

Design Review Report

Hensol Castle, Vale of Glamorgan

DCFW Ref: N161

Meeting of 15th March 2018



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

15th March 2018

26th March 2018

Vale of Glamorgan

Leisure/hotel

N161

Application submitted

Declarations of Interest

None declared.

Consultations to Date

Formal pre-application discussions with the local authority have taken place.

The Proposals

The site relates to the Grade I Listed castle and courtyard range, which has been partially converted to a hotel use. The wider site encompasses approximately 63ha (155 acres) and includes sport pitches, apartment buildings and a golf club/hotel within a Grade II Listed historic parkland setting.

An extant consent for the development of a spa facility was partially implemented (basement and slab installed). However, due to significant market condition changes we understand that the proposal was considered no longer viable. The current proposal seeks to make use of the existing slab.

The development proposals for the Castle aim to create a high quality hotel consisting of the Castle itself together with a new restaurant on the site of the former outbuildings, now demolished, to the north of the main Castle buildings. In addition to this, the proposed development will also include a new free-standing building in the outer courtyard for use as an events venue.

The scheme has already been submitted for planning.

Main Points

The Commission recommends early, ideally pre-application consultation when projects are at their earliest stages and when most value can be added. This late review comes at the request of the Local Authority following submission of a planning application. The

following points summarise key issues from the review which should be considered to inform any further design work:

Heritage and Site Assessment

Given the importance and listed statuses of Hensol Castle and grounds, we would expect to see a thorough and informative analysis of the site and context used to inform the design process. This would identify the opportunities and constraints to which the project needs to respond. Making the most of the many exciting opportunities this site offers will add value to the project, whilst understanding the constraints will help to refine and prioritise design options, prompt creative solutions and minimise risks over the lifetime of the project. A design approach based on this analysis will also assist the clarity of any justifications needed regarding the listed structures and/or important setting.

The unfinished works from a previous project have created a number of constraints, but assessing these as part of the existing site context will help the design team find appropriate solutions.

Analysis of the listed building is especially important and will help define the response demanded of new buildings. A Heritage Impact Assessment and Landscape Visual Impact Assessment would help to guide design decisions and demonstrate an informed response to context.

Site analysis will provide greater direction as to potential siting, orientation and form of the building; arrival and entrance sequences; circulation strategy and environmental strategies. It will help to align the design with the business plan and the resort's ambitions for the project. The analysis should also start to build a narrative for the project which is continued through the architectural approach and landscape design.

Architectural and Landscape Design Approaches

There are a number of potential architectural approaches to the building and landscape design which would make the most of views, environmental conditions and castle setting whilst respecting and enhancing the listed buildings. These might include 'a delicate pavilion in a garden', 'a walled garden', 'a contemporary castle courtyard'... There are numerous possibilities which should be tested and appraised in relation to the brief, business plan and the findings of proper site and context analysis.

The existing proposal lacks a clear concept or narrative. There are many ideas and approaches, some of which have come from the previous scheme and other works to the Castle, competing with one another and diluting the quality and clarity of any single, strong idea. Finding a clear and justified narrative will help inform decisions about materials, architectural language, articulation and detail design (heavy or light, solid or transparent, grounded or touching the earth lightly, etc. as discussed at the meeting). All of these are important for the quality of the offer to the customer and experience of end users.

The proposal presented at the review created a 'left over' space with escape stairs between the existing courtyard walls and the new restaurant which could become unpleasant and is one of the first spaces which will be seen/experienced on arrival.

The impact of the proposed new elements on existing hotel/venue functions, including views, noise and circulation, needs careful consideration if quality of experience is to be maintained and enhanced across the resort.

Simplify for Value and Quality

Simplifying the form, details, services and circulation routes could have a number of benefits, including:

- More effective use of capital budget
- Reducing running and maintenance costs
- Improved sustainability and energy performance (contributing to reduced revenue costs)
- A more elegant building and landscape

Achieving simplicity requires more investment in design time and skills in the short-term, but is outweighed by rewards in the medium and long-term. The current proposal is complicated by the previously granted scheme and the works which were started but not finished in combination with a new and different brief. A clear architectural concept, derived from analysis of the site and brief will give the project direction and help the design team to simplify the proposal.

