

13/02860/MPLAN: THE INVERARAY PROJECT: MAST 1/5 - MASTERPLAN REPORT

SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT NO. 1 – PHASE II Masterplan/Brief

1. SUMMARY

The masterplan Framework Plan and Phase I Design Brief for MAST 1/5 were endorsed by PPSL Committee on 18th June 2014. The endorsed Framework Plan set out Argyll Estates' overarching vision for the MAST 1/5 and Mixed Use Allocation 3001 designations, but only provided sufficient detail at that time to justify release of land at Barn Park for a Phase I housing development.

Argyll Estates have subsequently prepared a Phase II Masterplan/Design Brief which has been developed in tandem with proposals for a Class 1 Retail development, the planning application for which appears elsewhere on this agenda for consideration (ref. 14/02020/PP). The identified Phase II site area is the area of land south of the Inveraray Primary School playing field, and which adjoins the Avenue car park. Whilst being located outwith the masterplan area, the Phase II submissions acknowledge that the Avenue car park requires to be reconfigured to accommodate a new access route to the masterplan area. It is also acknowledged that the masterplan development requires to integrate with the Avenue and provides a positive opportunity for 'place making'.

The Phase II submission builds upon the Key Principles established within the Framework Plan and seeks to provide a focussed vision and design brief to guide both decision makers and developers in the realisation of a mixed use commercial development, which will provide a high quality environment which reinforces the existing Inveraray town centre by providing space for new commercial and community uses which are difficult to accommodate within the historic core of the settlement, or those which have been displaced by tourism functions.

2. RECOMMENDATION

The Phase II submission sets out a detailed design brief for the identified phase II site area. The proposals build upon the Key Principles which were established in the Framework Plan. The nature, scale, layout and built form which is envisaged for the phase II development is consistent with the aspiration to provide a high quality, urban environment which respects its location within the historic environment.

As such, it is recommended that the Phase II Masterplan/Design Brief be endorsed as an addendum to the previously approved Framework Plan and in this respect be afforded material weighting in the future determination of planning applications within the masterplan boundary, with recognition that such endorsement represents a 'minor departure' to the provisions of the adopted Local Plan at the current stage in the plan-making process.

3. CONSULTATIONS

Architecture + Design Scotland: Supportive of the documentation through their chairing of a joint meeting by them and their endorsement of it as a framework plan for future development as of a 05.08.14 meeting, when other consultees were present. A+DS have, however, made it explicitly clear that whilst they are supportive of the aims and vision expressed within the current submission, and the principle of releasing land for a Phase II development at the Avenue car park, they are unable to fully commit to the intentions for later development phases until such time as sufficient evidence to demonstrate the appropriateness of this approach has been submitted in support of the proposal. Such further work includes a transport assessment, 3D modelling of the development proposals to better understand the impact upon landscape and the historic environment, and detailed guidance on building scale, design, form, detailing and finishes being developed.

ABC Roads: (12th September 2014) – Generally supportive of the Phase II proposals. The applicant is advised to ensure that the proposed new adoption standard road complies with all current standards (including gradient, drainage, alignment and visibility splays) to ensure that it is suitable for the purpose of serving intended future phases of development. It is also noted that future phases of development will not be permitted to connect through to Barn Park until such time as that section of existing public road has been upgraded.

ABC Biodiversity Officer: (6th August 2014) – Notes that the Phase II proposals have the scope through the provision of Green Space, Open Space and Boundary Treatment to include biodiversity interest. It is suggested that these aspects be considered carefully at detailed planning stage and in particular should consider: inclusion of a SuDS scheme with a reed bed operating as a functional landscape and biodiversity feature, a mix of suitable trees and shrubs, and appropriate boundary treatment.

ABC Education: (16th April, 2014) – No problems envisaged in relation to the primary education of children locally, following an expectation of pupil yield that might be generated by the intended housing and the capacity of the local school.

ABC Core Paths: No further comments received to date.

ABC Amenity Services: (12th September 2014) – No objections. Note that waste management and grounds maintenance can be looked at during the detail planning stage.

Inveraray Community Council: No response received to date.

SEPA: (15.07.14) – No further comments.

ABC Flood Prevention Authority: (comments in relation to 14/02020/PP): No objections noting that there is reasonable prospect for development within the eastern extent of the masterplan area, adjoining the Avenue car park to be secured against the effects of flooding by incorporation of a suitable freeboard which takes into account factors such as climate change and wave action.

Historic Scotland: Consultation response to latest modification outstanding at time of writing.

Transport Scotland: Consultation response to latest modification outstanding at time of writing.

4. PUBLICITY

The Phase II Masterplan/Design Brief was advertised on 11th July 2014 inviting comments within 28 days (expired 8th August 2014).

4. REPRESENTATIONS

No representations have been received to date.

5. ASSESSMENT

The previously endorsed Masterplan Framework Plan established a number of Key Principles under the following categories which are intended to shape the layout and form of development within the masterplan area:

- Protecting Inveraray's Setting;
- Consolidating Inveraray's Urban Character – Streets;
- Consolidating Inveraray's Urban Character – Buildings;
- Addressing the Avenue;
- Enhanced Connectivity.

The Framework Plan also identified the Phase II site as a 'gateway' location providing for the "main visitor arrival point and commercial focus for the development integrated with the Avenue".

The Phase II submission seeks to provide a detailed design brief which addresses the key issues and requirements for development within the 'gateway' site. These are set out in summary as following, although a more detailed account of the rationale behind each of these is included within the submission.

