

Design Review Report

Land North of J33 M4 – Phase 5B

DCFW Ref: N308

Meeting of 21st May 2026



Review Status

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

Public

21st May 2026
5th June 2026
Residential
Creigiau, Cardiff
N308
Reserved matters planning application
Material consideration

Key Points

- This review was requested by Cardiff Council to provide independent design review feedback to assist the local planning authority in its consideration of the reserved matters planning application. The applicant and design team declined the opportunity to attend the review.
- The proposals have moved away from the placemaking, landscape and urban design principles established through the original masterplan, outline consent and approved Built Form and Townscape Document. While it is recognised that requirements may have evolved, the current proposals do not demonstrate how these changes have resulted in an improved or equally strong design response.
- The submitted material provides limited evidence of a clear placemaking vision or a robust design process demonstrating how alternative approaches have been explored, tested and refined.
- The proposals do not fully capitalise on the site's green setting, surrounding landscape and relationship with adjacent open spaces. Greater emphasis on landscape design could positively inform the layout, street hierarchy and character of the development.
- Streets, houses, parking and public spaces should function more positively as places for people and contribute to a stronger hierarchy, identity and sense of character across the development.
- Greater investment in a more rigorous and integrated design process could help unlock opportunities to create long-term value through the delivery of a stronger and more memorable place, while also creating a higher quality living environment for residents.

Consultations to Date

Proposals for the outline planning application for the wider site were reviewed by the Design Commission for Wales in 2014. Proposals relating to Phases 4 and 5 of the development, including 366 dwellings and a mixed-use neighbourhood centre, were subsequently reviewed by DCFW in 2023 at the request of the local planning authority.

The current review was also brought forward by the local planning authority, which was seeking independent design review feedback on the proposals. Persimmon Homes declined the opportunity to attend the review.

The Proposal

The proposal relates a reserved matters planning application for Phase 5B of a development on land to the north of Junction 33 of the M4 at Creigiau, Cardiff. The scheme includes 118 dwellings and represents the final phase of the outline planning consent.

