



HOUSING AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING HELD VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS ON THURSDAY, 10TH FEBRUARY 2022 AT 5.30 P.M.

PRESENT:

Councillor J. Ridgewell - Chair
Councillor M. Adams - Vice-Chair

Councillors:

D. Cushing, C. Elsbury, L. Harding, G. Kirby, Ms P. Leonard, B. Owen, and W. Williams

Cabinet Members:

Councillor S. Cook (Cabinet Member for Social Care and Housing) and Councillor E. Stenner (Performance, Economy and Enterprise)

Together with:

Officers: N. Taylor-Williams (Head of Housing), J. Roberts Waite (Strategic Coordination Manager), M. Jacques (Scrutiny Officer), S. O'Connor (Senior Housing Advice Manager), K. Denman (Senior Housing Solutions Manager), B. Jones (Homelessness Prevention Officer), M. Noakes (Principal Engineer), C. Boardman (Development Manager), E. Sullivan (Senior Committee Services Officer) and M. Harris (Committee Services Support Officer).

Also in Attendance:

C. Wilkins (Pentan Architects), D. Jones (Willmott Dixon) and C. Jones (Holder Mathias Architects)

RECORDING ARRANGEMENTS

The Chair reminded those present that the meeting was being recorded and would be made available to view via the Council's website, except for discussions involving confidential or exempt items. [Click Here to View.](#)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J. Bevan, R.W. Gough, A. Higgs, G.D. Oliver, D. Price, M. Sargent and B. Zaplatynski.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations received at the commencement or during the course of the meeting.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Consideration was given to the following reports.

3. RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL FORMER OAKDALE COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL

Consideration was given to the report which outlined the proposed Caerphilly Homes development opportunity at the former Oakdale Comprehensive School site and sought approval in principle to develop the site for Caerphilly Home's first, flagship, mixed tenure residential development, subject to receipt of a detailed cost plan which would be presented via a separate report in early Summer 2022. Approval was also being sought to appropriate the site from the General Fund into the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) by the end of the financial year 21/22 so that the Social Housing Grant can be drawn down from Welsh Government to part fund the acquisition, this approval would be subject to valuation from the District Valuer and this confirmation was not expected until early February 2022.

The views of the Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee were being sought prior to presentation to Cabinet for final, in-principle approval.

The Chair introduced Mr Daniel Jones from Wilmot Dixon and Mr Craig Jones from Holder Mathias Architects who provided a detailed presentation on the proposed development.

The presentation detailed the proposed composition of the development on the former Oakdale Comprehensive School site which would provide a mix of private and affordable, social rented homes in a sustainable, high quality, development which would be sensitive and sympathetic to the existing street scheme and new homeowners.

Illustrations of the site proposals were shown, and the Scrutiny Committee were asked to note how the steep change in levels would be sensitively managed as the site was developed. Drone footage and ariel photographs were used to show the different levels and the site as it is currently.

Mr C. Jones expressed his excitement and pride in this truly collaborative venture which would be an exemplar for place making, taking a holistic approach that would provide a high quality, low carbon homes for the people living there. The whole project from the design team to the construction team would be working hand in hand with Caerphilly Homes on this flagship development.

The topography of the site was outlined, Members noted that this would be a challenge for the development design, but Mr Jones emphasised that this was a challenge that they were excited to meet, and they would be able to achieve one site and one community which would seamlessly integrate into the existing street scene making the proposed development immediately part of the wider community. Reference was made to the

existing MUGA on site and assurances were given that this community asset would not be lost and would be repositioned as soon as possible.

The presentation then moved on to site access and how vehicle movements would be controlled within the site from one access point on Oakdale Terrace. The Scrutiny Committee noted that as the geography of the area moved from a tight urban grain to semi urban this would be reflected in the site's concept. Cars and parking provision would consider the Council's Active Travel Plan and the sustainable footprint of the development. The site would see a lot of green and mature trees retained along with new planting, there would be no over-looking in terms of the street screen and an illustrated site plan was presented showing how existing woodland, retained trees and topography would enhance the site. Sectional typography was shown and 3D views given and the importance of the roofscape was noted. The play area and lagoon area were also illustrated, and Members were asked to note that there would be no parking courtyards and the playground would not be overlooked and this would provide a safe environment for residents.

Achievements and next steps were outlined, and the Scrutiny Committee were assured that what was being presented today was completely achievable.

In concluding the presentation, the mix of homes and details of possible designs were highlighted, and reference was made again to the MUGA relocation. The target timeframe for outline planning approval was confirmed and it was noted that from this the commercial model would be developed further with Caerphilly and would be followed by a reserved matters application in the Autumn of 2022.

