



DESIGN
COMMISSION
FOR WALES
COMISIWN
DYLUNIO
CYMRU

Design Review Report

University of South Wales Campus,
Caerleon

DCFW Ref: N122

Meeting of 17th November 2016



Declarations of Interest

Panel members, observers and other relevant parties are required to declare **in advance** any interests they may have in relation to the Design Review Agenda items. Any such declarations are recorded here and in DCFW's central records.

Review Status

PUBLIC

Meeting date	17 th November 2016
Issue date	30 th November 2016
Scheme location	Caerleon
Scheme description	Residential-led mixed use
Scheme reference number	122
Planning status	Pre-application

Declarations of Interest

None declared.

Consultations to Date

Pre-application discussions with the local planning authority have been taking place over the past 12 months.

The Design Commission previously reviewed this scheme on 22nd September 2016; this report should be read alongside the report from the earlier review.

The Proposals

Following the closure of the campus in July 2016, the University of South Wales intends to submit an outline planning application for a residential-led, mixed use development of the site. The proposals retain the main building on the site along with others identified as of historic, architectural or re-use value.

Main Points

The following points summarise key issues from the review and should be considered to inform work ahead of making a planning application or engaging in further review.

Design quality & value opportunity

It is important that this scheme realises this positive opportunity for Newport and Caerleon to achieve good public value from the development and for the University to be able to reinvest and add value elsewhere.

Given the unique context and character of the site with its existing buildings, network of routes and urban setting with green spaces, this project provides an opportunity to

define and achieve quality which is higher than most speculative housing developments. The good quality existing buildings already have the potential to add value to the development if they are refurbished well, but further work needs to be done to really set the scheme apart and provide good quality, sustainable, healthy places to live.

The work done at this pre-outline planning application stage will set the tone for the development, therefore, it is important that quality standards, ethos, character and sustainability ambitions are secured through the planning application. The University is planning to sell the site on prior to development, so it is crucial that enough detail is included to ensure quality and public value are delivered.

It would be useful for the team to engage in discussion with the local authority's housing department, alongside the planning team, to establish housing demand for the site, both in terms of house type and size, but also the tenure mix. This will help the team to deliver appropriate, viable development. Retaining the existing road infrastructure will reduce costs for the developer, adding further value to the site.

Design code value

The development would benefit from the preparation and use of a design code. We recommend that this be prepared as a part of the planning application as this would be a useful mechanism for ensuring that design quality is maintained. A carefully thought-out design code would also act as a tool for the local planning authority and the University to secure a legacy of quality for the site. The Commission would welcome further engagement on the preparation and use of a design code.

It is good to see that the design team have been considering improvements in response to the comments made at the previous review. These improvements should now be clearly defined and fully articulated in the detail of the planning application in order to ensure they are not lost.

The Commission would like to see in more detail how the desired character and hierarchy within the development will be achieved. The scale, density, materiality and landscape quality will all contribute to people's experience of the place. These aspects can be included in a design code.

Clearly defining the quality expected in a design code, an early signal regarding the expected quality of the scheme, will provide the opportunity to attract interest from the most appropriate development partners and achieve full buy-in and clarity about delivery at the outset.

Landscape & parking strategies

The Commission was pleased to see that work has been done on developing a landscape strategy. Integrated play spaces and linked green spaces and routes will add value and contribute to improved well-being and quality of life for future residents.

As part of the design code green boundaries should be considered (such as railings with hedges) in some locations. Consideration will need to be given to management of these over time as the hedge planting matures.

Consideration should also be given to how all public spaces, streets and green spaces will be managed over the lifetime of the development so that quality is maintained.

Some rear parking courts were shown on the plans presented at the review. Care should be taken that these do not lead to inactive spaces at the fronts of the houses.

Sustainability strategy

An ambitious site-wide sustainability strategy would set the scheme apart from other housing developments, adding further value to the site and individual units. Good sustainable design provides healthier homes with lower fuel bills making them an attractive option for buyers and tenants.

To achieve good sustainable outcomes, the principles of sustainable design must be considered as part of the design process from the outset and used to drive design decisions. The site layout, form and orientation of buildings will have a significant impact. Passive design considered early does not necessarily add costs, whereas late inclusion of energy technologies can be expensive to install and maintain.

To help ensure sustainability ambitions are realised, the strategy must be incorporated in the design code and reflected in planning decisions.

Viable reuse of existing buildings

The existing buildings which are being retained add value and character to the site and it is positive that they will be repurposed so that they continue to be used and maintained. However, it is important that the refurbishment is viable and floor plan options should quickly be tested to show whether residential units are the most appropriate use. The linear form of the building with internal corridors may not lend itself to this use.

There may be value in exploring relationships with Housing Associations, or specialist private sector providers of elderly housing, to look at options for the existing buildings.

Active Travel Act & public transport

Active travel routes should be identified so that the right permeability of the site can be achieved. Foot and cycle routes should be incorporated in the design and quality of streets.

It would be useful to identify potential bus routes so that the correct width of streets and bus stops can be designed for at the earliest opportunity.

Building for Life

Building for Life (BfL) 12 Wales information is available on the DCFW website <http://dcfw.org/building-for-life-12-wales/>. It has been endorsed by Welsh Government and DCFW and has been adapted to respond to the Welsh planning policy context.

Built for Life accreditation would be an appropriate target for this development and consideration of the 12 questions now will ensure that it is achievable. DCFW offers Building for Life workshops and is also the organisation through which independent assessment for accreditation is undertaken in Wales. We recommend that further engagement with DCFW on Building for Life is undertaken en-route to assessment.

Further Review

The Design Commission would welcome the opportunity to review this scheme again. At the next review, we would expect to see the following:

- Draft design code
- Character and hierarchy of streets and public spaces defined
- Sustainability strategy set out
- Active travel and public transport routes identified and integrated
- Viable refurbishment proposals for existing buildings in more detail
- Building for Life principles considered

Comisiwn Dylunio Cymru Design Commission for Wales is the trading name of DCFW LIMITED, a Private Limited Company established under the Companies Act 1985 and 2006, Company No: 04391072 incorporated in England and Wales. DCFW is a non-statutory consultee, a private limited company and a wholly owned subsidiary of the Welsh Government. Registered office: 4th Floor, Cambrian Buildings, Mount Stuart Square, Cardiff CF10 5FL T: 029 2045 1964 E connect@dcfw.org. The comment recorded in this report, arising from formal Design Review through our Design Review Service, is provided in the public interest for the consideration of local planning authorities as a material consideration and other users of the Design Review Service. It is not and should not be considered 'advice' and no third party is bound or required to act upon it. The Design Review Service is delivered in line with DCFW's published protocols, code of conduct and complaints procedure, which should be read and considered by users of the service.

A Welsh language copy of this report is available upon request.

Attendees

Design team:	Paul Osborne, LHC Grant Elliott, LHC
Client:	Stephen Godber, University of South Wales
Planning consultant:	Karl Scholz, Alder King
Local Authority:	Joanne Davidson, Newport City Council
Design Review Panel:	
Chair	Carole-Anne Davies, Chief Executive, DCFW
Lead panellist	Phil Roberts Angela Williams Maria Asenjo Mark Lawton Amanda Spence, Design Advisor, DCFW
Observer:	Mike Singleton, Chair, Caerleon Civic Society