



Design Review Meeting Notes

Hillside School Site,
Blaenavon

14th November 2013



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	Thursday 17th October 2013
Issue date	14 th November 2013
Scheme location	Former Hillside School Site, Blaenavon
Scheme description	Residential
Scheme reference number	83B
Planning status	Planning Application submitted
Declaration of interests	None declared

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Consultations to Date

This scheme to demolish the former Hillside School in Blaenavon and replace it with residential development was previously reviewed by the Design Commission on 16th July 2013. At this full design review, it was recommended that scheme returned to the Commission when the designs had progressed. Comments from the first review are included in the Design Review Report dated 30th July 2013.

Now that a planning application has been submitted, the Local Authority has requested a second review.

The Proposals

The development is on the site of the former Hillside School, which closed in 2011. The main school building is well liked in the local community although the building itself is not remarkable and is not listed. It is intended to demolish the school building and construct a new residential development.

Notes of Meeting

The purpose of this meeting was to look at how the scheme has evolved since the previous review, and to consider any outstanding design issues the LA are concerned about.

Green/Open Space

This is a sensitive site, so the LA is asking for more detailed information about the landscape design up front. The green/open space is the main outstanding concern.

The design team has adjusted the orientation of some of the buildings to overlook open spaces and parking.

The client has appointed Landscape Architect, Anthony Jellard (Jellard McQuity) to deal with outstanding green/open space issues, and to create a welcoming entrance to the site from the west. The open spaces to the north and west are still being resolved.

DCFW questioned whether the open space adjoining the rear garden fences of existing properties created a security problem. The team explained that this is no different to the current situation, and that there are already trees and shrubs along the boundary.

It was suggested that the garden area to the rear of the block of apartments could be extended so that the fences join up with the existing garden fences. This would eliminate a dark, narrow space between fences which might otherwise encourage anti-social behaviour.

Access through the open space to the north of the site was discussed, and whether there should be a gate. All parties thought it was important that there was visual connection between the footpath and the open space.

The LA said that there should be something provided within the open space on the site which would encourage children to play. This does not necessarily have to be formal play equipment, but could be integrated with the landscape and could include public art.

The Housing Authority must be comfortable with the proximity of the play space to the special needs block, bearing in mind the noise and unpredictable activity that might take place in the play space. The special needs accommodation should not be distinguished from the other housing so that it is not stigmatised.

Boundary Treatments

The LA expressed concern that too many different materials were proposed for boundary treatments. Robin Williams advised that this had now been rationalised to use mainly brick walls with railings.

Materials and Surface Treatments

It is important that the houses fronting Upper Hill Street use high quality materials, as they contribute to the existing streetscape. The team are aiming to agree materials, including brick specification, before the Planning Committee to increase certainty on quality and to ease the process of ordering materials. They are proposing red brick rather than dark grey which was previously proposed.

The LA is requesting slate roofs and cast metal rainwater goods as this is a World Heritage Site adjacent to a conservation area. They consider the roofs particularly important due to their contribution to views into the site from higher ground. Ideally, they would like natural slate used throughout the site, but might consider a viability argument for the rest of the site. It was suggested that reuse of the slate (and perhaps brick) from the existing school building could be considered. DCFW did not think that there would be a problem mixing reclaimed slate and other natural slate across the site.

The LA was concerned about junction details of the proposed surface treatment materials. It was suggested that the design team supplies photos showing example details, perhaps from the manufacturers. The new Landscape Architect should also look at the surface treatments.

Elevation Designs

The LA has asked for details of the proposed porches. The canopies which were questioned at the previous review have now been removed.

There was a discussion about whether it was necessary to include windows or other detail in the gable-end walls of the terraces. There is disagreement between the LA and the design team about this which needs to be resolved. It was considered that the alternative door position on some of the houses fronting Upper Hill Street broke the rhythm of the street without reason, and the thin fenced strips of land alongside some of the houses fronting Upper Hill Street should be reconsidered.

Parking and Traffic

The LA was happy that enough parking spaces had been provided within the scheme.

Visibility to the parking areas at the rear of some of the houses has been improved since the previous review. This was welcomed. However, privacy of the rear gardens of these houses has been compromised. DCFW recognised that this was a difficult issue to resolve on this site, and that it was important that the Client was happy with the proposed arrangement. Otherwise, DCFW's view of the parking arrangements is unchanged from previous comments.

It was recommended that construction traffic and delivery arrangements were considered and explained in advance to local residents to alleviate any concerns. The team could speak to contractors to understand their views on preferred routes and phasing.

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

Attendees

Planning Consultant:	Robin Williams, Asbri Planning
Planning Authority:	Rebecca McAndrew Steve Thomas
Design Review Panel:	Jonathan Adams Amanda Spence, Design Advisor, DCFW