

# Design Review Report

The Embankment, Dumballs Road,  
Cardiff

**DCFW Ref: 44**

Meeting of 8<sup>th</sup> May 2014



## 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.

### Review Status

### PUBLIC

Meeting date	8 <sup>th</sup> May 2014
Issue date	21 <sup>st</sup> May 2014
Scheme location	Dumballs Road, Cardiff
Scheme description	Residential/Mixed-Use
Scheme reference number	44
Planning status	Outline, pre-hybrid

## Declarations of Interest

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None declared.

## Consultations to Date

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The developer is undertaking public exhibitions in Butetown and Grangetown. Cardiff Council has undertaken statutory consultation on the current live planning application.

## The Proposals

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This is a major mixed-use scheme based on an earlier extant outline planning consent. The Commission previously reviewed masterplan proposals in 2006.

The developer is now seeking detailed consent for part of the site only, with the remainder in 'masterplan' form. The detailed portion of the application contains mainly residential units (c160 units) in the form of townhouses and apartments, with some open space and parking facilities. The masterplan includes commercial uses, a new urban primary school, a river-side walkway and a new footbridge linking the site to Grangetown.

## Summary

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- The Design Commission for Wales welcomes the opportunity to review this significant development for Cardiff, and would like to review the various elements of the scheme again as designs progress.

- The Commission is broadly supportive of the development of this site for mixed-use, but recognises that further work is required on the detail.
- The overall layout of routes within the site appears to be well considered, but wider connections to integrate with the rest of the city and the Bay communities should be developed.
- The scale and enclosure of the open spaces and how they will be used needs to be considered in greater detail. There is a danger that spaces are too big, lack strong edges and will be under-used. A management strategy for the open space is required.
- Further work is required to refine the massing and elevation, especially along the river front which needs a measure of uniformity in massing and elevations and should be considered as a whole.
- The Design Commission is supportive, in principle, of the idea of an urban school on this site. The design quality, timing of delivery of the school and supporting infrastructure must be well-planned by the local authority, design team and developer.
- The Commission recognises the quality of affordable housing proposed.

## Main Points in Detail

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### **Streets, Routes and Parking**

The Commission is broadly supportive of the proposed arrangement of streets and routes through the site, although there are some detailed points where connections to wider and future development could be improved.

Trade Street is an historic street to the north of the site which is mentioned in the Cardiff Core Area South masterplan for this area. Although direct connection to Trade Street is not possible from the site being considered here, the proposed layout misses the opportunity for future connection. A new street within the site, which aligned with Trade Street would retain this option for the future.

Similarly, there is no alignment with a proposed route running along the south edge of the new college site which will link to Canal Park, an important recreation facility for the community. Nor is there an adequate building relationship with the projected open space on the southern boundary of the scheme, though the small spaces that link back into the scheme are welcomed.

Dumballs Road is a major route running along the east edge of the site. This important route would be strengthened by better enclosure from buildings along its length. The proposed commercial ground floor use has potential to add activity to the street, but the feasibility of the size of units proposed, and the servicing arrangements, need further consideration.

The proposed river-side path is an improvement on earlier schemes, appears to be well considered, and should encourage walking and cycling. The cross section drawing demonstrates that the proposed levels will provide some natural surveillance of the path, whilst retaining a level of privacy in the apartments.

Public transport stops (to the river taxi and on Dumballs Road) have been considered, but will need more detailed planning in the future. As the design team suggested, provision for a 'Metro' route along Dumballs Road should allow for this possibility despite lack of clarity about the nature of this at present.

The design team and the Council are discussing parking provision requirements, which will not be easy to balance. The team should consider whether it would be better to privatise the parking courts which are proposed for the perimeter blocks. At present they do not appear conducive to public access though more detailed design might convince us.

### **Open Space**

Further consideration about how the proposed open spaces relate to surrounding uses is required. This is particularly important in the commercial areas which risk becoming under-used or misused and unsafe at night, especially if they are not overlooked by residential properties. A site-wide strategy for open space is required, which considers access to play spaces for younger and older children.

The scale and sense of enclosure of the open space, especially in relation to predicted levels of use, are important. Open spaces which are too big or too many will feel desolate and under-used. A series of cross-section drawings, inhabited with landscape, furnishing, people and vehicles will help demonstrate how well the proposed scale of space will work.

Maintenance and adoptability of the open spaces and streets must be carefully considered at the design stage. A maintenance strategy should make clear who will be responsible for each area. Discussion with the Local Authority Highways Department is also important.

### **Scale, Massing and Elevations**

The design team is still in a process of changing and refining the massing and elevations of the part of the scheme which will form the detailed part of the planning application. Although the Design Commission can see that they are being improved, there is still more work to be done to refine the proposals further.

The perimeter blocks appear to work well, although the Commission has reservations about the large scale of the corner blocks. When viewed along a street, due to perspective, they are in danger of being overbearing; there will be no windows in the party walls above the level of the house roofs; and there will be significant overshadowing.

The precedent elevations presented in the draft Design and Access Statement are simple and refined, whereas those presented for this scheme are complex. The series of elevations along the waterfront in particular needs further work. Although some of the buildings along the river do not fall within the area of the detailed application, it is

important that the elevations are designed as one. There should be a degree of uniformity and a rhythm which ties them all together, rather than a concept based on a series of stand-alone objects.

### **Urban School**

The addition of an urban school to this scheme is considered positive by the planning authority and the Commission. However, further exploration is required of how external play space will be provided in this urban form, and how separation between school children and the general public will be managed. This should be discussed with the local authority. More detail is required, even at this outline planning stage, as the arrangement of classrooms, play space and other facilities will have an impact on massing, form, site layout and overall space required. Further consideration of activity such as drop off and collection, transport, access and circulation for the school community in this urban setting is required. The Design Commission encourages the team to look at successful precedent urban primary schools to see how they have dealt with external play space in a city setting.

Phasing of delivery of the scheme will have significant implications for the school, which will need to meet set deadlines to cope with predicted pupil numbers in a given school year. The local education and planning authorities must communicate early and both must be clear about this, so that the phasing can be planned accordingly. In order for the school to operate, there must be a certain level of infrastructure in place, including the footbridge which will provide a link to the Grangetown catchment area. The footbridge itself must be of sufficient design and material quality as to contribute to enhancement.

### **Affordable Housing**

It is encouraging that there is a good mix of private and affordable housing proposed. The Dumballs Road affordable housing block is innovative but includes north-facing apartments and inefficient circulation. The design team need to ensure this has holistic support before proceeding.

### **Sustainability considerations**

It is encouraging that the team is discussing sustainable drainage with the 'Greener Grangetown' team and the Local Authority. The Design Commission is supportive of the Greener Grangetown strategy. The Code for Sustainable Homes aspiration was not clarified and the panel did not have sufficient time to explore the question of an Energy Centre to provide CHP.

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

## Attendees

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Agent/Client/Developer:

Designer: David Neame, Planning, Neame Sutton  
Stephen Quin, Architect, Scott Brownrigg  
David Whitter, Architect, Scott Brownrigg

Local Authority: Nigel Hanson, Cardiff Council

Design Review Panel:

Chair John Punter  
Lead Panellist Alan Francis  
Andrew Linfoot  
Ed Green  
Amanda Spence, Design Advisor, DCFW