



CITY AND COUNTY OF SWANSEA
DINAS A SIR ABERTAWE

**To/
Councillor Robert Francis-Davies
Cabinet Member for Enterprise,
Development & Regeneration**

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SPC/2016-17/12

BY EMAIL

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*Date
Dyddiad:*

15 March 2017

Summary: This is a letter from the Scrutiny Programme Committee to the Cabinet Member for Enterprise, Development & Regeneration following the meeting of the Committee on 13 March 2017. It is about a Cabinet report on Castle Square.

Dear Councillor Francis-Davies,

**Pre-decision Scrutiny of Cabinet Report:
Castle Square Development and Public Realm Opportunities**

The Scrutiny Programme Committee met on 13 March to consider the report that you are presenting to Cabinet on 16 March, and give a view on the proposed decision.

You will recall that we considered your initial report to Cabinet in June and although supportive we raised a number of issues and concerns about: future public access; impact on future capacity; and impact on future public events.

We noted that your report to the next Cabinet meeting highlights further appraisal work undertaken to set the context for bringing forward proposals and sets out the main themes emerging following the Public Open Space Notice. We noted the intention to align development of the site with the wider City Centre development and strategic framework, and linkages with St Mary's Square, Princess Way and Wind Street.

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY / TROSOLWG A CHRAFFU

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Thank you for meeting with the committee and for your engagement in the process. What follows is the view of the committee, which we ask Cabinet to take into consideration before making its decision on the report.

Overall the Committee had no objection to the proposed recommendations, and remain supportive of the desire and rationale for seeking interest in the redevelopment and improvement of Castle Square. We agreed that doing nothing was not an option given the tired and dated appearance of the Square. The emphasis on 'high quality design' within the report is welcome.

Although supportive, there were a number of concerns raised about:

- future public access – it is important that Castle Square remains a public space to the fullest extent, and we were pleased to read the statement that 'any proposal should not result in the net loss of useable public open space' (para 5.1). You were clear that public accessibility was paramount; however we would be concerned at any parallels drawn with the space around Verdi's in Mumbles as being a good example of preserving public space. A Castle Square dominated by tables and chairs (for the exclusive use of restaurant customers) would not be satisfactory.
- possible conflict between occupying businesses and the council over use e.g. licensing issues – although we noted the 'intention for the council to retain ownership and control of the Square' (para. 5.3) we felt that the presumption that the Council will remain holder of the public licence needs to be clearly set out in any brief and terms of lease, in order to secure public access and protect the delivery of future public events, celebrations, and protests in the Square.
- how you will satisfy the wishes of those who view the Square as a place of quiet and rest. We noted that of the 47 consultation responses, a quarter did not want to see restaurants on the site, and almost a half wished to maintain the open space and green space.
- the need for consultation with St Mary's Church over any integration of Castle Square with St. Mary's Square, particular any plans for the areas around the church and graveyard.
- the proposed removal of a cycle lane (indicated in p. 8 of Appendix A) – you undertook to provide clarification over the exact location of this lane, and impact of closure on the cycle route around the City Centre.

I am unable to attend Cabinet on 16 March however I am hoping that a representative of the Committee can attend in support of this letter; otherwise please consider in my absence.

Your Response

We would be grateful for a written response to this letter so that the committee is informed of the decision taken by cabinet and its consideration of the views expressed by the committee, whether accepted or rejected. It would be helpful to receive your reply to this letter by 5 April.

We await with interest the future report back to Cabinet on an options appraisal and brief for the site prior to any site marketing, as noted in the recommendations, and look forward to further discussion within scrutiny about the future of Castle Square.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary Jones". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'M'.

COUNCILLOR MARY JONES

Chair, Scrutiny Programme Committee

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