

# Design Review Report

Pillgwenlly Regeneration, Newport

**DCFW Ref: 48**

Meeting of 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2015



## 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	22 <sup>nd</sup> January 2015
Issue date	12 <sup>th</sup> February 2015
Scheme location	Pill, Newport
Scheme description	Residential regeneration
Scheme reference number	48
Planning status	Pre-application

### CONFIDENTIAL

## Declarations of Interest

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Jen Heal declared that when she worked at The Urbanists, they bid for this project. All parties stated they were happy for her to stay and participate in the review.

## Consultations to Date

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A significant consultation process with residents has now been completed, with around 70% of residents engaged. The team have undertaken pre-application consultation with the local planning authority. This project has been subject to long term consultation with the Design Commission for Wales throughout 2014 and early 2015. Previous review meetings took place in May 2014 and July 2014. This report should be read in conjunction with earlier reports.

## The Proposals

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The regeneration project aims to address the legacy of the 'Radburn' residential layout of the Pillgwenlly Housing Estate, Newport. The majority of homes belong to Newport City Homes (NCH) with some private ownership and some leasehold. Raglan House, a sheltered housing facility occupying the south west corner of the site is no longer considered fit for purpose and it is proposed to convert it to flats. Car ownership is low, but the presence and disposition of garages contributes to a problematic streetscape and outlook, and hinders natural surveillance. The arrangement of front doors and underpasses has contributed to a poor pedestrian network and a lack of safe routes, and the estate has become a haven for crime and anti-social behaviour associated with drug use and semi-organised criminal activity. Several underpasses have been sealed over time, compounding the difficulties. There are few trees, and gardens are underused or poorly kept. The estate also faces the rear facades of shops and derelict properties along Commercial Road. Physical changes are now being explored and a social and economic strategy is being developed.

It is intended that a hybrid planning application will be made during March 2015, with construction planned to commence in October/November 2015. Newport City Homes

advised that there would be break clauses in the construction contract to allow some 'testing' of ideas.

## Main Points in Detail

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### **Progress and Communication**

The presenting team have made good progress since the last review, and have constructively addressed many of the comments made by Design Commission for Wales in July. The project is moving in a positive direction, and the team are showing stronger design leadership.

The level of intervention in the different site zones was well-justified in the presentation. It is good that Newport City Homes intends to allow for some testing/piloting of ideas during the implementation phases. This will help them to make sure that the scheme maximises the value of the benefits it provides.

There is some work to be done in clearly communicating and justifying the ideas behind the project, especially in visual form. Drawings which take a typical scenario and show in detail what the team aims to achieve would be useful, especially for ongoing communication with residents and the local community, and for a planning application.

There are some issues which still need to be considered in more detail. These include materials for the new build and over-cladding, and a site-wide waste management scheme.

### **Landscape Driven Regeneration**

The steps that have been taken to make this a largely landscape driven regeneration project are positive, and there is precedent to show that this approach has good potential. The team did not show much of the detail of the landscape design, which will be important in achieving the ecological, social and visual benefits desired.

The Commission agrees that it would be sensible to wait before deciding whether it is appropriate to include seating in the public realm.

Finding designated uses for the open public spaces in the scheme will be important in avoiding anti-social behaviour, but it is good that the team intends to involve the residents in planning this aspect of the scheme. Converting the existing garages to improve overlooking of the public open spaces is a positive step.

There is potential for a well-designed and managed lighting scheme to add significant value to this scheme, especially in terms of perceived safety. Currently, the council owned street lighting is switched off during the night, so the team might consider lighting with its own power which can stay on throughout the night. Lighting can also be used to emphasise new routes through the site and add a level of character to the landscape design.

### **New build and over-cladding**

The new residential blocks, especially the one at the Williams Close entrance to the estate, should strengthen the new routes through the site by providing a good transition from new to old. The new buildings should be simple in form and beautifully detailed, well-crafted and confidently designed.

Careful consideration must be given to the materials chosen for the exterior of the new blocks and any over-cladding of buildings. Durability, weathering and visual relationship with the existing properties are all important. Commercial cladding panels may be inappropriate in a challenging low scale domestic setting, and the team were encouraged to explore brick and other natural materials and to look for subtle rather than forthright solutions. Details such as rainwater goods and window specifications will also make a significant difference to the quality of the new buildings.

### **Community Communication and Participation**

The involvement of and consultation with residents to date is good. The Commission would encourage the team to continue good communication with residents throughout the rest of the planning and implementation phases of the scheme.

Providing opportunities for the community to participate in the planning of spaces, and providing places which can be used for community events is encouraged.

### **Measuring Improvements**

It will be useful, especially for future regeneration projects, for Newport City Homes to monitor the success and measure the benefits of the works. To do this, they must ensure that a plan is in place for collecting relevant qualitative and quantitative data, before, during and after construction.

Newport City Homes and their design team deserve credit for their commitment to long term engagement with the Design Commission for Wales. The Commission welcomed the evident preparation for this meeting and the clarity of this final presentation, which led to a constructive final review meeting.

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

## Attendees

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Agent/Client/Developer:	Ian Carter, Newport City Homes Marc Fury, Newport City Homes
Architectural/Urban Designer:	Rob Wheaton, Stride Treglown Greg McKay, Stride Treglown
Local Authority:	Lloyd Jones, Newport City Council
Design Review Panel:	
Chair	Alan Francis
Lead Panellist	Jonathan Adams Jamie Brewster Angela Williams Mike Gwyther-Jones Jen Heal, Design Advisor, DCFW Amanda Spence, Design Advisor, DCFW
Observing:	Carole-Anne Davies, Chief Executive, DCFW