



DESIGN
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Design Review Report

Box Bush Farm, Capel-y-Ffin

DCFW Ref: N162

Meeting of 14th June 2018



Review Status

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

PUBLIC

14th June 2018
27th June 2018
Capel-y-Ffin, Brecon Beacons
Residential
N162
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 and meeting Agenda items. Any such declarations are recorded here and in DCFW's central records.

None declared.

Consultations to Date

The scheme was reviewed by the Design Commission on 12th April 2018. This report should be read alongside the report from the previous review.

The Proposals

The site is a 38.5 acre derelict hill farm in the Brecon Beacons National Park, north of Llanthony Priory. The farm comprises a modest cluster of buildings in an elevated position with open pasture below and rising woodland above. The stone farmhouse has been unoccupied for five years, the adjoining barn roof has collapsed, and the buildings are rapidly deteriorating. The site has a strong sense of place, being in a very peaceful location with dramatic views of the beacons and passed by a former drover road that runs past the house from the monastery and up the hill.

The existing buildings will be refurbished, linked and extended to create a residential dwelling and live-work studio for the owner. Modern additions will appear as such with large glazed windows, flat green roofs and use of new and old corrugated metal to reference the agricultural materials on the site. A separate modern barn is intended at a much higher elevation on the land to power the scheme via solar and hydro-electric. There is an aspiration for the building to function off-grid. The landscape potential has been considered and the site includes a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) which the owner is looking to restore with the help of Natural Resources Wales.

Main Points

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

Simplify, refine and justify

The changes which have been made since the previous review have improved the scheme, and the overall composition of forms and spaces is more logical and legible. The scheme could be improved more through further refinement and simplification.

Good detail design will be crucial to achieving quality. Enough design time should be allowed at the right time in the project to refine and simplify the details.

Overall, the design will need to be very well justified, especially in the context of obtaining planning consent in the National Park. The advice of a professional planning consultant may be useful, but the design story and justification should come from the design team and client.

Landscape stewardship and interface

The landscape setting is spectacular and extremely valuable to the project. It is positive that the owners are developing strategies for improving the landscape and future stewardship of this valuable resource. The ambition and effort of the owners and design team to save and improve the site and make it alive again is commendable.

The relationships between humans and nature are important and interesting in this context, and the architecture and landscape design creates an interface between the two. Pathways, boundaries and buildings, and their siting, orientation and articulation can help make the landscape and human activity within it legible. This should be kept in mind when designing the courtyard, access routes and the energy/water strategy.

Perhaps outside the scope of this project, it would be interesting to explore the possibility of creating small architectural or sculptural interventions or installations in the wider landscape. These could provide an opportunity for studying, interpreting, framing and being immersed in the different landscape views and situations across the site.

Curating experiences

Designing this home and work place is, in a sense, curating experiences for the owners. It will be useful to imagine lifestyle scenarios to shape the design around. These could take the form of story boards (for different users, times or events) which the owner is familiar with. The design response to the scenarios will need to include:

- Qualities of space (light, sound, temperature, scale...)
- The relationships of different spaces
- A privacy hierarchy
- Transitions between spaces
- Views (framed, panoramic, glimpsed, revealed...)

The formality of the external entrance approach could be given further thought. The idea of framing the natural landscape is interesting, but the nature of the physical intervention needed to achieve this needs further exploration. The very formal 'classical' ordered lines and circles are at odds with the more informal, adapted character of the rest of the scheme.

Telling a story

Box Bush Farm already has an interesting story to tell, and this project is an exciting next chapter. There may be value in letting the next part of the story unfold naturally and slowly – perhaps in harmony with the process of accretion by necessity that has characterised building in the national park for so many years. The story does not need to be finished right now - the design could be left unfinished to a certain extent, but with enough done to make it habitable, allowing the owners to develop thoughts from their experience of living there through the seasons, in a genuinely iterative manner.

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

Attendees

Agent/Client/Developer:	Harry Marshall
Architect/Planning Consultant:	Sam Organ & Stephen Bates, CO2 Architects
Local Authority:	
Design Review Panel:	
Chair	Ewan Jones
Lead Panellist	Jonathan Adams
	Richard Woods
	Steven Smith
	Amanda Spence, Design Advisor, DCFW
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