

DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

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.

Design Review Report

Review status

CONFIDENTIAL

Meeting date	Thursday 6 th June 2013
Issue date	Thursday 13 th June 2013
Scheme location	Old Town Dock, Newport
Scheme description	Mixed use development
Scheme reference number	82A
Planning status	Pre-application
Declaration of interests	Wendy Richards was previously employed by Neil Chapman at Austin-Smith Lord.

Consultations to date

DCFW understood that one pre-application meeting with planning officers from Newport City Council had been held the day before the Design Review. Comments from the City Council are contained within the body of this report.

Summary

The Panel recognised that this is the penultimate development plot within the Old Town Dock site and is encouraged by the overall aspiration for the mixed use development proposed.

Notwithstanding our general support, there were some specific points raised by the Panel during the review:

- Every effort should be made to understand the constraint/opportunity behind retaining the old dock wall which provides an important and the only direct link to, the history and context of the site. The current development layout and definition of the building line is predicated on the location/exposure/use of this wall and is currently not used to maximum advantage.
- The proposed building heights for the landmark buildings which are identified to have 'architectural flair' in the SPG need further detailed consideration.
- The approach to vehicular circulation and parking courts needs to be reconsidered and designed as part of the landscape infrastructure, so the spaces will be used,

overlooked and enjoyed as part of the development. The treatment of East Dock road must be considered in this approach.

- A popular, active central landscape space is critical to the success of the project. More consideration needs to be given to the orientation of the buildings, particularly those with active frontages that open up onto the landscape, to maximise south facing aspect and provide useable, popular places that people will feel encouraged to use.

Discussion and Panel response in full:

This is the penultimate 12 acre/4.85hectare development plot within the Old Town Dock site. It is proposed to develop a mixed use, residentially led scheme, comprising of 85 houses, 209 apartments, 33,000ft² offices, 10,500 ft² community use, a cafe, small retail opportunities, a 3700ft² convenience store and a 3000ft² health centre. The development is proposed to be delivered over 7 phases. Phase 1 is adjacent to the recently implemented public space to the north of the development plot.

The proposal is a joint venture between Sennybridge Limited and Seren Group with construction costs currently estimated to be £28m. A planning submission is programmed for autumn 2013, outline for the site as a whole with a detailed submission for phase 1.

There is already substantial development to the east of the site. The riverside park has recently been completed to the south of the southern distributor road and around the Maltings site and Redrow Homes are completing their final development plot to the south east corner. The design proposals for this development site have been developed in response to supplementary planning guidance (SPG) for Old Town Dock, one development brief adopted in 2005, the other a draft addendum not yet adopted, but dated June 2013.

The design team emphasised the history of the site and demonstrated the relationship of the proposed development plot to the historic layout of the 'Old Dock'. The northern wall of the old dock has formed the spine of the scheme. The site layout is arranged around a linear landscape space that follows the wall of the old dock and provides a public focus to the development. Pedestrian and cycle links have been emphasised through the development layout. The designers have consciously chosen to limit vehicular routes through the site and used a cellular layout to plan the development blocks.

Ground floor cafes, restaurants and small retail units have been incorporated in the main public spaces linked to the central landscape spine with other uses provided across the site. Office development is envisaged in the first phase, overlooking the public park recently implemented by Newport Unlimited. This park sets the historic context of the site, with an artificial water body and dock wall edge within a green space which provides a positive east west connection and a link to a recently installed pedestrian crossing at Fredrick Street. The quality of this public realm sets a standard for the overall development which will progress south.

The design response to scale and massing is generally 2 – 4 storeys with 5 storey blocks highlighted at important corners in the north and south of the development. A 9 – 10 storey block on a 1 – 2 storey podium is proposed at the north eastern corner of the site. The

location of these taller blocks is a direct response to the SPG Addendum which identifies the location of prominent higher 'landmark buildings' which are described as having 'extra height' but no maximum height is defined.

