



IHP Design Review Report

Brynna Road, Brynna

DCFW Ref: 20W IHP4

Meeting of 22nd September 2020

Review Status

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

PUBLIC

22nd September 2020
29th September 2020
Brynna, RCT
IHP Residential
20W
Subject to Welsh Government Call-in*

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.

A declaration was invited by DCFW recognising that Ian Carter, a DCFW Commissioner recently joined Edenstone. The presenting team declared that this proposal pre-dates his appointment and he has not been involved in its evolution.

The Proposals

The scheme proposes 25 MMC constructed homes on the outskirts of Brynna. The scheme is being developed by Hafod Housing. Land to the north of Brynna Road adjacent to the settlement boundary at the western fringe of Brynnau Gwynion.

The proposal also seeks to develop a timber frame factory, via a joint venture with Edenstone Homes, Monmouthshire Housing Association and Melin Housing Association. The aspiration is that the factory will accommodate the manufacture of c600 units and its initiation will benefit from Welsh Government loan.

The scheme location is identified as an exception site and following local authority recommendation for approval in July 2020 is currently subject to Welsh Government Call-In procedures. An exception site is identified in Welsh Planning Policy as a small site located within or adjoining existing settlements and which demonstrate affordable housing need. The presenting team noted the need for three affordable accessible dwellings in the context of this site.

Main Points

This report is not a verbatim record of the full discussion that took place during the review, rather a summary of the key points that have been identified that would help to improve the project and any concerns regarding the funding of the project.

Design Concerns

The scheme presentation described the primary innovation as the proposed factory and the ambition to see a through-put of 600 units per annum. This was recognised as ambitious. Whilst details of the manufacturing process were available, details of the factory site, its location in proximity to the residential proposals and its design quality and environmental performance were not explored. Issues of embodied energy and carbon in transportation of manufactured elements/units are not yet understood or factored into the residential proposals.

The residential proposals are described as a site from which learning would be drawn regarding MMC methods. The current residential design approach and layout presents a number of challenges as yet unresolved in terms of overall place-making, amenity, energy and performance strategy and greening of the streetscape. The planning history is noted.

Integration of innovation

The primary innovation is described as the factory as noted above.

Placemaking

Testing of options for the use of structurally insulated panels via the chosen construction method still requires design proposals which optimise layout and orientation. Parking appears to dominate the streetscape, and greater opportunities exist for more generous frontage and integration with the existing settlement. There is an absence of site and context analysis to inform the design response and the logic of the site layout. For a semi-rural setting, the amount of street trees and allowance for frontage greening appears limited, and the quality and generosity of gardens could be enhanced and considered as a more holistic greening strategy for the proposed development. Further design development could be informed by studying the nature of tenure on site and needs of residents.

Overall a comprehensive energy strategy is needed which considers all aspects of the site and how well it serves residents' needs. Use of gas in the primary energy source does not anticipate future proofing and we urge reconsideration. Clear targets should be identified to inform energy performance, the selection of technologies and systems and their integration and management. All requirements should be considered, not just heat. The strategy should focus on benefits to residents in the long term. The current commitment to electric vehicle charging points requires revisiting in terms of capacity and in the context of vehicle use and parking overall, alongside pedestrian connectivity and active travel.

More response to the local precedents selected, and justification for the choice of materials is needed (including the proposed use of UPVC).

Next Steps

Placemaking, design quality and a whole place approach are critical for the success of the residential proposals. The planning history makes it difficult to access the scope available for this to become a good place to live. The success of the off-site construction methods in delivering good homes rests in early consideration of all the design drivers, and detailed collaboration and specification for manufacturers. The proposed factory business model is not as yet described in detail and the through-put of units is ambitious.

The Commission would welcome future opportunities for the team to engage much earlier in their development processes to add value at appropriate stages and well ahead of any planning submissions.

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

Attendees

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James Kathrens, Ashgrove Partnership

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Design Review Panel:

Chair, Carole-Anne Davies, Chief Executive DCFW

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