



# Design Review Report

S4C Headquarters,  
Carmarthenshire

**DCFW Ref: N107**

Meeting of 8<sup>th</sup> April 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**

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

### **Public**

8<sup>th</sup> April 2016  
22<sup>nd</sup> April 2016  
Carmarthen  
Media/offices  
N107  
Pre-application

## Declarations of Interest

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None declared.

## Consultations to Date

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A consultation period is planned for May 2016. The project is pre-application although it has been widely covered in numerous media.

## The Proposals

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At the heart of this project is the decision to relocate the headquarters of S4C from Cardiff to Carmarthen in a building which will house the broadcaster, spaces for independent creative industries and facilities that will support wider community use. The site lies to the northwest of Carmarthen centre, at a location which is well-established as a Higher Education Campus. Two new buildings, Y Llwyfan and a Teaching and Learning Centre, exist adjacent to the site for the new building. This site sits to the north of College Road, with the rest of the campus buildings to the south of the road. The site is currently a grass field which slopes down to the north away from College Road. It has a strong landscape setting defined by farming to the north and numerous tree covered hills beyond, which are characteristic of the landscape surrounding Carmarthen.

The proposed building, known as 'Yr Egin' is triangular in plan with one of its points facing the principal approach from the south. A south-facing, triangular paved and landscaped space is thus formed between Yr Egin and the Teaching & Learning Centre. The main entrance is positioned to face this space. Service yards and car parks are positioned on lower parts of the site to the north. Internally, the building is organised as three wings around a central 'heart space' that rises through all three storeys. On the ground floor a café, retail and a digital hub lie just beyond the entrance. Production facilities and an auditorium add to the solid appearance of the ground floor. The upper floors are substantially glazed and primarily provide office space around the perimeter.

## Main Points in Detail

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The following points summarise key issues from the review and should inform work ahead of a further review and the submission of any planning application:

### **Conceptual Approach**

The architectural concept for the project is strong and appropriate and works subtly on a number of different levels.

Rather than the concept imposing a geometric shape onto the site, the architects have used the idea to create a building which sits comfortably in the site whilst addressing the different surrounding conditions appropriately.

The ambition to create an impressive but modest building responds well to S4C's brief and philosophy.

### **Response to site and landscape**

The spaces around the proposed building and its relationship with the landscape and campus are important. This project provides an opportunity for the whole campus.

The way the building links to the wider landscape could benefit from further consideration. For example, there may be value in designing boundary treatments to strengthen the concept and the building's relationship to its setting. It will be helpful to define what the landscape zone between the building and the farmland is intended to be used for.

We welcome the landscape architect's involvement in the design process at this early stage so that building and landscape can be integrated and developed simultaneously.

Further thought could be given to how people are likely to approach and arrive at the new building. There may be different scenarios to be designed for in terms of landscape design, entrance position and sequence. Signage should ideally be avoided.

The proposal to create a public space outside the building helps to prioritise and improve pedestrian movement across the campus and helps to integrate the Teaching and Learning Building with the site. Pedestrian priority would be further reinforced through treatment of the pedestrian crossing, although this is likely to be beyond the scope of this project. It would be useful to engage in meaningful discussion with the relevant highway personnel, with a view to introducing shared space or other surface treatment here. Merthyr College is one example where this approach has been successful.

The integration of the service yard area to the north of the building is crucial. It is essential that the requirements for this area are fully understood and set out as soon as possible. Late changes could compromise the quality of the building and its relationship to the landscape. On one hand it may be possible to provide a landscaped screen to minimise the visual impact of the service yard, but security requirements may demand a much larger and bulkier separation that would work against the current building concept.

## **Form and Massing**

Different options for the form and height of the building have been tested and an appropriate and innovative solution has been reached.

It could be questioned whether the protruding finger of accommodation on the ground floor spoils the purity of the triangle concept or strengthens the entrance sequence. It may be helpful to show what alternative options have been explored in arriving at this decision. It may also be possible to extend the finger idea, in the form of additional boundary walling, but we recognise that the brief and budget may work against this.

