HERTFORDSHIRE DESIGN REVIEW PANEL MEMBERS
Bishop's Stortford North Design Review 02/0713:
Chair: Barry Shaw, Barry Shaw Associates
Yasmin Shariff, Dennis Sharp Architects/EACT
Dominic Cole, Dominic Cole Landscape Architects
Kevin Burrell – HFBT Architects

David Barnes
Star Planning & Development
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Birmingham
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23 July 2013

CONFIDENTIAL

Dear David,

Hertfordshire Design Review Panel: Bishop's Stortford North (ASRs 1-4 & ASR 5)

The Hertfordshire Design Review Panel met on 2 July 2013 to review proposals for Bishop's Stortford North, a large parcel of land comprising ASRs 1-4 and ASR 5.

During the day there was an initial presentation from the two development teams: a Consortium comprising Bovis, Persimmon, Taylor Wimpey, Fairfield and Kier; and Countryside Properties. This was followed by a comprehensive site visit, lengthy presentations and a Q&A session that covered the principles of the masterplans and the initial development parcels making up Bishop's Stortford North.

In view of the fact that Bishop's Stortford North is being developed by two separate teams the letter takes the form of a shared critique of the overall approach and issues common to both sites, followed by short separate comments on the work of each development team.

Panel observations and recommendations arising from the Review

The Panel appreciates the significant effort that was put into the site visits and presentations arranged by the developers. It offers its observations and recommendations to assist a good design solution for the site. It trusts that these will be taken as constructive rather than critical, and as part of the advisory process supporting shared ambitions for achieving good design.

The Panel agrees that this is an important site on the edge of Bishop's Stortford, and the last major opportunity in the foreseeable future to deliver a substantial housing development with a town wide impact. It therefore accepts the principle of development in this location with appropriate densities and housing mixes, and in ways which respect the key characteristics of the site and respond to the needs of the town.

Given this opportunity, the Panel questions the density and housing mix chosen for all the ASRs. It is not convinced there is a justification for such low proposed densities, including in terms of demographics. While not advocating a high density development, the site appears

to have potential for significantly higher numbers of dwellings in part because it benefits from adjacent green infrastructure assets such as the Stort Valley and Hoggatts Wood. The proposed mix needs to be more clearly related to a strategic analysis of need.

The Panel welcomes the protection of key landscape elements and the influence this has on shaping the Masterplan, but is not convinced that both the Garden Suburb and Village Green concepts are capable of being realised in a way that is appropriate to the locality and topography respectively. The Panel welcomes the efforts made by the developers to work together, but the physical and conceptual links between ASRS1-4 and 5 need to be significantly strengthened.

The Panel was not convinced that the two neighbourhood centres are viable as proposed. If retained, the economic justification for these would need to be better made, particularly given the modest catchment, the likely phasing of development and context of the intended relationship of the developments with the rest of the town, including the existing Tesco. The Panel is also surprised at the omission of any residential component in these centres. If there are concerns about combining residential and commercial usage these could be addressed in a design guide.

On the subject of sense of place, the entrances to both developments need further design work and greater space allocation in order that suitable statements are made. The Panel was concerned that one was by the Park and Ride.

ASRs 1-4

The Panel welcomed the overall approach to the retention of key features of the existing landscape. In relation to local green infrastructure planning objectives, it is not always clear that the countryside is being brought into the housing areas. Details here will be important. Where hedgerows are to be retained they will all need an appropriate standoff. Garden hedges, multifunctional SuDS and native tree planting could all assist delivering landscape objectives.

The Panel was not convinced by the references to historic garden suburbs and would have liked to have seen evidence, such as comparative overlays, that demonstrated the veracity of the claims. Alternative contemporary models such as New Hall in Harlow might prove more useful. The identity of the development and the quality of the housing designs must be better connected to the rest of Bishop's Stortford and more clearly informed by an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of existing townscape character. The Panel does not favour the somewhat tortuous routes and simple 'wallpapering' of the facades. Better layout and better architectural design should also include a stronger response to aspect and low carbon objectives, the particular characteristics of different areas within the site, and 3-dimensional needs and opportunities. In doing so, layout and design should aim to better assist legibility, orientation and a sense of place.

ASR 5

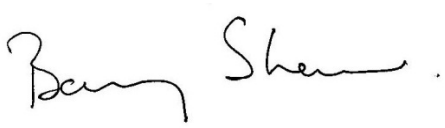
The Panel welcomed the development of the riverside park but was not convinced by the open space structure throughout the rest of the site. The Panel noted ASR5 included some bespoke design, but considers that more attention is required to the detail of the site layout. The identity of the development and housing designs must be better connected to the rest of Bishop's Stortford and be more clearly informed by an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of existing townscape character. In doing so, layout and design should aim to better assist legibility, orientation and a sense of place.

Overall Conclusion and Recommendations

The Panel welcomes the principle of appropriate development in this location, but has concluded that the schemes before it are under-designed for a site of this importance and recommends a re-think.

When presenting better co-ordinated ambitions it would help if the developers could explain how the various analyses have influenced design, and the 3D nature of the design through, for instance, the use of comparative overlays with sections and/or 3D visualisations.

Yours sincerely,



Barry Shaw, Chair
on behalf of the Hertfordshire Design Review Panel
cc.
Project and design team representatives:

<u>For the Consortium ASRs 1-4:</u>
Matthew Charnock - Bovis
Dominic Eaton – Stride Treglown Ltd.
Phil Rech – FPRC Environment & Design
Ian Dimbylow – WSP Group

<u>For Countryside ASR 5:</u>
John Boyd – J.B. Planning Associates
David Devries – Countryside Properties
Daniel King - Countryside Properties
Jonathan Dixon – J B Planning Associates
Mayler Colloton – Clague Architects
Paul Gibbs – David Jarvis Associates
Ben Stonyer - David Jarvis Associates
Rebecca Hobbs – Mayer Brown

Local Planning Authorities:

Kevin Steptoe, EHDC
Stephen Tapper, for EHDC

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Dominic Cole, Dominic Cole Associates