
Dunton Hills Garden Village
Workshop 7
Design checkpoint

d:se

15rd May 2019

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CONFIDENTIAL

Workshop Notes Draft
21st May 2019

Location: CEG, Sloane Square House, 1 Holbein Place, London, SW1W 8NS

DESIGN PANEL MEMBERS ATTENDING:

Jane Briginshaw, Architecture/Housing (Chair)
Andrew Beharrell, Architecture/Urban Design
Carl Gulland, Architecture

ALSO ATTENDING:

Sogand Babol, Design South East

Bill Newman, Brentwood Borough Council
David Ubaka, Brentwood Borough Council
Justin Boojj, Brentwood Borough Council (Development Management)
Kay Pallaris, Brentwood Borough Council (Strategic Planning)
Phil Drane, Brentwood Borough Council (Strategic Planning)

Charlotte Robinson, CEG
David Barnes, Star Planning/CEG
James Rayner, Broadway Malyan/CEG
Jeff Nottage, Broadway Malyan/CEG
Nick Norgate, Broadway Malyan/CEG

WORKSHOP 7 DESIGN CHECKPOINT

Introduction

Design South East have been appointed to provide design support and design review services for Brentwood Council, to guide the Dunton Hills Garden Village masterplan design and development process. Dunton Hills is within the Metropolitan Green Belt of London and holds Garden Village status, with support from central government. The aspiration is to support a community of around 4,000 homes.

The complete list of strategic aims for the Spatial Vision of Dunton Hills are available in the notes issued earlier in this workshop series.

This note represents DSE's design advice at the concluding workshop, of seven, in preparation for two formal Design Review Panels in June and July 2019. This session is intended as a broad overview of progress in the run-up to the first design review meeting.

Summary

The scheme, as presented in this workshop, constitutes a series of options that propose strategic amendments to the masterplan on the basis of advice received at the thematic workshops, with a particular emphasis paid to the position of the schools and form of the employment space.

We are comfortable that the team are engaging; iterations are being made and acknowledge this workshop as one part of a longer process. It is acknowledged that the first design review meeting in June is the point at which the team anticipate they will have synthesised as much of the advice from the workshops as possible. We agree that the cycle of alternating options should be broken, with one 'fix' being taken forward and tested more rigorously. The applicant team will need to select the most appropriate option and build upon this to synthesise panel, workshop and policy advice. Similarly, the team should bring material sufficient to articulate their position on key issues identified to-date, to the first design review. Precise information required is at the team's discretion.

There is, however, much more work still to do in order to respond fully to the advice, which has been developed in collaboration with diverse stakeholders. In the meanwhile, our recommendations focus on important strategic design moves that are yet to be incorporated into the scheme, which we would expect to see and which will be essential for the eventual masterplan and if not, require a full and robust justification as to the reasons why it should not be possible. The sustainable transport strategy, connectivity and parking are of particular priority to resolve.

Spatial vision

- Much more work is needed to demonstrate that the spatial vision has integrated the earlier recommendations relating to sustainable transport, heritage assets, green and blue infrastructure, biodiversity and energy into the proposal. For example, to reiterate previous advice, the panel are looking for a pioneering and proactive attitude in the green and blue infrastructure component of the spatial vision – with the attitude on the Olympic Park as one approach. Producing a 'ten-point' diagram for the key moves of the masterplan will be helpful to bring some clarity to the decision-making process in this regard, allowing the team to identify what is important.

School

- It is emphasised that schools, children and play should be used as a fundamental driver and opportunity for the life and character of the village. The team may also explore how to use the school as an organisation device around which local centres are knitted.
- While there are competing arguments for the location of the secondary school with regards to noise, acoustics, access to landscape opportunities and adjacency to streets, there may be some merit in moving the school further toward the west of the site. The team should interrogate this option further. The land-take of the schools feels expansive, however, well-designed and good schools are those that are integrated into the wider built fabric, with a finer grain. The schools and their surrounding grounds should be looked at in greater detail alongside adjoining public realm, open space and built-form. Multi-functional space should be articulated and captured in the drawings.

Local centres

- Positioning the local centre on the western boundary could be of benefit. While typically, traffic impact is a key consideration, our view is that in reality, new developments risk a lack of movement and activity, so bringing the local centre to a more prominent position for the wider community is something to explore.

Connections

- The need for a connection on the east has been discussed at length. The preference is for multiple connections; provision made for at least one connection is seen as crucially important, and essential in the long-term. Connections on the north and east need to be embedded in the design, on the applicant's land, with clear potential for it to connect to adjoining land. This is not evident in the proposal as it stands. The validity of a neighbourhood in the north-east, on the ridgeline, will be entirely dependent on how well connected it is to the surrounding area.

Sustainable transport

- The 'loop' road is largely unhelpful to the overall masterplan and reads as an impactful intervention that promotes car use, while the modal hierarchy of movement is still unresolved. If a modal shift from car use to public transport, pedestrian and cycle use is to be achieved, sustainable options need to be prevalent, and designed in, before the car. Car access still needs to work well, but it is reiterated that a clear, direct east-west street that predominantly accommodates a sustainable mode of transport is needed. This could be achieved by connecting from the junction on the main local centre, directly across to the western part of the 'loop'. This could, for example, accommodate a mass rapid sustainable mode of transport to West Horndon station.
- It is advised that clear, colour-coded diagrams that describe the overall network, street types, and modes of movement accommodated on each are required, as well as detailed design drawings of how they work in design terms, in addition to illustrations of the look and feel. Disconnecting discreet portions of the 'loop' would be helpful in ensuring it discourages internalised vehicular movements.
- 'Park Drive', linking the area to the north-west of the farmstead, across the ancient woodland and to the ridgeline community feels as though it takes the optimal route for ease of delivery. Should the route be drawn much tighter up to, and around the western and northern curtilage of the farmstead, it might shape the experience of moving through the site and increase positive engagement with the asset. Sections and three-dimensional drawings are required.

Density, parking and character

- Higher densities along the masterplan edges appears logical. Such densities are more 'urban' than usually seen in Essex villages, which is not an issue in itself, but it is important for the team to recognise, understand and express the 'nature' of the place accordingly. The panel queried whether 'feathering' densities toward the ancient woodland, wetlands and meadows might be interspersed with higher densities. The overall developable areas need to be critically reviewed, to reflect areas for parking and green infrastructure.

- It might be appropriate to consider the community in the north-east a tighter, more compact neighbourhood, with a distinct, possibly concentric and well-defined boundary, which is seen to confer a particular character that is of interest.
- The parking strategy should be prioritised. The strategy, land-take, and form require clarification. It is recognised that even at lower levels of 30-35 DPH, parking is difficult to resolve. At the higher levels of 60-80 DPH, the land-take will be much larger and needs to be planned for. Clarity on whether there will be podiums, surface or on-plot parking is proposed will be needed.

Representation

- Practically, it would be helpful for the team to develop more three-dimensional material, including a physical model of the proposed scheme, as well as sections at a good scale.
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