# Client Brief Workshop Outputs: 22 May 2013

Thanks to those who turned out on Wednesday evening for our workshop “Site Strategy.” This shorter evening session focused on three strategic layouts for the site, the positives and negatives of each layout was discussed. These layouts will now be refined and developed, in response to comments made, for discussion at the next Saturday session.

The presentation is available at:

https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B33lOwb76sgyMjRsckZMVnp6Z00/edit?usp=sharing

# Introduction:

**Key factors for consideration:**

To begin the evening Jim gave a short presentation outlining the key factors the site layout will have to deal with. These were environmental factors (light, sound and wind) sight lines and views (security and safety) and the spaces between buildings (social spaces). These factors were all illustrated within the presentation; further information is available in “The Environmental Design Pocketbook” by Sofie Pelsmakers a book which Jim will bring to future workshops.

**Front doors and back doors:**

There have been some issues with the way we have been talking about “front doors” and “back doors.” Katie clarified this, from now on we will talk about the following:

* **Street elevations:** the elevations facing the public streets around the site. These are the elevations which the council will have strict criteria and requirements for as they form the site boundary.
* **Grounds or garden elevations**: those elevations facing on to the site.
* **Lane elevations:** if we create new streets on the site we will call them lanes.

**Site typologies:**

It was emphasised that the three typologies presented during the evening are not designs for the site, just diagrams to explore ideas. The typologies are:

* The Cluster
* The Lane
* The Courtyard

**Assumptions:**

It was recognised that there are many ways the site could be designed and so a series of assumptions had been made by Jim in order to allow this discussion to take place.

* The exercises are based on 40 properties, 5 4bedroom homes, 15 3bed homes, 10 2beds and 10 1beds, a distribution resulting from the Demographics activity from Workshop 2.
* The group had shown a preference for large living areas and so the layouts are based on generous German space standards.
* Having looked at the spaces the group decided they would like within the Common House 240m2 was decided upon as an approximate floor area.
* The “Unit Mix Menu” was discussed. These exercises are based soley on those with a 40m2 footprint of up to 3 storeys. The layouts shown are based on these being arranged with a narrow (rather than a broad) street frontage, as the traditional terrace.
* None of the units have been stacked, so every property has its own front door. Stacking some properties, for example 1-beds, would reduce the footprint of the development and allow for more shared space.

Again it was clarified that the three typologies are not proposals for the site, just diagrams for discussion around the following key factors:

* Light
* Sound
* Wind
* Sightlines and Security
* Social Spaces

The following tables record the groups response and discussion around each of the typologies explored.

# Typology 1: Cluster:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Positives | Negatives |
| Light |  |  |
| Sound |  | * Opportunities for small pockets of shelter.
* If good daylighting and solar gain is achieved then it is difficult to achieve noise reduction with this density of properties.
 |
| Wind |  | * Opportunities for small pockets of shelter.
* If good daylighting and solar gain is achieved then it is difficult to achieve wind reduction with this density of properties as there is no space for shelterbelt planting.
 |
| Sightlines and security |  | * Lot of places to hide.
* Some houses can see the Common House, but others can’t.
 |
| Social spaces |  | * You would get lost!
* Spaces aren’t clearly defined
* There would be routes all over the place to provide access.
* No interaction with properties the other side of the site.
* Few opportunities for social spaces.
 |

It was also noted that as the properties are not within a terrace it would be more difficult to reduce heat losses.

# Typology 2: Lane:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Positives | Negatives |
| Light | * Good evening sun to the common house.
* Some properties with good evening sun, others with good morning sun – allowing choice.
 |  |
| Sound | * Lots of space for planting or bund to act as a buffer to the South.
 | * Little opportunity for planting as a buffer to the A14.
 |
| Wind | * Lots of space for a shelterbelt to the South West.
 | * Little opportunity for a shelterbelt to the North East.
 |
| Sightlines and security | * Good eye contact between properties.
 | * Safety for Children cars allowed on the lane
* The “wild” space is very open to the South.
 |
| Social spaces | * Common House located in a central position.
* Lots of space on the site for other uses.
* Allows for some properties near the Common House, and other more private houses further away. (Interestingly, this was seen as negative in the previous discussion about the cluster.)
* Varying scales of spaces.
 |  |

It was commented that to avoid security issues resulting from a big, open “wild” space to the South of the site, there could be a continuous boundary fence or wall allowing no way in to this side. Instead the pedestrian public access through the site could be East-West through the lane, with vehicle parking to the north.

# Typology 3: Courtyard:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Positives | Negatives |
| Light | * Great for some properties.
* More options to promote – evening or morning sun.
 | * Rubbish for some properties.
* Minimal solar access for passive heating for those with a E-W orientation.
 |
| Sound |  | * Guided bus way very close to some properties.
 |
| Wind | * Buildings to the South and West provide shelter to the others.
 | * Channelling of wind through gaps.
 |
| Sightlines and security | * Good sightlines across the whole site.
 |  |
| Social spaces |  | * Little privacy.
* Some properties are so far away there is a risk the central space may become very dead. If it was landscaped it would be divided up reducing access and views across the site.
* Car access may be desired around the edge of the site, creating a new road would be very expensive.
* A bit too like a gated community.
* Turns its back on the wider community.
* All the same type of outside space.­
 |

# General Comments:

The group was asked to think about when they value sunshine; for example Katie said as she works during the day so she likes her house to be sunny in the evenings. It was noted that people might be working in the Common House during the day so good light would be important then. However, there was consensus from the group that they would like nice sun to the Common House in the evening, when everyone might be there. The group would also like external space to the West of the Common House to catch the evening sun.

A concern was raised about noise from neighbours. This should not be a problem as the buildings will be built to building regulations; however Katie suggested putting a requirement in for the testing of sound insulation after completion, to ensure the designed noise reduction levels are achieved.

If the group agrees with a fabric first approach, for example Passivhaus, then there is a requirement for triple glazing, which is much better for reducing noise. It also favours fewer or smaller openings to the North, to reduce heat loss, on this site this would mean the noise from the A14 becomes less of an issue.

20 properties is considered to be an ideal cohesive group size, there is the potential to split the development in to two halves.

There is the potential to design the Common House around the sub-station.

Staggering properties to optimise day lighting and solar gain was discussed but this would be at a large cost increase.

# AOB:

The group was asked to make any further comments.

* The possibility of parking underneath properties, or having individual garages is yet to be discussed.
* Pitched roofs would give more flexibility in terms of future extensions, double height living areas and storage spaces. However it omits the possibility of roof terraces.
* 36 houses rather than 44 would make a large difference.
* In reality there would have to be a mix of properties with a 40m2 footprint and larger 60­m2 ones in order to allow for disabled access.

# Outcomes:

It was agreed that the courtyard and lane typologies provided the best environment for light, sound and wind. It was agreed that the courtyard typology might offer the most secure environment and the lane would offer the best for social interaction.

There was almost unanimous preference for the lane typology, with only Chris not convinced.

The next session will present a revised Site Stratergy based on these discussions as well as going in to more detail about the common house.

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