

PLANNING COMMITTEE

10 July 2014

ANNUAL PLANNING COACH TRIP (11 October 2013)

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT

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RECENT REFERENCES:

None

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This report explains the evaluation of 6 sites undertaken on the annual Member Coach Trip last year on 11 October 2013.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Report be noted.

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COACH TRIP EVALUATION

BACKGROUND

On 11 October 2013 the annual Members Coach Trip took place. In addition to ward councillors, this year parish councillors and members from the City of Winchester Trust were invited. (NB they are collectively referred to as *members* in the following report).

The approach was slightly different to previous years as members were asked to evaluate schemes that had recently been completed to test their success in urban design terms. At the beginning of the day forms were issued to members to complete during the day. They were asked to score schemes under certain headings.

In total 32 members and 6 officers attended the event. The evaluation exercise was undertaken by members (although two officers also completed the forms). Officers provided information about the developments and generally assisted members.

The following urban design criteria were used to assess each scheme:

In character and contextual.....

Is the layout, form and scale of the development in character with its surroundings. (NB this does not mean that it should be the same as surrounding development).

Has the design taken advantage of topographical and landscape features?

Movement and connections.....

Is the development well integrated with its surroundings with active frontages onto the public realm? Is the car parking discrete? Are pedestrians and cyclists well catered for with good connections to the surrounding area?

Quality of the public realm.....

Are the spaces you can see from the public realm well designed with attractive hard and soft landscaping and boundaries? Are public and private spaces clearly defined?

Quality of architectural detailing and materials

Are materials and detailing of a high standard (i.e. are they honest as opposed to imitations), durable and will they weather and age gracefully over time?

(NB...traditionally designed development works better with good quality traditional materials and detailing. Contemporary development can be more adventurous)

Members were asked to give each criterion a score (for each scheme) using the traffic light system:

green if the scheme meets the criterion,
amber if the scheme partially meets the criterion,
red if the scheme does not meet the criterion

Members were encouraged to jot down a few comments explaining why they had attributed the scores.

The following 6 sites were visited:

- 1. Residential development at Blue Ball Hill, Winchester**
- 2. Student accommodation at University of Winchester**
- 3. Residential development at the old Winchester laundry site, Winchester**
- 4. Holiday chalets at Blackwood, Micheldever**
- 5. Redevelopment of Whiteley town centre**
- 6. Residential development at Chestnut Meads, Winchester.**

(It was planned to visit the new social housing site at West Meon but owing to delays we were unable to do so).

FINDINGS FROM THE EXERCISE

The scores attributed for each scheme, against the urban design criteria, are attached at the end of this report together with pie charts which give a more graphical representation. A summary of the findings and views expressed by members is set out below.

Residential development at Blue Ball Hill, Winchester

This was a popular development in that it was considered to be in context in townscape terms although there were comments about its excessive height and diverse views on how well it settled into the townscape from views across the city. Also there were concerns about the use of render. Overall the quality of materials and detailing (buildings, hard and soft landscaping and boundary treatment) were considered to be of a high order. There was some

concern about how well connected it was for cyclists and pedestrians given the steep slopes to the site.

Student accommodation at University of Winchester

Although the buildings and hard landscaping were complete at the time of our visit only some of the soft landscaping had been planted and so it appeared rather stark. Members had mixed feelings about this development although on balance it was considered to be successful in contextual terms especially given the high density of accommodation achieved. Comments were made about the need for complimentary development on adjacent sites and the success of pedestrian routes through the scheme and outside spaces for students to meet and relax. Concerns were expressed about cycle accessibility, about the materials (in that there might have been more contrast between buildings), the lack of space between buildings, the possibility of wind tunnel effect and blocking views from the hospital.

Residential development at the old Winchester laundry site, Winchester

The views from members were mixed. Some of the members considered the architectural language too modern for the context (Victorian suburb) while an equal number considered that the contrast was appropriate and in context.

There were a number of comments relating to the cladding, window frames and forms and materials of the porches and the fact that there was too much grey.

There were positive comments about the layout and pattern of development and how it connected with the surroundings and about bike and bin storage.

