



DESIGN  
COMMISSION  
FOR WALES  
COMISIWN  
DYLUNIO  
CYMRU

# Design Review Report

Urban Quarter Phase 3, Swansea

**DCFW Ref: 298**

Meeting of 14<sup>th</sup> July 2023



**Review Status**

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

**PUBLIC**

13<sup>th</sup> July 2023  
19<sup>th</sup> July 2023  
Mixed-use development  
High Street, Swansea  
N298  
Pre-planning

## Key Points

---

- We support the concept of bringing new life to this part of the city through a mix of uses and 'mending' the built fabric.
  - More analysis of the existing context and history is needed to inform the character of the development.
  - Proposals for The Strand would usefully be set in the context of wider plans and ideas for the future of this area.
  - The retained wall on King's Lane is currently problematic due to the awkward spaces it creates. Further work is needed to test whether it can be made to work well or be removed.
  - The input of a landscape architect is needed to inform a design-led response to the range of roles that the external spaces will play.
  - Public and private spaces need to be more clearly defined.
  - The success of the development and its positive contribution to the city will be influenced significantly by the curation of uses and long-term care of the site, driven by Coastal Housing's strategy for regeneration developments of this nature.
- 

## Consultations to Date

---

Two previous design review meetings were held in relation to this site but different proposals in 2014.

## The Proposal

---

The proposal involves the demolition of 225-228 High Street and the redevelopment of this site and land behind to include ground floor commercial on High Street and The Strand frontages with residential apartments above totaling approximately 33 homes ranging from one to three beds.



Roof Plan

## Context

---

The site encompasses 225 – 228 High Street and the frontages of the Strand and Kings Lane. The site area is circa 0.2 hectares. The site is in close proximity to Swansea Station and this site is one of several acquired by Coastal Housing, several of which have already been redeveloped for mix of uses. A prior approval application (Ref: 2022/0690/PND) to demolish 226 and 226A was approved in April 2022.

To the west of the site, a mixed use development (Ref: 2015/0036) was approved in 2015, whereas on the opposite side of Kings Lane, a PAC has recently concluded on a proposed 6 storey building comprising ground floor commercial with upper levels of residential along with commercial development in the form of bespoke steel-frame units and shipping containers.

# Main Points

---

## **Development concept**

We welcomed the opportunity to review proposals for this site following engagement with Coastal Housing on proposals for the Urban Village and Castle Quarter. There is much to commend in the concept of development for this site – the proposed mix of uses and scale of development are appropriate, it will improve King’s Lane as a key east-west link, and it will contribute to the ongoing evolution of The Strand as a place.

Some wider thinking and visioning of how The Strand could change further in the future would help to put the proposals in context. This would help identify what moves need to be made by this development, the LUF-supported arches development, other infill sites and to the street more widely. This would be undertaken in conjunction with the local authority. Improving the pedestrian environment and the opportunities for cycling would be key aims. References should also be made to the history of this area, the relationship to the former docks, railway sidings and the importance of King’s Lane as a thoroughfare over time. A few indicative sketches would help to bring these ideas to life.

We welcome the exploration of city centre family living with three-bedroom apartments. Further thinking about the requirements of families in this location should inform the design, such as storage for bikes/cargo bikes/prams, access to shared mobility such as a car club, usable outdoor play space, routes to school etc.

We support and encourage Coastal Housing’s continued strategy of supporting local, independent businesses in this part of the city. This is critical for supporting the life and variety of High Street, the vibrancy of the site itself, as well as maximising the regeneration benefits of the development.

## **Defining spaces**

Further refinement of the spaces around the buildings is needed. Analysis of existing courtyard spaces in the neighbouring developments – what works, what doesn’t and why – should support the design of the space between the buildings. This sloping space will need to perform a range of functions including access to commercial and residential accommodation, SuDS, biodiversity, external café seating, amenity/play space. The input of an urban designer and landscape architect is critical at this stage to manage these requirements in a way that enhances the setting of the development.

The retained wall on King’s Lane does help to keep some of the character of the lane, however the current arrangement creates some awkward spaces around it, especially the

space between the wall and the proposed office building resulting in poor views from the lower floors. If the wall is to be retained, opportunities to give it more purpose should be explored rather than leaving it as a stand-alone structure.

Beyond the wall, where the central space meets the lane, a clearer distinction between public and private space is needed. The space may need to have a different treatment at this point to make it intuitive and legible without too much reliance on gates and signage. The indication of a 'container' use in this space needs further consideration. This may work better as a location for temporary uses that frequently change as it enables this space to be used more flexibly.

## **Materials**

A different material and detail approach is appropriate between High Street and The Strand elevations. Both would benefit from a clearer articulation of the proposed public realm, uses and character along both streets, working the local authority and building on previous recent developments. However, both street frontages from this development should offer richness and comfort at the human scale. There is a risk that The Strand becomes a collection of large-scale individual buildings with infrequent openings which doesn't support the future life and vibrancy of this edge. The local authority may want to consider establishing some principles for the design of plots along the street.

The reuse of material from demolition within the site should be maximised.

## **Next Steps**

---

This was a useful point at which to review the proposals and it seems that there is sufficient time for the design to be developed.

It is important to integrate meaningful engagement into the process which should involve residents and users of neighbouring developments and could also involve placemaking activities within the lane to start to change local perceptions of this as a place.

**Comisiwn Dylunio Cymru Design Commission for Wales is the trading name of DCFW LIMITED, a Private Limited Company established under the Companies Act 1985 and 2006, Company No: 04391072 incorporated in England and Wales as a wholly owned subsidiary of the Welsh Government. Registered office: 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Cambrian Buildings, Mount Stuart Square, Cardiff CF10 5FL T: 029 2045 1964 E [connect@dcfw.org](mailto:connect@dcfw.org). The comment recorded in this report, arising from formal Design Review through our Design Review Service, is provided in the public interest for the consideration of local planning authorities as a material consideration, and other users of the Design Review Service. It is not and should**

**not be considered 'advice' and no third party is bound or required to act upon it. The Design Review Service is delivered in line with DCFW's published protocols, code of conduct and complaints procedure, which should be read and considered by users of the service.**

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

## Attendees

---

|                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| Client:              | Andrew Parry Jones, Coastal Housing Group<br>Elliot Carpenter, Coastal Housing Group         |
| Design Team:         | Terry Morley, Holder Mathias Architects<br>Chris Knox, Holder Mathias Architects (observing) |
| Planning Consultant: | Phil Baxter, Asbri Planning  |
| Project Management:  | Jamie Lannen, Faithful and Gould   |
| Engineering:         | Darian Jones, McCann and Partners  |
| Local Authority:     | David Owen, City and County of Swansea   |

### **DCFW Design Review Panel**

|                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| Chair:          | Ewan Jones  |
| Lead Panellist: | Simon Power   |
| Panel:          | Wendy Maden<br>Toby Adam<br>Jen Heal, Deputy Chief Executive, DCFW<br>Max Hampton, Design Advisor, DCFW |
| Observer/s:     | Aisha Ali   |

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

None.