



Innovative Housing Programme (IHP) Design Review Report

Old Brewery Site, Aberystwyth

DCFW Ref: IHP A

Meeting of 22nd May 2018

Review Status	CONFIDENTIAL
Meeting date	22 nd May 2018
Issue date	31 st May 2018
Scheme location	Aberystwyth
Scheme description	Residential
Scheme reference number	IHP A
Planning status	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.

None declared.

The Proposals

The former brewery site was last used as a car park. It is located close to the town centre. The scheme aims to provide a mix of affordable houses and apartments designed to address the current needs of the town whilst integrating with the existing streetscapes and nearby buildings. It is proposed that off-site modular construction will be used, not relying on standard modules, but using techniques to provide a solutions which fulfils the requirements of the site and the developer.

NB Confidential is extended to the point at which details of the proposals enter the public domain on any platform such as press and media, meaningful entry into the planning system and/or the announcement of the award of public funds via the Innovative Housing Programme. See DCFW Guide, *Consulting the Commission through the Design Review Service*: https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/dcfw-cdn/DCFWconsultingthroughreview_2017.pdf

Main Points

This report is not a set of minutes, 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.

Important and Urgent Design Concerns

- Parking dominates the scheme
- There is currently a lack of useable, valuable amenity space (shared or private)
- It currently demonstrates poor integration and connections with neighbourhood and existing urban fabric
- The layout of streets and orientation of blocks does not respond to context and is not designed to take advantage of solar energy
- There is a lack of evidence of informative site and context analysis

Placemaking

Vision

More thought needs to be given to the type of place this development aims to create. This definition should take account of the town centre location, and might help to justify a reduction in the number of parking spaces provided.

Site Analysis

The vision and layout should be informed by proper analysis of the site and context. The team may find it useful to refer to DCFW's *Site and Context Analysis Guide: Capturing the Value of Site*, produced for Welsh Government:

<https://gov.wales/docs/desh/publications/160513-site-and-context-analysis-guide-en.pdf>

Layout and orientation

The proposed layout of blocks, streets and parking does not integrate the development with the context and lacks meaningful amenity space. A site strategy which responds to context analysis and integrates with surrounding urban grain and street pattern would provide a better solution. For example, the streets to the north east of the site have a strong grid pattern which might be continued. Layouts which create a new street or streets instead of a cul-de-sac with turning head should be explored, and this might be informed by the historic grain of the site. This should have the following benefits:

- Reduce dominance of parking and allow it to be integrated with street design
- Provide a rationale for fronts and backs of properties
- Free up space which would be required for a turning head
- Better connections to existing streets/routes
- Allow for useable amenity space which could provide space for play and social interaction
- Support a place based approach, better responding to emerging national policy objectives.

The layout should also take into account orientation of blocks for solar gain, daylighting PVs and solar access to gardens and amenity space.

Parking

Car parking should not dictate the design. Finding and integrating an appropriate parking typology, such as providing a space which can be a front garden or parking space, would be useful.

Street design

The designers are encouraged to challenge the standard engineering approach to highways design to create a safe, pedestrian friendly place. The client might consider not having new streets adopted. Narrower streets or a 'homezone' approach might be beneficial. In any event, an approach appropriate to the current guidance, *Manual for Streets*, should be utilised.

Landscape design

The design of gardens and shared amenity space should be positive and meaningful so that it adds value to the scheme. Leftover strips and patches of 'landscape' should be avoided. Options which provide larger, usable shared gardens rather than very small individual gardens should be tested.

Integration of innovation

Innovation approach: The presentation indicated that the team wishes to make cost-effective off-site construction work to create a great place to live which is integrated with the existing urban fabric.

The use of off-site construction alone does not necessarily represent innovation or lead to quality. The challenge is to integrate it with exemplary place-making to raise quality of living, and this will require adequate investment in the design process. The role of a main contractor operating between the design/client team and the off-site manufacturer should be carefully considered and defined so that it does not add unnecessary cost and complexity to the process.

Further consideration needs to be given to how the resulting form and appearance of the off-site method will successfully integrate with the existing urban grain and streetscapes.

Next Steps

- Define vision for 'place'
- Develop and justify site strategy through site and context analysis and testing of layouts and massing
- Resolve parking strategy
- The Commission would welcome the opportunity to review the scheme again once designs have progressed

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

Attendees

Agent/Client/Developer:	Alex Dawson, MWA
Architect/Planning Consultant:	Doug Hughes, Hughes Architects
Local Planning Authority:	Ceredigion, Not in attendance
Design Review Panel: Chair Panel	Jon Vernon-Smith Ed Green Wendy Maden, DCFW Chris Jefford Kedrick Davies Jamie Yeoman Amanda Spence, DCFW
Observer:	Alex Davies