The Chair expressed his thanks for such a detailed and informative presentation on behalf of the Scrutiny Committee and Members questions were welcomed.

In terms of the typography of the site, clarification was sought on the steepness of the slope shown on the graphics and assurance given that this would be 1:10 maximum furthermore this ratio would not be compromised as it was a key aspect of the proposed development even at this early stage. The Committee noted that there was a lot more work to do but developers would ensure that the internal street structure worked well as it would be fundamental to road safety.

Clarification was then sought on the potential for flooding and assurances were given that the development would not be put forward if there were any flood risks. Rainwater management was detailed and would be attenuated through slow release so there would be no additional pressures put on existing drainage systems. The proposed lagoon would also help and would be situated on the lowest section of the site, it would also help with the site's biodiversity ambitions.

Cycle storage was queried, and it was confirmed that there would be sufficient space available. Clarification was then sought on electric vehicle charging points and it was confirmed that these would form part of the next stage of the development plans in the design stage. Members were pleased to note that this would form part of the site's infrastructure.

The modern methods of construction that would be utilised within the site were detailed and Members welcomed the benefits that this would have in terms of energy costs for those living within the site. The Scrutiny Committee noted that the site would also be gas free and were pleased to note the benefits to the environment that the proposed heating and construction methods would bring, which would be the most advanced in Wales and the pride that this would provide both socially and environmentally across tenures.

Clarification was sought in relation to 'green add on's' and it was noted that these would be subject to the requirements of the homeowner and could be picked and mixed and matched in the same way as bathroom and kitchen options. It was noted that this is an area where further research is required.

Regarding the ratio of affordable to private housing confirmation was sought on minimum levels and confirmation was given that at least 50% of the development would be affordable, although factors such as sale price and the housing market would have an impact. Further assurances were given that a 50/50 split would be the minimum expected by Welsh Government under the requirements of the Social Housing Grant and Officers were confident that this could be achieved.

A motion was then moved and seconded that the MUGA replacement be completed before the removal of the existing facility. Officers outlined the difficulties that this would present in terms of the timing of the planning and construction processes and to this end the Member moved an amendment to his motion that the MUGA be replaced as soon as possible and this was seconded.

Following consideration of the report it was moved and seconded that subject to an additional recommendation to read that 'the replacement MUGA be completed as soon as possible', the recommendations contained therein be approved for recommendation to Cabinet. By way of Microsoft Forms this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that:

1. The content of the report be considered and the in-principle development of the former Oakdale Comprehensive School site by Caerphilly Homes be supported subject to the receipt and presentation of a detailed cost plan which will be available in summer 2022.
2. The principle of appropriating the site from the General Fund to the HRA at a cost to be determined by the District Valuer be supported.
3. The replacement MUGA be completed as soon as possible.

4. PROPOSED RE-DEVELOPMENT OF THE FORMER TY DARRAN CARE HOME, RISCA

With the permission of the Chair this item was brought forward on the agenda.

Consideration was given to the report which outlined the proposed Caerphilly Homes development opportunity at the former Ty Darran Care Home site and sought approval in principle to develop the site as an innovative later living scheme. Approval was also being sought to appropriate the site from the General Fund into the HRA prior to the end of the financial year 21/22 so that the Social Housing Grant could be drawn down from Welsh Government to part fund the acquisition. It was noted that this would be subject to valuation from the District Valuer, and this confirmation not expected until early February. The Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee views were sought prior to final, in principle approval from Cabinet.

The Chair introduced Mr Chris Wilkins of Pentan Architectural Consultants who would be collaborating with Caerphilly Homes on this exciting and exemplary development.

Mr Wilkins presentation provided the Scrutiny Committee with an analysis of the site including the surrounding land and building and its various users were explained. The site background was given, and Members were asked to note that there would be no ecological impacts because of the development, which would maximise the natural resources of the site. It was noted that there were certain below ground constraints and culvert and drainage would be a challenge going forward and the way in which these challenges would be met was detailed.

Members were advised that the proposed development provided a fantastic opportunity to do something ground-breaking with opportunities for private and public spaces, a garden courtyard and an event space for wider community use. The layout of residents shared spaces were detailed and would encourage a sense of community within the building, facilities would also include a workshop, library, IT facilities with the basis formed from residents own wants and needs. It was also noted that there would be opportunities for multi-generational interaction and local community education, residents would be encouraged to live independently, with indoor and outdoor space to accommodate every need. Landscaping would encourage biodiversity and ecology with rich greenery, orchard and tree planting, raised kitchen garden beds and a central communal garden, which tenants would be encouraged to plant and maintain.

