

Design Review Report

Slate Quay, Caernarfon

DCFW Ref: 11D

Meeting of 19th January 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

CONFIDENTIAL

19th January 2017
1st February 2017
Caernarfon
Mixed Use
11D
Pre-application

Declarations of Interest

None declared.

Consultations to Date

Consultation had been undertaken with Cadw and the local authority. A meeting with NRW and the LPA is scheduled to address flooding matters. The Design Commission for Wales was first consulted on proposals for this site in 2005 but the proposals have changed and progressed significantly since this time.

The Proposals

Proposed restoration, redevelopment and elements of new build to create a cohesive block. The proposed uses include converting the harbour trust building and Beics menai building into holiday lets, other existing structures into work spaces for artisan design and manufacturing, and the construction of new structures on the site to create artisan workshops. An internal street will run through the development linking the functions, increasing accessibility and permeability and establishing links back to the Maes.

Main Points

The Design Commission welcomed the opportunity to hear about and comment on the proposals for this very interesting site. It is evident that the client and design team have clear ambitions for the site and have taken great care in understanding the potential of the site and how it could be developed.

This report highlights the key points that were raised in the review, together with some additional points for consideration.

Main Points

- This is a strong and interesting scheme for a challenging but important site within the town. We welcome the considered but bold approach that has been taken to developing the proposals.
- The clear concept of 'crafted objects inserted into the site' should be maintained through the development of the proposals. The simple forms and low scale of the existing buildings have been given a modern interpretation which is appropriate. We are supportive of the proposed bold new insertions and agree that this approach is reinforced through the use of distinctive colours. Bolder colours will help to strengthen the concept, will be distinct from the existing buildings and reflect local examples of the use of colour. The choice of colour must, however, have some rationale, such as relating to materials associated with the site. Each inserted 'object' should be celebrated as an individual element so that the site does not become homogenised.
- Drawing a wider masterplan to encapsulate potential future projects, improvements to connections and options for the public realm around the site will help to put the proposals into context and highlight the need for wider interventions. It is disappointing to hear that the local authority is not taking a bolder approach to improve the pedestrian environment between the train station, the site and the castle. This would appear to be a missed opportunity to better connect these important visitor attractions and promote greater pedestrian priority. The sea of car parking around the site remains a concern but it is understood that other options are being considered for this space which may help to ease the problem, although it is unlikely that it will be removed.
- Showing more of the context of the site in the sections, elevations and axonometric drawings will help to set the proposals in context in terms of scale and the relationship to other uses.
- Further clarity is needed on the flood strategy which is still to be resolved. As subtle an approach as possible to flood mitigation would be most appropriate for this site.

Additional points for consideration

- The junctions between old and new will be very important and should be considered in detail.
- The east-west orientation of the roof in the north east corner of the site seems to have moved away from the north-south orientation that was identified as being prevalent in the analysis. The scale of this element also feels out of place. The elevation of this unit needs to be developed in the context of the existing walls.
- The curved roof also seems out of place and the rationale for this element needs to be weighed up.

- The entrances need to be clear and welcome as it is important that the central walkway feels public and people are encouraged to go into rather than just around the site.
- It is positive to hear that an artist has been engaged to work across all waterfront projects as this could help to explore options for connecting people with the interior of the building.
- How the crafted 'objects' meet the ground needs to be resolved to determine whether they 'float' above ground floor level or come down to the ground.
- A physical model may be helpful to explore some of the details and questions around massing and orientation.
- A step-free route through the site has been incorporated which must be maintained through to the final development.
- It is encouraging to hear that the Harbour Trust are keen to undertake future projects to improve other buildings in the vicinity, such as the buoy shed, whilst maintaining the character and activity of the harbour.
- The precedents identified for the form and nature of the new building are appropriate. Additional precedents for the proposed uses and type of development could also be helpful to support the business case and ethos.

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

Attendees

Architect: Victoria Alderton, Purcell

Client team: Dafydd Les Hughes, Caernarfon Harbour Trust
Gwyn Roberts, Galeri Caernarfon

Design Review Panel:

Chair

Simon Richards

Lead Panellist

Chris Jones

Panel

Cora Kwiatkowski

Michael Gwyther-Jones

Jen Heal, Design Advisor, DCFW

Amanda Spence, Design Advisor, DCFW

Observing:

Andrew Richards, Arts Council Wales

Jane Colhoun, Arts Council Wales