

The Design Review Panel

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Site	Yelland Quay, Yelland, Devon, EX31 3HB
Proposal	Regeneration of Yelland Quay Power Station
Local Authority	North Devon Council
Applicant	Yelland Quay Ltd
Agent	Woodward Smith Chartered Architects LLP
Review Date	21 st August 2019

This is the second time the Design Review Panel has reviewed a proposal for this site. The session was booked by Matthew Steart of Woodward Smith Chartered Architects LLP.

Paragraph 129 of the NPPF states: -

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

The Panel raised the following points: -

The extremely clear, comprehensive, and professional presentation was again welcomed by the Panel, and it is felt that this was of benefit to the design review process. Notwithstanding how much work has already gone into the design proposals presented, it is noted that the design process remains at an early stage; the Panel welcomes this second and continued thorough engagement with the design review panel process.

Generally, subject to the comments within this feedback document being addressed, the Panel remains supportive of the applicants stated aspirations and the proposed extent of development. As stated in the previous feedback document, it is considered that the sites special nature presents a unique opportunity to create a development of both local and regional significance; that is to say the site deserves a very high-quality design response.

The Panel acknowledges and welcomes the design team’s response to the previous design review panel feedback given. It is considered that the proposals are a significant improvement on those previously presented. The Panel supports the design process now being undertaken in response to

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the concern that the previous scheme presented was not grounded in the landscape context. The recognition of the fantastic opportunity and value that the sites special setting offers, in terms of landscape, outward views, estuary birds etc is welcomed; it is considered that it will be beneficial for the proposals to refer back to and demonstrate an appropriate response to the landscape and geographical location and setting.

The Panel welcomes the clear brief that is now being given by the client in terms of their aspirations for the site. It is noted that the aim is to create a permanent new village (rather than a holiday village) and this is supported.

The design team's investigation of other coastal communities as concept / design drivers, such as Instow and Appledore is supported. Notwithstanding this it is noted that the proposals are not trying to be a slavish / literal pastiche to a traditional coastal village, and this nonliteral approach is supported. The eco community references and precedents being used as inspiration are welcomed, as it is felt that these are grounded in the landscape and driven by landscape and ecology/biodiversity considerations. Furthermore, it is suggested that embracing the sites natural assets will result in a sensitive and well-designed scheme and may also represent a commercial benefit to the applicant, by creating a unique selling point for their development whilst ensuring that visitors will also be attracted. This will hopefully in turn result in a vibrant and prosperous sustainable community.

It is noted that, unlike traditional coastal villages, the proposed development does not yet appear to have any functional relationship with the water/sea/estuary. It is felt that the design proposals would benefit significantly from further exploring this aspect and the potential opportunities in this regard. In particular, it is suggested that there may be an opportunity to link the Tarka trail to the existing jetty/quay.

It is considered that the jetty/quay is a key existing element and should be treated as a key driver for the design proposals. The Panel considers that it would be beneficial to further consider the potential of integrating this aspect into the proposals in the short term, as well as demonstrating a consideration for the medium to long term opportunities that may exist regarding future uses of the jetty/quay.

It is felt that it would be beneficial to further explore the sense of arrival to the site in terms of sense of place, as well as to ensure that there is no conflict between cars, pedestrians and cyclists at what will be a key intersection. There may be an opportunity to vary the width of the carriage way at the entrance to the site, so as to create a sense of entrance and also demonstrate that pedestrians and cyclist become dominant at this point. The entrance to the site may also represent an opportunity regarding visitor management. It is suggested that, in terms of vehicle management within the site, it may be helpful to have regard for the approach taken by the 'Living Village Trust' in its Shropshire and Truro projects (<http://www.thelivingvillagetrust.com/>). It would be beneficial to further consider the hierarchy of streets within the development, as this will inform the character and sense of place.

The Panel feels that the proposals would benefit from a clearer integration between ecology/biodiversity and landscape inspiring the urban form(s) being proposed. It is considered that,

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on this site, this integration between ecology and landscape design will affect the appearance of the site as much as the massing of the buildings and will have an equal impact as the built forms on the end user experience. Whilst much improved, there is a concern that the proposals have yet to demonstrate how they are locked into the specific site; the unique identity of the proposals that relates to the site context would benefit from further design development.

