

# Design Review Report

Pillgwenlly Regeneration, Newport

**DCFW Ref: 48**

Meeting of 17<sup>th</sup> July 2014



## 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	<b>CONFIDENTIAL</b> 17 <sup>th</sup> July 2014
Issue date	5 <sup>th</sup> August 2014
Scheme location	Pill, Newport
Scheme description	Residential regeneration
Scheme reference number	48
Planning status	Pre-application

## Declarations of Interest

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None declared.

## Consultations to Date

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A series of community consultation and engagement events is taking place.

## The Proposals

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The project team are in the early stages of work on the Pillgwenlly Housing Estate, Newport and the regeneration project aiming to address the legacy of the 'Radburn' residential layout of the estate. 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. 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.

## Summary

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- The Design Commission understands the complexity of this scheme, and is supportive of the ambition and passion that the team has for improving the neighbourhood.
- The Commission welcomes the opportunity to be involved in a series of reviews as this scheme as it progresses. Whilst we are not opposed to any of the ideas

being proposed, we suspect the team now need to concentrate on a preferred strategy and direction, and avoid the scheme priorities becoming muddled.

- There may be benefit in a pilot project which tests ideas, limits costs at the outset, and which can be monitored to inform the direction of further work.
- The illustrations presented in the options document might not be easily understood by residents. A clear set of urban design drawings would help.
- The team might learn from precedents and from the processes used in other successful regeneration projects of this nature. Consultation on design options will need to be managed and controlled. There is danger in offering too much and raising expectation beyond what may be deliverable. The right language will be needed to communicate and capture the imagination of community members around ideas.
- Some options are lighter touch and others more significant. A good understanding of the consequences of the more significant options and combinations of options is required. The lighter touch early on would signify that change is happening and help enthuse people.
- There are opportunities to use the landscape for social interaction and engagement with the residents, and design proposals need to allow for and support the conditions for this interaction.
- The introduction of positive new uses, rather than concentrating on 'removing' problems, should be further considered, and if this is difficult to deliver through NCH, a joined-up approach with another delivery team might be considered. The Commission still considers that introducing a new evening use, which brings new people into the Estate will have tangible positive benefits.

## Main Points in Detail

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### **Social-Physical Relationship**

This regeneration scheme aims to tackle many complex problems. The emphasis on links between social problems and the physical environment risks being over emphasised and it is important to consider socio-economic factors and have a clear strategy. The Commission is supportive of the ambition to improve the environment of the Estate which will enhance conditions and quality of life for residents. The critical issue is whether a light touch or more dramatic intervention is required.

### **Options Appraisal**

The options for change have incorporated many site issues, and clarity on the ways forward is needed. A detailed matrix has been devised to 'score' different options, but the Commission is concerned that this might not deliver the best outcome. Whilst close client consultation is essential, it is also becoming clear that leadership is required, and that the team need to refine and finalise their recommendations based on their own findings, experience and judgement.

The team might benefit from drawing on precedents and to look at projects which have had both positive and negative results. It is encouraging that the team has already taken residents to visit a local completed project. They will benefit from hearing the experiences of residents in other regeneration schemes.

There may well be danger in believing a one-off design proposal will offer the solution, and it may be more appropriate to use the budget carefully to carry out a pilot project, monitoring the results and changing proposals if necessary, before moving forward with the rest of the scheme.

### **Community Consultation and Engagement**

The engagement with residents up to now has been extensive and positive, and should be continued throughout the project. The strong sense of community which exists within the estate is encouraging, and it would be good to see this nurtured and grown throughout the process.

However, further stages of consultation with the community will need to be carefully managed. Good communication using appropriate language and clear, easy to understand images will help to explain ideas and help guide and inform residents when decisions are taken. Care also needs to be taken to ensure that expectations are properly managed and that options are focussed to those that are all deliverable.

The team advised that developing new commercial space within the scheme might be difficult to deliver through NCH. The Commission still considers that a new evening use, such as a dance studio, which would bring non-residents into the estate, will help with surveillance and vitality, and if it cannot be delivered through NCH it may be necessary to jointly develop initiatives such as this with an alternative delivery vehicle.

A clear set of urban design drawings would help to explain the current situation and the merits and disadvantages of any proposed ideas. Diagrammatic drawings might include mapping entrances, mapping public and private space, and indicating access, routes, dead ends and good amenity space.

Early implementation will now be important. A mini-project, such as changing the basketball court space, would help to encourage and engage residents, and would quickly signify that change is happening.

Once work has been carried out, it will be useful to formally monitor the extent of its success and remaining challenges. Continued engagement with residents will help with this.

### **Landscape Design**

There are relationships between the landscape design processes, management, implementation and the people living in the estate which could be used to reinforce social aspects. Landscape design can be used as an engagement tool and to draw out the community spirit that has already emerged as a strong characteristic of the area.

The landscape offers opportunities to encourage social interaction, and for residents to take responsibility and ownership of spaces.

Soft landscape can deliver quick improvements and can quickly change perceptions of a place. This could offer opportunities where a light touch could make a significant and lasting impact.

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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 Paul Seaver, Stride Treglown Nick Lewis, Bay Associates
Local Authority:	Stephen Williams, Newport City Council
Design Review Panel:	
Chair	Alan Francis
Lead Panellist	Steven Smith Kedrick Davies Andrew Linfoot Amanda Spence, Design Advisor, DCFW
Observing:	Naomi Young