

# Design Review Report

## **Penrhys (Phase 1A)**

DCFW Ref: N339

Meeting of 15<sup>th</sup> April 2026



## 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> April 2026  
28<sup>th</sup> April 2026  
Housing development  
Penrhys, Ferndale, CF43 3PT  
N339  
Planning application submitted  
Material consideration

## Key Points

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- The long-term success and sustainability of this redevelopment will depend on a clear and comprehensive masterplan. Phase 1A should be understood as part of a wider strategy that demonstrates how future phases will deliver key elements of connectivity, community infrastructure, mixed uses and a sustainable neighbourhood.
- If this was a development proposal for this site without an existing community we would not be supportive of the location given its challenges with connectivity, access to facilities, topography, and micro-climate. However, the specific circumstances of an existing community in this location that wishes to remain and the lack of alternative locations for alternative accommodation in the surrounding area, mean that we do understand the need to redevelop the site. However, the above point about the delivery of aspects that will help to make this a more sustainable development will be critical to success.
- Strong community engagement has been undertaken and should continue throughout all stages of redevelopment. Existing residents should remain central to decision-making, with particular care taken to ensure rehousing arrangements are fair, responsive and do not financially disadvantage households.
- Phasing requires careful consideration to maintain quality of life for existing residents and create confidence in early delivery. Early phases should avoid isolation and clearly connect to subsequent stages of development.
- Further design refinement is needed to ensure homes and streets respond positively to the site's challenging topography and climate. Particular attention should be given to retaining walls, inactive frontages, residual spaces, amenity areas and the overall living experience of residents.
- The challenges of topography and microclimate require thorough design interrogation and likely a bespoke design and sustainability response. House types, layouts and an energy strategy should be specifically developed for the unique conditions of Penrhys.

