

Design Review Report

Northcliff Lodge, Penarth

DCFW Ref: N135

Meeting of 16th February 2017



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

Meeting date

Issue date

Scheme location

Scheme description

Scheme reference number

Planning status

PUBLIC

16th February 2017

6th March 2017

Penarth

Residential

N135

Permission refused

Declarations of Interest

None declared.

Consultations to Date

No formal consultation has taken place. Formal pre-application consultation will be carried out if/when a revised planning submission is made. This engagement with the Commission facilitates the early consideration of options following a planning refusal.

The Proposals

The site is located along the Northcliff headland in Penarth, and lies outside the Conservation Area of Penarth. Custom House sits below the site at the foot of the cliff and is listed. The site consists of Northcliff Lodge and its extensive grounds. The steeply sloping site benefits from panoramic views over the barrage and towards Cardiff Bay.

The proposal is to demolish the existing late 20th century dwelling and outbuilding and build 30 apartments with new access, parking and replacement tree planting.

The scheme was submitted for planning in 2015 and was supported by Vale of Glamorgan Officers with a recommendation for approval. However, in January 2017, the permission was refused by the Planning Committee. Following this review meeting, the applicant will decide whether to appeal the decision or submit a revised application.

Main Points in Detail

The following points summarise key issues from the review, and should be considered to inform any further work ahead of resubmitting a planning application or appealing the refusal:

Overall Approach

The Design Commission is supportive of development of this site which would deliver much needed housing on an urban infill site. The ambitions of the client and design team to deliver a high quality, innovative residential scheme are commended.

This review offers an opportunity to discuss minor improvements to the scheme to increase already high quality and add further value; and to consider how the design process and proposal can best be communicated in any materials and presentation produced for any revised planning application. The additional design work and illustrative information developed between the planning refusal and this review is useful and heading in a positive direction.

The Commission was surprised that the original scheme – despite this opportunity to enhance it – did not achieve a planning consent. The proposal is a well-considered response to a difficult site, with strong inclusive design commitment and an enhancement to choice of housing in the area.

Communication of Design Process

The differences between the submitted and presented documentation raised the awareness that exemplary clear communication of both the design development process and the resulting proposal is important to assure the local planning authority, planning committee and local residents that the best solution has been found.

Visual presentation of the following are useful:

- Site analysis and the implications (beyond the plot, including the neighbouring properties)
- Wider context shown in plan and section to demonstrate appropriate design response
- Justification for the number of units/density on the site
- Accurate visual studies showing the impact on selected key views (including alternative design options considered, if appropriate)
- Materiality and articulation of form – texture, colour and shadow
- Physical model of site, context and proposal to explain response to topography
- Energy and sustainability strategies

Documenting Changes

It will be useful for the design team to methodically document any changes they make to the scheme which was originally submitted for planning. Side-by-side comparison drawings and diagrams will allow everyone to easily see and understand the positive steps that have been taken to enhance and improve the scheme in response to feedback and further design studies.

The verified view studies which have been started are useful. It would also be helpful to have summer and winter studies to assess how the wooded backdrop to the Custom House changes through the seasons. This would also show if/where additional tree planting will be beneficial. One of the images presented suggested there might be an opportunity to better articulate the east end of the buildings using texture and/or openings, which would also provide additional views out.

Section and elevation drawings of the amended proposal with the outline of the original planning submission would demonstrate changes to height and massing and the inclusion of more gaps between the blocks. Including texture, colour and shadow on elevation drawings will show how material changes and articulation help to break down the appearance of the massing.

A strategic approach to the changes rather than a detailed enumeration is fundamental. The communication of these is also to be considered.

Access and Inclusive Design

It is very positive that access and inclusive design has been considered in detail and integrated through design. The following amendments could also be considered:

- Include pedestrian only access from the existing lane to the west of the site
- Provide natural resting places along/off of the main access ramp to make walking easier. These could be positioned to enjoy views through the site
- Provision for future pedestrian access to the marina from the site
- Ensure some/all parking spaces are accessible
- Maintenance of multiple lifts could be expensive. The long term viability should be balanced against the level of accessibility.

Consulting local access groups and considering 'scenarios' for different potential residents will be helpful.

Design for Quality and well-being

It is positive that the design team are using this opportunity to give further consideration to the detailing, materials and landscape design to maximise the quality of the scheme.

This is important because the detail design of both the apartments and the shared spaces between them will have an impact on the well-being and quality of life for all residents. The following could be considered:

- Further 'greening' of the upper, wider street/courtyard space to make it feel less like a space for cars
- Proportion of the open spaces of the upper and lower decks - car vs pedestrians
- Increase external amenity space
- Consider mini front gardens for ground floor flats and to improve the views of the block A and Block B to the upper terraced 'car' dominated area
- Explore levels of and around block A to allow for external landscaped spaces to soften and improve the views, and the relationship of the flats with the setting they are in
- Consider the impact of increasing floor to ceiling heights to make apartments feel more spacious and increase daylight. The current 2.4 m high is low by today's standards in apartments of this quality
- Maximise storage provision

- Visitor parking

There may be a tension between providing views from the new dwellings and maintaining a continuous 'green' backdrop of trees to the Custom House building. The view studies will help to achieve the right balance. The move to open the view in the lower block form of the earlier proposal was seen as a positive feature that could be further explored while reviewing the site analysis, density, access, flows and landscaping strategies.

Planning Strategy

Working closely with their planning consultant, the design team and applicant must now develop a sound planning strategy.

There are a number of steps which could be taken to help reduce the risks involved with submitting an amended planning application. These include:

- Benchmarking visits for elected Members
- Highlighting the public value of the scheme
- Good communication of the rationale of the design process founded on in depth analysis
- Communication of a viability/affordability study
- Demonstrate response to National Policy – housing need, urban densification, housing variety and choice
- Invest in a good public exhibition and PR strategy
- Persuasive communication and illustration of a good quality design proposal

It may be beneficial for a specialist conservation consultant to be appointed to assess and communicate the impact on the setting of the listed building.

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

Attendees

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Design Review Panel:	
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