



Design Review Report

Britannia Park, Cardiff Bay

DCFW Ref: 112

Meeting of 21st July 2016



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

Review Status

Meeting date

Issue date

Scheme location

Scheme description

Scheme reference number

Planning status

CONFIDENTIAL

21st July 2016

2nd August 2016

Cardiff Bay

Mixed-use redevelopment

112

Pre-application

Declarations of Interest

The following declarations were made prior to commencement of the review and all parties confirmed that they were happy to proceed:

- Ewan Jones: Grimshaw is working with QUOD on an unrelated scheme
- Mark Lawton: HLM is working with The Urbanists on an unrelated scheme, Mark also Chairs the Landscape Institute Wales of which Wendy Richards is a committee member
- Toby Adam: Gaunt Francis is working with Vectos on an unrelated scheme

Consultations to Date

Initial discussions have taken place between the design team, the local planning authority and Cadw prior to formal pre-application consultation which is expected to commence soon.

The Proposals

It is intended that an outline planning application will be made for a redevelopment of Britannia Park, located behind the Norwegian Church on the edge of Roath Basin. The proposal is for 200 residential units, 2000m² of restaurant/retail development, park and promenade.

The site is in proximity to Pierhead Conservation Area and there are some listed buildings on and adjacent to the site.

Main Points in Detail

The following points summarise key issues from the review and should be considered to inform work ahead of making a planning application or engaging in further review.

Overall Approach

The review took place at a useful early stage in the design process when there is scope for discussion to add value and improve the quality of the scheme. The presentation from the team during the meeting and the pre-review material were very clear which made for a useful dialogue.

This site and the proposed building occupy a prominent position in Cardiff Bay which is important for residents, businesses and visitors and provides a route and link between different areas of waterfront development. There were no immediate concerns about the scale and massing of the proposed scheme but it must be recognised that such a proposal demands the highest design consideration and quality, particularly where the building meets the ground. Reference to the DCFW publication Design for Tall Buildings would be valuable <http://cdn.dcfw.org.uk/Designing-for-tall-buildings.pdf>. Understanding any tall buildings policy and guidance emerging from Cardiff Council will also be important.

The Commission welcomes the client's ambition for a good quality, viable development to act as an exemplar for future projects of a similar nature. It is commendable that the landscape team and architects are working closely together at this early stage so that an integrated solution to landscape and building design is developed, although it was clear that the landscape team were still catching up with the architectural ambition.

Viability and Quality

The scale, complexity, location and site condition of this scheme mean that much work is needed to make sure it will be viable. A good understanding of local residential values, market demands and delivery costs will be crucial.

The feasibility of a number of 'unusual' aspects of the proposal should be explored at an early stage so that they do not compromise the whole scheme. These include basement car parking in this dockside location, realignment of the road, facade design to deal with climatic conditions and the commercial viability of the retail units.

The team's ambition for quality design is welcomed. The prominent site demands excellent quality and the team must be confident that this could be delivered within a feasible budget. Realistic cost analysis will be important, the design team and client will need to be strong guardians of quality throughout any cost engineering processes.

There are plans for other areas of Cardiff Bay to be developed in the coming years, which may alter the commercial viability of different elements of this scheme but could be difficult to predict. Therefore, it may be useful to consider a phased strategy for the commercial units with interim strategies. For example, a base grid and landscape could be established and populated over time as the market demands, rather than accepting the presence of empty units for a number of years.

Response to Site Conditions

The Design Commission welcomes the thorough and clearly presented site and context analysis. The design team are clearly working together to address the challenges of the site. We would expect to see that further analysis and testing of site conditions, especially environmental, continues to inform design decisions. Making the most of the

opportunities afforded by the site and context and identifying and addressing any problems at an early stage will add value to the scheme.

The exposed nature of the site means that any building will not have a 'back'. However, there are different conditions to address at the dock edges of the site compared to those facing into the Bay; the proposed uses, materials and character should properly respond to this. Ground floor uses and the relationship they have with the landscape and public realm will be important. It is also important that servicing strategies are fully considered and integrated to avoid unsightly elements such as bin stores and delivery yards/service vehicle access compromising public space.

