

Design Review

Garlick's Arch Guildford

Garlick's Arch, Guildford

Reference: 1258

Report of the design review meeting

Meeting date: 1 August 2019

Meeting location: Guildford Borough Council Offices, Millmead House, Millmead

Panel

Richard Portchmouth (Chair), Architecture, Urban Design

Carl Gulland, Architecture, Housing

John Pegg, Landscape Architecture, Urban Design

Kay Richardson, Landscape Architecture, Historic Environment, Urban Design

Oliver Davey, Transport Planning, Public Realm

Panel manager

Xan Goetzee-Barral, Design South East

Presenting team

Daniel Cavanagh, London Strategic Land

Jason Houslander, London Strategic Land

Matthew Chard, Barton Willmore

Quentin Andrews, OSP

Robert Nicholas, Icen Projects

Stuart Mills, Icen Projects

Other attendees

Cllr Colin Cross, Guildford Borough Council

Cllr Ruth Brothwell, Guildford Borough Council

Cllr Susan Parker, Guildford Borough Council

Cllr Tim Anderson, Guildford Borough Council

Kelly Jethwa, Guildford Borough Council

Paul Fineberg, Guildford Borough Council

Paul Sherman, Guildford Borough Council

Site visit

A full site visit was conducted by the panel ahead of the review

Summary

We are pleased to review this scheme early on its pre-application stage. The site is remarkable in its landscape qualities. Unfortunately, the scheme fails to protect or maximise the value of these qualities. Nor does it provide a convincing sense of place or belonging to the landscape and community context. We are therefore unable to support this proposal and recommend it undergoes a significant revision. To ensure the scheme progresses well, it is fundamental that the brief is clearly established and extensive research into the site's history and identity, including the surrounding settlements, is carried out. This will ensure a better response in the proposal's landscape design, layout and architecture.

Key recommendations

- The brief should be revised to properly establish the scheme's identity and relationship to the surrounding villages.
- Analysis of the site and its landscape history and heritage should be further developed to better inform the proposal. The site's strongest and unique characteristics should be identified and articulated as the core drivers for the layout and architecture.
- The grain of the proposal should be revised to ensure a village layout which has good permeability, connection and promotes movement through sustainable modes to the surrounding area.
- The proposals need to explain how residents will live in the scheme without being overly car-reliant.
- The relationship between the architecture of the housing and the green corridor of the stream needs to be revised to ensure this key landscape element is reinforced as the site's defining characteristic.
- The proposed housing and road layout on the slope to the plateau needs to be revised to ensure the slope character is protected and enhanced.
- The proposed Traveller Showpeople plots should be relocated to ensure appropriate access arrangements.
- The points of entry into the development should be carefully considered to ensure they create an effective transition from a highway dominated environment to a residential neighbourhood.

We recommend a further design review once our recommendations have been addressed.

Background

The proposal is for the development of land east of Burnt Common Lane of 28.9 hectares. The proposal is for approximately 550 residential dwellings (Use Class C3) and 6 Travelling Showpeople plots, relocating overhead electricity pylons and cables underground, provision of new vehicular access points and roundabouts, car parking, open space and other associated works.

The site is allocated for development within the adopted Guildford Borough Council Local Plan. A slip road from the adjacent A3 road is proposed, although this forms part of a separate allocation.

A stream meanders through the site and as a result there are Flood Zones 2 and 3 surrounding this. There is an Ancient Woodland on site, trees containing a foraging route for bats and nesting birds and a number of Tree Preservation Orders.

Several pre-application meetings have been held, including an Urban Design and Landscape workshop as well as a councillor briefing. Further officer, councillor and public consultation and discussions are scheduled for the coming months. A hybrid application is expected to be submitted in October 2019.