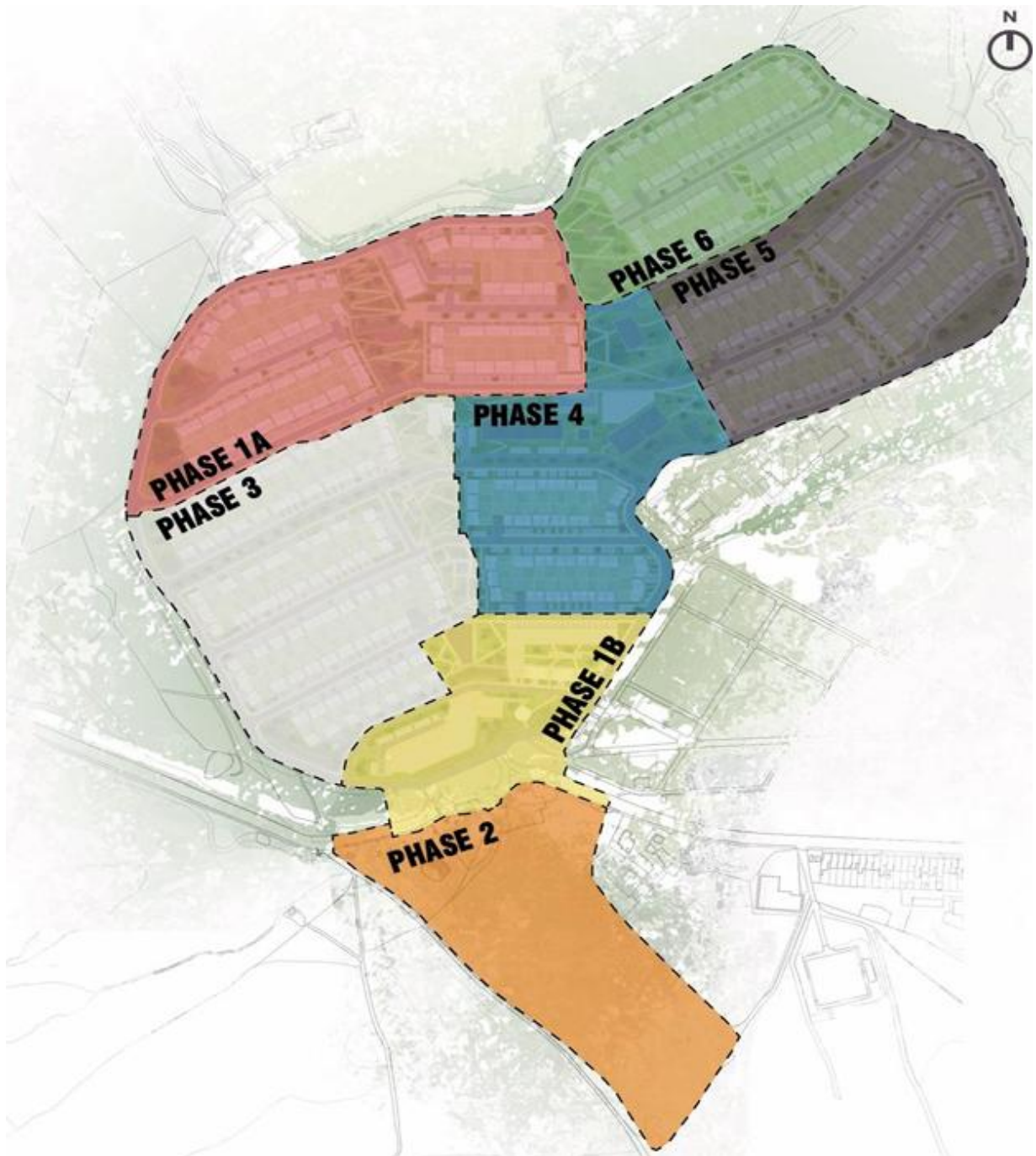


## Context

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Penrhys is an established community of approximately 550 residents located at an elevated position between the Rhondda Fach and Rhondda Fawr valleys. The settlement was originally developed as a large local authority housing estate in the 1960s. Following a prolonged period of economic and social decline, many of the original homes have been demolished or boarded up, with approximately 300 of the original 950 dwellings remaining.

Phase 1A is located to the north-west of the wider site.



*Phasing Plan*

## Main Points

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### **Community and Engagement**

There remains a strong sense of community within Penrhys, and the level of engagement undertaken by Trivallis appears exemplary.

We welcome the aspiration to provide higher-quality housing and an improved living environment for existing residents. We particularly support the stated commitment to enabling current residents to remain within Penrhys in both the short and long term, particularly given the lack of alternative options for relocation nearby.

The rehousing of existing residents is inherently complex and should continue to be handled through a responsive, resident-focused approach. It is also important that existing owner-occupiers are not financially disadvantaged as a consequence of redevelopment and are able to afford a new property on the site.

Consideration should continue to be given to how the existing sense of community can be retained and strengthened as new phases are delivered and new residents move into the area.

### **Masterplan and Phasing**

At the first Design Review of proposals for Penrhys in May 2025 we noted that, given the history of decline associated with the original development, there must be robust scrutiny and a clear strategic case for comprehensive redevelopment.

Considered in isolation, the Phase 1A planning application does not fully demonstrate the wider strategic case for regeneration. While we recognise that Phase 1A will assist with relocating existing residents and enable subsequent phases of development, the long-term success of the project depends on a clearer and more coordinated framework for the whole site being established at this stage. As a relatively small, housing-led phase, it cannot by itself address the wider structural, economic and social challenges affecting Penrhys – it relies on the wider masterplan coming forward.

This review identified positive intentions in relation to improving connectivity, strengthening commercial and community uses, supporting skills and education, and delivering a broader mix of housing tenures. These ambitions are fundamental to the long-term success of the settlement. We note that some measures are intended to come forward through planning obligations and associated delivery mechanisms as part of Phase 1. However, these commitments were not sufficiently clear through the review process, so

it will be important that they are explicitly defined, coordinated and communicated as part of an agreed strategy for the wider site.

The approach to phasing is also important. Redevelopment of the whole site is likely to take many years, and the experience of existing residents during early phases must be carefully considered. While we understand that Phase 1A focuses on land relatively free from existing buildings, its peripheral location risks creating a sense of separation or isolation if not integrated quickly with subsequent phases.

A more comprehensive masterplan and delivery plan should therefore be established at the earliest opportunity to inform Phase 1A and guide subsequent phases of development. We understand that this will be progressed with a selected delivery partner over the coming months. This should clearly articulate the overall vision, evidence base, delivery framework, phasing strategy and key commitments necessary to demonstrate how the wider regeneration project will create a thriving, resilient and sustainable place.