Detail and Materials

The detail design and quality of materials will be crucial to achieving quality. The detail and articulation of junctions and fixings, including the eaves, corners, rainwater goods, doors, windows and cladding will be important. The choice of materials and articulation should be informed by analysis of the existing buildings and landscape, but need not copy historic features or more recent interventions. The eaves detail presented at review is overly dominant and lacks the finesse that the listed setting demands. Whilst elements of the eaves design may have been used elsewhere in the Castle for a new corridor, they may not be appropriate for this location. Analysis of the existing roof forms at the castle, where there are many examples of parapet gutters rather than extended eaves, could result in a potentially more elegant solution.

Glazed elements and any shading should be carefully designed and detailed to take advantage of views and daylight whilst achieving appropriate thermal performance of the building. The detailing and specification of glazing systems should also be reviewed. The proposed abutment of the mezzanine floor (resulting in a clumsy spandrel panel) and the use of a generic curtain walling system, should be revisited to ensure that a solution appropriate for the listed setting is delivered.

The choice of materials should be consistent with the architectural concept and language, and offers the opportunity to contribute a tactile nature and intimate scale. The combination of carefully chosen, good quality materials, natural light and landscape can create moments of delight which add to guests' experience.

The interior design will also be crucial to achieving a quality venue. A good interior design with particular focus on fine dining and based on knowledge of commercial kitchen planning will be critical to the project's success.

Environmental Design for Comfort and Sustainability

It is best practice to integrate environmental design from an early stage in the design process. The enjoyable and comfortable experience of guests is essential to the success of this project. A good, integrated environmental design strategy and informative modelling and testing would contribute to a sustainable, cost-efficient building which provides excellent comfort conditions for guests.

Avoiding the need for air-conditioning would reduce energy demands and running costs, whilst minimising the quantity of plant to be accommodated. Any services should be carefully integrated with the architecture to avoid 'visual clutter which could detract from the quality of the listed building setting.

An effective environmental design strategy will have an impact on the siting, orientation, form, fenestration and articulation of the roof and openings of the building as well as its relationship to its landscape setting.

Delivering Quality

The developer/client must be confident that their appointed design team will be capable of delivering an integrated building and landscape of the highest quality, as demanded by the context and setting for this project.

Learning from Precedent

Exemplar schemes provide a useful benchmark for quality and demonstrate what could be achieved at Hensol Castle with the right investment and skills. The projects listed here show that quality can be achieved via a variety of architectural approaches. The aspirational examples are all place-specific and should not be copied directly.

Chiswick House Café, by Caruso St John

<https://www.carusostjohn.com/projects/chiswick-house-cafe/>

Merrion Cricket Pavilion, by TAKA Architects

<http://taka.ie/merrion-cricket-pavilion/>

Martyr's Pavilion, by John Pawson

<http://www.johnpawson.com/works/martyrs-pavilion>

Dine in Southall, by Architecture00

<https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/buildings/heritage-foods-architecture-00-completes-dine-in-southall/10029211.article>

Painshill Park, by FCB Studios

<https://fcbstudios.com/work/view/painshill-park->

Further review

The Commission would welcome the opportunity to review the scheme again once designs have progressed.

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

Attendees

Agent/Client/Developer:	Stephen Leeke, MD, Vale Resort
Architect/Planning Consultant:	Terry Jones, Design Director, Vale Resort
Local Authority:	Peter Thomas & Stephen Butler, Vale of Glamorgan Council
Design Review Panel:	
Chair	Jamie Brewster
Lead Panellist	Jamie Yeoman Alister Kratt Ben Sibert Matt Thomas Simon Power Jen Heal, Design Advisor, DCFW Amanda Spence, Design Advisor, DCFW
Observing:	James Stroud, Loyn & Co