

Design Review Report

Milford Dock Masterplan,
Pembrokeshire

DCFW Ref: 78E

8th April 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

Public

Review Date	8 th April 2014
Issue date	29th April 2014
Scheme location	Milford Dock, Pembrokeshire
Scheme description	Masterplan for regeneration of Docks
Scheme reference number	78E
Planning status	Pre-application

Declarations of Interest

None declared.

Consultations to Date

A series of focus group workshops and public consultation events have taken place over the past two years, including a recent public exhibition.

This scheme was presented to the Design Commission for Wales in October 2012. This report should be read in conjunction with the report from the previous review.

The Design Review on 8th April 2014 took place in Milford Haven and included a tour of the site.

The Proposals

The site is approximately 21.3Ha and lies to the south of Milford Haven town centre, bounded by residential development to the north and west, Hamilton Terrace to the east, and the Havens Head Retail Park to the north. The Milford Haven waterway lies to the south. Almost the entire site is within a Conservation Area and there are several listed buildings.

The masterplan aims to revive and regenerate the docks area, making it more attractive to local residents and tourists. It proposes mixed-use development including residential, a new supermarket, cinema, some remodelling of the harbour, a new footbridge, access roads and landscape design. The proposals include moving and reconstructing one of the listed buildings. A new building is proposed as a focal point, which would become a new Headquarters for the Harbour Authority.

Summary

- The Design Commission for Wales welcomes the opportunity to review this scheme for a second time. The Commission is on the whole supportive of development of this site.
- Design has progressed in a logical manner since the first review. It is also positive that informative consultation and market testing have been carried out.
- A thorough study of the context, character of the conservation area and setting of listed buildings should be undertaken. This should include map regression as well as assessment of existing features.
- The outline planning application should include some 'masterplan fixes' to give clarity and certainty in key areas whilst allowing flexibility where appropriate.
- The 'gritty' nature of the existing site should be preserved and enhanced through new development. It is suggested that this should be captured in design guidance for the site.
- Proposed access to the docks at the north entrance has been much improved, and removal of the multi-storey car park from the proposals is a positive change.
- Relocation of the listed building from the north entrance needs greater justification. The proposed relocation to the area of modern infill above the 'lost river' seems inappropriate for a historic building. The benefits and viability of rebuilding should be considered, as well as the appropriateness of a new location.
- The team should consider the impact of the proposed retirement housing on the setting of a listed building which currently has a direct visual relationship to the dock, and the cost and practicality of amending the dock to accommodate it. A soft landscape scheme in this shallow end of the dock might be more appropriate.
- A contemporary solution, which is appropriate to its setting is required for the new food store. The physical and visual relationship with the dock side and the existing buildings should be reviewed. Retaining the existing ground levels appears to be more appropriate than cutting levels down to match the dock side.
- The Design Commission is supportive of the idea for a new footbridge over the dock to improve pedestrian connections. The cycle/pedestrian routes need clarification to make sure the connection is attractive, legible and well used.
- The new headquarters building would be very prominent, and therefore would require excellent design standards, sustainable credentials and visual conceptualisation. It is recommended that this building is procured through a design competition.
- The usability of the outdoor event space at Mackerel Quay throughout the year's seasonal weather should be carefully considered.

- The leadership and commitment of Milford Haven Port Authority to delivering quality design is welcomed. Their commitment as client is significant and is to be commended.
- The Design Commission would welcome further opportunities to review this scheme as designs progress and we look forward to successful progress through the next stages of its development.

Main Points in Detail

Role of Design Guidance and Codes

The team should consider the role and scope of design guidance and codes in this masterplan. Design codes and guidance provide an opportunity for more control over development of the different elements of the masterplan. They may help to achieve a more coherent result, which is in line with the team's vision.

Any design guidance should be informed by a detailed study of the surrounding conservation area townscape/landscape, and should balance design aspirations with commercial viability, ensuring quality and added value through good design. Proper analysis would provide a stronger basis for design briefs.

Design Guidance might cover the following issues:

- Scale and form
- Movement and access
- Land use
- Series of Character Areas
- Suggested materials for buildings and landscape
- Sustainability

The docks area already feels quite 'gritty', and this should not be lost by over-manicuring the area through new development. An architectural vision is required, which will provide some clarity and control. The team will need to be specific about things that are desired in any guidance or codes. For example, requiring solid and robust materials would help retain the 'gritty' character of this dockside site. If contemporary development is desired, guidance should be explicit about this.

The Local Authority must fix the most important elements of the masterplan with planning conditions.

The M&E and other infrastructure (power, drainage, water etc.) will have an impact on the planning of the whole scheme, and should be integrated in the masterplan design and any guidance. Sustainable principles and strategy should be set in the guidance. This should cover issues such as cut and fill, maintenance, durability and materials as well as energy, water and drainage.

Conservation and Listed Buildings

Thorough analysis of the character of the Conservation Area and settings of the listed buildings is not evident in the proposals. This will be particularly important to the

successful development of this site, which is almost entirely within the Conservation Area. Such a study should help to set parameters of any design guidance and inform decisions about listed buildings.