Brief

- There is a lack of understanding as to how the scheme relates to its context and neighbouring villages of Burnt Common, Send Marsh and Send. Whether the scheme is attempting to be an extension of a nearby village or a settlement in its own right is not clear, and this must be established in order to properly inform the design of the scheme at a fundamental level. If being a village extension is the aim, then which village it is an extension of isn't clear and this must be articulated across all elements of the proposal. If this approach is being pursued, the proposal should be for a village-led site, not purely a landscape-led site as described in the review. This will result in a more effective addition to the village it is attempting to extend.
- The approach to the design development seems to be a response to the site's opportunities and constraints as identified by the applicant. Whilst these are important factors to consider, the in-depth analysis this particular site requires is lacking. The historical setting, morphology, settlement character, and views (in and out of the site as well as within) are key elements. Researching and responding to these with a design-led approach will better inform and justify the proposal, resulting in a better sense of place.

Social and environmental sustainability

- The development is likely to be heavily car-reliant. The proposal needs to clearly explain how future residents will live in a development which can accommodate private cars without creating a car-dominant environment. A transport strategy should detail how residents will move within the scheme as well as access the nearby villages with sustainable modes of transport. In particular, residents of the affordable homes are likely to have lower levels of car ownership and therefore their needs should particularly be considered.
- The provision of spaces for community uses hasn't been thoroughly considered as part of the brief. This should be explored in the brief as well as in the proposed building types as this will help knit the scheme into the wider community.
- Concerns regarding the capacity of local schools were raised during the review. This should be carefully considered, and the applicant should engage with the local authority to ensure the additional demand for schools created by the development will be met. The same applies for social and welfare provision.

Landscape

The site's landscape is remarkable, with a particular combination of hydrology and geology. Unfortunately, the proposal does not achieve the aim of being a landscape-led scheme as it fails to respond to the site's specific landscape character. The applicant should explore this as a starting point as it will provide design clues for the proposal and better inform the identity it is trying to achieve. The layout and architecture should then reinforce this.

- The steep south facing slope of the plateau descending to the stream is the most valuable landscape character component of the site, affording long distance views over the rolling landscape to the south to the North Downs scarp in the distance. The layout of the village area fronting onto this has been developed in a series of forms that do not respond to this underlying topographic form. Every effort should be made to reveal and emphasise this defining topographic component through all design elements.
- Arranging housing on the slope to the plateau in the current manner diminishes the topography's prominence and impinges on its landscape qualities. The layout here should be reconsidered to emphasise the plateau and slope as the distinctive feature of the site. The proposal appeared to show various gable ends and rear faces of housing piling up the hill, which is not an appropriate solution. A more structured approach to the layout of the housing based on views to the plateau should be considered as this would give the development a cohesive identity that would complement the site's inherent characteristics.
- The road connecting the village area to the plateau cannot work in its current configuration without significantly harming the topography. The road's location, alignment and layout should be reconsidered from first principles to ensure it is sensitive to a retained topography and provides a comfortable and desirable pedestrian route.
- The full retention of the hedge separating the proposed houses on the plateau might be a problematic organisational device. The generous stand-off from this feature could be reconsidered to provide more cohesive layout options in this area.
- There is a possibility of archaeological features being present on the plateau and this should be explored to help inform an authentic narrative for designing the open space at this point.
- A map regression or terrain modelling exercise has yet to be undertaken. This could inform a more workable landscape infrastructure for this remarkable and particular site, including different characters of open space through various uses.
- Locating an attenuation pond at the top of a hill is generally problematic. The scheme proposes that this feature is located on the plateau and this should be reconsidered.

Urban design

- The site's permeability is constrained by its location adjacent to the A3 and the two proposed roundabouts at the main entrances to the development. It is important

the proposal overcomes these constraints where possible to ensure the development is a sustainable place to live. The site's permeability should be maximised where possible to knit the scheme into the wider community. Pedestrian and bicycle friendly entrances will be particularly important in ensuring this, and in increasing the human scale of what is currently an overly car-reliant proposal. Creating a link to the footpath leading from Burnt Common Lane should be considered.

