

Design Review Report

Channel View, Grangetown, Cardiff

DCFW Ref: N191

Meeting of 14th February 2019



Review Status

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

PUBLIC

14th February 2019
28th February 2019
Cardiff
Mixed use masterplan
N191
Pre-application

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.

Panellist Mark Hallett has previously employed Cambria Consulting who are part of the consultant team. All present confirmed that they were content to proceed with this declaration.

Consultations to Date

This was the first review of the proposals for this site.

The Proposals

The review considered a feasibility masterplan for the redevelopment of residential areas on Channel View Road, including the demolition of 188 dwellings and the development of 362 new dwellings, 400m² of commercial floorspace (including a community hub), new public realm, improved public open space and the potential construction of a new pedestrian bridge of the River Taff to link the public open space at The Marl and Hamadryad Park.

Main Points

The panel welcomes the opportunity to review the proposals at this early pre-application stage. The following points summarise key issues from the review that should be considered in further design development and engagement with the local community:

Vision and design objectives

The vision for this place should be thoroughly explored from the outset of the design process and co-produced with the local community. Priorities and key objectives must be determined early as these will directly impact the form of the development.

Engagement

Robust and effective community engagement, which allows a diverse group of local people and future residents to be involved and truly shape the proposals, is key to the success of these proposals. The engagement strategy could become an exemplar for public sector engagement with local communities, if undertaken early and well.

The broad cultural profile of the local community and its adjoining neighbourhoods will need consideration in order to develop a robust engagement strategy which allows all those across the local community to engage in the process of developing this new part of the community.

Future engagement should be extended to include key stakeholder groups, including residents' groups and deliverers of strategic infrastructure. The use of social media networks and other channels of contact should be pursued to facilitate engagement with a wide range of stakeholders. Exhibiting proposals is insufficient in itself. An iterative process of engagement reflecting the goals and ways of working set out in the duty placed upon the Local Authority by the well-being and future generations legislation should be evident in the involvement strategy along with shared place-making objectives.

Proposed bridge

The proposed bridge appears to be imperative to the success of the scheme by opening this site to wider permeability, connectivity and access. The concept of the bridge should, therefore, be included as a fundamental requirement in future design and delivery discussions. This includes early specialist exploration by a suitable, experienced structures architect to inform proposals and establish sufficient capital funding requirements for this piece of infrastructure. However, the scheme also needs to be capable of success without the bridge, should there be a phased delivery or any unforeseen financial or development circumstances.

Given the importance of the bridge, a thorough design process will be required which delivers a bespoke solution for this important design element and avoids standard engineering responses. There appears to be a level of complexity to the design of this bridge, including level changes and bypassing routes which should be tested at this early stage.

This bridge serves as a link between two communities, in addition to a strategic link for the city, and this dual purpose reinforces the need for high design quality. The landing points at either side of the bridge, and how these embed into existing and proposed development, should be well considered. The absence of sufficient early design work represents false economy and could lead to a crossing of insufficient quality, falling short of the long-term public value that could be achieved by appropriately detailed design work at this stage.

Contextual analysis

The proposals do not appear to be thoroughly informed by the local context. Scale, massing and form should be demonstrably informed by the immediate context to allow the proposals to sit comfortably within this existing community. Analysis of this local context will reveal how the scale of the buildings and open spaces around them work together to create the community.

Density and massing

Design development and options testing of massing would be helpful for future reviews and the subsequent planning application to facilitate understanding of how the final design solution has been reached.

Although the skyline will help with the identity of the new development, the vision to create a skyline distinctive to this area will largely serve people other than those who live in the

area. Public spaces at the human scale will need to be prioritised so that they are valuable to residents of this area, over and above concerns for a distant view of the skyline. Blocks with a greater sense of enclosure could be tested in order to create public spaces which are more comfortable and integrated with the existing open space.

The current massing creates large blocks which face the green space and turn their back onto spaces through the middle of the developable area. These spaces could feel hostile and the very large parking court could become problematic spaces. This approach loses value through the middle of the site and further testing should be undertaken to explore options which could open views to the green space and water, optimising the value taken from the site, both environmental and economic.

Public realm

The massing should be fully tested to ensure that the spaces created between buildings are comfortable, welcoming and well used. Wind and solar studies should be undertaken and SUD requirements well integrated at the earliest stages. The valuable public space could be better integrated into the scheme to create a variety of spaces which are green and well used. The public realm strategy should feel coherent and create a range of well-designed spaces and routes with different characters and uses.

Tenure

The tenure mix proposed appears to respond directly to local need, which is welcomed. However, the preliminary tenure mix plan indicates a clear segregation of private and social tenure homes on the site. This is poor, outdated practice and is discouraged, particularly to avoid potential issues of social segregation, exclusion or relocation concerns within the community.

The proposals should be tenure blind to allow the community to live cohesively, however, this will need to be sensitively balanced with the need to phase delivery to rehouse local people with specific urgent housing need.

Transport strategy

Reference was made to the proposed South Wales Metro and how this could unlock sustainable travel potential for this site, therefore reducing the number of parking spaces required by Local Authority policy. With this in mind, the panel suggested that this could, in part, become an exemplar transit-based, zero private vehicle project. The current layout shows rear parking courts which are dominated by private vehicles which is incongruous to the sustainable transport message within the presentation.

Along with high quality, well-designed public realm, the transport strategy could include electric pool cars, sophisticated and well-connected cycle provision and vehicle charging points etc to create an efficient development in terms of sustainable movement.

Environmental strategy

The panel understands that community heating systems are being explored as potential energy solutions for the site. A proactive approach to the energy strategy will ensure that this development is as efficient and sustainable as possible, which is particularly important in the context of the Wellbeing of Future Generations legislation in Wales.

Testing of overshadowing and wind modelling will be required as the design process moves forward to ensure places created are comfortable and welcoming.

Delivery

Work should be undertaken at an early stage to develop the best delivery model to ensure that the scheme is built to the highest quality and creates the optimum amount of public value. Early engagement with partner developers should seek to embed socially responsible and sustainable development outcomes alongside financial returns which deliver a balanced range of tenures.

The public realm and key connections should be delivered from the outset of the process to embed the placemaking aspiration and maximise the value of the site. This will require a capital investment up front, meaning that finance and delivery methods must be considered as early as possible in order to release the benefits of impact investing. Limited financial information was presented to demonstrate that the wider ambitions of the scheme such as the public realm and bridge connections can be achieved.

Next steps

The ambition for this project is palpable and to be encouraged. The Commission welcomes further opportunity to engage with the local authority, design team and development partners throughout the design process to achieve a high-quality proposal, through a place-led approach which enhances the opportunity to secure public value for the long term. An early follow up opportunity should be sought for the LA and DCFW to consider and plan for this in more detail.

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

Attendees

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Design Team: Rob Firman, Tanya Simeonova, Twm Harris Davies,
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Barrie Davies, Asbri Planning

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