

# Keldur Development Area Competition

## The Conclusion of the Jury

2023-09-04

The jury has evaluated the five entries selected for stage 2 in the Keldur Development Area competition, launched by the City of Reykjavík and Transport for the Capital Area PLC in January 2023.

The conclusion, with one entry selected as a winner and two entries given recognition, is an important milestone on the way towards the development of the Keldur area. The 36 entries submitted in the first stage and the 5 that were developed further in the second stage constitute a thorough exploration of the challenges and opportunities inherent in the site, given the high aspirations. Therefore, the next steps can be taken with some confidence that the winning and recognized entries provide a sound basis and guidance for the development of the area.

It is important to keep in mind that the proposed approaches and the associated imagery will need substantial elaboration and modification in the formal planning and design process before the actual construction can begin. In short, we are merely “at the end of the beginning”.

The objectives stated at the outset, in the competition brief, reflect ambitions that are without precedent in urban development in Iceland. It is reasonable to expect that aspirations, such as towards carbon neutrality and a truly multimodal transport network, will be met with some scepticism when viewed from the current reality of car dependency in a capital area that is quite spread out for its population size. However, during its deliberations, the jury only became more confident that these aspirations can become reality and that the Keldur area can set an important example for new urban quarters.

Evaluation of entries was conducted under full anonymity of the teams behind each entry. The sum of scores given to each of 14 stated objectives determined the ranking of the entries.

The results are as follows:

1268200 Crafting Keldur	536 points, winning entry
8423938 Connect Fast + Live Slow	420 points, recognized
4958645 Urban Life Meets Keldur Park	396 points, recognized
1931724 The Green River	314 points
5563256 Keldur - weaving natural and urban fabrics	311 points

As indicated by the total scores, the winning entry provides the overall strongest starting point for the next stages of planning and development of Keldur. In addition, the recognised entries contain interesting and alternative approaches that can contribute to the final outcome, not the least of which is answering the basic question of how to introduce urbanity and community with a variety of building types into a greenfield site with challenging topography, and how to ensure that the natural qualities of the site will enhance the urban environment.

Below are the jury's remarks on each entry.

## 1268200 Crafting Keldur

The proposed development is based on the consistent application of urban blocks around a convincing and realistic Borgarlína route, with strategically located stations and urban centres. This approach uses the land well and allows flexibility in the distribution of density, while also allowing good permeability. The depicted urban form is fairly homogeneous but also robust and open to diversification without altering the basic approach. This may be called for to ensure sunlight access and adaptation to the topography. In testing for added density, a storey is simply added in certain areas, which may be somewhat simplistic.

The proposal presents a comprehensive and well thought out network of routes for all modes of transport that is consistent with the mixed uses and the provision of services. The social mixing strategy is convincing, using a hierarchical approach.

The placemaking is presented in a way that is localised and site specific, with multiple interventions that create an appealing character. The overall scheme should be able to create a unique neighbourhood with quality of life. One of these special places is an eco-pool that may not be fully realistic given the tidal variations, but could be representative of other playful alternatives.

In developing the proposal further, current research facilities at Keldur should be integrated better into the scheme.

Overall, the main focus is on urban development, whereas existing features, such as trees and buildings could have more prominence. The proposed green corridor could have a more naturalised shape.

The phasing strategy is straightforward and well communicated.

The communication of the entire proposal in text and images is particularly good, with informative visualisations that indicate careful study of the topography.

## 8423938 Connect Fast + Live Slow

In this proposal a clear and firm boundary is defined between the landscape areas and urban areas. Density is achieved through interesting and diverse building typologies, concentrated around the Borgarlína stations. The green landscape areas are substantial in size, raising questions about the utilisation of the land.

Borgarlína is routed convincingly through the urban areas in a well worked out solution. The parking typologies are varied and integrated thoughtfully, matching a multimodal network. Street connections with adjacent neighbourhoods are proposed. Integration of green spaces and sustainable drainage is well thought out.

Overall, the approach is somewhat conventional and suburban in nature, with an insufficient placemaking strategy. Even with a multimodal network provided, the cars are given some priority.

The communication of the proposal is generally good and interesting to see seasonal variations in the visualisations.

## 4958645 Urban Life Meets Keldur Park

The entry provides interesting ideas and clear graphics about urban form and parking arrangements with intense integration of nature into the urban spaces.

The principal characteristic of this proposal is the concentration of density in the east section of Keldur, with two Borgarlína stations on that side and only one in the west section. This leaves questions about the utilisation of the land unanswered, such as why the value of some of the most lucrative parts of the site is not realised and simply left for future development.

The proposal succeeds in weaving the multiple objectives together while many aspects, such as social mixing, public spaces and sense of place are treated sensibly but with a lack of site specificity. The phasing scheme assumes that built areas are surrounded by construction sites.

## 1931724 The Green River

This entry takes a very different approach that is excellently communicated. The draft presented in stage 1 was intriguing for further exploration with a vision stated through 13 dogmas that are largely aligned with the objectives stated in the competition brief. The emphasis is on the green aspect, leaving large parts of the site undeveloped. This leaves questions about the realisation of the value of the land.

Social mixing and mixed uses are reasonably well treated but the urban pattern is not consistent with the Borgarlína route and the opportunities that the station areas could offer in a transit oriented development. Car traffic is mixed with the Borgarlína and overall the traffic scheme is somewhat suburban in nature.

The description of the urban blocks gives good consideration to water management and green areas but a hierarchy of public spaces is missing, that could provide centrality in strategic locations. Phasing is well communicated and thought through.

While the visualisations are well crafted, they could have focused on informing about the integration of key concepts rather than putting specific details in the foreground.

The proposal is consistent in applying the vision presented in the 13 dogmas but not always convincingly achieving the intended results.

## 5563256 Keldur - weaving natural and urban fabrics

The proposal provides ambitious density while effectively communicating the green fabric. The mixed uses and location of services is well thought out and pragmatic. The topography is used to create five character areas within the site.

The building typologies suggested are diverse but leave questions about the quality and attractiveness of the public realm that they enclose.

The Borgarlína route meets the technical requirements well, avoiding the steepest slopes. This, however, takes the route towards Vesturlandsvegur where the Kálfamói station is quite peripheral, even if the green lid over to Grafarholt could be realised, which is uncertain.

Substantial changes in the existing street network are proposed with unclear benefit.

Many of the illustrations have limited appeal and information content.