

Design Review Report

Central Square & BBC Wales
Headquarters Building,
Cardiff

DCFW Ref: 36

Meeting of 14th August 2014



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	CONFIDENTIAL (Pre-Application)
Meeting date	14 th August 2014
Issue date	20th August 2014
Scheme location	Central Square, Cardiff
Scheme description	Masterplan and BBC building
Scheme reference number	36
Planning status	Pre-application

Declarations of Interest

None declared.

Consultations to Date

The developer and design team are meeting regularly with the Local Authority to develop the masterplan. Earlier workshops with the Design Commission for Wales were held at DCFW on 3rd February 2014 and Foster and Partners on 15th July 2014. This report should be read alongside DCFW's reports from those workshops, for purposes of continuity.

The Proposals

The Central Square masterplan aims to develop a vibrant, people centred mixed-use development and civic space for the citizens of Cardiff and visitors to the capital city. The scheme aims to respond to the needs of commuters and citizens as well as the requirement to manage large numbers of people during Millennium Stadium events.

Management of the city's public transport networks is a key issue for this masterplan, as the site incorporates the current bus station, and is adjacent to the Grade II Listed Cardiff Central rail station. As well as public realm, the masterplan incorporates buildings for retail, offices, residential and tourist information, with a prominent BBC headquarters building planned for the centre of the development.

The Design Commission for Wales is broadly supportive of this scheme which is vital for the future success of the city centre. The developer, design team and client representatives are to be applauded for their commitment to early and sustained engagement with the Commission and their efforts to secure the long term benefits of design excellence.

Key Considerations

The following considerations summarise key issues from the review, and should be used to inform work ahead of the next meeting, scheduled to take place in Cardiff at DCFW on 23rd September 2014.

Analysis and Event Management: A pedestrian flow analysis tool is being used to test and inform the public realm design. The Design Commission would still like to understand better how the analysis has been used to shape the proposals. This is not yet clear. It is important that if the analysis highlights any problem areas, these are addressed in the masterplan and detailed design. There is a level of uncertainty around the future number of rail and bus users and expansion of the city to the south which the analysis should keep in mind.

The management of considerable numbers of people and queuing for the rail station on event days will have a significant impact on the quality of the public space. This issue still needs much more work to ensure it is resolved. There are a number of options, including those which hold queues in the streets or involve information technology, which still need to be properly tested in design terms and with the flow analysis tool. Ideally, the solution would provide some shelter from the weather, and would not require the use of temporary barriers which could damage new paving and need to be stored. The team might look for examples of queuing management which have been successful in other locations. The impact of phasing on event management also needs careful planning. Whilst the analysis data may be useful, the design team should draw on City Council's in depth knowledge and experience to develop proposals which are informed, sensible and workable.

Bus Station: The team explained that they would design only an indicative layout for the bus station at this stage, to demonstrate that it will work with the rest of the masterplan. This is a sensible approach. However, it remains necessary to carefully plan the entrance and exit points, particularly onto Wood Street, as they will have a major impact on the street.

Rail Station: The public realm is being designed so that it could accommodate Network Rail's aspirations for expansion of the station in the future. There is further work needed to progress the relationship between the bus and train stations to form an 'integrated transport hub', although this will not be detailed in the initial hybrid application.

Taxis: The Design Commission understands that the location for provision of taxi ranks is still under discussion. We would like to know more about this at the next review and understand workable proposals.

Street Design: Design of the streets is now being considered in more detail, and will be influenced by the pedestrian flow analysis and traffic planning. Before the next review, designs should be developed in terms of the following:

- Nature and method of providing shelter/canopies
- A managed strategy for leisure and commuter cycling which joins existing provision

- Integration of bus station and car park entrances
- Integration of trees, lighting, street furniture and public art
- Managed strategies for parking, deliveries, drop-off, servicing and emergency vehicle access

Further consideration should also be given to how Marland Road joins the square, and how street furniture and planting is used in this area. There are also issues around servicing the retail units along this street which are yet to be fully resolved.

Station Square: Many potential uses for the square have been suggested, and it may also need to accommodate queuing for the station. The hard and soft landscape must be designed to allow this level of flexibility. Better definition of the vision for the square would help progress the design, and inform the nature of the landscaping. The apparent scale of the space and the nature of the edges which define it are important considerations.

The landscaping should take into account desire lines, visibility and volumes of pedestrian traffic. Particular concerns were raised by the panel about the nature and form of any landscaping in front of the BBC Building. Although the desire to minimise cafe clutter is supported, designs for the building and landscape should be carefully integrated.

The grid pattern previously adopted for the hard landscaping helped to fix the BBC building in place and should be reconsidered. It could be used to organise services, lighting and street furniture. Further work is required on the extent and placement of new trees, which was a concern raised in the previous workshop report.

Public Realm and Landscaping: As raised at the previous workshop, materials and lighting of the public spaces and streets will be important and will be significant for the quality of the scheme. Buildings, trees and paving might all be used in any new lighting scheme. Lighting might change with different events, and the square should be able to accommodate seasonal/festive arrangements. The Commission expects to see proposals for these elements at the next review.

If public art is to be included a fully integrated strategy is advisable, and a professional public art coordinator should be appointed as part of the team at this stage, if this is not to be carried out by Foster & Ptnrs. Any public art strategy and proposals should be reflected in the masterplan document.

Masterplanning Sustainability: Although a commitment to BREEAM 'excellent' (and 'outstanding' for the BBC building) were welcomed, it is best practice to consider the full range of sustainability issues at this early masterplanning stage, including examining the potential for synergies between buildings with different/complementary energy demands. The Commission would like to hear more about how sustainability is integral to design at the next review.

BBC Building: It is recognised that the BBC may take time to adapt the way they work once they move to the new building, and in order to make visible the internal, technical uses of the building to the public, the building design will need to incorporate a level of flexibility.

Given that the best opportunities for making activity visible occur on the south and west facades of the building, there will be tensions and conflicts between transparency and solar control which must be further considered. The Commission will expect to hear more from the design team about this issue at the next review.

The proposal contains large areas of floor to ceiling glazing onto interior office spaces. This means careful attention should be given to the design and layout of the offices and the ceilings which will be highly visible from outside.

The division of the retail space and associated servicing strategy needs further development, although it is not yet clear what type of retailer(s) will occupy the space.

Further detailed consideration should be given to how the café space opens up onto Station Square and whether two sets of external columns outside that space will help or hinder movement and the design concept.

Next Review: The next design review session for this scheme is scheduled for 23rd September, 10am-2pm. It is agreed that the team will submit materials five working days prior to the review and by 17th at the very latest.

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

Attendees

Agent/Client/Developer:	Paul McCarthy, Rightacres Jason Hyett, Rightachres Alan Bainbridge, BBC Neil Davies, BBC
Architectural/Urban Designer:	Toby Blunt, Foster & Partners Adam Newburn, Foster & Partners John Cottrell, NLP Planning Shikant Sharma, Buro Happold

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Helen Berresford, Sheppard Robson
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Chris Butten, Hyland Edgar Driver
Jon Folly, Capita

Local Authority:

Claire Moggridge, Cardiff Council
Nigel Hanson, Cardiff Council
Lawrence Dowdall, Cardiff Council
Martin Smith, Cardiff Council

DCFW Design Review Service:

Chair

Alan Francis, Chairman, DCFW

Lead Panellist

Lynne Sullivan, DCFW Panel

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