

# Design Review Report

Griffin Island (VVP),

Newport

**DCFW Ref: 52**

Meeting of 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2014



## 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

23<sup>rd</sup> October 2014  
4<sup>th</sup> November 2014  
Griffin Island, Newport  
Residential conversion, listed buildings  
52  
Pre-application

## Declarations of Interest

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None declared.

## Consultations to Date

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Fortnightly meetings are taking place with Welsh Government Officials under the requirements of the VVP investment programme. Early consultation with DCFW is a requirement of the VVP programme, set out by Welsh Government.

## The Proposals

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The Griffin Island proposal is an internal conversion project in the empty former office spaces above retail spaces and within Grade II Listed buildings in Newport City Centre. The conversion would create 26 new affordable apartments, in a mix of one and two bed accommodation, available for below-market rent. The project is split into three phases.

All three phases are only accessed from city centre streets, with staircases up to first floor level. The scheme does not incorporate any ground floor space except for the entrance doors. The Grade II Listing limits the extent to which fabric improvements can be made to the building. However the team stated that they will be incorporated where possible. The team intend to treat windows carefully with some secondary glazing and explained that most of the heritage value is in the facades which face the street, rather than in any internal features.

There is an existing valid planning consent for conversion to nine flats on the phase three site, and an expired permission for conversion to 24 flats on phases one and two sites. However, the team propose to make a new application for all three phases.

This scheme forms part of Newport City Council's successful bid for funding from Welsh Government's Vibrant and Viable Places (VVP) initiative.

## Main Points

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The following points summarise key issues from the review.

### **Overall Principles**

The Design Commission for Wales is supportive of the initiative to reuse these historic buildings, and to bring residential use into the city centre where it will add life and vitality. Although the timescale is challenging, the team appeared to have the skills and experience necessary to deliver this project.

### **Constraints**

The Design Commission understands the constraints and challenges inherent in the conversion of these listed buildings, with limited access off of the city centre streets.

These constraints may limit the extent to which the scheme will be able to address DQR if/where applicable and the extent of any environmental upgrades. The approach to conservation, DQR and environmental improvements described by the team at the meeting are sensible and appropriate to this context. The constraints and associated approaches should be clearly set out and communicated in the planning application.

### **Relationship to Ground Floor and Streetscape**

The internal conversion of the upper floors of these listed buildings, whilst providing important new accommodation, will have little tangible or visible impact on the streetscape. The value and impact of this project could be greatly enhanced if it could be coordinated with improvements to the ground floor retail units.

The Design Commission would encourage the Local Authority and Cadw to consider the potential for combining this project with other initiatives, such as Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI), which would add value and help improve the streetscape. We would encourage the team to pursue further conversations to explore such potential.

There is a level of 'clutter' caused by equipment fixed to the outside of the listed buildings, such as CCTV provision, lighting, cabling and brackets, which could be rationalised contributing further to a coherent and attractive street frontage. The City Council should act as guardian in ensuring the rationalisation and coordinated installation of such equipment and services, not least where fixings may interrupt the integrity of the listed frontage.

### **Further Engagement**

The Design Commission for Wales is meeting with VVP delivery teams to establish where value can best be added through further design review. This scheme does not warrant further review, provided it can be delivered as proposed.

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

## Attendees

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Agent/Client/Developer:	Kate Rees, Seren Group Eliot Hopkins, Greenwich Communities Ltd
Designers:	Aaron Terry, Roberts Limbrick Ltd David Martin, Roberts Limbrick Ltd
Design Review Panel:	
Chair	Ewan Jones
Lead Panellist	Amanda Spence Carole-Anne Davies