- The layout and grain of the proposal in the site's village context is not convincing. Whilst there is a clear logic to the arrangement of routes across the site, these seem to have a formulaic and monotonous arrangement similar to a town centre. This is not the most appropriate solution for this site. A village layout focused on the seemingly organic arrangement of routes and their convergence would be more suitable, as this would create a greater sense of place and character. This can allow for a high-density layout which can effectively absorb parking and allows for the development to incorporate planting in a more informal manner. Studies of nearby villages such as Puttenham and Thursley should be carried out as these would provide good precedent to inform the proposal with a more appropriate grain and layout.
- The new neighbourhood's thresholds must be carefully considered. With roundabouts currently proposed at both main entrances, the thresholds here must effectively transform the atmosphere from a highway environment to a village environment and welcome residents and visitors into the development. In the current proposal this has been poorly resolved as people entering the development will see the backs or sides of houses. These locations are challenging to the scheme and must therefore be of a high-quality bespoke design in order to effectively reconcile these conflicting environments. The landscape design and architecture at these points need to address this objective.
- The proposed views to the plateau from the village area and vice versa do not acknowledge the remarkable topography, which is essential if the plateau is to be distinctive and of high-quality design. These views are key elements of the scheme which should be carefully considered in the design development and protected.
- The proposed Traveller Showpeople plots are in an inappropriate location. These are likely to be accessed by large vehicles and should therefore be located close to the main roads surrounding the site. The proposed location at the end of a rural lane must be reconsidered. Also, further investigation into the types and frequency of vehicles that are likely to be using these plots must be carried out to properly inform their layout and design. By virtue of its function this feature could be characterised as a haulage yard with some residential components.
- The layout of buildings fronting onto the A3 road is uncomfortable and monotonous. It proposes the highest density in the site's most unattractive, environmentally poor and polluted location. Although we acknowledge the role of these buildings in providing the site with acoustic protection, a more varied and organic arrangement, akin to a village, should be considered.
- The proposed parking courts are not convincing in their design. Due to their distance from the dwellings, they are at risk of not being used and could become dead space. These should be reconsidered.

Architecture

- The architecture of the scheme was not presented in any detail at this review. However, some perspective sketches were shown which illustrated a generic response to the vernacular with little consideration for the specific qualities of the local context or surrounding landscape. The architecture must be more responsive, identifying simple forms of a more contemporary vernacular whilst ensuring the building types maximise and resolve the site's particular opportunities and constraints respectively. Further studies of nearby villages should be carried out to provide a precedent and ensure the scheme feels 'of Surrey'. Barns, farmsteads and manor houses are larger building types often built into the fabric of villages which might offer design clues for apartments, later-living and community use buildings.
- Outbuildings which can provide office space, such as car barn garages with office space on the upper storey, should be considered. Outbuildings are a common feature of village architecture and including office space in them will allow for home working and promote more sustainable lifestyles.

Material and detailing

We did not discuss materials and detailing to any great extent in this review. The applicant team and local authority should note general guidance on material quality and detail, which accords with national policy. Paragraph 130 of the 2018 National Planning Policy Framework states:

Local planning authorities should also seek to ensure that the quality of approved development is not materially diminished between permission and completion, as a result of changes being made to the permitted scheme (for example through changes to approved details such as the materials used).

At the planning application stage, the quality of the detailing should be demonstrated through large scale drawings at 1:20 and 1:5 of key elements of the building/landscape and should be accompanied by actual material samples which should be secured by condition as part of any planning approval.

Energy strategy

We did not discuss an energy strategy for this development to any great extent in this review. Our guidance at the planning application stage is that the proposal should produce a clear energy strategy which details how the development will optimise thermal performance, minimise the demand for energy, supply the remaining energy requirements efficiently and optimise the use of renewables, consistent with Government and local policies. This strategy should be communicated in a robustly considered way, for example using detailed modelling work with respected calculation methods.

This review was commissioned by Garlick's Arch Ltd with the knowledge of Guildford Borough Council.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Unless previously agreed to remain confidential, this report will be publicly available if the scheme becomes the subject of a planning application and to any public inquiry concerning the scheme. There is no objection to the report being shared within respective practices/organisations. DSE reserves the right to make the guidance known should the views contained in this report be made public in whole or in part (either accurately or inaccurately). DSE also reserves the right to make guidance available to another design review panel should the scheme go before them. Since the scheme is not the subject of a planning application at the time of review, this report is offered in confidence to the addressee and those listed as being sent copies. If you do not require this report to be kept confidential, please let us know.

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