If the site is to be a key development site in the Replacement Local Development Plan and given that RCT County Borough Council are signatories to the Placemaking Wales Charter, we expect a joined up placemaking approach to the planning and delivery of this site across all parties involved. We recognise that the delivery, location and design of the proposed primary school sit outside the direct control of Trivallis. Nevertheless, the primary school will be a key asset to the location and community and will play an important role in the success of the wider neighbourhood. It is therefore positive that investment is proposed by the local authority, but disappointing that greater consideration does not yet appear to have been given to how its location and integration can best support the emerging residential development and wider placemaking objectives.

The pen profiles presented in the review should be updated to provide examples of how the masterplan for the site will enable existing and new residents to live healthy and sustainable lives in this location. For example, while informal car sharing currently takes place and works for existing residents, the proposed transport hub and onsite facilities will be critical to help ensure that new residents aren't reliant on private cars.

### **Analysis and Design Response**

The presentation at the review included a clear explanation of the factors contributing to the decline of the original development. This context would usefully be reflected within the Design and Access Statement, alongside a clear explanation of how the current proposals respond to historic shortcomings.

The elevated location of Penrhys means the site is likely to experience challenging climatic conditions, including significant wind exposure and heavy rainfall. We support the proposed installation of a weather station at the earliest opportunity and recommend that the findings inform the layout, public realm and building design. The layout is currently highly responsive to the topography but this should be balanced with consideration of prevailing winds and there may be more that can be done with the layout and landscape proposals.

We recognise that the site presents difficult topographical constraints and that the layout seeks to respond to these conditions. However, concerns remain regarding the quality of experience in some parts of the scheme. These include:

- Inactive frontages as a result of ground-floor elevations dominated by garages.
- Gardens surrounded by high retaining walls.
- Lower-ground rooms facing retaining structures.
- Residual spaces occupying prominent corners.

Further testing of the quality of these spaces through 3D modelling should be used to refine the proposals.

The use of the Tai ar y Cyd pattern book may be contributing to some of these issues. While the proposals seek to adapt the pattern book, we question whether this approach is appropriate across all parts of the site, particularly where extensive modification is required and design compromises remain. Alternative house types tailored specifically to the site's topography, microclimate, views and wider context may provide a more successful response.

We also recognise that standard planning and housing development requirements may be challenging to apply rigidly in this location. A proportionate and design-led approach may achieve better overall outcomes, including:

- Layouts that work positively with the topography and respond to the challenging microclimate.
- Emphasis on the quality rather than the size of amenity space.
- Streets and parking arrangements designed specifically for the site context.

A clear energy strategy is required. This should explain how energy proposals respond to the site conditions and how residents will benefit through affordability, comfort and long-term resilience. Bold ambitions in relation to energy, such as no/low energy bills could be a key selling point for the development.

Overall, we recommend further analysis, testing and design refinement to ensure the layout is the best it can be for the site. The preparation of a detailed three-dimensional model would assist in understanding the spatial quality, character and living experience of the proposals.

## Next Steps

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We would welcome continued engagement as proposals evolve and would be pleased to facilitate further Design Reviews covering both the wider masterplan and future development phases.

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

## Attendees

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Client:	Louise Attwood, Trivallis Keiron Montague, Trivallis Mark Hallett, Trivallis
Design/Consultant Team:	Liam Hopkins, The Urbanists Robert Bathgate, Stride Treglown Caroline Jones, Savills
Local Planning Authority:	Chris Jones, Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council

### **DCFW Design Review Panel**

Chair:	Jen Heal, DCFW Chief Executive
Panel:	Kedrick Davies, Lead Panellist Aisha Ali Toby Adam Max Hampton, DCFW Design Advisor

Felicity Barbur, DCFW Design Lead

Observers:

Zack Simic, Transport for Wales

## 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.

Mark Hallett is a Design Commission Panel Member and Chair of the DCFW Audit, Finance and General Purposes Committee. Mark was attending the review in his role as Board Member at Trivallis and has had no involvement in this project on behalf of the Design Commission. All were content to proceed.