It is suggested that it may be beneficial if, before proceeding further with the overall masterplan layout, the design team were to identify key areas within the site and investigate different iterations that explore the different conditions and surrounding interfaces. It is felt that each condition will require an individual design response rather than repetitive solution. It is suggested that it is these specific treatments to each of the individual conditions that will create a sense of character and unique sense of place. The proposals should further consider the relationship and boundaries between the public and private spaces. It is suggested that it would be beneficial for the private buildings to be orientated in such a way that they casually overlook the public space. There is a concern that otherwise the public space may be perceived as place that is unsafe to use and or somewhere where grass clippings and worse can be inappropriately deposited.

The Panel suggests that it may be beneficial to further consider the proposed relationship between the green space and build forms on the eastern boundary. It is felt that there may be an opportunity to reinforce biodiversity planting and interplay helping to better root the proposals within the landscape setting. It is suggested that the eastern edge could incorporate a more informal treatment.

There is a concern that the proposed central boulevard feels very urban, is of an inappropriate scale for a village and would benefit from being reduced in width and uniformity. It is suggested it may be beneficial to create a less formal central route incorporating level changes, varying building heights and changing vistas.

The Panel welcomes the consideration of links to surrounding landmarks and built features (such as church spires), and encourages further development of this so as to root the proposals in a wider setting, which may also aid better navigability for end users. The Panel is not supportive of the proposal to incorporate an iconic sculptural element; it is suggested that its contextual sensitivity may be its iconic unique identity

The Panel considers that there is an unresolved tension between the sense of enclosure and openness of the surrounding landscape; it is noted that historically settlements were usually clustered at the bottom of valleys for protection. It is therefore suggested that the proposals may benefit from capturing the transition between a dense human scale and the wider open views and landscape. Generally, it is suggested that it may be helpful to utilize environmental performance issues such as, solar gain, wind protection, form factors etc as potential form generators.

Regarding the proposed fence between the footpath and the foreshore, this is not supported by the Panel and it is suggested that it would be beneficial for a footpath to be taken through the site. It is felt that this may remove the need for the fence. Furthermore, it is considered that providing a new

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footpath may represent an opportunity to provide a more attractive option for users, creating a sense of accessibility and community to the proposed development.

The Panel notes that the proposals are for an outline application, however it is considered it is important, especially for such a sensitive site, for an indication of the design aesthetic and building forms to be considered and indicated at this initial master planning stage. The Panel is not supportive of the house type precedents indicated, as it is felt that these are fairly uniform contemporary dwellings that could be anywhere; it is considered that the proposals would benefit from developing unique site responsive house types that reference and are informed by the site. Regarding materials; there are opportunities to incorporate green roofs and other ecologically sensitive materials help to make the proposals unique and may raise the design standard of the proposals compared to a normal national house builder scheme.

It is considered that, as the proposals are developed further, it would be beneficial for the design to be explored and presented in three dimensions so that the compression and expansion of spaces, density and heights can be more thoroughly considered and the design proposals more clearly justified to third parties. The Panel would welcome appropriately sited and designed taller buildings being brought back into the site. It is felt that the proposals would benefit from a variation of heights being evident when viewed from afar, as the design may then appear more organic.

Regarding the site heritage, it is considered that the previous iteration presented to the Panel referenced the old turbine hall too literally. In this iteration there is a concern that there may now be no reference to the sites historic use as a power station at all. The Panel suggests that it may be helpful to retain elements of this or incorporate subtle heritage references within the landscape design, perhaps through changes in level and or surfacing/materials, in particular it is suggested that there may be an opportunity to retain the switch building. The Panel feels that retaining a heritage link through the proposals may add value for end users.

The proposals would benefit from strategically considering the potential future evolution and expansion of the site in the long term; that is to say the proposals should demonstrate how it is envisaged the settlement may be able to extend, adapt and change, particularly at the site edges.

