



Report of the Dunton Hills Design Review Panel

Dunton Hills Garden Village

24th October 2019

The design review meeting

Reference no.	1178/091019
Date	9 th October 2019
Site and meeting location	Dunton Hills Golf Club House, Tilbury Road, West Horndon, Brentwood, Essex, CM13 3LT
Panel members attending	Jane Briginshaw (Chair), Housing, Architecture Scott Adams, Architecture, Urban Design, Regeneration Andrew Cameron, Urban Design, Transport Planning Richard Warwick, Architecture, Sustainability Lindsey Wilkinson, Landscape Architecture, Historic Environment
Panel manager	Sogand Babol, Design South East
Presenting team	Jeff Nottage, Broadway Malyan Nick Norgate, Broadway Malyan Lucy Markham, Montagu Evans Andrew Pankhurst, SES Hannah Murton, Tyler Grange David Barnes, Star Planning
Other attendees	Charlotte Robinson, CEG Phil Drane, Brentwood Borough Council Justin Booij, Brentwood Borough Council Caroline McCaffrey, Brentwood Borough Council David Ubaka, Brentwood Borough Council Max Gibson, Brentwood Borough Council Laurie Edmonds, Brentwood Borough Council Jonathan Alldis, Homes England Natalie Hayward, Essex County Council Matthew Jericho, Essex County Council Andrew Patchett, landowner's representative Matthew Winslow, Basildon Borough Council Cllr. Colin Foan, West Horndon Parish Council Cllr. Philip Mynott, Brentwood Councillor
Scope	As an independent design review panel, the scope of this review was not restricted. The authority requested advice on the design response to heritage and the level of detail appropriate for the applicant's Masterplan Framework Guidance Document to ensure the quality of the overall development is maintained.
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
Proposal	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.
Planning stage	An outline application is intended to be submitted to the local authority within the next few weeks.
Local planning authority	Brentwood Borough Council
Planning context	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 the health and wellbeing of the community. The Council are currently in the process of procuring consultants to develop an additional design guide, for adoption as a Supplementary Planning Document in the first half of 2020. In addition, the site should have regard to the Essex Design Guide, which has recently been updated with new sections relating to Garden Communities.
Previous reviews	This scheme has previously been reviewed by the panel on 5 th June and 17 th July 2019.

Summary

After a comprehensive review process, we are convinced of the aspiration of the applicant team. However, we are not convinced a high-quality development is deliverable based on the material presented.

A great deal of thought has gone into the framework document, but it is too flexible, long, and lacking in hierarchy. The structure needs some thought, while the tone and controls are too minimal to support a high-quality development. It is critically important that additional items need to be identified as mandatory within the Masterplan Framework Guidance Document. This will require close consultation with the Council and may mean consistent and overlapping criteria in the Guidance Document and the Council's SPD. Existing prescriptive elements within the Guidance Document need to be brought into sharper focus. An executive summary is needed to help with clarity.

Refinement of the spatial proposal is required. The team will need to rapidly develop the options and controls for the historic farmstead, a robust sustainability strategy, the approach to employment and mixed-uses, as well as technical exercises on density, parking and highways.

Detailed advice

1 Masterplan framework; structure and content

- 1.1 The Masterplan Framework Guidance Document is structured around the three neighbourhoods of *Dunton Fanns*, *Dunton Waters* and *Dunton Woods*. In light of the assertion of a landscape-led masterplan, this perspective is questioned. The key landscape influences of the ancient woodland, ridgeline and blue infrastructure network have been of greater significance in previous discussions, while the capacity of the masterplan to deliver an effective place will be supported by maintaining these elements as central to the framework. Therefore, the landscape should be drawn out more prominently. The presence of the landscape in the overall vision could be re-established by refining and expanding on the interfaces between the key development areas and the landscape.
- 1.2 The Guidance Document is a suitably lengthy piece of work. It does, however, need an executive summary to ensure ease of communication through the planning and development process.
- 1.3 The masterplan framework need not resolve every part of the masterplan with the same level of detail. As Phase 1, *Dunton Fanns* requires prompt attention, studies and evidence to demonstrate the proposal is viable and in accordance with the aspiration, particularly with regards to density, heights, parking, and mobility. However, as a longer-term aspiration, *Dunton Woods* is understandably less refined and it may be appropriate for the team to condense or abbreviate the work pertaining to this phase, leaving space and time for additional exploration and studies in due course.

