



DESIGN  
COMMISSION  
FOR WALES  
COMISIWN  
DYLUNIO  
CYMRU

26 March 2020

**Design Commission for Wales Design Review Panel 19 March 2020**

**Scheme name:** Land at Curran Embankment, Cardiff

**Scheme location:** Curran Embankment, Cardiff

**Date of initial materials review:** 19<sup>th</sup> March 2020

**DCFW panel:** Chair: Jon Vernon Smith; Lead panellist: Steven Smith;  
Panel: Jen Heal Design Adviser, DCFW; Efa Lois, Place adviser DCFW;  
Mike Gwyther Jones, Carole-Anne Davies, Chief Executive, DCFW.

Dear Colleagues

Your scheme design materials were initially reviewed by the DCFW Design Review Panel, allowing us to respond whilst working practices were adjusted due to address the immediate disruptive impact of the Coronavirus Covid 19 public health emergency. Our services have now moved online, and we have returned to regular scheduling.

The purpose of this initial materials review was to identify key questions on aspects of the proposals that we would like to hear more about. The questions aim to help you and your team to prepare for full review via Zoom video conferencing, details of which you will receive shortly. The main points are set out below.

**General:**

The Design Commission for Wales reviewed design materials submitted for proposals for the redevelopment of land at Curran embankment/Curran Place Cardiff.

The materials provided were:

**1** A report entitled Curran Embankment Masterplan – Presentation to Cardiff Council dated 07 02 2020 prepared on behalf of Vastint UK by urban designers 3D Reid, and landscape architects PlanIt; **2** A completed Design Review registration document completed by consultants Turley Associates dated 14 02 2020.

The Commission welcomed the opportunity to review the plans for Curran Embankment at an early stage of development before a formal planning application has been submitted. The Commission is aware of the planning history of the site and has reviewed several proposals over a period of years, coming forward via consortia.

The Curran Embankment masterplan report describes a large urban regeneration proposal for a 15 ha site between Dumballs Road and the River Taff. The site is currently used for a diverse mix of industrial and business use housed in very large industrial sheds.

The proposed development is consistent with a pattern of development in Cardiff over recent years in which high density, city centre business and residential development has displaced industrial uses in the former dockland areas of the city. The scheme proposes to demolish all existing buildings and develop the cleared site with the phased development of a mix of residential, office, hotel, event and creative quarter uses in buildings up to fifteen storeys high.

The site plan is composed of a number of parallel streets that broadly follow the alignment of the existing industrial sheds. The streets link a new public riverside landscape to Dumballs Road. The development is divided into 50m square courtyard blocks framing public space and a 'City Square'. The development is divided into functional zones with business space located close to the existing college on Dumballs Road.

## **Observations**

The Design Commission welcomed the simple form of the masterplan. The urban street grid layout seems to be an appropriate response to the site planning and phasing. The riverside public space has the potential to open up an attractive new riverside environment in the city linked to the existing community across the Taff with the proposed pedestrian and cycle bridge. There are some key questions however which need to be addressed and which are relevant to the evolution of further plans. The following will be helpful for the team to prepare for the forthcoming review.

## **Questions**

### **1. The Development brief**

- What is the development intention or vision for this site?
- In what way are the UN sustainability goals outlined in the presentation reflected in the objectives of the proposal?
- How are the goals of the Well-being of Future Generations Act Wales, mentioned in the presentation, reflected in the objectives of the proposal?
- How have land assembly issues (that have previously frustrated development of this land) been addressed?
- How has the brief for this scale, mix and form of development been determined?
- What is the proposal for the provision of affordable homes?
- What long term public benefits, facilities or uses are proposed as part of the development mix?
- How has the scale and grain of phases, development plots and building sizes been determined?

### **2. Place-making**

- In what way does this development create a sense of place that is relevant to Cardiff and Wales?
- How has planning policy emphasising the importance of sustainable place-making been embraced by the proposal?
- What assessment has been made of the levels of activity that are likely in the proposed public spaces?

- What calculation or modelling of pedestrian activity has been used to inform the proposal?
- Will the public realm be as animated as suggested by the reference images?
- What is the approach to ground level uses across the site in relation to the frontages onto public spaces?
- Will the river frontage be a fully accessible public space?
- How will the river front landscapes connect to adjacent areas?
- What are the proposals for future management of public spaces and landscapes?

### **3. Access and Transport**

- How is active travel prioritised along with private vehicle use and any parking strategy?
- How have options for the proposed Cardiff Metro been assessed as part of this proposal? How are they reflected?
- How will this major development contribute to citywide connectivity and public transport improvements?
- How have decisions about pedestrian movement, permeability etc been determined?
- What is the site 'way finding' strategy?

### **4. People and community**

- How has the displacement of the many economic interests and businesses currently on the site been addressed?
- Is there a case for accommodating some or all of the existing businesses within the development as part of the place-making and community building strategy?
- Is there scope to retain some of the existing distinctive buildings as part of such an initiative?
- Whilst the existing buildings might be considered undistinguished as heritage architecture they do, none the less, have economic and social value. How has this issue been addressed in these proposals?

### **5. Building form**

- How has building height and general massing been determined?
- How has daylight, sunlight and shading been addressed in determining the building configurations?

### **6. Technical considerations**

- How has potential site flooding been addressed?
- How have requirements for sustainable drainage been addressed?
- What is the site wide energy strategy?
- What is the sustainability strategy for the development?

As usual you can contact us at [connect@dcfw.org](mailto:connect@dcfw.org) or through Sue Jones at [sue.jones@dcfw.org](mailto:sue.jones@dcfw.org) for general and design review enquiries.

We will be in touch very shortly with details of your online review slot with us via Zoom and we hope the above will be helpful for your preparations.

Yours sincerely

Carole-Anne Davies, Chief Executive

On behalf of the DCFW Team.