



IHP Design Review Report

The Old Brewery Site, Aberystwyth

DCFW Ref: 19S

Meeting of 19th June 2019

Review Status

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

PUBLIC

19th June 2019
25th June 2019
Aberystwyth
Residential
19S
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.

The Proposals

The proposal is for the redevelopment of this site for 40 residential units using modular construction. The proposed development ranges from two to six floors with deck access and integrated balconies. The site will also accommodate associated parking, communal green space and footpaths as well as a hub building containing bin and cycle storage.

Proposals for this site were reviewed by DCFW as part of IHP round two but the scheme has evolved since that review.

Main Points

This report is not a record of the full discussion that took place during the review, rather a summary of the key points that have been identified that would help to improve the project and any concerns regarding the funding of the project.

Urgent Design Concerns

DCFW welcomed the opportunity to review proposals for the site at the concept stage. The team have taken on board the comments given in the design review report last year and the proposals have evolved, however, overall the scheme is lacking a grounding in site analysis and a sound rationale. A much clearer narrative is needed as to why the proposed form, orientation, position on the site, materials and landscape treatment have been designed the way they have. Given the lack of a clear site and context analysis, it is difficult to understand how the building form has responded to the space around the building and the neighbouring properties and gardens. The commitment of the development team to be a bolder with this development is positive but to aim to be 'striking' alone is not sufficient, the development must also be a well-integrated part of the fabric of the town which responds positively to the roads, buildings and spaces around it. A comprehensive site analysis drawing would help to interrogate the work to date.

Environmental performance targets should be informing design decisions including the shape of the building, its location on the site, its orientation and window size. The

integration of renewable energy should be considered at this stage to ensure that the approach is fully integrated.

Refinement of the design should consider simplification based on a clear rationale for why each element of the scheme is important for quality of life of residents and performance.

The proposed Hub containing bin and cycle storage is a recent addition to the proposal and requires further development. Its location and form should respond to the flow of people through the site to ensure that it is conveniently located. The potential for it to be powered by wind energy should be tested given that it is sheltered by the residential building.

Placemaking

The ratio of build development to green space is positive and has the potential to contribute positively to placemaking for residents and the wider public. However, the design of the space around the building is not convincing and it is not clear that it will be a positive benefit rather than a maintenance liability. The shape of the proposed building is producing some awkward spaces between it and the neighbouring rear gardens and there is a lack of hierarchy in these spaces that give a clear definition of what is public, semi-public or private space.

Further clarity is needed on the likely use of the footpaths through the site to ensure that they are responding to desire lines, noting the pedestrian desire line through the site which was raised in the presentation. Managing the level change along the footpath must also be considered.

The reduction in space given to parking is positive, given the sustainable location of the development. The resulting gain in green space for residents needs further design development particularly given that it is a north-facing space. The input of a landscape architect would benefit the scheme both to aid the aforementioned analysis process and in the design of the scheme where the building and landscape should work together.

Integration of innovation

A concern regarding the repetitive nature of modular building is being challenged through the proposed design and thought has been given to how the proposed off-set of the units will be achieved. It is important not to over complicate the design to lose the benefits of modular construction.

The proposed use of native wood and a local factory enabling the development of local skills are positive and the project enables the modular construction that was supported in the previous round of IHP to be tested at a larger scale.

Next Steps

- Use site and context analysis to interrogate the design and amend in response.
- Consider simplification and a focus on those elements that will have the most benefit for residents and the wider public.
- Integrate an energy strategy.
- Work with a landscape architect in the design of the public realm and resident's amenity space.

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

Attendees

Agent/Client/Developer:	Alex Dawson, Mid Wales Housing Association Geraint Roberts, Mid Wales Housing Association Owain Williams, Williams Homes
Architect/Design Consultant:	Doug Hughes, Hughes Architects Richard Lewis, Hughes Architects Gary Newman, Wood Knowledge Wales
Design Review Panel: Chair Panel	Jonathan Vernon-Smith Christopher Jones Maria Asenjo Jen Heal, DCFW Larissa Berquò, DCFW