



new bus loop to improve the accessibility of the town centre and the integration with rail services.

A series of distinct districts are proposed to differentiate the town centre. From north to south these include:

- a mixed use area with new offices around an improved railway station
- a retail and commercial core
- a cultural area and university campus alongside a riverfront walkway
- a new office and residential area to the south
- a revitalised South Dock community.

On the east bank there will

- a predominantly residential community, connected to the city centre via a new pedestrian bridge

### **Panel's Response**

The panel considered the timescale of this ambitious project, and the need to tackle the major sources of blight first, such as the Old Green interchange and the Kingsway. The pace of development in different areas will vary. The city centre retail schemes seem to be deliverable, and the financial structures allowing the delivery of the station district development is almost in place.

The panel questioned exactly how the high aspirations for design quality expressed in the masterplan will be achieved in practice, and whether such aspirations could inform supplementary planning guidance (SPG). They were told that the Local Authority's new guidance was now available in draft. There is an opportunity to synthesise the two. The Panel felt that the master plan's design guidance struck exactly the right note and was carefully tailored to the different sub areas of the town. They were pleased that the masterplan has been adopted by Newport City Council and therefore has a policy role and can guide the preparation of briefs and further design guidance.

The panel questioned the plans for the public realm and were pleased to hear that a strategy has been commissioned from Urban Initiatives, and will include a number of different conceptual designs. This is viewed as an important resource to guide any future planning conditions and developer contributions. It is supported by further detailed masterplanning work being carried out by Landscape Design Associates at the Old Town Dock and by MacGreogor Smith on the riverside park. The panel were impressed with the way that Newport Unlimited have made use of landscape and urban design expertise, and the way they are managing it. The panel were pleased with the way that the landscaping ideas were developing, and the ambition being shown.

The panel warned against piecemeal development of the riverside. Releasing the right amount of land for development at the right time and in the right place will be a matter of fine judgement, and critical to giving the project momentum over the long term.

The development of the Kingsway boulevard will progress in line with the adjacent retail developments, and they will drive the funding. The intended treatment of Kingsway (part boulevard; part four-lane, two-way traffic) is perhaps not ambitious enough. However, the

proposed hybrid solution does not preclude a more consistent approach in the future. For the moment there is a need to deal with traffic travelling north/south, and to maintain access to employment centres in the Docks.

Sustainable construction is seen as an important issue not adequately addressed in the master plan. All new buildings will apparently be required to meet BREEAM standards. In the Old Town Dock area, grey water recycling and sustainable drainage will be part of the development strategy. This is welcomed.

The adoption of the masterplan by Newport City Council as a policy document provides significant status and allows the plan to function as a promotional tool, clearly expressing a vision for the future and instilling confidence within the investment development sectors, as well providing an internal reference point for the preparation of briefs and guidance.

## **Summary**

The panel endorses this masterplan as an exemplar document for Wales which offers an inspiring vision for the future of Newport. It demonstrates best practice urban regeneration in many respects, and places an appropriate emphasis on design quality as a generator of confidence and investment. DCFW would like to see the encouragement of unexpected and appropriate solutions which are feasible and have real local value, rather than the standard international examples. Coordinating the input of multiple consultancies into one integrated whole will also be crucial in taking this project forward.

Issues of process remain to be resolved, particularly as regards how design quality will be delivered and assured, both through NU involvement and the development control process. The master plan's design guidance ought to be incorporated into the local authority's SPG. Quality control on the public realm improvements and the landscaping, and the choice of an appropriate palette of materials will be critical.

Clearly, achieving all the necessary funding for development of the public realm will rely on section 106 type funding agreements with the private sector. The real challenge now is to decide where currently available funding is best placed so that, for instance, the riverside park quality can be set at an early stage and be used as a development generator, rather than as an afterthought to a commercial development scheme.

The panel appreciates the opportunity to comment on this important initiative. It looks forward to a further session to consider in detail the central area of the town after the public realm strategy is complete, and the opportunity to comment on the major retail schemes.

End