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Design Review Report

The Ledger, Central Quay,
Cardiff

DCFW Ref: N157

Meeting of 18th January 2018



Review Status

Meeting date

Issue date

Scheme location

Scheme description

Scheme reference number

Planning status

CONFIDENTIAL

18th January 2018

30th January 2018

Cardiff

Office, car park & associated public realm

N157

Pre-application

Declarations of Interest

Panel members, observers and other relevant parties are required to declare *in advance* any interests they may have in relation to the Design Review Agenda items. Any such declarations are recorded here and in DCFW's central records.

Jamie Yeoman is an architect at Rio Architects and attended in this capacity. He is also a serving panellist for DCFW's design review panel. DCFW had previously organised a design charrette to explore the future potential development. All present were content to proceed following this declaration.

Consultations to Date

Although no formal consultation has been undertaken regarding this specific phase, the wider Central Quay masterplan was presented to DCFW's Design Review in February 2017. DCFW also facilitated a design charrette in relation to the future development of Central Quay on behalf of the developer in July 2018 which was accompanied by a report.

The Proposals

The proposal comprises two structures, the Ledger Building and a multi storey car park, with associated public realm.

The Ledger Building consists primarily of office accommodation with some ancillary uses. A large public square is included in the proposals linking the Ledger building to the rear entrance of Cardiff Central Station and potential future metro stop.

The multi storey car park will include taxi drop off and pick up points on the ground floor as well as a unit of retail. The adjacent street will contain four coach bays.

Main Points

DCFW remains supportive of the aspiration to deliver a high quality mixed use neighbourhood at Central Quay. Phase 1 of this neighbourhood must set the high standard expected of following phases and engagement with DCFW through design review is welcomed. The discussion around phase 1 of Central Quay highlights some

weaknesses in the masterplan which should be resolved at this stage to protect and ensure delivery of the aspiration.

The following points summarise key issues arising from the review and should be considered to inform any further work ahead of a planning application being submitted:

Setting the standard

As highlighted in the review, the Ledger is the catalyst building for Central Quay and should set a high-quality precedent for the rest of the development. However, the car park building should not be considered secondary to the Ledger building, indeed it is on the edge and arrival point of Central Quay from much of the city and has an important elevation onto Penarth Road. Therefore, it will equally contribute to setting the tone and quality for delivery of the remainder of the Central Quay masterplan. The cladding should be distinctive but timeless, so as not become a victim to passing fashions. Despite the focus on the Ledger building as the 'catalyst', the car park building should not be value engineered to a lesser quality at delivery stage.

Movement and legibility

Multiple transport modes and active travel provision are included within this phase, which results in the public realm acting as a multi-modal interchange. The car park will become the primary taxi drop off and pick up location for Cardiff Central Station, in addition to private vehicle drop-off, coach, active travel and possible Metro movements. This, therefore, requires the design of the public realm to accommodate various desire lines, whilst carefully considering the complex legibility and safety requirements of a multi-modal transport environment. These movements must be integrated into the public realm design.

At present the size of the plot is constraining the public realm, which must accommodate these various transport modes. The coach stops to the west of the car park create a narrow pedestrian route which must be used to access the cycle hub of the Ledger building. The scale and feel of this environment to a pedestrian should be given further consideration. It will be important to consider the volume of pedestrian movement anticipated in the public realm to ensure adequate space provision is made.

Legibility of the routes will not only encourage safe and easy interchange for passengers, but will also avoid the need for large amounts of signage. A full understanding of all signage requirements to facilitate the proper navigation of this area is required and should be built into public realm proposals to avoid it becoming a cluttered environment. The sense of arrival from the station must be positive and easy to navigate by all users.

The potential for the ground floor vehicular area of the car park to be treated as properly designed public realm should be explored. The layout of this space should allow for compact vehicle circulation to maximise the potential for a good pedestrian environment.

The activation of the ground floor with the inclusion of a Metro supermarket is positive but it did not appear in the computer generated images. This unit must provide a genuine contribution to the street scene by anchoring the building with an active ground floor use.

Public realm

A public realm strategy to accompany the masterplan would underpin and provide clarity on the primary function and character of the various public spaces and squares, including the Station Plaza and second square included within this phase.

Consideration should be given to the activation of the large Station Plaza and the various desire lines and entrances to both the office foyer and separate Marketplace entrance that it must accommodate.

