**Milton Keynes Council Development Review Forum**

**4 May 2020, Civic, 1800 – 1900**

**Virtual via MS Teams**

**Forum Meeting Notes**

**Attendees**

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| **NAME** | **ORGANISATION** | **E-MAIL** |
| Neil Sainsbury (Chair) | MKC – Head of Placemaking | neil.sainsbury@milton-keynes.gov.uk |
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| Matthew Whateley | CMI Architecture | matthew.whatley@cmiarchitecture.co.uk |
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| Cllr Keith Mclean | MK Council | Keith.mclean@milton-keynes.gov.uk |
| Mandy Shipp | Wolverton and Greenleys Town Council | mandyshipp@wolvertonandgreenleystowncouncil.gov.uk |
| Dianne Sutton | MK Forum | DianneLSutton@outlook.com |
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| Cllr Carole Baume | Milton Keynes Council | Carole.baume@milton-keynes.gov.uk |
| Cllr James Lancaster | Milton Keynes Council | James.lancaster@milton-keynes.gov.uk |
| Tim Skelton | Milton Keynes Forum | colesbourne@btinternet.com |
| David Tooley | Local Democracy Reporter | David.tooley@jpress.co.uk |
| Liam Costello | West Bletchley Council | liam.costello@westbletchleycouncil.gov.uk |
| Janie Burns | MKC Housing | Janie.burns@milton-keynes.gov.uk |
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| Chris Walton | MKC Housing | Chris.walton@milton-keynes.gov.uk |

1. The Chair welcomed everyone, did introductions and explained the purpose of the Forum, ie allowing stakeholders an input into the emerging design and layout of schemes as well as raising the quality and profile of design in Milton Keynes.

**Berwick Drive, West Bletchley Garage Site Redevelopment**

1. The applicant explained that the scheme was the redevelopment of MKC owned garage sites to the rear of Berwick Drive for 12 (6 x 3 bed and 6 x 2 bed) council owned homes.
2. The architect went through the site constraints which were an important informant to the design as infill sites have to take into consideration of the impact on surrounding properties, before explaining the design.

Discussion

1. It was stated by a few stakeholders that the scheme was quite exciting and the modern / contemporary design was supported
2. Back to back distances should ideally be 22m as per the Council’s Residential Design Guide SPD whereas what is proposed in only 21m

The applicant responded that the dwellings have been designed to take into account the 13.7m rear-to-flank distance to maximise the site. The 22m simply refers to some of the properties off the turning head of Inverness Close to illustrate they would not be an issue in terms of overlooking for the proposals.

1. A turning head was stated as needed at the eastern end
2. The courtyards should ideally all face south.

The applicant agreed but said to meet other urban design considerations that this was difficult to achieve. For the south side homes, they face north to deal with the overlooking of the rear gardens to the south – if they face south they would overlook the rear gardens to the south

1. It was questioned if the properties were designed to Parker Morris standards and if they are where is the internal storage?

The applicant replied that the scheme has been designed to meet new nationally prescribed space standards which have superseded Parker Morris standards.

1. It was noted that the internal staircase being U-shaped would make it difficult for disabled access who prefer straight staircases.
2. There was quite a lot of discussion on bin storage. Where would the bins be stored?

The applicant explained that they would be stored in the downstairs courtyard area, but a stakeholder then questioned whether this would reduce the attractiveness of the courtyard as an external area.

1. It was also questioned whether, given in the future residents may have 4 wheelie bins whether there would be space for all of them.
2. It was questioned what the green strips at the edge of the site are?

The applicant explained that they are extra green space for homes

1. Further to the discussion on bins it was questioned if front gardens/courtyards were having to accommodate so many bins, where would bicycles be stored?

The applicant explained that bicycles would go alongside one of the external walls on each property. The applicant also said that they would look at precedent in this regard.

1. Another stakeholder commented that it would be good for the garages to be tidied up through this development as there is currently anti-social behaviour associated with them.
2. The issue of access was queried as an early slide had showed vehicular access across the culvert area to the east whereas it now appeared to be through the existing access to the west.

The applicant explained that it wasn’t feasible any longer to put the access in across the culvert

1. It was commented that the design was quite radical for West Bletchley – it is very different to the surrounding development and it was therefore asked whether the radical design was due to site constraints.

The applicant responded that the design was in part due to the site constraints – to avoid overlooking of existing properties, but the design was also a response to modern day living, as well as to maximise use of the site. Pitched roofs were not included to try and reduce the overall mass of each home relative to surrounding properties which has a knock on effect on daylight to surrounding properties.

1. The challenge of on street parking was mentioned and would new residents exacerbate existing on street parking problems in the surrounding streets

The applicant responded by saying that they are meeting parking standards

1. It was stated by a stakeholder that the contemporary design was supported but it looked like a lot of development was squeezed on and would new residents want bigger gardens? It was commented that as the new homes will accommodate families the courtyards might not be that attractive as garden space, given that they will also provide bin storage.

