



DESIGN  
COMMISSION  
FOR WALES  
COMISIWN  
DYLUNIO  
CYMRU

# Design Review Report

Mariner Street, Swansea

**DCFW Ref: 59**

Meeting of 13<sup>th</sup> September 2018

**Review Status**

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

**PUBLIC**

13<sup>th</sup> September  
26<sup>th</sup> September  
Swansea  
Student accommodation  
59  
S73 application submitted

## Declarations of Interest

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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.

## Consultations to Date

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This was the fourth opportunity that DCFW had to review proposals for this site, with reviews held in January 2016, June 2015 and December 2014. The proposals brought to this review represent a diversion from the previously reviewed proposals as a new developer and design team has taken on the site.

A section 73 (minor material amendment) application has now been submitted to amend the original consent.

Formal pre-application consultation on these proposals was undertaken in summer 2018 and statutory pre-application consultation was undertaken in August 2018.

## The Proposals

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The proposal is for a high quality development of 792 student bedrooms along with 4 ground floor commercial uses. The location is a prominent site immediately to the west of Swansea Station, across High Street. The site is currently used for surface level car parking and is extremely well connected for both city centre amenities and local educational institutions.

## Main Points

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This scheme represents a denser proposal which is a diversion from the previous schemes brought to design review. DCFW understands that the increased density has been achieved through efficiencies in the layout, using the Fusion Students model which has been tried and tested elsewhere.

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

**Massing**

The DCFW consider that the distinctiveness and clarity of the massing of the previously submitted scheme has been diluted in this proposal. Varying the massing more

noticeably could help the scheme to appear less bulky and more elegant. The plinth layer could be better defined to make the different land uses on the site more legible to users and help the building to sit within the public realm more comfortably.

### **Elevations**

DCFW understands that testing of elevational materials is on-going and this is encouraged in order to find the most appropriate solution for this prominent site. Good quality renderings will be required so that informed decisions can be made. DCFW notes that this is a large scale building that will have a significant long term effect on Swansea and therefore adequate time must be taken to explore elevational treatments.

Further exploration and testing of the fenestration pattern should be undertaken to mitigate the repetitive nature of student accommodation. The fenestration could be better articulated to add interest and quality to what is currently a very simple scheme.

Exploring combinations of materials for the different masses and the plinth level may help to create a more elegant building. The panel noted concerns around the deliverability of traditional masonry at 16 stories.

In addition to the consideration of the elevations in detail, the design team should consider long views of the elevational treatments and fenestration patterns, given the prominence of a building of this height on the skyline of Swansea.

### **Roofline**

The revised proposal amends the raked profile at the upper floors of the tower to a more acute angle. The panel felt that this did not necessarily enhance the profile of the tower, particularly with the elevational treatment of rectangular openings that were presented for review. There is a concern that views from the north would reveal that the raked profile concealed plant equipment behind an extended parapet, undermining the solidity of the form. The design team advised that this would not be the case because the raked profile will be fully enclosed to conceal plant and maintain the apparent solidity of the form, although the sloping 'roof' surface may include louvred openings for ventilation. Nevertheless, given the dominance of this form on the skyline, further testing should be undertaken to ensure it is the best design solution and is not compromised by the functional requirements of the plant equipment.

### **Public realm**

Further consideration could be given to the threshold space outside the entrance to the student accommodation to create a sense of purpose within the public realm.

Given the nature of the site, there is no clear front back distinction meaning that the servicing area to the north of the site must be well designed and of high design quality to ensure it adds to the public realm. Its relationship to the buildings and uses on north side of the street, and pedestrian movement, should be an important design consideration.

The input of a landscape architect would add value to the public realm proposals. This expert input would ensure that the soft landscape is effective, appropriate in size and scale, usable and can be successfully managed within realistic maintenance schedules. Given the city centre location of this site, the materiality of the public realm should complement the surrounding public realm designed and delivered by the Local Authority.

## **Courtyard**

The external courtyard at first floor level is the only private outdoor space for residents of the accommodation. As such it should be designed to be a pleasant meeting point with activities, viable planting considering the deck structure, and with appropriate furniture. The current proposals feel civic in character, where they could be more playful to contribute positively to the quality of life for students. The treatment of the walls around the space should be well considered as they will impact how it feels to be in the space and are likely to contain only small bedroom windows.

## **Next steps**

The Commission would welcome further opportunity to review the scheme with the aim of improving design quality through constructive dialogue.

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

## **Attendees**

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Agent/Client/Developer:	Sam Ball, Fusion Students
Architect/Planning Consultant:	Mike Lampard & Nathan Ind, Corstorphine and Wright Architects Jack Appleton, Alder King
Local Authority:	Steve Smith & David Owen, CC Swansea
Design Review Panel:	
Chair	Andrew Linfoot
Lead Panellist	Chris Jefford Mark Lawton Matt Thomas Angela Williams Wendy Maden, Design Advisor, DCFW
Observers	Gayna Jones, Chair, DCFW