

DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

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.



Design Review Report

Review status

PUBLIC

Meeting date	Thursday 25th April 2013
Issue date	Thursday 9 May 2013
Scheme location	Cardiff and Vale College, Dumballs Road, Cardiff.
Scheme description	Higher Education College
Scheme reference number	81D
Planning status	Pre-planning
Declaration of interests	None recorded

Consultations to date

DCFW was not provided with any information regarding consultation processes. The scheme is the subject of a full planning application which has been submitted to Cardiff Council. It is located within the Cardiff Enterprise Zone and is partly funded by the Welsh Government.

Summary

The Panel is supportive of the general aspiration of the scheme which aims for a solution somewhere between a campus and a city block, and which could provide an interesting addition to the city. The level of investment by the development team and College is a very positive point for Cardiff and will help to improve Dumballs Road, which is fortunate to have good access to the City Centre and Cardiff Bay.

Notwithstanding our general support, there were some specific points raised by the Panel during the review:

- Without clear masterplan guidance from the City Council on the character or hierarchy of Dumballs Road and Canal Parade, the design team have chosen to address Dumballs Road with their main elevation and play down the impact onto Canal Parade. The Panel felt that this design decision was not helped by splaying the predominant, tall northern façade away from Canal Parade, so reducing the importance of that street, when in masterplan terms greater east/west connectivity should be more significant. The Panel accepted that the retail units and crèche were aligned with the back of the pavement on Canal Parade, but questioned whether this was the right approach given that this street would benefit from more than single storey development.

- The link with Canal Park at the rear of the site, which is proposed as separated by a two metre high metal boundary fence, does not encourage use of this new green link. The current approach to managing access presents difficulties and restricts movement. The Panel thought that the east/west connections warranted further attention together with the opportunity to develop a better link through the site along the southern boundary.
- The southern service road into the site off Dumballs Road could prove problematic, and create illegibility with the main pedestrian entrances from the southerly approach. If another east/west link is not developed at this point the service entrance might be more shielded and the development more physically linked to the adjacent site, rather than being a stand-alone building. In this context the existing poor quality boundary to the adjacent property might also be improved.
- The new entrance into Canal Park (off Canal Parade) created by this scheme needs considerable improvement. As it stands, it may even be preferable to avoid it, and allow for further improvement instead to the existing park entrance point further east. It will definitely be a major benefit to retain it, but if so, the College perimeter fencing and car park access gates need to be reconsidered.
- The proposed location for the crèche should be re-considered so as to leave what is an important future development site on Canal Parade, rather than land-locked in the centre of the site. Such a strategy could also help address the Panel's concerns about the scale of development addressing Canal Parade, and could provide added value to the developer.
- The roof terraces are ambitious and potentially create good indoor/outdoor links but the characteristics of these spaces need to be considered through detailed landscape design, the provision of shelter/enclosure and their relationship to the areas they connect to in the building.

Discussion and Panel response in full:

Overall the Panel supported the scheme. It is a complicated yet ambitious building which could provide a fascinating facility for the City. The Panel also appreciated the physical model which allowed us to see the building in the site context.

The development is for a higher education and sixth form college on a 5 acre plot off Dumballs Road, where a mix of modern office buildings and older industrial units exist, to either side. Dumballs Road has good links with the city centre and Cardiff Bay and the campus is designed for 24hr use. (NB The strategy for managing this use was not made clear at the meeting).

The aim is to consolidate five college faculties that are currently spread over 13 sites into one main site, providing educational and social spaces. The design incorporates 150 parking spaces at the rear which could also provide scope for extending the scheme by building over the parking area in the future.

The design proposes 3 storeys at the southern end, rising to 6 storeys at the north, and tiered with outside terraces. Conference facilities, a hospitality suite and restaurant are planned for the upper storey – a positive element which could provide interesting views of the Bay and towards the city centre. The proposed form responds to the height of the surrounding buildings.

The function of the terraces needs further review. Whilst they look very attractive, their links to internal areas of the buildings are currently unclear. The central terrace is accessible from the conference/hospitality area and the Panel were supportive of keeping this separate to other public areas. Aligning the characteristics of the terraces to the internal spaces with which they connect would be beneficial. Detailed landscape design for these spaces needs to be progressed, in response to the climatic conditions created by the building.

