



DESIGN
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Design Review Report

Roath Brook Flood Defence,
Cardiff

DCFW Ref: 43

Meeting of 30th October 2014



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	Public
Meeting date	30 th October 2014
Issue date	12 th November 2014
Scheme location	Penylan, Cardiff
Scheme description	Landscape/flood defence scheme
Scheme reference number	43
Planning status	Pre-application, at public consultation

Declarations of Interest

None declared.

Consultations to Date

Remodelling of the historic parks to accommodate flood protection works will need to address a number of important issues which are being explored by the NRW and their design team through a programme of public and stakeholder consultation. The most recent public consultation took place in September and October and included drop-in sessions and a public exhibition. Proposals are also available to view on NRW's website.

The Proposals

Natural Resources Wales (NRW) has identified the need for significant flood defences along Roath Brook where it runs through a string of Victorian parks in the residential areas of Roath and Penylan. The proposed scheme will incorporate significant flood defence structures within a landscape design.

The budget for the works, confirmed at this meeting, is £8-9m. The team intend to make a planning application for the works within the parks in early 2015, but stated during this meeting that achieving good quality is more important than the timescale.

This scheme has been reviewed twice previously by the Design Commission, on 8th May and 12th August 2014. This report should be read in conjunction with the reports from the previous reviews.

Main Points

Design Progress

Overall, the Design Commission is concerned about the apparent lack of progress that has been made with the quality of the design approach since the previous review. Few of the points made in our previous report have been addressed.

The civil engineering solutions to the flood defence requirements have been designed and were clearly explained and justified in the presentation given at this review, and at previous reviews. However, there are still many unanswered questions about how these technical solutions will form part of a good quality landscape design which respects and ideally enhances the park for future generations. The importance of excellent design cannot be underestimated in this context.

The Commission supports the principle of thorough public consultation, but to be effective it must be carefully planned and directed by good quality design. The openness of the consultations to-date appears to have hindered the making of any firm design decisions. The nature of the recent consultation has perhaps resulted in more questions rather than answers and runs the risk of any strong design vision being diluted in an attempt to meet conflicting expectations.

Whilst the 'listening' stage of consultation is important, it is crucial that the team moves to a stage where they can confidently 'inform' the public about their design proposals, how they respond to constraints and opportunities, and demonstrate how the response is informed by analysis and will result in a long term benefit. The role of an inspirational, skilled, capable designer and design team is important in public engagement, so as to provide clarity about the reality of potential married with a vision that echoes that of the creators of the original park. This may be a modern/21st century vision, not a Victorian one, but it must nevertheless be clearly communicated and must recognise that this intervention will change the park.

Communication of Processes and Design

As with the previous review, the visual materials submitted prior to the review were difficult to understand and did not clearly explain the design processes. The verbal presentation, as with the previous review, was clearer.

At this stage, it is essential that the team can clearly and confidently present their analysis and justified design proposals. Currently, the visual material does not effectively represent the design process or solutions.

The Commission is concerned by the lack of confidence and conviction in the drawings which have been presented, which raises concerns about the confidence of the design team. There must be an overarching ambition which is clearly communicated to the public, Local Authority and other stakeholders.

As mentioned previously, it is particularly important that members of the public and other stakeholders can easily understand the proposals, the impact they will have on the existing parks and the nature of the new spaces which will be created.

Clear, large scale section drawings showing the proposals in the context of the whole street and of the park, and in detail, would be particularly useful. Accurate three-dimensional views of the scheme would help in communicating the impact of the proposals and the scale of the new places being created. The perspective views presented at the review are hard to read, and the cluttered sheets are difficult to understand.

Visual and verbal presentations should clearly and simply communicate the 'story' of the design process. As mentioned in our previous report, diagrams which show how analysis has informed design will be useful in doing this.

Design Vision and Place-Making

A clear, overarching vision for the scheme is still desperately needed with a clear plan for its delivery. The team must be confident in the legacy which this scheme will leave for the city.

