

Avenir Homes Ltd. Lissywollen South SHD, Cartrontroiy, Kilnafaddoge, Athlone Co. Westmeath

Meeting Type: SHD Stage 1 (Planning Authority)

Time & Date: 11.30am Tuesday 4th May 2021

Location: MS Teams

Ref. No.: PP5655 (WHA 21-040)

Attendees:	Company/Organisation	Abbreviation
Cathaldus Hartin Senior Planner	Westmeath County Council	CH
Paula Hanlon Senior Executive Planner	Westmeath County Council	PH
Yvonne Haughey Executive Planner	Westmeath County Council	YH
Damien Grennan Senior Engineer (Roads and Transportation Section)	Westmeath County Council	DG
Jonathan Deane Senior Engineer (Environment Section)	Westmeath County Council	JD
Pat Nally Senior Executive Engineer (Municipal District Athlone Moate)	Westmeath County Council	PN
Kieran Butler Housing Officer	Westmeath County Council	KB
Antonia Smyth Senior Executive Officer (Housing Section)	Westmeath County Council	AS
Conor Frehill Planning Consultant	HW Planning	CF
Richard Doorly Consultant Architect	Henry J Lyons Architects	RD
Miriam Corcoran Consultant Architect	Henry J Lyons Architects	MC
Mark Heslin		
Mike Waldvogel Landscape Architect	Forestbird Design	MW
Mark Cunningham Applicant/Landowner	Avenir Homes Ltd.	MC

Proposal

Residential Development comprising 73 no. dwellings, 55 apartments and 297 student accommodation campus on lands at Cartrontroiy, Kilnafaddoge (Lissywollen South), Athlone.

1. Introductions

Introduction by CF on behalf of applicant/consultants and PH on behalf of the Council.

2. Introduction to the Site

CF: Reference made to Regional Growth status and projected population growth of 4,800 additional people by 2026. Regional Plan identifies Lissywollen area as having potential to meet target growth. Important strategic landbank. Creating place, integration of uses, underpin status of AIT and support same, whilst also supporting the economic development of the area.

Three uses proposed overall on applicants landbank at this location:

- Residential
- Student accommodation
- Mixed use

Referenced that there is a cap on development under SHD legislation and given that floor area of proposed future commercial development exceeds minimum requirement for SHD to Board, this commercial element which is integral to the overall development of this landbank will require a separate application, to be submitted to Westmeath County Council.

3. Overview of Proposed Development

RD: Provided presentation which outlined summary of overall objectives of proposal i.e. to create a mature, attractive urban space with an appropriate density, well developed public realm and connectivity to adjoining features/uses such as the Greenway. Confirmed that the site overall encompasses 4.5ha, with 3.8ha the subject matter of this SHD application (Stage 1 meeting) and the remainder of the landholding to be developed by way of a separate planning application for commercial purposes in accordance with the zoning objective of these lands. Referenced that the proposed SHD to comprise 128 residential units and student accommodation (c.300 beds) which will provide a density of 73 units per Ha (inclusive of student accommodation).

The typology of the residential housing would be 3- and 4-bed terraced/semi-detached, apartment blocks comprising one-bed and two-bed apartments and a student accommodation scheme. Connectivity through site emphasises pedestrian/cycle links. Active ground floor space for student area and connection to Greenway (if permissible).

Outlined that the scale, massing and density of this proposal rises North to South. A Landscaped buffer and perimeter wall onto adjoining proposed Lissywollen Avenue (which was the subject of a previous SHD application) is proposed. References that the Greenway bounds the site to the south, proposed housing backs onto Blackberry Lane and that outdoor seating areas are all overlooked by built form, with interconnected high quality public open space. A proposed Green thoroughfare through student housing block, communal areas and gym address open space on the ground floor.

MW: Provided synopsis on proposed layout in terms of open space provision and landscaping. Considers that there are three different types of users, with different needs and in this regard, a series of parks is proposed – one large central green and 10 different zones linked together. A biodiversity corridor with N-S and E-W links to the Greenway is also proposed. Nine different views/photomontages associated with this proposal were presented.

PH: Commented that the Council supports the principle of the development which supports the associated accommodation needs of AIT and is consistent with regional population growth targets for Athlone. In a local context,

proposal should provide for seamless integration between both existing and future development and details to be provided on how this can be achieved as part of any application. Referenced that a future avenue (Lissywollen Avenue) will flank the northern and eastern perimeter of this development and noted in particular that it is proposed that a three-storey terrace currently backs onto this avenue area. Stated that the manner in which development addressed this avenue was an issue on a previous SHD application on adjoining lands. Queried if consideration was given to overall layout and urban design proposal in addressing this avenue. Commented that design of the road network should provide cycle/footpath links.

