

Statws/Status:
Cyhoeddus / Public



Adroddiad Adolygu Dylunio: 14 July 2006
Design Review Report:

Dyddiad Cyfarfod / Cyflwyno'r Deunydd: 5 July 2006
Meeting Date / Material Submitted:

Lleoliad/Location: Park Street, Cardiff

Disgrifiad o'r Cynllun Mixed use:
Scheme Description: Office, residential, hotel

Developer/Datblygwr: Parlison Properties
[Andrew McParland]

Pensaer/Architect: PRC Architects
[Steve Crawford]

Ymgynghorwyr Cynllunio: RPS [Peter Waldren]
Planning Consultants:

Awdurdod Cynllunio: Cardiff CC
Planning Authority:

Statws Cynllunio: Applications submitted
Planning Status:

Y Panel Adolygu Dylunio/Design Review Panel:
John Punter (cadeirydd/chair) Ewan Jones
Cindy Harris (swyddog/officer) Phil Roberts
Michael Griffiths Kedrick Davies
Howard Wainwright

Lead Panellist: Howard Wainwright

Sylwedyddion/Observers: Anna Lermon, DCFW

Cyflwyniad/Presentation

These proposals consist of a detailed planning application for a new office block for the Western Mail and Echo, together with an outline application for a residential block and hotel. The brief requires 6,000 square metres of office space at the western end of the site on the corner of Park Street and Scott Road, allowing the newspaper business to continue trading on their current site while redevelopment proceeds. On completion of the new office block, the existing building will be demolished to allow a mixed use development of a 250 bed, 4 star hotel and a 218 unit apartment block. A refurbishment option was examined but rejected, and the company is committed to maintaining a city centre presence.

This is a constrained site in a central location, surrounded by tall buildings and dominated by the Millenium stadium. It adjoins routes which form an important link between the railway station and the stadium, which means congestion and noise on match days. The proposed heights range from 7 storeys for the office block, through 10 storeys for the central residential block, to 14 storeys for the hotel on the eastern corner, fronting Park Street and Havelock Street.

The office building, which is the subject of the only detailed application, will have car parking and reception on the ground floor, and six clear floor plates above. The Park Street/Scott Road corner is chamfered and the main entrance is located on the eastern end of the Park Street facade. Above the entrance canopy a solid stone base is extended the full height of the building on the core, forming an inclined vertical panel bearing the company logo of the dragon. The rest of the facade is lighter in colour and feel with strips of windows and spandrels recessed behind horizontally profiled silver metal cladding. An architectural mesh encloses the ground level parking on Scott Road and it is thought that this could be improved with public art. The plant area on the roof will be screened and ventilated with louvers.

On the central residential block the northern Park Street facade is continuous at 10 storeys, while to the south a central wing separates two courtyards at first floor level which allow some sun and light to the southern facades. The ground floor and basement are devoted to car parking. The flats are all single aspect and accessed by a spinal corridor

The hotel reaches 13 storeys on the corner of Park and Havelock Street. It will not have any parking provision, and will have a small landscaped courtyard on its south western corner. The ground floor of the hotel accommodates a bar, restaurant and reception area to give this important corner some active frontages. The design of the hotel has been undertaken with a particular occupier in mind, which accounts for the rather different and complex pattern of rooms

All vehicular access is from the southern access road. Park Street is treated as a more pedestrian friendly 'Home Zone' and is reduced in width with paved areas, soft landscaping and parking bays. A mix of York stone and Bath stone will be used to define the quality of the external space. Wind tunnel tests have been carried out which show that these proposals do not adversely affect the present state of affairs.

A BREEAM Very Good rating is specified for the office block. Person- and daylight-sensitive lighting will be used and possibly some grey water treatment included. It is hoped that the scheme will help to regenerate this part of the city centre.

Although no local authority representative was present, it was reported that they are content with the mix of uses. There are ongoing discussions concerning affordable housing provision and it is likely that some key worker housing will be provided on site, with the rest off site.

Ymateb y Panel/Panel's Response

After some discussion the Panel agreed that the corner uses as proposed were appropriate. The Panel considered that the proposed massing was too bland and uniform, and did not adequately reflect the variety of the context. It was acknowledged that the outline proposal for the non-office blocks was basically a capacity study, relating to siting, numbers and access, and that the designs were illustrative only. Given that the level of detail on the Park Street elevation did not differ greatly between the blocks, the Panel felt that insufficient design work had been done on the office block.

