



DESIGN
COMMISSION
FOR WALES
COMISIWN
DYLUNIO
CYMRU

Design Review Report

Land North of Junction 33, Cardiff

DCFW Ref: 308

Meeting of 18th September 2023



Review Status

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

PUBLIC

18th September 2023
2nd October 2023
Residential, neighbourhood centre
North of J33, Cardiff
N308
Reserved matters application

Key Points

- There are options and opportunities that Cardiff Council could take to improve the quality of engagement with applicants and help create the right environment for quality to be delivered.
 - Given that Persimmon Homes East Wales and The Urbanists are signatories to the Placemaking Wales Charter it is disappointing that the principles of the charter are not sufficiently reflected in the process, material or the proposals submitted.
 - The current proposals do not deliver the required areas of enhancement and uplift identified in the Built Form and Townscape document.
-

Consultations to Date

Outline planning proposals for this site were reviewed by DCFW in 2014. This is the first review of proposals relating to this reserved matters application, at the request of the local authority

The Proposal

The proposal relates to Phases 4 and 5 and the neighbourhood centre of the consented residential-led development of land to the north of M4 Junction 33 at Creigiau, Cardiff. These phases include 366 dwellings, a mixed-use neighbourhood centre, sports pitches and other public spaces.



Overall Masterplan

Context

Outline planning permission has been granted for residential development on this greenfield site following its allocation in Cardiff Council’s Local Development Plan (LDP). Early phases of development have already commenced. This review relates to two phases of residential development and the neighbourhood centre.

The proposals were brought to design review by the local authority as the developer Persimmon Homes had not taken up the opportunity and recommendation by the local authority to bring the scheme to the Design Commission themselves. The local authority was seeking feedback on the quality of the submission and proposals.

Main Points

The Design Commission welcomed the opportunity to engage on this significant residential and neighbourhood centre development in the north of Cardiff. It is disappointing that the developer had not engaged directly and did not attend the review, therefore we did not have the benefit of a presentation of the proposals by the developer and design team.

Whilst the proposals employ some standard urban design principles, overall, the plans lack a distinct character, fail to adequately respond to considerations of who will live here and

what their needs might be, and do not sufficiently provide the key points of uplift and interest identified in the Built Form and Townscape document.

Process

As well as addressing the proposals for this specific development we were keen to explore how the Council's process of engaging with applicants on developments of this scale and nature could help create an environment for quality to be delivered. This included using the role of development management as gatekeepers to drive better design outcomes. In particular the discussion drew from the example of the development of Ashlands at Portishead and the planning process that was undertaken there. Some key points from this example include:

- A visioning masterplan that sets out the type of place that is to be created at the outline application stage.
- Controlling, through s106 agreements, when reserved matters applications are submitted to allow time for design.
- Requiring sub-area masterplans at 1:500 scale to be approved by the local authority before reserved matters application.
- Establishing a small but dedicated and consistent team of individuals with appropriate design skills within the authority to work on the application including development management, urban design, project management and highways.
- Holding regular design workshops with the applicant to steer and make design decisions and record them in correspondence.
- Supplementing the workshops with desktop review and written feedback by email in a timely matter.
- Being open to amending the original vision if better proposals emerge later as a result of the iterative process set out above.
- Requiring key decisions later in the process (such as the s38 process) to come back to this project team.

Such a process requires small consistent resource and stems wasted time and resource in other areas. It can be supported with the input of the Design Commission in the early stages.

Further information about the Ashlands/Portishead example can be found in the case study within the [Placemaking Guidance](#) produced by DCFW.

Consideration should be given to investing in skills and ways in which the local authority can work collaboratively internally to support better design outcomes. Taking time to visit good examples and understand how they were delivered should form part of this and is something that DCFW can help facilitate.

General design considerations

There are several aspects that are present in all phases of the proposed development that require further consideration:

- Private drives that sever connectivity within the site.
- Attenuation areas creating left over spaces with little purpose, rather than an integrated SuDS landscape strategy.
- Poorly integrated play areas.
- Unclear relationships between active travel routes and desire lines.
- No bespoke corner units to address key prominent corners.

The following points were raised about the proposals for each of the individual phases of development.

