

South Cambridgeshire District Council

Design Enabling Panel

PANEL MEETING REPORT

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| Scheme: | Reserved matters application for the construction of up to 110 dwellings following approval of outline application S/0202/17/OL |
| Site address: | Land east of Teversham Road, Fulbourn CB21 5HZ |
| Status: | Pre-planning enquiry, ref: PRE/0230/19 |
| Date: | Thursday 8 August 2019 |
| Venue: | Monkfield Room, South Cambridgeshire District Council, Cambourne, CB23 6EA |
| Time: | 13:15 – 14:30 |
| Site visit: | An unaccompanied site visit was conducted by the Panel on 8 August 2019 prior to the design review |

Panel Members

Simon Carne (Chair) – Director, Simon Carne Architect
 Simon Conder – Director, Simon Conder Associates Ltd
 David Gunn – Senior Architect, Adamson Associates
 Judith Tranter – Director, TM Architects

Local Authority attendees

Katie Christodoulides – Principal Planning Officer (Case Officer)
 Dr. Bonnie Kwok - Lead Urban Design Project Co-ordinator & DEP Manager
 Tom Davies – Planning Project Officer (Urban Design)
 Cllr. Dr. Tumi Hawkins - Lead Cabinet Member for Planning (Observer)
 Cllr/ Dr. Douglas De Lacey – Chairman of the Council (Observer)

Applicant and Representatives

Paul Derry – Associate Planner, Barton Wilmore Ltd (Planning agent)
 Steve Topper – Architect, Barton Wilmore Ltd (Architect)
 Christopher Lee – Project Manager, Castleford International (Applicant)

Relevant planning policies

'National Planning Policy Framework' (2019) (NPPF)

Paragraph 124 - The creation of high-quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities. Being clear about design expectations, and how these will be tested, is essential for achieving this. So too is effective engagement between applicants, communities, local planning authorities and other interests throughout the process.

Paragraph 127 - Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:

- a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
- b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;
- c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);
- d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;
- e) optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and
- f) create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users⁴⁶; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.

Paragraph 128 - Design quality should be considered throughout the evolution and assessment of individual proposals. Early discussion between applicants, the local planning authority and local community about the design and style of emerging schemes is important for clarifying expectations and reconciling local and commercial interests. Applicants should work closely with those affected by their proposals to evolve designs that take account of the views of the community. Applications that can demonstrate early, proactive and effective engagement with the community should be looked on more favourably than those that cannot.

Paragraph 129 - Local planning authorities should ensure that they have access to, and make appropriate use of, tools and processes for assessing and improving the design of development. These include workshops to engage the local community, design advice and review arrangements, and assessment frameworks such as Building for Life. These are of most benefit if used as early as possible in the evolution of schemes, and are particularly important for significant projects such as large scale housing and mixed use developments. In assessing

applications, local planning authorities should have regard to the outcome from these processes, including any recommendations made by design review panels.

Paragraph 130 - Permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions, taking into account any local design standards or style guides in plans or supplementary planning documents. Conversely, where the design of a development accords with clear expectations in plan policies, design should not be used by the decision-maker as a valid reason to object to development. Local planning authorities should also seek to ensure that the quality of approved development is not materially diminished between permission and completion, as a result of changes being made to the permitted scheme (for example through changes to approved details such as the materials used).

Paragraph 131 - In determining applications, great weight should be given to outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability, or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area, so long as they fit in with the overall form and layout of their surroundings.

'South Cambridgeshire Local Plan' (2018)

Policy H/15 Countryside Dwellings of Exceptional Quality

Outside the Green Belt, single new bespoke dwellings of exceptional quality will be permitted in the countryside providing all of the following criteria are met:

- a) The dwelling would reflect the highest standards in architecture, being recognised as truly outstanding or innovative;
- b) The dwelling would significantly enhance its mediate setting;
- c) The nature and size of the site, and the design of the dwelling, its landscaping and location on site are sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area and to wider views;
- d) That there are no existing dwellings on the site capable of being replaced under Policy H/14.

