



Comisiwn Dylunio Cymru

Design Commission for Wales

**Design Review Report:
Meeting Date / Material Submitted:
Location:**

**10 March 2004
4 March 2004
Land to the South of Roath Basin,
Cardiff Bay**

Architects / Design Team:

**Wyn Thomas Gordon Lewis
Terry Farrell & Partners
Hyder Consultants**

Scheme Description:

Mixed use development

Public/Other Body:

Welsh Development Agency

Present: Designers/Developers:

Paul Williams, WDA, Project leader
Paul Vining, WTGL, Planning consultant
Geoff Weber, Hyder, Transport consultant
Steve Smith, Terry Farrell & Partners

Present: Design Review Panel:

John Punter,
Cindy Harris
Lyn Owen
Alan Francis

Ed Colgan
Jonathan Adams (part)
Mike Biddulph

Observing

Steve Trigg, South Wales Police
Professor Zhu, China Academy of Urban Planning and Design

Presentation

Paul Vining set out the planning context. The Welsh Development Agency already owns the vast majority of the site, and the principle of development on this site has been established for some years and is consistent with the statutory Cardiff County Council local Plan 1966 and the emerging UDP. The involvement of the WDA is important as it brings a different dimension to the scheme, in terms of their interest in promoting research and development and high technology employment uses on the site, alongside high quality residential and leisure uses. Further properties may need to be compulsorily acquired to ensure comprehensive development, and this project has a 20 year time horizon.

This project has significant sustainability credentials being located on a brownfield site, achieving a dense and compact development with a diverse mix of uses, delivering a range of house prices, types and tenures, being capable of being served by public transport, and creating significant amenities for the people of Cardiff (especially with its 1.6 miles of public waterfront and the completion of the pedestrian/cycle links between the Norwegian Church and the Barrage).

Steve Smith from Terry Farrell and Partners described the qualities of the location and conveyed a sense of excitement about the opportunity to create a new waterfront with technologically advanced employment opportunities, high quality housing and excellent public amenities. The scale of development envisaged is medium rise, between 6 and 10 storeys, and there is a requirement for a road through the site to connect the Queensgate Roundabout inner to the barrage.

The centre of site on the south side of Roath Basin is earmarked for hi-tech industry/research and development uses linked to the medical and bio-sciences. Sites at the eastern and western ends of the site are envisaged for housing with 20-25 per cent of the accommodation as affordable pepper-potted across the site. The layout of the buildings is a response to the pattern of the old railway lines, but it also works well microclimatically so that the streets are aligned north south to collect sunshine and to protect the site from the westerly winds (there are no tall buildings proposed to intensify wind speeds). The two dry docks at the western end of the site will be retained and flooded and minor reclamation of the Bay will create more of a peninsula at the westernmost part of the site south of the Channel Dry Dock. The Bute Dry Dock will be the social heart of the development where retail and commercial outlets will be located on the ground floors of the residential and commercial buildings. The commercial zone will be extended along the south side of Roath Basin perhaps as a series of pavilions detached from the main B1 blocks. There will be one-level basement car parking under all central buildings and multi-storey car parks in a low-rise strip to the SE.

Geoff Weber as transport consultant made it clear that they appreciated the current modal split of Cardiff Bay. He saw it as a priority to encourage public transport use on this site, and pointed out that all the buildings would be in close proximity to a circular bus route that would connect to Cardiff Bay or Central Station. A cycle network will be included and will connect across the Barrage to Penarth. He foresaw a phased approach to transport and parking provision, with the proportion of car use slowly reducing, as public transport became more attractive. The layout of paths and walkways has been based on perceived desire lines with a new pedestrian bridge across Bute Dry Dock.

Response from the Panel

The Panel acknowledged that high density, but only medium rise, development was good for the viability of a public transport system, but were concerned that the phasing approach, including temporary car parks, might become established and lead to a public reluctance to utilise public transport. It considered that a full bus service needed to be funded from the outset.

It was suggested that the street layout and building footprints might allow for more variation in the scale and disposition of public space, and that some buildings might be brought up hard to the water's edge. Steve Smith pointed out that the

minor road layout at least was still flexible and that buildings had been set back somewhat from the waterfront on the south side of the Basin to allow for solar access. The consistent roof height had also been designed to maximise shelter from prevailing winds.

The Panel welcomed the strong urbanism of the scheme and the promise of a piece of real city focused on streets and docksides. There were questions about the level, location and type of shopping provision. Shops, and related commercial community uses such as a gym and nursery, would be situated around Bute Dry Dock. There were questions about childrens' play space if family housing was proposed. This might be incorporated into the dockside space, but the family units might also make use of roof gardens.

