

Statws/Status:
Cyhoeddus / Public



Adroddiad Adolygu Dylunio: 13 March 2006
Design Review Report:

Dyddiad Cyfarfod / Cyflwyno'r Deunydd: 01 March 2006
Meeting Date / Material Submitted:

Lleoliad/Location: Meridian Gate, Cardiff

Disgrifiad o'r Cynllun Hotel + residential
Scheme Description:

Pensaer/Architect: Wigley Fox [Peter Morgan
Gareth Brown]

Awdurdod Cynllunio: Cardiff CC
Planning Authority: [Helen Hodgson]

Statws Cynllunio: Full application submitted
Planning Status: Dec 05

Y Panel Adolygu Dylunio/Design Review Panel:
John Punter (cadeirydd/chair) Paul Vanner
Cindy Harris (swyddog/officer) Ed Colgan
Lyn Owen Douglas Hogg
Ewan Jones

Lead Panellist: Lyn Owen

Sylwedyddion/Observers: Charlie Deng
Design Review assistant

Cyflwyniad/Presentation

This scheme was previously reviewed by DCFW in May 2004 and it obtained planning consent shortly afterwards, despite the significant concerns of the Commission. Since then, there has been a change of developer and brief. A major

international hotel group required a prime site in central Cardiff and Imperial Property Group bought the site for an upmarket hotel and a residential element comprising 118 no, 2 and 3 bed units. The residential block is the same size as in the previous scheme, and has triggered the affordable housing requirement of 36 units which will be provided off site. The footprint of the western tower, now a 200 bed hotel, is reduced and presents a more slender elevation. The public open space remains the same with a mix of hard and soft landscaping, and the courtyards at podium level are provided for the use of residents only. The Barcelona lights currently on the corner will be retained but moved, and the Jim Driscoll statue will be placed on an elevated stone plinth. Parking provision is low, given the central location, with 40 spaces allocated for residents, and 35 for the hotel. This parking provision is based on an anticipation that 80% of hotel users will use public transport. The residential and hotel parking will occupy different deck levels within the scheme.

The tower will have glazed curtain walling with solar reflective glass and aluminium projecting fins. The intention is to broadly follow the finishes and colours on Callaghan Square and No 1 Kingsway. The gull wing or butterfly roof feature on top of the tower has been added to give it more distinction.

The planning application will go to committee on 15 March and it is hoped to start on site in Sept 06.

The Local Authority welcomed the slimness of the tower and the increased glazing which creates a strong focal point in the townscape. They wanted to see a distinctive roof feature to add to the landmark nature of the building. The quality of the detailed design is critical for the scheme's success, and will be conditioned. High quality materials are required, and the precast concrete panelling is therefore of some concern. It needs to be of the same quality as Callaghan Square. The glazing system also needs detailed consideration.

The Council wish to be consulted on the design of the public realm on Bute Terrace, and require a financial contribution towards repaving the southern side of this street. The Highways department also require a contribution towards a pedestrian crossing on Bute Terrace. The servicing arrangements need to be looked at again, to resolve any possible conflicts. In view of the new office development on the west side of Bute Street, a suitable frontage on the Bute Street elevation is necessary. Currently the ground floor is blank-walled plant rooms, although there is a restaurant planned for the first floor. It was suggested that the ground floor glazing on the north could be carried round to the west side.

Ymateb y Panel/Panel's Response

The Panel welcomed the opportunity to be updated on plans for this important city centre site, across Bute Terrace from St Davids 2. We appreciated that some of our earlier recommendations had been implemented, although many were now no longer relevant.

The Panel wanted to see this development relate well to its future rather than its present context and respond to the materials and elevational details on the new office block to the west and the new John Jewis store to the north. We noted the intention to respect the height of the Alto Lusso building to the east and the slight improvement in the spacing between the westernmost wing of the the latter and

the new residential tower. The design team will research the elevational treatment of neighbouring buildings and seek to achieve an appropriate response. It is proposed that the wall panel system will be manufactured off site.

The street frontages to Bute Street and Bute Terrace should be designed to animate the public open space in front of the hotel entrance, which should become a genuine public amenity. The hotel operators also want a vibrant street frontage and the designer considers that the two and a half storey glazed entrance lobby helps to achieve this. It was confirmed that the podium space will not be daylighted from the top. While welcoming the emphasis on hard landscaping, the Panel thought that the public realm solution as presented did not work well or adequately address the generators of movement off site.

