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Landscape Strategy Ysgol Bro Dinefwr, Llandeilo

Planning Application Number: E/27510

Response to Carmarthenshire County Council

15th January 2014



Thank you for inviting Design Commission for Wales (DCFW LTD) to comment on the landscape design materials submitted in accordance with the conditions of the Planning Permission for the construction of a new 1200 pupil secondary school and associated 30 pupil specialist ASD unit and associated facilities on land at Lovelodge Farm, Ffairfach, Llandeilo (Application Number: E/27510).

The Commission carried out two full Design Reviews of previous proposals for this scheme on 7th December 2011 and 12th September 2012. We understand that a scheme was submitted to Carmarthenshire County Council, and that Full Planning Permission was granted on 26th April 2013. Condition 17 of the permission requires that, *'No development shall take place until an appropriate and comprehensively Detailed Landscape Design Scheme has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The scheme shall be in compliance with the principles of the approved Landscape Concept Scheme and guidance provided by the local planning authority.'* Further drawings have now been submitted to the local planning authority, upon which the Design Commission has recently been invited to comment.

We refer you to the Design Review Reports dated 20th September 2012 and 16th December 2011, the content of which should be considered alongside the following observations:

Landscape Detail Design Material

The condition of the planning permission requires a *'detailed'* landscape design scheme to be submitted. The need for development of detailed landscape design was also identified at the earlier DCFW Design Review. The DCFW report dated 20th September 2012 commented on the *'care and attention given to the landscape context'*, but recommended that the *'landscape and Visual Impact Assessments should be used to inform the development of the detailed design, which the designers acknowledged was not yet satisfactory.'*

In a Detailed Landscape Strategy, we would expect to see information regarding plant species, surface and hard-landscape specifications and indicative construction details, three-dimensional views showing the human experience of the landscape, along with images of the materials and plants to be used.

Three further landscape drawings have been submitted since the planning permission was granted. Drawing L(90)101 maps details of plant species to be used. Drawings L(90)101 and L(90)102 indicate the locations of different surface materials, boundary treatments and site furniture. However, there are no detail drawings, and the specification of the site furniture is yet to be decided. There are no drawings which demonstrate the human perspective from within the site, or on approach, or from the surrounding landscape; and there are no photo examples.

In particular, it would be useful to inform decision making, for the LPA to have sight of material which shows how the courtyard garden will be used in different scenarios: a performance taking place on the stage, for example.

At the Design Review, the panel also thought that more detailed work needed to be done 'to create a sense of civic quality around the main entrance'; and they could 'not identify the drivers for the courtyard landscape and noted that an urban precedent had been used, which is not appropriate for this scheme.' The three landscape drawings do not address these issues in any detail.

Wider Landscape Context

The Design Commission for Wales recognises that this site is located in a 'truly remarkable landscape setting', which is of significant value to the local community. The site and the wider landscape should be recognised and valued for its distinctiveness and quality and as an asset in cultural, environmental and economic terms.

At Design Review, the panel thought that supporting material, informed by a Landscape and Visual Assessment, was needed to properly show the impact of the building in this important landscape setting. The roofs of the new school, in particular, will be visible from the bridge and surrounding high points, and will therefore make a new contribution to the character of the landscape.

Any future development in this area, including this new school will have an impact on the surrounding landscape. Therefore, it would be beneficial to consider a Landscape Strategy for the whole of the wider area to control development and assess its likely impact on this important and valuable landscape. Future development including new settlements, infrastructure or transport will impact upon the landscape and a strategy could usefully highlight opportunities and inform considerations and/or future decision making.

Thank you for contacting us again. We hope our response is of assistance and we would welcome notification of the outcome.

END.