



Design Review Report

Coleg Cambria,
Connah's Quay
21st January 2014



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	21 st January 2014
Issue date	27 th January 2014
Scheme location	Connah's Quay, Flintshire
Scheme description	Post 16 Education Centre
Scheme reference number	35
Planning status	Pre-application

Declarations of Interest

Leonie Wainwright and Jerry Spencer are Design Commission for Wales Advocates.

Consultations to Date

A public consultation event took place on the week commencing 13th January 2014.

There have been several pre-planning meetings with Flintshire Planning Officers, Conservation Officer and Highways department.

The Proposals

The scheme comprises a 6800m² extension to the existing Coleg Cambria Deeside campus to house a new sixth form centre for 700 students with the potential to accommodate a further 300 in the future. The proposed site is currently a sports field, sitting between the existing Coleg Cambria campus and Connah's Quay High School. The entrance to the site is off of Golftyn Lane, close to the High School entrance. Existing gas and water services run across the site, and there are views to the Flintshire Bridge and power station chimneys in the distance. The brief includes provision for drop off and parking for 26 coaches.

Summary

- A campus-wide masterplan, based on thorough site analysis, is required to logically plan transport and pedestrian routes. The masterplan should then inform the design of the proposed building and landscape.
- The external spaces and landscape require better planning, definition and design. A landscape architect should be employed to work with the design team.

- Materials and detailing need further work to ensure a good quality scheme. The representation of materials will be important for the planning submission.
- The proposed sustainability strategies need to be modelled and tested.

Main Points in Detail

Timescale

To be of most value, Design Review should first take place at an early stage of a project when there is more scope to inform the design process. This project is running to an extremely tight time schedule, which has meant that this review took place just prior to a planning application being made. Therefore, the major design decisions have already been made, and there is limited opportunity for the review to influence the design.

Good design comes from an iterative process of analysis and testing of design ideas. If the client had given more time for designing, it would have improved the likelihood of achieving good quality design and a well resolved scheme.

The design team acknowledged that there are a number of aspects of the design which have not yet been fully resolved, and will be worked on prior to the planning application being submitted. The issues identified - transport and parking arrangements, site permeability and external works – were largely consistent with the concerns of the panel.

Masterplan

For a scheme of this scale and nature, which must relate to the existing surrounding buildings, a strategic masterplan is essential in making the facility work effectively. The design of this new part of the college would benefit greatly from a masterplan for the whole of the campus.

Ideally, the masterplan would be informed by a thorough analysis of the wider site, and would respond to the college's short and long-term requirements for the whole campus. It should also take into account the college's relationship with the adjacent High School and sports facilities.

The masterplan should clearly set out logical pedestrian and vehicle entrances and routes through the site, including any links to the High School. Priority should be given to the pedestrian, ensuring that designated routes are safe and convenient. Proper planning of transport/travel routes are particularly important for this scheme, given that it must incorporate a large coach parking and drop off facility, the entrance to which will be close to the High School's entrance. From the current proposal drawings, the overall traffic strategy is not clear; and the proposed pattern of pedestrian routes does not demonstrate a convincing approach. This is particularly apparent in the rather ill-defined relationship with the Coleg Cambria site and the apparent lack of integration and response to the Connah's Quay High School .

The panel felt that the presented design development of the coach park containing a green sward as its central reservation would be visually preferable to the option that presented an unrelieved area of solely hard finishes.

The design of the new building should respond to the strategies outlined in the masterplan, rather than routes and transport being planned around the building. The masterplan will inform the location of building entrances and the function and design of spaces around the building.

External Spaces and Landscape Design

The functionality and quality of the outside spaces around the proposed college building will be important in achieving a good overall design. The building and landscape design should work together in response to the overall masterplan. Although the planning of the rooms and spaces inside the proposed building have been considered in detail, the building form sits as an island with leftover space around it. External amenity and breakout spaces for the 700 students appear not to have been considered. These external spaces need to be better defined and planned to make them useful and to add value to the scheme.

As soon as possible, the client should employ a landscape architect to work closely with the architects on the design of the external spaces.

Parking is a major concern with this scheme, and requires further consideration and integration with the overall landscape design and masterplan.

Materials and Detailing

The specification of materials and detailing will be crucial to achieving a good quality design. These are areas which need further consideration, and will influence the impact the building makes on the surroundings.

The site requires piled foundations, and consequently, the designers have been advised against use of brickwork. There is a desire to make use of the local supply chain through the choice of materials. Metal rainscreen cladding is therefore proposed, although currently illustrated as a monolithic material on the drawings. The designers should consider the longevity of the materials and colours proposed, taking into account durability and the changing fashions for certain colours.

It will be important for the materials to be represented accurately in the documents submitted for planning. The 3D views shown at the Design Review do not give a realistic impression of the materials. Photorealistic views of the building in its surroundings from different view points, including any views onto the roof, will also be useful.

Sustainability and Building Services

The architects and services engineer explained that the scheme was on target to achieve BREEAM Excellent and that energy use would be 20% better than current Part L. There is a daylighting strategy, and it was explained that heating/cooling ventilation methods had been designed for summer and winter conditions. Although these aims and strategies are to be commended, evidence of testing and modelling would give reassurance that the sustainability claims are true.

In particular, the daylighting strategy for rooms on the lower levels, where it is intended to 'borrow' daylight from the atrium, should be scrutinised to ensure that sufficient

daylight levels will be realistically achieved. And the team must be comfortable that the glazed entrance space will not have problems with overheating.

With education buildings, it is especially important to achieve good acoustic separation. The team should employ recommended methods and testing to ensure this is achieved.

The building services are being designed to allow connection with a district heating system in the future if the opportunity arises. Again, this needs to be considered as part of a campus-wide masterplan.

DCFW is a non-statutory consultee, a private limited company and wholly owned subsidiary of the Welsh Government. 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:

Architectural/Urban Designer: Simon Venables, Ainsley Gommon Architects
Leonie Wainwright, Ainsley Gommon Architects
Sarah Davies, Ainsley Gommon Architects
Tim Davies, Waterman Building Services

Planning Authority: Jerry Spencer, Conservation Officer

Design Review Panel:

Chair

Richard Parnaby

Lead Panellist

Michael Griffiths

Angela Williams

Amanda Spence, Design Advisor, DCFW

Observing: