

The Eden Project



Context

The Eden Project selected Dundee as a suitable site for a new cultural attraction. The Eden Project is an educational charity and social enterprise that focusses on showcasing the diversity of plant life and to raise awareness about environmental issues, particularly related to biodiversity, sustainability, and climate change. They also focus on educational programmes, sustainability initiatives, and research into plant conservation. The original site in Cornwall is a major tourist attraction and its expansion into Dundee would result in a flagship development for the city as well as a significant regeneration project.

The Eden Project is a National Development within the Hierarchy of Development and is identified within National Planning Framework 4.

The site is on the edge of the city centre, is within walking distance of the main transport hubs and is on a main bus route. The redevelopment of the vacant brownfield site would complement



regeneration activity within the city and would enhance and add to the current offering of visitor attractions within Dundee.

The development site involved several challenges and a range of considerations and given this, stakeholders were asked to provide feedback to inform the decision-making process.

It was a complex planning application to assess and determine. Complex matters that required assessment included the former industrial use and associated contamination whilst consideration needed to be given to flood risk issues, proximity to trunk road and railway, neighbouring residential uses, historic environment, and enhancing active travel connections and linkages to and from the site. The development proposal has further been designed to redevelop a brownfield site, and the design proposal would make use of and incorporate a former spiral gas holder on the site.

What Happened

The proposal was for a major, mixed-use leisure development on a key site on the edge of the city centre. It would be a cultural attraction showcasing cultivated landscapes, exhibits, art, performance and science across three main venues. The site was selected due to its location in Dundee Waterfront, and the proposals aimed to contribute to its continuing transformation.

A key aspect of the proposal was forming enhanced connections from the Stobswell area of the city to the Waterfront and, as part of this, the development included a green footbridge providing a link across the trunk road and railway line.

The planning service led extensive pre-application discussions to ensure a quick application process and the achievement of a positive outcome for all parties. The brownfield site of a former gas works was recognised as the project will increase footfall within the city centre, encourage more overnight stays, increase daytime and evening spend, and positively impact the vitality and viability of the city centre.

Areas of Collaboration

Given the scale of the project as a National Development as identified in National Planning Framework 4 the applicant was firstly required to submit a Proposal of Application Notice and as part of this process was required to undertake pre-application consultation with the community.

The applicant undertook extensive community engagement, and the Eden Project Team hosted various events across Dundee with feedback from the community being incorporated into the design proposals as part of the planning application submission. The assessment and determination of the planning application was led and coordinated by a Dundee City Council Senior Planning Officer.

This involved working extensively in partnership with The Eden Project as the applicant as well as other internal and external regulatory bodies such as contaminated land, drainage engineers, Transport Scotland, SEPA and Scottish Water.



During determining the application regular catch-up meetings were held to keep the application on course. Consultees were included where applicable and an emphasis was placed on stakeholders both internal and external working collaboratively to resolve issues.

This project managed approach allowed for a smooth assessment of the application and subsequently a positive recommendation at Committee. Given the scale of the development the application was required to be determined at full Council following a pre-determination hearing at Planning Committee.

Overall Result

The close working relationship between Dundee City Council and the applicant's agent allowed for the design and layout of the site to evolve through positive discussion during the determination of the application.

This reuse of this former gas works within the Dundee Waterfront will result in a sustainable re-use of a brownfield site and introduce a new visitor attraction of significant scale that would provide additional employment opportunities and would further bring visitors to the Dundee area and beyond.

Whilst works have not yet commenced on site, it is considered that the approval demonstrates a commitment from this planning authority and the applicant to regenerate this part of Dundee and to secure long-term investment in the city and wider area.

Lessons Learned

This is an example of where effective pre-application discussions are consequently leading to the delivery of a high-quality proposal. Extensive dialogue between the planning team, consultees, the agent and the project team, the approval decision on this national development was issued within 7 months of the application being submitted.

The planning service provided clear information about which supporting documents required to be submitted and this reduced the number of negotiations and amendments required at the formal planning application stage.

This was an excellent opportunity to consider and consent a major regeneration project which was well managed with strong engagement and a focus on collaborative working with all interested parties and stakeholders to secure a positive outcome.



This case study has been prepared in collaboration by Dundee City Council and the National Planning Improvement Team at the Improvement Service. We publish good practice case studies identified through our work on the National Planning Improvement Framework and the National Planning Hub. They aim to support the sharing of good practice and build collaboration across the sector in addressing common challenges. Please email us at npi@improvementservice.org.uk if your authority has a good practice case study to share.

