

Report of the Dunton Hills Garden Village
Chairs Review

Dunton Hills Garden Village

18 February 2020

The chairs review meeting

Reference number	1178
Date	7 th February 2020
Meeting location	70 Cowcross Street, Farringdon, London, EC1M 6DG
Panel members attending	Jane Briginshaw, Housing, Architecture (Chair)
Panel manager	Sogand Babol, Design South East
Presenting team	Jeff Nottage, Broadway Malyan Charlotte Robinson, CEG David Barnes, Star Planning
Other attendees	Coby Tomlins, Brentwood Borough Council Phil Drane, Brentwood Borough Council Justin Booij, Brentwood Borough Council David Ubaka, Brentwood Borough Council
Site visit	A full site visit has been conducted on multiple occasions previously.
Scope of the review	This review was carried out to conclude Design South East's advisory contributions to the masterplanning process. Comments were maintained within the context of those made at previous reviews.
Panel interests	Panel members did not indicate any conflicts of interest.
Confidentiality	This report is confidential as the scheme is not yet the subject of a detailed planning application. Full details of our confidentiality policy can be found at the end of this report.

The proposal

Name	Dunton Hills Garden Village
Site location	Dunton Hills Golf Club House, Tilbury Road, West Horndon, Brentwood, Essex, CM13 3LT
Proposal	<p>This is a proposal for a new, landscape-led garden settlement of up to 4,000 homes in three neighbourhoods. The vision is for a self-sustaining community supported by green and blue infrastructure, spaces for education, recreation, employment and culture and spatial provisions to accommodate technological advances in sustainable transport, including on-demand services and ‘smart’ facilities, as well as a walkable, polycentric community with a ‘central heart’ and market square as the primary destination for the settlement.</p>
Planning stage	<p>An outline application is intended for submission to the local authority by the end of February.</p> <p>The Council have recently appointed HTA Design LLP to carry out a detailed SPD which is programmed for adoption by October 2020.</p>
Local planning authority	Brentwood Borough Council
Planning context	<p>The site is identified in the emerging Brentwood Pre-Submission Local Plan 2016-2033 (Regulation 19). Consultation responses are currently being processed and the plan will bear increasing weight until it is adopted, which is expected to be in the third quarter of 2020. The development is required to deliver 2,700 homes in the plan period, with an overall indicative capacity of 4,000 homes identified in the longer-term. Site specific policies require necessary community, employment, utility, transport and green and blue infrastructure to support a community of this size, with an emphasis on health and wellbeing. In addition, the site should have regard to the Essex Design Guide.</p>
Previous reviews	<p>This scheme was previously reviewed by Design South East on 5th June, 17th July and 9th October 2019.</p>

Summary

The masterplan has progressed to a broadly satisfactory standard, in view of the Council's future detailed design SPD. We are confident regarding the mobility and landscape strategy, albeit there are reservations related to coherence, distribution and integration of diverse uses, energy and sustainability.

1. Structure, tone & wording

- 1.1. The structure of the masterplan guidance document is now more coherent, and an executive summary has been provided. Alongside refined language, the framework now has more clarity which is positive. The suitability of evocative images as part of a masterplan is questioned. These should be removed.

2. Vision & coherence

- 2.1. A landscape-led masterplan based on existing qualities has been established. However, we maintain that the overall coherence of the spatial masterplan "layers" with one another is still deficient. For example, the proposal for a "flat Fanns edge" along the A128 is not consistent with the existing context nor proposed densities. The initial idea or qualities identified would have to develop into something more tailored to the location in order to be appropriate.
- 2.2. The team should develop one key drawing that captures the landscape vision and framework, as well as additional drawings to clarify how enhancement is supported and how encroachment will be controlled in the masterplan.
- 2.3. There are a number of missed opportunities, including the absence of a clear narrative explaining how masterplan caters for a cross-section of the community, for "whole life living". Within this, one idea which is lacking consideration is provisions to support independent mobility for children. Our advice is that additional "hooks" are needed in the text-based masterplan, that can ensure this dialogue is captured as the project evolves. Another missed opportunity, raised during the workshops, was the idea of linking the country parks to the north and south through the site, possibly via an additional green route through the site, or in some other conceptual way.

3. Mobility

- 3.1. The mobility strategy is robust, progressive and well-considered. We appreciate this is an evolving picture that involves multiple stakeholder input and defer to the Council's strong lead in this area.

4. Distribution & integration of uses

- 4.1. Our previous comments regarding the distribution of diverse uses are maintained. Notwithstanding, more can still be done on the integration of different uses with the rest of the masterplan. Albeit, we note that strong justifications were put forward by the applicant team and authority, particularly related to the gypsy and traveller provision, which is argued as rooted in the self-defined needs of the community.

5. Energy & sustainability

- 5.1. Our previous comments regarding energy and sustainability strategy are maintained. The masterplan is aligned with baseline needs, but could be more progressive, particularly related to heating and hot water. We note that the authority aims to ensure that sustainable measures are incorporated through future strategic controls.

Confidentiality

If the scheme was not the subject of a planning application when it came to the panel, this report is offered in confidence to those who attended the review meeting. There is no objection to the report being shared within the recipients' organisations. Design South East reserves the right to make the contents of this report known should the views contained in this report be made public in whole or in part (either accurately or inaccurately). Unless previously agreed, pre-application reports will be made publicly available if the scheme becomes the subject of a planning application or public inquiry. Design South East also reserves the right to make this report available to another design review panel should the scheme go before them. If you do not require this report to be kept confidential, please inform us.

If the scheme is the subject of a planning application the report will be made publicly available and we expect the local authority to include it in the case documents.

Role of Design Review

This is the report of a design review panel, forum or workshop. Design review is endorsed by the National Planning Policy Framework and the opinions and recommendations of properly conducted, independent design review panels should be given weight in planning decisions including appeals. The panel does not take planning decisions. Its role is advisory. The panel's advice is only one of a number of considerations that local planning authorities have to take into account in making their decisions.

The role of design review is to provide independent expert advice to both the applicant and the local planning authority. We will try to make sure that the panel are informed about the views of local residents and businesses to inform their understanding of the context of the proposal. However, design review is a separate process to community engagement and consultation.

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