Concept designs were shown which illustrated the various aspects of the development with views of the garden, light and shade with pools/ponds and wildflower meadows incorporated with the design. Two EVA charging points would be in built into the development with infrastructure in place for more.

The Net Zero ambitions for the development were outlined and this would include construction materials which would be assessed at each stage. The Scrutiny Committee noted that this made the proposed development unique for this type of housing in terms of its project design and ambitions.

The resident experience was outlined and would look to retain independence, promote community and a quality of life unparalleled in similar developments of this type. There would be extra space for guests and visitors, making it an active and engaging place to live and work.

The Chair thanked Mr Wilkins for his detailed presentation and welcomed this astonishing development, particular reference was made to the open fronted courtyard and the arts and craft style of the illustrations shown.

Clarification was sought in relation to the ownership and management of the proposed developed and Members were advised that this would be Caerphilly Homes and would be socially rented. It was noted that residents from Waunfawr House (Crosskeys), St Mary's Court (Risca) and Castle Court (Crosskeys) would become the tenants of the new development, with that existing accommodation being decommissioned.

A Member expressed his pleasure in welcoming this new development into his ward as a fabulous scheme for 'later living' accommodation and sought clarification on the timeframe for the demolition of the existing building. Officer's confirmed that the building would need to be retained while the application goes through the planning process, there was a lot more detail to go through in terms of moving the construction elements forward but as soon as this had been completed, the first phase would be the demolition probably towards the winter this year or spring 2023. Assurances were given that this would be done as quickly as possible.

Clarification was then sought on the timeframe for the valuation and Officers confirmed that the valuation for this scheme had been received this afternoon and was currently being worked through.

Members queried the future of the decommissioned schemes and whether there would be any opportunities for further development. Officers confirmed that they were looking at options to optimise their potential for development.

Members were also pleased to note that tenants would be encouraged to take ownership of gardens and the raised kitchen beds.

Following consideration of the report, it was moved and seconded that the recommendations be approved for recommendation to Cabinet. By way of Microsoft Forms this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that: -

1. The content of the report be considered and the development by Caerphilly Homes of the former Ty Darran in principle be supported, subject to the receipt and presentation of a satisfactory cost plan which will be available in early summer 2022.
2. The decision to appropriate the site from the general fund to the HRA in principle at the cost to be determined by the District Valuer be supported. The revised valuation expected to be received early February 2022.
3. The proposal to move to the next stage of the project in order to determine the most suitable procurement route for the detailed design and construction phase of the project be supported.

5. WELSH GOVERNMENT LEASE SCHEME PROPOSAL

Consideration was given to the report which informed Members of the current request from Welsh Government for Local Authorities to express an interest in the Leasing Scheme Wales (LSW) in meeting their duties under Part 2 of the Housing Wales Act 2014. The Scrutiny Committee's views were being sought on whether Caerphilly County Borough Council should express an interest in the scheme or to decline and remain with its current Private Sector Scheme – Caerphilly Keys prior to the report's consideration by Cabinet on the 23rd February 2022.

Officers provided background to the Caerphilly Keys private sector leasing scheme launched by the Council's Housing Solution Team in August 2018. Members noted the excellent relationship between the Caerphilly Keys Team and the private sector landlords and the portfolio of private landlords already on board with this well established and trusted model, which had been running for the last three and a half years.

Members were asked to note that a survey had been completed with private sector landlords and the majority had responded that they did not want to take forward the Welsh Government proposal. The Officer advised that given this response should Caerphilly take up the WG scheme there was a risk that Caerphilly could lose its existing portfolio of private landlords.

Members recognised the success of the Caerphilly Keys scheme and the excellent service provided by the Housing Solutions Teams. Members also expressed concern at the possible loss of the existing portfolio, the potential for landlords to serve notice on Caerphilly tenants and the implications that this would have in terms of rehousing and homelessness. Officers confirmed that there was a risk of notices being served but the Council would have the statutory responsibility to assist tenants into alternative accommodation.

The Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee thanked the Officer for an excellent report and the work being done by the Housing Solutions Team.

Following consideration of the report, it was moved and seconded that Option 2 be approved for recommendation to Cabinet. By way of Microsoft Forms this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that an interest in the LSW be declined on the grounds that CCBC has a successful PRS Scheme in place with Caerphilly Keys.

The meeting closed at 7.30 p.m.

Approved as a correct record and subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 15th March 2022, they were signed by the Chair.

CHAIR