## **Facade Design**

Adapting standard components to achieve a creative and functional facade is a sensible approach as is the early consideration of security, ventilation and environmental control, which are being properly treated as integral parts of the facade design.

The Commission appreciates the elegance in the simplicity of approach to the facade design but it may be that a specialist facade engineer is required to ensure full buildability, robustness and longevity. The team are currently working with a recognised facade company and they may be able to offer those guarantees.

If done carefully, building branding/signage into the facade design would provide an elegant, distinctive solution.

## **Internal Organisation**

The proposed internal layout works well apart from the arrangement of the auditorium, plant room and adjacent spaces; we appreciate that these elements were work in progress at the time of the review meeting. It is, however, important that there is sufficient gathering and circulation space outside the auditorium and that the route into it is attractive to use as it could be a source of revenue. The current proposal shows a route passing the service core. The design should offer enough flexibility to allow for technological developments and for the ways in which such spaces are used and serviced.

The proposed 'heart' space at the centre of the plan would provide a welcome and interesting centrepiece. It should be carefully considered whether the flexible meeting spaces around the heart on upper levels would work if they were enclosed.

Security will be important in this building and should be carefully planned for at this early stage given its potentially significant impact on the function of the communal foyer spaces. How the cafe terrace is accessed, whilst maintaining the right level of security, will also be important and that may influence whether the client's aim of seeing the landscape through the foyer glazing can be maintained.

Some of the building's potential tenants are unknown at this stage. This means that the best way to approach the internal fit-out needs careful consideration to allow for flexibility whilst avoiding clutter. It may be difficult to design the upper floor partition (between the corridor and the office space) until more is known about tenant profile.

## **Environment & Experience**

Environmental qualities, such as daylight, ventilation, temperature and views, have a significant impact on occupants' wellbeing and productivity. As well as providing a practical, functional and efficient layout it is important that the environmental qualities of the internal spaces are carefully considered.

It is best practice for sustainability to be designed in from the start of the design process, beginning with consideration of building form, orientation and fenestration and passive design. It is more expensive and inefficient to 'add on' technology at a later stage. The ambition to provide a mostly naturally ventilated building is welcome, but environmental modelling to test approaches to low energy design will be most useful at this early stage and would be best carried out before a planning application is made.

## **Procurement & Budget**

The development team is currently working to fixed budgets and we understand the current proposals exceed those budgets. However, the scope of works needed to meet the current budget seems vague as to whether, for example, the internal fit-out scope should exclude all Category B installations, either for all tenants including S4C or for non-S4C tenants. Typical commercial developer proposals would usually only install to Category A and even some Category A elements, for example suspended ceilings, are omitted if the Category B ceiling solution is not yet defined. It is important that the developer team identifies specific budgets for each part of the scheme and as to whether these budgets include fees, VAT etc. Only then can a considered budget and brief be provided to the architects.

As it is intended that BDP will be novated before completion of RIBA Stage 4 in the Design and Build contract, the level of detail in the Employer's Requirements will be important for ensuring a high quality standard and that the design concepts remain strong through the delivery stages of the project. Visual detailing should take preference over concealed engineering, although a sufficiently coordinated engineering approach will be vital to ensure the visual detailing is deliverable.

The proposed floor plans and innovative approach to facade design appear reasonably efficient and capable of being developed to achieve good value.

## **Further Review**

The Design Commission always welcomes the opportunity to review schemes again as designs progress. It may be useful for another review of this scheme to take place prior to any planning application being made, pending the timing of procurement arrangements and scope to add further value.

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

## Attendees

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Architect/Planning Consultant:	Niall Maxwell, Architect, Rural Office for Architecture Neil Sansum, Architect BDP
Client/developer:	Ray Selby, UWTSD Hywel Griffiths, UWTSD Geraint Flowers, UWTSD Garffild Lloyd-Lewis, S4C
Local Authority:	Stuart Willis, Carmarthenshire CC
Design Review Panel:	
Chair	Alan Francis
Lead Panellist	Elfed Roberts
	Amanda Spence, Design Advisor, DCFW
	Michael Griffiths
	Jen Heal, Design Advisor, DCFW
Observing	Carole-Anne Davies, CE, DCFW