



IHP Design Review Report

Hatch Active Factory, Baglan Energy Park

DCFW Ref: 19E

Meeting of 25th April 2019

Review Status

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

PUBLIC

25th April 2019
8th May 2019
Baglan, Neath Port Talbot
Residential
19E
Pre-application

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.

The panel Chair was advised that Gayna Jones, Chair of the Design Commission for Wales, chairs the IHP Group. Gayna was not present in the meeting.

Andrew Nixon declared a personal connection with a Director of the Design Commission for Wales which is a matter of public record and has previously been noted. The Director in question was not present at this meeting.

hatch. CEO confirmed during the meeting that the company is in receipt of investment funds via the Banc, the Development Bank of Wales.

All present at the review were content to proceed following these declarations.

The Proposals

The hatch accelerator vision is to *"lead the UK's transition to a digitally designed precision manufactured residential product, built in scalable factories with and within the communities they serve."* The proposal is for a new 48,000sqft manufacturing facilities to enable the production of a minimum of 200 high quality, affordable modular homes per annum for Wales. Working alongside the Active Building Centre, the aim is for the facility to be energy positive, and to provide a platform to demonstrate the various innovations and sustainability benefits of this approach. The facility will offer the opportunity to develop/commercialise the application of the "Homes as Power Stations" project.

Main Points

This report is not a set of minutes, rather a summary of the key points that were identified that would help to enhance the project and any concerns regarding the funding of the project. The Commission noted that this review focussed on the 'hatch. active factory manufacturing system' itself and not on any specific housing proposal. The focus of the presentation was on the hatch. semi-standardised/modular manufacturing approach.

Urgent Design Concerns

One of the key benefits emphasised by the hatch. team is the flexibility of the system to respond to different requirements and contexts. The idea of a pattern book for Wales approach is challenging as it implies a standard approach to all locations. This runs

contrary the national policy context of place making, distinctiveness and a sound design response to locations which are unique in terms of context, history, topography, microclimate, orientation etc. Response to topography is critical for many sites within Wales. Early in the discussion DCFW confirmed that it would not be appropriate for it to become involved in the development or approval of any such pattern book. The Commission is supportive of longer-term engagement at a strategic level through its recognised services and expects further consultation with hatch. and Coastal in due course.

Whilst the systematisation is interesting, the presentation focussed too heavily on design as a matter of 'appearance'. The external appearance of the units alone is not sufficient for good design and the creation great places. A full design process will still be needed for each location including consideration of how the production system for housing units will impact on the design approach. The potential should not be discounted but as presented, is currently insufficiently convincing as a housing innovation.

Placemaking

The unit production method is not yet integrated into a full picture of how this approach will result in good homes and neighbourhoods and great placemaking. Whilst we accept that this is a foundational consultation with DCFW and that Coastal Housing has yet to fully establish sites and quantum of units, it will be necessary to bring forward proposals that show how this focus on the unit manufacture, contributes more widely and delivers benefits over and above familiar systems, such as timber frame or other modular methods already in widespread use. The story of how this production method will fit into and enhance the placemaking process is needed.

The benefits for occupants as a place to live must also be evident.

Integration of innovation

The full benefits of this method are not yet clearly explained in the context of cost and benefit, particularly public benefits such as long-term value and well-being related outcomes. Potential savings in manufacturing time, process waste and reduction in defects must be demonstrated in a more convincing way. It must also be made clear that there are many elements of a development will not change as a result of this method of construction such as the design process, ground works site infrastructure and the planning regime.

The Commission understood that significant investment is needed in the factory to enable the business case to work and that public investment via Banc has already been made in the business. Therefore, a very clear, evidenced statement of public value is needed to justify further public investment.

An environmental sustainability approach has not been integrated into the unit production approach yet and it was not evident how the 'homes as power stations' aspect would be integrated. This could add significant value if considered and integrated at this stage rather than addressed on a case-by-case basis with add-ons to units later down the line. Site wide sustainability strategies will also be necessary as part of the design response to each development opportunity Coastal is able to identify.

Next Steps

DCFW welcomes further engagement as individual sites come forward for development.

The emerging design proposals for the proposed factory were not considered within this review. Further sessions can be made available to accommodate this.

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

Attendees

Agent/Client/Developer: Gerard Walsh, hatch.
Martin Sayers, hatch.
Iain Thayne, hatch.
Adam Roberts, Coastal Housing Association

Architect/Planning Consultant: Andrew Nixon, Powell Dobson

Local Planning Authority:

Design Review Panel:
Chair Jamie Brewster
Panel Angela Williams
Kedrick Davies
Carole-Anne Davies, DCFW
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