



DESIGN
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Design Review Report

Former Four Winds Pub, Aberavon

DCFW Ref: 312

Meeting of 9th November 2023



Review Status

Meeting date

Issue date

Scheme description

Scheme location

Scheme reference number

Planning status

Public9th November 202317th November 2023

Mixed-use development

Former Four Winds Pub, Princess

Margaret Way, Aberavon

N312

Pre-application

Key Points

- The development needs to be of a high-quality design to realise its potential as a catalyst for the regeneration of Aberavon seafront.
- The information presented is not sufficient to justify the proposal and its height.
- The council owned land should be included in the scheme to realise the development's potential.
- Every flat should be designed to provide high quality homes for the people living there, including aspect and environmental considerations.
- The development should be designed to meet the particular needs of the older people who will be living there.
- If a reduction in the car parking provision can be justified, the design of the development can be improved to make better use of the whole site and to improve the living environment.
- An aspirational sustainability strategy should be developed.
- The development needs to be resilient to the weather and maintenance needs.
- The architecture should respond to its seafront context.
- Overall, significant further analysis and design development is required.

Consultations to Date

This is the first engagement with the Design Commission. There has been engagement with the local community and a pre-application with the local planning authority.

The Proposal

The proposal is for a mixed-use scheme with commercial on the ground floor and residential above. The intention is to have a retail unit on the corner and a café along the front. The flats would be for social rent specifically for people over 55. The people living there would have access to a communal leisure room and roof garden.

Two options for the design of the proposed development were presented. The review focused on Option 1, which is the preferred option but requires the purchase of land owned by the council. The proposed building is forward of the existing building line and is five storeys, stepping up to 7 storeys on the corner.



View of proposed development from Aberavon beach

Context

The site is located on the Aberavon seafront. The site faces onto Princess Margaret Way, which is the main road along the seafront, and turns the corner along Dalton Road.

The site was previously used as a pub, with a single storey building and parking to the front. There is a small parade of single storey shops to the east of the site on Dalton Road, with a mini supermarket, takeaways and a cash machine. To the southeast is a four storey hotel. There is a leisure centre, cinema and indoor bowls club nearby along Princess Margaret Way. The wider area is mainly residential.



Site Context

Main Points

Catalyst for Regeneration

This development provides a fantastic opportunity to positively contribute towards the Aberavon seafront and potentially be a catalyst for regeneration. There is no strategy in place for the regeneration of the seafront, with development coming forward incrementally. This development is an opportunity to create a vision for the wider seafront.

Scale, Massing and Layout

The scheme was primarily brought to Design Review to get the Design Commission's view on the scale and massing of the proposed development.

The proposed scheme is five storeys, rising to seven storeys on the corner, which is far greater than most of the surrounding area, being two storeys in the immediate context. The retail unit on the ground floor is also likely to require a greater floor to ceiling height, and the terrace level greater depth for insulation, which would further push the overall height up.

The information presented is not sufficient to justify the proposal and its height. There was a lack of analysis, at the local, neighbourhood and wider contexts and design development presented. Further analysis is needed to inform the design, including looking at the site's context in relation to the urban fabric and building heights, along with its strategic relationship to routes, wayfinding and townscape. The design strategy should be revisited, with different layouts explored and tested.

It should also be noted that the build significantly projects forward of the notional building line and therefore, in order to justify this, should be of the highest quality, with a particular focus on the projecting gable end.

The council owned land to the front should be included in the scheme to realise the development's potential.

People

The proposal includes a large proportion of single aspect, northeast facing flats that look over a car park. We have concerns that these flats won't be a particularly nice place to live, with a lack of sunlight and a rather uninspiring environment for people who might stay inside for much of the day. Compounding this was the lack of communal amenity space normally associated with later living schemes. In exploring different layouts, consideration should be given to what it will be like to live in each flat to ensure all the people living there have a good home.

Further consideration should be given to the particular needs of the older people who will be living here. Can you engage with potential future residents and use their input to inform the design? The design should also draw on existing good practice on the design of older people's housing, including the [HAPPI principles](#) and other developments such as the [Appleby Blue Almshouse](#).

The design should seek to prevent social isolation, with more generous communal spaces that cultivate an environment where people can stay and meet neighbours. Having the communal garden and leisure room on the top floor will provide great views but may put people off going up there. The roof terrace could be wind swept and needs to be designed to create a sheltered environment that people will want to use.

Further analysis is needed as to how people living there will be able to get to local facilities on foot, bike and public transport and whether there are the right facilities nearby for the tenure being proposed.

Car Parking

The car parking currently dominates the proposed development. This is affecting the amount of the site that is developable, driving the need to push the height of the building and creating a poor living environment for some of the flats.

It was suggested in the meeting that the level of car parking proposed was being driven by car parking standards and that other Linc accommodation for people over 55 had a lower demand for car parking. A reduction in car parking provision would enable an improved design and a better living environment for the people living there. The Design Commission therefore encourages the reduction of the number of car parking spaces as much as possible.

The developer should gather evidence to demonstrate that lower car parking provision would be appropriate. Measures to enable people to live without needing to own a car should be incorporated, such as providing a car club. The local authority should apply their parking standards flexibly to allow the creation of high-quality development.

Sustainability

Further work is needed on the development's sustainability aspirations. We encourage the client to be aspirational about what they want to achieve and open about the best design solution.

Further analysis is needed of how the design can maximise passive solar gain and prevent overheating.

Building Safety

We have concerns about whether the design presented would meet the requirements of the Building Safety Act, under the definition of a High Risk Building, and question whether

only having one lift is acceptable. The applicant should review this with a fire consultant and integrate their advice into the design proposals.

Architecture

Further consideration is needed as to how the development can respond to its context. We encourage the design team to analyse seafront development and identify old and new examples of great seafront architecture. The site's residential context also needs an appropriate response. At the moment the architecture is placeless and a significant focus has been given to a complex balcony arrangement. Maybe this could be simplified, while retaining its role as celebrating the corner, providing a calmer building and allowing the savings to be spent elsewhere on the design.

Next Steps

We urge the client to commission the design team to focus on undertaking further analysis and explore alternative ways of organising the layout, rather than more elevational work. The Design Commission would be content to offer a longer Design Review or workshop to aid the design development.

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

Attendees

Client:	Simon Lewis, Linc Cymru
Developer:	Emma Jones, Hale Construction
Design Team:	Tanya Simeonova, Austin Smith Lord
Planning Consultant:	Alex Smith, Simply Planning
Local Authority:	Chris Davies, Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council

DCFW Design Review Panel

Chair:	Craig Sheach
Panel:	Richard Woods Angela Williams Clare Wilding Kedrick Davies Carole-Anne Davies, Chief Executive, DCFW Jen Heal, Deputy Chief Executive, DCFW Max Hampton, Design Advisor, DCFW
Observer/s:	Tracy Kearns, Transport for Wales

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 conflicts of interest.