

Design Review Report

Wales International Convention Centre,
Newport

DCFW Ref: 67

Meeting of 4th March 2015



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.

Review Status

Meeting date	CONFIDENTIAL 4 th March 2015
Issue date	20 th March 2015
Scheme location	Newport
Scheme description	Convention centre
Scheme reference number	67
Planning status	Outline consent granted 2014

Declarations of Interest

None declared.

Consultations to Date

Discussions between the design team and Newport City Council have taken place between December 2014 and February 2015.

The Proposals

A new international convention centre, containing auditorium, main hall, meeting rooms and associated offices, service and catering facilities and car parking is planned for the Celtic Manor Resort site in Newport, adjacent to the existing hotel and conference facility. The steeply undulating site is close to the M4 motorway and adjacent to Coldra Woods. Outline planning consent was granted in summer 2014, since when Scott Brownrigg have been appointed to develop design proposals.

Main Points in Detail

This review was carried out at a late stage in the design development, and the team was reminded that early consultation is recommended when there is greater scope for the Design Commission for Wales to add value through its comment. However, the design team considered it important to meet with the Commission even at this late stage and the following points summarise key issues from the review, and may be used to inform work ahead of making a detailed planning application.

Site and building location

Although an issue outside of the responsibility of the design team, the Design Commission questions the merits of locating an international convention centre without direct links for rail travel. The proposed site relies on visitors arriving by car.

Given the chosen site, the Design Commission for Wales understands the design team's decision to position the building in the proposed location, to make best use of the existing topography. This has allowed the team to develop good interior spaces, some of which could have a strong relationship with the landscape.

Viewpoints

Due to the nature of the site, views of the new building will be important considerations. The views of the building from the motorway, and the impact on the visibility of the existing hotel are especially significant. It is essential that views from the motorway are accurately modelled so that impact can be assessed.

Other key agreed viewpoints should be established, such as those from public rights of way and other significant places in the surrounding countryside. Communication with the local planning authority should establish whether a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment is required.

Views of service areas and the kitchen block should be carefully considered from the public footpaths close by.

Drawings showing high level views are useful for explaining the scheme and how it sits in relation to the existing buildings, landscape and roads.

Noise impact

Noise from the motorway has a significant impact on this site. The location and form of the proposed building means that the entrance plaza will be particularly vulnerable to noise. It is encouraging to hear that the design team includes the expertise of an acoustician. However, the team could consider ways to create a stronger barrier to noise along the edge of the plaza and enhance the arrival experience.

Communicating the proposal

Due to the complicated level changes across the site, the proposals need to be very clearly communicated to aid understanding, particularly in terms of access and impact on views. A physical model would be very useful for communicating the scheme to a wider audience.

Materials

The proposed slate cladding appropriately hints at a natural characteristic. However, the team may consider whether incorporating materials which make a reference to the Newport locality would also benefit the scheme.

The detailing of the slate cladding will be important, and should be designed for distant and close up views. Samples and larger test panels will be useful for testing different options.

Arrival and relationship to manor building

The arrival sequence will play a major role in the visitor experience of the convention centre. This should be carefully planned and refined to be welcoming for those using the existing hotel and leisure facilities as well as those visiting the convention centre.

The relationship between the existing manor house and the proposed roads, landscape design and new building need further consideration so that they are all fully integrated and respect the manor house.

Entrance canopy

The entrance and glazed canopy could be better resolved and refined. The canopy extent and supports appear to be the least resolved part of the scheme.

Sustainability and environment

As this scheme has the potential to be internationally significant it should achieve the best possible levels of energy efficiency and sustainability performance, to ensure it is an exemplar. Given the nature of the project and the absence of access to sustainable transport links, the highest possible standards over and above minimum BREEAM requirements should be aimed for and the means of achieving them clearly demonstrated.

It is encouraging to see good daylight entering the exhibition space, natural ventilation in the car park, and a sustainable water management designed to work with landscape proposals.

As the site is very exposed to prevailing winds, it would be good practice to undertake wind modelling studies at this stage. Wind conditions in the plaza and at the entrance will be particularly important.

Security

Security of the site should be considered at this stage, as any late requirement for security fencing could have a negative impact on the relationship between the building and the wooded landscape.

Exemplars and further reference

It would be useful for the team to look at exemplar convention centres of a similar scale, both in the UK and internationally. There may be many useful lessons to learn from these, including those related to arrival/entrance, servicing, catering and parking/transport.

Reference to the Welsh Government/Design Commission for Wales Practice Guide: Planning for Sustainable Buildings may also be helpful and we include a link here.

<http://gov.wales/topics/planning/policy/guidanceandleaflets/practice-guidance-planning-for-sustainable-buildings/?lang=en>

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 as a wholly controlled 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

Agent/Client/Developer:	Celtic Manor Resort
Architectural/Landscape Designer:	Oliver Thomas, Scott Brownrigg B. Brown, Chris Blandford Associates
Local Authority:	Tracey Brookes, Newport Council Not present
Design Review Panel:	
Chair	Alan Francis
Lead Panellist	Angela Williams
	Stephen Smith Jen Heal, Design Advisor, DCFW Amanda Spence, Design Advisor, DCFW
Observing:	Carole-Anne Davies, Chief Executive, DCFW