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# Design Review Report

21-22 Park Place, Cardiff

**DCFW Ref: 113**

Meeting of 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2016



## Declarations of Interest

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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	23 <sup>rd</sup> June 2016
Issue date	7 <sup>th</sup> July 2016
Scheme location	Park Place, Cardiff
Scheme description	Commercial Development
Scheme reference number	113
Planning status	Pre-application

## Declarations of Interest

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DCFW panel member and commissioner, Mark Hallett, has employed Savills on projects not related to this scheme. All attendees confirmed that they were happy for the review to proceed with Mark Hallett present, following this declaration.

## Consultations to Date

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This was the first review of this scheme by the Design Commission for Wales.

## The Proposals

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The proposal is for the demolition of the existing two storey villas that currently occupy the site and the development of a commercial unit of up to five floors totalling 25,000sqft of floor space.

The site is located within a conservation area and adjacent to the Grade I listed Park House.

## Main Points

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This is an important location within the civic area of Cardiff, it is a prominent site on the corner of Park Place and St Andrew's Place, and is located adjacent to a Grade I listed building. It therefore demands excellence in design quality and the Design Commission for Wales welcomed the opportunity to review the proposals at an early stage.

### Justification

The Commission noted that Cadw were invited to comment in these early stages but declined. Whilst at this stage there is no feedback offered by Cadw, further work should be done to explain and document the key decisions behind the site development. The

proposed removal of the existing villas on the site requires clear justification based on more than simply the viability of the development. Thorough analysis of the Conservation Area context and adjacent listed building, heritage impact, the quality of the existing buildings and the contribution of the proposed development is a necessary part of the design process. Relevant planning policy must be identified and addressed with a logical explanation of the design response. This is not yet clearly set out in the material provided for this design review.

### **Analysis**

The analysis of the site and context requires further development and illustration to form part of the evidence for the proposed approach. This should include identification of the key opportunities and constraints presented by the site and its setting, as well as presentation of a thorough understanding of the built context. The latter had been started but requires further development and clear articulation of how this has influenced the design.

### **Form and massing**

The bulk and massing of the building is as significant as the height of the building. A clearer rationale for the proposed massing is needed based on analysis of the site and the vision for the building not just on the requirement for floorspace. Whilst the height of the proposed building may be appropriate, the massing creates a building that appears 'squat'. The massing should be considered in the context of the rhythm of the street.

A physical model could be a useful design tool for exploring the form and mass of the building in its context. Sections along and across Park Place and into the park could also help to demonstrate the relationship with surroundings.

Evidence of the design development and the options that have been explored for the form of the building is currently insufficient. There is no exploration of roof forms other than the flat roofs shown, for example. This needs to be clearly explained and justified particularly given the context where gables are prevalent and care will be needed to achieve an appropriate design response. If the flat roofs are to be roof terraces as suggested, the design needs to reflect this with appropriate parapets, railing and access.

### **Entrance**

The appropriate location for the entrance to the building was discussed as the proposed location is tucked away and does not help the building to positively address the street. The potential for relocating the entrance should be explored and the corner of the building could be a possible alternative. Locating the entrance here could also help to connect the building with its external space more positively. This corner is prominent and critical to the success of the building.

The building entrance should also be legible through the massing of the building rather than relying on the addition of a canopy.

### **Ground floor**

A balance is needed at ground floor between privacy for those using the space inside, access to natural daylight and activation of the street. The building and the strip of

external space beyond should be considered together in developing a solution to this particularly on the northern side of the building. Currently there would be little natural daylight penetrating the ground floor space and the slot windows provide limited natural surveillance of the street. It is understood that proposals for this elevation are still developing.

### **Environmental performance**

The stated performance ambitions for this building were disappointing. It is recognised that the performance of the building needs to relate to market demand but improved environmental performance could hold investment value. We would like to see a more integrated and ambitious environmental strategy which pushes the building beyond a sealed, air conditioned box.

### **Delight and added value**

There are a number of unique aspects of this site that could enhance the proposals which do not yet seem to have been capitalised upon. These include:

- The views and amenity value that the park on the opposite side of Park Place presents.
- The unique neighbouring Park House which the proposed building currently turns its back on. Views out to Park House would add a greater sense of place when inside the building.
- The external space to the front and side of the building that could be used to not only enhance the setting of the building but provide meaningful external space that complements the internal uses.

Whilst an argument was made during discussion that this building should be subservient to the adjacent Park House, the building needs to be of exceptional design quality and should be special in its own right given its setting. More conviction in the design is needed to achieve this.

Further consideration also needs to be given to the quality of the internal spaces. This includes the amount of natural daylight, ventilation, views out, the space given to circulation and communal areas and the potential for encouraging positive interactions within these spaces. Currently the internal spaces lack a sense of place, comfort and delight.

### **Materials**

The commitment to using Portland Stone is welcomed as appropriate for this location. As part of the design 'story' the reasons for the choice of stone and any other options considered should be set out. Some of the reasons presented in the meeting included its simplicity, reflection of materials found in Cathays Park and contrast with Park house.

### **Strategies**

Further information is required to explain the approach to the design. We suggest that a strategy needs to be in place for each of the following:

- Heritage and conservation
- Movement, access and circulation

- Environmental performance
- Addressing Park Place

### Next steps

Further design development is required to respond to the unique opportunity that this site presents and to reflect its significance. The site analysis, vision, design development and justification require clearer presentation and explanation in order to be convincing.

We would welcome the opportunity to see the proposals again before a planning application is submitted.

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

## Attendees

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Architectural Designer:	Nic Downs, Downs Merrifield Emma Reeves, Downs Merrifield
Planning and Heritage:	Chris Potts, Savills Dr. Nikki Cook, Savills
Design Review Panel:	
Chair	Jamie Brewster
Lead Panellist	Mark Hallett
Panel	Maria Asenjo Amanda Spence, Design Advisor, DCFW Jen Heal, Design Advisor, DCFW