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Design Review Report

Llandudno Lifeboat Station

28th November 2013



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.

Review Status

CONFIDENTIAL

Meeting date	28 th November 2013
Issue date	18th December 2013
Scheme location	Llandudno
Scheme description	New Lifeboat Station
Scheme reference number	20
Planning status	Pre-application

Declarations of Interest

None declared.

Consultations to Date

The RNLI and their design team have consulted the Local Authority extensively.

The Proposals

A previous application made in 1998 on a site adjacent to the listed pier wall was widely supported, recommended for approval by LPA officers, but not supported by Elected Members and therefore refused consent. We understand that a Planning Appeal was unsuccessful due to impact on the character, features and setting of the listed pier, and on the setting of listed buildings.

A Site Options Appraisal in 2010 looked at 18 sites. The selected site was assessed with a feasibility study in 2010, and meets the technical requirements for housing and launching the lifeboats.

The size and arrangement of the lifeboat station is largely dictated by the technical requirements for storing, accessing, maintaining and launching the life boats. The current proposal includes hard standing and parking space for lifeboat crews' cars. Cladding materials are stone and Siberian larch, with a zinc roof.

Summary

- The difficulty of finding a suitable location for the new lifeboat station and the frustration with the rejection of the previous scheme are understandable.

However, the RNLI, design team and Local Authority (LA) need to be sure that this proposal is for the correct site.

- It is disappointing that the LA have not been more pro-active in bringing forward this crucial voluntary emergency facility.
- The chosen location requires a truly exceptional, award-winning standard of design to address the visual impact of such a building on this site.

Main Points in Detail

Site Selection

Designing a lifeboat station for the selected site is very challenging. The team must be sure that all site options have been fully explored, and that this is the best of the feasible options available. This exploration should not exclude consideration of compulsory purchase or making the lifeboat station part of a larger mixed use development, should these be feasible.

It is recognised that a lifeboat station with direct access to the sea is ideal and would minimise response times, and that the beach in the vicinity of the chosen site has been tested for launching requirements. However, the feasibility of sites which are slightly further from the water's edge should also have been more fully explored.

The LA needs to explicitly support and enable the delivery of this important voluntary emergency facility. It is not clear at present whether there is LA support for the idea of a lifeboat station on this site.

There may be potential in reconsidering the site of the previous application, but with a different design approach. Although the previous site is in a Conservation Area, a building here could potentially have less impact on the Conservation Area than the chosen alternative beach side site, and meet all operational needs.

Visual Impact

Large buildings on the seaward side of the road are unprecedented on this broad stretch of beach. The visual impact of a building of this scale and massing on this site will be significant. In particular, impact on views of the sweeping bay and backdrop of listed buildings, as well as views from the Great and Little Ormes will be affected.

The impact of the proposed building might, in reality, be greater than the photo montages suggest. 2D images cannot capture the 3D experience of approaching and moving around the building.

Any new building design should be supported by physical models including one in the context of the bay to clearly demonstrate a positive contribution to the seafront.

A lifeboat station is by necessity a visually significant and potentially bulky building. Using 'natural' materials in an attempt to blend it into the background, or shapes to 'break up its mass', will not prevent this being a prominent building.

The impact on the immediate surroundings must also be considered. These include hard standings, parking and the separation from the paddling pool. All these must be well considered and any proposal must be carefully integrated into its setting.

Design Quality

This unique location with the sweep of the bay holds attachment with many people, and the site has tremendous potential, but to satisfy the constraints, the design must be of exceptional quality, making a positive contribution to its context.

Whilst the lifeboat station has technical requirements, and the plan and volume are largely dictated by these, the way the building is clothed is important. The current proposal is functional, but lacks the magical spark that an outstanding design would recognisably demonstrate.

A building in this location must be well a conceived and elegantly detailed object: an enhancement to the seafront landscape.

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

Attendees

Agent/Client/Developer:	Robert Jeans, RNLI Howard Richings, RNLI Colin Williams, RNLI
Architectural/Urban Designer:	Steve Robinson, Studio Four Architects David Revill, JBA Consulting
Planning Authority:	Peter Jones-Hughes, Conwy CBC Bryn Kyffin, Conwy CBC
Design Review Panel:	
Chair	Ewan Jones
Lead Panellist	Simon Carne Lynne Sullivan Kedrick Davies Amanda Spence, Design Advisor, DCFW