Policy HQ/1 Design Principles

1. All new development must be of high-quality design, with a clear vision as to the positive contribution the development will make to its local and wider context. As appropriate to the scale and nature of the development, proposals must:
 - a) Preserve or enhance the character of the local urban and rural area and respond to its context in the wider landscape;
 - b) Conserve or enhance important natural and historic assets and their setting;
 - c) Include variety and interest within a coherent, place-responsive design, which is legible and creates a positive sense of place and identity whilst also responding to the local context and respecting local distinctiveness;

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- d) Be compatible with its location and appropriate in terms of scale, density, mass, form, siting, design, proportion, materials, texture and colour in relation to the surrounding area;
 - e) Deliver a strong visual relationship between buildings that comfortably define and enclose streets, squares and public places, creating interesting vistas, skylines, focal points and appropriately scaled landmarks along routes and around spaces;
 - f) Achieve a permeable development with ease of movement and access for all users and abilities, with user friendly and conveniently accessible streets and other routes both within the development and linking with its surroundings and existing and proposed facilities and services, focusing on delivering attractive and safe opportunities for walking, cycling, public transport and, where appropriate, horse riding;
 - g) Provide safe and convenient access for all users and abilities to public buildings and spaces, including those with limited mobility or those with other impairment such as of sight or hearing;
 - h) Ensure that car parking is integrated into the development in a convenient, accessible manner and does not dominate the development and its surroundings or cause safety issues;
 - i) Provide safe, secure, convenient and accessible provision for cycle parking and storage, facilities for waste management, recycling and collection in a manner that is appropriately integrated within the overall development;
 - j) Provide a harmonious integrated mix of uses both within the site and with its surroundings that contributes to the creation of inclusive communities providing the facilities and services to meet the needs of the community;
 - k) Ensure developments deliver flexibility that allows for future changes in needs and lifestyles, and adaptation to climate change;
 - l) Mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change on development through location, form, orientation, materials and design of buildings and spaces;
 - m) Include high quality landscaping and public spaces that integrate the development with its surroundings, having a clear definition between public and private space which provide opportunities for recreation, social interaction as well as support healthy lifestyles, biodiversity, sustainable drainage and climate change mitigation;
 - n) Protect the health and amenity of occupiers and surrounding uses from development that is overlooking, overbearing or results in a loss of daylight or development which would create unacceptable impacts such as noise, vibration, odour, emissions and dust;
 - o) Design-out crime and create an environment that is created for people that is and feels safe, and has a strong community focus.
2. Larger and more complex developments will be required to submit Masterplans and Design Codes to agree an overall vision and strategy for a development as a whole that demonstrates a comprehensive and inclusive approach.

'District Design Guide' (2010)

This document sets out minimum residential amenity standards for new developments in the district, e.g. minimum private and communal amenity space, minimum back-to-back distances, minimum garage sizes, etc.

'Cambridgeshire Quality Charter for Growth' (2010)

This document sets out core principles of the level of quality to be expected in new developments in the district: the 4Cs, i.e. Community, Connectivity, Character and Climate. Collectively, they form the basic principles for achieving higher quality development that meets the needs our communities. New housing development should provide a great choice of housing along with the active participation of local communities. New developments should be located where people can benefit from high connectivity to jobs and services. Climate change should be tackled through imaginative landscaping and innovative approaches to transport, energy and waste. Places of character should be created, with distinctive neighbourhoods and a first-class public realm.

Draft 'Fulbourn Village Design Guide SPD' (2019)

This Guides supplements the new Local Plan policies on high quality design, distinctive local character and place-making. It sets out design principles to guide future development proposals in and around the village of Fulbourn.

Panel views

It should be noted that the comments below include items from the Panel's in-camera discussion and amplify the brief opinion delivered at the end of the session.

Discussion

The Panel was grateful to the client and their design team for bringing this complex and challenging scheme forward for a design review.

The site has a long history that predates the setting up of the Design Enabling Panel. Permission, won on appeal, has been a factor in the delay to bringing the scheme forward and in the view of the Panel, has contributed to the difficulty in developing a successful scheme. The Panel anticipates that, following this design review, a more detailed and considered engagement between the Local Planning Authority, the developer and his design team will enable the design team to not just identify the constraints, but also embrace the many opportunities offered by this beautiful site. The Panel believes that this will lead to a greatly improved and profitable scheme for all concerned.

Layout

The Panel was confused by the pre-application plans shown on page 11 of the presentation document. Our initial understanding was that of the two plans, Proctor Matthews had prepared the plan dated June 2018 and the January 2019 was from Barton Willmore. It was later confirmed by the Case Officer that Proctor Matthews had prepared both layout plans. With that clarification, the Panel believes that the scheme of June 2018 offered significant potential over the January 2019 plan, the illustrative layout prepared by Barton Willmore (page 9 of the document) and the later plans (design workshop July 2019 page 13 of document) and the version shown in the PowerPoint presentation.

