



DESIGN
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Design Review Report

BBC Llandaff Site

DCFW Ref: 68

Meeting of 18th February 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	18 th February 2016
Issue date	4 th March 2016
Scheme location	Former BBC Wales Site, LLandaff
Scheme description	Residential Development
Scheme reference number	N68
Planning status	Outline planning permission secured

Declarations of Interest

None.

Consultations to Date

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

The Design Commission for Wales continue to support the ambition to deliver a contemporary suburban development and welcome Taylor Wimpey's commitment to non-standard houses across the majority of the site. It is positive to see how the scheme is progressing and that a landscape architect has been appointed to inform the landscape approach. The following comments are made in the context of this supportive position and are intended to support the continual improvement of the proposal prior to the submission of reserved matters application(s).

It is important that this site is connected to the existing community as well as improving permeability in the area. It was confirmed that the routes through the site would be publically accessible and the Design Commission stressed the need to ensure that these routes are kept open by means of planning condition or s106 agreements.

The Square

The square has the potential to create a strong sense of place and identity within the development, however there are currently a number of weak points, particularly at the corners, that reduce the success of this space.

- The north west corner currently has a view onto the back of one of the detached properties and the rear garden fence which is not an adequate arrangement for that house or the square.
- The south east corner is occupied by the 'keystone' building which provides a strong frontage to the road to the south, but the parking to the rear of the building weakens the approach into the square and the form of the square itself. Consideration could be given to building over the parking area to help provide enclosure to this space.
- In the south west corner the transition from townhouses to detached properties begins before the square is completed which again weakens the corner. Continuing the line of townhouses right to the corner could help to give the square greater definition and completeness.

Overall, the layout of the square needs to be refined in order to be the successful space that is intended. There may be knock-on implications of some of the changes made and these will need to be fully worked through. Careful consideration also needs to be given to the interface with the detached houses to ensure that inappropriate overlooking of private spaces from the townhouses is avoided particularly from rear decks.

The north side of the square was not touched upon at the review, but it is noted that this backs onto the footpath and the open aspect to the River Taff. Therefore a double fronted design should be considered in this area as opposed to blank garden walls.

The hard and soft landscape proposals for the square require further consideration starting with who the space is for, what its function will be and whether its nature is an urban square or more sub-urban space. Defining the design approach will also help to guide the arrangement of parking within the space. Currently the visitor parking arrangement eats into the green space which significantly diminishes its quality. An on street approach would seem more appropriate in this location but needs to be informed by the design approach outline above.

The parking arrangement in the front of the houses should also be considered in relation to the landscape approach to the square. Currently the living spaces look out onto the on-plot parking spaces. A section through the house frontage will help to determine whether the buffer strip provided between the living room windows and parking is adequate to provide amenity to residents or whether an alternative approach should be considered.

Crescent

The proposed six storey seems to be an appropriate height for this location but will need to be fully proven with views into the site from viewpoints determined with the local authority.

The Design Commission for Wales supports the move away from render given the north-facing elevations and in the context of existing trees which could cause discolouration. The use of a slate base to the walls rather than a more local stone was questioned and the options should be weighed up in relation to local context, performance and aesthetic qualities. Similarly the use of a buff brick throughout the scheme will need to be justified in the context of the variety of materials found in the area.

The gaps between the three blocks that form the crescent appear to have narrowed since the outline plan in the previous review and creates some challenges including narrow, potentially dark spaces in between the blocks and a lack of clarity in whether the block read as one or as three. Widening these gaps could improve the plaza at the base of the crescent by allowing more sunlight into the space.

The proposed crescent sits very close to some of the existing trees identified for retention. The impact of the trees on the windows of apartments needs to be reviewed to determine whether this is appropriate.

The next stages of landscape design for the site should address the flow of the spaces around the crescent buildings and how the landscape approach can help bed the buildings into the space. The initial landscape proposals presented were for the crescent and the square only. We would like to see a landscape strategy for the whole site that helps to tie the development into its context.

Simplification

There are a lot of design ideas in close proximity within the scheme that could result in an overly complex design. In particular the variety in height, elevational relief and materials in the crescent and the square have the potential to erode the quality of the form. Removal of one or two ideas and a focus on the strongest ideas across the bespoke units could help to calm the overall approach. It's possible that there may be greater value and a dignity in repetition.

Transitions

The three different forms of development – detached house, square of townhouses and crescent of apartments – are supported in principle but fitting them together on the site creates challenges that have not yet been adequately resolved. The relationship between the square and detached houses has been discussed above but the relationship between the square and crescent also needs to be refined. A review of the keystone building and landscape proposals could help to resolve some of these issues and analysis tools such as figure ground plans and comparisons with other locations where there is a transition from a square into surrounding development could prove helpful.

The corners in the layout of detached houses should also be addressed with an approach that ensures that natural surveillance from habitable rooms is provided from the gable end of properties.

Next steps

The team intend to return to the Commission in the near future to present proposals for the land to the south of Llantrisant Road and provide an update on this scheme. We welcome the scheme returning and the opportunity for further dialogue and would be keen to see more detail on the landscape approach as well as how the above points have been addressed. The team is advised to contact the Commission early to secure a meeting date compatible with the programme.

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

Attendees

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Local Planning Authority:	Ross Cannon, Group Leader, Cardiff Council Tim Walter, Principle Planner, Cardiff Council
Design Review Panel:	
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