Wiltshire Council Planning Consultation Response

URBAN DESIGN

Officer name:
Brian Johnson Dip Arch RIBA
Landscape & Design Officer (Urban Designer)
Landscape & Design Team
Economic Development and Planning
Wiltshire Council

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Application No: 14/12118/OUT

Proposal: Mixed Use Urban Extension Comprising Residential (Class C3), Local Centre (Classes A1-A5) and (Classes D1 and D2), Primary School, Public Open Space Including Riverside Park and Allotments, Landscaping, 4 Vehicular Accesses, Site Roads and Associated Infrastructure.

Site Address: Rowden Park Patterdown Road Chippenham

Case Officer: Charmian Burkey

Recommendations:

Support subject to conditions (please set out below)


The design intent conveyed by the Illustrative Masterplan (LDA Design SLR), together with the Design and Access Statement (Version 1.5 Nov 14), and Parameter Plans Fig 1.3 to 1.8 inclusive supporting and explaining this Masterplan would in principle accord with the requirements of Core Policy 57. It should be a condition for this Masterplan layout, the design intent and design principles conveyed in the above supporting information to be carried through with any subsequent planning application for Reserved Matters. These design principles are referred to in my comments below on this information. I also indicate a few important matters of detail for consideration at any subsequent Reserved Matters application stage.

The pedestrian/cycle connections, siting of a Local Centre and School, recognition of the future possibility to link with the two or three pockets of potential future development land bordering the site, and important setting of the railway embankment would generally accord with my comments dated 25.03.14. on 14/02450/PREAPP.

Movement, routes and connections (CP57 ix. BfL12 Q1 & Q8)

The above information shows the development would have a well connected and distinct network of pedestrian/cycle and vehicular routes across and through the proposed development, making
significant connections with the adjoining area and that these routes would be legible, convenient and relatively direct.

The distinguishing design principles of this are the correlation of key routes with Green Infrastructure corridors; the intention for a shared footpath/cycle route across the riverside park to provide a direct recreational route to the town centre and providing formal wide tree lined avenues as spine routes through the three designated Character Areas: ‘The Valley’, ‘The Farmstead’ and ‘The Woodland’. The significance of Patterdown Road as a key route into the town and setting of the railway embankment is also appropriately reflected by the two formal tree lines along this perimeter and excluding the raised strip of land west of Patterdown Road from development.

It would be reasonable to expect with the detailed design at Reserved Matters, in addition to the increased street width and enhanced landscaping along these key routes emphasised in the Design & Access Statement, for significant distinction of these key routes from the secondary routes through the appearance, form, greater height and stature of dwellings and boundaries lining these routes and at key corners along these to be incorporated, to create a truly legible street hierarchy to aid orientation and way finding.

The connected tree lined avenues; the spine vehicle route through the ‘The Farmstead’ and ‘The Woodland’, the large loop road configurations and only short straight cul de sacs shown in all three Character Areas would provide for convenient and accessible routes for public transport, delivery and refuse collection movements, and avoid the problems associated with long and winding cul de sacs.

I accept it may not be possible to secure a shared cycleway/footpath across the land at Pudding Brook to more directly access ‘The Valley’ area but the Masterplan Layout appropriately provides for this possible connection with this smaller area of the development.

In terms of the interface with the highway of pedestrian/cycle desire lines from the development: across Patterdown Road to the Showell Farm Employment site (13/00308/OUT); under the railway bridge and through to the facilities in west Chippenham; across the River Avon into the town centre from the riverside park; and along the Patterdown Road eastwards these would be detailed off site considerations by highways and others of any measures necessary.

Facilities and Services (CP 57ix, BfL12 Q2 & Q3)

The design principles for the Local Centre and Primary School convey a community focus for the development: the distinct characteristic ‘barn’ like scale, form, appearance and massing of these buildings being shown grouped together around a public open space (as conveyed in the Design and Access Statement); being conveniently located at the general centre of the overall development, leading off and addressing the spine route; and near and appreciable from the existing main road which would also assist with conveniently providing the necessary public transport and servicing connections.

The proposed allotments are located where they would be in a visibly central and widely accessible location that would be relatively well overlooked and frequented to feel an integrated community facility.

