



DESIGN
COMMISSION
FOR WALES
COMISIWN
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CYMRU

Design Review Report

Merthyr Tydfil Bus Station

DCFW Ref: 61

Meeting of 22nd January 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

CONFIDENTIAL

Meeting date	22 nd January 2015
Issue date	2 nd February 2015
Scheme location	Swan Street, Merthyr Tydfil
Scheme description	Bus Station
Scheme reference number	61
Planning status	Pre-application

Declarations of Interest

DCFW panellist Jonathan Adams was previously employed by Capita and is currently retained as a consultant. Jonathan did not attend the review meeting following this declaration.

Consultations to Date

Extensive consultation has been undertaken with the public and local businesses regarding the relocation of the bus station. Stagecoach and Rockspring have also been engaged as key stakeholders regarding the functional requirements and potential impact of the new bus station.

Pre-application meetings have been held with the local planning authority and other local authority departments.

The full scope of the VVP programme in Merthyr Tydfil was presented to the Design Commission in October 2014. The bus station was identified as one project for further engagement with DCFW and this review forms part of that engagement.

The Proposals

This proposal is for the relocation of the Merthyr Tydfil town centre bus station, from its existing location to the north of the shopping centre, to a site south of the shopping centre which is being made vacant through the closure and demolition of a health clinic and police station. Once the new bus station is open and operational, the existing bus station will be closed allowing the site to be redeveloped.

Proposals for the new bus station were at an early stage at the time of the review allowing for fluid and constructive discussion. Initial proposals are for a linear, south-facing building and concourse to the south of the shopping centre. The station would

accommodate 14 bus bays, four layover spaces and a taxi rank with associated ticket office, toilets, cafe and staff accommodation.

Bus access into the station is via Avenue De Clichy with buses leaving the station via Swan Street.

The programme anticipates submission of a planning application in May/June 2015.

Main Points

The Design Commission for Wales welcomed the opportunity to consider this important development at this stage in the design following a briefing from the Local Authority on the VVP programme in October 2014.

The presentation from the Local Authority regeneration team was helpful in setting the context for the development and providing the background to the site selection and consultation to date. It is very positive that this has helped to engender a shared vision and collaboration for this project within the local authority and with key stakeholders.

The Commission was presented with some of the options under consideration for the layout of the site but not all. It is important that the options so far considered are documented and reasons for their exclusion (based on the analysis of the site), clearly set out. This will help to justify the choices made and enable all options to be reconsidered if significant problems arise with the preferred solution.

Although Stagecoach have been consulted on the requirements for the bus station, the Commission considers it important for the client and design team to test and challenge alternative bus station layouts to ensure that the most efficient, effective and future-proof solution is identified. In particular the need for buses to reverse is a concern with the proposed layout. Current practice at various stations uses alternative layouts, avoiding the need of reversing and allowing more efficient use of space. Hammersmith bus station is just one useful example with a much higher volume of vehicles avoiding the need for reversing and complicated manoeuvres. The Commission suggested these and other examples should be explored with a view to future as well as current transport infrastructure and bus service needs. Examples should be visited and tested to inform optimum operational requirements and there may be value in the local authority doing so with stakeholders such as Stagecoach.

The connections to and from the bus station on foot are critical. The location presents a number of challenges in this respect which are not yet fully resolved and would benefit from further analysis at a wider level. Particular challenges include the level change from the shopping centre, the narrow link alongside the chapel (and the need to cross the service yard entrance) and how best to allow residents living to the south access the station without crossing the bus turning area. Access from the west is unresolved as the future of the pedestrian bridge is uncertain but this must be accommodated in the plans for the site.

Consideration is being given to including the disabled car park in the site. This space would provide additional flexibility and could help to ease some of the issues with the

current layout relating to the location of the taxi rank and pedestrian routes. If this land is included in the site the general layout should be reviewed.

It is recognised that ongoing discussions with Rockspring are resulting in potential changes to the perimeter of the site which will have an impact on the location and layout of the station building. Whilst this could have a positive impact in addressing the entrance to the shopping centre, the success of the bus station design should not be dependent on the delivery of these changes.

A landscape strategy would help to inform the design of the public spaces and routes, incorporating appropriate green elements where possible. This should also guide the hard landscape materials and street furniture. Clutter should be avoided and consideration given to whether a safety fence would be required along the southern edge to prevent pedestrians crossing the path of the buses. If this is required it will need to be sensitively integrated into the scheme or an alternative found through a sound landscape strategy and well designed public realm. The landscape proposals should extend to consider all of the connections into the site.

The town centre masterplan originally identified this site as a location for new development, the form of which should address the river with the gyratory enabling a reduction in the barrier between the town centre and the river. This ambition should not be overlooked in the development of the bus station proposals and the potential to incorporate or accommodate a building that provides frontage onto the river should be explored.

This is the main point of arrival into Merthyr Tydfil for many people and must present a high quality and welcoming first impression that has a clear identity and legible layout. It must be a safe environment at night as well as during the day. The Design Commission welcomes the appointment of an arts professional to the design team at an early stage.

Next Steps

The Design Commission recognises that this site is an appropriate location and size for the proposed development. We are encouraged by the consultation that has already taken place in the development of the proposals and would like to see this continue, particularly with key stakeholders, as the design develops.

The team need to maintain the ambition for this development as a modern, high quality and accessible bus station that also forms part of the fabric of the town. An appropriate budget is required to achieve these aspirations and we hope that this can be established soon so as to inform the design process.

The Commission would welcome a return to us with the next iterations and we encourage the team to contact us early to secure a follow up review, likely to be in March.

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

Attendees

Architectural Designer:	Amy Cowan, Capita
Local Authority:	Helen Kell, Regeneration MTCBC Gavin Lewis, Regeneration MTCBC Judith Jones, Planning MTCBC Huw Roberts, Planning MTCBC
Design Review Panel:	
Chair	Alan Francis
Lead Panellist	Jamie Brewster
Panel	Mike Gwyther Jones Angela Williams Carole-Anne Davies, Chief Executive, DCFW Amanda Spence, Design Advisor, DCFW Jen Heal, Design Advisor, DCFW