

From: Nick Thomas
Sent: 27 February 2025 11:44
To: Nick Wyke
Cc: DC Support
Subject: 24/01209/DISC Condition 6 (Design Code)

Dear Nick,

Thanks for consulting me on the draft code amendments submitted by Dorchester Living on the 5/2/25.

This follows detailed comments dated 17/06/24 (original application submission), 29/11/24 (amended application submission) and our most recent meeting 16/12/24.

I remain concerned that the code lacks clarity of purpose. The draft document does not provide certainty that subsequent applications will lead to high quality design as required by policy and guidance.

Sections 1 and 2

The referenced design documents and their relationship to this code is not clearly explained.

My understanding of the various documents is below:

Strategy Document

- 1) Heyford Design Document

Is this a reference to the 2007 Planning Brief SPD?

2010 Application

- 2) Design Code - Prepared by Pegasus, October 2013 (The 2013 Code)

This code was prepared for the original 2010 application and established seven-character areas.

2018 Application (Additional development areas)

- 3) Design and Access Statement (DAS) – Prepared by Pegasus, March 2020

The DAS established new character areas for the additional development. This is based upon an analysis of the 2010 character.

- 4) Green Infrastructure Strategy – Prepared by Pegasus, March 2020

This is the overarching strategy for green infrastructure and any future design documents should be in accordance with this strategy.

- 5) Strategy Document, Parcels 12,21 and 23, - Prepared by Proctor and Matthews June 2020

This is effectively in lieu of a code for plots 12,21 and 23.

- 6) Design Code, Parcels 11,13,16,17,39 and 40

This new code needs to build upon the vision and principles established within the preceding documents – the key reference documents should be the 2020 DAS and GI strategies.

Section 2

It is still unclear whether the information in this section is intended to be a summary of what was established by the 2020 DAS or further analysis.

The text states that, '*...this design code initially analysed the seven-character areas established for Heyford Park...*' There is no critical analysis with this code. Is this sentence meant to refer to the DAS?

Statements in the text that lead to conclusions about how the new scheme will be designed are not supported by analysis. For example, the general assertion that new development areas, '*seamlessly blend with the natural surroundings, offering a harmonious integration of landscape and architecture*'

Section 3

Primary Streets

The Primary Street Coding on Page 25 relates to Camp Road (identified on Page 23 Plan as 'Bus Route, Vehicle and Footways'). It is unclear why this existing street is coded – streets within the new development parcels should have a lower hierarchy.

Secondary Streets

The Secondary Street Coding appears to relate to streets labelled as 'Primary Vehicle Routes on the Page 23 Plan. This needs to be corrected.

Plans are needed to illustrate how the various elements such as verge, parking, street trees, build outs, raised tables, junctions, lighting, pedestrian crossings, drive cross overs will all relate to one another.

Mews Streets

A plan is required to illustrate how the various elements – shared surface footway, parking, junctions, frontages, lighting, street trees will relate to one another and create an attractive street scene.

Edge Lanes

A plan is required to understand the proposed relationship between the edge lanes, landscaping and pedestrian movement. All edge lanes should be linked with pedestrian footways to provide continuous links for pedestrians and cyclists.

Walking a cycling

Vignettes are needed to illustrate how walking and cycling will be prioritised.

Parking

The assertion that parking will be '*thoughtfully designed*' is insufficient. Please consider 'Streets for Healthy Life' for precedents of where parking is integrated with the public realm. Coding needs to ensure the new development parcels will follow best practice principles.

Table – Parking Typologies

- The table identifies Perpendicular frontage parking as 'On-plot' – elsewhere the document states that, '*perpendicular frontage parking must be seamlessly integrated into the public realm*' This is the correct approach, so the table needs to be changed to 'Off-plot' and the associated text needs to reflect this.
- On plot hard standing – this should be behind the building line.

Cycle store and refuse strategy

The code needs to move beyond functional and numerical requirements. The coding needs to ensure bike stores; bike parking and bin storage will be integral to the building and landscape design.

Sustainable Design

PV Panels – Built form and roof orientation needs to be considered at the design stage to maximise the efficiency and ensure panels are not visually dominant (i.e. prominent building frontages)

SuDS – the location, opportunities and design requirements for SuDS needs to be identified as part of the street hierarchy and open space design. Words such as *'will look to'* and *'where feasible'* provide no certainty that SuDS will be integral to the design proposal and are inconsistent with the landscape section.

Landscape and Materials Palettes

Generally, the materials and colour palette will need to be informed by the site context. Estate railings are mentioned – is there a context for estate railings? Is this an appropriate treatment for all open spaces?

Building Form Guidance

- Architectural design – how does 'diverse' character translate into the design?
- Building details – I suggest this needs to be more specific and relate to the various character/ development areas.
- Development block principles – on plot parking should be located behind the building line. Please remove the word 'generally'.
- Focal Spaces – These spaces should be identified and coded.

Section 4 – Example parcel

Top corner key plan

The plan needs reference points to be useful.

Regulating Plan

As set out in my previous comments the regulating plan needs to reflect the approved DAS layout with any divergence explained and agreed.

The Regulating Plan needs to include design elements such as:

- Public open space (type and purpose)
- Green Infrastructure (type and purpose)
- Pedestrian links (i.e. between the primary street and primary pedestrian/cycle route.
- SuDS features
- Building frontages
- Key frontages, spaces, views and vistas if any (what is the relationship with focal points and landmarks?)

Density and Building Heights

- If these plans are necessary they should be consistent with the Regulating Plan.
- Building heights does not reflect the area shown on the Regulating Plan.
- Density is not shown on the Regulating Plan.

Routes and Roads

- This plan does not reflect the approved scheme or the proposed Regulating Plan.

- Short cul-de-sacs with no pedestrian connectivity are not supported. Connectivity needs to be provided between streets and primary pedestrian/cycle route.
- It is unclear what the other colours, hatches and red line area on the plan relate to either exclude or include in key.

Landscape

- The plan is not consistent with the Regulating Plan.
- Boundary treatments need to be coded – i.e. hedge, wall, railings, low shrubs etc.
- There is nothing to explain how street trees will be deliverable within the public realm – how do the green dots relate to road hierarchy?

Character Principles

- The development parcel should have it's own character informed by context and best practice.
- There is no architectural coherence between eastern and western areas.
- Detailing should be in accordance with Cherwell's Residential Street Design Guide – elements such as 'chimney's to animate the roofscape' will not be acceptable unless functional – the design will need to articulate the roofscape without adding prefab chimneys.

I trust that these comments together with those provided previously provide sufficient guidance.

There are various other sources of coding guidance that include:

- The National Model Design Code <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-model-design-code>
- The Design Council's suite of documents and guidance <https://www.designcouncil.org.uk/our-work/projects-partnerships/design-codes/#/reality-check>
- Urban Design Learning links to examples of design codes <https://www.urbandesignlearning.com/resources/design-codes>

Kind regards

Nick

Nick Thomas CMLI
 Urban Design, Conservation & Environment Team Leader
 Planning Policy, Conservation & Design
 Communities Directorate
 Cherwell District Council
 T 01295 221912
nick.thomas@cherwell-dc.gov.uk
www.cherwell.gov.uk