



DESIGN
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Design Review Report

Merthyr Tydfil Bus Station

DCFW Ref: 61

Meeting of 21st May 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	21 st May 2015
Issue date	3 rd June 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 second time that the proposals for the bus station have been presented to the Commission following an initial presentation regarding the full scope of the VVP programme for Merthyr Tydfil. The previous review was held on 22nd January 2015.

Extensive consultation has been undertaken with the public and local businesses regarding the relocation of the bus station. Stagecoach and Rockspring have also been engaged as key stakeholders regarding the functional requirements and potential impact of the new bus station. Further public consultation is planned in June 2015 prior to a planning application being submitted.

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.

Proposals for the new bus station have been progressed since the previous review but the concept of a linear, south-facing building and concourse to the south of the shopping centre is retained. The station would accommodate 14 bus bays, ten layover spaces

(increased from 4 at the previous review) and a taxi rank with associated ticket office, toilets, cafe and staff accommodation.

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 early to mid July.

Main Points

The Design Commission for Wales welcomed the return of this project to design review and the opportunity presented to comment again on the design as it develops.

The Commission is supportive of the stated ambition for this development as a significant part of the fabric of the town centre and as an important building in its own right. The following key points resulted from the discussion in the review and the Commission encourage the design team to give further consideration to these areas.

The Building

A strong concept for the station building itself is emerging as a result of wider context review and has the potential to lead to a well considered design approach. It is acknowledged that some key areas of the design are still being developed following recent changes such as the seating areas and how to shelter people as they move from the building to the bus. The comfort of passengers needs to be the main objective in these ongoing considerations.

A strong roof form is being explored for the building which has the potential to create a building of interest that also responds to the unique requirements of the site. However we have not yet seen clear visuals of what this will look like in context. It would be helpful to see how the building will work with the backdrop of the shopping centre, on the approach to the site and from view points across the river.

Sections and additional plans of the building are also required to test the roof height as well as which areas will be enclosed or open. The roof form needs to be tested through daylight modelling to identify the impact it will have on light in different parts of the space within the building and the wider site.

A sustainability strategy should be integrated into the proposals for the building with identified targets and how these will be met. This is also an important consideration for waiting passenger comfort as the building is largely south facing and could be susceptible to overheating.

Site Layout

The Commission expressed concern regarding the layout of the bus station in the previous review as it results in large areas of tarmac, the need for buses to reverse and pressure on the land available on the site for pedestrians. It is understood that the

layout has been discussed again with the bus operator Stagecoach but without gaining any positive changes. It is disappointing that changes could not be negotiated as this requirement seems to replicate the function of the existing bus station rather than move forward to reflect more modern bus station forms that are evident elsewhere. Therefore the concerns of the Commission on the impact that this will have on the quality of the 'place' that is created remain. In order to enable constructive discussion about the current proposals the layout was accepted as imposed by the bus operator.

Pedestrian connections to the site remain an important consideration. It is positive that the pedestrian link east of the bus station to High Street can be widened through the removal of the wall alongside the chapel. The aspiration for high quality pedestrian links should be maintained.

Public realm

The engineer-led layout of bus and taxi movement through the site has resulted in a series of disparate public spaces. There is a danger that these will become meaningless leftover spaces rather than a public realm that makes a positive contribution to the town centre.

Further consideration is required of what people will do in the spaces and what their qualities will be (given the impact of frequent bus movements). A strong landscape strategy would establish how to join up the spaces in a meaningful way. Now that the bus requirements have been established the plans can focus on the public realm and move away from the dominance of the highway proposals.

Consideration should be given to the space(s) that are most important for people and how this can be made the best that it can be. This may lead to changes in the location of the building to increase primary public space whilst tightening up secondary spaces that have less value. The Commission were particularly concerned about the quality of the space that will be created between the bus station and the shopping centre. The nature of this space needs to be explored and tested with sections and perspectives which may determine that the space would benefit from being wider. This space should not be considered as the back of the bus station as it is in fact the front.

The current precedent images for the public realm design are very hard in nature. Consideration should be given to how green elements can be successfully integrated to help deal with surface water runoff as well as to provide a relief to the hard urban nature of the town centre.

The concept of pedestrian priority needs to be followed through in all aspects of the public realm design as it relies on choice of materials, kerb heights, road dimensions and controlling signage amongst other things in addition to the imposition of a speed limit. There was an understanding from the design team of the consideration needed in relation to the access needs of disability groups within the context of pedestrian priority.

The architect and artist should continue to work collaboratively to develop tangible outputs from the extensive background research and consultation that has been undertaken. It is not yet clear what this will be but could certainly add value to the public realm if well integrated.

Next Steps

There is a strong concept emerging for the building that we would like to see followed through to the more detailed design in preparation for the planning application. The public realm still presents a number of challenges that require additional testing and a clearer vision for the type of place that this will be.

We would welcome the team back to design review if this was able to fit with the project programme. The design review date for July is Thursday 16th. If this is not possible the Commission can offer a more flexible consultation on the scheme at the appropriate time.

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

Attendees

Architectural Designer:	Amy Cowan, Capita
Engineer:	Ian Pritchard, Capita
Artist:	Christopher Tipping
Local Authority:	Gavin Lewis, Regeneration MTCBC Judith Jones, Planning MTCBC Huw Roberts, Planning MTCBC
Design Review Panel:	
Chair	Jen Heal, Design Advisor, DCFW
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