The phasing of the scheme was something that concerned the Panel. The development team suggested that development will probably begin at the north east corner of the site with a series of residential schemes, with a Technium development in the centre. High design aspirations were expressed particularly for the superb sites at the west end of the site.

The Panel was concerned to ensure that the strategic cycle and pedestrian route linking the city to Penarth via the Barrage was provided at the earliest opportunity. There were doubts expressed about the design of the spine road and especially the use of roundabouts, which are not a pedestrian or cycle friendly urban form. It was suggested that a footbridge be provided to linking the south side of the basin to Adventurers Quay and to provide a direct pedestrian link at the eastern end of the site. Steve Smith pointed out that this would have to be a lifting bridge, and there was the question of who would adopt and maintain it.

The question was raised as to whether there would be sufficient demand to fill the huge amount of office space on the site, especially given the very low demand currently being experienced. However, the WDA had examined the market and one of the problems for Cardiff was that there were very few top quality sites to attract relocations or new investors. Much of the B1 space was earmarked for research and development and high technology uses in order to try to promote development of a new economy in areas like the bio-sciences in association with the newly merged Cardiff University/Medical School.

There was recognition that a certain amount of flexibility had to be built into the masterplan, especially as the development might take 20 years to be completed. It was considered particularly important that the design of the public realm and landscape was clearly determined and its quality assured. The Panel were concerned to ensure that the mix of uses be protected at all costs so that this became a living and working area. Similarly it was critical to ensure a significant amount of affordable housing in the project. The component of affordable units has not yet been decided, but is likely to be in the range of 20-25%, pepper-potted throughout the site and architecturally indistinguishable from the private housing. A couple of specific sites have been earmarked as possible landmark developments, but it was emphasised that simple, well-detailed buildings and spaces would be the norm.

There was a plea to learn the lessons from Adventurers Quay, on how to best relate buildings to the dockside. Car parking grilles lining the dockside were not acceptable to the Design Commission. Steve Trigg of South Wales Police emphasised the need for collaboration at an early stage in the masterplanning

process, with regard to achieving design principles commensurate with community safety and crime prevention in relation to the housing layout.

Summary:

The Panel were delighted with the way this project was presented and the obvious depth of design consideration. They were excited by the project, not just its design potential to finally develop some genuine urbanity in the Bay, but the possibility for the project to incubate a new economy that would have real growth potential. The Panel supported all the basic urban design principles, as outlined. There were still some worries over how mixed the B1 uses might turn out to be, how a real commercial focus might be developed at Bute Dry Dock, and whether the provision of a circular bus route would really attract residents and workers to use public transport.

The Panel consider that the real challenge of this scheme is a joint one to the WDA and the Local Planning Authority. This is to create an effective masterplan that guarantees the provision of a quality public realm and a successful, urbane live-work community. The tensions between necessary development flexibility and a predictable urban form, and the challenges to deliver a fully accessible, high quality public realm, are considerable. The panel had a number of explicit requirements that it would like to see enshrined in the masterplan. These include

- A commitment to basement car parking so that housing and B1 buildings can interface directly with the street and docksides;
- Clear demarcation of retail and leisure uses to ensure that this community has a good range of services, and facilities to encourage people from across Cardiff to walk and cycle through the area;
- Further thought to the necessary social provision in the area including facilities like day care, recreational and cultural facilities, and park space;
- Agreed building envelopes and footprints that commit future developers to urban building forms and medium rise development;
- A commitment to high quality architecture in each element of the scheme, recognising the value of a consistently high standard of 'background' buildings across the site, but taking advantage of some of the best sites to develop landmark buildings of exceptional quality;
- Early completion of an attractive pedestrian and cycle route to the Barrage, even if this is of a temporary nature;
- An agreed phasing plan so that the development is consolidated and does not leave completed projects isolated in large tracts of derelict land for many years;
- A commitment to the provision of a bus service through the site at the earliest opportunity, and some investment in the wider high capacity public transport provision in the Bay when the Council resolves what this will be.

Further Assistance

DCFW and its Design Review Panel would be keen to meet with the development team as the masterplan progresses if they would find further discussions useful. The Panel applauds the WDA's commitment to the masterplan process on this critical site. It demonstrates to the Council the methods by which it should be proceeding with the Ferry Road Peninsula International Sports Village Scheme.

End