

# Design Review Report

Bradley Court, Cardiff

**DCFW Ref: N131**

Meeting of 15<sup>th</sup> February 2018



## Declarations of Interest

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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

Issue date

Scheme location

Scheme description

Scheme reference number

Planning status

### PUBLIC

15<sup>th</sup> February 2018

22<sup>nd</sup> February 2018

Cardiff

Student Accommodation

N131

Application submitted

## Declarations of Interest

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Panellist and Commissioner, Mark Hallett is Development Director at Igloo. He employs AECOM and Igloo employs FCB Architects on different schemes. All present were content to proceed with the review following the declaration.

## Consultations to Date

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The scheme was submitted for planning in June 2017 and has been through the statutory pre-application consultation processes.

This scheme was previously reviewed by the Design Commission in February 2017, 17<sup>th</sup> April 2017 and 30<sup>th</sup> May 2017. The Commission also made comments to the planning authority on the amended scheme submitted for planning in October 2017 in the form of an objection letter. This report should be read alongside the reports from those reviews and the letter. The scheme presented at this review is a further iteration having been amended since the DCFW letter of objection was submitted.

## The Proposals

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The development site is a prominent 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 student studio residences plus a 'hub' in a new 'tall' building. A restaurant/café facility is proposed for part of the ground floor. The overall volume of the proposed block has been reduced by 25% compared with the scheme submitted for planning in October 2017, but is now higher. A different approach has also been taken to the materiality and articulation of the massing.

## Main Points

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### **Previous Feedback**

This scheme has been reviewed by the Design Commission for Wales several times during its development. Whilst there has been an openness to the possibility of a tall building in this location, the Commission has been consistent in its concerns regarding the scheme and these concerns have never been fully addressed.

The initial review of proposals for a tall building in this location highlighted the need for extensive studies and analysis of the site, context and townscape to achieve an appropriate response to the site and provide the basis of a rationale for the proposals. The first review also stressed the importance of the scale, massing and height of the development being justified in urban design terms rather than solely commercial terms.

The challenge of achieving the required high quality design and elegant proportions demanded by this important site were particularly evident in the second and third reviews where the significant visual impact and proportions of the building, particularly the width of the tower, were of particular concern. The quantum of proposed development was proving challenging in this constrained and sensitive site. The lack of justification for the tall building of the proposed proportions was raised again.

### **Response to the Conservation Area and Tall Buildings SPG**

The Design Commission reiterates that this site is in one of the most sensitive locations in the city being located within one Conservation Area, in close proximity to another and with a listed building within the site. Any building in this location must satisfy the need to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and a tall building must respond to the guidance set out in the Local Planning Authorities Tall Buildings SPG.

The Tall Buildings SPG sets out guidelines for acceptable new tall buildings in the city in support of design policies set out in the Local Development Plan. The Commission considers that the proposals contradict or fail to satisfy a number of these guidelines as outlined below:

*'The applicant will be required to justify the siting of the proposed scheme in the context of a clear design analysis and strategy for the site'. A thorough analysis and justification has been lacking from the beginning and should have been the starting point for the design. The points put forward in the most recent review failed to satisfy concerns about the location of this tall building.*

*'Any tall building proposals relating to the heritage assets listed below (or their settings) will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that they will preserve or enhance that asset's architectural quality, historic and cultural significance, character, integrity and/or setting'. The proposed tall building would have a significant impact on the Conservation Area and will disrupt the current consistent rhythm, scale and composition of the area. The proposals do not create an elegant profile and the mass of the building is considered to be damaging to the Conservation area. Insufficient public benefits are presented that would override the harm to the Conservation Area that the proposal would create.*

*'Any proposals that can be viewed in the vicinity of Cardiff Castle and the Civic Centre need careful attention. In this area of very high sensitivity, it is unlikely that proposed buildings significantly taller than the prevailing townscape will be supported.'* The proposal is highly visible from the Civic Centre across Gorsedd Gardens.

*'The prominence of tall buildings dictates that they must be of outstanding quality in architectural form and detailing'* and *'The quality of the form and silhouette of the building is critical and includes consideration of visual impact, and relationships with both the local context and other tall buildings. Tall buildings should be elegant and slender in form and should not appear as slab like structures.'* This has been a concern throughout the review process and has not been resolved. The desired quantum of development and the regular form required by the use as student accommodation on this very constrained site is a limiting factor. The resulting proposal, whilst revised in form from the previous versions still fails to create the quality of form required for this location.

*'Tall buildings will not be permitted in locations where they would overshadow or overlook adjacent properties to the significant detriment of the amenity of neighbouring occupiers.'* Overshadowing studies have never been presented as an integral and informative part of the design process. A tall building in this location will also have an impact on conditions and comfort for pedestrians and cyclists in the public realm.

## **Conclusion**

The Tall Buildings SPG provides the guidance required to determine the suitability of the proposed tall building on this site. The highly sensitive location of the site, combined with the proposed height and mass means that there is an increased obligation to achieve excellent quality and it is much harder to justify.

DCFW considers that the current scheme still fails to achieve the architectural excellence needed in such a location, on a number of counts detailed above, including justification and elegance in form.

Whilst each application will be judged on its own merits, it is important that the authority thoroughly assesses the precedent this may set and is clear as to their position should future applications be made for other sites within the Conservation Area.

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

## Attendees

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Agent/Client/Developer:	Michele Steel & Ken Knott, Select Property Group
Architect/Planning Consultant:	Tom Jarman, FCB Studios Gareth Hooper, DPP
Local Authority:	Lawrence Dowdall & Simon Gilbert, Cardiff Council
Design Review Panel:	
Chair	Ewan Jones
Lead Panellist	Mark Hallett Steve Smith Chris Jefford Toby Adam Jen Heal, Design Advisor, DCFW Amanda Spence, Design Advisor, DCFW Carole-Anne Davies, CE, DCFW
Observing:	Lyndsay Neville, Welsh Government