



Design Review Report

Splott Community Hub,
Cardiff

Meeting of 22nd May 2014



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

CONFIDENTIAL

Meeting date	22 nd May 2014
Issue date	11 th June 2014
Scheme location	Splott, Cardiff
Scheme description	Community/leisure centre
Scheme reference number	47
Planning status	Pre-application

Declarations of Interest

None declared.

Consultations to Date

Cardiff Council has consulted local community about what facilities they would like be included in the scheme. Statutory consultation with the community is currently in progress.

The Proposals

This proposal is to demolish the existing Splott swimming pool, the Bowls Club building and one bowling green in Splott Park, close the existing Star Centre community facility, and replace them with a new building in the park. This will provide a 25m swimming pool, library, community centre function rooms, sports hall and crèche. The intention is to save costs by combining facilities in one location. Car parking will also be provided on site. The chosen location within the park is roughly opposite Baden-Powell Primary School and in front of an existing nursery.

Summary

- The Design Commission for Wales welcomes the opportunity to review this important community project, although we would have preferred to see it earlier in its development when there would have been greater scope to add value to the design process.
- The building elevations show some elegance (although more detail is now needed), but the materials should now be selected for their robustness, especially as there is a history of vandalism in the area.
- The BREEAM Excellent aspiration is good, but the ways in which it will be achieved must be tested and demonstrated.

- The proposed scheme has been compromised by a complex series of issues, including numerous changes to the brief and restrictive site constraints. The defined red-line boundary has created a number of constraints, particularly in relation to access to the hall.
- The Commission would have welcomed better evidence of analysis and justification for selection of this site and setting of the boundary constraints. However, now that it has been selected, the team must ensure the best possible outcome through good design. A landscape designer should be engaged as soon as possible to ensure the building properly relates to the park setting.
- The reception space should be reconsidered. The current arrangement provides poor surveillance of the entrance, awkward arrival and gathering spaces and poor security control for the library and other facilities within the building. The entrance space should be able to comfortably accommodate the many uses of the building, whilst helping users orientate themselves. The effectiveness of the draught lobbies should also be given further consideration.
- Whilst the plan is very efficient, that efficiency has led to deep central space, congested internal space planning, and has led to the inclusion of long internal corridors and poor way-finding.
- The proposed security fence does not seem appropriate for a public building in a parkland setting, and would lend the building a defensive and unwelcoming appearance. The team should consider reducing or removing it and other security measures to replace it.
- The relationship of the building to the Bowls Club is unsatisfactory. There is no space within the building which overlooks the bowling green, nor the southern aspect of the park, and the security arrangements will create a tortuous access route for bowls club users.
- The proposed roof forms are currently unrefined and would overpower the potentially elegant facades when viewed from a distance.
- The team should consider bringing the building forward to the pavement line, giving it a better civic presence, better relationship to the school, and allowing more flexibility in use of the space around the building

Main Points in Detail

Site Location

The location for the building within Splott Park has been selected so as to cause little disruption to the existing playing fields. The Design Commission for Wales would have preferred to have seen evidence of site analysis and its impact on selection of the site, as well as better justification for the site boundaries.

The selected location within the park has merit in that it offers opportunities to create relationships with the Baden-Powell Primary School opposite, as well as with the retained

bowling green and playing fields on either side, but the potential of these relationships has not been fully explored or exploited.

The site selection has determined decisions about the form of the building and its relationship to the spaces around it. The impact of site constraints in conjunction with a changing brief has compromised the design. Better site analysis might have identified a better layout for the building which would have alleviated some of the tight spatial arrangements present in the current proposal.

Arrival, Circulation and Use

In designing a multi-functional public building such as this, way-finding and circulation are particularly important. The long corridors in the proposed scheme, and the relationships between the different facilities and the reception space are causing problems. The proposal will not have sufficient legibility.

In particular, the sports and community hall, which could hold around 200 people, is not well-located at the back of the building. The narrow corridor approach does not allow sufficient space for waiting and break-out, and it is not visible from the entrance.

