

# Design Review Report

Maritime Centre, Porthcawl

**DCFW Ref: N158**

Meeting of 15<sup>th</sup> February 2018



## Review Status

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

## PUBLIC

15<sup>th</sup> February 2017  
23<sup>rd</sup> February 2017  
Porthcawl  
Mixed use  
N158  
Section 73 application

## Declarations of Interest

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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.

Panel member Mark Hallett is currently employing AECOM on a separate project. All were happy to proceed on the basis of this declaration.

## Consultations to Date

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Full consultation was undertaken on the original consented scheme. This review is of the amended scheme which is subject to a s73 application for minor amendments.

## The Proposals

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The proposal is for a mixed-use Maritime Centre, comprising accommodation for several non-profit organisations including Sea Cadets, Wind Surfing Federation and Coastguard. In addition, the centre will house a restaurant, cafe, Science Discovery Experience, micro-brewery exhibition space, conference space and residential accommodation for visiting groups.

The proposed location is a prominent 0.36ha site on Porthcawl sea front, within both regeneration and conservation areas and adjacent to the listed Jennings Building.

## Main Points

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The Commission prefers to be consulted on projects at their earliest stages when most value can be added. This review was at the request of the Local Authority. The Design Commission for Wales welcomes the aspiration to create an innovative Maritime Centre on this key site in Porthcawl that will act as a catalyst to wider regeneration of the area.

## Business Plan

It is encouraging that the client and Local Authority are undertaking thorough testing of the Business Plan. A robust Business Plan will be necessary to ensuring the long-term sustainability and viability of the building and the worthwhile investment of public funding, whether for capital or long term revenue needs. The successful cross funding from the commercial elements to the non-profit organisations within the building is crucial to its endurance as a building to serve the public.

### **Site context**

There are numerous challenges to designing on this site, including the harsh sea-front climatic conditions, adjacent heritage buildings, views and vistas to and from the site and the asymmetrical nature of the space. This challenging context, therefore, requires thorough site analysis and subsequent exploration of how the building can be positioned on the site to best respond to these challenges and opportunities. The current proposal does not sit comfortably on the site and does not establish a strong relationship to the adjacent Jennings building. The very formal symmetrical layout feels unsettled in the asymmetrical site. The functions in this building have strong links to the sea: testing of alternative orientations for the building would allow the design team to explore and exploit different views from the building with stronger links to the water and the adjacent listed building. Adjacent buildings and the site context should be shown on the plans.

DCFW would encourage further discussion between the client and the Local Authority to explore the potential to include the Jennings car park within the site boundary. This would create a more logical site extent and would allow the proposed Maritime Centre to better relate to the Jennings Building. The team's earlier proposal to place all parking in a single line along the access road would be neat and efficient.

### **Concept**

The history of the site is that of robust marine industry, the traces of which are evident in the area today. The current design evokes a sense of leisure and seaside holidays, rather than the former industrial nature of this area and proposed function of the building. Given its prominent location and in its current form, this proposal would fundamentally change the character of the area. This is especially pertinent given the requirement for the building to preserve or enhance the conservation area. Taking a conceptual approach which develops from simple industrial maritime forms may help to reduce the complexity and quantity of detailing, helping to manage costs whilst being more appropriate in its simplicity and contextual response.

### **Form**

Recent value engineering exercises required to bring the building within budget have diluted the initial concept, resulting in a building without a coherent design narrative. The cost and quantum of future maintenance required for a complex design in this exposed location, with frequent changes of detail and surface, is a substantial concern for the long-term success of this venture. The extensive glazing creates environmental and health and safety challenges for a building of this nature in this location. A simplified form is likely to be more robust to withstand the harsh climate.

### **Sustainability**

DCFW supports the aspiration to deliver a BREEAM Excellent scheme. By reconsidering the concept, an opportunity arises to incorporate passive sustainability principles from the outset. This will improve the efficiency of the resulting building whilst also reducing the required mitigation measures, such as air conditioning.

### **Public realm**

The public realm around the building should be well activated by the ground floor uses and a robust public realm design should be developed to give this prominent building a setting to support its important civic function.

## **Delivery**

DCFW appreciates the time constraints of the funding, however time is needed to reconsider the initial concept and develop a design that will meet the objectives of all the user groups as well as the local authority. This redesign would likely be more appropriate for the context and simpler in form, thereby potentially reducing the construction period.

DCFW would encourage the design team to return to Design Review with an amended scheme.

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

## Attendees

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Agent/Client/Developer: Stuart Bentley, Porthcawl Harbourside  
Mark Bryant, Porthcawl Harbourside

Architect/Planning Consultant: Stuart Bentley, Porthcawl Harbourside

Local Authority: Satwant Pryce, Bridgend CBC  
Claire Hamm, Bridgend CBC  
Sue Tomlinson – Bridgend CBC

Design Review Panel:  
Chair Ewan Jones  
Lead Panellist Steven Smith  
Chris Jefford  
Toby Adam  
Mark Hallett  
Jen Heal, Design Advisor, DCFW  
Amanda Spence, Design Advisor, DCFW  
Wendy Maden, DCFW