

Design Review Report

Newport Transporter Bridge and
Visitor Centre

DCFW Ref: N203

Meeting of 11th July 2019



Review Status

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

Public

11th July 2019
23rd July 2019
Newport
Visitor Centre
N203
Pre-application

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.

None declared.

Consultations to Date

This is the first review by DCFW of the proposals for this site.

The Proposals

The project aim is to provide a visitor centre with exhibition space to demonstrate interpretation of the Newport Transporter Bridge and its historic context. The proposals for the visitor centre are coupled with the restoration plans for the bridge itself.

Main Points

The success of this building will be the key to the whole project, and it is therefore important to allow enough design time at this stage to get it right. The review explored several themes that need to be more fully explored, potentially with the need to work back through the analysis and concept stages to reach a fully resolved solution. The proposals jumped quickly to a specific architectural form with little explanation or justification of why this was the best solution, this needs to be resolved with a clearer and considered rationale and narrative for the design decisions that are made.

Design philosophy

The vision for the use of the building is good but the vision and design philosophy of the building itself is underdeveloped. A key element of this is how it will sit alongside the bridge and whether it should touch it and/or interrupt views to, through and from it. The current design is quite busy against the complexity of the bridge. The composition of angles, spaces and resulting views needs a clear rationale.

The link to the bridge should be considered in terms of its value. If it is an essential part of the visitor centre, the interface with the bridge must be exceptionally well detailed. The current images could be misleading in terms of the size of structural elements, number of

columns and deck depth of the link to the bridge. Accurate representation of this is needed to assess the impact of the structure in relation to the bridge.

The bridge was ground-breaking in its engineering at the time of its construction and this could be reflected in the building by celebrating current innovation in engineering or building technology.

Links and connections

A wider perspective of regeneration, development, visitor and connectivity initiatives and how the project sits in the wider context of these would be helpful. The site is outside of the heart of the city centre and somewhat cut off by the A48 and river, so it is important that it is physically and psychologically integrated with the city as much as possible.

Active travel and public transport connections and improvements should be fully explored.

Reducing the amount of parking on the site may allow different arrangements of the building and external spaces. This could be facilitated by better links from the car park on the other side of the A48 and clear signage. This would need to be supported by improvements to the A48 to help slow traffic and improve the quality of the public realm.

Arrangement of spaces

Some changes had been made to the layout since the submission of pre-review material which indicated a positive development, but further iterations are needed to reach the best solution.

The entrance space must be inviting and engaging. There must be sufficient space for large numbers of people to arrive, be organised and circulate, but also the opportunity to immediately engage with information about the bridge. The entrance foyer and education room could be part of one space that can be divided up when necessary.

Looking at and learning from other visitor centres would help to inform the design of the building and use of interior spaces. For example, the movable exhibitions at the Waterfront Museum in Swansea which allows the spaces to be used differently. This should be done with the client.

Identifying key views of the bridge and building them in to the design could helpfully inform orientation and fenestration. Some framed views might be more appropriate than fully glazed elevations.

Environmental strategy

The amount of glazing proposed must be considered in the context of the environmental performance for the building.

Materials

The impact of the choice of materials needs to be worked through the design and should balance thermal performance with the vision for the building and its appearance in its context.

Comisiwn Dylunio Cymru Design Commission for Wales is the trading name of DCFW LIMITED, a Private Limited Company established under the Companies

Act 1985 and 2006, Company No: 04391072 incorporated in England and Wales. DCFW is a non-statutory consultee, a private limited company and a wholly owned subsidiary of the Welsh Government. Registered office: 4th Floor, Cambrian Buildings, Mount Stuart Square, Cardiff CF10 5FL T: 029 2045 1964 E connect@dcfw.org. The comment recorded in this report, arising from formal Design Review through our Design Review Service, is provided in the public interest for the consideration of local planning authorities as a material consideration and other users of the Design Review Service. It is not and should not be considered 'advice' and no third party is bound or required to act upon it. The Design Review Service is delivered in line with DCFW's published protocols, code of conduct and complaints procedure, which should be read and considered by users of the service.

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

Attendees

Design Team:	Ezra Watts, AWW
Local Planning Authority:	Stephen Williams, NCC Mike Lewis, NCC
Agent/Client/Developer:	Emma Newrick, NCC Maxine White, Newport Norse Phil Booth, Newport Norse
Design Review Panel:	
Chair	Jonathan Vernon Smith
Lead Panellist	Mike Gwyther-Jones
Panel	Steve Smith Jamie Yeoman Angela Williams Helen Kane Jen Heal, DCFW