

Design Review Report

Review status

Public

Meeting date	26 September 2012
Issue date	11 October 2012
Scheme location	Deeside, Flintshire
Scheme description	Northern Gateway
Scheme reference number	78A
Planning status	Outline application submitted
Declaration of interests	n/a

Summary

The Panel welcomed the opportunity to review this important scheme which forms part of the Welsh Government designated Deeside Regional Enterprise Zone for Advanced Manufacturing.

This is an important employment driven strategy which has to maximise the unique physical assets of the site and to integrate a substantial residential community. An outline planning application had just been made with Flintshire County Council. That application includes an Environmental Statement and other supporting information which was not available to the Panel to inform the review, our comments are made on the basis of the material that we had at the time. We would like to continue to work closely with the team, local authority and Welsh Government partners to develop the potential of the project, inputting specifically through the detail design process as the scheme progresses.

This is a complex scheme, with the application presented to the Panel relating only to the southern half of the overall site. The northern site is in different ownership and has been granted outline permission.

The Panel was not convinced that there was an overall vision responding to the unique character of the site and its context. Considerable work needs to be undertaken to integrate a thorough analysis with a design framework that will maximise the quality and unlock the potential value of the site.

In summary:

- The Panel believe that the potential of a site wide sustainable transport strategy has not been fully explored. Rail, cycle, pedestrian and car connections between residential areas, employment and recreational spaces, perhaps within a landscape framework need to be incorporated into the detailed design.
- The Panel was encouraged that the listed buildings are now acknowledged in the land use zones but was not convinced that their contribution to the unique potential of the project design and character has been fully realised.
- The Panel was not provided with information that identified the amount, location and value of the vegetation, topography, watercourses and impact of the frontage to the River Dee, or how an evaluation of that material had informed the design response for the sustainable masterplan, beyond the requirements of flood management
- The Panel noted that the combined residential areas, existing and proposed, will comprise a significant community. There was little information on the development or design intentions for this area. The location of the 'heart' of this new sustainable community and the relationships between development parcels and the adjacent Garden City was not refined enough to understand the impacts or identify the benefits for the existing or proposed community
- The Panel expressed concern that there was no coherent design framework within which the large employment buildings and their service needs could be integrated. The resulting irregularity failed to address the environmental impact and could have a detrimental effect on the long term investment value.
- The Panel noted the mass and height of the development and was concerned that the zone of visual influence, landscape and visual impacts were not clearly presented, although we understand that they have been assessed in the Environmental Impact Assessment, which forms part of the planning application.
- Sustainability infrastructure needs to be planned from the outset, there are specific opportunities available to this site, and we understand discussions have taken place with local energy generation facilities. The Panel would encourage the development of a fully integrated strategy that would have both economic and promotional benefits for the Northern Gateway development.

Discussion and panel response in full

The Panel was informed that the development team have recently submitted an outline planning application for 'Access and Quantum', other matters reserved, with accompanying documentation including an Environmental Statement. The Panel confirmed that they had not seen the Environmental Statement or Executive Summary, their comments related to the Masterplan Framework Document, the Design and Access Statement and a number of A3 and A0 drawings.

The project has been some years in development, the design and development team working with Flintshire council through the Unitary Development plan allocation process. The whole site is divided by two land ownerships, the northern part of the site has outline planning permission, the developer for the southern part of the site, under consideration here, has just submitted an outline application for 'Access and Quantum' with all other matters reserved.

Welsh Government colleagues were asked about the status of the Regional Enterprise Zone and confirmed that policy was under preparation, due to be signed off by the Minister at the end of September.

The team presented the opportunities and constraints of the site, elaborating that their proposals were for B2/B8 at a smaller scale near the rivers' edge and adjacent to the listed buildings and residential development adjoin Garden City. The local centre was identified to strengthen existing retail facilities within Garden City. Flood risks have been assessed and addressed through land raising and allocating a portion of the site as open space. A science park is proposed adjacent to the listed office campus, a number of interested parties may be interested in locating facilities in this area.

Discussions focussed on the unique nature of the site and the opportunity to provide a sustainable community of quality which would provide added value and a unique selling point for the enterprise zone. The Panel felt that through the masterplanning process this opportunity had been lost and that the result had been a zoning uses plan rather than a place making opportunity providing uniqueness with the proposed employment and residential opportunities.

Economic value is key to delivering this site, a conventional industrial estate would be indifferent to this but this is a mixed use site with unique character strengthening an existing residential community. The Design and Access statement does not currently reveal a development of unique qualities which will enhance values.

The value that the existing qualities of the site can bring to the long term success of the development should not be ignored in the development of the design. The sensitive development alongside the listed buildings and their possible reuse, as part of a high quality waterfront proposal, will add value and reinforce the historic context of the site.

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

Appendix 1

Attendees

Agent/Client/Developer	PRDL (Martin Scambler) Pochin Developments (Tom Loomes)
Architectural/Urban Designer	AEW Architects (Alan Lamb)
Consultants	Spawforths (Dave Rolinson, Andrew Rose)
Third Party	Welsh Government (Bryn Richards, Clwyd Roberts)
Planning Authority	Flintshire County Council (Jerry Spencer/ Sally Cunliffe)
Design Review Panel Chair	Wendy Richards
Officer	
Lead Panellist	Roger Ayton Chris Jones