

Comisiwn Dylunio Cymru	Design Commission for Wales
Design Review Report:	14 October 2004
Meeting Date / Material Submitted:	7 October 2004
Location:	Cambrian Centre, Newport
Scheme Description:	Residential, hotel, retail, Offices, carpark.
Client:	Goldtique Investments [Graham Roth]
Architects / Design Team:	Holder Mathias [Stephen Hill, Peter Gamble]
Consultants:	Horstonbridge Ltd [David Griffiths]
Public/Other Body:	Newport City Council [Neil Boardman, Bob Bowler] Newport Unlimited [David Ward]
Planning Status:	Full planning application submitted
Panel Members:	
Alan Francis (Chair)	Nick Davies
Cindy Harris (Officer)	Ed Colgan
Lyn Owen	

Presentation:

This is a fully mixed use scheme which seeks to retain existing retail units wherever possible, and introduce new uses (hotel, offices, residential). A major design aim has been to maximise permeability, reinforcing already strong links between the station and the town, and creating a new street. Following the last presentation of this scheme to Design Review (September '04), the developer emphasised the necessity of completing by December 2006, in order to satisfy the needs of the major occupier of the office block. A hotelier is now also committed to this site.

The designers have addressed the areas of concern raised at the last design review in the following way:

- **Permeability:** this has been improved, with the linkage from Queensway to Railway Street in particular made stronger. There is now a wider, curved opening leading into a public square, with a potential small retail unit at the base of the residential tower. This has the effect of reducing the length of the car park frontage, made possible by a reduction in the number of parking spaces from 800 to 700.
- **Horizontality:** the block is now more 'grounded', with large scale 'windows' reflecting the function of the spaces behind and creating a natural hierarchy and legibility. The fenestration has changed, with

- ‘punched holes’ replacing ‘ribbon’ windows, and an extra storey - bull-nosed and stepped back - has been added to the north eastern half of the block.
- **Form of tower:** the previous ‘lozenge’ form gave apparent directionality, and suggested an inadvertent reference to the new residential block of Altolusso in Cardiff. The proposed new form of a rotunda addresses directionality while providing panoramic views, and attempts to create a distinctive architectural statement for Newport. It retains the same floor area and number of units and therefore has increased in height by four storeys. The façade expresses clearly a ‘base/ middle/top’ and the smaller footprint enhances the public link and public square to the east.
 - **Active frontage to Queensway:** the area of active frontage to Queensway - intended as a pedestrian friendly street in the masterplan for Newport - has been increased by moving the hotel entrance further towards the residential tower and by adding a new retail unit to the base of the tower.
 - **Level difference between Queensway and Cambrian Road:** this two metre difference in levels has been addressed by incorporating a flight of steps around the bull-nosed corner, as a short term solution. Disabled access is provided on the other side of the junction where the difference in levels is less. A more permanent solution will follow with the development of a proposed ‘Bus Box’ and elimination of the underpass.
 - **Materiality:** this has been improved with the use of coloured (Eternit) panels. On Queensway a slate grey panel is proposed, with a terracotta rainscreen or brickwork, and a granite plinth to the residential block. On Cambrian Road, terracotta will combine with stone coloured panels and this treatment will continue into Railway Street, adding legibility to the retail units. Original proposals for the use of acrylic render remain with regard to the residential tower.
 - **The office building:** Newport City Council’s conservation officer again expressed concern over the scale of this building, especially on the Cambrian Road frontage, but agreed to abide by the consensus view. The terracotta rainscreen cladding is intended to provide a link between the conservation area and the new retail uses. It should be read as a corner building.

Panel’s Response

The Panel acknowledges and welcomes the improvements in permeability and the active frontage to Queensway. With regard to the remaining points:

- **Horizontality** - this is much improved, though it may be possible to reduce it even further by extending certain vertical elements and the overall composition may be improved by introducing a capping such as a roof overhang.
- **Form of tower** - we welcome the new shape of the tower, with the massing broken down and a well handled composition. Its height will tend to set an important precedent for Newport, who may wish to consider adopting a policy on tall buildings (although the masterplan identifies preferred locations).
- **Difference in levels** - the present solution is acceptable in the short term, pending a more comprehensive study of the public realm around Queensway, being commissioned by Newport Unlimited.
- **Materiality** - high quality, durable materials and intelligent detailing will be crucial to the success of this development. Whilst we welcome the diversity

suggested, terracotta and Eternit panels were designed as flat cladding panels and for instance do not turn corners easily. Eternit panels may not be available in curved format. Given the likely levels of rent this development will attract, it may be necessary and desirable to give public support to ensure the necessary level of quality.

- **The office building** - we find the proposed massing and scale acceptable and appropriate. The quality of the finished building - and its superiority to apparently similar blocks from the 1960's - will depend greatly on the detailing, layout and expression of materials. We strongly suggest that the façade detailing is reviewed further through the use of full scale detailed drawings, or at least by the use of such drawings as a condition on any consent granted.

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