Heritage Strategy

There are relatively few historic buildings and structures left in Cardiff Bay and this project provides an opportunity to enhance people's experience and understanding of local heritage. There may be benefit in stitching the various heritage elements together through landscape design to form a more coherent experience. This would preferably include a strategy for dealing with the adjacent lock and earth-bund dam so that this area is not left forgotten between development parcels.

It is important that a clear heritage management strategy is set out which works alongside other aspects of the scheme.

Environmental Design

The Commission welcomes the ambition to achieve good ratings under BREEAM and the Homes Quality Mark, but the impact this will have on the plant, M & E services, materials and space planning should not be underestimated. The team could state their high level environmental aspirations beyond these standards as part of their overall vision for the scheme. Doing so would respond to industry advances in this area which go beyond baseline standards. The Commission also refers the team to expectations of appropriate Welsh design policy and to the *Practice Guidance: Planning for Sustainable Buildings* <http://gov.wales/topics/planning/policy/guidanceandleaflets/practice-guidance-planning-for-sustainable-buildings/?lang=en>

The presentation material suggests that housing will be 'high-end' and it will be important to understand what this market will demand in terms of services, such as comfort cooling. It will be important to establish this at an early stage so that building services can be properly integrated with the building design. Highly serviced tall buildings require large areas for plant, sometimes a whole floor, which will have a significant impact on space requirements and the appearance of the building.

Early consideration of building services and environmental design will allow the effects on costs and architecture to be properly managed. Services which would usually be hidden at the back of a building might have to become part of the aesthetic, as all sides of the site are equally exposed and important. It will not be visually successful or cost effective to add in building services and sustainable technologies at a late stage in the design process, these issues should be resolved well in advance of a planning application.

Environmental modelling and testing should inform the design process. It will be especially important to test for overheating and ventilation as these will have a

significant impact on the facade design. Understanding and managing wind conditions on the building and at ground level in the public realm will be essential to delivering comfortable environments.

Whilst it is good practice to provide outdoor amenity space for the flats, the design of any balconies and winter gardens must be carefully considered. The main issue to be dealt with on this exposed, high rise waterfront proposal is wind. Detailed design and testing of balcony details and screening will be important to provide comfortable, safe, usable spaces. It is important to think about how residents might use winter gardens, as there is a risk that over time they will become unsightly storage or used like habitable rooms. When used as habitable rooms, un-insulated winter gardens can make apartments very energy inefficient.

Landscape Design

Climate consideration in the landscape design is a positive approach. This project provides opportunities to create more comfortable outdoor amenity spaces for people to enjoy in this exposed part of the city and landscape design has an important role to play in adapting the microclimate to achieve this.

A north/south axis and route are shown on some of the drawings presented at the review. Consideration should be given to whether this route is necessary, who would use it and whether it detracts from the important routes and features around the edge of the bay.

The design is in the early stages when a number of ideas are being explored. It would be useful for the team to consider how further advantage could be drawn from the landscape design, bringing people closer to the water, as there are few opportunities for this elsewhere in Cardiff Bay. Opportunities to introduce play space for children should also be considered.

Using landscape design and building form to blend out the residential block at ground floor level appears appropriate and should be explored in more detail as the design process progresses. The later iterations showing a reduced scale to new buildings near the Norwegian Church were welcomed.

A designated cycle route currently passes through the site, this project provides an opportunity to improve the route at this section and contribute more widely to opportunities for active travel.

Design for People

The team demonstrated a good understanding of the site and context and it was clear how external factors have been informing the design process. The Commission would like to see that equal attention is given to the experience of the different people who will visit, work and live in the proposed buildings and spaces. People's well-being and experience will be affected by environmental comfort, views, space planning, safety and by the nature of fully inclusive facilities available to them.

Further Review

The Design Commission would welcome the opportunity to review this scheme again, once designs have progressed, but well before a planning application is made. The team

is encouraged to contact the Commission early to secure a second opportunity for review due to high service demand.

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

Attendees

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Design Review Panel:	
Chair	Ewan Jones
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Observing:	Marged Wyatt, Welsh Government Brian Davies, Welsh Government