

Design Review Report

Atlantic Wharf Masterplan

DCFW Ref: 262

Meeting of 12th August 2021



Review Status

Meeting date
Issue date
Scheme location
Scheme description
Scheme reference number
Planning status

PUBLIC

12th August 2021
18th August 2021
Cardiff Bay
Masterplan including arena and hotel
N262
Pre-application

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 and meeting Agenda items. Any such declarations are recorded here and in DCFW's central records.

Mike Biddulph from Cardiff Council planning department made a declaration that he is a DCFW Commissioner.

Consultations to Date

This was the first review of the proposed arena and masterplan. Limited information has been available publicly online.

The Proposals

The vision for the 14.5ha site set out in the materials provided, is to create a large-scale, mixed-use, entertainment-led visitor destination. A hybrid planning application is being developed which will include an outline submission for up to 1,100 residential dwellings, a hotel, office space, leisure facilities, retail establishments and 2,000 car parking spaces, plus associated biodiversity, landscape, drainage, walking, cycling, a new public square and other transport infrastructure. A detailed application is being prepared for a 15,000 space capacity arena, a 182 room hotel and with associated biodiversity, landscape, drainage, walking, cycling, and other transport infrastructure.

Main Points

DCFW welcomed the opportunity to respond to proposals for this site, although earlier engagement would have allowed a more strategic and constructive input into the proposed masterplan and early phase proposals. This is a significant site in terms of its size and location, therefore, particular care is needed to ensure its proposed transformation embeds it into the community and creates an enduring and resilient part of the city.

Meeting the stated ambition

There is a stated ambition that the proposed development will be of a 'world class' standard. This is laudable but *how* the proposals are achieving this, both in terms of the

offer of the development and the architecture, is currently unclear from the materials and in the discussion. Key aspects of the proposals including what it provides for the people of the city, its sustainability standards and placemaking qualities need to be much more clearly articulated. As currently presented, there is a lack of confidence that the stated ambition will be achieved. Drawing on precedents from around the world would help to provide benchmarks for the qualities of the arena, hotel and public realm and how the proposed development serves its visitors and people who live locally.

The proposals should also refer more directly to strategic city ambitions including One Planet Cardiff, Child Friendly Cardiff and Cardiff Liveable City. There are further opportunities to support these strategies within the proposals. In particular, the proposed demolition of buildings that are less than 40 years old needs to be clearly justified and all options explored for the reuse of materials on site in light of decarbonisation and climate imperatives. It is also disappointing to see the loss of existing landscape buffers including on Schooner Way where a buffer would ideally be included between the proposed development and existing homes.

Ensuring delivery

The hybrid application presents some challenges regarding certainty that key aspects of the wider masterplan will be delivered. A clear drawing showing what is included in the detailed application with the surrounding area as it currently stands is needed. This should be accompanied by a narrative that sets out how that development will hold up on its own as a 'world class' facility and high-quality piece of townscape without reliance on future development. The narrative can then set out how that will be enhanced in the future as the wider site is developed over time. High quality, sustainable transport connections to the arena need to be established from the beginning.

Planning for the future

While the masterplan for the wider area will set out the key parameters for future development, the limitations of a masterplan to actually deliver that future development must be understood. While the Council maintains some control through land ownership, there is no certainty that the intended development will come forward as proposed or in a timely manner. Therefore, each phase or element of development needs to support what is already in place, be convincing and of a high standard on its own, and not preclude important future development.

The Council has several roles to play here as landowner and consenting authority, but collectively needs to act inclusively and with clarity of vision for the application site and the wider Bay area. This will involve upholding the vision; collaborating and assisting the

coordination of problem-solving activity associated with the complexities of movement, public realm, mix of uses, and a number of developers; and representing the interests of the residents of the city. It was unfortunate that representatives of the Council as landowner and client for the initial phase of development were not able to be represented at the review. We would welcome further engagement in the future and over the lifetime of the masterplan.

Public realm

The proposed public square is vast and the justification for its scale is currently lacking. As well as providing reasoning for the scale of the space, there also needs to be further consideration and design response to what people will do in the space throughout the day and year to ensure that it is welcoming, comfortable and activated. Different user needs should be considered including children, teenagers, elderly, and those with access needs.

The management and maintenance of the public space is critical to its success and a plan should be in place to both fund and undertake this. As well as maintaining the hard and soft landscaping there is also a role for the programming and day-to-day stewarding and curation of the space. This role needs to be clearly attributed to a particular person or organisation.

The wider public realm is also important to ensure that the overall development becomes a coherent and legible part of the city rather than a series of disconnected buildings which has been a challenge in the Bay in the past.

Engagement and impact

The influence of community engagement on the proposals so far should be clear and not left to the PAC process in order to be meaningful. Further engagement is needed to establish and commit to wider public benefits.

The impact of the development during construction must be understood, communicated and minimised where possible.

Next Steps

We understand that the planning application is due for submission later this year following the PAC process that will commence soon. This will limit the scope for meaningful further engagement on the detailed aspects of the proposal. However, opportunities for further review of the wider site would be beneficial and should be programmed into the project timetable.

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

Attendees

Agent/Client/Developer:	Nick Harris, Robertson Property Ltd
Architect/Design Team:	Lee Johnson, HOK Daniel Lewis, Rio
Planning Consultant:	David Brown, Arup
Landscape Architect:	James Brown, The Urbanists
Other Consultants:	Peter Evans, WSP
Local Planning Authority:	Mike Biddulph, CCC Justin Jones, CCC

DCFW Design Review Panel

Chair:	Andrew Linfoot
Lead Panellist:	Mark Hallett
Panel:	Steve Smith Simon Power Angela Williams Jen Heal, DCFW, Design Advisor Efa Lois, DCFW, Place Advisor
Observing	Carole-Anne Davies, DCFW, Chief Executive