The design team aim to achieve BREEAM 'excellent' (2011) and the design includes a substantial photo-voltaic (PV) array on the roof. The cleaning regime for such an extensive array is a concern. The aim is for 50% natural ventilation and where mechanical ventilation is necessary, automatic controls will be installed to make the building as energy efficient as possible.

The Panel was concerned by the relationship that the proposal sets up between Dumballs Road and Canal Parade. The Panel accepted that the City Council had provided little guidance on the relative merits and intended future hierarchy of these streets. Nevertheless, promoting greater east/west links is an important requirement in this part of the city, so we might have expected to see a greater strengthening of the Dumballs Road/Canal Parade corner by the new building, rather than a splaying of the main bulk of its northern elevation away from Canal Parade as if turning its back. The design team accepted that such a solution would be unlikely in a dense urban city block, but justified their response by the more sub-urban, lower value context of this site, and by building out to the Canal Parade pavement line with single storey retail units and the adjacent crèche. The Panel felt however, that the proposals offered too little in respect of the potential importance of Canal Parade to the future of the area.

The rear of the building and its relationship with Canal Park was of equal concern. The proposals include a 2m high, metal perimeter fence to the eastern boundary of the site, with securitised pedestrian access gates into the park. Whilst the Panel accepted that security was a concern, we felt that the proposal risks offering little either to Canal Park or the College, and could potentially encourage vandalism. The proposal also features a potentially very important new access point into the park off Canal Parade which, as currently designed, will be faced with the 2m high perimeter fence one side and an existing brick wall/fence (surrounding the social housing) to the other, and would be unwelcoming in the extreme. The Panel suggested that a landscape and/or integrated art strategy might help to address the fence and the new park entrance and this should be considered.

Car parking for the college will be accessed via gates off Canal Parade, immediately adjacent to the proposed new park entrance. It was unclear how the gates will be managed; if they are to be locked at any times, and by whom.

The proposed plan is, very approximately, symmetrical about a central east/west axis, with the splayed northern elevation matched by a similar one to the south, which allows for a

service road access at that point. The Panel felt that this service entrance, being necessarily generous, potentially conflicted with the important pedestrian entrance further north on Dumballs Road. There is an opportunity on the southern boundary to incorporate an additional east/west thoroughfare through the site. Short of providing a more public amenity however, the Panel felt the design team should consider closing down the service entrance more, and joining the building up with the existing site on its southern side. That boundary is presently an unsightly fence/balustrade, up to the back of the pavement, and joining up the sites could help provide a more robust and pleasing boundary treatment.

The crèche is a stand-alone building, and previous proposals have placed it more centrally on the site. It is served by the main car parking, but also has a front door onto Canal Parade. The Panel advised that Canal Parade is often very busy, with both sides of the road lined with parked cars. If it is more likely that users of the crèche would arrive by car, then relocating the crèche further within the site could have advantages including allowing for the future development to front Canal Parade. This might then offset the Panel's concerns about scale in that important street, assuming that the future development building would be far more than single storey.

The lack of a drop-off facility at the front of the building was discussed. The main drop-off area and disabled access is at the rear. The Panel questioned the possibility of having a pull-in area off Dumballs Road, but accepted that this would clutter the front of the building.

The flexible atrium space with overlooking balconies was welcomed as this will provide a light, open and pleasant environment at the core of the building, notwithstanding the need to address glare into the space.

With some adjustments to address the commentary in this report, this building could be a fascinating addition to the City, benefiting from good transport into the city centre. The Panel is generally supportive of the investment, aspiration and ambition of the scheme which could dramatically improve the whole area around Dumballs Road. Providing a new facility for use by students, staff, community groups and the general public is welcomed along with the provision of good quality conference and hospitality facilities. The Panel wished the developer, client and design team every success with the project.

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

Attendees

Agent/Client/Developer

Jeff Thomas – Cardiff and Vale College
Paul McCarthy – Rightacres property

Architectural/Urban Designer

Jamie Dickson –Willmott Dixon
Ceri Gullett – Willmott Dixon
Dominic Hook – BDP
Sarah Gealy – AECOM

Planning Authority – Cardiff County Council

No attendance

Design Review Panel

Chair

Wendy Richards

Lead Panellist

Alan Francis

Michael Griffiths

Kedrick Davies