

Design Review Report

DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

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	31st January 2013
Issue date	12 February 2013
Scheme location	Harbour View, Abersoch
Scheme description	Residential
Scheme reference number	80A
Planning status	Pre-planning
Declaration of interests	None recorded

Consultations to date

The developers have held pre-planning discussions with the Local Planning Authority for the provision of apartments. The LPA expressed a preference for new houses, rather than apartments in Abersoch. A planning application will be submitted as soon as possible for the development of 15 houses .

Summary

The Panel were appreciative of the presentation at pre planning stage and fully understood that, although detailed designs were provided, the plans are not yet fully developed and the developer and designer are willing to make fundamental changes to improve the scheme . The Panel acknowledged that this is a significant, but challenging, site to develop and is supportive of the client providing an element of affordable housing.

The Panel had some concerns about the current proposals, namely:

- The scale and form; the Panel were concerned about the massing of the scheme, not least how the development would be viewed from locations outside the immediate site. Building at levels that follow the contours of the site may provide a more pleasing view from the village.
- The houses proposed were not reflective of family housing in relation to garden space, areas for children and the development of the central space which the Panel thought needed to be of higher quality to give more value to the site and promote a sense of community.

- The Panel would support a more contemporary architectural design. Victorian-style buildings, unless built to faithfully replicate the scale, form and character of existing buildings in the area, are unlikely to make a positive contribution to the town. A more contemporary approach, generated by a response to the location and topography of the site, with an innovative approach to sustainable design and the provision of renewable energy, may sit more comfortable within the context of the local area
- The inclusion of a landscape consultant within the design team would be beneficial to assist in generating a site strategy and improve the landscape treatment, which is a key element of the site. The current plan does nothing to improve the site aspect towards the river.
- DCFW would welcome the opportunity to review the scheme again as this is a prominent, important site in an area of outstanding natural beauty and any development will have a significant impact on the village and surrounding area.

Discussion and Panel response in full

The development is on the site of the Harbour View Hotel which has been closed for many years and is in a state of poor repair. There are statutory constraints to developing the site as it is in a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The site is situated off Lon Engan which is well placed for access to the village and its amenities.

The location of the current vehicular access route does not meet highway regulations and the proposal is to create an alternative access route in the middle of the site with safe pedestrian access along Lon Engan.

The current proposal is for 15 houses, 3 for the affordable sector with as many as possible positioned to benefit from the extensive views that the site offers. The site benefits from views to the NE and NW. The Panel were concerned that the topography of the site has not been utilised to its optimum; alternative strategies should be considered to maximise the views from all the houses. One approach might be to build the houses in two tiers to allow those at the rear to have a view over the houses at the front of the site.

The view of the site needs to be a key consideration of the design as any buildings upon it will be prominent, particularly from the approach road as one enters the village and from the harbour area. The Panel thought that the current proposals did not compliment the topography of the site, although a full topographical survey had been carried out. The Panel would have liked to see the development of lower, domestic buildings with more made of the central space encouraging outside areas for families and play areas for children. Overall the Panel thought that the design should clearly demonstrate the type of place that is being created. If this is a development for families, more attention to the shared spaces and areas for children would be encouraged.

The Panel felt that the affordable housing should be better integrated with the other houses within the site.

There appears not to be a well thought through sustainability strategy, although the presenting team did indicate that 10% of energy would be provided by renewables, materials would be locally sourced where possible and consideration would be given to rainwater recycling. The Panel reiterated that a more contemporary design would also make utilising renewable energy sources simpler.

The Panel were concerned with the arrangements for car parking and movement around and entry and exit to the site; the location of the junction with Lon Engan should be reviewed with the Local Authority Highways Department.

Overall, this is an important scheme in an area of outstanding natural beauty and with such beautiful views from the site, the Panel would like to see these maximised for all dwellings and consideration of how the site will be viewed from the village and surrounding area should inform the design.

The Panel were pleased that the scheme was brought to Design Review at this stage and would be happy to review it again.

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

Attendees

Agent/Client/Developer	Scott Ashall - Ashall Properties
Architectural/Urban Designer	Paul Seymour - Seymour Architecture
Planning Authority - Gwynedd County Council	not present
Design Review Panel Chair	Alan Francis
Lead Panellist	Angela Williams
	Jonathan Hines
	Sue Jones, DCFW, recording