



Project Title:	SLK 03: East Kilbride Community Growth Area Masterplan
Details:	Proposed masterplan
Location:	South Lanarkshire
Use type:	Housing / Education / Public Realm / Infrastructure
Client Developer:	Cala Homes / Lynch Homes
Lead Designer(s):	Geddes Consulting / MGP Architects
Planning Authority:	South Lanarkshire Council
Planning Status and Ref:	Outline Planning Submission ref: EK/09/0218
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Introduction

This report relates to proposals for a masterplan for the residential development of a site in a designated Community Growth Area (CGA) in East Kilbride, which were submitted for Outline Planning Approval in June 2009. Initial draft proposals by the Design Team were previously presented by the Design Team at an A+DS Design Review meeting held on 28 April 2009. As the proposals have not changed considerably since this last presentation, this is substantially an updated version of the previous report, issued on 20 May 2009. The updated proposals as submitted were reviewed in September 2009 by A+DS staff, in consultation with members of the original Design Review Panel.

A+DS Views

1 General

1.1 Previous draft proposals

In our previous report we stated that we could not support the proposal as outlined, and requested that the Project Team reconsider their basic approach to the content of the masterplan proposals. Whilst acknowledging that there are limits on what is possible in detailed design terms in this context, we felt that much more could and should be achieved in this masterplan, in terms of defining the character of this important new area of East Kilbride as a place. We also noted that 20% of the CGA was being developed by other parties to a separate masterplan, adjoining and sharing access routes with this area, and strongly encouraged the Planning Department to bring the different developers together so the new neighbourhood around Jackton works successfully as a whole, rather than becoming unrelated developments sub-divided by roads.

2 Vision and Approach to Place-making

2.1 Vision and Analysis

Previously we noted that the initial proposals presented to the Panel did not define a suitable vision for a new quarter of East Kilbride, and appeared to have been driven more by existing and proposed road considerations than quality place-making. We acknowledge that the previous diagrammatic layouts and zoning plans have now been augmented with a Design Statement and other technical documents. However, these still do not define a suitable vision for this new quarter of East Kilbride, and the quality of

place-making remains inadequate. The analysis of the existing town and landscape qualities is not well demonstrated, and it is not clear how the proposed routes through the site are derived from any analysis of pedestrian, cycle or vehicular routes. The design narrative still appears to be dominated by road layouts and infrastructure, and many of the qualities of the earlier Development Framework have been lost. We restate that the project team needs to review their approach and develop the layout to be a convincing Master Plan which provides a framework for the creation of a new sustainable community with a strong sense of place, for an important site in an attractive location.

2.2 Establishment of urban design principles

In the previous report we stressed the need for the design team to set out clear architectural principles that would inform and be integral with the general layouts. We advised that this take the form of a clear three dimensional spatial framework for the development, which responds to the existing topography and urban structure. An 'Urban Design Strategy' of this type remains totally absent from the proposals. We note there is less information in the submission on the nature of the proposed buildings and spaces than was previously presented, or indeed was set out in the Council's Development Framework document. Three different 'Character Areas' have been identified, but their noted qualities are very general and unrelated to building proposals. These qualities need to be set out at this stage, as without them there will be no method by which the character can be controlled once the areas are sub-divided into development plots.

2.3 Communication of Urban Design Strategy

Previously we encouraged the Design Team to address matters of urban form such as massing and layouts, which would consider the typology of the buildings and how they form spaces in each area. It is now proposed in the submission that such information will be added later when full Design Codes are submitted, prior to any full planning applications. While this is an accepted route to define architectural detail in local areas, it is still necessary at this stage of masterplanning to establish appropriately scaled guidelines of the type requested, as part of the Urban Design Strategy. Typically this would include diagrams and / or illustrations which set the desired character and patterns of places, and provide guidelines and standards for future development, such as:

- Ease of movement / connectivity / main routes through the site
- Legibility of urban form in key public spaces, gateways, principle views
- Continuity and enclosure
- Urban form including scale / massing in key public spaces or typical situations
- Public realm
- Adaptability and diversity / mix of uses

The Design Team should develop the information to address these crucial issues based on previous work including the draft Design Code excerpts previously presented.