2 Masterplan framework; communication, tone and controls

- 2.1 The masterplan must have additional mandatory items. Some of these can include a tolerance, to provide flexibility and future-proof the document.
- 2.2 Elements that 'must', 'should' and 'could' be integrated into future detailed applications must be explicit, with the language consistent with the Council's future SPD as far as possible. A graphic device to distinguish between prescriptive and illustrative criteria within the document would be helpful.

- 2.3 Key, non-negotiable elements of the masterplan framework should be clearly identified in the executive summary. We welcome the introduction of simple diagrams that explain these key moves.
- 2.4 The controls for density, height and parking in the supporting application are not yet convincing. We question the suitability of upper parameters for height set in metres, and the underlying technical work. The resultant detailed proposals could misinterpret the intent. A more appropriate control would be to establish upper and lower parameters for height in numbers of storeys and for the plan form of developable areas in metres.
- 2.5 Controls should be established for key elements of the landscape framework similar to those for density, height and parking.

3 Heritage

- 3.1 The historic farmstead is an indispensable and central component of the masterplan. However, there is limited analysis that clarifies and communicates the heritage significance, illustrates the extent of the curtilage and setting of the asset, or assesses the community significance and value. Taken in the round, the influences of heritage and community value will need to inform a new set of controls in the framework. This might include, for example, the acceptable proximity of development to this cluster, adjacent uses, possible uses contained within the curtilage, its role in the masterplan beyond a historic 'heart' and the relationship that needs to be established with the Market Square and Village Green - whether it be visually or physically linked. The process will require additional consultation with relevant stakeholders, such as Historic England.

4 Movement, sustainability and urban design

- 4.1 The mobility strategy has been well thought through. We applaud the approach of the applicant, Homes England, Brentwood Borough Council and Essex County Council working in collaboration toward meaningful, long-term change. However, the approach does not yet reflect in a layout and design that truly underpins a more active transport network. Further work is required to the form of the proposal, and its communication in the masterplan framework.
- 4.2 Fundamental to the success of the mobility strategy is the link to West Horndon. This must be captured as consistently and comprehensively as possible in the application. The panel have not yet seen the proposals for this link. We stress the need for technical work and evidence from the applicant, supplied to the Council, to corroborate the assertion that the link with West Horndon station across Tilbury Road will be safe, direct and prioritise pedestrians. Drawings in the masterplan framework identifying this link will need to be synchronised throughout. Detailed highways drawings must be agreed with the relevant authorities in advance of the outline application submission.
- 4.3 Regrettably, the forward-thinking attitude of the applicant in sustainable transport is not reflected in the overall sustainability strategy, which falls far short of expectations in a time of climate crisis. This is a critical site that delivers the majority of housing growth within Brentwood Borough. We encourage additional commitments regarding sustainable construction and energy, water and waste strategies, to align the overall approach and ensure adherence to the strategic aims and priorities of the relevant authorities.
- 4.4 Further exploration of proposed densities, heights and parking levels is essential. We are not yet convinced by the underlying analysis for the parking strategy. While we

welcome the development of an incremental and phased strategy, the application will need to be supported with exhaustive technical studies demonstrating that the quantity of proposed parking is appropriate, and its form is well-integrated. Low levels of parking will need to be supported with control mechanisms to ensure they are realised without adverse effects. The team may wish to consider design and management criteria to prevent exploitation of the public realm for informal parking.

- 4.5 The location of employment in the north-west corner, overall distribution of uses across the site and location of the Gypsy and Traveller provision is not acceptable as it stands. Co-located uses and activities are foundational principles for a mixed and successful community.
- 4.6 The location of Phase 1 is sensitive to the construction of latter phases and heightens the risk of disturbance to new residents in what is to be a long programme. This underlines the need for a phased construction management strategy that is submitted at outline stage.

5 Additional advice

- 5.1 Although it was not discussed in the review, the panel encourage integration of progressive levels of cycle parking as part of the package of sustainable measures to discourage car-use. The team might look to Cambridge for precedents for quantity and location and should observe the amount of space needed both in the public realm and inside homes; this could be explored and quantified in the same process as car parking.

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. 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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