The developable area within the site divides fairly equally between the west and east on either side of the stream that runs north to south through the centre. The parameter plan indicates areas for residential development and those for open space. The perimeter of the site consists of retained trees, including some excellent specimens as well as hedges with gaps filled. It seemed to the Panel that the Proctor Matthews plan of June 2018, developed in more detail, would satisfy these parameters. The spaces between buildings, edge conditions, the pedestrian friendly layout, the relationship to boundaries and coherence of layout, would be a substantial improvement on the layout proposed and presented to the Panel. The Panel considers that a suitable outcome could be developed if this previous approach is followed.

House typologies and design quality implied by the June 2018 layout suggest a better relationship between house frontages and shared street spaces. Apartment blocks are located towards the centre of the scheme where they would benefit from the shared public open spaces at the heart of the development. Access to all parts of the site is shown, though there would need to be careful consideration for public safety around the edges.

Character

The recently published draft '*Fulbourn Village Design Guide*' sets out some key principles for development of major sites in the village, of which this is one. The Panel applauds this document and hopes that it will be used constructively for the benefit of the site. Village character is an essential consideration in the development of residential schemes and it is dangerous to believe there are formulaic solutions. Village character is complex and it should not be described in simple terms such as urban, suburban or rural. This is a very special site with many existing natural and man-made qualities. It offers the potential to connect to the surrounding settlement. It benefits from existing water features, a stream and an established perimeter of mature trees and hedges. It demands a response that prioritises access for pedestrians and cyclists above motor vehicles, and establishes places for the new residents and visitors with pedestrian priority of the streets and spaces within the site.

Connectivity

Constraints AND opportunities are key to the development of an exemplary scheme. The presentation only stressed the constraints; this is unfortunate. The outline approval allowed for a single vehicular access. It was discussed at the design review with the Case Officer, the applicant and his design team that a second entrance to the site from Cox's Grove would provide a number of significant benefits for the scheme. The Panel believes this concept could potentially be explored as it would greatly enhance the scheme: it would enable the scheme to be built out from two access points and in the future would become part of a better vehicle link to the village from the east end of the development; it would also provide ease of access and egress for all, not just emergency vehicles. The design of streets should discourage through traffic and control speed.

Pedestrian linkages to the site are provided from three sides but they are the bare minimum. The village study emphasizes the need to maintain views through to open countryside beyond. Access through Poorwell water, is particularly important but requires the agreement of the Parish Council. Reinstating the open space of Poorwell Water should be a priority. The Panel hopes this can be negotiated for the good of all in the community.

Issues to be addressed

The current July 2019 proposals have flaws and challenges, which were highlighted in the review session. These include:

- 1) A lack of understanding of the existing village character
- 2) Suburban layouts with cul-de-sacs predominant
- 3) Unadopted 'Private driveways' shared between a number of houses
- 4) Duplication of single sided streets to the eastern end of the site
- 5) Highway standards applied to meandering street alignment
- 6) Poor sense of arrival at the west entrance
- 7) Central park and play areas poorly defined, no sense of enclosure
- 8) Crossing the stream should be celebrated
- 9) Dead frontages to apartment blocks largely taken up with integral garages
- 10) Lack of provision of private amenity space for flats
- 11) Projecting balconies that are out of character with the village (inset balconies/winter garden could be an alternative?)
- 12) Affordable housing predominantly in flats not tenure blind
- 13) Three-bedroom flats above ground level for affordable housing (houses would be more suitable)
- 14) House plans and elevations lack inspiration
- 15) Awkward details, over-elaboration of materials and non-functioning chimney stacks
- 16) Garden enclosure facing public spaces where fencing would be unacceptable
- 17) Careful consideration of close proximity between proposed and existing neighbouring properties

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The Panel strongly believes that with the planning, access arrangements, pedestrian priority and character of the development addressed, a substantial improvement - along the lines suggested by Proctor Matthews - can be delivered. The Panel would like to review the scheme again as it develops.

Note: *Please note that these comments are informal opinion of the Council's Design Enabling Panel and relate to the design aspects of the proposals. The comments are produced for discussion purposes only with the applicant. The views expressed will not bind the decision of Council members should a planning application be submitted, nor prejudice the formal decision-making process of the Council.*