



DESIGN
COMMISSION
FOR WALES
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Design Review Report

Conwy Council Office Strategy

Colwyn Bay

DCFW Ref: 89

Meeting of 19th October 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

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

CONFIDENTIAL

19th October 2015
9th November 2015
Colwyn Bay
Office
89
Pre-application

Declarations of Interest

None declared.

Consultations to Date

No public consultation has taken place yet.

The Proposals

This scheme forms part of Conwy Council's plan to consolidate its existing 12 office locations, whilst also promoting regeneration in Colwyn Bay town centre. The town centre site currently accommodates a row of small shops and a surface car park, and sits between, but not within, two conservation areas.

The proposal is to demolish the existing buildings on the site and construct a new four-storey office building with atrium and an adjoining multi-storey car park.

A design team is being appointed through a competitive dialogue procurement process. At the time of this review, the designers could not be named. Due to the procurement route and the very late consultation with the Commission, there is limited scope for any significant changes to be made to the proposal.

Main Points

The following points summarise key issues from the discussion and should be used to inform any development of the design which takes place before a planning application is made:

Regeneration and Public Realm

There is scope for this project to provide an opportunity to improve the public realm around the site, giving something back to the town and adding value to the overall scheme.

This can be done by considering how the pedestrian environment can be improved, improving routes to and from the building, and designing out spaces which are not useful or which might encourage anti-social behaviour.

Types of paving, external lighting, signage, street furniture and shared-surfaces should all be considered and integrated with the wider design proposal where appropriate.

It might be beneficial to have a new pedestrian crossing point to address the entrance layout of the proposed building. Also, the pavement radius at the corner of the plot might be made smaller to provide a better dwelling space for pedestrians and building visitors.

The narrow publicly accessible alleyway proposed between the proposed building and the adjacent site should be avoided unless it is properly overlooked. It seems preferable to use this as a garden space, accessible only from within the site. The car park access should also be carefully considered.

Careful consideration should be given to who the parking will be for. Providing public parking on this site and encouraging staff to park elsewhere and walk through the town could help stimulate the town centre economy.

Landscape Design

It is important that the landscaped areas of the scheme, outside the notional building boundary, have a purpose which is clearly defined in the brief. Maintenance of the soft landscaping should be considered and properly planned for at this stage in the project.

Roof Form and Atrium

The proposed roof form is leading to some unusual internal spaces on the top floor which could be very exciting but may need bespoke lighting and fit-out solutions. It is likely that those spaces will have tall ceilings which may limit flexibility for internal partitions and could be costly. It is important that the client understands the reasons for the roof form, especially the raised corner, and understands the implications this has for the use of the space.

Whilst the central atrium would help to introduce daylight to the centre of the building, problems with glare and overheating could be experienced. Environmental modelling should be used to test and inform the proposal before a planning application is made. Acoustic testing will also be required to ensure the open reception area does not disturb workspaces on other floors.

Operation and Maintenance

It is important that those aspects of the design which will affect the operation and maintenance of the building and site are well considered, specified and addressed in the proposals at this stage.

The lifespan and cleaning and maintenance requirements of the various materials and components specified will have an impact of the whole-life cost and longevity of the project.

Issues such as energy efficiency; heating, cooling and ventilation systems; sunlight, daylight and electronic light controls; and building management systems will have an impact on running costs and the well-being and productivity of building users.

Design Control and Prioritising

It is important that the local authority client has control over the design drawings and detail so that a high standard of design quality is maintained throughout the delivery of this scheme.

All drawings and design information should be checked back against the original brief and specifications, including acoustic, energy and service requirements. It is important that the detail of the proposals and the implications for building users is fully understood before any drawings are signed-off.

The client should set the agenda and drive the process by prioritising sign-off of those parts of the scheme most important to them, i.e. not just general floor space and form, but also all materials and finishes which can be touched and seen and which will, therefore, have the greatest impact on building users. It is those elements that will need to be fixed in the 'Employer's Requirements' and not necessarily, foundations or structural frame.

Future Reviews

The Design Commission always welcomes the opportunity for consultation and review of schemes at an early stage, before designs are fixed. The Commission also provides a client support service, helping with the development of project briefs. Conwy Council may find value in taking up these early-stage services on future projects, including the Parc Eirias site and the redevelopment of sites which will be made vacant by this scheme.

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

Attendees

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Design Review Panel:
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