



Project Title:	FIF 15: Kirkcaldy East Strategic Land Allocation – Kingdom Park
Details:	Masterplan
Location:	Kingdom Park, Kirkcaldy East, Kirkcaldy
Use type:	Housing / Education / Retail / Leisure / Office / Civic / Public Realm / Infrastructure
Client / Developer:	Murray Estates Limited / EC Harris LLP
Lead Designer(s):	Gillespies
Planning Authority:	Fife Council
Planning Status and Ref:	Proposal of Application Notice
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Introduction

This report relates to a masterplan for Kingdom Park, the first of a two-phased development at Kirkcaldy East, identified within the Approved Fife Structure Plan as part of Fife Council's Strategic Land Allocations. Preliminary designs were presented at an A+DS Design Review meeting held on 28th July 2009 in Kirkcaldy following a visit to the site, and a restricted report subsequently issued on 24th August 2009.

This report is based on our previous report, updated to take account of changes made to the designs since last reviewed, as discussed at an informal design review meeting held on 14th January 2010 in Edinburgh as part of a public consultation exercise.

A+DS Views

1 General and previous comments

1.1 We thank the project team for involving us in the project at an early stage, and for presenting it to us so clearly. We generally support the way that the designs are progressing and are pleased to see that many of the comments made in our earlier report have been taken on board and the designs developed accordingly. We offer the following comments at this time for consideration.

2 Connectivity and infrastructure

2.1 Randolph Road

In our previous report we recognised that the site had a number of difficult constraints in terms of the existing road and rail infrastructure which inhibited connectivity, and encouraged the project team to further explore ways in which links to Kirkcaldy town centre and to the other nearby communities to the south and west could be established. We supported the design team in their ambition to change the nature of Randolph Road, currently a busy through road, into a street that promotes activity and has character. We suggested that to achieve this there could be great benefit in bringing development

closer to Randolph Road. We also suggested that the introduction of surface level pedestrian connections across the street was essential if an integrated community was to be achieved in the longer term.

In examining the current designs, we support the way in which part of the development has been moved closer to the edge of Randolph Road and welcome the proposed introduction of pedestrian crossings at either end of the development. These amendments go some way towards addressing the issues previously raised. However, the proposed open space which is set back from Randolph Road is not convincing, and appears somewhat isolated at present. This area will form a prominent gateway to the development and act as an important focus for the community when approaching from Randolph Road, and should have an identity and clear usage in its own right. We recognise the requirements for SUDS provision on this part of the site, and the location of an existing pumping station, may have constrained the design approach. Notwithstanding, we suggest the design of this space would benefit from further development with a clearer definition of how it might be used as a public space. We encourage the design team to define more clearly how it might be used as a public place, and grasp the opportunity to create somewhere welcoming, attractive and unique.

2.2 Rail halt

We previously noted that the proposed rail halt was not supported by Transport Scotland as a priority for development within the next 20 years, but that the land identified is to be reserved for future possible development. We still support the design team in their intention to develop this area as a local town centre with a view to a rail halt being introduced at some time in the future.

3 Site layout and density

3.1 Central spine / Landscape link

At the last presentation the Panel recognised the concept of a proposed central spine that linked areas to the south of the site with those to the north, though they were not convinced that the spine was working successfully as a 'place'. They suggested that more could be done to develop the landscape in this area, to make it an attractive space that connected the local centre to the south with the parkland area around the burn to the north. They also felt that there was a lack of definition between the public and private areas, and those areas devoted to parking, and that some street parking would reduce the need and impact of parking courts. It was unclear why a consistently high density was required along the length of the central spine, as this would emphasise the boundaries between tenures and work against the desirable outcome of an integrated community. It was suggested that the density might be reduced gradually, moving away from the local centre, both north to south and east to west, and that the scale of buildings be broken down.

We welcome the way in which the concept of the central spine has developed since the previous review, with the introduction of a linear landscaped space alongside the main boulevard connecting the Kingslaw Burn to the north, with the main public park and local centre to the south. Although in some ways this creates a spine that is less distinct than in the previous masterplan, it appears that a new focus for the development has been created, wherein the park itself becomes the 'spine', with the gradation of development

to the east. We support these changes which we feel are of benefit to the scheme, and encourage the project team to develop this approach further.

3.2 Commercial zone

At the last review the Panel recognised the rationale behind locating the commercial zone nearby the proposed North East Neuk Link junction for ease of vehicular access, deliveries etc. However, it was suggested that the integration of some of the commercial facilities into the central spine would provide a greater mix of uses and activity along the spine, create a better sense of place, and benefit the community. It was felt critical that commercial buildings address the community of Kingdom Park, perhaps through creative use of a landscaped frontage, in addition to being principally accessed from the main road.