The two adjacent vehicular access points from Bute Terrace [one leading to a service bay] could become a disincentive for pedestrians to use this route, and we would like to see some positive provision for pedestrians at this point. We applaud the reduction in parking provision, but we are concerned at the way in which the taxi dropoff point squeezes the footpath to a narrow strip in front of the hotel. It also appears to be too close to the signalled road junction, and the Local Authority Highways officer would like it omitted. In designing a hotel it is vital that the pick up and drop off points are well designed for guests' convenience, but also to protect the quality of the public realm for general citizens. The Panel considered that in view of the reduced parking, it was important to make adequate provision for a taxi rank and dropoff point.

One of our major concerns was to improve and strengthen the north / south route linking the city with the bay. This link needs to be as direct and uninterrupted as possible, and we would therefore like to see the pedestrian crossing over Bute Terrace brought as close as possible to the corner with Bute Street. The position of the crossing will have implications for St Davids 2 and for the design of the public open space on Bute Terrace, but the final decision will be led by the Highways department. The designers need to work closely with them to ensure that the public space and street crossing function effectively

With regard to the design of the residential block, the Panel thought the architectural treatment and choice of materials left much to be desired. In particular, the building does not relate well to the podium, being neither flush with it nor set back significantly. It appears to sit on top of the enlarged podium as a separate element and does not link satisfactorily to ground level, nor does it relate well either to the new tower or to Alto Lusso. We would like to see a rethinking of the residential block design in the same way as the tower design has been revised, to achieve similar gains, particularly a greater linkage at street level. The designers stated that their approach had been to define the plinth and set the block back slightly from the pavement line to expose the corner of Alto Lusso, but this gesture was not adequate to achieve significant benefits.

The Panel was dismayed to learn that no wind tunnel testing had been carried out. The designers agreed that this would be done but not before the planning committee meeting. We were dubious about this approach and thought that tests may well show wind-related problems at ground level, and these needed to be countered in the design of both the corner of the building and the public space.

We were told that the procurement route will be Design & Build with the architects retained, and this increased the Panel's concerns about detailed design and choice of materials. It was agreed that a two storey sample section of the facade would be erected on site, before these were approved.

The design team is working with Hoare Lea to optimise the environmental performance of the buildings. The Panel was informed that the interested hotel group have an excellent document on sustainability which their developments are expected to meet, but unfortunately we did not have sight of this before the meeting.

Crynodeb/Summary

The Panel welcomes the mixed use proposal for a major hotel with a range of ancillary restaurant, conference and possibly small leisure facilities, and the residential element, all of which have underpinned the emergence of a better architectural and urban design scheme for this site. We are not concerned about the extra height and we think that the tower addresses the north/south route better, and generally sits well in the streetscape. We consider this to be an acceptable response to the site and the revised brief, but with some major revisions necessary. In particular:

- We are surprised and concerned at the lack of wind tunnel testing, and we consider that an understanding of the microclimate is a prerequisite for designing good public space.
- The relation between the public realm and highways considerations appear unresolved and we would like to see the Local Authority taking a lead on this. The north/south pedestrian crossing should be as close as possible to the road junction. There should be adequate provision for a taxi rank and for vehicular access into the site, which does not impinge on the quality or integrity of the pavement.
- We welcome the boulevarding of Bute Terrace and the retention of the Barcelona lights, but are unsure as to why the latter should be relocated from the corner.
- We think the podium element works well, but the way in which the residential block relates to it, is unfortunate and needs rethinking. In fact the whole design of the residential block and its choice of materials could be rethought to good effect and to better relate to Alto Lusso and the new hotel.
- We have concerns about the quality of the detailing and the choice of materials, and would like to see these conditioned. Full height sample panels should be erected on site. The glowing butterfly on the top is considered acceptable as a means of completing the tower .
- We are encouraged by the sustainability criteria which the expected hotel developer would require, although we have no details, and we would like to see an energy audit [as recommended in TAN 8] and a full sustainability statement.
- With regard to the Bute Street frontage, ensuring that diners in the first floor restaurant overlook this area should be conditioned and the ground floor made as attractive as possible.

Diwedd/End

NB A Welsh language copy of this report is available upon request.