

# Design Review Report

Land to the North of Malpas, Torfaen

**DCFW Ref: N342**

Meeting of 15<sup>th</sup> October 2025



## Review Status

Meeting date  
Issue date  
Scheme description  
Scheme location  
Scheme reference number  
Planning status  
  
Planning status of DCFW comment

## PUBLIC

15<sup>th</sup> October 2025  
17<sup>th</sup> October 2025  
Residential  
Land to the north of Malpas, Torfaen  
N342  
Site being promoted through Torfaen  
RLDP process  
Material Consideration

## Key Points

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- While we welcome the early opportunity to review this site, significant concerns remain regarding its suitability for good placemaking.
- The site's location and connectivity are considered insufficient to support a sustainable, active travel-oriented community.
- The proposal risks creating a car-dominated development with limited viable options for those without access to private vehicles.
- There is a weak physical and functional relationship between the proposed site and the existing settlement of Malpas.
- Further work is required to establish how higher-density development could be successfully delivered in this context.

## Consultations to Date

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This is the first review of proposals for this site by DCFW. The local planning authority has been engaged on the proposals.

## The Proposal

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The proposal is for residential development of 100-150 dwellings, vehicular access from the A4042 relief road, active travel connections and public open space.



*Proposed Development Framework Plan*

## Context

The site is located between the existing residential area of Malpas (in Newport) and the A4042 relief road. It comprises a large field, which slopes down to a stream that runs north-west to south-east. Between the field and much of the existing housing is a disused railway with wooded embankments which currently only has informal pedestrian access. The boundaries to the A4042 are heavily wooded with trees planted in connection with the road construction.

## Main Points

We welcome the early opportunity to consider this site and to provide input to the local authority as part of their Replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP) process. It is not within our remit to determine whether or not the site should be allocated in the RLDP. However, it is important at this stage to assess the design and placemaking merits of the proposal, and this report provides commentary on those aspects.

While we acknowledge that the design team has attempted to respond to the principles of the Placemaking Wales Charter, we remain unconvinced that the site's location and

achievable connectivity are sufficient to create the conditions necessary for good placemaking. Our principal concern is that the separation from the settlement of Malpas, will result in a car-dominated and car-dependent development. This raises significant concerns about the quality of life for residents and the limited opportunities for those without access to a car.

### **Active Travel Principles**

In line with the transport hierarchy and the Placemaking Wales Charter, active travel should be the primary means of movement both within the site and to key day-to-day destinations. The current proposal relies heavily on a single pedestrian connection to the south, which passes through land outside the site boundary. As such, the upgrading and ongoing security of this access cannot be guaranteed at this stage. Although the design narrative suggests this link is to be the main pedestrian route, the layout currently treats it as a secondary access. In addition, we are not convinced that there is a clear understanding of what constitutes an effective, inclusive and safe route, or that there is evident ability to deliver on those requirements. To be effective, the masterplan should be reoriented to prioritise this route as the principal point of entry and movement for most residents.

We have similar concerns regarding the use of the disused railway and the onward connections. While the disused railway line could offer potential for a future active travel route, its current limitations including lack of connections at either end, minimal opportunities for access/egress along its length, and very limited natural surveillance, reduce its usefulness. In its proposed form, it is unlikely to feel safe or attractive for many users.

We noted that future cycle routes to the north are likely to be years away from being delivered, are currently unfunded, will require significant works to the dual carriage way roundabout, and need to cross a new planned dedicated south-west slip to be constructed.

### **Day-to-Day Accessibility**

Even if safe and welcoming active travel routes can be established, it remains unconvincing that essential day-to-day destinations are reachable within a reasonable walking or cycling distance. The design team should consider how a typical week would function for a household without a car and assess whether this meets the Marmot Principles for equitable and sustainable living. If the team believes the location can successfully support such a lifestyle, this case needs to be explained and evidenced much more clearly.

## **Road Access**

Early discussions have taken place with both the local authority and Welsh Government highways officers. However, it is not yet clear whether the proposed junction, located close to an existing roundabout, will be acceptable. The local authority has indicated that a dedicated left-turn lane may be introduced in this area, just to the west of the proposed main site access, which could further complicate the proposed access arrangement.

## **Public Transport Provision**

The proposal does not currently present a convincing case for viable public transport use. An hourly bus service, some 500+m from the development, is unlikely to support the range of day-to-day activities required by residents, including travel to work, school, and shops. Our concerns above regarding the active travel routes linked to the site are relevant here as well.

Beyond the suggestion of a partial cycle route along the old railway embankment, no information has been provided on how public transport, active travel, or shared mobility options will be actively promoted. Consideration should be given to any innovative transport measures, although such options may be limited by the relatively small development population.

## **Relationship with Existing Settlement**

Although the idea of keeping the site “invisible” may reduce the landscape and visual impact, it also risks isolating the development from the existing settlement. The intervening ancient woodland presents a significant barrier to integration with Malpas. As currently conceived, the proposal reads as a self-contained enclave accessed primarily from the main road.

The proposed public open space could, in principle, offer some benefits to existing residents, but the physical separation created by the woodland and disused railway makes genuine community integration challenging. Whilst we acknowledge that the woodland offers a significant opportunity for people, it is ancient woodland and the increased pressure from people using the woodland may result in an unacceptable level of harm to this irreplaceable habitat. The matter of the sites SINC status and its inherent ecological interest also seemed unclearly resolved.

It is also noted that while the site lies within Torfaen, its relationship with Malpas, which falls within Newport, is critical. Collaboration with Newport City Council will therefore be essential, and this was acknowledged as not yet having been undertaken. At present, it is unclear what the housing needs of Malpas are, whether there is pressure for growth, or how this site might fit within a wider settlement strategy.

## **Nature and Density of Development**

Beyond questions of planning policy compliance, further consideration is required as to the nature and identity of the proposed place. A higher density of 50–60 dwellings per hectare, with policy compliant affordable housing of around 30%, has been suggested, which would distinguish the development from the surrounding low-density suburban character.

While we support the principle of higher density to make efficient use of land and to support nearby settlements, this must be underpinned by strong public transport and active travel connections. Without these, higher density development risks becoming dominated by cars.

At this stage, the proposal does not yet demonstrate a sustainable approach to placemaking. There remain significant barriers that must be addressed to ensure that the site can evolve into a well-connected, liveable, and sustainable community.

## **Conclusion**

While we welcome the opportunity to engage early in relation to this site and the RLDP process, the proposal in its current form raises substantial concerns regarding connectivity, sustainability, nature of place, character and its relationship with the existing settlement. Development of the nature proposed, in this location, risks becoming highly car-dependent and physically disconnected, which would undermine the principles of the Placemaking Wales Charter.

## **Next Steps**

Should the site progress further, we would welcome continued engagement.

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

## Attendees

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Client: Paul Fitter, Harvington Properties

Design Team: Dai Lewis, EDP  
Joe Hall, EDP  
Matt Grist, Ridge

Planning Consultant: Sian Thomas, hgh Consulting  
Roger Hephher, hgh Consulting

Local Planning Authority: Justin Jones, Torfaen CBC  
Emyr Jones, Torfaen CBC  
Arianwyn Lewis, Torfaen CBC  
Adrian Willock, Torfaen CBC

### **DCFW Design Review Panel**

Chair: Simon Power

Panel: Andrew Linfoot, Lead Panellist  
Wendy Maden  
Toby Adam  
Jen Heal, DCFW Deputy Chief Executive  
Max Hampton, DCFW Design Advisor

Observers: Kate Richards  
Ryan Moreland

## Declarations of Interest

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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.

DCFW panellist Gareth Howell works for EDP but was not involved in this review. The declaration was noted and all present were content to proceed.