The layout and position of the entrance space and reception is poor. There is insufficient visibility from the reception desk to the entrance and street. The functional layout, especially in relation to the library, is compromised. It is not clear how the librarian would have control over the facility. The cafe's kitchen facilities block views in and out from the street.

The effectiveness of the draught lobby should be given further consideration. With many people moving through the entrance, there is potential for the cafe and library to become uncomfortably cold and windy.

The design of the entrance, circulation and cafe/waiting spaces should take into account how people might use the building. Families might use more than one facility at a time, and there should be sufficient and comfortable space for parents to wait while their children partake in activities.

In an effort to squeeze the required facilities into the given space, the design has lost any sense of delight. The current plan is very diagrammatic. This should be an attractive hub in the community, which people are drawn to and enjoy spending time in. Carefully planned relationships of spaces, scale, daylighting, views, noise and thermal comfort will all play a part in creating a good user experience. The deep plan of this square building also makes it difficult to get good daylighting to the central spaces which will negatively impact on conditions and energy consumption in use.

Security Fence

In order to meet Secured By Design standards, the team has been advised to provide a high security fence around three sides of the building. This fence destroys the notion of this building being part of the park. It blocks any potential relationship between the spaces in the building and the surrounding playing fields. The team should explore other security measures, and reassess the needs for such a defensive fence.

The fence also creates awkward dead spaces around the sides and back of the building, especially between the sports hall and the existing nursery. The arrangement of internal and external spaces should be efficient and effective.

The impact of the fence is not immediately obvious, as it is not shown on all the drawings. It is important that the designers 'test' the impact of the fence on the elevations through drawing and modelling. Any fence or other boundary treatment should be an integrated part of the building and landscape design.

Landscape and Public Realm

A landscape architect should be engaged immediately. An integrated approach to building and landscape design is important. For a community building in this park setting, good design of the public realm is crucial. The landscape architect should be given a clear brief from the client and architect.

Parking, external lighting, boundary treatments, security features, planting, streetscape, access, highways design and hard landscaping materials must all be integrated with the building design. The potential value of the project will be lost if design of the public realm is neglected.

The parking areas and the spaces at the sides and back of the building appear poorly considered. Landscape design has the potential to improve relationships between the building and the park.

The team should consider bringing the building forward to the pavement line. This would improve its relationship with the street and the school opposite. It would also generate more flexibility in the building shape and the design of the external spaces around it. It is recognised that some trees would need to be lost for this to be best arranged, but the relationship between school and new facility would benefit as would the spaces around the nursery.

Materials, Elevations and Environmental Design

The elevations are well considered, although more detail is now required, as well as an assessment of the impact of the boundary treatment. The detailing of the facades and their supporting structure will be important.

The form of the roof has been derived from the height required for badminton in the sports hall, and the aversion to flat roofs for security reasons. This has resulted in a 'hump' shape in the centre of the roof, which would be prominent when the building is viewed across the park. We would encourage the design team to seek a more elegant solution which can be better substantiated. Flat roofs might be feasible if other measures are incorporated to prevent unwanted access, such as large overhangs.

Due to the history of vandalism in the area, materials should be selected for their robustness. Elements should be easily replaceable if they are damaged. A better justification for the selection of materials is required, including some consideration of their relationship to the surroundings.

The environmental performance of the facades (solar shading and reduction of glare in the pool) needs to be properly tested, as they could be detrimental to the functioning of the building if not properly addressed.

The aspiration to achieve BREEAM Excellent is encouraging. Better explanation of how this will be achieved, and how the building will be serviced is needed. An integrated approach from M&E design and architecture is required.

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

Attendees

Agent/Client/Developer:	Teresa Boyle, Gavin Traylor, Cardiff Council
Architectural/Urban Designer:	Nick Harrison, Owen French, Stride Treglown
Local Authority:	Lawrence Dowdall, Cardiff Council
Design Review Panel:	
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