Public realm design maximises the east west connections for pedestrians and cyclists and the landscape concept organises a number of amenity, bio diverse and woodland planting blocks amongst a network of 'cells in nature' within the landscape strategy. The old dock wall is highlighted through the landscape strategy connecting to the recreated wall in the recently opened public open space to the north. The design team explained that the location and condition of the existing wall was not fully understood, that it is potentially 2m below existing ground level and is probably incomplete. The designs highlight the location of the wall as a link to the past, without necessarily exposing the existing structure. The line of the dock wall illustrated on the landscape strategy also forms the building wall line to development blocks along its length.

The vehicular access and parking approach keeps vehicle movement within small development blocks, parking courts serve each block and there is little ability to move between these. Effectively each proposed road terminates in a dead end, the approach to delivering these 'cells' of development is a design approach to limit vehicular movement. Public transport serves the site through bus links along Uskway and East Dock road and a car sharing scheme is also promoted together with secure bicycle storage.

The initial phase of the development will deliver the office development overlooking the northern park, associated car parking and two residential blocks along east dock road. The joint venture between Sennybridge and the Seren Group allows opportunities to develop the CHP/energy centre built at Mariners Quay. The current target is for residential development to be built to Code for Sustainable Homes level 4.

The Panel were disappointed to understand that the recently created dock wall to the north of the site was not necessarily completely original. On the basis of the importance of the history attached to the site and the docks, the panel felt that there should be a strong response to the dock wall. The design team and client were not able to confirm the location or condition of the wall. The Panel urged the developer and the team to understand more detail about the location, condition and possible use of the wall prior to setting up their design strategy on the principle that it is retained/used/highlighted within the development. Wherever possible the wall should be retained and used, however, the implications of doing this need to be fully understood prior to design development.

The approach to creating development cells with parking courts and limited on street parking was not thought to be an appropriate approach to site planning nor responding to the principles of Manual for Streets which set the best design principles. As a consequence of this design approach, vehicular access was problematic through the site, faced with a number of dead ends. The approach to parking and street frontage along east dock road also needed to be reconsidered. It was recommended through the detail design process that the parking solutions already built out on the eastern development be reviewed to understand their strengths and weaknesses and inform the detail design of the proposals. The arrangement of parking throughout the development should be part of the landscape infrastructure.

There was some discussion around the viability of delivering some of the community facilities and retail opportunities ahead of completing the site as a whole. It was also apparent that these opportunities needed to be retested in terms of making the most of their aspect as the detailed design developed. There was a lack of south facing seating areas adjacent to cafes/facilities where suitable spaces should be designed to promote outdoor activity.

The proposed treatment of Uskway by planting a median strip in the carriageway was discussed. The panel questioned the need for this and felt that resources would be better concentrated on some landscape management of the existing semi mature/mature tree planting to Uskway. Early implementation of this edge treatment and east west connections early would make greater impact.

Given the early timing in the design development process that this scheme currently occupies and the programme for an autumn planning application, it is recommended that programming another design review takes place in order to understand the design development for this important site.

The city council confirmed that the general principles of the development accord with the SPG, though they had only briefly seen the proposals and wanted to understand the legibility and permeability of the scheme in greater depth. They held concerns over the height of the proposed 10 storey landmark building which should be considered in the context of adjacent buildings and the impact on existing residents. The city council also confirmed that they would like to see exposure of the existing dock wall, though they accepted there may be limitations, however the wall could be included in the sustainable urban drainage scheme within the landscape strategy. Certainly the wall and its location/top of wall height and condition needed further investigation.

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

Attendees

Agent/Client/Developer

Mike Joyce – Sennybridge Limited

Architectural/Urban Designer

Aled Roberts - Robert Limbrick Architects
Aaron Terry - Roberts Limbrick Architects

Planning Authority
Newport City Council Council

Andrew Dawe – Principal Planning Officer
Vicky Williams – Planning Officer

Newport Unlimited
Urban Regeneration Company

Hamish Munro
Neil Chapman (Austin-Smith: Lord)
URC Design Adviser

Design Review Panel

Chair
Lead Panellist

Wendy Richards
Angela Williams
Simon Carne