2.4 Indicated building arrangement guidelines

In the previous report we noted that the diagrams setting out some guiding design principles for development, in terms of a pattern of primary and secondary frontages relative to roads and public spaces, were unclear. The pattern indicated did not seem to be guided by a consistent logic or design, resulting in primary and secondary frontages apparently addressing the same spaces. This required particular attention around the

main green route / park at the centre of the plan, identified in the earlier Development Framework as the most important public space. It was also noted that it was unclear what building typologies address the primary and secondary frontages. We note that there has been some revision in the submitted plan but without any obvious improvement, or any additional detail that addresses these issues. We restate that the nature of the public spaces should be considered, described, and these principles then clearly communicated in the masterplan.

3 Road network

3.1 Main East-West Distributor Road

In our previous report we commented that there were basic problems with the nature of this major new road as proposed, in that it created an obstacle to a coherent new neighbourhood, and that the use of roundabouts was inherently anti-urban and unfriendly for pedestrians. The road design has remained essentially unchanged in the submitted proposals. We acknowledge that this road was set out in the earlier Development Framework, and is part of the Council's strategy for the distribution network of East Kilbride, relieving traffic pressure on other routes to Eaglesham Road. However, there are design measures which can be taken to address the quality of the street's environment to make it more appropriate for its location within the new settlement, even with the anticipated heavy traffic load. We would request the design team reconsider its design, in conjunction with the Council's roads engineers, to address the needs of those who will have to live beside or cross this road as well as those on it, to be more in line with emerging street design policy. We would encourage solutions that make this road more overlooked and engaged with the adjacent buildings, considering further the nature of the surrounding spaces, junctions and crossings, and which makes the road design more suitable for the low vehicle speeds set.

3.2 Local streets

In our previous report we welcomed the general commitment to a 'shared surface' approach through most of the housing areas, but noted that guidelines were not presented to establish these streets as functioning public spaces. We also encouraged the adoption of an approach which would integrate pedestrian routes better with the street network, rather than generally separating streets from the pedestrian 'green network'. In general the submitted proposals have not altered in this regard, and the additional detail in the Design Statement on the arrangements of these streets is unconvincing and insufficient to address the issues raised. The information on their characteristics needs to be better explored, in conjunction with the spatial character studies noted above. We also suggest that the detail of the Shared Surface streets be reconsidered to be at least to current published standards for Homezones. Also the pattern of the 'Shared Surface' streets has been omitted, so it is impossible to see whether these form a connected network enabling good access through the new development and into adjacent areas. We suggest that the pattern of both Secondary and Tertiary roads need to be reconsidered, in particular the idea from the Development Framework of putting a street connection along the northern side of the park, with the potential of providing a route to the school, and / or a bus route which would be more central to the places where people live and use on a daily basis.

3.3 Street design

We would expect, as previously noted, to see this project be made more in line with the draft government policy document 'Designing Streets'. This development, along with the other South Lanarkshire CGA's, could become exemplars for the delivery of this policy, with a new model for the successful integration of traffic in towns such as East Kilbride.

4 Landscape

4.1 Landscape strategy

The previous presentation described a strategy for the integration of landscape features of the site such as tree belts, watercourses and landforms. However, we suggested that these moves could be strengthened and incorporated more fully into the urban structure at various scales by developing the 'grain' of the landscape framework into measures such as the boundary treatments of plots. The information now submitted, describing greenspace types in the Design Statement does not address these issues, neither in detail nor in setting out the strategic principles previously presented. The landscape information needs to be expanded and made more systematic, to set out the principles or intentions of the landscape design to be applied throughout the scheme, or in each 'character area', as a sound framework for individual developers to follow thereafter.

