

Status:

Public



Design Review Report: 21 January 2005
Meeting Date / Material Submitted: 12 January 2005
Location: Adam St, Cardiff
Scheme Description: High rise residential block
Architect: David Preece
Consultants: Hyder Consulting: Matt Thomas
Sinewave NMD: David Pring
Building Energy Partnership:
Peter Robson
Client: Amodeo Holdings Ltd:
Salvatore Amodeo
Planning Authority: Cardiff City Council:
Helen Hodgson
Planning Status: Outline application submitted
Date for detailed application (if known): Not known

Design Review Panel:
Alan Francis (chair) Nick Davies
Cindy Harris (officer) Jonathan Adams
Richard Parnaby Douglas Hogg
Phil Roberts Kieren Morgan

Observers: Gillian Wulff
Peter Roberts

Presentation

The site is at present occupied by dilapidated depot buildings. This development is intended to support the move towards repopulating city centres by providing accommodation at the upper end of the market. Its neighbour to the east is the TA building adjacent to Morgan St; to the west are several recently completed or imminent high rise buildings including Altolusso, the student accommodation on Pellet Street and the new Meridian Gate development.

In this context, the designer's claim that the proposal for a 26 storey block is considered appropriate. The block is based on a cruciform plan. There will be two storeys of car parking (150 spaces at a ratio of 1:1), with the lower floor at semi-basement level, and two floors of amenity space (dance studio/gym). The remaining floors will accommodate spacious, two-

bed apartments (average 90m²), with balconies and outdoor activity space, good views and solar access. There will be duplex apartments and penthouses at the top.

The local planning authority wishes to consider this proposal in the context of the whole area around Adam Street including the development on Pellet Street, and St Davids Two. The current proposal is for a stand-alone development without sufficient regard to, or integration with, its surroundings. The Council's main concern is the scale and height of this block, which is taller than its reference buildings, and the degree of overdevelopment on this city centre fringe site. Other concerns relate to the vibrancy of the public realm at street level, the overshadowing of surrounding buildings, and the likely wind speeds on the upper floor amenity areas.

The outline application is supported by a design statement and transport statement. All matters are reserved. The Council would accept a lowering of the car parking standard to 0.7, similar to Altolusso. They would seek public realm improvements, such as a pedestrian crossing on Adam Street as part of a section 106 agreement.

Panel's Response

In general, the Panel supports the City Council's reservations. The outline status of the application is surprising and disappointing. We note that provision for retail at street level is included in the design statement but is not part of the application. An active public realm would be vital to mitigate the effect of the excessively bulky car park podium.

In order to support such a scheme, the Panel would need considerably more convincing information, in the form of a thorough urban design analysis, and a reinforcement of the mixed use nature of the scheme. There is no fundamental objection to a major development per se, but again the necessary evidence to justify this development – such as townscape views, environmental assessments, or shading diagrams – is missing. Some of the views provided, looking down Atlantic Wharf, are inaccurate and misleading.

We find the design statement superficial, and think that more design development work needs to be done. The bulkiness of the two intersecting slabs leads to an inappropriate massing, and the cruciform plan does not support environmental efficiency measures. The presently proposed podium seems totally inappropriate adjacent to the TA centre.

The City is looking for 30% affordable housing provision on this site, which the developer is unable to offer. Any agreement on off-site provision of affordable housing would have to be approved by the housing strategy officer.

The developer felt aggrieved at the contradictory planning advice he had received over recent years, and the effective blighting of the site by uncertainty over the location of the link road and the development of the TA centre.

The Panel appreciates that the main point of contention here is the principle of a very tall building, with almost exclusive residential use, in this particular location. While we understand that this is an outline application, we consider that these two fundamental issues need full justification before they can be properly assessed. There is a counter proposal, within the St Davids Two scheme, for a mixed use development on this site and its interim use as a car park, though the Council offered no comment on the implication of two

very different applications being submitted for the same site. There is now an SPG for Cardiff on tall buildings, which the Council offered to make available

Summary

Although the Panel welcomes the redevelopment of this site and has no in principle objection to a major redevelopment, we are unconvinced by the design arguments for this scheme. In particular:

- The principle of this building on this site is not supported, in terms of its height, scale, massing and proposed use
- While recognising that policies do change, there should be more attempt at consistency in the dialogue between developers and planners
- A thorough urban design analysis should be carried out, including sections and views from major viewpoints around the city centre.
- Any future proposal for this site should be based on mixed use
- Any images presented should be as accurate as possible
- The building should appear more elegant and the massing at street level should be reduced
- We applaud the environmental control mechanisms that have been suggested

End

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