

Design Review Report

Bradley Court, Cardiff

DCFW Ref: N131

Meeting of 16th February 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

Meeting date	CONFIDENTIAL 16 th February 2017
Issue date	6 th March 2017
Scheme location	Cardiff
Scheme description	Student Accommodation
Scheme reference number	N131
Planning status	Pre-application

Declarations of Interest

Design Review Panellist, Helen Kane did not attend the review due to her declaration of a potential conflict of interest arising from work she may be engaged in with AECOM.

Consultations to Date

No formal consultation has taken place.

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 18 storeys. For this review, three sketch options were provided plus some initial studies on fenestration and materials.

Main Points in Detail

Engaging with the Commission at an early stage is welcomed.

The following points summarise key issues from the review, and should be considered to inform any further work ahead of the planned review meeting in March 2017 and a planning application being submitted:

Response to Site and Context Analysis

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. The site sits at the intersection between a characterful Victorian Street and a busy, car-dominated 20th Century road. A tall building on this site would have a significant impact on the immediate environment and the wider city. The recently adopted and published guidance from the local authority also sets out the parameters for tall buildings in the city.

For these reasons, extensive studies and analysis of the site, context and townscape will be crucial to achieving an appropriate response. The developer may wish to consider an independent, specialist townscape and urban design study to inform the design work.

It is encouraging to see a specialist heritage architect working with the design team from the outset as impact on heritage will be especially important.

Good, informative analysis will help the design team to make the most of opportunities for the project to contribute positively to the city, add value to the townscape and develop a response which is wholly appropriate to this sensitive location.

Height and Massing

The developer’s aspiration for good quality is commendable. The Design Commission fully understands the need for this project to be commercially viable in order for the site to be developed, and that this means that there will be a specific quantum of development which the developer will be seeking. However, in this sensitive location, the scale, massing and height of the development will need to be fully justified in urban design terms as well as commercial terms.

The starting point for determining the appropriate height and massing of the building should be a comprehensive urban and streetscape study.

The proposals presented at this review showed a building which significantly exceeds the height of other buildings in the Conservation Area. The team will need to clearly set out the evidence and a rationale for this to be considered an appropriate response on this site.

Viewpoints should be agreed with the local planning authority from an early stage so the impact of height, massing and articulation of different options can be tested in a consistent and meaningful manner as design work progresses. As well as long distance views, the visual impact of the building on the streetscape along Park Place and behind other buildings in the Conservation Areas will be important.

As part of a comprehensive study of the site, the relative value of the protected trees should be considered so that the benefits of retaining or removing them can be weighed up against the different massing options that would be possible. The relative value of providing external public spaces within the site should also be weighed against the impact on the form and massing.

There will need to be a careful balance between an optimised plan arrangement and the resulting proportion in height terms. The current proposed ‘L-Shaped’ plan does not result in an elegantly proportioned mass when extended to the height proposed.

Because tall buildings have a significant and wide-reaching impact on their surroundings, it is especially important that they are of the highest quality, and that their quality is durable. Therefore, the budget for this project will need to be balanced to ensure that sufficient investment is made in achieving the level of quality demanded.

The base and top of tall buildings are always of critical importance to the overall quality achieved. Servicing and location of plant will be important considerations in this respect. The roof of a tall building in this location might provide an opportunity for exciting amenity space with views over the city and civic centre.

Streetscape

The quality of the streetscape along Park Place will be particularly important. Detailed studies of the following characteristics will help to inform the design:

- Rhythm and proportion
- Detailing and materials
- Scale (uniformity of scale)
- Roof/eaves line and building line
- Relationships to public realm

The proposal should seek to make a positive contribution to the streetscape along Park Place which celebrates the existing quality in response to a detailed assessment and analysis.

There is also potential to improve the streetscape along Stuttgarter Strasse, where there is currently limited active frontage.

Façade Design

The façades of the building should be designed in response to analysis of the site, context and micro-climate. The following issues should be considered:

- Noise
- Climate
- Orientation
- Neighboring uses
- Views (in and out)
- Visual impact and articulation of form and massing
- Reading of building proportions
- Positive expression of repetitive nature of building
- Active frontages
- Contribution and response to streetscape (immediate pedestrian perspective)
- Contribution and response to cityscape (long distance views)
- Environmental performance (ventilation, heating, cooling)
- Materials, including appearance, quality, durability and maintenance
- Comfort conditions internally
- Comfort conditions in public realm

Pedestrian Experience

The quality of the public realm around the site for pedestrians will be important, not least because all of the residents will be leaving and arriving on foot. The current pedestrian route between the main university buildings and the site is not pleasant and

involves a convoluted crossing of the car-dominated Stuttgarter Strasse. The Commission would like to see the design team working with the local authority to suggest integrated improvements to the public realm for pedestrians in this area.

Taller buildings have an impact on the micro-climate and comfort conditions at street level which will need to be tested and managed.

Environmental Performance

The vision and objectives for environmental performance should be clearly set out at this early stage so that environmental design can be an integrated part of the design process. Outstanding environmental performance can form part of the brand, and may become a selling point for the scheme. Designing a building which can be operated as sustainably as possible will add value to the project in the long term.

Construction Methods

In the consideration of appropriate construction techniques, pre-fabrication may offer benefits in terms of time on site, which is crucial for student-related projects which need to meet term deadlines. Pre-fabrication can also offer better quality control and improve construction waste, and is suited to highly repetitive building forms such as student residences.

Future Adaptation

Good practice would also consider future scenarios for the building with potential alternative uses. The project will deliver better long-term value if there is flexibility designed in which would allow for easy conversion to office or other residential use.

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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: Simon Doody & Tom Jarman, FCB Studios
Gareth Hooper, DPP

Ashleigh Murray, Donald Insall
Caitlin Forster, Aecom

Local Authority:

Nick Beckley, Cardiff Council

Design Review Panel:

Chair

Ewan Jones

Lead Panellist

Jamie Brewster

Michael Griffiths

Maria Asenjo

Kedrick Davies

Amanda Spence, Design Advisor, DCFW

Carole-Anne Davies, CE, DCFW

Observing:

David Jeffrey, WYG