

Addroddiad Adolygu Dylunio Design Review Report

Review Status: **Public**

Meeting date:	18th February 2009
Issue Date:	3rd March 2009
Scheme Location:	Capital Quarter, Tyndall Street, Cardiff
Scheme Description:	Mixed use
Planning Status:	Outline application submitted December 2008.

Part1: Presentation

An outline application for this site was reviewed by DCFW's Internal Panel in May 2006 and received a resolution to grant consent in July 2007, pending Section 106 agreements. The site was bought by a new developer, J R Smart, in January 2008, who has appointed a new team and changed the brief. Residential use has been omitted and office use increased. Two hotels, student accommodation, a residential care home and a multi-storey car park have been added. The proposed height and massing are broadly consistent with the previous approval.

It is intended that end uses will be flexible and the site layout follows a 'campus' style approach, with blocks set around two courtyards. BREEAM Excellent will be the target for environmental performance. This proposal will deliver part of the north/south link between the Bay and the city. There will be improvements to Tyndall St, removing parking spaces and creating a crossing point.

The Local Authority is broadly supportive and regards the interchange and linkages with adjacent sites as critical. It was confirmed that there will be a separate detailed application for each plot.

Summary of key points arising from discussion, to be read in conjunction with Part 2 of this report.

The Panel was pleased to review this important application and appreciated the need for maximum flexibility in the current economic climate. However, this proposal does not demonstrate a high quality of site planning or urban design and aspects of it are unacceptable. In summary:

- We would like to see a development framework prepared for the site with an urban design, public realm and landscape strategy used to inform the site layout.
- We broadly support the proposed uses although we have some reservations about the juxtaposition of student accommodation with 'city living for the elderly' and doubt the suitability of the site for the latter use.
- We support the principle of the pedestrian link between the public spaces preferably reinforced with active frontage at ground level.
- The 'garden squares' should be the subject of a more detailed microclimatic study, to ensure that they can be delivered as attractive and usable public spaces. How each building will enclose and address these squares in order to reinforce their use and sociability needs more thought.
- The landscape strategy should differentiate the uses and treatment of the two squares, and reduce the areas of 'left over' space, particularly along the service road leading to the hotels and multi-storey car park.
- A hierarchy of routes should be apparent. The wide swathe of the estate road needs tightening and better integration into the spaces.
- We would support the development of a meaningful Design Code, to establish a 'family' of buildings and materials, and to ensure some design consistency over what might be a significant time period.
- There should be a firm commitment to achieve BREEAM Excellent. Sustainability considerations should inform the site planning, building form and orientation, and infrastructure works.
- There is no service yard shown for the hotel to the west and the service yard for the 'central' hotel conflicts with its main entrance.
- A large proportion of rooms in the student and elderly accommodation blocks face North.
- The pedestrian bridge ramps are shown with an unacceptable gradient and the design solution wastes valuable space. The pedestrian route connecting to the bridge is well treated, but it requires a pedestrian crossing to allow it to continue south towards the feeder canal.
- We are pleased to note that separate detailed planning applications will be made for each site, which would provide the opportunity for assessing the proposal against both development framework and design code.

Part 2: Discussion and Panel Response in Full

The level of detail shown in the presentation material appears inconsistent with an outline planning application and the desired flexibility of end uses. We understand that this is the result of discussions with land agents and designed to attract particular end users. However, there is a danger that what is shown here will be translated literally into building designs. There is too much detail to be ignored at this stage, but not enough to be convincing. In particular, arrangements for access and servicing are inadequately dealt with. We think that design should always reflect function, and the final scheme should incorporate a greater variety of treatment, depending on the end use.

The purpose of an outline application for this site should be to set parameters within which development can take place, identifying key elements such as connectivity, public space and street frontages. A properly developed design code might be useful in this context but

that was not what was presented here. Such a code would deal with the use and management of the site, public realm design, volumetric elements and principles that inform the architectural solution. It should not simply be an architectural vocabulary.

In general the site layout and indicative designs lack definition, clarity and articulation. We were told that desktop wind and shadowing studies had been carried out and their findings incorporated, but we were not convinced that the courtyards shown would have a good microclimate to support activity. The different character of the residential and commercial courtyards should be apparent in the plan.

We regret the lack of any landscape strategy to date. There is currently no clear division of public and private areas, or of fronts and backs of buildings. There appears to be a lot of 'left over' space - eg round the estate road; between the office and hotel; and where the bridge ramps hit the ground. The roads are not well integrated with the public realm, and there is no hierarchy of routes which would help legibility and improve pedestrian movement. In particular, the buildings fronting the estate road need to better address and contain the road and provide natural surveillance.

The target of BREEAM Excellent should be made a firm commitment. There is no evidence that sustainability issues have influenced site planning or building design. The presentation material provides a discussion of various sustainability and renewable technology measures, but it is important that decisions are made and a detailed sustainability strategy adopted as soon as possible. In particular, it would be desirable to include installation of a district heating system in the infrastructural works, and we note that consultations have been held with Viridor concerning the possible supply of waste heat from their proposed incineration facility on the Bay.

We support the idea of a north/south, pedestrian/cycle route between the city and the Bay, and appreciate that the proposed footbridge will be an essential part of this. Much more work is needed to develop the various linkages into a continuous route, including a pedestrian/cycle crossing on Tyndall Street. The footbridge itself needs to meet the requirements of BD 2904, rather than the Building Regulations. Transport for London's Inclusive Mobility Guide is also relevant and widely used across the UK. The proposed 1:6 ramps are not acceptable over such long distances. These should be a minimum of 1:12 with frequent intermediate landings

The Design Commission for Wales Design Review Panel and staff welcome further consultation and will be happy to provide further feedback on this report and/or where appropriate, to receive further presentations. Thank you for consulting the Commission and please keep in touch with us about the progress of your project.

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

Appendix 1: Attendees

Asiant/Client/Datblygwr:

JR Smart [Alex Smart]

Agent/Client/Developer

Pensaer/Architect:

M2H Architects [Rhodri Morgan,
Gareth Brown]

Consultants:

n/a

Awdurdod Cynllunio/
Planning Authority

Cardiff City Council

Y Panel Adlygu Dylunio:

Design review panel:

John Punter [Chair]

Cindy Harris [Officer]

Lynne Sullivan

Ewan Jones

Steve Smith

Jonathan Adams

Roger Ayton

Lead Panellist:

Ewan Jones

Sylwedyddion/Observers:

Roisin Willmott [RTPI]

Simon Carne [DCFW Panellist]

Nia Morgan [DCFW student placement]