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Design Review Report

Hotel, West Parade, Rhyl

7th November 2013

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	**CONFIDENTIAL**
Meeting date	Thursday 17th October 2013
Issue date	7th November 2013
Scheme location	West Parade, Rhyl
Scheme description	Hotel
Scheme reference number	25
Planning status	Outline planning condition
Declaration of interests	None declared

Consultations to Date

Pre-application reviews have been held with Denbighshire County Council throughout the past year. Sarah Stubbs is the Case Officer. A public exhibition was held in July.

The Proposals

The site is located on the junction of West Parade and Water Street and extends south along Crescent Road. The site was previously occupied by the Honey Club which was unused for some time, and a derelict building on 25/26 West Parade. Both buildings are now demolished. The site has a prominent location on the edge of a Conservation Area, facing the sea front, and has been identified by the Local Authority as a key opportunity for regeneration.

A new 64 bedroom hotel with ground floor ancillary space is planned. The proposed built form reflects that of the now demolished Honey Club, with eaves and ridge heights to match those of neighbouring buildings.

Summary

There were several key points specifically identified by the Panel:

- The Panel was supportive of the principle of redevelopment of this site and thought that a hotel was an appropriate use. They understood the design pressures associated with budget hotels, but recognised that this will be a very important development for Rhyl.

- The Panel felt the impact upon the seafront to be the most important aspect of the new hotel design. It should contribute to West Parade in a way that looks towards the future, and that this consideration should drive the design proposals for the site. They thought that the current proposal was trying to respond to competing demands which weakened the proposal.

- The Panel felt that the design was unduly influenced by the Conservation Area and that it was difficult to respond to historic buildings which no longer exist, whilst delivering a contemporary hotel facility. The Panel suggested that a well designed, building which addressed the scale of existing context would provide Rhyl with a good example of commercially viable sea front development. This is essential for the future of the area.

- The Panel were keen to see the scheme to succeed in the right way, and would therefore welcome a further Design Review as the scheme progresses.

- The Local Authority was reminded that the Design Commission's early involvement is important for key future projects in Rhyl in order that added value is achieved.

Discussions and Panel Response in Full

Presentation

Tom Booty of Denbighshire County Council gave a useful introduction to the context of this scheme, using a 3D fly-through of Rhyl to point out key developments taking place in the town and aspirations for the future.

The architect then gave a presentation of the scheme and explained how the design approach had been developed. The functional brief is based on the standards required of a Premier Inn Hotel, plus a retail unit fronting the Parade. The massing relates to

surrounding buildings. The facade design, materials and detailing have all been driven by a combination of analysis of historic Rhyl buildings, a study of the Conservation Area architecture, guidance from the Local Planning Authority, and Design Guidelines produced by Anne Lloyd-Morris of Heritage Planning Consultancy.

A facade design study was presented, which showed how the architects had incorporated a rhythm to reflect the verticality of the bay-fronted Victorian buildings which used to line the parade. Red brick was chosen to respond to the higher quality historic buildings in the town which tend to be brick. The facade also incorporates horizontal bands of soldier-course bricks in a different shade of red.

Design Guidance and Approach

The Panel congratulated the team for bringing forward a project of this significance for Rhyl. They thought the nature of use would sit well on this site, and were encouraged to see the mixed-use (hotel/retail) proposal. Some information about who may fill the retail space and how it might be sub-divided would be useful.

The Panel was concerned that the architectural expression of the facade had become confused as a result of the variety of influences on the design, including the requirements of the Conservation Area, comments from the Local Planning Authority and Design Guidelines from Heritage Planning Consultancy. The Panel understood that the design response had been heavily guided by the Planning Department, and that they had been wrestling with the constraints on architectural design and producing a commercially viable building on this site. The Panel felt that these multiple sources of design 'guidance', and the design response to these influences, had not led to a successful outcome.

There was some confusion over where the boundary of the Conservation Area falls, however it became clear that the site is just inside the boundary of a town centre conservation, most of which is behind the buildings that face onto West Parade. This creates an awkward situation for the designers. As the site lies on the edge of a Conservation Area, the new development should 'preserve or enhance the character of the area'. However, what that character should be is unclear, given that the original buildings on the site have been demolished and this is the only part of the Conservation Area to face the seaside.

The Panel recognised that there was a conflict between responding to the ideas taken from historic buildings and producing an appropriate contemporary building within the

budget constraints. At the moment, the scheme is falling between two places. The team needs to think about how they can achieve a successful seaside hotel in this modern-day context. The new building should be high-quality and done well. An example might be that a modern, carefully detailed brick building would be appropriate for the edge of the Conservation Area.

The ground floor side and rear elevations of the current design are more successful, as they relate to the use of the spaces inside rather than trying too hard to be something else. The view of the Panel was that it was crucial for the development to be forward-looking, not looking to the past, some of which no longer exists. The building must make a positive contribution to the wider regeneration aims for Rhyl and enhance the West Parade frontage.

Design Details

The Panel wanted to get a better understanding of the choice of materials for the facade. The architects explained that, although the vast majority of buildings along West Parade were now rendered, the higher quality historic buildings were mostly red brick. They also thought that brick would be more durable in a seaside environment. The architects recognised that the detail and execution of the brickwork would be important in achieving good quality. It was suggested that keeping the detail simple would help to deliver the building within budget.

The Panel wondered whether the design would benefit from breaking up the monolithic block along the main facade. The architects thought that the repetitive nature of the hotel did not lend itself to this. It was agreed that the building should also reflect its use.

The corner of the building needs to be addressed and strengthened. Perhaps the articulation of the entrance could help with this. The route into the hotel from the disabled parking at the rear also needs to be better resolved.

The Panel suggested that the team look to precedent of successful, contemporary seaside developments of a similar nature to demonstrate what this scheme could achieve.

This scheme will be important for Rhyl in sending messages about its future and attracting further developments, therefore, the Commission would welcome a further review of this project before it is submitted for Planning Approval.

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

Attendees

Agent/Client/Developer:	Julian Seabrook, Chesham Estates
Architectural/Urban Designer:	Gordon Thomson, Formation Architects Michael Richter, Formation Architects
Planning Authority:	Tom Booty, Carole Evans, Denbighshire CC
Design Review Panel:	
Chair	Ewan Jones
Lead Panellist	Kedrick Davies Wendy Richards Martin Knight Elfed Roberts Amanda Spence, Design Advisor, DCFW
Observing:	Carole-Anne Davies, DCFW Mike Harvey, South Wales Police