

# Design Review Report

Quay Stores, Milford Haven,  
Pembrokeshire

**DCFW Ref: 217**

Meeting of 12<sup>th</sup> December 2019



## Review Status

Meeting date

Issue date

Scheme location

Scheme description

Scheme reference number

Planning status

## Public

12<sup>th</sup> December 2019

19<sup>th</sup> December 2019

Victoria Rd, Milford Haven

Pembrokeshire

Leisure/culture/Mixed Use

N217

Reserved matters application

planned for 18 December 2019

## Declarations of Interest

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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.

None declared.

## Consultations to Date

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The Design Commission has previously been consulted on the wider regeneration aims of the Milford Haven Port Authority (MHPA), its associated regeneration, landscape and masterplanning strategies. Outline consent for the Milford Waterfront scheme (ref. 14/0158/PA) was granted on 01/11/19. We understand public consultation events are planned for the near future and access groups have been engaged with the MHPA in developing this scheme. This proposal is a distinct project upon which the Commission is being consulted for the first time.

## The Proposals

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The proposal forms part of a reserved matters planning application as part of Milford Haven Port Authority's vision to develop Milford Waterfront as a vibrant destination and help regenerate Milford Haven. The Quay Stores Redevelopment proposal is to restore and develop the vacant, redundant, semi-derelict Grade II listed Quay Stores, located centrally in the town, adjacent to Milford Waterfront and is within the Conservation Area. The proposal is accompanied by a business plan partly supported by a strategic funding bid to the Welsh Government Buildings Futures fund, in 2018. Proposed end uses include a multi-use auditorium with stage and an aspiration for 400 foldaway seats, with an adjoining restaurant/small event venue. The site is located at Victoria Road, Milford Haven, Pembrokeshire, SA73 3AB.

Information available suggests the built form will be influenced by the existing Grade II Listed Structure with some new build necessary due to the extent of dereliction; within the parameters set in the outline application which are as follows: New build – 1,069sq m (gross); outline design and access statement (DAS) includes a building height strategy, suggesting the new build element of Quay Stores will be up to 14m in height (3 storeys); Max length/width parameters are 90m and 60m respectively. The immediate context includes proximity to the old railway line and connecting tunnels to the harbour, which currently present a poor-quality user experience. A core element of the public realm strategy presented, rests on an extensive 'green ravine' concept to strengthen bio-diversity, accommodate wildlife including bat species and wider enhancement of public realm experience in proximity to an existing 16.8m cliff face

## **Main Points**

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The proposals result from a design competition invested in by the client for which they are to be credited. There are however some key questions to be addressed which will have significant influence on its success and long-term sustainability which is especially important given the public funds being sought. These relate to the site and context, relationship to existing and proposed facilities, public realm as well as to the architecture of the new building itself and how it supports the proposed new mixed use.

### **Business planning and clarity of purpose**

A comprehensive presentation allowed an in-depth discussion however, the Commission was not given access to the business plan or budget therein, making it difficult to assess affordability and achievable quality or to understand the assumptions made regarding capital and revenue considerations.

Very late in the discussion it emerged that commercial operator interest had been identified and that there was a subsequent proposal for a hotel in proximity, for which this facility is intended to provide certain services and facilities including conferencing, banqueting, along with cabaret, comedy, music,

weddings etc. A key aim is to achieve c250 events annually will require space, staffing and servicing capacity for c5 per week - an ambitious target given the locality.

Prior to this emerging, the impression gathered from the drawings and associated materials is of a 'lower key' cultural facility with performance space. The discussion indicates something quite different with a higher intensity and mix of use. It is vital that the intended purpose is explicit in the business plan and expressed in the design approach which will need to support intended uses. Public support, audience development and wider interest will also all be strengthened by a clear narrative.

### **Site, context and public realm**

Current proposals would benefit from further consideration of the wider context and the broader masterplan principles. More analysis and testing which extends beyond the building alone would be a useful exercise.

