



IHP Design Review Report

H Factor First Time Buyer/Starter Homes,
Aberfan

DCFW Ref: 19AR

Meeting of 26th June 2019

Review Status

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

PUBLIC

26th June 2019
1st July 2019
Aberfan, Merthyr
Residential
19AR
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.

DCFW Panellist Elfed Roberts works for the Housing Association Pobl who are also submitting a bid for IHP funding. It was made clear to the presenting team that Elfed's role on the panel was to contribute his expertise in housing and design. All were content to proceed on this basis.

The panel Chair was advised that Gayna Jones, Chair of the Design Commission for Wales, chairs the IHP Group. Gayna was not present in the meeting.

The Proposals

H Factor have two projects in development. The proposal reviewed was for a small starter site that will accommodate six to eight homes. The aim is for the homes to be low cost to enable local first-time buyers to stay in the area. The properties will have an integrated tech-interface that will help residents understand their energy consumption and make the best use of their renewable energy supply. The technology will also monitor health and well-being factors. A flat-pack panel approach to construction is proposed with the potential for some self-build.

Main Points

This report is not a record of the full discussion that took place during the review, rather a summary of the key points that have been identified that would help to improve the project and any concerns regarding the funding of the project.

Urgent Design Concerns

The project intentions are commended but the design of the site is unresolved. The approach to the design of the dwellings and the site must come from the innovation *and* a response to an analysis of the unique features of the site. The site location plan, site analysis and design development were lacking from the presentation as well as topographic information and sections through the site. Ensuring this has been undertaken and presenting it in a logical sequence will help to refine the design and justify the approach.

Revisiting the internal arrangement of the dwellings could result in improvements. For example, the garden is currently accessed through a bedroom in some of the properties

and the balconies do not connect into a living space. In the two-bedroom properties the bedrooms are two floors apart which is not ideal for a family with young children. Further consideration of how people will live in and use these spaces will help to improve the design.

Placemaking

Some elements of the site are unresolved such as the remaining green spaces around the dwellings. It is unclear who will own and manage this and there is the potential that they will become a maintenance burden rather than being a positive addition to the site. Further work is needed to ensure that this will be a great place.

Integration of innovation

The full picture of what the innovation is and how it is fully integrated into scheme needs to be much clearer. There is a danger of trying to do too much on this small site without getting the basics right. Refining the objectives of the project and how the proposed innovation meets these objectives would help to focus the project.

A flat-pack approach is appropriate for this site due to the access constraints that were outlined. This could become a model for other small, constrained sites.

More information is needed on how the self-build element of the project would be managed and coordinated. Drawing on previous experience will help to reinforce the validity of the approach.

Next Steps

- Use site analysis to refine the site design.
- Review the practicalities of the internal arrangement of the dwellings.
- Clarify and narrow down the innovation.

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

Attendees

Agent/Client/Developer: Lynne Colson, H Factor
Adam Hancock, H Factor
Keith Baker, H Factor
Simon Conway, H Factor

Architect/Landscape Consultant: Lalit, H Factor

Design Review Panel:
Chair Simon Richards
Panel Angela Williams
Elfed Roberts
Jen Heal, DCFW
Larissa Berquò, DCFW