MC: Confirmed that consideration was given to activate Lissywollen Avenue as part of this proposal. However, given that the subject site faces onto ESB HQ and car park and undeveloped lands, it was considered that fronting housing onto this avenue would not provide an attractive urban environment for further occupants of the scheme. Referenced that consideration is being afforded to the proposed development of a commercial form on adjoining lands within the applicants ownership which will front onto Lissywollen Avenue. (Noted: These associated lands lie outside of the subject site boundaries).

MC & MW: Further stated that they propose to open up the public realm, that the landscaping is a design feature in itself and that there is a calming effect provided with a tree-lined avenue.

CF: Highlighted that there are active constraints given the shape of the subject site which informs proposed layout.

PH: Advised that in the context of the Urban Design Manual and given proposal on adjacent lands for a significant residential scheme and associated avenue, that a justification regarding urban design and the treatment of the development onto the avenue is required. Reference was also made to pedestrian/cycle linkages – cycle lane and the applicant was advised that enhancements are required in respect of Smarter/Active Travel. The development of pedestrian/cycle linkages onto Greenway are considered to be a positive addition to the scheme.

MH: Confirmed that there is no road directly into student accommodation, however access by emergency vehicles will be accommodated.

PH: Referred to Objective OM-5 of the Lissywollen Framework Plan which references high quality cycle and pedestrian links and that the proposal to be informed by same.

DG: Stated that the proposed layout appears to be very roads dominated. Active/Smarter Travel is a primary focus of the Councils road design section and the delivery of segregated cycle lanes as part of this scheme was raised. The Senior Engineer encouraged the applicant to further consider the provision of a segregated cycle lane North to South of this scheme. The importance of providing connectivity to the adjoining Greenway was also stated. Queried whether a Traffic & Transport Assessment was undertaken/ required and level of detail associated with same. Noted public transport provision and future proposals and queried whether it is necessary to provide a bus stop to serve student accommodation in particular.

Commented on the need to provide for Electric vehicles (charging points). Further commented on Road layout and crossroads along the road proposed. Outlined the importance of footpath and cyclelane linkages with this development and sought clarity on the western side of the development i.e. Blackberry Lane and proposal for same. Noted extent of the car parking proposed (Two spaces per house, one per apartment and visitor parking) and questioned if there is a need for the extent of car parking proposed having regard to Smarter Travel. Suggested that cycle lane provision in lieu of car spaces be investigated.

CF: Stated that the consultants will review capacity and Smarter Travel in regard to layout and cycle facilities on Lissywollen Avenue and commented that there may be scope to revise proposal in this regard. However, it was queried whether the provision of a segregated cyclelane would create another layer of hardscape to the detriment of the landscape. Reference was made that it is a short run through the site to the Greenway and that a N-S pedestrian route to the Greenway is proposed, however one of the N-S routes could be utilised in providing a cycle lane. This would offer an additional link to adjoining users of Lissywollen Avenue and future occupiers and encourage a modal shift. The consultants are mindful in keeping the scheme as green as possible and therefore will review in accordance with same.

MH: A Supplementary report on Roads and Traffic will be carried out, informed by adjoining proposed SHD.

PN: Advised that a TTA is required and discussed the proposal independent of adjoining proposals.

DG: Confirmed that a TTA is warranted and that a supplementary report is not adequate to address issues raised in TTA associated with adjoining Lissywollen SHD proposed. Proposal will further impact on same.

CH: Type A units – Requested that design be reviewed to address Lissywollen Avenue (northern end). All units to address public open space and incorporate Dual Aspect Design, where required.

PH: Suggested that a Comparison table regarding proposed and required car parking be provided to justify proposal and stated that a Mobility Management Plan is required.

PN: Referenced 'Taking in Charge' requirements and outlined concerns in relation to table-top proposals i.e. block paving proposed. There is a requirement that more robust materials be used. Council does not maintain open green space – landscaping proposals should have regard to this and future maintenance requirements of same.

PH: Queried potential Noise impacts from adjoining Athlone by-pass and potential impact on residents – TII.

CF: Outlined that noise from Junction 9 was highlighted as an issue on adjacent lands (Alanna Roadbridge Development) and the measures proposed in addressing same. Proximity of units associated with this scheme relative to adjacent development was also discussed.

PN: Stated that the Council does not take students car parking in charge and queried future management of same.

CF: Noted that 10% development is car parking and referenced requirements in accordance with the plan, with no guidance at national level.

CH: Concurred with same.

