

# Design Review Report

Caerphilly Castle Regeneration,  
Caerphilly

**DCFW Ref: N244**

Meeting of 12<sup>th</sup> November 2020



**Review Status**

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

**PUBLIC**

12<sup>th</sup> November 2020  
20<sup>th</sup> November 2020  
Caerphilly  
Visitor facilities  
N244  
Pre-application

## 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 and meeting Agenda items. Any such declarations are recorded here and in DCFW's central records.

## Consultations to Date

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This is the first time the scheme has been reviewed.

## The Proposals

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The proposals are for the refurbishment of the existing Great Hall, conversion of the existing visitor centre into a shop, a new café, visitor reception area, toilets, catering facilities, education space, staff accommodation, external terrace and play area, and visitor interpretation and improved accessibility across the site. The objective of improving connectivity to the town itself was also identified as aim.

## Main Points

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The ambition to improve the visitor experience to the castle, ensure greater inclusivity and improve environmental conditions are all welcomed and supported by the panel. A visit to the Grade I listed Scheduled Monument should be a joyful and life enhancing experience and of a world-class standard. The review raised a number of concerns about the evolution of the design and how it has been presented which are outlined below.

**Design Concept**

The design concept and vision for the proposed new building was not clear from the information provided. There are some key early, strategic decisions that need to be made about the type of building that is being proposed, where it should be located within the context of the castle, and its relationship with the town itself. For example, should the building appear light and temporary or solid and permanent? Should the building touch the castle wall or be separate from it? Should the building be similar to the existing visitor centre or different? What should be distinctive about this as Caerphilly Castle's visitor centre? What role could it play in better connecting with the town?

At this stage we would expect to see a more thorough site analysis, review of precedents (what are the qualities of other world-class castle visitor centres?), design concept and options. Without this information it is very difficult to interpret whether the building proposed is the best solution for the area, whether it truly meets the project objectives, and it is hard to see how this is a particular architectural response to the location and context.

### **Building Form**

The rationale for the current form of the proposed building is not clear. It creates some awkward spaces between the building and the castle wall.

Further analysis of the arrival sequence would help to inform the design to test what is visible and ensure there is clear legibility for visitors. Currently the existing building which is becoming the shop will be most prominent on arrival, so the new building will need to counter this to ensure people know where to go.

### **Access and Interpretation**

Interpretation and social accessibility seem to be progressing well but would benefit from being extended out beyond the castle grounds into the wider town centre. Physical access improvements across the site as a whole were not presented but will need to be developed as part of the landscape design.

### **Distribution of Uses**

The arrangement of uses on the site does not yet seem to be fully resolved. Is this the optimum location to fulfil some of the wider objectives mentioned during the presentation? Are the toilets in the right place? Is the relationship between the café and play area right? Is there sufficient internal space for interpretation?

### **External Space**

The intention to work with both the internal and external spaces is positive but could be further enhanced by ensuring both aspects interact well with each other. Appointing a landscape architect is critical to ensuring that the external space is designed in conjunction with the building and interpretation proposals.

### **Next Steps**

The length of the presentation and some technical issues meant that there was not sufficient time to cover all aspects of the proposals in great detail (such as the Great Hall). We would welcome a further review of the proposals when further design development has taken place but well in advance of a planning application.

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

## Attendees

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Agent/Client/Developer:	Kate Roberts, Cadw Stephen Jones, Cadw
Architect:	David Burne, Purcell Mabon Rhys Jones, Purcell
Project Manager:	Amy Hands, Mace Benn Allen-Gunn, Mace
Access and Interpretation:	Ewan McCarthy, Bright
Local Planning Authority:	
Chair:	Kedrick Davies
Lead Panellist:	Neil Williamson
Design Review Panel:	Michael Gwyther-Jones Toby Adam Jen Heal, Design Advisor, DCFW Efa Lois, Place Advisor, DCFW