



DESIGN
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Design Review Report

Merthyr Tydfil Bus Station

DCFW Ref: 61

Meeting of 20th August 2015



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	20 th August 2015
Issue date	27 th August 2015
Scheme location	Swan Street, Merthyr Tydfil
Scheme description	Bus Station
Scheme reference number	61
Planning status	Pre-application

Declarations of Interest

None declared.

Consultations to Date

This is the third review of the proposals for the bus station by the Design Commission following an initial presentation regarding the full scope of the VVP programme for Merthyr Tydfil. The previous reviews were held in January and May 2015.

Further public consultation has been undertaken since the previous review which was largely positive and has influenced amendments to the design.

Pre-application meetings have been held with the local planning authority and other local authority departments.

The Proposals

This proposal is for the relocation of the Merthyr Tydfil town centre bus station, from its existing location to the north of the shopping centre, to a site south of the shopping centre which is being made vacant through the closure and demolition of a health clinic and police station. Once the new bus station is open and operational, the existing bus station will be closed allowing the site to be redeveloped.

The station would accommodate 14 bus bays, ten layover spaces and a taxi rank with associated ticket office, toilets, cafe and staff accommodation. The design of the station building and public realm has been progressed since the previous review.

Proposed bus access into the station is via Avenue De Clichy with buses leaving the station via Swan Street.

The revised programme anticipates submission of a planning application in September.

Main Points

The Design Commission for Wales welcomed the return of this project to design review and the opportunity to comment on the building design now that it has progressed beyond the initial concept stage. However the limited time between the review and the submission of the planning application means that there is limited scope to influence any strategic decisions and therefore the comments of the panel were focused on more detailed design issues.

The Commission remain supportive of this project and there have been some significant improvements to the design since the plans that were seen in the interim between the last review and this one. However there are a number of aspects that require further consideration which are outlined in the comments below.

The Building

Roof form

The concept of reflecting the local mountainous landscape in the form of the roof is now better articulated both externally and internally. The detailing of the roof is important to ensure that the elegance of the structure is not compromised. This will need to take into account the overall thickness of the roof, details of hips, valleys, fascias and drainage. The impact of wind on the flow of water across the roof should be taken into consideration in designing the drainage.

Sustainability

The ambition to create as passive design as possible is commended and supported but there is currently a lack of detail in how this will be achieved. The environmental/sustainability strategy needs to be completed as soon as possible as it should be driving the design. In addition to the main public area of the station being passively heated and ventilated the potential for the integration of photo voltaics on the roof, as well as other renewable energy options, should be explored as this could contribute to an income for the local authority from the power generated.

The principle of heat gain from the south facing glazing needs to be balanced against the potential for overheating the space. The maintenance and cleaning of the glazing should be taken into account in the consideration of a brise soleil, particularly as the buses are likely to generate pollution and grime which could detract from the quality of the glazed wall. The glazing must be accessible for cleaning externally.

Quality of internal space

The passenger area of the station should be a comfortable, attractive and safe space. The space is currently very busy with lots of design ideas in the floorscape, roof form, materials and the structures proposed, and would benefit from simplification.

The palette of materials is currently very hard which could create a cold and noisy environment. The addition of a ply finish to the underside of the roof form will help to

soften the space and absorb some of the sound. The potential for further use of this material in the internal space could be explored.

The Commission queried the necessity and location of the bridge at first floor level due to its potential impact on the quality of the waiting area. It could create a visual barrier to make the main waiting area seem smaller as it bisects the space. Exploring the impact of moving it to the north edge of the building could help with this. Wherever it is located, the materials will need to be appropriate, either as a solid element that forms part of the two main two storey structures, or as a portal, or a lightweight structure.

Signage must be incorporated into the design for those entering the building from both of the entrances and provide clear information about service times and gate numbers. Careful consideration needs to be given to how disabled people, including those with impaired vision or hearing are able to navigate the building to the appropriate bus stands.

External Design

The entrances to the building could be better defined, particularly the eastern entrance for those approaching from the east and south. This could be through the paving, building materials and/or lighting.

The eastern edge/corner of the building is currently unconvincing. The combination of materials, angles and overhang presents too much complexity where the focus would be better placed on the entrances.

When the bus station is closed at 7pm passengers will have to wait at the external bays with minimal shelter and no seating. Whilst this helps to prevent antisocial behaviour, it will not encourage the use of public transport in the evening. Later opening of the station should be pursued in order to encourage greater use.

Site Layout

In response to previous comments, the building has been located further south which creates less of an ally way to the north but this space still needs to be carefully designed and managed. Efforts to animate the space, such as the pop up stalls mentioned by the team would help to improve the space.

Public realm

The paving design seeks to reflect the industrial heritage of the town and historic movement patterns whilst incorporating materials that have been used in recent public realm works in the town centre for continuity. The paving design is currently at odds with the movement pattern through the space. By reviewing the paving pattern legibility could be improved to help guide people through the space. Care should be taken in the detailed design of the paving pattern to avoid too many angles that create the need for awkward cutting of the stone paving material.

Including the pavement to the south of Swan Street in the public realm works could help to tie this into the space and encourage movement along that side of the street to the crossing.

The use of planters could be employed to a greater degree to discourage people from jumping over the wall to the south and into the path of the buses.

Consideration has been given to the use of materials and kerb heights to promote pedestrian priority. A further review of road signage should ensure that this does not create unnecessary clutter.

Conclusion

This is a very important development for Merthyr town centre and the quality of the design must be maintained throughout the detailed design and specification process to ensure that the local authority and public are not disappointed with the final building.

A number of positive changes have been made to the design of the station building which have strengthened the manifestation of the original concept. However, the points raised in this report must be addressed to ensure that the design is functional, legible, comfortable and easy to maintain with minimal running costs.

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

Attendees

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Design Review Panel:

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