It is currently proposed that one of the listed structures will be dismantled and re-built in a different location on the site to make room for the required entrance into the docks at the north. Various options for access have been assessed, but the only appropriate solution requires demolishing or moving the listed building. The stonework of the building is in a poor condition and could not be reused. It is proposed that the relocated building would use new block work with render over and that some of the details of the building would be reused. The team should consider the merit in carrying out this work, given that much of the remaining building would not be original. It is difficult at this point, to understand the value in relocating the building, given how little of its fabric would survive. Any decision must be properly justified and based on guidelines from Cadw and Pembrokeshire Council's Conservation Department. If the building is relocated, a suitable site must be found. The site indicated on the proposal drawings is not appropriate, as it blocks views out of the head of the dock, potentially reduces the legibility of the pedestrian route to the library and sits on an area of modern infill above the course of the 'lost river'.

A new building for retirement housing on reclaimed land is proposed at the shallower north end of the dock. This requires further consideration as it would significantly alter the setting of the listed building behind, and its quayside relationship to the water. It would also be costly to reform the edge of the dock to create the land on which to build. This element could put the deliverability of this masterplan at risk. Although the shallow end of the docks cannot be used by boats, the team should explore soft-landscape options which would be positive for wildlife and visual and public amenity. A similar landscape approach and planting scheme, predated at Bristol Harbourside has been successful.

Nelson Quay Area

Currently, there are no plans for de-trunking of the A4076 off of which access to the dock will be made. Opportunities for doing so might allow improvements to the public realm, pedestrian access and links to the town centre, and should be explored. Pembrokeshire CC and the Welsh Government are understood to be considering this.

Supermarket Area

The panel was pleased that the multi-storey car park had been removed from the proposals.

There was discussion about whether the new supermarket should retain the existing stepped levels, placing it higher than the level of the docks, or whether the land should be dug out. Digging out would be costly, and there is no opportunity to use the material as fill elsewhere on the site. Retaining the stepped levels provides a transitional plateau between the dock and Hamilton Terrace above, and helps to hide the car park when viewed from the dockside. The team should draw detailed site sections to explore the impact of the different levels on the relationship between the supermarket, town centre and dockside.

The supermarket design should be appropriate to its setting, but contemporary rather than pastiche. It should celebrate its location between the docks and the bank up to Hamilton Terrace, and reinforce the connection to the dockside. The roof elevation must be carefully considered as there will be views down onto it from above. The design should be informed by the context study, bearing in mind the listed buildings nearby and above the site.

A standard supermarket approach would not be appropriate. The team should look at good examples of supermarket design where the building is successfully integrated with the existing context. The siting of the café and views from this area will be important in this regard. The Waitrose store at Portishead is a useful precedent, as are several Sainsbury's stores around the UK. Site visits to various precedents, with both client and design teams, are always valuable and may assist design evolution and decision making.

Footbridge and Pedestrian Links

Based on discussions testing the value of the concept of a new footbridge, and the way it will operate and be managed, with boats entering/leaving the harbour, the Design Commission is ultimately supportive of the proposal. The new bridge would improve connectivity, especially to Hakin on the west side of the port, providing effective routes along pedestrians' and cyclists' desire lines.

The masterplan proposes amendments to the route of the Wales Coastal Path, which attracts tourism. Therefore, it is important that the route is clear and enhances the value of the docks area. The route at the west of the docks and through Hakin needs to be strengthened and made clearer. If alternative, side routes are proposed, the main Coastal Path route should be obvious.

The pedestrian route through the car park will connect the docks with the town centre. This important link is currently squeezed between parked cars in the supermarket car park and needs more work to make sure the connection is attractive, legible and well used. The route and the car park should be designed together as a piece of public realm.

Headquarters Building

The proposed headquarters will be a key building in the scheme, in a visually prominent location. It is crucial that this building demonstrates outstanding design standards and sustainable credentials, whilst being deliverable.

It is recommended that this building is procured through a competition to achieve the very best design that relates to the context. The brief will be especially important, and should be given careful consideration.

As this is proposed to be a large, tall building, it will have a significant impact on views. From the context analysis, key views should be identified and agreed with the LPA so that the visual impact can be properly assessed. Views from the water, as well as the land, should be included. The height of the building needs to be well justified. Careful consideration is necessary for any tall building and we refer the team to the Design Commission for Wales' publication, appended to this report.

Mackerel Quay and Smokery

The family housing would require a quantity of rock excavation to prepare the site for construction. The cost of this might impact on the deliverability of this element of the masterplan. It is recommended that the team consider this in more detail before committing the layout proposed.

A rational public realm strategy is needed for this area. The team must think about how event spaces will be used when there is no event happening, and what spaces will be like throughout the year. This part of the dock is more exposed to bad weather, and the function and location of public spaces must be realistic. Robust and durable materials would seem appropriate to the location, and would help with budget. In the more sheltered parts of the dock, consideration could be given to the inclusion of children's play equipment.

Town Centre Relationship

The team should be careful that the masterplan does not take away trade and activity from the town centre, from the shops and Torch theatre in particular.

The masterplan is aiming to attract a different audience to the docks than that at the town centre, and aims to appeal especially to tourists and visitors. A gap analysis has been carried out to identify opportunities. The results of this should be clearly explained in the Design and Access Statement.

The connection between the town centre and the docks will be important so that the town centre also benefits from any increase in tourism.

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

Attendees

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