

Design Review Report

Channel View, Grangetown, Cardiff

DCFW Ref: N191

Meeting of 22nd of October 2020



Review Status

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

Public

22nd of October 2020
20th of November 2020
Cardiff
Mixed use masterplan
N191
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.

Consultations to Date

This is the second consultation with DCFW following previous review on 14th of February 2019.

The Proposals

This proposal is for the demolition of 188 residential units of between 2-4 storeys along with demolition of a 14 storey block, to accommodate the construction of up to 370 new residential dwellings. Proposed dwellings would provide a mix of 2 storey properties and blocks of flats up to 5 storeys high, with an additional older persons' scheme of up to 10 storeys high. Proposals for the site also relate to a separate aspirational project to develop a new pedestrian / cycle bridge over the river Taff, linking the Grangetown and Butetown areas. Changes will also be made to The Marl public open space as part of the proposals.

Main Points

Context

The Commission is broadly supportive of the redevelopment and intended use of this site in Cardiff. However, we note that further significant design and community engagement work will be needed in order to create a successful scheme. The Commission notes that sustainable development and decarbonisation are not aided by demolition. However, we understand a study has been carried out by Cardiff Council which justifies the proposals in this case. We urge a commitment to excellence in all aspects of environmental strategy for the new proposals as a means of going some way to addressing the impact of the decision to demolish. Overall, it is paramount that any new development is designed to a high quality, with appropriate context analysis fully informing the design rationale and evolution. A commitment to placemaking will be necessary from the outset.

Clarity of design concept

The edges of the proposal require further design exploration, in particular the integration of the proposal into the existing neighbourhood, and its surroundings.

The design approach requires an analysis of the pedestrian experience. The legibility of spaces, and the pedestrian routes through those spaces would benefit from further analysis, especially regarding the number of road crossings required to walk from the existing housing to the park through the south of the site.

The Commission considers it worth exploring a hierarchy of connectivity through and within the proposal and allowing this to inform the design. This hierarchy may be informed by both the position within the masterplan and how the routes may be detailed and landscaped.

The Design Commission appreciates the design response which has resulted in the 'return' on Channel View Road but would suggest the project team considers again the possibility of improving the boundary to the existing property such that an avenue might extend further into the site and that 'the side of the existing house' would be acceptable within that avenue. This may also assist in the simplification and efficiency of the layout to the south.

The new link/bridge

The Design Commission is concerned about the current lack of identified funding for the proposed bridge or sufficient design work to inform it. Given this position, the residential scheme must be successful irrespective of the aspiration for the link, not reliant upon it.

The connections to the bridge are such a dominant feature of the masterplan that they may be over-riding/dominating other layout design considerations. For example, the diagonal route through the southern part of the site is the most direct but results in a number of triangular spaces where the value of that space is diminished due to its shape and alignment of paths. Further analysis and drawing upon user and local knowledge of how people live in, use and move around in the proposed neighbourhood could help identify connectivity priorities within and around the proposal.

Public/private nature of spaces

Absolute clarity is needed regarding the privacy of spaces, in particular it is essential to think about what the proposed spaces will be used for, who are they for, who will look after and maintain them, and who is allowed to go into those spaces. It is important to think about the relationship between the front doors of homes the people who will potentially use those spaces, and whether the quality of the spaces so that they are successful. The Design Commission has some concerns that the public spaces to the south are through spaces, are enclosed by roads or dominated by parking and do not provide those incidental spaces for the community to meet. Learning from the existing layout, incidental spaces and connections would be useful.

Waterfront edge

The elements of the proposal facing the waterfront would benefit from further design exploration and development. The two most southern blocks could do with further refinement to improve their relationship to this important edge. The proposed development must improve the quality of the public waterside and contribute to sufficient safe and attractive space for pedestrians.

The proposed tower block

Elements of the proposed tower block design are to be commended – the proposed deck access in particular could be a pleasant space, along with its facilitation of single-banked housing units, which can enhance natural light in from front and back.

However, the design should avoid any north-facing only flats, which should be straightforward to achieve with further design work. Developing a relationship with the river, rather than the street, in terms of the building orientation could create flats with river views, which would be beneficial for residents.

If the tower block were to have a rectilinear alignment with the river, each flat could become a more joyful space to inhabit, with a balcony with a river view.

Green Walls

The green wall element of the proposal requires further design development in order to ensure that they would make a real contribution to the wellbeing for residents. It is worth exploring alternative ways of integrating landscape into the lives of the residents. The environmental costs and benefits should also be examined.

Resilient housing for the future

Although the tower block building is currently being proposed for elderly residents, who are likely to be retired, it is important that the flats allow flexible spaces for different uses such as accommodating visits from the wider family, working or educating from home.

Access to gardens and outdoor spaces is of key importance to the wellbeing of residents and ensures the resilience of this proposed housing for the future. Exploration of 'incidental meeting spaces', and 'day in the life' studies could aid in the development of successful places within the scheme.

Engagement

The Design Commission understands the difficulties of engaging with the community for consultation during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, it is vital that all voices within the community are heard, and an online consultation could limit the percentage of the community who can engage and feedback. The project would benefit from the input of an engagement specialist in order to include the more hard-to-reach members of the community at this difficult time. The project could also consider the use of a virtual public consultation tool for a virtual public consultation event. The virtual venue could be modelled on a familiar and recognisable local venue along with offering the opportunity to engage live with the project team through the chat function/s rather than just submitting a questionnaire. Local knowledge and expertise should be drawn upon inclusively to help shape proposals.

The Commission urges detailed consideration of how the existing community and neighbourhood can be maintained when they are 'moved out' and supported and reunited when they 'move in'.

The circumstances of this meeting were not ideal and come a few days before further public consultation. The Commission would welcome a further meeting, post consultation as the design approach evolves and suggests and longer time slot is secured through liaison with the DCFW team.

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

Attendees

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Chair:	Andrew Linfoot
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