

Information

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Project: Govan-Partick Bridge

Status: Pre-Application

Case Officer: Sean McCollam

Applicant: Glasgow City Council

Engineer: Jacobs

Presentation by: Peter Lyttle of Jacobs

Project Description

The proposals are for a new footbridge and associated public realm to span the River Clyde and provide a connection from Water Row in Govan to the Transport Museum in Partick. In the past it was possible to ford the Clyde, meaning that the two areas were interconnected but industrialisation meant that the river was deepened over the years so this became impossible and was replaced by a ferry.

The new bridge will reconnect the two communities and is central to the GCC Govan-Partick Strategic Development Framework (SDF) and the emerging context of the Water Row Masterplan.

The design brief states that *'the bridge should be an innovative and elegant solution that is minimal, efficient and respectful of its surroundings. It should enrich the experience of this part of the city and of the river for all users, adding value to its environment without eroding the positive impact of the existing landmarks and natural assets'*.

Introduction

Pre-application discussions are underway and although the design is at an early stage, a thorough assessment of the constraints has been undertaken. The River Clyde is considered to be a significant asset to Glasgow but in this position, it is acting as a barrier between the two communities since the demise of the ferry. The key policies to consider are Place Making and Sustainable Development and the emerging SDF will be utilised to assess the eventual planning application. The new bridge is an important factor within the regeneration of the river corridor and will also compliment emerging developments including the nearby Glasgow Harbour. At present there are thought to be no concerns with the proposals from a planning policy view point.

Discussion

The current design proposals are for a pedestrian swing bridge with an articulated steel pylon that seeks to emulate the historic image of riverside shipbuilding cranes. It was confirmed that a double swing bridge option had been explored but that a single pivot was the preferred option following consultation with Clyde Port Navigation. Two tapered concrete columns are positioned below, at each end of the swing bridge section.

It was discussed whether the proposed form of the bridge was a result of engineering necessity or if it was driven by an architectural aesthetic and whilst the pylon is structural it was agreed that it is not the only structural option available.

The panel commended the team for the ambition to create a landmark structure but that it was felt that the articulation of the pylon meant that it was visually competing with the Transport Museum and Govan Old Parish Church in the immediate context and also with the other bridges on the Clyde in the wider city context. It was felt that the current proposed solution wasn't fully realising the design brief and it was suggested that alternative more minimal solutions in the form of a traditional horizontal span should be explored to minimise the impact upon the Transport Museum and Govan Old Parish Church. However, it was agreed that this is a high-profile city-wide project that is reconnecting two communities therefore its visual appearance is important and the bridge should be celebrated as a new feature of the Clyde.

The public realm was discussed as being pivotal to the success of the bridge and initially the position of the landing points was challenged. However, it was agreed that their position is supported through historical analysis, engineering data and the bridge also responds to the emerging Water Row Masterplan to the South and immediate context of the Museum, the River Kelvin, Marina and the Tall Ship. However, it was agreed that more collaboration with the Water Row Masterplan is required in order to establish what the conceptual approach will be to the landing points. It was stated that Partick and Govan are inherently different places with unique character therefore this should be a principle driver of the design of the bridge, the landing points and associated public realm.

The operation of the bridge was questioned in relation to people using the bridge for commuting to work. It was clarified that whole process would take in the region of thirty minutes in order to ensure a factor of safety before and after the passing of any vessel. It was also confirmed that the Waverly is the prime user of the river therefore a timetable could be posted to notify commuters of planned closures.

Panel Summary

The panel complemented the team for the ambition to create a landmark structure but that it in order to fully realise the brief for a minimal, elegant efficient solution that is respectful of its surroundings, it was felt that the following areas should be considered:

- The bridge should not try to 'compete' with the Transport Museum.
- The design of the bridge should be based on engineering principles rather than seeking to achieve an Architectural Aesthetic.
- The team should review the height of the pylon in comparison with the height of the Transport Museum and Govan Old Parish Church.
- A more minimal and modest language should be explored through the review and testing of all structural forms available to ensure that the correct form can be justified, supported by analysis and satisfies the design brief.
- This investigation should include horizontal structural forms as well as vertical.
- Detailed visual impact analysis of the views from, and of, the bridge in its context is required to better understand the impact of the structure.

- The team needs to have a greater engagement with Water Row Masterplan to develop the strategy for the landing points to ensure that the individual characters of Partick and Govan are celebrated.
- The design of the public realm should be developed for both sides of the river, reflecting the character areas, and the associated landscape, materiality and accessibility.

In summary the consensus of the panel was that this is an exciting project that will benefit the Govan and Partick communities whilst becoming an asset to Glasgow City, however the design could be refined and enhanced through consideration of the points raised by the panel.