We are pleased that our comments have been useful in developing the designs for this part of the masterplan. We note and welcome the incorporation of a greater mix of uses in the area, including residential, that address both the commercial buildings and Kingslaw Park. We support the creation of a new diagonal route running northwest from the central spine to better connect the neighbourhood centre with the commercial zone. We understand that designs for this element are still at an early stage and suggest that, as they are progressed, a similar level of analysis and 'small scale' thinking as has been given to other routes elsewhere in the Masterplan would be beneficial. The pedestrian experience along this route, for example, will play an important part in its development as an active street.

4 Landscape design

4.1 Framework

We commented previously on the importance of a strong landscape framework being established at an early stage. The relationship between buildings and landscape should be integral in generating a response to the character of the site and establishing a sense of place for Kingdom Park. We welcome the way in which the landscape design is developing generally and support the creation of the new public park alongside the central spine to help link the areas to the north and south of the masterplan, as mentioned above. The landscape framework would now benefit from a clear definition of the identity, components and functions of the various open spaces within the masterplan.

4.2 Wider landscape

In the earlier review we sought clarification from the Council about the extent to which the two towns of Kirkcaldy and Glenrothes should relate to one another and / or remain distinct and separate places, and for strategic consideration as to where Kirkcaldy stops and Glenrothes begins. We note that it is the Council's intention for a space to be maintained between the two towns and for Kingdom Park to form the northern edge of Kirkcaldy.

4.3 Boundaries

We previously advised that careful consideration should be given to the design of the edges of the development to encourage connectivity and avoid the creation of no-go, landscaped 'buffers', particularly between adjacent sites to the south and west. As mentioned above, we welcome the way in which a more positive edge is being

developed along Randolph Road. We note that there are geotechnical constraints at the southwest corner of Randolph Road that restrict development in this area; however, this is an important corner as it will form a transition point into the development and careful consideration should be given to how the landscape, architecture and urban form meet at this junction. We note the proposed incorporation of cycle and pedestrian paths along the landscape edge on the western boundary of the development as presented in the site sections. However, this strip of landscape is of a similar width to the linear public park that runs north south through the scheme and we are concerned that, in the wrong hands, this could become a left over space. Careful consideration should be given to how peripheral spaces such as this are used and they should be incorporated into an overall landscape strategy for the site.

5 Phasing

5.1 We previously advised that, in creating an identity for Kingdom Park, the social capacity of the area must grow in line with the expansion of the physical environment and that the location and phasing of the proposed community facilities is therefore critical. We support the inclusion of proposed community facilities at an early phase within the masterplan in this respect. We encourage the development of a landscape framework for the entire site, which should be integrated into the overall phasing programme. Landscape features, and especially the parks, need to be introduced as early as possible to allow for a mature landscape to develop early as possible.

6 Sustainability

6.1 We welcome the consideration that has been given so far to broader sustainability issues, such as the proposal to provide allotment spaces within the linear public park for local food production, in addition to the investigation of renewable energy strategies. Careful consideration must be given to how allotments (essentially fenced private garden spaces) might be successfully incorporated into an important public park.

7 Architecture and identity

7.1 We welcome the development of an architectural approach as part of the masterplan at this stage. The design of the landscape and public spaces throughout the development will also play an important part in informing and generating the identity of the Kingdom Park and the buildings within it, and we feel that the opportunities presented by these aspects of the design have not yet been fully realised in the architecture presented. We suggest that there are planned settlements in Fife which might provide more useful precedents to inform the character of the architectural approach to supplement the East Neuk fishing villages which have already been referred to.

Conclusion

We commend the design team for the way in which the designs are progressing and we are pleased to see that many of the comments made in our earlier report have been taken on board and developed. There are some areas that we feel might benefit from further design development. We support the way that routes through the masterplan are developing, in particular with the introduction of a diagonal route that links the neighbourhood centre to the commercial zone. We suggest that the design of this element would benefit from further analysis and small scale thinking if it is to become a

successful place. We welcome the improvements to the landscape design generally, in particular with the creation of a north south linear park that links the neighbourhood centre with the commercial zone. We support this conceptual shift in the masterplan and feel that it will be of a benefit to the scheme. We welcome the improvements to Randolph Road but have some concerns with the nature of the green space that sits back from the edge of the street, which at the moment appears unused and lacks identity. We encourage the design team to see the design of this space as an opportunity to create something special as a gateway into the neighbourhood. We are pleased to see an architectural approach developing at this stage in the masterplan and encourage the design team to take this forward in tandem with developing a landscape framework to help inform the design of the buildings as they come forward.