

# Design Review Report

Pantmaenog Forest, Sir Benfro

**DCFW Ref: N192**

Meeting of 14<sup>th</sup> February 2019



<b>Review Status</b>	14 <sup>th</sup> February 2019
Issue date	26 <sup>th</sup> February 2019
Scheme location	Sir Benfro
Scheme description	Mixed use
Scheme reference number	N192
Planning status	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 Agenda items. Any such declarations are recorded here and in DCFW's central records.

Phil Roberts is a DCFW Design Review panel member, however he was not sat on the panel for this review. All present confirmed that they were content to proceed with this declaration.

## Consultations to Date

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No consultation to date.

## The Proposals

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The proposal is for the construction of six live/work units incorporating workshops for woodworking at the edge of an existing village. A variant of the proposals would provide five live/work units and a timber processing/machining building for which planning consent has already been achieved. The aim is for the project is to be sustainable in all respects including construction using materials largely sourced from within the forest, education and skills development from self-building, promotion of sustainable forest management, bio-diversity and provision of opportunities for local people to support health and wellbeing.

## Main Points

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The Commission welcomes this early review of the scheme. The initiative has considerable potential to galvanise a place-led approach, engaging people in shared living, working and learning opportunities in their locality. This will need careful thought and a strategic approach that maximises the opportunities for full realisation.

The following further points summarise key issues arising from the review discussion and should be considered to inform any further work:

### **Concept**

The concept for the project is strong and commendable. Further work is needed to better integrate the connections between people and the land, into the project. This could be achieved through creating of a real sense of place and community, with growing and sustainable living, learning and making at the heart.

The aspiration to deliver a project which is simple and elegant is encouraged and should be set out clearly at the core of the vision for the ongoing design process.

The value and benefit to residents could be increased by considering clustered or communal workshops along with more diverse land uses. The current proposals, with a singular workshop privately located on each plot, limit the potential to create a real community on this site as well as linking back to the existing village, with the co-operation and shared asset culture that this type of business could benefit from. A clustered workshop approach could also generate interest from visitors and further strengthen the economic viability of such uses in this location. Opportunities to integrate workspace/offices, education and training could be further explored to diversify the potential of the site, however the planning context would need to be carefully considered.

The intention to enhance and encourage the ongoing use of the Welsh language in this area is admirable and in line with cultural desire as well as more recent Wellbeing legislation in Wales. This would perhaps best be achieved if inclusive learning opportunities were constructed around language and making and if educational experiences were available to visitors wishing to learn and enjoy the beauty of the Welsh language. This has the potential to strengthen and promote Welsh at the heart of the proposals and to widen knowledge and understating through visitors and other learners. Precedents including Nant Gwrtheyrn are useful and demonstrate that the impact and power of place is an enhancement to engagement with the Welsh language.

### **Context and layout**

The currently proposed layout options feel generic and incongruous to such an interesting concept and do not yet respond sufficiently to existing context or landscape. Further exploration of how the unique and organic concept can feed into the layout needs to be undertaken. This may include how the proposals sit within the wooded landscape or how the workshops could be clustered to create a sense of place and community.

If it is considered that families may live on the site, opportunities for children's play spaces and community gathering spaces should be explored and ensure a fully inclusive development will be created. The layouts currently proposed would do little to encourage neighbour interaction and it is, as yet, difficult to see how whole lives might be lived.

### **House types**

Evidence of local context analysis should be presented to explain how the proposed house types have been informed by the surrounding area and the ways of living therein. The contemporary design approach taken is encouraging, however further design work is needed to refine these house types. Consideration should be given to how the construction of the buildings might be directly influenced by the materials that can be obtained from the forest.

A mix of house types and sizes would contribute to creating a mixed community. Delivering house types which suit a range of potential residents will increase the flexibility and viability of the development. Phased delivery linked to demand appears to be a logical step, allowing for buyers to select a house type best suited to their needs. Options for joint workshops should be explored rather than proposing the same size workshops for all live/work units.

Homes should endeavour to meet the needs of a whole lifetime to make this community as sustainable as possible.

### **Environmental strategy**

The design team should go further to demonstrate that the houses proposed use sustainable design principles. The proposed layouts should better evidence how orientation has been used effectively to create comfortable indoor conditions, which should be a priority above added photovoltaic panels. A reconsidered layout could allow these opportunities for passive solar gain and renewable technologies to work together.

### **Planning process**

Further work will be needed in advance of a planning application to evidence that the proposals are responding to demand. Likewise, the justification for the scheme will need to be robust and well considered, with all the value in the concept and site detailed carefully.

### **Delivery**

Engaging Down to Earth in the delivery of the project is commendable and creates added value above and beyond housing and workshop provision. Their inclusion and presence in future discussions with the Commission would be valuable.

Phased delivery linked to demand appears to be an efficient mechanism however the overall layout and design principles for the site should be protected to ensure the site is developed out to a high quality for the whole proposal.

Legal agreements may need to be explored in order to ensure the intended type of worker live in this project long term. The coordination of these agreements and their enforcement will need careful consideration.

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

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## Attendees

Agent/Client/Developer:	Phil Roberts
Architect/Consultants:	Huw Denman, Selfor Ltd Mark Waghorn, Mark Waghorn Architects
Design Review Panel:	
Chair	Cora Kwiatowski
Lead Panellist	Chris Jefford Angela Williams Mark Hallett Mike Gwyther-Jones Carole-Anne Davies, Chief Executive, DCFW Wendy Maden, Design Advisor, DCFW Jen Heal, Design Advisor, DCFW
Observers:	Jun Huang Larissa Berquo, DCFW Katya Roberts