning application is to be made with an outline application for the whole site and a full detailed application for phase 1 which will include the school. The site is identified as a strategic site in the emerging LDP.

This review considered the masterplan for the whole site as well as emerging proposals for Phase 1.

Main Points

The Design Commission for Wales welcomed the opportunity to consider this important site at an early stage in the masterplanning process and in the context of the emerging LDP.

The opportunity that the design team has to test and amend ideas for the site will allow the points discussed at the review, and summarised below, to be taken into consideration.

The consideration of the first phase of the whole site in more detail should set the standard for development across the whole site. It is important that the principles of good urban design and placemaking are established to create a high quality and distinctive place to live and as a legacy for the future of Swansea and its surrounding settlements.

Narrative

The masterplan document must present a clear story and rationale for the proposed layout, built on a thorough understanding of the constraints and opportunities. A set of simple and informative diagrams, that build up to present the overall picture, would help to achieve this.

The heart of the place

The location of, and uses within, the proposed new local centre is still flexible and different options are being considered. A number of objectives for the centre were discussed but are not yet clarified, for example whether it should provide a link between the east and west and whether it is linked to the existing farm buildings or is independent. Working through and clarifying these objectives would help to guide the decision on the location and character of this new local centre.

Several options for the location of the local centre or mixed use facilities were discussed in the review including the opportunities of the main access point on Gorseinon Road, adjacent to the school, close to the farm or to the east of the spine road. Each of these options needs to be reviewed against the objectives, a clear rationale provided for the chosen location and a vision for the type of place established.

The local centre provides the opportunity to vary the density of the development and provide a higher concentration of properties close to local facilities and public transport connections.

The location, design and integration of the proposed primary school will be an important aspect of the heart of the place. At this early stage the Panel considered it premature to discuss the proposals presented in detail apart from noting the importance of addressing boundary treatments, school drop-off movement and service access, school playing field and play space enclosure and security and the integration and shared use of playing fields by the community.

Similarly the amount, location and nature of the green spaces should be considered alongside decisions about the local centre. How these spaces might work with the existing large village green needs to part of that consideration.

Public transport

It is understood that a Strategic Transport Model has been commissioned for the whole county. This should be used to help understand and plan for public transport connectivity as well as private car traffic. Establishing the journey times and frequency of buses to the city centre will provide an integrated public transport approach which is supported by well located, comfortable and convenient stops. Walking routes to bus stops that are safe and direct should be incorporated into the layout.

Street design and hierarchy

DCFW supports the design of streets and spaces to contribute to the sense of place of the development. The initial material provided, exploring the nature of the street hierarchy was a positive start and the creation of enclosure and interesting spaces using the building, rather than being lead by the geometry of the highway, is welcomed. It is important that the studies are translated into the masterplan as the hierarchy of streets within the initial masterplan is not clear. Consideration also needs to be given to what can be achieved within the adoption standards and what will fall outside of this requiring an alternative management approach. The character of the streets should be part of the character for each of the sub-areas, an aspect lacking from the masterplan presented.

Parking provision will be an important part of the street scene and measures should be taken to avoid parking half on footways by providing adequate on street parking for residents and visitors.

The 'spine road' is an important piece of infrastructure for the development and has a number of functional and placemaking requirements that will need to be balanced. A 20mph speed limit is desirable for built-up stretches of the street and this must be reflected in the design. Surface materials, planting, street furniture, building height and its relationship to the street, as well as pedestrian and cycle priority, can all contribute to the street design and speed restriction. The character of the street is likely to change along its length and the principles of each character area should be mapped out. The initial sketches of the semi-detached properties proposed for this route were compelling but consideration needs to be given to how vehicle access to the properties will work, the treatment of driveways and garages and whether this approach should be consistent or change along the length of the street. Sections are needed to explore the sense of enclosure and relief along the street.

The principles of Manual for Streets and Design Guidance Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013 should be used to inform the design of the streets, junctions, footpaths and cycle ways. The nature and design of the footpaths and cycleways need to be mapped out in relation to existing routes and desire lines. The sufficiency of a 3m combined footpath and cycleway along the spine road was questioned given the opportunity presented by creating a new route through the development site.

Options for the entrance to the site from Gorseinon Road were considered including whether it should be the location for a substantial building or remain more open to allow views through to the development. This should be considered in relation to the narrative that is developed for the spine road and the decisions made about the location of the local centre.

Traffic modelling will help to understand the impact of the new road on levels of traffic on the surrounding streets. Maximising the number of connections into the site from existing roads will help to stitch this development into the existing fabric of the village and integrate into the existing neighbourhood. The panel identified opportunities to the North (from Orchard Grove) and East (from Brynrhos Crescent) as possible further vehicle and/or pedestrian access points. The potential for increased traffic on existing roads can be managed through the design of the road hierarchy.

Affordable housing

The Design Commission supports the pepper-potting of small clusters of tenure blind and integrated affordable housing units throughout the development.

Green fingers

Retained green elements such as hedgerows and trees need to be designed and well integrated into the layout to ensure that they add value to quality of the residential environment as well as providing meaningful ecological links. These could be smaller incidental spaces rather than formal public open space.

Environmental strategy

A development of this scale presents opportunities for an integrated and comprehensive environmental strategy. The objectives for this should be set out now so that it informs the masterplan.

House types

The design of individual properties was not considered in detail in this early review, however, some general points were raised. Fenestration should provide natural surveillance on the gable end of properties particularly where they are on corners. Roof materials will be important as they will be seen from a long distance and consideration should be given to the consistent use of one material across the site. Garden enclosure should avoid timber fencing when part of the street elevation.

Context

The masterplan would benefit from being considered and developed with more of the surrounding context shown on the plans. This will provide a better sense of how the development will relate to adjacent properties, routes and uses. Given the topography of the area, a 3D model would further help with understanding the rolling nature of the countryside.

Conclusion

We welcomed the opportunity to review the masterplan at this stage and have identified a range of considerations that need to be taken on board. A number of important decisions regarding the nature and location of the 'heart' of the development are yet to be decided but are critical for the creation of a sense of place and legacy of the development as well as how it relates to the existing village.

We would like to see the proposals for phase one again when the layout has been progressed but well in advance of a planning application.

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

Attendees

Developer:	Stephen Litherland, Bellway PLC
Architect:	Bernadette Kinsella, Powell Dobson
Urban Designer:	Martin Douglas, PAD
Planning consultant:	Robin Williams, Asbri Planning
Local Authority:	Tom Evans, Forward Planning, City & County of Swansea Council Steve Smith, Urban Designer, City & County of Swansea Council
Design Review Panel:	
Chair	Alan Francis
Lead Panellist	Simon Carne Lynne Sullivan Jonathan Vernon Smith Maria Asenjo Jen Heal, Design Advisor, DCFW
Observers	David Owen, Andrew Ferguson, Lucy Kelly, Liam Jones, Huw Jenkins, Lee Richards – City & County of Swansea