4.2 Central open space

We previously noted that the nature of this central 'park' around the allotted 'flood area' was unclear and we encouraged further design development, to create a usable and potentially bio-diverse environment within the heart of the community. We also noted the importance of defining a way to manage the creation and maintenance of this space as it would need to establish itself over a long period and through successive phases of development. These issues remain unaddressed, in what is acknowledged as the central focus of much of the development. Design development and planning of the proposal is now essential, to create a firm vision for the park as a welcoming and functioning place.

4.3 SUDS ponds

We previously acknowledged the work carried out in reaching a functioning arrangement of ponds for the surface water drainage. However, we noted that further refinement was required on these elements to fully integrate them into the landscape framework, so that they are not left as unattractive stand alone pieces of infrastructure. In the current submission, the SUDS strategy remains unchanged and very little detail has been added. We still recommend that further design work is required on these elements to make them integral with both Urban and Landscape Design strategies, within the technical and safety considerations imposed. Alternatively if this cannot be achieved using this type of pond, then the approach must be reviewed to consider other options permitted by SEPA and which could be better integrated into a neighbourhood (e.g. swales or permeable surfaces as in the recent draft document 'SUDS for Roads'). There is an opportunity to make the water management part of the character of the place, particularly in the area of the central park, if fully considered and described at this stage.

5 Infrastructure and delivery

5.1 Sustainable Infrastructure

We asked previously for the Project Team to make a firm commitment within the masterplan to particular viable options being investigated for energy use and supply, as part of a sustainability strategy. We acknowledge that a strategy document has been submitted, and welcome the adoption of a reasonable approach to reducing energy consumption and engagement with an 'Ecological Footprinting' process. However, we note that an energy strategy will only be decided 'prior to the construction of the first house', other than an expectation that the supply of renewable energy to meet government targets will largely be through 'the provision of micro-renewables for each individual house' which are yet to be determined. Deferring decisions on this to later stages presents the distinct possibility that the number of viable options at that time will then be restricted; it can be much harder or impossible to build in distribution networks for efficient central CHP generation after the site has been sub-divided into different developer areas. Also, a strategy which relies on micro-renewables has several disadvantages, including reduced vulnerability to site conditions, and poorer efficiency. The sustainability strategy at this phase needs to test the general development principles and energy management to ensure that best practice is being incorporated, and should deal with the large scale decisions while still at a large scale planning phase.

5.2 Phasing

It remains unclear what the phasing of construction will be, both in terms of practical delivery, and in developing a successful place at all phases in the process. The phasing statement now submitted describes when the road will be built, but not the school, park, or the other proposed services, or how the housing will be developed. Of particular importance to creating a successful and functioning place throughout development is the order in which the housing will proceed, relative to the delivery of other services and infrastructure. The phasing should be not solely be planned around considerations of construction or funding, but also such that the area will grow to enable links within it and into the adjacent areas to work, based around the early provision of essential services like the new school.

Conclusion

We cannot support the proposals as submitted and are disappointed at their quality and the level of information presented in the submission for this important site, particularly when we highlighted many issues in the pre-planning consultation. The proposals require more thorough design consideration, for both large scale principles and localised spatial planning, to build up an Urban Design Strategy of guidelines at a suitable scale for an outline planning application of this type and in this location. This area presents an opportunity for a sustainable and viable new community, integrated with the landscape and with a bio-diverse character, which improves on the car dominated housing developments of the past. There is a real danger that this submission would permit piecemeal development of housing to standard developer models and house types, and potentially creating a place without any local identity. We would suggest that the project team and that the Local Authority work together to thoroughly reconsider and develop these proposals to create an exemplary residential environment, guided by the principles of a high quality place-making.

Further consideration should be given to Scottish Government documents such as *Designing Places* (2001), and the PAN83 Masterplanning (2008). We also encourage the

project team to demonstrate a strong commitment to sustainability and recommend reference to best practice guidance e.g. Sustainable Housing Design Guide for Scotland (2007) from the Sustainable Development Commission.