

Design Review Report

Former BBC Site, Llandaff, Cardiff

DCFW Ref: 68

Meeting of 14th April 2016



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	PUBLIC
Meeting date	14 th April 2016
Issue date	27 th April 2016
Scheme location	Former BBC Site, Llandaff, Cardiff
Scheme description	Residential Development
Scheme reference number	68
Planning status	Outline planning permission secured

Declarations of Interest

None.

Consultations to Date

This is the third opportunity that the Design Commission for Wales has had to review proposals for this site. The second review focused on land to the north of Llantrisant Road and this review focused on land to the south of Llantrisant Road.

The Proposals

The proposal is for residential development following the demolition of all buildings on the existing site, with the exception of the listed lodge house. The site will accommodate 350-375 residential units in total in a mix of apartments, terraced and detached houses.

An outline planning application has been approved and the team are working towards a reserved matters application.

Main Points

This was the third opportunity that the Design Commission had to review this significant residential development and we remain supportive of the ambition of the development. The focus of this review was on the southern part of the site, although some aspects of the north side were revisited where there had been changes.

North of Llantrisant Road

Changes had been made to the square to help enclose the space and create a stronger form by addressing the corners more positively. The addition to the 'keystone building' in the south east corner and the continuation of town houses to the south west corner are both positive improvements. The north west corner has also been improved with the inclusion of a small apartment block in place of the rear boundary to a property but

some further work may be required to ensure that the parking, access and open space arrangements are suitable for this unit.

A lack of overlooking to provide natural surveillance and a positive frontage to the streets and footpaths remains a problem in some areas. Ensuring that the detached units have windows to habitable rooms on their gable ends will help to address some of these issues. Some amendments may be required to the layout to more positively address the footpath and open space to the north of the site. This has the potential to be a useful pedestrian and cycle link and it must be designed to be safe and secure. It also has the advantage of maximising the outlook towards the River Taff and distant hills for the homes along this edge.

Courtyard block

The scale of the blocks that form the courtyard on the south side of Llantrisant Road require further testing to demonstrate that their scale (i.e. their overall height and massing as well as their elevational treatment) is suitable for this location. This includes a comparison to what is currently on the site, the relationship to the detached houses and town houses on the north side of the road, as well as how the architecture and fenestration impacts on the perceived scale of the blocks.

Exploring options that break up the massing of the blocks, such as stepping the top floor back, could help to reduce the perceived scale. In addition, the large openings indicated on the current north (Llantrisant Road) elevation drawings could exaggerate the scale of the blocks and may not reflect their domestic nature. The fenestration arrangement is related to the internal arrangement of the units and the location of the dining and bedroom spaces should be considered in this context.

The scale of the courtyard should also be considered in relation to adjacent properties. The 21m separation currently shown between the apartments and semi-detached properties to the south is arranged across a significant change in level and the resulting section does not appear adequate to address overlooking and amenity issues.

Retained Pine trees

It is positive that the team proposes to retain the established 'majestic' Black Pine trees as they have been identified as an important aspect of the character and green infrastructure of the site, however, they could be more positively integrated into the layout as a focal point which links the different forms of development on the south side. Making adjustments to the layout of the detached houses, courtyard apartments and townhouses to better address and reflect the importance of the trees will reinforce the idea of pocket parks and provide an attractive setting for the properties.

A detailed study of the green corridor through this part of the site, what the spaces feel like and the sense of arrival along the access road, could help determine a preferred orientation and layout for the blocks which would help to improve these spaces.

It is understood that the green spaces throughout the site will be accessible for play but this will be informal rather than through designated equipped play areas. It is important therefore that these spaces remain accessible and surveillance is important to ensure that the spaces are safe.

Mix of unit types

The layout in the southern part of the site is divided into three very distinct sections, each accommodating a different housing type; apartments within the courtyard, detached houses to the west and a street of semi detached houses to the south east. This separation is currently creating an awkward and unconvincing layout as the different areas don't link well together. A more refined blend of property types across the site could help to improve the flow of streets and spaces and help to give each of the properties a positive setting.

The street of semi-detached properties currently looks too tight and could result in characterless public realm with frontages dominated by parking. Reviewing the mix of unit types could help to alleviate some of the issues in this area.

Street design and adoption

It is proposed that all of the streets will be adopted. It is important that adoption requirements do not compromise the quality of the streets through requirements for standard materials, lighting and signage. It is understood that work is being undertaken collaboratively with the local authority highways department to achieve an agreed approach that deviates from DB32 type highways requirements. This collaboration is important to the success of this and other residential developments across Cardiff.

Foot/cycle path connection

The proposed connection to the existing path to the south west of the site is currently inadequate as it passes between two tall rear property boundaries and requires a right angled turn which does not reflect the natural desire line and does not allow sight lines. Opportunities for straightening this link where it meets to the site with a more legible and welcoming connection to the cul-de-sac should be explored.

Listed lodge

Adequate analysis of the setting of the listed lodge house and how it will be addressed is currently lacking. The proposals do not, at present, give sufficient regard to preserving or enhancing the setting of the listed lodge house. The scale and orientation of the nearest proposed detached house would be harmful to the setting. Further work should be undertaken to explore the relationship between the house, surrounding properties and the proposed landscape works.

Materials

Imported slate remains the proposed plinth material despite the reservations expressed at the previous review regarding the appropriateness of this material in this location. Further consideration is encouraged with particular regard to materials found on the site and in the local area including pennant stone and multi-coloured sandstone river cobbles. Re-use of existing materials on the site would be encouraged.

The amount of buff brick proposed is extensive and therefore the proposed brick must be of good quality with good workmanship demonstrated in construction. The 3D computer model that is being developed should be used to test whether the use of buff brick across the whole site is appropriate to the local character and not relentless. The scale and simplicity of the brickwork will require detailed investigation to ensure that skills and

resources are available to properly construct it and if so, that particular care and attention is taken with the method of construction and detailing.

Next Steps

Throughout a useful and very positive engagement process three reviews have now been undertaken with the Design Commission and it is understood that a reserved matters application is due to be submitted in early May. We are therefore of the view that further reviews are unnecessary.

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

Attendees

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Design Review Panel:	
Chair	Alan Francis
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