

Design Review Report

DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

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	12 September 2013
Issue date	27 September 2013
Scheme location	Pontprenau Primary School
Scheme description	School
Scheme reference number	13 (83A)
Planning status	Pre-planning
Declaration of interests	None recorded

Consultations to date

Consultations with Education and Highways departments in Cardiff Council and a specialist education consultant have taken place since the last review meeting. The team have also consulted the Crime Prevention Design Advisor for South Wales Police.

A statutory public consultation for a single form school entry has been undertaken, however, the current proposal is for a two form entry therefore a further public consultation will be carried out in due course. The scheme will likely be in the public domain by the end of September 2013 but until that time the design review report will remain confidential.

This is the second time the scheme has been presented at Design Review, the first being in July 2013, when three options were being proposed by the design team.

Summary

Whilst understanding the constraints and difficulties of the site the Panel remains concerned about the proposals and the scope to achieve a high quality solution for the school. The following points were highlighted:

- Many of the classrooms remain south facing. The resulting solar gain will make them uncomfortable for the children and teachers. The design has been modified to provide a canopy for shade on south facing classrooms but the Panel was not convinced that this was adequate. The Panel reiterated that improved solar control was required or else a more focused use of north facing classrooms which would provide ample daylight and be much more comfortable in a learning environment.

- The Panel welcomed the appointment of a landscape architect to the team, as suggested at the July review. The need to enclose the site with high fencing was an area that the Panel thought should be reviewed and a better, perhaps more landscaped solution found around the main building entrance. The Panel also commented that the landscape design at the north of the site was a positive and interesting development which added value to the design.
- Access to the site remains a major concern especially regarding the way in which entry to the site will be interpreted. Vehicular access is proposed, from an existing roundabout on Heol Pontprennau, for staff parking but with no facility for visitor parking or parent/guardian drop-off. The Panel questioned the locations of pedestrian crossings for the school and also suggested that dialogue be opened with the highways authority towards major alterations to the existing roundabout so that the school access is not perceived as primary vehicular entrance. Such changes, if deliverable, would then provide more space at the front of the site and improve the access route for pedestrians and cyclists.
- The Panel felt that having separate building entrances for all the different age groups could prove problematic and discussed the possibility of combining the entrances for infant and junior children to ease legibility, and provide more space for waiting parents/guardians.
- The form of the new building at its junction with the existing community centre requires significant refinement. The new building entrance and foyer should engage more effectively with the existing bold form of the community centre roof and north wall.
- The current proposal indicates a covered play area for Reception classes that shelters the entrance to a plant room and storage facilities. The Panel understood the need for a link either side of the school, but thought this proposal could become a dark and unpleasant area that would need artificial lighting at all times. It might also become a wind-tunnel and be difficult to manage. The panel believed the area could be significantly improved by relocating the plant room and store; widening the space and introducing teaching rooms on its northern side.
- The first floor circulation area appears too constricted and can benefit from widening so as to provide additional learning spaces and improve flows into and through the area at a key pressure point.
- The location of the refuse store could introduce servicing difficulties.

Discussion and panel response in full

The design team opened the discussion with their response to the points raised in the earlier July review as set out in the Design Review report. The team explained their responses and reasons for bringing forward the current proposal.

The Panel fully acknowledged the constraints of a site which slopes steeply North to south, and the need to incorporate the existing community centre into the new school. The Panel was reassured that the design had progressed since the last review but were surprised that Option 2 had been developed further as this approach fragments the accommodation resulting in long circulation routes through the school. Access for pupils and parent/guardian drop-off is a major concern as the site is directly off a roundabout on Heol Pontprennau with no dropping off provision. The Highways Department's desire to introduce a school safety zone with traffic restrictions at the front of the site (to maintain visibility) were considered to be measures that would further compound an already congested area.

The Panel was concerned that the main entrance to the school appeared to give priority to vehicles at the expense of pedestrian and cyclists and believed that the design team need to reconsider the various approaches. The existing roundabout is a major contributor to this, and the panel urged the Authority to engage with their highways department with a view to major alterations to the existing layout and the potential removal of the roundabout. If deliverable, this would free up space at the front of the site and improve pedestrian and cycle access at the entrance. The Panel requested that a highway layout be prepared, to identify the locations of pedestrian crossings and demonstrate how pedestrian and cycle access will work. The design team confirmed they are consulting the Highways Department and the Panel wished to emphasise the role of the Planning Authority, not the Highways Department, as the permitting authority, and that highway department advice should be informed by and reflect current guidance as set out in the Manual for Streets.

The Panel thought that the main entrance to the school building was unclear and needs further attention to make the area more legible, inviting and comfortable. The proposed arrangement of small lobbies and spaces behind a fully glazed entrance façade is illogical and could easily lead to congestion, and greater clarity is needed between the entrance door in the glazed façade and the similar entrance door adjacent to it.

The interface between the new school building and the retained community centre needs to be resolved so that they properly relate as one new integrated building. The Panel thought it might be beneficial to separate the main part of the new school from the community centre and use the form of the new entrance foyer to provide a clear definition between the two.

The Panel raised the possibility of combining the infant entrance and the main entrance to create a more comfortable space at the front of the school for parents/guardians. Similarly, the area for drop off and collection of nursery school children could be more generous if their entrance was moved further north.

The Panel thought that some spaces could be improved to create a better and more pleasant flow through the school. As designed, the proposed covered central space, intended to provide a link between age group entrances, will need to be artificially lit at all times and could become a wind tunnel. The Panel suggested relocating the plant room and adjacent store, and turning the whole of the area north of the space into a more flexible use room or learning space that could benefit from the external space outside. The Panel also thought that the use of good quality materials in this area was crucial to ensuring the space would be a pleasant one.

The Panel questioned the location, effectiveness and practicality of the refuse store, which appeared to present potential difficulties for deliveries and collections to and from the kitchen.

Many of the classrooms are south facing but the panel were not convinced that they were sufficiently safeguarded from solar gain or glare, despite the design team's suggested use of extended roof eaves. While the Panel supports the Passivhaus approach to the environmental strategy, it has concerns that this approach has implications for many aspects of the specification. The south facing glazing in particular is at risk of causing over-heating unless suitable solar shading is provided on all of the south facing windows.

The Panel believed that some areas of boundary fencing need to be re-considered, particularly those around the main entrance, as they may limit the space available for parents/guardians whilst dropping off or collecting children. The Panel thought that drop off and collection spaces should be more generous, especially for areas used by younger children.

The Panel encouraged the team to return to design review if the timetable allows but are mindful of the intention to submit a planning application in the next two months.

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

Attendees

Cardiff Council

Client/Developer	Mike Gwyther-Jones Kathryn Lewis Michele Duddridge-Hossain Andrew Bates Mian Soleem Daniel Rossiter Glenie Hoang (observing) Greg McKay – Stride Treglown
Design Review Panel Chair	Alan Francis
Lead Panellist	Jonathan Adams Simon Carne Steve Smith
Observing	Carole-Anne Davies, DCFW
Recording	Sue Jones, DCFW