



DESIGN
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Design Review Report

University of Wales Trinity
Saint David

DCFW Ref: N56

Meeting of 19th February 2015



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

Review Status

CONFIDENTIAL

Meeting date	19 th February 2015
Issue date	2 nd March 2015
Scheme location	UWTSD SA1 Swansea Waterfront
Scheme description	Innovation Quarter
Scheme reference number	56
Planning status	Pre-application

Declarations of Interest

The following declarations of interest were made at the beginning of the meeting: Steve Smith (Urban Narrative) and Richard Parnaby from the Presentation Team are Design Commission for Wales Panel Members. Steve Smith representing the Local Authority is also a Panel Member. All parties were happy to proceed following the declarations.

Consultations to Date

The design team have met with the Commission several times during the development of the masterplan.

Public consultation was to commence the week after the design review.

The Proposals

This proposal is for a mixed use development of part of the SA1 site to accommodate the relocation of existing UWTSD academic functions as well as facilitate the delivery of supporting development. This initial phase of development is to be located in the south west of SA1.

Main Points

A substantial amount of progress had been made since the previous presentation in November 2014 both in terms of the clarity of the approach to the site and the design of the masterplan. The focus on one site – the Peninsula – at this stage was welcomed and this allowed a more detailed discussion on the form and massing that has been developed since the last meeting.

It was evident from the discussions that many of the matters raised in the meeting had been given consideration by the design team or were still being progressed. The following key points summarise the discussion.

Catalyst for future development

The floor space required for the University itself has been located centrally within the site, maintaining a waterfront identity but leaving high-value waterfront development plots available for delivery through development partners. The catalytic impact of the development is therefore increased and the early development of the University buildings would promote further development.

It is helpful that the space requirements for the University accommodation have been established within the larger site and that those elements that are within the direct control of the University can be planned and designed.

Development partners

It is understood that there are a number of potential delivery partners that could come in to develop a range of supporting uses. The mix and arrangement of uses on the site will have a significant impact on the vitality and success of the scheme and therefore a mechanism must be established to enable the University to maintain control over the supporting uses. This could be in the form of a strategy or code for uses that will sit alongside the design code.

A realistic estates strategy is required to guide the use code and the masterplan going forward now that some of the masterplanning principles have been established.

Scale and layout

The proposed building heights seem right for the site but would benefit from further testing/demonstration with the 3D computer model or, preferably, a physical model.

It is evident that the location of the car park has been explored but still presents some issues in its current location. In particular the side elevation of the car park block will be very prominent on the approach to the site from Kings Road as well as from the residential properties opposite. As this is a north-facing block it may be harder to wrap the structure with active ground floor uses. In conjunction with establishing the hierarchy of routes through the site further consideration could be given to whether the car park can move further into the centre of the block rather than the edge. Wherever it is located the vehicle and pedestrian entrances and queuing space will need to be considered and shown.

The design code will need to establish an approach to other parking on the site for potential residential and hotel uses to ensure that any negative impact on the public realm is minimal.

Further development of the library design should seek to establish the relationship between the building and surrounding public space. As this is identified as the heart of the development it will need to be of the highest quality design.

Public realm

Consideration is starting to be given to the design of the key public spaces within the site. The Commission would like to see this developed further to have a clear

understanding of the nature of the different spaces and how this relates to surrounding uses.

Defining the nature and scale of the public spaces to be provided on this site presents a challenge. It is not a city centre site but neither should it become a sub-urban campus – something different to each of these needs to be defined. Although at times the site may have visitors using the buildings and the waterside perimeter, especially if future bridge links are made, its location means that it will not be constantly busy. Examination of other dockside sites, in Swansea and elsewhere (Cardiff, Salford), will provide a realistic indication of how populated (or under populated) the public realm might feel, even with major occupiers nearby (the BBC, ITV and the Imperial War Museum in the case of Salford). The masterplan and urban design proposals need to create places that feel safe, attractive and successful when sparsely occupied. This may suggest fewer or smaller public spaces. This is a significant design issue that needs to be acknowledged and tackled head on.

Defined by the project team as a ‘peninsular’, the site’s waterside edge is its key physical characteristic and potentially one of its greatest selling points for developers and the wider public. We encourage the design team to explore this edge as a key component of the public realm in more detail. This includes what happens in the surrounding buildings, what the set-back will be, which spaces are lively and which are quiet, whether there is a difference between the river edge and the dock edge, where the sun is at different times of day, what the landscape approach will be, and what activity will be happening in and alongside the water. Even those spaces that are identified as being quieter need to be interesting. The significance of the waterside public realm needs to be articulated on the drawings.

With several other waterside developments in the pipeline in Swansea, including the Civic Centre site and the Tidal Lagoon, a strategic perspective of the nature of waterside public space and associated land uses would be of benefit and is a matter that the Local Authority could address in partnership.

Phasing

It is recognised that an early start on site is desired and that the ambition of the University is to deliver the accommodation that it requires as soon as possible. The Commission would like to understand more about the timescale for delivery and what is proposed for the rest of the site in the meantime.

It would be useful to have a plan that identifies the areas of the site – buildings and public realm – that will be delivered by the University.

The feasibility of constructing the southernmost part of the site once the middle University section has been placed needs to be considered.

Conclusion

This development will potentially have a transformational impact, bringing new activity and people to the waterside. In order to maximise the contribution that it will make to the city it will need to have a special character of its own. This is likely to be derived from the water’s edge which is so prevalent and potentially varied. The character of the masterplan must be supported by an appropriate and realistic mix of uses established through an estates strategy.

The Design Commission for Wales welcomes further engagement through the design review service as the proposals are developed to the next level of detail.

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

Attendees

Presentation Team:

Richard Parnaby, UWTSD
Steve Smith, Urban Narrative
Pierre Wassenaar, Stride Treglown
Paul Seaver, Stride Treglown
Geraint Flowers, UWTSD

Local Authority:

Steve Smith

Design Review Panel:

Chair

Ewan Jones

Panel

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