

# Design Review Report

Plots E7 and E8, SA1

Swansea Waterfront

**DCFW Ref: 283**

Meeting of 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2022



## Review Status

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

## Public

3<sup>rd</sup> August 2022  
18<sup>th</sup> August 2022  
Residential  
Swansea SA1 Waterfront  
N283  
Application Submitted

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

Mark Hallett was initially asked to be a panel member for this scheme, but he declared that he is on the Board of Pobl, so he was not a member of the panel for the Swansea Design Review Day.

Steve Smith, of Swansea Council, declared that he is a Design Review Panel member.

All were happy to proceed.

## Consultations to Date

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This is the first consultation with the Design Commission. The Commission prefers early and sustained engagement however DCFW agreed to this review to inform consultation phases and provide input for the local authority given the status of the masterplan inherited at this SA1 site.

## The Proposals

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Project information proposes a reserved matters application for residential development of Plots E7/E8 at Swansea Waterfront (known as SA1), for a sustainable, mixed tenure residential development of family homes and apartments, that accords with the design code and development quality objectives of the SA1 Swansea Masterplan area. Proposals include construction of up to 109 residential units and associated works (details of access, appearance, landscaping, layout, scale pursuant to conditions 6, 8 and 9 of outline planning permission 2015/1584 granted on 13th May 2016) (which varied 2008/0996 and which varied 2002/1000) for SA1 Swansea Waterfront mixed use development. The project has an estimated build cost of £24,447,534 with an additional £2,700,000 for the land. This estimate includes for the cost of all Social Rent plots achieving EPC A and 'Non Fossil' in accordance with the Welsh Government requirements under WDQR 2021. The site is within the SA1 Masterplan area and borders on to the Association of British Ports (ABP), land to the south and vacant plots to the east and west. The site fronts on to the constructed loop road that serves the wider area and

overlooks the Prince of Wales dock to the north. It should be noted that the site is in close proximity to the site known as site D5b in the same SA1 area, also being pursued by Pobl subject to separate approvals. This may in due course have a bearing on procurement and tender processes and potential economies of scale.

## Main Points

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These residential development proposals include a series of streets comprised of two main house types incorporating 'double fronted' dwellings with gardens and/or roof terraces. The gardens and green spaces present as private or semi-private and more social spaces whilst the whole aims to incorporate natural play and a 'linear park' area.

The dwellings are proposed at a scale appropriate to the adjacent dock and the waterfront context with three storey terraces edging the proposed park and four storeys proposed at corners. The layout presented includes two blocks with a 'cranked return' between which communal green 'street' is proposed. The rear but still 'front' of the dwellings incorporates green infrastructure and low fencing in order to create attractive green boundaries to courtyard gardens. Long term management and maintenance is proposed to remain with Pobl with relevant resident covenants in place aligned with the masterplan and its design code.

### **Linear Park**

A key design issue to be resolved is the definition of the linear park, its enclosure and relationship to the dwellings. The Commission understands that the protected area is related to aspirations for a waterway which may or may not be realised in the future. However, to be successful it needs to be fully designed to integrate with green routes and resolve uncertainties about connections, its purpose and the nature of public, private and semi-private spaces that adjoin it. At present it is unclear where the park leads and how it connects. It is also creating a series of challenges including bisecting the plot, creating awkward geometry and introducing significant uncertainty. The approach to this space as a linear park is currently poorly resolved but that is partly due to the vague understanding of what this space will be in the short and medium term.

It is the role of the design team to design for and test the optimum layout and typologies for the available land as a whole and to test and demonstrate their benefits – not simply to respond to constraints. This design work needs to be done thoroughly in order to inform a detailed conversation with the local authority as to the long term effects on homes, which could be substantial and detrimental. The benefits or otherwise, for residents for the short and long term must be tested and made explicit in order to avoid

perverse impacts which may leave a challenging legacy. If the land is to be preserved for a potential future use, a much clearer idea of what the space will be and who will maintain it in the short and medium term is needed. It may need a meanwhile use, or flexibility to change over time.

### **House types**

Design work is also needed to explore the relationship to the dock edge and internal spaces and to test the effect of adherence to the two building typologies. Currently the two 'cranked' terraces alongside the 'green street' result in awkward leftover spaces externally which in effect build in compromised space from the outset. Internal layouts will likely be similarly affected. The ends of terraces are also an issue when following strict adherence to the proposed house type.

A well-designed bespoke solution is more likely to be successful. Though this may result in certain properties having unique layouts, being able to provide better proportioned external spaces and taking the opportunity to integrate site-specific elements into the buildings, like windows into gable ends, would be likely to bring compelling advantages. Further work is needed to rationalise current proposals and test further options.

### **Streets**

The currently layout does not successfully create well defined streets, partly due to the challenge of needing to front on to so many edges as well as the geometry of the site. The spaces that result in the current layout are very vehicle focused. A much clearer hierarchy of spaces needs to be created across the site so that the public green spaces feel very clearly public, and the residential streets feel more contained and semi-private.

Consideration of different house types, as mentioned above, may also help to resolve some of these matters. The development by MVRDV at Nieuw Leyden in the Netherlands provides one example of how to approach dealing with parking for a dense development that results in social streets (<https://www.mvrdv.nl/projects/160/nieuw-leyden?photo=2219>).

The Commission is of the view that further work is needed to test more successful layouts and that discussion of detailed energy strategies which should inform the design and detail through to delivery are more appropriate at a later stage when this early design work is more evident.

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

## Attendees

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Agent/Client/Developer:	Mark Trounce, Pobl Carys Spence, Pobl
Architect/Design Team:	Alastair Fraser, Powell Dobson Architects
Landscape Architect:	Louise Ball, Tir Collective
Planning Consultant:	Philip Baxter, Asbri Planning
Local Authority:	Steve Smith, Swansea Council David Owen, Swansea Council Jeff Saywell, Swansea Council

### **DCFW Design Review Panel**

Chair:	Carole-Anne Davies
Panel:	Wendy Maden, Lead Panellist Richard Woods Lynne Sullivan OBE Jen Heal, DCFW, Design Advisor Efa Lois, DCFW, Place Advisor
Observer/s:	Hayley Kemp, Swansea Council Marco Mancini, Swansea Council Alys Smith, A-Level Work Experience Student