Holiday chalets at Blackwood, Micheldever

This was a very popular scheme and nearly all members considered that it had met all of the urban design criteria or at least met most of them. If there was any criticism it related to a minor issue such as the visibility of service ducts under the cabins.

Redevelopment of Whiteley town centre

Members considered that the redevelopment of the Town Centre had been successful. The alignment of buildings, their heights, the fact that there were good public routes with active frontages throughout the development had resulted in a comfortable environment with good townscape quality and a place with a unique identity. The public art and seating were liked and the hard and soft landscaping, particularly the significant numbers of new trees. In terms of architectural quality and detailing members considered that it was of a high order although there were concerns that the Oak cladding could deteriorate visually in time.

Residential development at Chestnut Meads, Winchester.

The main house originally received planning approval as a conversion into flats together with two new dwelling set behind. Owing to structural difficulties the main house had to be rebuilt. Members considered that the developer had taken a great deal of care replicating the original house in terms of the quality of materials and the detailing and that it was a very sensitive development

Some concerns were expressed relating to the openness of the front area which had little landscaping and an exposed car parking area and no screening of the bin area. (NB hedging has since been planting to screen the bins). One member thought that the front boundary treatment (railings) was visually weak and more robust railings or a higher wall would compliment other boundaries in the street. Another member considered the side conservatory rather prominent and out of place.

CONCLUSIONS AND COMMENTS

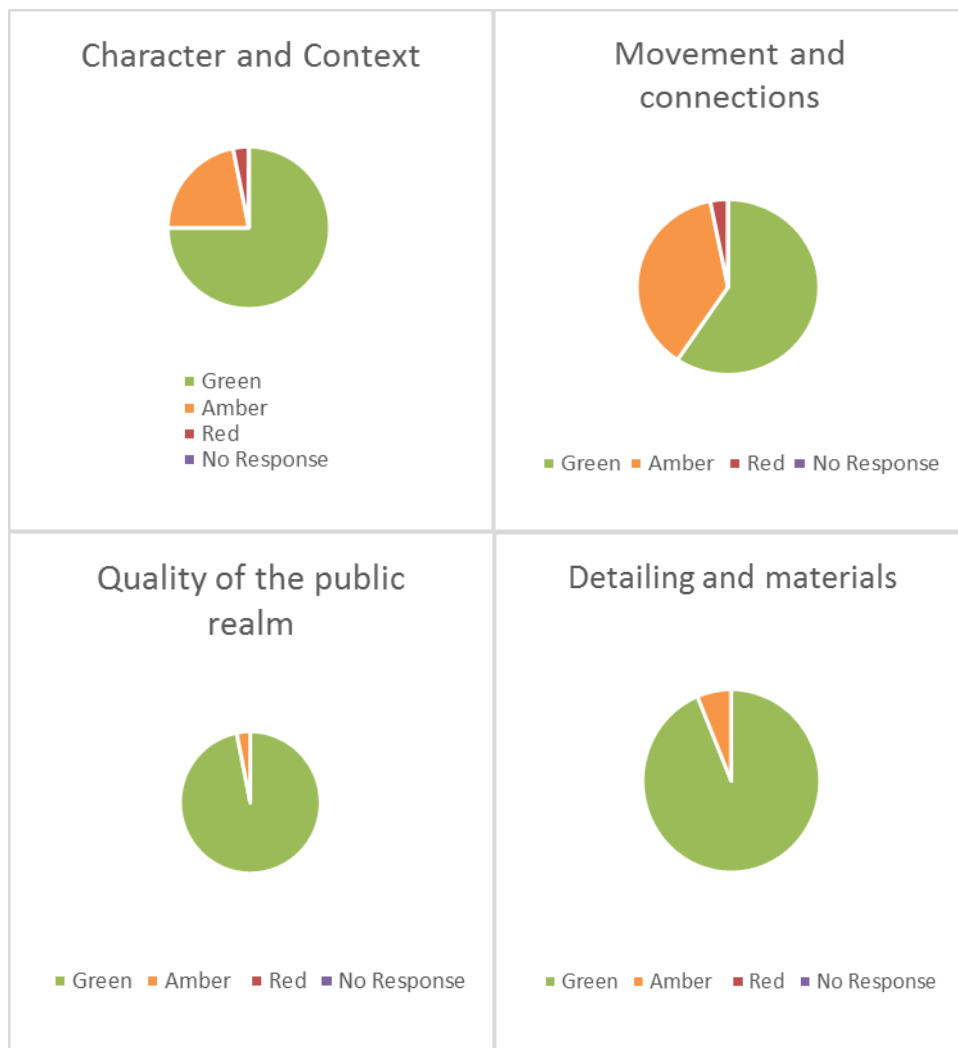
This was an enjoyable day and informative for both members and officers. A cross section of new developments was visited and all participants completed the forms and some useful comments were made on the sheets. Throughout the day there was continual dialogue between members and officers and this has helped officers to understand what is important for members and what concerns they have and are likely to have in the future. The day will also have helped members understand the planning processes, planning policy and the guidance we work to and also the planning constraints and opportunities which emerge when dealing with planning proposals.