Phase 4A

The green space within this phase is not of sufficient scale to be considered a 'village green' and is unlikely to be well used in its current form. There are several elements within this phase that could be grouped together more positively to make a more significant contribution to the life of the community. This includes the NEAP which is currently in a very poor location, the community orchard, and the SuDS attenuation areas. Collecting these uses together and enclosing them with a strong built form that provides good natural surveillance could transform this phase.

The housing typologies do not change sufficiently to help define spaces. Terraced houses could help to provide more enclosure.

Phases 4B and 5A

These residential areas relate poorly to the neighbourhood centre. The arrangement of the neighbourhood centre car parks and the rear of properties in these phases will not help to create a positive environment. These houses should be considered neighbourhood centre properties and the scale, nature and arrangement should reflect this. There should be benefits from proximity to the centre, but this is not currently maximised as the two elements seem to be considered separately.

Consideration should be given to whether private or communal amenity space can be integrated into proposals for the flat blocks to the north of the centre. This would benefit the residents and could provide a clearer definition of space around these blocks.

Neighbourhood centre

The proposed mix of uses including the integration of a supermarket and residential accommodation on upper floors in this location is positive. The active ground floor uses will help to provide life and activity within the centre.

We have significant concerns about the arrangement of the areas to the rear of the mixed-use blocks. These large areas of car parking are poorly enclosed, overlooked, activated and landscaped. There is no information about the rear elevations of the commercial properties which will have a big impact on the function and feel of these spaces. Additionally, the bin and bike stores are poorly integrated with the properties they serve and are in prominent locations within the spaces. As note above, the rear of properties in phases 4B and 5A do not create a positive interface with these spaces. A strong landscape approach to these spaces is also needed and is currently lacking.

All mobility modes need to be well integrated into the street including a bus stop, bike hire and secure general bike parking.

The public space to the south of the centre could be more clearly defined for day-to-day use but also as a potential location for the community to gather and events to be held e.g. a neighbourhood Christmas tree.

Whist not included in this application, consideration should be given to some principles for how the school will be integrated into this location including fence lines, traffic management, traffic speeds and a positive frontage onto the street.

Phase 5B

The LEAP and attenuation areas are poorly integrated in this location. They could be used much more meaningfully to create a sense of place and activity within the location.

The proposed change of surface treatment is insufficient to create node or focal point in this location. The role and purpose of the focal point needs much more consideration and articulation.

The design of the streets should reflect the 20mph residential speed limit without the requirement to retrofit traffic calming measures.

Stronger links to other phases are needed to avoid this feeling like a isolated pocket of development. There is also the potential to connect more meaningfully to the wider green infrastructure.

The frontage to the south lacks coherency and strength. It appears arbitrary and needs a stronger design idea to address this important edge.

Conclusion

Overall, we would expect more from signatories of the Placemaking Charter with a stronger vision for what this place will be like, how people can live here in a sustainable way and how the built fabric can support a stronger sense of place and community. Much more can be achieved with the elements included in the proposals if they were designed and arranged more cohesively.

Next Steps

- We would welcome further review of proposals for these phases, ideally with the developer and design team present.
- We offer support to Cardiff Council on wider considerations regarding how the application process might be enhanced to promote design quality.

Comisiwn Dylunio Cymru Design Commission for Wales is the trading name of DCFW LIMITED, a Private Limited Company established under the Companies Act 1985 and 2006, Company No: 04391072 incorporated in England and Wales as a wholly owned subsidiary of the Welsh Government. Registered office: 4th Floor, Cambrian Buildings, Mount Stuart Square, Cardiff CF10 5FL T: 029 2045 1964 E connect@dcfw.org. The comment recorded in this report, arising from formal Design Review through our Design Review Service, is provided in the public interest for the consideration of local planning authorities as a material consideration, and other users of the Design Review Service. It is not and should not be considered 'advice' and no third party is bound or required to act upon it. The Design Review Service is delivered in line with DCFW's published 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

NB The developer and design team did not attend this meeting.

Local Authority:

Mike Biddulph, Cardiff City Council
Alexandra Richards, Cardiff City Council

DCFW Design Review Panel

Chair:

Kedrick Davies

Panel:

Chris Jefford
Jen Heal, Deputy Chief Executive, DCFW
Max Hampton, Design Advisor, DCFW

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 and meeting Agenda items. Any such declarations are recorded here and in DCFW's central records.

Mike Biddulph, who initiated the design review from Cardiff City Council, is also a Director of the Design Commission for Wales.