Character (CP57 i & ii, BfL12 Q5)

The emphasis of Core Policy 57 is that development should respect the intrinsic local building and landscape character and distinctiveness but also be individually distinctive.
The Masterplan and parameters plans indicate in principle an appropriate design response regarding the setting and interface of the proposed built form to the existing surrounding landscape:

- Through the correlation of the Masterplan with the existing Green Infrastructure notably with the extent of deep tree and hedge cover margins shown along the field boundaries and the large toes of green open space extending into and through the site allowing attractive vistas along routes to the open countryside beyond;

- Through the irregular and fragmented built edge of the development with the adjoining fields to the south and east and with the open fronts rather than the rear gardens of perimeter dwelling plots facing and set back with open space margins from these boundaries;

- Through the lower average density development parcels indicated on the Parameter Plan along these field boundaries and in the most southern portion of the development alongside the existing garden centre. I would expect this lower density in any Reserved Matters application to therefore appear as a recognisably lesser building scale (height and mass), notably to ‘The Valley’ Character Area which climbs the slope of Rowden Hill and which could otherwise form an uncharacteristic concentrated and prominent backdrop and skyline of building from the valley floor to the south and east identified as the riverside park.

The architectural language of the proposed built form including materials and detailing would be a key aspect of creating an overall development that appreciably respects the intrinsic local building character of the town. The characteristic extent of stone facings, and relatively simple vernacular form with end and intermediate gables conveyed in the reference photos and design intent perspectives within the Design & Access Statement consistent for each Character Area are significant intrinsic characteristics of the town.

The two detailed perspective views and the freehand sketch’s appropriately convey this applied to a well proportioned ‘modern’ aesthetic for the buildings with: considerable use and disposition of coursed rubble ‘stone’ facings and surrounds to openings (either reconstituted or natural stone) overlooking feature open spaces; intermediate smaller gables; roofs of traditional appearance with traditional sized/coursed ‘textured’ slates and tiles; and complimentary render faces, but rightly the sparing use of brickwork faced dwellings as brick is not an intrinsic characteristic of the town.

I would reasonably expect these design principles and design intent to be carried comprehensively through the development with any Reserved Matters application. This would avoid the uncharacteristic form and appearance of ‘executive’ style dwellings typified by a multitude of hipped roof slopes and integral projecting garages. I advise the visual attraction and local connection of ‘stone’ should be focused to best effect on the more frequented open spaces, entrances to the development, spine routes and appreciable vistas, with render and any brickwork generally more focused on the secondary streets and closes.

Definition of streets and spaces (CP57 iii, BfL12 Q7, Q8, Q9, Q10, Q11).

The Illustrative Masterplan shows that the generally regular size, shape and depth of the street blocks defined by a loose grid of relatively straight roads would enable a coherent townscape to develop demonstrating a number of good design principles which should be maintained and not weakened in any subsequent Reserved Matters application:

- Relatively consistent building lines with the regular placing and orientation of houses and car parking creating a strong built edge and built closure fronting the streets and open spaces, creating a strong definition between public and private realm, avoiding odd pockets and
margins of open space and limiting the unattractive focus on the side and rear gardens of plots.

- Avoiding visually isolated rear parking courts. The number of housing ‘courts’ branching off cul de sacs shown is limited and these each contain a number of houses. (Six courts shown in The Woodlands, four in ‘The Farmstead’ and three in ‘The Valley’).

- A limited number and change in direction of rear access passageways to serve terraced properties.

- Efficient sized and regular shaped rear gardens appear to be shown which would meet the recommendation of BfL12 Q12 (rear gardens should be at least equal to footprint of the dwelling) and maintain minimum nationally recognised back to back privacy distances of 20metres.

- Discretely placed car parking so as not to dominate the street scene with the large majority of parking generally off street are shown with driveways to side of dwellings and garages set well back on plots and away from street and open space corners. Any Reserved Matters application should ensure that adequate width in driveways is shown to draw refuse bins from rear gardens to the street for collection and across the face of garage doors. E.g. 800mm to the side of parking bays.

- The two detailed perspective views and freehand sketch’s indicate significant windows in return faces at street corners and facing open spaces rather than blank or largely blank wall faces, an important feature in achieving a high standard of design and meeting the recommendation in BfL12 Q7 that buildings should ‘turn the corner well’.

A matter for any subsequent Reserved Matters application in this regard is where the Masterplan layout conveys a number of hedges running down these side flanks of corner properties. These would need to be mid height rather than high sided as this would otherwise hide any windows at ground floor and convey the dwelling turning its back on rather than engaging with the street or open space in the way BfL12 recommends.

Loose shrub planting is also indicated on the perspective views as a boundary forward of dwellings. It would be reasonable to expect a significant embellishment of boundaries to house fronts on key routes and house flanks at street and open space corners with mid height ‘stone’ walls or elegant country estate type railings to raise the stature of plots and this attention to detail are well tried and tested approaches by developers. The sketch on page 55 of the Design & Access Statement shows how with a high hedge the elevations appear to turn their back on the perimeter footpath and riverside park offering limited sense of surveillance and a negative backdrop from the open space which could be addressed by a mid height wall or railings in front of the house flank. Again a matter of detail for consideration at any subsequent Reserved Matters which does not fundamentally prejudice the site layout and plots shown on the Illustrative Masterplan.