Crawshay Street has been identified as a key movement route into the site for pedestrians and cyclists. However, the car parking proposed for the retained residential terrace will create a large, hard landscape with resulting pinch points along the active travel route. Opportunities to create a softer shared surface parking solution should be considered to create a more pedestrian friendly environment along this key route. This is especially important given the lack of activity at this elevation of both the car park building and Ledger building. The plans submitted provide no indication of the relationship of curtilages to these properties and whether the proposed public realm proposals adequately address this issue.

The road between the Ledger building and the car park was illustrated with street trees in both the fly through model and perspective views, but did not appear in the plan information. It is unclear whether this is a result of design development because the space is now too constrained to permit tree planting to occur. The importance of street trees within this road should be defined by the framework masterplan.

The experience and quality of the public realm should be explored and demonstrated through human scale pedestrian perspective views.

Servicing and plant accommodation

The front and backs of the buildings do not feel fully resolved. The masterplan fails to identify a coherent street hierarchy, which has resulted in key routes being fronted by service and plant accommodation rather than active uses. The lessons learnt from testing this plot should be used to improve the block layout within the overall masterplan. The masterplan should allow for a primary, secondary and possibly tertiary movement network. This should allow for a proper servicing of urban blocks within the masterplan, which are distinct from primary movement/access corridors, allowing for proper ground floor activation on primary and secondary routes.

The space between the coach bays and the Ledger building is a particular concern as people will be waiting and arriving into this space which is not active at ground floor and will have the noise of coaches and plant.

Mix of uses

The mix of uses within the Ledger Building will help to create vibrancy within the first phase. The overall mix of uses is different to that initially set out in the masterplan and, while flexibility is required to react to the market, changes to one plot could impact adjacent plots and indeed the wider masterplan. Therefore a review of the masterplan is required when these changes are made.

Roofscape

The use of green roofs across the Central Quay masterplan is encouraged, however it is notable that the roofscape of the proposed car park neglects to include any innovative roof uses. This hard vehicle heavy environment will be visible from many of the upper storeys of the proposed Ledger building, resulting in a negative impact on the accommodation along the east elevation.

Consideration could be given to alternative uses and/or treatment of the top deck of the car park as well as lighting which should not comprise column lighting, which would be inappropriate in this urban setting. The design of lighting in the car park was also discussed and its relationship to the permeability of the building envelope. The context of this building during the hours of darkness and its relationship to the wider lighting strategy of the site needs to be considered.

Well-being and environment

The diversity of function and accommodation within the Ledger buildings will positively contribute to the well-being of the users of the building. Innovation in vehicle technology, such as electric and self-driving vehicles, should be considered when designing flexibility into the car park accommodation. The concept of well-being and environmental sustainability should be explored further to ensure the buildings are future proofed and set a high standard for the remainder of Central Quay.

Orientation

The outdoor eating area associated with the Ledger building generally faces north-west, and whilst it is appreciated that this area affords a view towards the former Brains building and chimney, this substantial outdoor space would be unlikely to receive any significant sunshine. Insufficient time and detail was afforded to review of the sun-pass diagrams provided and more work is required to demonstrate that this important area would be comfortable during the day.

Massing

The massing of the Ledger building and its subdivision into three off set portions generates an attractive building concept enhanced by the terrace and datum on the first floor. Care should be taken in establishing the relationship between this and future plots and spaces. Cross sections would have helped us to understand the relationship between proposed buildings and existing buildings and adjoining spaces. The issue of scale of spaces and massing will be a very important component in securing a proper urban environment.

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

Attendees

Agent/Client/Developer:	Jason Hyett - Rightacres
Architect/Consultants:	John Evans – Jaylea Jamie Webb – Benoy Richard Roberts, Chris Taylor, Jamie Yeoman – Rio Nigel Hanson – Urban Prospects David Finch – Churchman Matthew Williams – Mc Cann Chris Evans – Vectos John Cottrell – Lichfield
Local Planning Authority:	-
Design Review Panel:	
Chair	Jen Heal, Design Advisor, DCFW
Lead Panellist	Alister Kratt Martin Knight Mark Lawton Carole-Anne Davies, Chief Executive, DCFW Amanda Spence, Design Advisor, DCFW Wendy Maden, Design Research Assistant, DCFW
Observers:	Rhian Haf Richard James, Karen Bolton, Dai Griffiths, Rhodri Llyr Bevan - PCNPA