It was disappointing that there was a delay which meant that we didn't have enough time to visit the affordable housing scheme at West Meon in the afternoon.

In addition to our annual member coach trip, planning officers in Development Management undertake training days each year and visit completed schemes they have been involved in. Most of our 6 sites have been visited by officers. As well as assessing the urban design success of the schemes, officers discuss and evaluate in more detail the processes, stages of negotiation, consultation responses, representations, and policy implications.

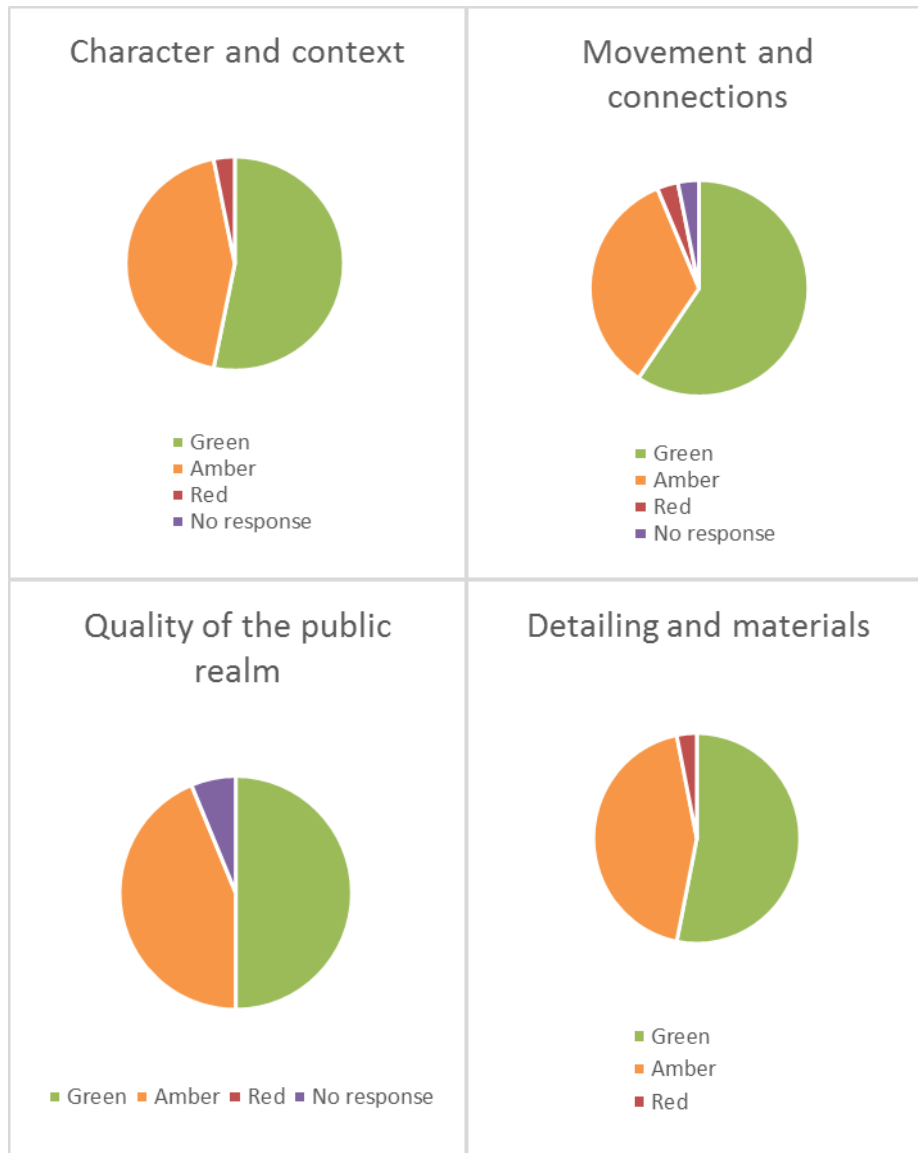
Residential development Blue Ball Hill

	Green	Amber	Red	No Response	Total
Character and Context	24	7	1	0	32
Movement and connections	19	12	1	0	32
Quality of the public realm	31	1	0	0	32
Detailing and materials	30	2	0	0	32



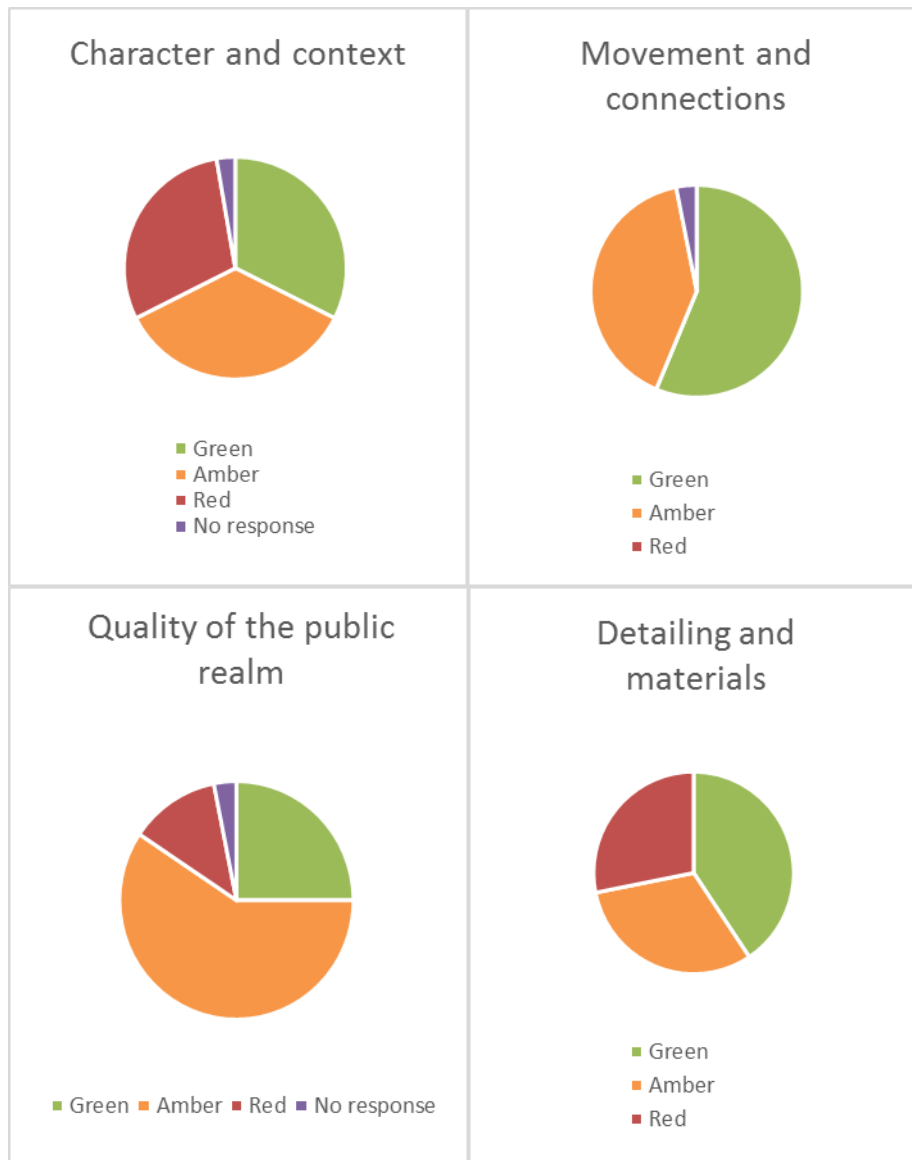
Student Accommodation, University of Winchester

