



DESIGN  
COMMISSION  
FOR WALES  
COMISIWN  
DYLUNIO  
CYMRU

# Design Review Report

Pentrebane Street, Caerphilly

**DCFW Ref: 307**

Meeting of 26<sup>th</sup> July 2023



## Review Status

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

## PUBLIC

26<sup>th</sup> July 2023  
7<sup>th</sup> August 2023  
Mixed-use development  
Pentrebane Street, Caerphilly  
N307  
Pre-planning

## Key Points

---

- The creation of workspaces and a café in the centre of Caerphilly would add to the vitality and viability of the town. However, we encourage the client to engage further with potential operators and businesses to ensure the design meets their needs and is flexible for adaption.
- The design team should consider whether the design of the courtyard meets the needs of the people who will be using it the most, as well responding to the microclimate.
- The proposed buildings are larger than the buildings in the surrounding area, which raises concern about whether they are sensitive to their context, however it is acknowledged that the site's central location does lend itself to a higher-density development.
- The design team should further consider how the design responds to the character of Caerphilly, now and in the future, and what identity the scheme aims to create.
- The Design Commission does not support north facing, single aspect flats. Alternative design options should be explored to overcome this negative feature of the proposal.
- The design could change where people access the cycle storage to make this part of the life of the courtyard, rather than something hidden away.

## Consultations to Date

---

This is the first Design Review with the Design Commission for Wales. There have been pre-application discussions with the local planning authority and the plans have been made public, but there has not been any public consultation yet.

## The Proposal

---

The scheme is being led by Linc-Cymru Housing Association, in partnership with Caerphilly County Borough Council, with the aim of redeveloping the town's closed indoor market

and other commercial properties. The proposal seeks to create a mixed-use development with commercial spaces on the ground floor and residential above.



The commercial spaces are intended to be flexible, with the aim of attracting tech and creative businesses. The commercial spaces seek to provide the opportunity for co-working, events and workshops. The intention is for the internal layouts to be flexible to allow smaller units to be opened into larger spaces. There is also the aspiration to have a café facing Pentrebane Street to attract people from the main high street.

The residential element of the scheme is for a mix of social and private rental flats. The proposal is mainly for one bedroom flats, with some two bedroom flats. Some of the flats would have balconies and there would be a small communal roof terrace.

The building facing Pentrebane Street is proposed to be six storeys, with the upper two storeys set-back, and the building facing Clive Street proposed to be four storeys, with the upper top floor set-back. There is a one/two storey building in the courtyard, with its back facing the lane running alongside the site.

The central courtyard would be shared by the ground floor commercial spaces and be publicly accessible during the day. People would be able to walk through the site between Pentrebane Street and Clive Street.

The sustainable drainage strategy includes having green roofs to the main two buildings, with landscape integrated bioretention areas in the central courtyard, before attenuating in an underground tank.

There would be no vehicular access onto the development, with car parking, access and servicing along Pentrebane Street and Clive Street.

The Council is in the process of assembling the site for development, with the potential for Compulsory Purchase Orders.



## Context

The site currently accommodates a three storey building along Pentrebane Street and two storey buildings along Clive Street. The site was previously home to Caerphilly Indoor Market, which opened in 1927 but is no longer in operation. There are retail units on the ground floor, with a mix of vacant and operating businesses.

The site is centrally located within the town. Pentrebane Street and Clive Street are secondary commercial streets off Cardiff Road, which is the main high street in Caerphilly. Caerphilly Transport Interchange and Caerphilly Castle are just a few minutes' walk.

To the North, East and South of the site are commercial buildings, some with residential above, and to the West are Victorian terrace houses. The buildings around the site are mainly two storeys, with some one storey buildings along Pentrebane Street and some three and four storey buildings along Cardiff Road.

## Main Points

---

### **Mixed Use**

The Design Commission welcomes the inclusion of the proposed workspaces and café on the ground floor. The site's central location makes it ideal for commercial uses and can help provide opportunities for business start-ups and local jobs. The central location will also encourage people to walk, cycle and use public transport to get to work. The commercial development can help generate activity within the town centre and support the existing retail and other services.

It was reassuring to hear that the Council and Linc are confident that there is the demand for such commercial uses and there appears to be a good understanding of how these units will meet the demand for starter, incubator businesses.

We encourage the client to engage further with potential operators and businesses to find out more about who is likely to use these spaces and how they operate. This process can help inform the design of the workspaces, café and courtyard, and ensure its success as a place

### **Courtyard**

The central courtyard is currently designed and presented as being a very busy space, with lots of people passing through and sitting out. However, if the ground floor uses are going to be workspaces, it is unlikely there will be this level of activity. There is the danger the courtyard could feel quite sparse, particularly in the evenings when the gates are closed.

The project team are encouraged to reconsider who the courtyard space is for and how the design should respond to meet their needs. It may be that this is a space more for the

residents of the flats above, as much as the businesses or visitors, which could benefit from more greenery and less hard surfaces. If the aim is to attract people living in the surrounding area to use the courtyard, the design needs to feel welcoming and provide a reason for people to enter and stay. We also encourage you to identify where the warm and cold spots are and design the courtyard to maximise the benefits of these characteristics.

## **Buildings**

Given the proposed scale of the buildings on the site, further contextual analysis is needed to ensure the proposal comfortably sits in the townscape, which may lead to reviewing different options for the articulation of the upper storey. However, the site's central location does lend itself to a high-density development and having more people living and working within the heart of the town centre would support local businesses, generate activity, and reduce the need to travel by car. It is also recognised that the set-backs and change in materials of the upper-floors helps reduce the perceived height of the buildings.

The scheme would benefit from further consideration of how the design relates to Caerphilly. Consideration should be given to how the design responds to the existing character, how it fits with the future of Caerphilly and what identity it is seeking to create. This analysis should form part of the Council's wider work on the Placemaking Plan. We also encourage the design team to explore whether the buildings could be more sensitively articulated, alongside what the materials and palette should be.

## **Homes**

The proposal includes several north facing, single aspect flats. These flats will receive little sunlight and are unlikely to be pleasant places to live. Single-aspect, north-facing flats are not supported by DCFW, unless there is a very clear justification for them. All design options should be explored to overcome this negative feature of the current proposal.

## **Cycle Storage**

The cycle storage would benefit from the access being moved to the other side of the plant to enable people to get their bikes via the courtyard. Relocating the access to the bike store would provide a safer environment for people getting their bikes, as well as help generate activity in the courtyard. Without the need for the access along the side of the site, the workshop building within the courtyard may benefit from being moved back to the site boundary.

## Next Steps

---

The Design Commission would welcome a further Design Review, if considered beneficial, to support more detailed aspects of the scheme, such as the layout of the courtyard.

**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:	Sian Diaz, Linc-Cymru Housing Association Simon Lewis, Linc-Cymru Housing Association Hamish Munro, Caerphilly County Borough Council
Design Team:	Matt Parsons, Childs Sulzmann Architects
Placemaking Team:	Paul Seaver, Stride Treglown
Local Authority:	Ryan Thomas, Caerphilly County Borough Council Douglas McFlynn, Caerphilly County Borough Council Helen Winsall, Caerphilly County Borough Council

### **DCFW Design Review Panel**

Chair:	Andrew Linfoot
Panel:	Wendy Maden Gareth Howell Simon Power Jen Heal, Deputy Chief Executive, DCFW Max Hampton, Design Advisor, DCFW

## 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.

There were no declarations of interest.