

# Design Review Report

Queen's Arcade, Cardiff

**DCFW Ref: 71B**

Meeting of 10<sup>th</sup> May 2018



## Review Status

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

## CONFIDENTIAL

10<sup>th</sup> May 2018  
24<sup>th</sup> May 2018  
Cardiff  
Mixed Use  
71B  
Pre-application

## 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.

Steve Smith attended this meeting in his capacity as DCFW Design Review panellist. However, he has worked closely with HMA on projects in Swansea in his role as Urban Design and Conservation Officer at Swansea Council. All those present at the meeting were content to proceed following the declaration.

## Consultations to Date

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Initial, early pre-application meetings regarding the principle of development have been held with the local planning authority.

## The Proposals

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This project consists of the wholesale redevelopment of the current Queen's Arcade retail centre in Cardiff, bounded between Queen Street to the north, Working Street to the west and the newer St David's 2 Shopping Centre to the east and south. All buildings are proposed to be demolished with the exception of a listed building facing onto Queen Street. The Pre-Submission Statement observes that the Centre is currently exhibiting signs of decline due to its dated external appearance, an out-of-fashion provision of its fully internalised network of routes, complex levels and the wider challenges facing retail centres in a time of rapid change within the sector, and in particular with the growth of online shopping.

The outline design proposes the retention of the existing 'street pattern' of the internalised routes but with these streets opened up to the external environment. Multiple levels are eliminated with a single level streetscape accessing all shops with a shallow gradient connecting differing existing ground levels. Upper levels are given over to residential use; car-parking spaces are not provided, instead a large first floor level cycle park is proposed. The route connecting to Queen Street is widened to accommodate a kiosk pavilion whilst the frontage to Working Street bridges across the entrance at first floor level.

## Main Points

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The Commission was pleased to have the opportunity to review this scheme at an early stage when there is scope for the constructive discussion to add value. The physical model provided a useful tool in the conversation. The overall idea to replace an outdated retail model with a new piece of cityscape to create a place to live in the city centre is supported. The following points summarise key issues from the review which should be considered to inform any further design work:

### **Creating a Place to Live**

The proposal would create an opportunity to create the first housing on Queen Street and should set a precedent for city centre places to live which are well designed and promote well-being, community and sustainability. This ambition needs to be built into the brief and objectives of the project so that it is realised in the delivery.

Creating a great place to live will require a series of modelling, testing and refining to be carried out, including:

- Sunlight and daylight (inside apartments)
- Overshadowing
- Wind (especially the impact on pedestrian comfort/safety)
- Views to and from new buildings and of streetscapes
- Sections to test proximity and privacy

The inclusion of social and amenity spaces and dual aspect apartments is encouraged, whilst single-sided, north facing apartments should be avoided. The proposed new tower elements provide a good opportunity to achieve this. Provision of affordable housing and inclusive design for accessibility should be considered from an early stage.

There is added value in attracting tenants who will stay long term and reduce turnover.

### **Massing & Streetscape**

It is positive that the proposal seeks to create new streets in the city centre to replace the outdated indoor shopping precinct model.

The proportions of spaces between buildings and block heights could be usefully tested through street sections. It is important to get this right, as it will have a significant impact on people's experience and comfort. Massing should be clearly informed by site and context analysis which includes a study of the existing rhythm and scale of streetscapes.

Currently, the two tower forms do not sit comfortably next to each other in close proximity. Options with forms with different heights and massing should be tested to achieve the best form and massing for the housing.

Key viewpoints should be established and tested with a series of meaningful options.

The large central block onto Working Street, which bridges the new street is imposing and overbearing on the setting of the St John the Baptist Church and conservation area. There may be benefit in building taller elsewhere to reduce the height along Working Street, and it will be important to get the articulation of this façade right. Options

without the bridging over the new 'street' should also be explored, as it creates a confusing experience of inside/outside.

The 'street' off of Working Street might be better suited to a Cardiff Arcade scale which is more personal and intimate in contrast to the wider 'street' off of Queen Street which follows the route of the old canal and ends an important vista along The Friary. The building which, with the listed 'Venetian' style building, frames the route off of Queen Street will be an important feature of the streetscape and quality here is particularly important.

### **Architectural Language**

The quality of materials, articulation of the building mass and detail design will all have an impact on overall quality and the experiences of residents, shoppers, staff and tourists to the city. The architectural language should be informed by analysis of the site and context as well as respond to the brief, and avoiding a 'could be anywhere' appearance would be positive. The presenting team's design statement raises exciting issues of context, including key city views and the historic line of the canal. A deeper understanding of these issues could contribute to a rich design and architectural language.

Off-site fabrication should be explored at an early stage, as it may offer a solution to delivering high quality on a difficult city centre building site. The construction methods and module sizes will need to be integrated with structural strategies, massing and service strategies for this to be an effective and efficient solution.

### **Management and Access**

Issues such as long term management and maintenance, access and security should be considered and addressed early in the design process.

### **Heritage Strategy**

A heritage strategy should be based on evaluation of significance and the defining characteristics of the conservation area. The treatment and integration of the listed building which is currently at the entrance to Queen's Arcade from Queen Street needs careful consideration. It is questionable whether a pastiche reimagining of the newly opened up 'lost' façade is the best approach.

The Commission would welcome further opportunities to see this proposal as it evolves and in advance of a planning submission. We urge the team to contact us swiftly to secure a further slot.

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

## Attendees

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Agent/Client/Developer:

Architect/Planning Consultant: Kirstie Jones & Terry Morely, HMA

Local Authority:

Design Review Panel:

Chair

Jamie Brewster

Lead Panellist

Amanda Spence, Design Advisor, DCFW

Jen Heal, Design Advisor, DCFW

Wendy Maden, DCFW

Mike Gwyther-Jones

Richard Woods

Steve Smith (Swansea)

Observer

Rhian Haf