



DESIGN  
COMMISSION  
FOR WALES  
COMISIWN  
DYLUNIO  
CYMRU

# Design Review Report

Parkgate, Westgate Street, Cardiff

**DCFW Ref: N190**

Meeting of 14<sup>th</sup> March 2019



**Review Status**

Review date  
Issue date  
Scheme location  
Scheme description  
Scheme reference number  
Planning status

**Public**

14<sup>th</sup> March 2019  
20<sup>th</sup> March 2019  
Cardiff  
Hotel  
N190  
Pre-application

## 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.

None.

## Consultations to Date

---

Previous consultation with DCFW on proposals for this site was undertaken in February 2019.

## The Proposals

---

The proposal is for the retention of most of the existing fabric of the original Parkgate Building and its rear extension with the original entrance hall retained as the main entrance to a hotel. The County Court is proposed to have its rear portion demolished to accommodate a conference suite for 350 guests with the loss of some original fabric of significance. The proposed hotel will also include a spa and the existing basement car-park is to be retained.

## Main Points

---

The Design Commission welcomed the opportunity to review proposals for this site again. It is evident that design work is developing at a pace along with the acquisition of the buildings and the engagement of a potential operator. It is encouraging to hear that the potential operator of the hotel is amenable to a nuanced layout and design that incorporates the qualities of a historic building.

DCFW is supportive of this proposal that would bring buildings with architectural and historic value in the city centre back into meaningful use. It will be of significant benefit to the city and to the enlivening and ongoing improvement of Westgate Street.

The following key points were identified in this review:

**Form and materials**

Increasing the height of the front portion of the proposed new building as presented in the review helps to balance the overall form and is an improvement on the previous iteration. The scale of the rear element repeats the strategy of the 1990s building to the

rear of Parkgate, dwarfing the street-facing historic buildings with a much larger rear extension. Whilst on one level this succeeds in retaining the lower scale of frontages to Westgate Street, ultimately it embeds an awkward hierarchy of form, which is revealed on the side elevation of the new-build element. Considering more distant views from both Westgate Street and potentially Cardiff Castle may help to further refine the form. Consideration could be given to further expression of the spa at the upper level.

While the proposed use of stone and simplicity is considered appropriate, it presents the challenge of ensuring that the proposed new building holds its own against the detailed façade of the existing buildings. Further careful work may be beneficial to ensure that it has sufficient richness and presence. This should integrate a thoughtful environmental strategy which allows for hotel occupants the choice to open their windows; so that the designed richness is purposeful and not gratuitous. Thoughts expressed in the review discussion about the importance of edges should not be lost.

The glazing on the ground floor is helpful to activate and overlook the street but the arcade approach that wraps round the front and side of the building is less successful as it suggests that people are to be led around the building which is not the case.

Similarly, while the size and proportion of the windows are positive there could be recognition of the different orientations of each elevation.

### **Narrative and justification**

The design journey to date was well presented at the review but would be further supported by including other options that have been considered and the reasons why they have been ruled out, such as removing the 1990s extension to the rear of Parkgate.

The heritage analysis must come first in the narrative to justify how the design has responded to the significance of different elements. It will help to categorise and prioritise elements into high, moderate, low or neutral significance, along with detrimental elements to present a rational approach to how each element has been treated.

A narrative approach to heritage will also add to the character and justification of the design. For example, drawing on the historic uses of the buildings and their significance in society at the time.

### **Environmental strategy**

Long-term climate resilience should form part of the environmental strategy for the building. Whilst mechanical ventilation is proposed, consideration should be given to what will happen in the case of power failure and to customer choice particularly in relation to opening windows.

Future patterns of use and behaviour in the immediate environment of the buildings should be considered and designed for including noise, air quality, travel and transport that will have an effect over the long term.

The use of stone is positive for thermal mass, but roof materials are also important alongside the potential for green roofs. There appear to be good opportunities for natural day light which should be taken advantage of.

## Interior

Attention to detail and quality will be as important with the interior of the building and should be aligned with the design approach to the exterior. The entrance hall has the potential to be fantastic, but inclusive design and accessibility presents a challenge. Working with an access consultant at this stage would add value and help to overcome some of the challenges. The corner reception desk was awkward in this space, so it is encouraging that other options are being considered.

Windows at the end of circulation spaces would help the spaces to feel more pleasant.

A re-interpretation of the courtyard, particularly to draw natural ventilation and light into the large conference space will provide a significant strand of the case for the loss of the historic staircase to the County Court building.

## Next steps

We welcome the opportunity for ongoing engagement with the developer and design team as proposals for this site progress.

---

**Comisiwn Dylunio Cymru Design Commission for Wales is the trading name of DCFW LIMITED, a Private Limited Company established under the Companies Act 1985 and 2006, Company No: 04391072 incorporated in England and Wales as a wholly owned subsidiary of the Welsh Government. Registered office: 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Cambrian Buildings, Mount Stuart Square, Cardiff CF10 5FL T: 029 2045 1964 E [connect@dcfw.org](mailto:connect@dcfw.org). The comment recorded in this report, arising from formal Design Review through our Design Review Service, is provided in the public interest for the consideration of local planning authorities as a material consideration, and other users of the Design Review Service. It is not and should not be considered 'advice' and no third party is bound or required to act upon it. The Design Review Service is delivered in line with DCFW's published protocols, code of conduct and complaints procedure, which should be read and considered by users of the service.**

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

---

## Attendees

Agent/Client/Developer:	John Evans, Rightacres Property Co.
Architect/Consultants:	Alan Francis, Gaunt Francis Architects Stephen Quin, Gaunt Francis Architects James Green, Gaunt Francis Architects John Cotterell, Lichfields
Local Authority:	Howard Warren, Cardiff City Council
Design Review Panel:	

Chair  
Lead Panellist

Jamie Brewster  
Richard Woods  
Mark Lawton  
Ashley Bateson  
Carole-Anne Davies, Chief Executive, DCFW  
Jen Heal, Design Advisor, DCFW

Observers:

Larissa Berquo, DCFW  
Matthew Thomas, HLM Architects