

Statws/Status:
Cyhoeddus / Public



Adroddiad Adolygu Dylunio: 27 October 2006
Design Review Report:

Dyddiad Cyfarfod / Cyflwyno'r Deunydd: 18 October 2006
Meeting Date / Material Submitted:

Lleoliad/Location: Central Hotel, Cardiff

Disgrifiad o'r Cynllun Office and retail
Scheme Description:

Developer/Datblygwr:

Pensaer/Architect: John F Evans Partnership
[Steve Bowles]

Awdurdod Cynllunio: Cardiff CC
Planning Authority:

Statws Cynllunio: Planning application
Planning Status: submitted Sept 2006

Y Panel Adolygu Dylunio/Design Review Panel:
Wendy Richards (cadeirydd/chair) Ann-Marie Smale
Cindy Harris (swyddog/officer) Elfed Roberts
Charlie Deng [swyddog/officer] Mike Biddulph
Douglas Hogg

Sylwedyddion/Observers: James White, DCFW

Cyflwyniad/Presentation

Proposals for this site were reviewed by the Design Review Panel in March and May 2005 and these subsequently received planning permission. This scheme from a new developer and designer retains the Sports Cafe use on ground and first floor, but replaces 7 floors of residential apartments with 9 floors of office accommodation [5600m³]. There is a perceived lack of Grade A office accommodation in Cardiff which this proposal seeks to address.

The building footprint extends to the site boundary but is symmetrical for economical construction. Floors 2 to 7 occupy the maximum area and subsequent floors are stepped up towards a glazed cylindrical tower at the front. Ground and first floor facades are fully glazed. External façade materials are large format ceramic granite tiles. Windows are powder coated aluminium. The south elevation and top floor will have functional brises-soleil. The construction will be pre-fabricated modular panels ensuring an efficient, air-tight and well insulated envelope.

The public realm will be improved by re-levelling the area outside the office entrance, bounded by the railway bridge and St Mary St, so that it can be re-paved and planted.

Ymateb y Panel/Panel's Response

The site of the former Central Hotel is a key site in the city, at a major road junction and terminating several key vistas. As such, the Panel considered that a tall building would be appropriate providing that it had an elegant profile and very high quality materials and detailing. We thought that this proposal appeared too dumpy, and the building could easily be taller, with the rotunda building up to a focal point. Above all, we would like to see some evidence of its response to this particular city centre location and to the conservation area which it adjoins.

The Panel regretted the lack of any contextual analysis and thought that this should have been included in the planning application for this landmark site. We also had serious concerns at the absence of any structural or planning grid, which should be an early element of the design and used to inform the elevations and fenestration, internal layout, and the size and location of the core. No internal layouts were provided and there were no details of proposed subdivisions. We enquired about the future adaptability of the Sports Cafe. There was no general cost in £/m² available.

The Panel commented that the curved facade on such a prominent frontage as shown would need to be built as a genuine curve and not faceted. We would like to see the extent of signage conditioned in any planning approval. We thought that the vertical slots were competing with the curved facade.

The Panel was concerned about the building's relationship with the street. The entrance to the office accommodation is not sufficiently prominent and this will affect its commercial viability as well as the street scene. The building appears to 'bleed away' from the junction rather than addressing it. We would like to see more curved, enclosing and sheltered spaces created, although we were informed that a contractual agreement with the Sports Cafe necessitated retaining the previous form. We thought that the planned area of public space to the east of the site on St

Mary Street would not benefit from good environmental conditions. In particular, we would like to see the results of a wind study test. Any public art provision should be integrated into the fabric of the building, rather than displayed as isolated works.

The Panel was informed that the off site manufacture would reduce construction waste, and would deliver levels of insulation and energy conservation above Building Regulations. An electrical heating system would be installed together with mixed mode cooling / ventilation. We had severe doubts as to whether the proposed fire escape strategy was workable or acceptable. If external fire stairs are needed this will have a fundamental effect on the design.

Crynodeb/Summary

The Panel was pleased to have the opportunity to review further proposals for this important city centre site, although we regretted the absence of the Local Authority. However, we were extremely concerned at the lack of relevant information in the presentation to the Panel and in the planning application, and we consider this to be an unacceptable response to the site and the context. In particular:

- A building on this key site needs an elegant profile and a high quality of materials and detailing
- Any curved facade shown on the plan needs to be built as a genuine curve.
- We think the plant tower is too prominent and appears to tower over the glazed rotunda
- The entrance to the offices should be an attraction in its own right.
- The proposals should include the creation of a functional and attractive public open space.
- We would like to see a more coherent sustainability strategy which avoids electric heating and minimises air conditioning.
- We think that the lack of vital design information [eg structural grid, viable fire escapes] severely compromises the realisation of a quality office building, which will achieve its commercial objectives as well as its civic responsibility for high quality sustainable design.

Diwedd/End

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