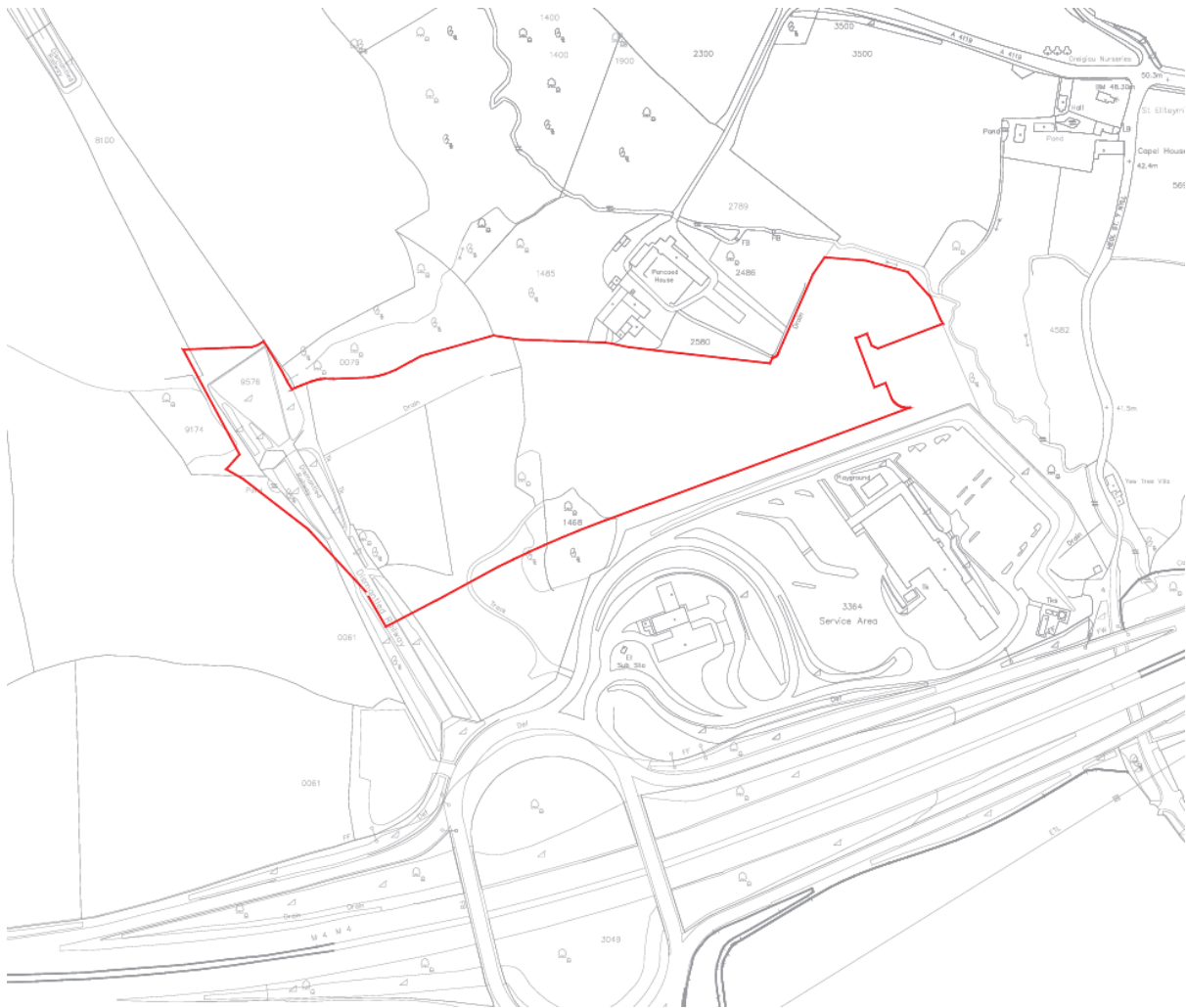


Site Layout Plan

Context

Outline planning permission has been granted for development on this greenfield site following its allocation within Cardiff Council's Local Development Plan. Earlier phases of the wider development have already commenced.

The current proposals relate to the final phase of the development and form part of the Greenway / Employment District character area established through the approved masterplan and outline consent. The site sits adjacent to the motorway service station, Pencoed House and greenfield land.



Site Location Plan

Main Points

Context, Character and Design Development

The proposals would benefit from a clearer and more rigorous design rationale explaining how the characteristics of the site and surrounding area have informed the layout, landscape strategy and architectural approach.

The original masterplan established a number of strong placemaking and urban design principles, including outward-facing development, key frontages and corners, a strong landscape structure and a central green space. These principles are also broadly consistent with the aspirations of the Placemaking Wales Charter and Cardiff Council's placemaking and urban design policies, which seek to create distinctive neighbourhoods with a strong sense of place and identity. The current proposals do not clearly demonstrate how these aspirations have informed the evolution of the scheme.

For example, the original concept sought to create development that actively fronted onto the green space to the north. The current proposals instead introduce rear garden boundaries backing onto this space, fundamentally changing the relationship between the

development and the landscape setting. It is understood that this may relate to ecological considerations and minimising light for bats, but the proposals would benefit from a clearer explanation of how these competing requirements have been balanced and how a positive relationship with the green space can still be achieved.

Similarly, the original intention to create strong frontages onto the route to the south, with buildings set behind lanes, has not been fully realised. Several of the key frontages and corners identified within the masterplan are also not clearly expressed within the current layout.

The proposals have moved away from aspects of the original concept but do not clearly demonstrate how the revised approach improves upon or successfully reinterprets the original placemaking and urban design principles. The submitted compliance material does not provide sufficient clarity regarding how the proposals either accord with the masterplan or establish a strong alternative design rationale.

Given the extent to which the proposals have moved away from elements of the original masterplan, the local planning authority should seek clearer evidence of the design process undertaken, including how different layouts and alternative approaches have been explored, tested and refined to arrive at the current proposals.

The proposals would also benefit from a stronger response to orientation, surrounding uses and wider contextual conditions. For example, it is not immediately apparent from the submitted material that the site sits adjacent to a service station, which is likely to generate light, noise and activity during the evening. The relationship between the proposals and these surrounding conditions requires further consideration.

The relationship between the development and surrounding edges would benefit from further testing and explanation. Sections through key edges, including relationships with surrounding green spaces, the service station and Pencoed House, would help demonstrate how these conditions are intended to function in practice.

Streets, Parking and Housing Layout

The current layout, street design and housing arrangement create a relatively standardised suburban character that risks feeling placeless and insufficiently responsive to the site's landscape setting, surrounding context and wider placemaking ambitions.

The layout and street design appear to be heavily influenced by parking, highway-led design approaches and the use of standard house types, sometimes at the expense of placemaking and landscape quality.

The amount and arrangement of parking creates challenges in several locations and contributes to a vehicle-dominated environment. This results in several poorly resolved areas throughout the site, including rows of double parking spaces between buildings, parking courts with limited natural surveillance, large areas dominated by vehicles, and cul-de-sacs that limit connectivity, movement choice and relationship to the wider development. These elements collectively suggest that parking provision and highway-led design approaches are exerting too great an influence over the structure of the development.

There may also be opportunities to reduce the reliance on on-plot parking and fragmented parking areas by incorporating a greater proportion of parking within the street environment itself. A more integrated on-street parking approach could help create streets with a better relationship between the buildings, parking and public space.

The current street layout and housing arrangement create a uniform and standardised environment across much of the site. The submitted material does not demonstrate a sufficiently varied or responsive approach to street design, landscape structure and building arrangement, resulting in limited distinction between different parts of the development.