The Design Commission strongly believes that these parks, which are an important asset to the city, deserve an excellent landscape design solution. The proposals presented to date are far from achieving this. We would urge NRW to consider appointing an experienced and inspirational designer to the team, who will have the confidence and vision to design a solution this special place deserves. A distinguished designer, who would work alongside the existing design team, would add great value to the project. NRW have stated their priority for good design, but they now need to invest in an excellent designer to support their civil engineering team and their ambition.

The Design Commission recognises the difficulty that the challenges this scheme presents. Achieving the necessary flood defence levels will have a great impact on this series of much-loved parks, and it will be impossible to meet the desires of all stakeholders. However, there are technical requirements which the scheme *must* achieve, there are many options that *could* be implemented, and there is the potential for imaginative interventions that will secure a valuable legacy. The current absence of overall vision means that solutions have not been prioritised in this way.

There is so far little evidence of any consideration of place-making. As mentioned in our previous report, the scheme presents opportunities to create new functions and places which will be valued in the future. These opportunities - which might include education, arts, fitness and play - are not yet being realised.

The Commission and the Local Authority have, and continue to express concerns about some of the 'left over' spaces which the current proposals would create. The size, purpose, accessibility and usefulness of all the spaces need to be considered and articulated. Long term management and maintenance of the new spaces are important considerations and do not seem to have been resolved to date.

Made In Roath is an active local creative arts group, who might be useful for the team to contact if an arts and/or interpretation element is to be incorporated in the design.

Detail Design

Once the team can confidently state their overarching vision, the same confidence, conviction and good quality design, need to be applied to the detail design.

The detail design will be extremely important to achieving overall quality, and the value of investing early in this stage of the design process should not be underestimated. New structures should be designed to be site specific, but with a common language to achieve continuity across the site, and be beautifully detailed. Public investment in this project should be directed towards an outcome for long term public value, and of the highest quality that will match or exceed the positive legacy delivered by the original park. This means investing in the design process.

The detail design work so far presented to the Commission is unsatisfactory. The sketch details for the stone and brick-clad walls do not demonstrate thorough consideration of the issues around wall width, coping details, height, proportion, integration with railings, relationship to other adjacent structures, use of materials and how they may vary along the length of the scheme. Visual references in the material to small scale brick edges and walls, characteristic of the Roath area gives the impression that the new walls will be of similar character, but belies their necessary scale and impact.

Similarly the approach to design of the new bridge was not clearly conveyed. The bridges are important features along the length of the park and a beautifully designed family of bridges carefully linked to the open spaces, new defences and streets, for example, could be a delightful, valuable addition of lasting public value.

Further Engagement

The Design Commission welcomes the opportunity to review this scheme for a third time. As the Commission still has a number of major concerns over the design quality of the scheme, we would recommend that a fourth review takes place in the near future. The next review might require an extended time slot so that the detail design of the proposals can be considered in greater depth.

At the next meeting the following would be helpful:

- The attendance of the full design team including the landscape architect
- Details of the views of the Local Authority and clarity about their view from an urban design/place-making perspective as well as from a conservation perspective. This may be done via written material provided in advance and/or by representatives from each of the relevant Local Authority departments attending.
- The provision of clear diagrams demonstrating analysis of the site and context and how this is informing design decisions.
- A clear overarching vision for the scheme.
- A series of clear, large scale section drawings and accurate perspective views which convey the impact of the scheme and the nature and scale of new places
- Detail design studies which are in line with the overall vision and are confidently presented.

The Commission suggests that with full attendance of all design team members, adequate materials as described above, and a workshop structure, a more meaningful dialogue will be possible and assist progress.

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

Attendees

Agent/Client/Developer:	Tim Hopkins, NRW
Designers:	Alice Johnson, Engineer, RHDHU
Local Authority:	Ross Cannon, Conservation, Cardiff Council Tim Walter, Planning Officer, Cardiff Council
Design Review Panel:	
Chair	Carole-Anne Davies
Lead Panellist	Andrew Linfoot Jamie Brewster Phil Roberts Amanda Spence, Design Advisor, DCFW