

Design Review Report

Bradley Court, Cardiff

DCFW Ref: N131

Meeting of 30th May 2017



Review Status

Meeting date	PUBLIC 30 th May 2017
Issue date	13 th June 2017
Scheme location	Cardiff
Scheme description	Student Accommodation
Scheme reference number	N131
Planning status	Pre-application

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.

None declared.

Consultations to Date

Formal pre-application discussion with the local planning authority is underway and public consultation is in progress.

This scheme was previously reviewed by the Design Commission in February 2017 and 17th April 2017, this report should be read alongside the reports from those reviews. This follow up meeting was convened at the request of the team. The Commission considered a meeting prior to formal submission would add greater value.

The Proposals

The development site is a corner plot at the junction of Park Place and Stuttgarter Strasse in Cardiff's city centre, close to the edge of the Cathays Park Conservation Area and within the Windsor Place Conservation Area. The development site includes a Grade II Listed building (11 Park Place) and there are a number of trees on the site protected by Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs).

The brief seeks to provide up to 460 student studio residences plus a 'hub' in a new block of up to 17 storeys (one storey fewer than proposed at the previous review). A restaurant/café facility is proposed for part of the ground floor.

Main Points

The continued engagement with the Commission is welcomed. The Design Commission reiterates its view that the site for this project is particularly sensitive and complex, being within one Conservation Area and in close proximity to another with a listed building on the site. The corner location forms a natural marker to the edge between the commercial city centre and the civic centre – arguably Cardiff's most distinguished built environment. A tall building on this site would have a significant impact on the immediate environment and the wider city and therefore demands the highest design quality and comprehensive justification.

The following points summarise key issues from the meeting and should be considered to inform any further work ahead of a planning application being submitted:

The quality challenge

As stated in the Design Commission's previous Design Review reports, the site and context for this scheme demand the highest design quality and comprehensive justification. This does not necessarily mean that a tall building would not be appropriate here – a matter for the local authority to determine in light of its policy and comprehensive justification of proposals, but a taller building makes achieving excellent quality more challenging and is harder to justify because the impacts it will make are more significant.

Height and proportion

The proportions of tall buildings are important to achieving elegance, especially the footprint-height ratio. The proportions of the proposed tower element do not create an elegant profile, particularly the wide north and south elevations of the building.

The design team and client explained that there are a number of factors related to the height and massing of the building which influence the viability of the scheme, including the number of units, circulation/core ratios, fire strategy, construction process and durability/maintenance. These factors limit the opportunity to improve the massing of the building within the current brief. Whilst these issues need to be fully resolved for the building to be delivered, the quality of the scheme should not be compromised.

We have previously highlighted that it is crucial for the design process for this important site to be informed by detailed testing and refinement of options to achieve the optimum solution. This process should be clearly communicated in the planning submission to demonstrate that the best quality will be delivered. The Design and Access Statement should provide confidence that all options for delivering a building of exceptional quality have been fully explored and exhausted. The material presented at this meeting and in previous reviews did not provide this level of justification or confidence and didn't tell the full story of how that proposal has been arrived at. Further evidence of the design development is required to underpin the proposal.

Articulation and perceived proportions

The articulation of a building façade can alter the perceived proportions of a building. Given the concerns regarding the actual proportions of the proposed scheme, it will be useful to use articulation to emphasise verticality and make the tower appear more slender. The proposed horizontal banding, particularly near the top of the building, has the effect of cutting the building into slices and reducing the apparent height.

The treatment of the top of the building requires further design development to ensure that it does not appear as if it has been cut off at an arbitrary height.

The simplicity of the proposed façade design and the richness, durability and quality of the materials proposed are welcomed.

Other important considerations relating to articulation include:

- Legibility/identification of main entrance

- Graphics/signage
- Lighting of, in and around the building
- Solar control, which should be informed by thermal modelling
- Wind control

These aspects should be considered before a planning application is made as they can have a significant impact on the appearance and function of the building.

Response to testing and public consultation

The Commission welcomes the environmental testing for wind conditions in the public realm, which is currently in progress. It is important that the value of the testing process is maximised by allowing sufficient time to modify designs in response to the results. Further testing may be needed to reach the optimum performance and eliminate uncomfortable or dangerous conditions. The testing process is likely to inform the design of the public realm and well as the articulation of the façade, and this process should be clearly communicated in the Design and Access Statement.

Likewise, the value of the ongoing statutory public consultation will only be realised if enough time is allowed for responses to be collated, understood and analysed, and for the results to inform the design process.

Vision

The design of the building has undergone a series of amendments in response to feedback from various stakeholders and successive review meetings with the Commission. It is important that time is taken at this stage to review and testing the design to ensure that it retains a strong vision and has architectural coherence.

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

Attendees

Agent/Client/Developer: Michele Steel, Select Property Group

Architect/Planning Consultant: Tom Jarman, FCB Studios
Osian Roberts, DPP

Design Review Panel:

Chair

Lead Panellist

Jen Heal, Design Advisor, DCFW

Jamie Brewster

Amanda Spence, Design Advisor, DCFW

Carole-Anne Davies, CE, DCFW