The applicant said that they would look at the garden sizes and try and remove some of the storage areas to the front so it feels more of a garden than a courtyard. The applicant also responded that the dwellings are providing more amenity space than an apartment but in effect is apartment style living. The design will also look to enclose the balconies on the ground and 1st floor to allow extra privacy and offer the option of secure outside space

1. It was also noted that the properties look small and it was questioned whether they meet the national space standards.

The applicant explained that they do meet the national space standards and the schedule of accommodation and floor areas was included in the presentation.

1. The important element of the schemes contribution to climate change was queried – how is it meeting the Council’s greenest city and climate change agenda.

The applicant explained that homes included PV’s, Mechanical Ventilation Heat Recovery, (MVHR), fabric first, insulated to a high standard and the scheme will comply with the relevant policy in Plan:MK and will be a 40% reduction on Part L standards

1. It was questioned whether it would be not better to replace the terraces at 1st floor level with living space and then have larger courtyards/gardens at ground floor.
2. It was noted that the access to the site was for garages that are mostly used as storage (so cars don’t therefore enter much) and hence it was questioned whether the access would be suitable for development with cars.
3. A stakeholder commented that the trees look good but need to be the right species to ensure that paving doesn’t get lifted by the roots. Could the trees be put into ‘tree root cages’ so that the paving is protected?

The applicant said that this would be looked into

1. It was asked whether artificial grass could be included to green the streetscene and improve the visual aesthetics of the development. This was seen as particularly important for a tight knit development like this. It was said that care need to take place if grass is planted as cars tend to park on it and it becomes unsightly.

The applicant replied that one problem with artificial grass is that doesn’t get any ‘ecology’ points

1. It was clarified that electric charging points would be provided.
2. It was asked how larger vehicle such as DPD vehicles would manoeuvre through the development. They should rather turn at the top of the development. Can a turning head be included at the eastern end of the development?

The applicant replied that a detailed vehicle tracking diagram would accompany the planning application although it was questioned whether this tracking would include delivery vans potential to turn?

Applicant will also look to see whether turning head can be included at eastern end of development.

1. It was queried whether flat roofs work as they had caused a lot of problems on early estates. Has their efficiency improved?

The applicant replied that previous issues with flat roofs no longer exist and guarantees exceed 40/60 years.

1. It was noted that MVHR take up a lot of space and where could they best be located? It was commented that if the scheme exceeded Part L then the walls looked very thin – a passive house normally has walls 500mm thick yet these are only allowing for 350mm. It was questioned what values were being proposed to be met? It was also said that MVHR needs regular maintenance and who will do this – the tenant or MKC?

The applicant replied that the scheme can exceed Part L with 350mm walls being nominal

1. There was a discussion about lighting and the suggestion that it should be low level to prevent ‘bleeding out’ into surrounding properties.

Applicant said that they would look at the lighting calculation and surrounding bleeding out and explore low level lighting which might be quite nice.

1. It was questioned how the homes would be heated eg through an air source heat pump which might have to out at the front and not be that visually attractive.

The applicant confirmed heating would be via Air Source Heat Pump, which will be secured on the roof with a lockable access hatch.

1. It was enquired where washing would be dried

Applicant said this would be in the front courtyard or down the side green privacy strips.

1. It was noted that for the 2 storey dwellings, the full length windows provided less storage space and resulted in the kitchen feeling smaller. Smaller windows might provide additional storage space beneath them and result in the kitchen feeling bigger

The applicant stated that they would look into this to see if it was feasible.

1. Could the flat roofs be used as green roofs to tick the ecology ‘box’?

The applicant responded that they would investigate this

1. It was queried whether the scheme would have s106 applications. It was confirmed that it would as the scheme is more 10 units but given the scheme is for affordable housing S106 requirements would be reduced. It was noted that because garages are being lost there would be some need for s106.
2. It was asked whether any of the homes would be for social rent as this impacts on s106.
3. It was commented that the upstairs terrace was a bit ‘useless’ – could it be used more creatively eg as a solarium
4. Will the brickwork be as dark as shown on the plans as the brick in surrounding properties is perhaps not this dark?

The applicant responded that the proposed brick does mirror existing bricks but will look at this further to see if another brick, possibly lighter, would be better.

1. It was noted that the nearest public green space was quite far away and what therefore the response of the scheme was to this? It was asked whether the existing 2 pieces of triangular hardstanding areas could be made into nice green spaces?

The applicant was exploring this

1. The nature of how wheelchair accessible the homes are was raised.

The applicant said the homes were fully compliant with disabled access policy / wheelchair accessibility.

1. It was questioned how many of the homes are adaptable.

The applicant responded that 11 dwellings will be compliant with Part M4(2) of the Building Regulations and 1 dwelling compliant with Part M4(3) of the Building Regulations, which exceeds the requirements of Plan:MK.