

Design Review Report

Bank House, Trefin,
Pembrokeshire

DCFW Ref: N136

Meeting of 9th November 2017



Review Status

Meeting date
Issue date
Scheme location
Scheme description
Scheme reference number
Planning status

CONFIDENTIAL

9th November 2017
21st November 2017
Pembrokeshire
Residential
N136
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

This scheme was reviewed by the Design Commission on 17th August 2017. This report should be read in conjunction with the report from the previous review. Representatives of the Local Authority were present on both occasions.

The Proposals

The proposed development is for 3 no. detached dwellings, each designed to Passivhaus standard. The site layout comprises parking and access to the north with gardens for each house located to the south.

Within the centre of Trefin, part of a conservation area, the site lies on a south facing, sloping field on the southern edge of the village, to the east of Bank House farm. Trefin is characterised by a vernacular of simple volume, two storey pitched roof houses that line the street frontages through the village. Materials for the historic housing within the village are a mix of stone, render and painted stone. There are a number of 1960s cul-de-sac developments located on the outer peripheries of the village. The proposed site for this project takes its access from a C20th cul-de-sac of 7 houses.

The site had a previous planning permission for 3 no. dwellings which expired earlier this year. Due to changes in affordable housing requirements and completion of surveys, the site is now being taken forward for development.

Main Points

The Design Commission welcomes the proposal to create high quality, Passivhaus dwellings on the site, and the developer's ambition for design quality and sustainable living should be commended. The presentation made at the review clearly set out improvements that have been made to the proposal since the previous review, and the discussion highlighted further areas for consideration and improvement. The developer deserves credit for their commitment to early and sustained engagement on this project, with DCFW and the LPA.

The following points summarise key issues from the review and should be considered to inform further work on the scheme prior to a planning application being submitted:

Contextual approach and design narrative

It is positive that the team has studied the typologies and vernacular of the village, and that this has informed the development of a simplified form and materials palette for the houses.

Given the conservation area context, it is especially important that the impact of the proposal on its surroundings is fully considered and justified. Key views to the scheme should be identified and agreed with the local planning authority. Accurate, verified photomontage views would demonstrate visibility of the proposal and how it relates to the rest of the village.

A clear, illustrated design narrative should be set out in the Design and Access Statement (DAS) to explain and justify each step in the response to context, sustainability and planning policy. The DAS should provide sound, objective reasons for avoiding an inappropriate pastiche approach to building in the conservation area. Passivhaus is a justified response to environmental issues and building in the National Park and should be a key part of this narrative. Good, accurate visuals will be essential. The current Sketchup views presented at the review are insufficient and do not help tell the story of the project in the most effective manner. More sophisticated visual material will be needed for the DAS and all parties may find it helpful to refer to <http://gov.wales/docs/desh/publications/171009design-and-access-statements-guidance-en.pdf>

Materials and detail design

It is positive that the number of materials and junctions has been significantly reduced since the previous review. This will make achieving Passivhaus standards more viable and is more cost-effective to build. The single material approach to cladding the building can be justified as a response to context and building sustainably. However, careful detail design is crucial to successfully achieving a high quality finish through this approach. The simple form, clad in one material will work best if the idea is not diluted.

Careful consideration will need to be given to the detail design of the eaves, ridge, rainwater drainage, window and door reveals and any flues or vents. There are examples of this approach in Switzerland, Austria and Germany and other parts of Europe which may provide useful precedent.

The internal layout, fenestration and detailing should be developed to maximise the amount of daylight into the centre of the houses and at the basement levels which risk being dark, uninviting and lowering the overall quality of the development. Further testing is required to demonstrate that all spaces will be comfortable, useable and genuinely sustainable.

Landscape and parking

Further consideration of the landscape design and parking provision could contribute to a more welcoming arrival environment and further improve the sustainability of the scheme.

The Commission encourages the team to challenge the parking standards and minimise the number of spaces provided to reinforce the sustainable, healthy living objectives promoted by the project. Providing fewer spaces per house with shared visitor parking could be explored.

Reducing the number of parking spaces and/or finding an arrangement which reduces the area needed for turning heads will allow for greater areas of soft landscaping and permeable, green surfaces. Planting and choice of hard landscape materials will be important for creating welcoming entrances to the houses. Reinforced grass may be appropriate in some areas.

Locating the garden store at the basement level may not be convenient for storing large items such as lawn mowers and bikes, and should be given further consideration.

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

Attendees

Agent/Client/Developer:	Richard Gambold, Green Gull Ltd (via video link/conference call)
Architect/Planning Consultant:	Not present
Local Planning Authority:	Andrew Richards, Pembrokeshire Coast NPA
Design Review Panel:	
Chair	Jon Vernon-Smith
Lead Panellist	Simon Richards Amanda Spence, Design Advisor, DCFW Carole-Anne Davies, CE, DCFW Jen Heal, Design Advisor, DCFW Wendy Maden, Design Research Assistant, DCFW
Observing:	Hefin Jones, Chris Sweet, Joanne Smith (PINS) James Evans (Welsh Government)