It is suggested that the design would benefit from considering the environmental opportunities that are offered by the site in a holistic manner. For example, it is suggested that environmental and climatic issues such as wind and the proximity to water may represent opportunities regarding renewable energy production and or sustainable tourism. There may also be potential on this site to utilize geothermal energy. Furthermore, it may be beneficial to consider district heating and power; it is suggested that this should be explored at this stage of the design process as it may inform the siting of buildings and infrastructure. It is further suggested that opportunity to attract sustainable tourism may also represent commercial opportunities to bring other uses into the site.

The Panel suggests that it may be beneficial for a Design Code to be produced and agreed with the local authority at this outline stage; it is suggested that this would give a framework for future detailed proposals to ensure that they remain reflective of the original exciting aspirations. Any design code

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produced for this site should not be too prescriptive and should allow for diversity. As part of this exercise it may be helpful to explore contemporary and traditional village developments around the south coast, and to gather a library of images that can be deconstructed, in terms of forms and materials, to identify elements that may be appropriate for this site. There is a concern that the current architectural precedents regarding the proposed house types are not appropriate for the stated aspiration of this project. It is considered that they are reflective of U.S private gated individual units, which is not supported. It is felt that it would be beneficial for the proposals to create a greater sense of openness and interaction between the public and private realm, resulting in an interrelationship visually with the community.

In a spirit of helpfulness, it is suggested that ancillary buildings, material choices and boundary treatments may help to tie the architectural forms together, so as to result in a sense of unity and desired density usually found in more traditional desirable village locations.

The proposal should now consider details of maintenance, such as the management of refuse/bins at this stage of the design process. It is suggested that there may be an opportunity to incorporate centralized refuse collection. It is noted that consideration such as this can have a large impact on the overall character.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS. (to be read in conjunction with the above)

In summary the main conclusions of the Panel are: -

- The Panel is supportive of the applicants stated aspirations & the clear brief & vision given by the applicants
- The response to the previous design review panel feedback given is welcomed
- It is felt that embracing the sites natural assets will result in a sensitive & well-designed scheme
- As a proposed coastal village, it is felt the design would benefit from providing a relationship with the water; there may be an opportunity to link the Tarka trail to the existing jetty/quay
- It would be beneficial to further explore the sense of arrival & intersection between vehicles, pedestrians & cyclists
- The proposals would benefit from more clearly showing how ecology/biodiversity & landscape have informed the urban form
- The different conditions & responding design iterations should be explored for key areas within the site
- The proposed relationship between the green space & build forms on the eastern boundary would benefit from further consideration
- The proposed central boulevard feels very urban, is of an inappropriate scale for a village
- There may be opportunities to consider links with other surrounding landmarks & visual links

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- There is an unresolved tension between the sense of enclosure & openness of the surrounding landscape
- It is felt that it would be beneficial for a footpath to be taken through the site, rather than along the foreshore
- The Panel are not supportive of the house type precedents indicated
- It would be beneficial for the design to now be explored & presented in three dimensions
- It may be beneficial to incorporate subtle heritage references within the landscape design
- The potential future evolution & expansion of site should be strategically considered
- Environmental opportunities should now be considered at this stage of the design process
- It is felt that the production of a Design Code at this outline stage would be beneficial to the applicant & local authority
- The proposal should now consider details of maintenance, such as the management of refuse

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NOTES:

Please note that the content of this document is opinion and suggestion only, given by a Panel of volunteers to the local authority, and this document does not constitute professional advice. Although the applicant, design team and Local Authority may be advised by the suggestions of the Design Review Panel there is no obligation to be bound by its suggestions. It is strongly recommended that all promoters use the relevant Local Authorities pre-application advice service prior to making a planning application. Further details are available on the Council's website. Neither Design Review Ltd nor any member of the Panel accept any liability from the Local Authority, applicant or any third party in regard to the design review panel process or the content of this document, directly or indirectly, or any advice or opinions given within that process. The feedback and comments given by the Panel and its members constitutes the members individual opinions, given as suggestions, in an effort of helpfulness and do not constitute professional advice. The local planning authority and the applicants are free to respond to those opinions, or not, as they choose. The Panel members are not qualified to advise on pollution or contamination of land and will not be liable for any losses incurred by the Local Authority or any third party in respect of pollution or contamination arising out of or in connection with pollution or contamination.