Prioritising people and place, establishing and enhancing clear pedestrian access and routes; proximity to the station, modes of transport, how people get to and access the venue along with points of arrival, event servicing, all need further consideration - they are critical to attracting audiences and encouraging regular, informal use. As currently proposed two indistinct 'front doors' are offered, and further work is needed to establish a primary entrance and new pedestrian approach within a coherent public realm and reflecting on the changes taken place in the wider context.

The latter is paramount in achieving the aims of the broader masterplan and in supporting the success of the component parts. The Commission understands that a hotel is also proposed in proximity and there would be value in a further design exercise to help better understand the relationship between the two and the impact the whole will have in terms of access, movement and pedestrian experience.

The existing tunnels need considerable further attention. Whilst we appreciate the enhancement of entrances and lighting strategies, more work is needed to

ensure these are more pleasant routes which support a sense of safety. Whilst the green ravine concept is helpful as a coherent element, it was still unclear what the quality of the pedestrian space closest to the cliff face would be. Lighting and landscape strategies carefully responding to wildlife, and bat species in particular, also need to ensure quality of experience for pedestrians. More work (or better communication of work done to date) is needed to demonstrate that overall, an enhanced environment would result, creating a safe, pleasant pedestrian route and wider public realm. The design approach to this pedestrian corridor also needs to be extended towards the railway station to ensure an integrated approach.

### **Existing and new-build approach on Quay Stores**

In terms of the building proposal, there is a need to better address the ways in which the development interacts with Victoria Road along with the servicing needs of a multi-functional building. A full servicing strategy should be in place given the demands of uses, number of events proposed and their potential conflict with the quality and user experience of internal and external spaces. The Commission is concerned over the potential conflicts between pedestrians and service vehicles in the landscaped courtyard at what we were advised was going to be the main entrance.

A comprehensive sustainability strategy, addressing the site as whole as well as the building performance in terms of energy efficiency should also be evident. The aim of achieving a BREEAM Very Good rating is baseline aspiration and whilst we appreciate the challenges of the existing dilapidation as well as the flaws of such rating systems, we encourage the team and the client to aim higher in terms of sustainability and energy performance.

Catering, retail and performance spaces are energy hungry and require good ventilation – a comprehensive strategy should be in place to inform design decisions. Optimising good daylight will be important to the quality of internal spaces given the mix of uses proposed as will ensuring glazed links do not result in excessive gain and can achieve consistency in terms of thermal comfort.

Opportunities to activate ground floor frontage have not yet been seized and need to be better addressed, given that people are likely to enter the building as pedestrians walking along Victoria Road. A pedestrian crossing, as shown in the original sketches, could be beneficial for pedestrians approaching from the waterfront.

Currently the internal layouts at ground floor within the Listed buildings result in a missed opportunity accommodating toilets, stairwells and storage. A large kitchen is required as part of the brief, however we question whether the current layout optimises its location. A reassessment of the layout could better contribute to the opening up of windows to Victoria Road, announcing a sense of the activity inside, activating the frontage and drawing footfall.

The double height glazed link between the existing and proposed new structures the new entrance from the green ravine and external courtyard could all bear further testing. This could help achieve a more efficient layout and internal circulation. The external elevations of the new build element requires some further testing to ensure an attractive solution which sits well with the Listed Buildings, wider context and has a positive impact at street level.

The Commission recommends early consultation on proposals, in advance of a planning submission. Sharing information as to available budgets is routine and usually helpful in realistically assessing the affordability and quality achievable, and particularly where public funds are to be drawn upon. We urge the Port Authority to make better, earlier more strategic use of the Commission's services on a more regular basis given the longer-term business development and diversification plans for the future of the Trust Port.

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

## Attendees

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Client/Agent/Developer:	Milford Haven Port Authority
Design Team:	Purcell, Architects Novell Tullett Landscape Architects Ooda consulting, Environmental design
Planning Consultant:	Turley
Local Planning Authority:	Pembrokeshire County Council
Statutory consultees:	N/A at this meeting
Design Review Panel:	
Chair	Simon Richards
Lead Panellist	Kedrick Davies
Panel	Simon Power Neil Williamson John Lloyd Efa Lois, Place Advisor, DCFW Carole-Anne Davies, Chief Executive, DCFW.