

Design Review Report

Bradley Court, Cardiff

DCFW Ref: N131

Meeting of 13th April 2017



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	13 th April 2017
Issue date	25 th April 2017
Scheme location	Cardiff
Scheme description	Student Accommodation
Scheme reference number	N131
Planning status	Pre-application

Declarations of Interest

None declared.

Consultations to Date

Formal pre-application discussion with the local planning authority is underway but public consultation has not yet taken place.

This scheme was previously reviewed by the Design Commission in February 2017 and this report should be read alongside the report from that review.

This is the second review to have been afforded confidential status, whilst the proposals are developed at the early stages, prior to the public consultation period. The comments of the Commission on this project will be made public immediately the consultation period starts. Subsequent reviews will not be afforded confidential status.

The Proposals

The development site is a corner plot at the junction of Park Place and Stuttgarter Strasse in Cardiff's city centre, close to the edge of the Cathays Park Conservation Area and within the Windsor Place Conservation Area. The development site includes a Grade II Listed building (11 Park Place) and there are a number of trees on the site protected by Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs).

The brief seeks to provide up to 460 student studio residences plus a 'hub' in a new block of up to 17 storeys (one storey fewer than proposed at the previous review). A restaurant/café facility is proposed for part of the ground floor.

This is the second review following the first review in February, where initial concepts and options were reviewed. The proposed options presented at that time involved variations of an eighteen storey mass. The review concluded that, based on the depth of

analysis included at the time, there was insufficient justification for the proposed building height on this sensitive site.

Main Points

The continued engagement with the Commission from an early stage in the design process is welcomed. The Design Commission reiterates its view that the site for this project is particularly sensitive and complex, being within one Conservation Area and in close proximity to another with a listed building on the site. The corner location forms a natural marker to the edge between the commercial city centre and the civic centre – arguably Cardiff's most distinguished built environment. A tall building on this site would have a significant impact on the immediate environment and the wider city and therefore demands that highest design quality and comprehensive justification.

The following points summarise key issues from the review and should be considered to inform any further work ahead of public consultation and a planning application being submitted:

Height, Form and Massing

A key point of discussion in the previous review in February was the question, 'is the scheme too tall for this site?' The consensus then was that it was, mainly given the inadequate depth of analysis provided to justify the proposed development height. Since that review the team has, informed by pre-application discussions with the local planning authority, done a significant amount of work to test the visual impact of the latest proposed massing and form from surrounding viewpoints. Both the images and the model presented at the review are useful in demonstrating that impact.

The testing confirms that a building with the proposed form and massing would have a significant visual impact on the streetscape and the two Conservation Areas, although the Commission appreciates the scale of the lower wing has been reduced to minimise its impact on views from Windsor Place.

Now that the impact assessment studies have been carried out, they can be used to help answer the key question which remains, 'is a tall building appropriate for this site?'. Given the sensitivity and importance of the site, this judgement should not be determined solely by commercial viability of developing the site and should be dependent on quality, not just height. Although the Design Commission can comment on the quality of the design process and the proposal, it is ultimately the local planning authority's place to determine whether the response to the Conservation Areas and their Tall Buildings Design SPG* is acceptable.

*NB This SPG was not available via the Council's website at the time of this review. The Commission understands it received approval on 26th January 2017.

The planning authority should also carefully consider the precedent this proposal would set for building in or near a Conservation Area. There are other sites (such as that across Stuttgarter Strasse) containing non-listed buildings of indifferent quality that are likely to come forward for redevelopment should this scheme receive planning consent.

It is important that the authority thoroughly assesses the precedent issue and is clear as to their position should future applications be made for other sites.

If it is decided that a building of the proposed height is appropriate, the Commission would like to see further viewpoint testing to arrive at an optimum solution in terms of massing, proportion and articulation of form. In particular the Design Commission has concerns regarding the width of the building and the additional visual weight created by the treatment of the corners. It is good practice to demonstrate that different scales and juxtapositions of the tall and small wings have been tested, including an option that removes the existing trees.

The choice of materials and composition and articulation of the façade will also influence the 'apparent' impact of the form and massing and should also be explored through view studies.

Façade Design

The close-up studies of material compositions are useful and the ordered and rational approach to façade design is welcomed. However, further work needs to be done on the composition and articulation of the façade and its impact on distant views.

Considering views of the building from outside, alongside the internal experience and environmental modelling, should further inform the façade design. Early discussion with façade manufacturers and the client's commitment to long-term quality and durability are positive.

It may be appropriate for different sides of the building to be articulated differently in response to context and climate. How the top floor and any roof plant is dealt with will be important, as will the interaction of the ground floor with the public realm.

Due to its scale and location at a critical intersection of two conservation areas and the city centre, the proposal would become a prominent landmark in Cardiff. Careful consideration should be given to what makes the building 'belong' to Cardiff and expressive of the culture and values of the modern Capital City. This is not easy, as there is no predominant style or material. The proposal presented at the review had an 'American' feel to it and many such precedents were drawn upon in the presentation. Further studies of key buildings in the locality and the architectural language they use may usefully inform material selection and composition and provide a better narrative for the building.

Landscape and Public Realm

Pedestrian movement through and around the public realm is important and the landscape design needs to accommodate this, as well as address the treatment of the 'edges' of the site to help create a comfortable space. The more detailed studies of the landscape design and the qualities of space created are a positive step, but environmental modelling should now be used to demonstrate that this can be realistically achieved.

It is good that the public realm beyond the boundary of the site is also being considered, and further consideration of potential improvements to pedestrian movement across Stutgarter Strasse in particular would be beneficial.

Tall buildings have a direct and significant impact on the environment at street level, especially for pedestrians and cyclists. Wind hitting the side of a tower can be funnelled down to the ground creating uncomfortable or unsafe conditions. Overshadowing will also be significant. Therefore, it is important that early environmental modelling (wind, solar, thermal) of the public realm is carried out and informs the landscape design and façade design, both of which can be used to help avoid or mitigate negative effects.

Further Review

The Commission would welcome the opportunity to review this scheme again before a planning application is submitted.

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

Attendees

Agent/Client/Developer:	Michele Steel, Select Property Group
Architect/Planning Consultant:	Tom Jarman, FCB Studios Gareth Hooper, DPP Marc Dix, LT Studio
Local Authority:	Mike Biddulph & Justin Chung, Cardiff Council
Design Review Panel:	
Chair	Jen Heal, Design Advisor, DCFW
Lead Panellist	Jamie Brewster Steven Smith Jonathan Vernon-Smith Amanda Spence, Design Advisor, DCFW Carole-Anne Davies, CE, DCFW
Observing:	Peter Thomas, Vale of Glamorgan Sophie Godfrey, PINS Samantha Leathers, CH2M