



IHP Design Review Report

Heol y Ffynnon, Brecon

DCFW Ref: 19AG

Meeting of 26th June 2019

Review Status

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26th June 2019
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Brecon, Powys
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Application submitted

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. Elfed Roberts is also working or has worked with Pentan and Asbri on other projects not related to this one.

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

The proposal is for a social rented scheme of 33 dwellings using Welsh timber with associated open space and enhanced amenity area with biodiverse drainage and a place to walk. The development would be supported by improvements to a footpath through the neighbouring residential area connecting to local schools and, ultimately the town centre. A partnership element of the project seeks to raise awareness of and encourage students to consider construction which has been identified as a need in the local area.

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

This project is well progressed with a planning application due to be determined in July. This limits the scope of constructive input into the design, but the following design considerations were raised:

The qualities of the compelling early sketch that identified key spaces and buildings within the site, linked by incidental streets have been diluted in the final scheme. In particular, the road has become very dominant, eroding the quality of the internal environment. Manual for Streets design principles should be applied on this site and it is disappointing to hear that the highways department within the local authority have not been supportive

of this approach. Any opportunity to explore improvements to the street design even at this later stage should be explored, particularly around the central space.

Further analysis of the local vernacular and how this has changed over time and in different locations (i.e. the town centre is different to the periphery) would help explain the proposed materials. As the use of wood is a key theme for the development this could be expressed more in the architecture and provide a rationale for a vernacular of the current era.

The layout of the site results in a cul-de-sac arrangement that limits connectivity with the existing settlement. Although the topography is challenging, a pedestrian link to the south should be fully explored.

Placemaking

Placemaking is one of the themes being explored in this project. While the proposals include some public open space, there is little innovation in this. The proposed space adjacent to the retained oak tree seems unresolved with the sides of houses facing on to it. Other incidental spaces to the south don't seem to have a specific function. The description of all these spaces working as a connected green space through the site could be very positive but this is not yet coming through strongly in the layout or landscape plan.

Going back to the Placemaking plan which identified the key spaces and marker buildings and checking whether this has been achieved in the final layout or how it might be rediscovered would be helpful.

Integration of innovation

The proposed innovation is not clear in this scheme. The proposals employ a number of good practice principles such as the provision of open spaces within the development, SuDS requirements and active travel connections and builds on other initiatives such as the Home-Grown Homes and Wood Encouragement programmes but the innovation within this was not evident.

The partnership element of the project could have added value but there was little detail on this.

Active travel and public transport improvements that would make this a viable no/low car development could be explored, however the location is challenging for this. The proposed upgrading of the footpath along is helpful but there was little evidence or narrative around how likely this is to have a significant impact on residents' movement patterns. The footpath improvements remain disconnected from the site and there was little evidence of considerations to support active travel within the site such as bike storage.

Next Steps

- Explain the innovation more clearly and ensure it is fully worked through in the design of the site.
- Explore the potential to enhance the street design.
- Develop the partnership working theme further.

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

Attendees

Agent/Client/Developer:	Simone Hodges, Powys County Council
Architect/Landscape Consultant:	Dafydd Tanner, Pentan Fiona Cloke, FC Associates Vincent Goodwin, Powys County Council (Active Travel)
Planning Consultant:	Barrie Davies, Asbri Planning
Local Planning Authority:	
Design Review Panel:	
Chair	Simon Richards
Panel	Angela Williams Elfed Roberts Jen Heal, DCFW Larissa Berquò, DCFW