RD: Referred to connection to Greenway and Blackberry Lane. N – S and potential connection(s) to Greenway. Proposed development design & layout is informed by Greenway.

KB: Discussed Part V requirements. Currently, 10% Social/Affordable Part V requirement. A Separate Part V discussion can be facilitated outside of this pre-planning with the Housing Section, where required. Highlighted that changes at national level may result in an increased requirement of 20% S&A.

RD: Clarity on connections to Greenway. Nature of Blackberry Lane.

MW: Blackberry Lane redevelopment backs onto lane. 2m wall onto lane. Green edge/foraging corridor. States it is an amenity corridor. Signage for "Elderberry Cordial".

PN: Stated that Blackberry Lane is a public road, not just a lane. No public lighting proposals submitted.

CF: Referenced two attendant pieces of land to north, one to east required to ensure completeness of site and integrate these areas (currently in the ownership of the Council) into the proposed scheme. This is being discussed with Liam Higgins, Property Section WCC. Seeks clarity on same.

JD: Discussed a number of environmental issues associated with the scheme as follows:

- (1) Queried how will surface water techniques be managed? Sensitivity to River Shannon for any potential contaminants via surface water run-off. (Referenced proposal on adjacent lands which incorporates proposed green roof system). Applicant to advise on green infrastructure/surface water design.
- (2) Considers that landscape proposals are high quality, but queries whether all natural existing boundaries are being retained. States importance that biodiversity should not be put under strain.
- (3) Climate Change Adaptation Strategy & Active Travel/Smarter Travel
Considers Cycle storage proposal for scheme in a positive manner. Considers that cycle lane provision is critical and that it is not appropriate in its current form. Queries connectivity and access links for students to AIT? Strategy to identify 248 cycle spaces. States that the greenway (Old Rail Trail) is not the desired line and won't be utilised for accessing the college as it's not the shortest route. Considers that the applicant has a responsibility in upgrading existing infrastructure. Cycling strategy – infrastructure improvements outside red line.

PH: Provides comments in respect of AA screening – closest site within 3km from three Natura sites and 10 sites within 10km of site. Advises that a Screening report for AA should accompany an application.

EIAR Screening– does not trigger mandatory EIA. Falls outside threshold. Suggests that an EIAR screening report to justify sub-threshold should accompany an application. Refers to policy contained within Lissycowen Framework Plan and the need to conduct survey of bats/badger setts.

CF: Confirmed that a Bat survey is being undertaken and that a Badger survey has been undertaken.

CF: Acknowledges issue relating to Smarter Travel raised in the outset.

CH: NTA information required from Damien Grennan - to liaise with CF.

PN: Noted that AIT carried out a mobility management plan in recent times and applicant should reference same. Detailed drawing of attenuation not site specific. Require access to same and details for site. 5l/sec surface water requirements. Construction waste and environmental management plan required. Green solutions for surface water required. Open channel not advisable. Risk Assessment required if utilising these methods.

JD: Provided comments in respect of water/wastewater services provisions. A Pre-connection with Irish Water is required. There is adequate capacity for WWT.

PH: Childcare facility in apartment block proposed. Await Westmeath County Childcare Committee (WCCC) considerations of proposal.

CF: Referenced Lissywollen SHD proposal on adjacent lands – three creches within 700m if proposed creche included, which may undermine feasibility of operators. CF to communicate with Muriel Martin WCCC in this regard.

PH: Referenced Cultural heritage requirements – compliance. In relation to design and layout, expressed concerns of potential overlooking and overshadowing based design and layout. These concerns to be further discussed at a later date.

CF: Queried status of ATDP and proposed Joint Urban Area Plan with Roscommon County Council and the status of Lissywollen Framework Plan.

CH: Confirmed that the County Development Plan is effective from today, (4/5/2021); ATDP – Lissywollen Framework Plan are current statutory plans. The preparation of a joint UAP for Athlone with Roscommon County Council will commence following the completion of their County Development Plan process. A Joint Transport Assessment for Athlone is being undertaken with Roscommon County Council. CF to liaise with DG in this regard, if required. Additional strategies for Athlone (including Placemaking/Public Realm/Apartment Heights are going to tender) and will inform the UAP.

CF: Queried whether a Material Contravention is required for student quarter?

CH: Advised applicants to indicate objective(s) in the plan to which a material contravention may be warranted and that this matter be discussed with the Board at tripartite stage, if required. Confirmed that there are no provisions in the plan which preclude proposed height(s) at this location. Density and height may be issues for Material Contravention Statement to the Board.

CH: Concluded the meeting and thanked all attendees for their engagement in the process.

END