

Addroddiad Adolygu Dylunio Design Review Report

Review Status: **Confidential**

Meeting date:	14th October 2009
Issue Date:	28th October 2009
Scheme Location:	Maindy Road, Cardiff
Scheme Description:	University campus
Planning Status:	Pre-application

Part1: Presentation

Cardiff University is embarking on a new phase of physical expansion and has acquired a site close to the existing campus at Maindy which it intends to develop as a centre for teaching and particularly postgraduate research. The derelict site is former railway land, and needs redevelopment. A capacity study prepared by the School of Architecture concluded that accommodation of 60,000 m² could be accommodated, in a phased development over 15-20 years. The team stated that the documents presented should be regarded as work in progress, and they were keen to engage in dialogue with the Commission.

The site location is highly accessible with good public transport connections, although the railway line to the west is a barrier to all east-west movement. All development will be required to achieve a BREEAM Excellent standard with passive environmental controls maximised. A low carbon energy centre is proposed to serve all phases, and most spaces will be naturally ventilated. Acoustic protection from the railway will be required, with a double skin facade proposed on this frontage.

Following consultation with residents who live on the eastern edge of the site, the team has developed a site layout option showing two courtyards on Maindy Road. The height of the blocks steps down from six storeys on the railway edge, to two storeys facing existing residential properties on Maindy Road to protect residents amenity.

The Local Authority welcomes this design approach and the consultation with Maindy Road residents, and considers this a good location for campus expansion. The proposed footbridge across the railway will need to be completed at an early stage. Its precise location and the degree of public access to this bridge require further consideration.

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

The Panel welcomed the opportunity to comment on this scheme, but our comments would probably have been more useful at an earlier stage of project development. We fully appreciate the need for long term phasing of development and flexibility within the masterplan. Nevertheless, we are unable to support an imminent outline application based on the material presented here. A planning application in the near future would be premature, without resolving the following crucial issues:

- The character and quality of the public realm treatment on the site need to be more firmly fixed, and the desired form and character agreed for the four main public spaces proposed.
- A strategy for improving connectivity across the site needs to be developed, and across the railway line to the existing university campus. We think that a second footbridge to the north is essential for this, providing a better link for the residents of Maindy to Bute Park and better access to the campus buildings to the west of the railway, especially for those students in the residences to the north.
- Both the above will need to be informed by a solid, evidence-based movement strategy which sets out a clear hierarchy of routes.
- The massing of the blocks should be reconsidered. While we welcome the low rise development on Maindy Road, especially the boulevarding of the street and its green courtyards, the unbroken six storey façade to the south west would be overbearing from the perspective of train passengers and those using the campus buildings to the west, and would create a canyon effect. The Panel is not convinced about the deliverability of a single structure with an internal linear atrium, especially given the uncertainties over future users and funding.
- More information is needed on the microclimatic conditions in different parts of the site, including wind, daylight, shading, and the effect of these on likely patterns of use.
- The linear park to the north needs a more imaginative solution and should provide amenity space for students in accommodation blocks to the north, as well as those working on the new campus.
- We welcome the BREEAM Excellent target and the site specific energy strategy but we advised that the long south west facing frontage would be difficult to shade adequately.
- A strategy for interim uses which does not prejudice future development, should be an integral part of the programme.
- A mechanism for updating the masterplan as each Phase is commenced should be agreed and conditioned as part of any outline permission, together with a plan for its long term stewardship.
- The planning use classification [B1 / C1] needs defining as this will affect future decisions, including connectivity and parking provision.

Part 2: Discussion and Panel Response in Full

The Panel questioned whether the decision to submit an outline planning application was appropriate for a scheme of this size and length of phasing, especially given uncertainties

over funding. We understood the client requirement to maximise flexibility and provide a degree of certainty for external funders. However, we think there is insufficient information currently on the proposed access, servicing, car parking and pedestrian movement, for an outline application of this scale. It was agreed that the first stage would be to produce an indicative masterplan, which would confirm a more precise strategy for the public realm as a given for further development. We suggested that the Local Authority might impose a condition that the masterplan would be revisited and revised at the commencement of each Phase, as each new building is proposed and seeks detailed planning permission.

