

Comisiwn Dylunio Cymru Design Commission for Wales

Design Review Report:	21 January 2004
Meeting Date / Material Submitted:	15 January 2004
Location:	Abergavenny Cattle Market Place
Architects / Design Team:	Mountford Piggott MacGregor Smith
Scheme Description:	Planning/Design Brief for a large foodstore
Public/Other Body:	Monmouthshire County Council

The DCFW Design Review Panel was delighted to have an opportunity to comment on this emerging brief and prospective land disposal. We benefited from a useful briefing document in advance of the meeting. The submitted documents provided a very clear and thorough analysis of the context, and the beginnings of an urban design strategy for the north side of the town. They were well supported by presentations from the Council and their consultants which fully explained their aspirations for the site.

Our comments are intended to support the Council's initiative. We wish to encourage them to achieve an exemplary development that can be used as a model for other local authorities seeking to strengthen their town centre retail offer, and inserting larger scale retail units sensitively into the historic fabric.

DCFW understands the time frame and development context within which the Council is operating, and the complexities of competing out-of-town applications and options on the site in question. Our key comments are as follows

Support for the way the brief is evolving

The panel strongly support the direction the brief is taking, but they wish the brief to go further to ensure more development on the site, and particularly a greater quantity of residential. We feel that the consequent increase in demand for car parking provision is not necessarily insoluble. The Panel is conscious that a more prescriptive brief might reduce the development interest in the site, but it wishes to compensate for this by creating the possibility of achieving higher land values. It believes a dense and intricate development will best serve the town's regeneration objectives and restore more coherence to the north side of the town. The Panel would prefer to see a development of this nature managed by a lease and a building agreement to better ensure the delivery of design quality. It acknowledges that it may be more practicable to use planning conditions on an outline application to achieve access, massing, height, scale, public realm, and land use mix objectives.

The food store

A key design consideration is to eliminate the dead frontages of the proposed food store as far as is possible given operational requirements. We have three suggestions

- Provide more residential units along a greater length of the north side of Lion Street, while retaining the enclosure of the original street.
- Seek to ensure that the frontages to the new lane-way are glazed, and to provide entrances at either end to serve those coming from town and from the car park (a coffee shop with an external aspect would be a bonus). The entrance way on Lion Street must respect the historic character of the street.
- Move the store eastwards to adjoin the eastern site boundary removing the lane which will in any event be a liability.

We would also encourage a second floor of development above the supermarket to add more residential or small office suites.

The slaughter house complex

We encourage the retention of these buildings for residential and/or retail use, as they can create more visual and social diversity on the site and increase the sense of place. We would like to see as much of the original buildings as is practical retained, and the complex strengthened by additional development that can enclose more of Brecon Road. Failing that, rebuilding of the stone wall back to its original dimensions would help retain the existing character of the street and hide unsightly car parking

The extension of Market Street

It is important to provide a pedestrian link across the site to connect to the car park/park and provide a quality route into town. The fact that the route has to cross the car park is less than ideal, though detailed design can make this relatively safe and reasonably pleasant. The Panel thought it might be possible to align the route further west to link more directly to the car park and run alongside the stream which could be de-culverted. If this were possible then the western part of the site could be developed as residential, and the car park reduced in size. It was suggested that if additional car parking was a necessity then partial decking of the car park should be considered. The decking would of course need to be screened and form part of an attractive and landscaped edging to the site.

The library

We fully support this public use which will complement the supermarket with its longer opening hours. The proposed footprint might better respect the alignment of Lion Street and increase its enclosure. Again intensification of use across the site may be possible

Brewery Square

Again the Panel supported the early ideas for improvement of this space, but we needed more time to consider the complexities of this site, including Market Street and the area around Magnolia Terrace.

Further Assistance

DCFW and its Design Review Panel are willing to offer further assistance should this prove useful.

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