- A single unified building line fronting the Avenue car park;
- Buildings in terraced form (or close together, linked by walls);
- 4 metre wide public realm strip between building line and car park;
- Development form inspired by Inveraray Main Street;
- Block south of proposed Co-op to have public frontages to north and east;
- Mixed uses supporting the town centre's role as Inveraray's hub;
- Rear parking and servicing to Design Streets standards;
- Functional open spaces integrated into the development.

The current submission includes an indicative layout for the Phase II site which accords with the Key Principles, and which is reinforced by 3D visualisation to indicate the envisaged scale and massing of new development, thereby allowing confirmation of the anticipated acceptable impact upon the Designed Landscape and wider landscape setting. The proposed layout requires new development to be predominantly two storey in form, although variations can be accommodated. Given that commercial development will predominantly expect ground floor, accessible/visible accommodation that upper floor accommodation would offer potential for use as residential flats.

The Phase II submission has been developed alongside a formal application which seeks detailed planning permission for a retail development within the Phase II site boundary (ref. 14/02020/PP). The Phase II masterplan process has included consideration of alternative locations for the retail development. In particular it is noted that the submission has been amended since its original submission to accommodate the relocation of the proposed retail development to the northern boundary of the Phase II site. The relocation of the retail development has been arrived at in order to accommodate specific operational requirements of the developer, who has insisted on being able to secure a self-contained site which has potential for future expansion; (it was found that these requirements could not viably be secured elsewhere within the Phase II site without undermining the development potential of the remainder of the Phase II area). This has resulted in a significant compromise whereby it is no longer possible to drive the new service road straight across the Avenue car park, as doing so from the existing junction with the A83(T) would not provide a sufficiently large site between the school playing field and the new road. Consideration has been given to the relocation of the junction with the A83(T). This would, however, require a new opening to be formed in the category B listed Avenue screen wall with initial investigations suggesting that this would require to be at least 25% larger than the existing opening to accommodate access geometry and visibility splays. Historic Scotland have expressed some initial concern in their consultation response to the associated planning application (ref. 14/02020/PP) that the curved alignment of the new service road is not a feature which would ordinarily be associated with the Designed Landscape. The service road crosses perpendicular to the line of the Avenue before curving to the south. Officers note that a number of other curved routes are already apparent within the remodelled car park which is in itself a modern and not entirely sympathetic intervention to the historic environment, and it is considered in this respect that, visually the proposal will not have a significant adverse effect upon the qualities of the Designed Landscape – this conclusion is underpinned by Historic Scotland’s decision not to offer any formal objection in this regard. In other respects the curved road alignment offers a number of positive outcomes. First and foremost, the ability to avoid any significant alteration to the B listed Avenue screen wall, other benefits include the curve being a natural feature to slow traffic down at a point where walk to school routes intersect the car park, and the potential for additional landscaping provision to green up an area which has been subject to criticism for being a ‘sea of tarmac’. The western edge of the Avenue car park will be incorporated within a 4m wide public realm strip which is intended to ensure that the new built development is integrated with the existing car park to provide an improved environment with a unified sense of place. The Council’s Roads and Amenity Services Officers have been party to masterplan discussions and have not raised objection to the proposals.

During the collaborative working meetings it has been mentioned by Architecture + Design Scotland that there would be merit in trying to reduce the width of the Avenue car park in this location, so as to bring built form closer to the historic beech tree Avenue. The Phase II submission does not do that, but keeps the buildings close to the edge of the current wide car park (separating the two by the proposed 4 metre wide hard surfaced public realm strip). Officers are content that this offers an acceptable and practical design solution in the absence of any allocated or anticipated Council resource to completely re-design and relocate public parking provision. Setting the proposed building line against the western edge of the Avenue car park also ensures that buildings are set back from the line of the historic Avenue (which is defined by linear tree coverage rather than buildings), preserves views of the A listed Bell Tower from the south, and would be in keeping with the setback distances of existing buildings, including the School and Bell Tower.

It should be noted that within the Phase II submission it is identified that the current wide car park in this location does little justice to the appearance of the historic beech tree Avenue. The Phase II submission recognises that when the recently (some ten years back) re-planted Avenue Beech trees mature, the character and appearance of this historic feature will improve, but the submission also notes that the character of this locale could be further improved if the Council *“were willing to consider improvements to the car park, with more attractive surfacing and improved landscaping”* (page 8). This measure, if adopted as an aspiration and potentially achieved whenever public resources allow, could go some way to addressing Architecture + Design Scotland’s concern over the width of a “sea of tarmac”. Retaining the actual Avenue in a grey surface, whilst altering the treatment of the car parking spaces either side of it could in conjunction with maturing beech trees bring visual emphasis back to the historic Avenue and improve the overall environmental quality and sense of place which is envisaged for this gateway location.

The Phase II submission makes appropriate provision for vehicular and pedestrian linkage from existing routes to Phase II and beyond. It shows an appropriate urban form to the south of the supermarket site, with parking to be contained to the rear of the buildings along with provision of open space and landscaping around this grouping.

6. CONCLUSION

The submission, whilst indicative, has given all interested parties and statutory consultees sufficient detail to be able to assess the key issues which would arise from the development of Phase II and to provide a detailed Design Brief to guide future decision-making within the Phase II site area.

IMPLICATIONS

Policy:	None
Financial:	None
Personnel:	None
Equal opportunities:	None

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