

# 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	Tuesday 16 July 2013
Issue date	Tuesday 30 July 2013
Scheme location	Heritage Acre, Penmaen, Gower
Scheme description	Residential: Single dwelling
Scheme reference number	83C
Planning status	Pre-application; full application submission anticipated August 2013
Declaration of interests	None declared

### **Consultations to date**

Pre-application discussions have been held with the City and County of Swansea Planning Department.

### **The Proposals**

Heritage Acre is a single dwelling at Penmaen on the Gower Peninsula. The site is on a south facing slope, less than 500 metres from the sea with panoramic views over Oxwich Bay. There is an existing bungalow on the site that will be demolished and replaced with a new house of contemporary design.

### **Summary**

The key question is the impact of the dwelling on the landscape setting. The new building will occupy a very similar footprint as the earlier building, and the Panel have no concerns on this point and consider the palette of materials, colour, tone, scale and prominence of the proposed design, as illustrated, to be appropriate to the site.

The Panel noted the Local Planning Authority comments and that the application, when submitted, will be advertised as a departure from Local Authority Policy EV19 (Replacement Dwellings & Chalets). The Panel felt there is sufficient justification for the departure.

Notwithstanding their general support for the scheme the Panel did highlight several concerns:

- The large expanse of floor to ceiling windows, especially the unprotected south facing glazing which will be problematic in terms of controlling both heat loss and solar gain.

- The Panel highlighted the need to think further about the reflecting pool and the potential for it to become a stagnant, problematic feature rather than an enhancement.
- It was stated that the pool is intended to have a practical function, but the Panel did not find this convincing. It is important that the impact of the overhanging building be considered as this could create a very different atmosphere to that intended. The possibility of relocating the pool to the south of the house could be further explored – it might prove to be a more attractive option.
- The decision to place living accommodation on the first floor and not at ground level seems unnecessary given the unhindered access to the view, even at ground level, despite existing hedges. The benefits of direct access to the garden, not least the immediacy of the experience of the landscape, would appear to outweigh the minimal difference in the quality of view.
- Some of the rooms appear not to follow a natural sequence (for example the relationship between living room, library snug, kitchen and dining area) and in some cases their size and shape appear inappropriate to their intended use. The Panel fully understands that this may be in accordance with the clients' specific brief, but the implications of the above are significant in terms of structural decisions, function and use of the rooms and spaces; comfort, heating, cooling and energy efficiency. These points are expanded upon in the reflection of the full discussion, shown below.

### **Discussion and Panel response in full**

This proposal is for a contemporary dwelling to replace a cottage on the site of Heritage Acre. The site inclines towards Three Cliffs Bay, with several similar precedents in the area.

The Local Planning Authority (LPA) are largely supportive of the scheme and commented that it 'appears to be a well designed contemporary dwelling in line with the adopted Gower Design Guide' and would be an improvement on the the existing bungalow.

The LPA is concerned however, about the scale of the new building, especially at the first floor level which could be described as overly conspicuous in its setting. The LPA also commented on concerns around the glazing and the impact of reflected light, artificial light at night and its 'framelessness'. They also emphasised their requirement for high quality design and materials which should not be compromised.

The Panel had concerns about the extent of unprotected glazing, particularly on the south side. The architect explained that the provision of louvres were rejected by the client who has requested a simple, minimalist building with large areas of glass, to maximise the views.

The environmental control strategy is still developing. The Panel raised concerns about the proposed mechanical ventilation system and the size and extent of ductwork necessary to achieve comfortable air temperatures in all weather conditions. They were not convinced it would be possible to provide sufficient insulation in floors, walls and roof without cold bridging given the current dimensions of those elements. This applies both to the proposed stone walls and the steel structure.

The proposed heat recovery system would also have an impact on floor, roof and internal wall thickness with the need to incorporate the relatively large ducts to efficiently distribute air. The investigation and detailing of these implications is crucial, along with accurate thermal calculations, to ensure the desired minimalist purity can be achieved while maintaining reasonable standards of comfort.

The Panel welcomed the intention to harvest rainwater for use in toilets and showers and make use of solar energy, but expressed concern about the likely visual impact of the relatively large area of photovoltaic cells that would be required, which were not currently included on any external illustrative material.

The Panel discussed the internal layout at some length, noting that bedroom 3 was more spacious than the master bedroom and the rooms did not flow naturally with some rooms appearing as if in the wrong place. For example, the need to walk through a guest bedroom to access the sauna was questioned in this context. The architect reiterated that the design responded to the specific requirements of the clients.

The provision of a reflecting pool in a location which would be in shade for much of the day, was questioned and the potential for stagnant water that attracts insects was a concern. A suggestion might be to move the pool to the south side and use it as a recreational pool and this might be explored. The Panel understood that the function of the pool was to store excess harvested rainwater, however this did not allay their concerns.

In its concluding comment, the Panel were supportive of the principle of replacing the existing bungalow with a contemporary dwelling that captures the extensive views. The internal design and the environmental strategy need more thought, not least to control solar gain from the large amount of glazing on the south side and the provision of natural ventilation to maintain comfortable internal air temperatures.

The Panel recognised and encouraged the ambition of the project, a rare opportunity to create a tailored home in such a beautiful location but thought that a budget of £550k would come under pressure given the nature of the scheme being presented.

The Panel would be interested to be kept informed of the outcome and hoped the discussion had been helpful for the design team.

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

## **Appendix 1**

### **Attendees**

Agent/Client/Developer	DR P Rabaiotti
Architectural/Urban Designer	Jonathan Morris, J K Design Studio
Consultants	CB3 Engineers
Planning Authority – City & County of Swansea	Lucy Kelly
Design Review Panel	

Chair  
Lead Panellist

Alan Francis  
Richard Parnaby  
Lynne Sullivan  
Christopher Jones  
Jonathan Adams  
Carole-Anne Davies, DCFW  
Sue Jones, DCFW

Observing  
Recording