



**Comisiwn Dylunio Cymru Design Commission for Wales**

<b>Design Review Report:</b>	<b>13 May 2004</b>
<b>Meeting Date / Material Submitted:</b>	<b>6 May 2004</b>
<b>Location:</b>	<b>Seagate and Ferrara Quay Swansea</b>
<b>Architects:</b>	<b>Latitude Architects: Mike Griffiths, Andrew Gilbert</b>
<b>Consultants:</b>	<b>EC Harris, Martin Griffiths CSJ Planning Consultants WS Atkins</b>
<b>Client/Developer:</b>	<b>Earthquake UK Ltd Quentin Webster</b>
<b>Local Authority:</b>	<b>City and County of Swansea Elfed Roberts, Richard Jones, Dave Gill</b>
<b>Scheme Description:</b>	<b>Residential/Mixed use</b>
<b>Planning Status:</b>	<b>Full planning application submitted</b>
<b>Design Review Panel Members:</b>	<b>John Punter, Cindy Harris, Ed Colgan, Paul Vanner, Lyn Owen, Alan Francis, Nigel Hanson</b>
<b>Observing</b>	<b>Marcus Blayney, UWE Steve Trigg, SW police</b>

**Presentation**

The client/developer began by describing their aspiration for a bold, beacon style development, taking full advantage of the position and views. The mixed use, sustainable development would be high density and surrounded by a good quality public realm.

The architect described the background to this project, beginning with Swansea's strong historical connection with the sea. The wartime bombings had left the town without a strong centre and with a ragged edge, and by the 1970's it was in a state of industrial decline.

The site sits at the junction of the sea and land and refers to both. The Seagate part of the site to the south abuts the promenade and would accommodate two blocks and three towers, the latter acting as a counterpoint to the Observatory down the coast. The corner block has been reduced in height to relate to the buildings on Carmona Drive. Ferrara Quay is a linear site at road level with views back to the marina, city centre and distant hills, as well as seawards. The dramatic focal point would be a 29 storey corner tower incorporating a restaurant on the top two storeys, with two lower residential blocks to the east.

Dockside walks and the promenade set the context for the development of the public realm. There is a mix of private gardens (within the Seagate blocks) and public space (mainly on the Ferrara Quay site) with an axial pedestrian link between the sea and marina.

Comments from the City Council concerning the quality of the public realm met with a positive response from the developers. As a result, the height of the wall which abuts the promenade now features a large raised deck and steps, to minimise the wall height and improve views. In addition, commercial space has been introduced to the lower Seagate levels, to animate the façade facing Ferrara Square, again in response to input from the Local Authority.

The creation of a vital public space in Ferrara Square was seen as essential but difficult, as it is cut in half by Trawler Road. This could be compensated for by more active frontages and enhanced entrances.

There will be a basement carpark under the whole of the Ferrara Quay site; two levels of parking under the Seagate site; and an upgrade of the Carmona Drive multi-storey carpark.

Representatives of the City Council stated that the preferred developer had been selected because of their bold approach. The initial designs had dealt satisfactorily with scale, massing, layout, and links with the public realm. There has been a full environmental impact statement and visual impact assessment by the City's own external consultants. A climatic impact assessment is also being carried out by specialist consultants, including the effects of changes in wind direction and strength on existing residents and the water surface of the marina.

There has been a significant public response to these proposals, with some support and some opposition. Issues of traffic generation and parking have been central to this discussion. An affordable housing component is not required on this site, as a large proportion of accommodation around the marina is already rented or in shared ownership.

A single phase construction process is planned, with the two sites starting together and the Seagate site completed first.

## **Panel's Response**

The Panel welcomed the thoroughness of the preparation and presentation. This is obviously a key site within the maritime quarter of Swansea, and it was generally agreed that this scheme would benefit and upgrade the whole area.

The height of the main tower was of greater concern to the panel from distant views than its immediate impact close up. The elliptical form and clear roofline was appreciated but the plan form of the tower was felt to offer too broad a massing from the West Pier and from other vantage points, interfering with the sweep of the bay and obscuring views of Town Hill. The panel felt that while the view from Mumbles, in particular, might be improved by a landmark structure which enlivened an otherwise indistinct sea frontage, the height and massing of the tower still needed considerable review. The disposition and scale of the Seagate blocks were welcomed but the panel maintained that the main tower may be too great a massing when set against familiar Swansea landmarks including the Observatory.

The response of the designers to City Council concerns about the quality of the public realm was good. The retained visual link between the promenade and private gardens was endorsed, but there was concern about the split levels in Ferrara Square and a desire to raise the road to the level of the square. The incorporation of a rooftop restaurant was seen as a very positive addition to the waterfront and the developer advised that interest had already been received from both local and UK operators. The panel however felt that such an important part of the scheme deserved a main entrance off Ferrara Square, probably by being linked to one of the ground floor retail units, rather than the much smaller entrance proposed, which was effectively off a small pavement on a bend in the road.

It was agreed that a major residential tower could be accommodated on this site. The panel considered the proposed detailing to work well, and appreciated the efforts made to reduce the effect of loss of sunlight on adjacent residential properties. The creation of a building of this height and massing, however, would create a precedent in respect of important policy issues for the City Council, which might only be dealt with by the development of a City wide visual appraisal and tall buildings policy.

The management of the whole site was raised, and the possibility of a concierge scheme was discussed. It was suggested that provision of CCTVs or patrolling wardens could be made the subject of a Section 106 agreement. Care would be needed to control the potential for skateboarding on ramps.

## **Summary**

The Panel was delighted to see a project of real quality on such a strategically important maritime site. The high density is acceptable and the design of the public square is evolving in a way which suggests resolution of some of the earlier problems. The relationship between private and public space has been sensitively handled and the environmental impact factors recognised. The design team and the City and County of Swansea are to be congratulated for working together successfully to achieve real improvements to the scheme.

However, the height and massing of the main tower remains of concern and the panel felt that further work on this element of the scheme was required to ensure a satisfactory relationship with the Seagate towers massing and with other established waterfront landmarks, especially from long views including the West Pier. It may help to incorporate further public uses into the main tower, including a public viewing gallery (which could be wrapped around the restaurant plant rooms), as was discussed informally between members of the Commission and the architects after the presentation. The introduction of such use may go a long way to justifying the proposed scale of the tower.

We look forward to the continuing development and realisation of this exciting design.

**End**