The public realm and landscape strategy need further development, and it was agreed that active frontages and building entrance locations need to be more clearly identified and defined. More than that, it is important that the University is seen to be reaching out to the City and providing an increased level of amenity on and around the site. The access corridor to the bridge and Bridge Plaza both need to be welcoming active spaces to encourage a high level of daytime and evening use, especially if other parts of the Maindy campus are to be made more secure and private. More well designed campus precedents, such as the BBC White City, should be used for inspiration. The ongoing changes to the alignment and form of the pedestrian bridge were considered to be positive.

We were informed that an evidence-based movement framework study is being prepared to focus particularly on pedestrian movement. This will establish a hierarchy of routes and help define public, semi-public and private spaces, as well as setting the scene for more detailed decisions concerning servicing and circulation. Parking levels are still to be determined but the Local Authority will be looking for low levels, given the public transport connections. The rear access road will have a minimum width compatible with servicing and deliveries. All these aspects will need to be redefined in the light of the movement study.

It was noted that car parking is proposed beneath the buildings along the railway, although this is not shown on the sketch elevations or sections. This would mean that vehicular access would penetrate right across the site and this raised concerns about the management of such traffic. Furthermore, the ground floors of the buildings alongside the railway would be parking and servicing uses, and this had implications for the design and the level of the proposed internal streets within these buildings parallel to the railway.

The Panel acknowledged that the site layout is constrained by the railway line which runs along the south western boundary. We questioned the design response of a continuous defensive frontage which, given its orientation, will probably be dominated by solar shading devices. It was suggested that this facade could be relieved with some taller and some lower blocks to allow for more visual connections, more variety of form and better daylight and sunlight access to the proposed spaces. The 'internal street' could be moved to the railway edge above the access road, to give a greater degree of transparency and mirror the student activity on the other side of the railway line. The appearance of this frontage from passing trains should be more fully considered. The Panel had doubts about the deliverability of a single, internally connected block given the uncertainties over potential occupants, partners and funding.

The railway line also serves to reinforce the remoteness of the site and the lack of natural linkages. Ideally we think there should be a second bridge over the railway, located to the

north west of the site and providing a more direct link to Bute Park and the northern end of the campus for staff, students and residents alike.

We noted that the linear park to the north had no clear function and appeared to be 'left over' land, in the most remote part of the site where there would be little natural surveillance. While we understood that this campus would probably be mostly used by post-graduate research students, it is important that this area is well integrated into the overall site plan and landscape strategy, is well overlooked and has a clear function.

The Panel understood the need for phasing of development and considered that a phasing plan should form part of the application. We agreed with the design team that interim uses for undeveloped parts of the site should be developed as part of the overall programme. We supported the suggestion of a tree nursery as an appropriate and beneficial use, and thought that recreational facilities might be provided for staff/student use in the form of grass or dry play pitches or courts. It is important that permanent Use Class[es] for the site are defined as the research function does not clearly belong to either education or commercial office uses. Planning for connectivity, access, car parking and other issues must be considered in the context of the formal Use Class.

The Panel supported the commitment to achieve BREEAM Excellent for all buildings on site and confirmed that this was a funding requirement. The low carbon energy centre and site-wide distribution network will be an efficient means of energy delivery, and we would like to see a low carbon fuel used for energy generation. A biomass boiler, which needs a constant load, may be difficult to match with the phased nature of development.

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:
Agent/Client/Developer

Cardiff University [Stephen DurrIDGE,
Ian Lomer]

Pensaer/Architect:

Powell Dobson Architects [Jeff Tucker,
Martin Sullivan]

Consultants:

Nick Dixon [Peter Brett Associates]

Awdurdod Cynllunio/
Planning Authority

Cardiff CC [Norman Howlett]

Y Panel Adlygu Dylunio:

Design review panel:

John Punter [Chair]

Cindy Harris [Officer]

Glen Dyke

Lynne Sullivan

Martin Knight

Steve Smith

Lead Panellist:

Martin Knight

Sylwedyddion/Observers:

Toby Adam [DCFW]

Chris Jones [DCFW]

Declarations of Interest: John Punter stated that he is employed by the University of Cardiff

Glen Dyke stated that he is employed by Davis Langdon