



DESIGN
COMMISSION
FOR WALES
COMISIWN
DYLUNIO
CYMRU

Design Review Report

Penguelan, Aberystwyth

DCFW Ref: 74

Meeting of 18th June 2015



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	18 th June 2015
Issue date	1 st July 2015
Scheme location	Aberystwyth
Scheme description	Low-impact dwelling
Scheme reference number	74
Planning status	Pre-application

CONFIDENTIAL

Declarations of Interest

None declared.

Consultations to Date

There has been informal consultation with the local planning authority. This is an early consultation with DCFW and is afforded confidential status at this time.

The Proposals

The site is an undeveloped field, bounded by the River Rheidol to the south and a public road to the north, situated in rural Mid Wales countryside, 6 miles from Aberystwyth. Historically, the setting was used for farming and industry, including lead mining and a hydro electric power station further up the valley.

The proposal aims to utilise passive design as well as incorporating a ground source heat pump, PV panels and a biomass boiler. The proposal will be largely single storey, providing level access from the parking area and throughout the property. A second storey provides a single guest room. The ground floor accommodation is proposed as largely hidden below the amended raised ground level.

Main Points in Detail

The nature of this review was unusual, as it seems highly unlikely in the current circumstances, that a residential development on this site would achieve planning consent. The architects and their client are fully aware of this context, however the client requested that the proposition be consulted upon through the Commission's Design Review Service. The Design Commission panel felt that it would not be appropriate to comment in detail on the design of the proposal given the planning context. Discussion about the planning context took place and is summarised below.

Presentation

The scheme, which is at an early stage in the design process, was clearly presented by the architects. The analysis of the site and surrounding areas had informed the design concept. The physical model demonstrated the design strategy at this stage.

Planning Context

The Design Commission is not placed to provide individual planning policy advice. This is a matter for the Local Authority. The Commission's role through its Design Review Service is to consider, discuss and provide expert comment on aspects of design quality in the built environment in Wales, proposed in the context of extant national and local planning and development management policy. However, the planning context does have a significant impact on the design process and a number of planning related issues were considered during this review.

For this site, based on the information available at the meeting, it appears that there is no allowance in national or local planning policy for a dwelling to be developed on this site as it is outside the development boundary defined by the Local Development Plan (LDP). Aside from necessarily stringent requirements for agricultural worker or affordable homes, neither of which would apply in this case, there is no equivalent in Wales to the English NPPF paragraph 55 (previously PPG7) which makes occasional allowance for isolated houses which demonstrate exceptional quality and innovative design.

The local authority is recognised as one that is keen to support good quality design. However, it is understandable that care should be taken in relation to precedents in policy and practice in this specific planning context. The architect stated a view that in some local authorities such as this, the nature of the local construction industry in the past has been to build houses in small quantities on windfall sites which may be in rural areas and that opportunities for this kind of development could be considered useful for responding to housing demand. He noted that there were previously allocated sites of this scattered type, identified in the local plan, for smaller scale or one off housing, but that this was not the case in the latest plan. We understand that the current LDP approach prioritises intensification of development in existing centres and strategic areas.

Next Steps

It is important to note that challenges to existing policy bear risk for designers, clients and developers alike. It is important to consider the statutory public consultation stages that national and local policy is required to progress through in the event that any party wishes to challenge existing and adopted policy.

As a first stage the Commission considered that the client, if determined to proceed further, should consult a professional planning consultant, if, having understood the risk involved, the client decides to proceed with making a planning application. The professional planning consultant along with the architects, a landscape architect and other specialist consultants would need to make a clear justification that the scheme enhances the site as a whole and that it does indeed respond to housing need/demand. In that context it is also vital that every aspect of the design would need to be of the highest quality and clearly justified.

If part of the argument for the scheme is that it is low-carbon, it should be as close to zero-carbon and as sustainable as possible. This would require well integrated energy strategies which are modelled, tested and refined at very early stages to achieve an optimum outcome.

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

Attendees

Agent/Client/Developer:

Architect/Planning Consultant: Zeta Freeman - Catalina Architecture Ltd
Larry Jeffreys - Catalina Architecture Ltd

Local Authority: Owain Davies, Planning Officer, Ceredigion

Design Review Panel:

Chair Ewan Jones
Lead Panellist Simon Carne
Mike Gwyther-Jones
Maria Asenjo
Michael Griffiths
Elfed Roberts
Amanda Spence, Design Advisor, DCFW

Observing: N/A