

# Design Review Report

Rhossili House,

Gower

**DCFW Ref: N148**

Meeting of 17<sup>th</sup> August 2017



## Review Status

Meeting date  
Issue date  
Scheme location  
Scheme description  
Scheme reference number  
Planning status

## CONFIDENTIAL

17<sup>th</sup> August 2017  
29<sup>th</sup> August 2017  
Gower  
House  
N148  
Pre-application

## 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.

None declared.

## Consultations to Date

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A pre-application submission was made to Swansea Council in February 2017, followed by a meeting in May 2017.

## The Proposals

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The site is situated on the edge of the village of Rhossili adjacent to the coastal path leading down to the beach and Rhossili Bay. This is an extremely sensitive and prominent location overlooking the bay and is visible from both Rhossili Down as well as on the approach to the site along the B4247. The site is within the Rhossili Conservation Area and Gower AONB, and any proposals will need to clearly demonstrate how they preserve or enhance the character of this designation.

The proposal is to demolish an existing five-bedroom house and replace it with a new four-bedroom house overlooking Rhossili Bay. It is proposed that the structure will be constructed from cross laminated timber panels to form all walls, floor, and roof with a lime render external finish and a roof covering of slate.

## Main Points

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This prominent site is situated in the Gower Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and Rhossili Conservation Area and presents a fantastic opportunity to create a great place to live and showcase excellent design, but it demands exceptional design quality and a fully justified design process. Contextual contemporary simplicity is welcomed.

The following points summarise key issues arising from the review and should be considered to inform any further work ahead of a planning application being submitted:

### **Contextual design**

To address the planning requirements of the AONB and conservation area and justify any proposal for new building on this site, the design team will need to demonstrate that a thorough understanding of the local context has informed the design process. The proposal will need to 'preserve and enhance' the character of the conservation area and have a positive impact on its landscape setting.

A study which thoroughly analyses local building characteristics, such as materials, form, grain, fenestration and vernacular typologies would help to inform and justify design decisions. This analysis and rationale should be set out clearly in the Design and Access Statement to explain the reasons for the proposal and demonstrate this to planners and other stakeholders.

A range of agreed CGI views would be highly desirable, clearly illustrating how the proposed scheme is viewed from many of the surrounding vantage points.

### **Landscape setting**

A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) would provide a recognised standard method of assessing the impact of the building on its landscape setting and could be used to identify any issues which need to be addressed. The process will establish key viewpoints to be assessed and, alongside a contextual study of the village, could help to justify the proposal.

Careful design of the landscape setting could help to deal with privacy without compromising views, and help integrate the building within the site. Dry-stone walls, native small tree planting and manipulation of levels could be combined to provide layers of privacy. Gorse can spread rapidly and should be planted cautiously!

### **Form and composition**

The desire to create a simple vernacular form in the open landscape is an appropriate approach and echoes the nearby National Trust cottages, but this needs to be supported through detailed context studies.

The idea of kinking the building facade to create a play of light and shadow is interesting, but may not be deliberate enough in the proposal presented at the review.

The detail design and composition of fenestration will have an impact on the perceived form of the building. This needs careful consideration, alongside studies of the impact on views, privacy, daylight, sunlight and environmental performance.

### **Construction and materials**

The choice of proposed materials for the building envelope is appropriate to the context, but needs to be fully justified in documentation and presentation material. The proposed CLT construction demonstrates a number of benefits in terms of environmental sustainability. However, the construction process must be given careful consideration to ensure that the surfaces which will form the interior finish do not become weathered and stained before the building is made watertight.

This exposed location means that durability and protection from driving rain and salty air are especially important. It is encouraging that the architects are in dialogue with suppliers at this early stage to explore appropriate solutions. Durability should be a key factor in the specification and detailing of the building envelope to ensure long term quality in this harsh environment. Further work is required to demonstrate that CLT is an effective and sustainable solution in this challenging location.

### **Experiencing the building**

It is important to consider how the building will be experienced both from the inside and from outside. It is positive that a large scale model has been made to explore the qualities of spaces inside the house, and the desire to provide spaces with different scales and qualities is encouraging.

It is clear from the discussions at the Design Review meeting that the architects are considering all the right issues, including views, privacy, daylight, sunlight, shelter and environmental comfort. However, there are a number of areas which are not fully resolved and will require further work. These include the first floor terrace, where privacy issues are compromising views and sunlight; and the entrance sequence, which is not convincingly defined. The entrance design should consider arrival experience, security and providing a place to remove boots, shoes, coats and beach gear.

The experience of moving past and around the building from outside should also be considered, especially walking past it along the coastal path.

### **Model**

A Sketchup type model or smaller scale physical working model which includes some of the village and landscape context would provide a welcome tool to assess and demonstrate the setting of the building in the landscape, its form and composition and how views, privacy and access are dealt with.

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

## Attendees

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Agent/Client/Developer:

Architect/Consultants:

Ted Swift & Paul Maich, Maich Swift Architects  
Paul Hinam, Gallese Design

Local Planning Authority:

Lisa Tucker & Krystyna Williams, Swansea Council

Design Review Panel:

Chair

Jon Vernon-Smith

Lead Panellist

Mike Gwyther-Jones

Jonathan Hines

Matt Thomas

Simon Richards

Amanda Spence, Design Advisor, DCFW

Jen Heal, Design Advisor, DCFW

Observers:

Helen Jones, PINS

Rhian Haf, Artist

Chris Jefford, Architect

Richard Gambold

John Floyd