



Project Title:	INV 05: James Watt Dock Masterplan
Details:	Proposed masterplan
Location:	Greenock
Use type:	Housing / Retail / Office / Public Realm / Infrastructure
Client / Developer:	Clydeport Properties Limited
Lead Designer(s):	ADF Architects
Planning Authority:	Inverclyde Council
Planning Status and Ref:	Outline Planning: ref. 09/0182/IC
Issue Date:	11th September 2009

Introduction

This report relates to an outline planning application for a masterplan for the redevelopment of James Watt Docks, Greenock presented at an A+DS Design Review meeting held on 25th August 2009 in Glasgow.

Preliminary designs were presented to A+DS on 24th June 2008 at a Design Review meeting in Inverclyde, and a restricted report subsequently issued on 16th July 2008.

A+DS Views

1 General

1.1 We thank the design team for their clear presentation and welcome the opportunity to comment on the developed designs at this important stage. This is a unique and special site and the redevelopment of James Watt Docks offers a wonderful opportunity to regenerate, transform and repair a key part of Greenock and act as a catalyst for further improvement in the area.

1.2 When we last saw proposals for the site at an early stage in the design process we made a number of comments in relation to the design vision, the relationship of the proposed development with the water and masterplanning issues. We felt that the site had the potential to become a Scottish exemplar of water related development and encouraged a very special response. However, we thought that the initial design propositions did not promise a sufficiently inspiring and appropriate response to such a significant site, and felt that the whole approach needed to be fundamentally reconsidered. We encouraged a more innovative, creative and ambitious approach to the design and its delivery.

1.3 We feel that much has improved since our last review and are pleased that the design team have taken many of our previous comments on board. We generally support the direction in which the designs are moving and feel that this is a much more promising scheme than previously presented. However, in applauding the key aims that the design team are seeking to achieve in terms of creating a destination with identity,

there are still some important aspects of the designs that require further consideration. The following comments are made within this general context.

2 James Watt Square

2.1 We support the creation of James Watt Square in principle, as a key piece of public realm and focus for the development. However, we suggest there are some areas where the design of this space could improve, in terms of providing a safe, successful and people friendly environment.

2.2 Road and roundabout

We have serious concerns with the size and location of the proposed roundabout at the northeast corner of the square, in terms of the detrimental effect it would have on the creation of a people friendly space. We recognise the technical requirements for bringing traffic into and around the site, and that the road design has already been consented by both the Local Authority and Transport Scotland. However, we do not endorse an approach, within an urban context such as this, that is predicated on road design determining the design of pedestrian friendly environments.

2.3 Scale, enclosure and microclimate

The scale of the buildings that would address the square do not appear commensurate with the expansive scale of the place that is being proposed, which as a result also lacks enclosure. We have concerns that the microclimate within the square may suffer as a consequence, further compounded by a lack of buildings and activity fronting onto it. More needs to be done to address the issue of enclosure, either by reconsidering the scale of some of the surrounding buildings, or by other means.

2.4 Experience of the dock

We encourage the design team to exploit the potential for the reuse of James Watt Dock in the designs as much as possible.

3 Water edge

3.1 We encourage the design team to develop the relationship between the buildings, land and water, and in doing so to maximise opportunities throughout the site to create special places. We support the use of variable sloping embankments as edge treatments in this respect, though we do not yet feel that the plans suggest the full quality that is envisioned by the design team.

3.2 We do not yet feel that the design potential of the “Perch” has been fully exploited. We suggest that the designs for this area may require further consideration, particularly with regards to the occupancy of, and public accessibility into, this unique part of the site.

4 Landscape / phasing

4.1 We are pleased to see that a landscape architect has been involved in developing the masterplan. We encourage a landscape strategy and planting programme to be developed for the whole site, and for this to be established early in the process, to help guide future development and provide an opportunity for a mature landscape to be created as early as possible.

4.2 Clarification is required to demonstrate how car parking will be accommodated on the site. It is important that such provision does not have a negative impact on the development quality of the place and how people are able to navigate and use the public spaces.

5 Interface / listed buildings / sustainability

5.1 The site's very location predicated a certain degree of separation. However, as raised in our previous report, this new neighbourhood must not be conceived in isolation and it needs to be demonstrated how the proposals link back into the town; for instance more consideration needs to be given to how the A8 may be crossed, and the quality and safety of the routes to schools and other facilities and services. This is particularly relevant to the more northern residential areas of the site. We look forward to hearing more about these and other broader sustainable aspects of the project.

5.2 We welcome the retention and reuse of the 'A' listed structures on the site. We commend the design team in their efforts to restore and reuse the fire damaged Sugar Warehouse building, which is of particular merit, and defines the character of the area. We also welcome the proposed public access to the Titan Crane in its potential reuse as a visitor attraction.

5.3 An important part of the linkage between the James Watt Dock site and the town is the interface between them. We encourage the design team to continue the positive frontage from the Sugar Warehouse westwards along the edge of the A8 to create an active frontage between this and any future development on the opposite side of the road, with a view to creating what may eventually become a vibrant street.

5.4 A+DS encourages a holistic approach to sustainability. Understanding the opportunities presented by topography, orientation and management at the strategic level can influence the range of choices for sustainable working and living that are available, and promoting efficient use of resources. We would look to see a sustainable agenda firmly embedded in the proposals at this stage.

Conclusion

We welcome the opportunity to review the designs again at this important stage. When we last saw the project it was at an early stage in the design process, and we feel that the designs now show much greater potential. We generally support the key aims of the project, in terms of creating a new destination with identity. However, we suggest there are some areas that require further consideration.

We have some concerns with the proposed scale of James Watt Square relative to the surrounding buildings, and the impact of the consented road and roundabout on the space. We encourage the design team to maximise opportunities for creating special places wherever possible through developing a stronger relationship between the proposed buildings and the water's edge. We support the use of a landscape architect on the project and encourage the development of a landscape framework and planting programme as early as possible to help establish a mature landscape across the site. We welcome the reuse of the existing 'A' listed structures, and encourage further investigation of how the physical and social interface between the new neighbourhood and the existing town can be integrated as part of the developing masterplan.

Appendix

Presenting Team:

Clydeport Properties Limited
ADF Architects
McInally Associates
Riverside Inverclyde

Euan Jamieson
David Dunbar and Tom Sneddon
Tom McInally
Bill Nichol and George Hunter

A+DS:

Chair:

Rob Joiner

Panel:

Alison Blamire, Karen Cadell, Chris Rankin
and Paul Stallan

Staff lead:

Steven Malone

Staff:

Angela Williams, Tony Reilly

Other participants:

Inverclyde Council
Historic Scotland

David Ashman and Fergus Macleod
Luke Wormald