

Design Review Report

Theatre Clwyd, Mold, Flintshire

DCFW Ref: N209

Meeting of 6th August 2019



Review Status

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

Public

6th August 2019
14th August 2019
Mold, Flintshire
Theatre
N209
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 is the first review by DCFW of the proposals for this site. Select and targeted stakeholder engagement has taken place. The project website, consultation materials and press news are now publicly available online. Full public consultation is due to begin on 1 September 2019. A planning application is planned for submission later in the Autumn 2019.

The Proposals

Theatr Clwyd occupies an elevated site, on the outskirts of Mold, Flintshire, on the edge of a civic campus shared with the Shire Hall Council offices and courts complex. The context is dominated by landscape and open countryside with significant views from the front of the building. The main entrance is to the south; there is public road access and a car park at front and delivery and staff road access at back of site.

The proposals aim to fully refurbish and transform Theatre Clwyd, improving access for the whole of the community, partners and stakeholders. It is intended that performance spaces, public areas and visitor experiences are enhanced as a result, along with new and revitalised events, learning and meeting spaces and refurbished back of house, making and rehearsal facilities. New spaces for community activities are proposed, along with new rehearsal rooms and new/upgraded backstage facilities including technical improvements to auditoriums.

Whilst proposals in large part concern the physical fabric, space and technical refurbishment, a new foyer extension and improved entrance with new workshop space at

the back, are essential elements of the proposal. The proposed new glazed, timber structure foyer extension is intended to be welcoming, to improve circulation and connections between levels and take advantage of views over the landscape.

Improved energy efficiency, naturally ventilated and daylit spaces, improvements to the external envelope and, where possible and appropriate, new renewable energy sources are being considered in the design approach. A bespoke BREEAM 2014 Very good rating is sought.

Theatr Clwyd has an international reputation of longstanding. It is one of Wales' major cultural assets and was recently Listed by Cadw as Grade II. The listing includes specific reference to its function as a theatre, fully and particularly expressed in its built form.

Main Points

The Design Commission welcomes the opportunity to review proposals at this useful stage in the project development, ahead of public consultation and whilst DCFW has also been engaged by the local authority in considerations for the wider civic campus site. The client deserves considerable credit for recognising the need for, and appointing, an outstanding specialist design team.

The client vision is fully supported through the design approach of a sound, multi-disciplinary, specialist design and construction team and is clearly understood and shared by all partners and stakeholders. The design approach and rationale are sound and interventions practical, addressing circulation challenges and proposing new elements which better present the building and enhance a greater sense of welcome and inclusion.

Overall this is an ambitious, potentially high quality and long overdue scheme for revitalising a cultural entity of significant reputation and value to Wales. The Commission is supportive of the project as a whole and we simply urge detailed consideration of the following critical design issues:

Influence of the Grade II Listing

The recent Grade II listing of Theatre Clwyd, which emphasises its function as a theatre, explicit in its original design and built form is an interesting factor. It will need to be fully addressed in the Heritage Impact Assessment and should inform the Design and Access Statement accompanying the planning submission. Potentially, it has a further role in

positively influencing the desire for a 'special place' expressed by Flintshire Council in their broader ambition for the whole civic campus site.

Proposed new foyer and associated spaces

The new build work on the entrance and foyer spaces clarifies access and layout internally but remains ambiguous in its relationship to the surrounding landscape and visitor routes. The wider and important landscape and park setting has been assigned a key value by all partners including FCC. Whilst the theatre project will proceed ahead of plans for the broader site, we urge the team to examine and establish at this stage, and in detail, the full range of possibilities for the landscape that the theatre might influence or benefit from. It is necessary that this work is done now to establish the parameters that will govern current and future possibilities and ensure that these are anticipated and enabled by the once in a generation theatre renewal works.

Approach and arrival experiences for visitors along with the key entrances to the building need full resolution. Currently the landscape setting, lifespan of the car park structure, means of arrival and entry into the building and its key welcoming spaces are not fully resolved. They are critically influenced/affected by decisions for the wider site. The recent masterplanning workshop led by the Design Commission for Wales in partnership with the local authority highlighted similar factors and the need for immediate and long-term strategies to be identified and tested. The design team should be facilitated to carry out this testing which would be of immediate and lasting benefit to the proposals. It may also present an opportunity to work with the local authority, to reassess the setting as one that now houses two listed buildings and to address new and appropriate planning and policy development as a result. The skills of a high-quality landscape architect will be vital to this process.

Environmental strategy and selection of materials

The Commission appreciates the challenges of working with buildings of this age and with such an extent of refurbishment. However, we strongly encourage the team to strive for higher environmental efficiencies to the benefit of sustained high performance and longevity of the refurbished building. This should be achieved without further compromise to the acoustic isolation of the performance spaces. Beyond the technical theatre requirements, the extent of glazing throughout the new and revealed spaces must be fully considered in the context of the environmental performance strategy for the whole. Productive, pleasant and populated green space should also be fully considered in a holistic environmental strategy, maximising the value of the landscape setting.

The testing of choices for materials is evident and needs to be worked through in order to provide the necessary environmental/thermal performance, aligned with the vision for the building's appearance in its context.

Protecting design intent and material quality and procurement

The client and design team are well integrated, and a contractor is in place. The means of protecting design integrity and quality through procurement and construction will now be critical to success.

The procurement approach in terms of attitude to risk, cost and quality control appears sound and the client is engaged at a necessarily detailed level. Consideration of tender stages and the importance of sufficient and robust detail for each individual package, so as to protect design integrity and material quality is necessary. The M&E requirements in particular, form a large part of the technical and functional refurbishment of the existing built fabric. As much detail as possible should be gathered, understood and specified prior to tender/competitive pricing requirements in order to avoid the risk of having to make cost cuts at a late stage in the design process. This will also help ensure that the project meets the client expectations and ensures full quality control throughout.

Phasing, new and temporary spaces

The phasing strategy during construction is logical however it will have an impact on visitor experience. This along with a more inclusive, diversified business model encompassing growth in events and community uses, education and greater maker capacity will require more detailed consideration of the spaces beyond the key studio and auditorium spaces, including outdoor spaces. Plans to ensure good quality visitor/user experience during phased construction must form part of this in a clear strategy for the whole construction area alongside technical theatre/studio requirements.

This project is an important catalyst for the site, for Mold and potentially the wider region. It affords a unique opportunity to influence its surroundings now and in the medium to long term. Detailed work with the design team, a good landscape architect and the local authority is necessary in the very near future if that broader scale opportunity is to be realised, and certainly prior to a planning submission.

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

Attendees

Client/Agent/Developer:	Tamara Harvey, Artistic Director, Theatre Clwyd Liam Evans-Ford, Executive Director, Theatre Clwyd
Design Team:	Jessica Daly, Architect, Haworth Tompkins Will Mesher, Architect, Haworth Tompkins Peng Jiang, Skelly & Couch Mel Frimston, Betts Associates
Local Planning Authority:	Mandy Lewis, FCC James Beattie, FCC Chris Rees Jones, FCC
Statutory consultees:	Judith Alfrey, Cadw
Design Review Panel:	
Chair	Ewan Jones, Grimshaw, Commissioner DCFW.
Lead Panellist	Jonathan Adams, JA & Ptnrs., DCFW.
Panel	Simon Richards, Land Studio, DCFW Carole-Anne Davies, Chief Executive, DCFW.