

Design Review Report

Review status

Public

Meeting date	26 September 2012
Issue date	5 th October 2012
Scheme location	Kelsterton, Connahs Quay
Scheme description	Converter Station
Scheme reference number	78B
Planning status	Outline application refused Detailed application submitted July 2012
Declaration of interests	n/a

Summary

The Panel welcomed the opportunity to review this interesting project. The considered architectural approach was appreciated. Our major concerns relate to the retention of the proposed high quality material specification. In summary:

- The success of the project will depend largely on the material specification and the translation of high quality materials researched in the Design and Access Statement (DAS) through to the finished building.
- The proposed acoustic wall treatment, which is intended to be aesthetically attractive, risks drawing attention to the considerable bulk of the wall, rather than making it a background structure in the landscape.
- Offsite contributions to community facilities and planting would be desirable.

Discussion and panel response in full

The architect's brief from the client was to respond to the refusal of outline planning permission in February 2012, and to progress a scheme which satisfied the concerns raised by committee members and the local community. There were also

many specific functional requirements for the converter station which have to a large extent dictated the height and mass of the building. The two long sides of the building are designed to respond to the different contexts, one facing the town of Connahs Quay, the other facing the Dee estuary.

The local authority representative stated that they broadly support the application, though there have been no pre-application discussions about the design, and that it is likely to go to the planning committee in October or November. The Panel welcomed the retention of the architects through the delivery stage of the project.

The Panel was assured that a site selection process had taken place. Although no details were available, 6 or 7 potential sites had been investigated and the current site, which formerly housed a coal fired power station, presented the best available option for various technical and feasibility reasons. The availability of the existing overhead network avoids the need for additional pylons or lines.

The building, as option 1 in the DAS, has been located on the site to align with the river, the adjacent road and railway line. The scale of the building is significantly lower than that proposed in the outline application, and arranged so that the lowest aspect faces the town. This height gives minimum clearance for the necessary equipment and cannot therefore be made any lower. While helping to reduce the visual impact, this arrangement places more emphasis on the quality and treatment of the roofscape and the architectural quality of the building.

The Panel emphasised the importance of the material selection. The copper roof finish proposed by the design team will weather with an attractive patination and will have the further advantages of longevity and low maintenance. It will be important to ensure that the proposed specification of materials is translated to the finished building. If the proposed copper is replaced with another material, this will affect the character and potentially the acceptability of the overall design.

With regard to the acoustic wall, the Panel doubted that the proposed 'fins' made of Trespa panels would deliver the desired enhancement. Rather, there is a danger that the colourful 'jigsaw' façade treatment will actually draw attention to the wall which should disappear into the landscape rather than stand out. In our view it would be better to retain a simple unadorned wall treatment, reflecting the drama and simplicity of the existing Eon power station nearby, and securing the delivery of a high quality roof finish on the main building.

The Panel commented that Option 2 in the DAS appears to have less visual impact than the preferred Option 1 and queried if the design team had determined the zone of visual influence through their visual assessment. The team stated that there was

no difference between the two options in terms of receptors and visual impacts particularly in the in the longer term once planting has matured.

Discussions have been held with the LPA on possible offsite planting and enhancements to the adjacent park, but this does not form part of the current application. The bund and planting along the southern site boundary will be maintained by National Grid. The existing line of conifers will be retained.

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

Atodiad 1/appendix 1 Mynychwyr/attendees

Agent/Client/Developer	National Grid (Keith Webster, Glyn Gibson, Simon Best)
Architectural/Urban Designer	Archial Architecture (Iain Cant)
Consultants	Aecom (Mark Welsby) TEP (Bobby Clayton)
Third Party Planning Authority	n/a Flintshire CC (Declan Beggan, Glyn Jones)
Design Review Panel Chair Officer Lead Panellist	Wendy Richards Cindy Harris Chris Jones Roger Ayton