The Panel did not agree that the proposed treatment of Park Street merited the description of a 'Home Zone' approach. Park Street and Scott Road were potentially hostile environments and the success of any residential use in this area must be problematic. The Panel pointed out that St Davids House to the south was six storeys rather than four, and expressed concern over possible shading of the enclosed courtyards, which might otherwise be a compensating residential amenity. We were told that all the space in St Davids House has just been refurbished and relet and there is therefore no prospect of any immediate change to the south of the site. The Panel considered that the two sites needed to be redeveloped together as a single block so that the whole area could be improved and good quality living and working conditions, and a quality public realm, could be created. We thought that the Planning Authority ought to be more proactive in this regard.

The Panel considered that the whole disposition of the residential accommodation was flawed and that taller, free-standing blocks would create better living conditions and more light on Park Street. The architects remained confident that the courtyards would have sunlight for most of the year and would not be prejudiced by the new building. It was confirmed that wind tunnel testing did not show any adverse effects from this scheme on the current situation.

The Panel observed that the deep plan of the office building would not create comfortable interior spaces, and would make full air conditioning necessary. We suggested that more daylight could be introduced through a central atrium which would also allow natural ventilation, and we would not object if this meant an increase in the building height. Although the compact form of the offices means that capital costs would be lower, the Panel thought that this would be an expensive building to service and maintain. The designers stated that the building form responded directly to the client brief and their functional requirements. The detailed layout of the floor plates has been agreed and suits the client's space planning needs. The blank party wall accommodates functions which require no daylight. The need for the company to continue trading was also a constraint, in terms of the site and space available for the new building.

Nevertheless, the Panel thought that the design conflicted with the aspirations for sustainability and would detract from the environmental performance of the building.

The blank wall would not save energy as claimed but would be energy intensive in terms of heating, cooling and lighting. In addition, we felt that the single aspect, north facing apartments would not provide attractive living spaces, and these should be made dual aspect if possible. If the blocks were made higher and the slab-like massing was broken up, this would allow greater permeability, better solar access and rights to light. Ideally, we would like to see a single heating/cooling system for the whole site with the infrastructure installed at an early stage, but the developer was reluctant to consider this.

The Panel found the facade treatment of the office block, as drawn, to be lacking in simplicity and elegance with too much horizontal emphasis. A more straightforward approach, with a robust contemporary building using modern materials, would work better. A more open and dynamic frontage would be more compatible with the nature of the client's business. The expression of the stone plinth is compromised by the large openings and there is an awkward relationship between the main entrance and the chamfered corner. We thought that relocating the entrance and /or reception area to the north west corner would improve the vitality of both Park Street and Scott Road and give them both a focus.

The long blank facade along Scott Road in particular, especially the 'dead' ground floor, makes a difficult environment even more unattractive. The Panel thought that the proposal for public art was poor compensation for the lack of a convincing approach to street frontages, and that more could be done to make the offices interact with the street with visible ground floor uses.

The Panel also objected to car parking grilles all across the ground floor of the residential block on Park Street, which makes this facade particularly oppressive with an entirely dead frontage at street level. While acknowledging that retail uses in this location were not feasible, we thought it might nevertheless be possible to create B1 office uses on the first two floors of the residential blocks. This would create more opportunity for modelling and breaking up the massing, and creating a safer street. Although the developer was sceptical about the possibilities for vertical integration of residential with office use, it was accepted that there are more examples of hotel and residential uses being successfully combined (eg Greyfriars Road), and this would be another option.

Crynodeb/Summary

The Panel welcomed the opportunity to review these proposals, and the intention of the newspaper company to retain their city centre site. We understand the difficulty of developing this site and the constraints arising from the need to continue trading, and from the missed opportunity to include St Davids House in the redevelopment. However, we consider these proposals to be an unacceptable response to the site and the brief, and to make insufficient contribution to the improvement of the environment of the city centre. In particular:

- We have grave concerns about the quality of the architectural treatment and the claims of sustainable development.
- The slab-like massing of the residential should be broken up to increase light and liveability, and provide more variety of aspect and better amenities. We would consider taller tower blocks acceptable.

- The facade treatment to both Park Street and Scott Road needs rethinking. We think the entrance to the offices should be located on the corner to give visibility down both streets.
- The buildings should enhance the vitality and safety of Park Street and then the improved street landscaping would be worthwhile. Active frontages should be sought on the ground floor through the inclusion of a mix of uses and the hiding of all car parking..
- We think the internal environments within the office and the apartment blocks are unlikely to be of a high quality. Single aspect, north facing apartments are unacceptable in this location
- We are not convinced that the rear courtyards will function well as attractive amenity areas, or admit enough light or provide an attractive aspect for residents.

Diwedd/End

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