	Green	Amber	Red	No response	Total
Character and context	17	14	1		32
Movement and connections	19	11	1	1	32
Quality of the public realm	16	14		2	32
Detailing and materials	17	14	1		32



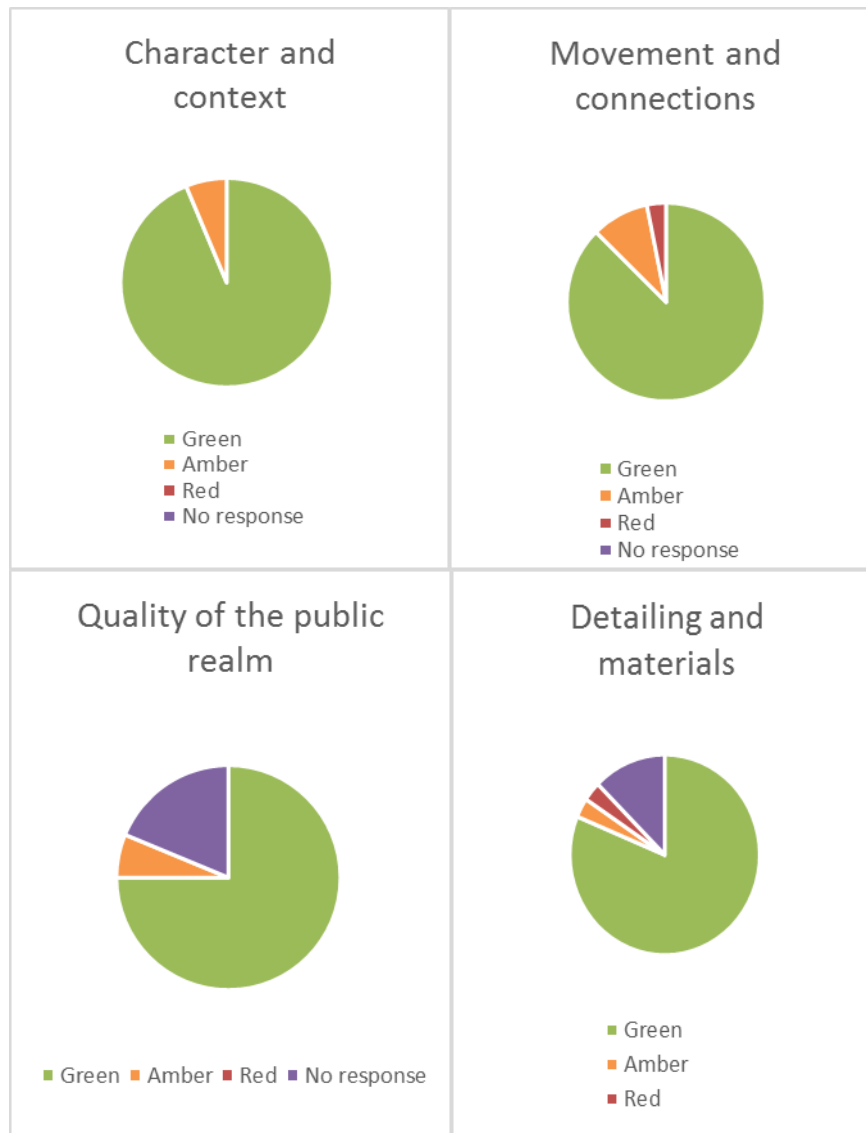
Residential development at the Laundry Site Winchester

	Green	Amber	Red	No response	Total
Character and context	12	13	11	1	32
Movement and connections	18	13		1	32
Quality of the public realm	8	19	4	1	32
Detailing and materials	13	10	9		32



