



Project Title: SAS 13: South Ayrshire – Auchincruive Estate
Details: Proposed Masterplan
Location: Auchincruive, Ayr, South Ayrshire
Use type: Housing / Education / Retail / Leisure / Office / Public Realm / Infrastructure
Client / Developer: SAC / AWG Properties Ltd
Lead Designer(s): WYG Planning and Design
Planning Authority: South Ayrshire Council
Planning Status and Ref: Planning Permission in Principle: 09/01416/PPPM
Issue Date: 15th June 2010

Introduction

This report relates to a proposed masterplan for the existing estate in Auchincruive, South Ayrshire, presented at an A+DS Design Review meeting held on the 25th May 2010 in Bakehouse Close, Edinburgh.

The project was previously seen by A+DS at a Design Review meeting on the 11th March 2008 and a report subsequently issued on 11th April 2008. Since that meeting the original application for Outline Planning Permission has been withdrawn and the proposed masterplan has been updated to reflect changing market conditions. A new application for Planning Permission in Principle was submitted to South Ayrshire Council on the 10th June 2009.

A+DS Views

1 General Comments

1.1 We welcome the proposals to Design Review at this stage and thank the project team for their presentation at the meeting. We support the concept of a masterplan that will revitalise the estate and preserve the existing listed buildings, whilst refurbishing them for sustainable uses. We do, however, have some concerns over the utilisation of the existing landscape, the vision for the estate, the sustainability of the proposals and the development strategy.

2 Landscape

2.1 This widespread site has a landscape consisting of many layers – physical, historic, cultural, routes, etc – however, there is very little evidence of any detailed analysis and how this has informed the development of the masterplan. These layers all contribute to the quality of the estates setting and must be enhanced and preserved as a result of any development. We, therefore, encourage the designers to consider a series of site sections that study the layers of the site and use this information to direct the proposals for the masterplan.

3 Vision

3.1 The proposed concept could create a new village within the bounds of the existing estate. However, we feel the vision for this new village is unclear and requires to be explained.

3.2 We note that the project team envisages the proposed development as an exemplary village although we are unconvinced as to how this will be achieved. We welcome such an ambitious aspiration as the estate has the potential to be an exemplary place; however, we have no impression of what this place might feel like or how its character could be formed and its existing setting be enhanced. We, therefore, suggest that both the design of the masterplan and the proposed buildings would benefit greatly from a more serious study of and reference to the existing estate.

3.3 In order for any new village to be described as exemplary, we believe it should be of its time in terms of layout and appearance. Where referencing context in terms of traditional Scottish streets, we would also note that the estate has its own unique features and feel an opportunity would be lost if the proposals did not identify a solution that marries the historic buildings and the surrounding landscape with distinctive buildings that are fit for the 21st century.

3.4 The information provided by the project team prior to the meeting referred to both a proposed Design Code and a Sustainability Statement; however, neither was provided at the time of the presentation. We, therefore, suggest that the Design Code and the Sustainability Statement be provided for review to enable South Ayrshire Council and A+DS to evaluate whether the proposals are exemplary and, if acceptable, be included as part of any planning conditions attached to the planning consent.

4 Sustainability

4.1 The sustainability of the proposed village, in terms of both its economic viability and environmental impact, should be carefully considered. Furthermore, the way in which people and traffic will move in and around the new village, as well as the bounds of the existing estate, must be designed to afford opportunities for phasing and potential growth, whilst providing the necessary links and facilities required for a cohesive community.

4.2 We understand that sufficient capital must be raised to allow the Scottish Agricultural College to relocate its campus and also provide it with a sustainable model for the future. This should not, however, dictate the layout and scale of the new village, as sustainability and economic viability are essential for the proposed village to become a reality. Hence, we encourage the designers to formulate a masterplan that guarantees the legacy of the new village, by incorporating a proven mix of residential, commercial, education, leisure and community uses within the village, and will attract people and businesses alike to Auchincruive.

4.3 Potential phasing of the village will make it necessary to address the environmental impact of any new development at both the masterplanning and detail design stages. Similarly, forthcoming amendments to the building regulations and any subsequent revisions could alter the appearance and impact on the layout of the village due to restrictions imposed upon carbon emissions. We, therefore, promote the design

and implementation of a carbon neutral development, which could also contribute to the notion of an exemplary village.

4.4 Movement of people and vehicles to, from and around the estate will also affect the environmental impact of the village. The existing estate is bound by green belt along all of its edges and is served only by B class roads, resulting in a heavy reliance on vehicular traffic. We understand that the proposed masterplan aims to create a village in accordance with *Designing Streets* and *Home Zones*, which we commend; however, we encourage the designers to devise a masterplan that boasts an exemplary movement strategy through a series of well-maintained foot and cycle paths whilst limiting the use and reliance upon the car, particularly within the bounds of the new village.

4.5 If the village is to be sustained it must have the ability to grow to meet the demands of the future generations. As a result of the density and number of units proposed we are concerned that there is no capacity within the proposed masterplan for expansion of the village, should the demographic of the area change as the community is established. We, therefore, suggest that a robust strategy be developed as an integral part of the masterplan that allows the village to be enabled, established and extended, without detracting from the quality and character of the place.

5 Development Strategy

5.1 We highlight concerns over the planning of a new village development in an area that is predominantly green belt. However, we recognise that the redevelopment of the estate is necessary to safeguard the existing building stock that will be vacated as part of the relocation of the Scottish Agricultural College. As such, we suggest that any new development should be focussed around the listed buildings that are to be refurbished and enhanced as part of the proposed masterplan.

5.2 The development strategy for the new village is essential to the success of the project and should contain details of planning, procurement, phasing and an urban design code in order to ensure that the village creates a quality environment and a sense of place.

5.3 Phasing and procurement of the new village will be central to its establishment and success. At present it is unclear as to how the project team intends to phase the development. We, therefore, suggest that they consider a development phasing brief as part of the design process.

5.4 Both the design of the proposed masterplan and the post-application Urban Design Code need to address the root morphology of the existing estate (patterns of ownership, connectivity, urban space, massing) and not just its superficial aesthetic. We believe this is essential to establish and maintain the necessary quality of place and ensure that the character of Auchincruive is not diluted as a result of its development. We also suggest that a contingency strategy be integrated as part of the urban design code to address any shift in the economic viability of the masterplan, over the course of its implementation, and the subsequent morphology of the village over time.

Conclusion

We support the concept of a masterplan that assures the survival of the estate, however, we feel that the proposals require considerable amendment if the new village is to be regarded as exemplary. We feel that the masterplan must be driven by strong ligatures with the surrounding landscape and existing context, a sustainable approach to the new villages design, and a concise vision for the estates future. Furthermore, we believe that a sound development strategy must be devised, implemented and executed in order to maintain the setting of Auchincruive and safeguard the character of its unique estate.