A more coherent hierarchy of streets, public spaces and buildings is needed, supported by a wider range of street typologies that respond positively to differing conditions across the site. This could include mews streets, shared surface streets and more varied relationships between buildings, streets, landscape and public space.

Greater coherence in the use of housing typologies, heights and massing would help establish a stronger and more legible neighbourhood character. While the proposals seek to introduce variation across the development, this currently appears somewhat inconsistent. A clearer townscape strategy, for example through more consistent building heights along particular streets or stronger emphasis at corners and key frontages, could help create a more distinctive and structured character.

The main street along the south of the site currently forms a long and straight route. Although this route sits outside the application boundary, its overall design and function will have a significant influence on the quality and identity of the wider development. We have concerns that this street will not support lower vehicle speeds or an attractive walking environment.

Overall, the proposals do not demonstrate how a more distinctive form of development could be achieved in this location while still accommodating the likely need for car use. The resulting layout risks creating a standardised suburban environment rather than a place that responds positively to the site's location, landscape setting and wider character.

Public Realm and Landscape

The predominance of standard house types within the development places greater importance on the role of landscape and public realm in creating identity and distinctiveness. However, the proposals demonstrate limited evidence of landscape design positively informing the layout, street hierarchy and character of the development, and many of the open spaces appear residual rather than deliberately shaped and integrated within a coherent urban design and landscape design strategy.

The original concept proposed a central green space with significant tree planting. The current proposals instead create a small triangular space that lacks the enclosure, purpose and relationship with surrounding buildings needed to function successfully as a meaningful focal point for the community.

The location of the proposed play provision also requires further consideration. While it is understood that the play provision may aim to serve the wider development beyond the application boundary, the submitted material does not currently demonstrate how this will function as part of the wider neighbourhood structure. In particular, the play area may instead be better located within a more centrally located green space.

The original aspiration for extensive landscaping and street tree planting throughout the development has not been reflected within the current proposals. It is recognised that SuDS requirements have evolved since the original concept was prepared, but this should not become a barrier to delivering high-quality landscaping.

The attenuation pond and surrounding landscape present an opportunity to create a valuable amenity and ecological asset. However, further detail is needed regarding how these spaces will feel, function and be overlooked in practice.

Overall, the proposals would benefit from a stronger relationship between buildings, landscape and public spaces, supported by a more considered approach to detailed landscape design. At present, many of the spaces lack clear definition, enclosure, activity and purpose.

Affordable Housing

The affordable housing is concentrated within the far edge of the site in an area with a constrained and awkward site geometry, creating a number of challenges relating to layout, parking and integration with the wider development.

The current design does not successfully resolve these conditions. In particular, the parking and green spaces positioned behind gardens lack natural surveillance and clear purpose, creating potential concerns regarding safety, stewardship and long-term management. Similarly, the attenuation pond has limited relationship with the surrounding homes and lacks strong overlooking, frontage and integration with the residential environment. The layout and arrangement of buildings should respond more positively to these spaces so that they contribute more meaningfully to the character, amenity and identity of this part of the development.

Overall, the affordable housing should be integrated within the development rather than concentrated within a constrained edge of the site. The design response to this part of the site requires significant improvement to establish a more coherent and successful relationship between buildings, parking, landscape and public space, and to create a higher quality residential environment.

Community and Living Environment

The submitted material provides limited evidence of how the proposals have been informed by consideration of what it will feel like to live in the development on a day-to-day basis. The current arrangement of streets, spaces and buildings does not clearly demonstrate how the scheme will create opportunities for residents to meet, socialise, play and develop a strong sense of community and neighbourhood identity.

The proposals also do not clearly demonstrate what it will feel like to move through and experience the development at different times of the day and year, including the relationship with surrounding open spaces and routes through the wider neighbourhood. Further illustrative material, including sections, visualisations and wider context information, should be provided to support assessment of these aspects of the scheme.

Next Steps

We encourage the local planning authority to seek further clarification regarding how the proposals respond to the placemaking, urban design and landscape design principles established through the original masterplan and outline consent, including clearer evidence of the design process and testing undertaken through the evolution of the scheme.

Further design development is needed to strengthen the relationship between buildings, streets, public spaces and landscape to create a more distinctive and coherent environment that responds positively to the site and its context.

We encourage Persimmon Homes to directly engage with us as the scheme develops and would welcome a further review.

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

Attendees

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

Local Authority:	Mike Biddulph, Cardiff City Council Gwion Dafydd, Cardiff City Council Abbie Connelly, Cardiff City Council Alexandra Richards, Cardiff City Council
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DCFW Design Review Panel

Chair:	Simon Power
Panel:	Kedrick Davies, Lead Panellist Chris Jefford Jen Heal, DCFW Chief Executive Max Hampton, DCFW Design Advisor Felicity Barbur, DCFW Design Lead

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 is a Director of the Design Commission for Wales. Mike was attending the review on behalf of Cardiff Council, and has had no involvement in this project on behalf of the Design Commission. The declaration was noted and all were content to proceed.