



## RAF Daws Hill Design Review 17<sup>th</sup> July 2012

### Panel Members

Ivor Samuels – Town Planner & Architect (chair)  
Christina Duckett – Town Planner & Architect  
Malcolm Moor – Malcolm Moor Urban Design  
Andy Bramwell – Bramwell Hall Projects  
Jennifer Owen – BOB MK Coordinator

### Introduction

Thank you for asking the BOB MK design panel to review the development brief for the above scheme. The panel is pleased to review the project at an early stage and would like to point out that the quality and clarity of information and input from the planning authority was exemplary. The site visit was essential to the panel's understanding of the problems and potentials of the site. The panel is also pleased to see that the developer and planning authority are working well together.

Below is a report summarising the comments and suggestions that the panel would like to make.

### Traffic & Transport Links

The panel feel that the transport strategy needs to consider cycle routes between the site and the Handy Cross sports centre and other amenities in that direction. While it is understood that cycling is not a usual part of life in the area and cycling into Wycombe would not be a popular mode of transport due to the incline of the roads at a time when for health and environmental reasons we are being encouraged to cycle it is worth including cycle routes to make the site more accessible to the community. Cycling across the ridge in the site would be possible. An effort should be made to make the idea to encourage residents to walk, the panel suggested that a 'walking times' map both within the site and beyond, would be a clear way of illustrating to people the possibilities of walking into Wycombe and the surrounding area easily, this may also help people to understand how the site can be integrated into the community.

The existing north-south footpath traversing the site may pose a threat to pedestrian safety, particularly at night, as it is surrounded by trees. It is proposed to locate an area of housing north of the school. The panel feel it would be a good idea not to place the "private backs" of this housing directly against the footpath but to position the link road to that portion of the site alongside the footpath so that there is public activity in the immediate vicinity.



## Community & Integration

The development brief as a whole does resemble a traditional neighbourhood unit plan, which is positive. The school being positioned in the 'heart' of the site and the shops at the junction of the proposed development with Daws Hill Lane to attract passing trade should function well.

The panel feel that there needs to be more indication of a community centre in the plan. As there are affordable homes included in the scheme the brief should cater for the young families who will live on the site, for example a toddler group is a good way for mothers and children to socialise and come together as a community. It is very important to recognise that families in affordable housing need local facilities even though the existing community does not perceive such a need.

The open space / sports pitch was considered to be well positioned at the edge of the site. Sports grounds have a tendency to be disruptive to neighbours due to noise so it is good that there is a distance between the two. If the site is considered peripheral to the neighbourhood then again, perhaps a walking times map would show people it is actually just a short walk away from their home. If the preferred option is to have open space in the centre of the site, the panel recommend that it should be in the form of a village green where the community can come together to relax rather than play sport.

It is very important not to create pockets of gated communities so one communal open space would help avoid this occurring. The creation of gated communities can also be avoided by the addition of the direct link through the site being shown on the map, especially through the lower density, treed residential area.

## Density & Design

The framework plan illustrates a differentiation between high and low density areas, the panel believe that there should not be such rigid boundaries delineated on the site as it may hamper integration.

There needs to be more of an indication as to the character of the houses and the sense of place. The panel have agreed that each housing area should have a distinct character. The necessity of incorporating a variety of house types should be emphasised in the brief.

## Business Use

The panel expressed a concern that in present circumstances there might not be demand for business uses that are compatible with housing. Any activities proposed



for the allocated business sites must be carefully controlled and monitored so as not to have an adverse impact on surrounding residential areas. The panel suggested that this part of the site which is adjacent to the motorway and therefore unsuitable for housing might be used temporarily as allotments until such a time as the market for other uses improves.

### Sustainability

The panel are concerned that a large number of existing structurally 'sound' buildings will be demolished. They would like the planning authority and developers to consider re using at least some of the materials in a sympathetic manner e.g. the footings could be re-used or a first floor could be added onto the current buildings.

Building for Life of silver standard (17) for the houses and school should be an aspiration for the developers and planning authority. Wycombe has a good record for improvements in the quality of its housing as measured by Building for Life and this record should be sustained. There are of course other performance indicators to consider such as Code for Sustainable Homes. If this is used then code 4 should be the goal for the site.

It is understood that there is currently no policy basis to justify Building for Life but since the brief will become a supplementary planning document if it were to be included then the planning authority will be able to defend its sustainability goals in the event of an appeal.

### Conclusion

The project in general is promising and we would be very happy to review the scheme throughout its progress. Please do keep in touch throughout the development of the scheme.