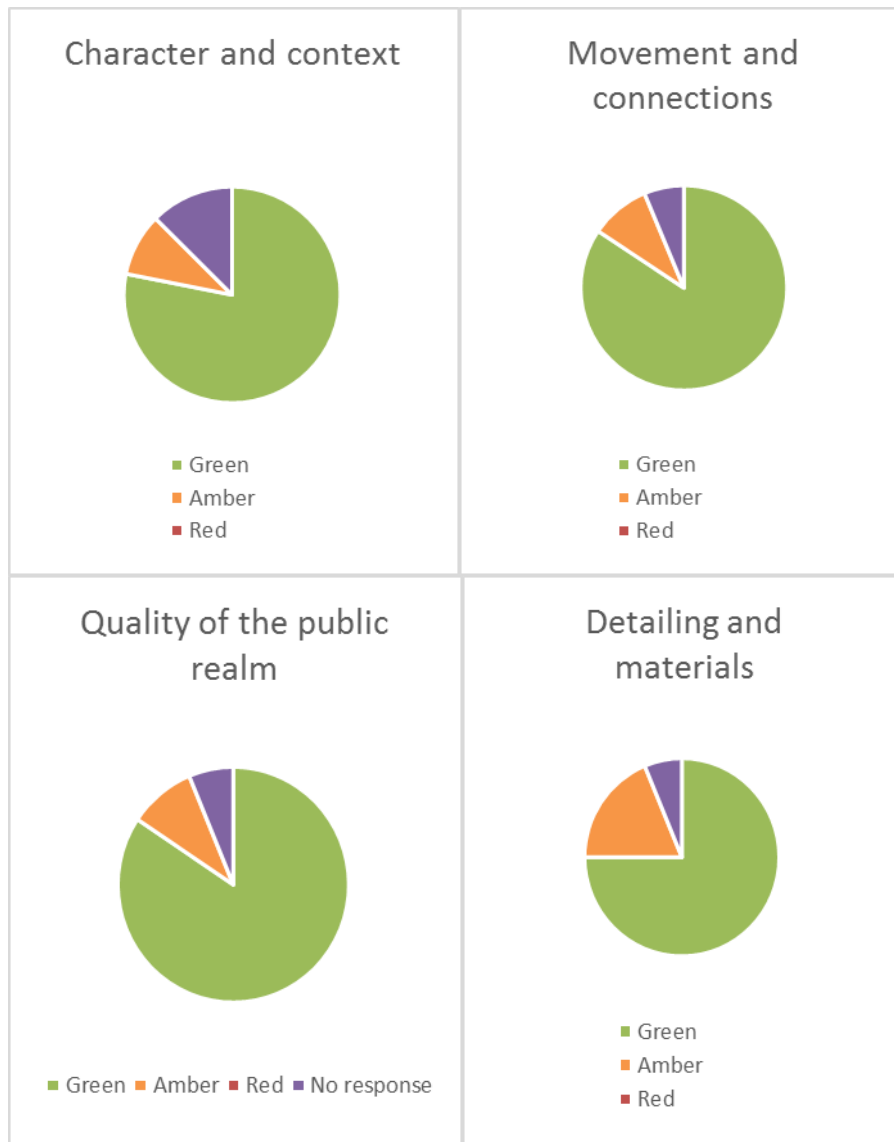
Holiday Chalets, Blackwood Micheldever

	Green	Amber	Red	No response	Total
Character and context	30	2			32
Movement and connections	28	3	1		32
Quality of the public realm	24	2		6	32
Detailing and materials	26	1	1	4	32



Town Centre Redevelopment at Whiteley

	Green	Amber	Red	No response	Total
Character and context	25	3		4	32
Movement and connections	27	3		2	32
Quality of the public realm	27	3		2	32
Detailing and materials	24	6		2	32



Chestnut Meads, Winchester

	Green	Amber	Red	No response	Total
Character and context	21	4		7	32
Movement and connections	19	5		8	32
Quality of the public realm	21	3	1	7	32
Detailing and materials	21	4		7	32

