

Statws/Status:

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DESIGN
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CYMRU

Adroddiad Adolygu Dylunio: Design Review Report:	21 September 2007
Dyddiad Cyfarfod / Cyflwyno'r Deunydd: Meeting Date / Material Submitted:	12 September 2007
Lleoliad/Location:	Wood Street Cardiff
Disgrifiad o'r Cynllun Scheme Description:	Residential / hotel / retail
Cleient/Asiant: Client/Agent:	Urban Solutions [Cardiff] Ltd [Richard Selby]
Developer/Datblygwr:	As above
Pensaer/Architect:	Charter Architects [Christopher Littlemore] Urban Sense Architects [Vesna Bostandzic]
Cynllunio / Consultants:	Hoare Lea [Wynne Harris] Arup [Tim Bennett]
Awdurdod Cynllunio: Planning Authority:	Cardiff CC [Nigel Hanson]
Statws Cynllunio: Planning Status:	New planning application submitted Jull 2007
Y Panel Adolygu Dylunio/ Design Review Panel:	

Alan Francis (cadeirydd/chair)
Cindy Harris (swyddog/officer)
Ann-Marie Smale

Kedrick Davies
Martin Knight
Mike Biddulph

Lead Panellist:

Martin Knight

Sylwedyddion/Observers:

Timothy Cantrell
SW England Design Review Panel

Cyflwyniad/Presentation

Proposals for this city centre site have been reviewed previously by DCFW in December 2003, May 2005 and March 2006. The present developers were in partnership with Laing O'Rourke but this partnership was dissolved six months ago and Urban Solutions have secured funding for the scheme based on the extant consent. The recent discovery of a buried copper cable on the site stopped enabling works temporarily, but arrangements have now been made to have this removed and relocated. The developers have recently become aware of an emerging demand for extended stay hotels, and this function has now been included. Block A now comprises a 105 room hotel with residential above and is 22 storeys overall. A new planning application has been submitted and the developers are anxious to start on site as soon as possible.

Key views have always been recognised as an important tool to test the proposed form and massing. The slender elegant form of the 32 storey focal tower remains and terminates views along the river. Noise abatement is also an issue and has been addressed in the design. Block A opens up completely to the south and the raised gardens, and serves to shield this residential amenity from traffic and stadium noise. Fenestration sizes increase as the block rises away from noise sources. There is a clear separation of public and private space.

At street level, the scheme reinforces links between Millennium Plaza and Central Plaza with active uses along Wood Street. Ground floor retail units frame the public space and unite the blocks. The southern edge however, facing the station car park, remains closed at ground level.

The Local Authority representative welcomed the extension of use to include a long-stay hotel. They broadly support this application but have some reservations about the resolution of the eastern elevation, and the treatment of the top floors of Block A.

Ymateb y Panel/Panel's Response

The Panel began by emphasising the importance of this central site, which will be the first manifestation of the city to be seen on any approach, by road, rail or air. In addition the immediate local impact of the development will be very significant. However, we are convinced that this is the right location for a tall building, and a high density, mixed use scheme.

With regard to the focal tower, the Panel was content with the way the design development has progressed, and reassured that it has not changed. However, its quality will depend on immaculate execution and we were doubtful whether a D&B procurement route was the best way to achieve this. The Panel stated that achieving the highest quality of detail in the tower's glazed skin was critical. We suggested that a tapered floor system should be used to avoid the appearance of horizontal bands in the fully glazed elevation and the team agreed to consider this.

The Panel had greater concerns over the revisions to Block A, which will be the second tallest building in the city, and is also very wide. The bulk of the block and the rather clumsy resolution undermines the elegance of the tower and we do not think the two buildings work well together on the site. The Panel considered that the resolution of Block A was less successful than previously, partly because there is now less order to the fenestration, so it appears monolithic and reads as a single element; and partly because the effect of render taken round corners is to increase the appearance of bulkiness. We thought that the northern elevation was especially dominant, and appeared to turn its back on the city centre and stadium.

With regard to our comment in the Design Review report of March 2006, that 'there should be greater differentiation between the two lower blocks, and between them and the needle', the Panel judged that this had not been achieved, and that there is now less differentiation [due to the removal of the step at roof level] and less sense that Block A forms part of a hierarchy of smaller buildings.

The Panel enquired about microclimatic studies and was told that the wind tunnel testing done for the previous scheme still applies and was deemed acceptable. It was acknowledged that Block A will cast long shadows over Wood Street and the area to the north, but the team stated that this was inevitable with a development of any substantial size, and that shadowing would be negligible on Millennium Plaza. The Panel thought that schemes of this size and significance should be accompanied by a physical model which would allow the scale and massing of the development to be fully understood within its context.

The Panel was informed that 190 parking spaces will be provided on 4 levels, including a partial basement, with two car lifts. There is no parking allocation for the hotel.

The Panel understood that restrictions required for crowd control included a split level pavement and this restricted the size of retail units. We acknowledged that the hotel and retail use would help control the illegal parking that can occur on the approach to the station during busy times, although the issue of drop-off at the hotel might need attention. The Panel also welcomed the mix of uses and the reassurances given about the vitality of retail uses in this location.

The Panel expressed disappointment that there was no aspiration to achieve the highest environmental performance. Currently the aim is to achieve BREEAM Very Good. The team stressed the marginal viability of the development and indicated the sustainability gains already arising from efficient heating, solar orientation and the use of IES thermal modelling. The Panel queried the viability of achieving the illustrated scale of mature trees and planting in a soil depth of 600mm, but was assured by the design team that it was viable.

The Panel advised that materials at street level should be robust and that the proposed render system may be too fragile. The detailing of the podium soffit treatment should ensure a good quality finish. It was confirmed that servicing arrangements were unchanged and the Panel queried whether there was sufficient space allowed for the servicing of the hotel.

Crynodb/Summary

The Panel was concerned about the possible effect of this precedent on subsequent development, and we would like to see a tall buildings policy for Cardiff. However, we support the proposed use on this site, the density and the design of the tall tower. We consider that minor but important issues remain to be resolved:

- The quality and the detail of the tower design must be protected through all stages of the procurement process.
- Our greatest concern is with the massing of Block A and the treatment of the northern elevation. The success of the whole scheme will depend on the successful resolution of Block A, but the new fenestration pattern and main corners returned in render are a deterioration in quality.
- Block A no longer reads as two blocks, but as a single element. There is now less differentiation between the two lower blocks and between them and the tower, than there was previously.

- We regret that a higher environmental standard cannot be achieved, although we understand the financial pressures on the scheme.

Diwedd/End

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