

Statws/Status:

Cyfrinachol / Confidential



Adroddiad Adolygu Dylunio: Design Review Report:	23 April 2008
Dyddiad Cyfarfod / Meeting Date:	16 April 2008
Lleoliad/Location:	Callaghan Square, Cardiff
Disgrifiad o'r Cynllun Scheme Description:	Commercial
Cleient/Asiant: Client/Agent:	As below
Developer/Datblygwr:	MEPC [Rick De Blaby, David O Flaherty]
Pensaer/Architect:	Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios [Keith Bradley, Jo Wright, Alex Morris]
Ymgynghorwyr Cynllunio: Planning Consultants:	Savills [Chris Potts, Anna Cheney, Catherine Griffiths]
Awdurdod Cynllunio: Planning Authority:	Cardiff CC [Nigel Hanson]
Statws Cynllunio: Planning Status:	Pre-application
Y Panel Adolygu Dylunio/	

Design Review Panel:

Alan Francis (cadeirydd/chair)
Cindy Harris (swyddog/officer)
Charlie Deng (swyddog/officer)
Michael Griffiths

Jonathan Adams
Ashley Bateson
Phil Roberts

Lead Panellist:

Jonathan Adams

Sylwedyddion/Observers:

Mark Hand, Newport CC

Cyflwyniad/Presentation

The client's brief required a highly sustainable commercial development with a strong sense of place. It was noted that extant planning permission exists for 200,000 square feet of office use on this site. A new outline application is imminent.

It was acknowledged that this scheme should relate well to the broader context, although not able to directly influence it. However, the architect has tried to show the potential for future development of Callaghan Square, if the highways and transport issues can be resolved. This proposal for five new commercial blocks creates active frontages on the south side of Callaghan Square and a development of appropriate density. The point of focus looking down St Mary Street towards the Castle, is marked by a tall tower. Ideally, the team would like to see the future completion of frontages to the east and south west of this site. The project team includes Camlin Lonsdale as landscape architects and Buro Happold as M&E consultants. They are working towards a BREEAM Excellent rating.

The City Council welcomed the dialogue that has already taken place, and the concept of a new city centre business district. They regard the development of Callaghan Square as only partially complete and see this proposal as a means to continue the process. It will require input from WAG, as guarantor of the PFI and as landowner. There is an opportunity here to make the square more pedestrian friendly, and this could include building in the square itself. The authority have no objection to the proposed height of the tower, and welcome the ground floor active uses and linkages.

Ymateb y Panel/Panel's Response

The Panel appreciated the long planning history of this site and supported the desire to complete the square. We welcomed this proposal as the most substantial one to date, but we questioned whether it contributed to the formation of a 'square' as traditionally

understood, with buildings forming an edge, giving definition and relating well to the central space. It was agreed that the landscaped edge would be important in establishing this relationship, but that the traffic arrangement and flow was undoubtedly a constraint. We debated whether this proposal does actually complete the square, given the gaps in the frontage and the lack of a consistent height. In particular we thought that the strength of the curve on the northern side was lost with the lack of a continuous frontage, and that the two taller blocks appeared incongruous in this context.

The architect stated that in his view this was less like a conventional British square, and had more similarities with large European squares. He acknowledged that the width of the gaps between blocks could be adjusted, but emphasised the importance of creating permeability. The Panel wished to avoid creating the impression of a series of disconnected developments. Reference was made to the Mackie masterplan which showed a perforated edge to the southern side of the square, partly to allow for solar access. The diagonal alignment of the routes through are intended to minimise the appearance of 'gaps' in the street frontage. The stepping of the two frontages are designed to align with Callaghan Square and Tresillian Way.

The Panel supported the idea of enhancing the central area, possibly by building along its eastern edge on land owned by the Welsh Assembly Government. This could be the beginning of a 'perimeter within a perimeter' which, together with reinforcing the existing planting, could give more enclosure to the central space and introduce activity within the traffic boundary. We discussed the possibility of limiting the highway to the northern edge of the square, but acknowledged that the resulting six lane highway would constitute a huge barrier to access. Similarly, joining the roundabout to the rectangular space would not be practicable.

The Panel questioned the viability of introducing a significant amount of new office space at this time, and asked whether there was the flexibility to create different uses which would also help introduce vitality around Callaghan Square out of office hours. The developer thought that the creation of a new, attractive and desirable business district would unleash demand, and pointed out that the new commercial development [by MEPC] opposite this site had been let quickly. Another factor was the increasing reluctance of companies to lease buildings that did not deliver high environmental standards and low energy use, thus creating a new market for sustainable developments. Nevertheless, as long term owners, the developers were open to other uses, such as hotel or residential, and we were assured that Savills had been through every possible permutation of use.

The Panel requested information about materials and finishes, given the standard set by no 1 Callaghan Square, the additional expectation of quality for tall buildings, and the local ambition for this area of the city. The current proposal deals mainly with massing and has not progressed to consideration of materials. We were informed that the

material specification would be driven principally by sustainability and low maintenance requirements. The glass to wall proportion would be determined by the environmental analysis and was likely to be in the region of 50%. With regard to scale, the Panel agreed that the issues of elegance and proportion were paramount. The team claimed that the differentiation of scale helped to create distinction and character.

The Panel acknowledged the design team's expertise in terms of delivering sustainable developments. We sought reassurance that the environmental strategy would be incorporated into the space planning, and were told that floor to ceiling heights were relatively high, with exposed concrete soffits and narrow floor plates. Mixed mode ventilation would be used as the best low-energy option. The Panel advised that the sustainability strategy should respond to the Welsh Assembly Government aspirations for zero carbon buildings by 2011. The team stated that a separate sustainability report, including targets, would be included with the outline application. With regard to wind tunnel testing, a desktop study would be carried out at the outline stage, with a more detailed study to follow.

Crynodeb/Summary

The Panel appreciated the opportunity to review the latest proposal for this important site. For us, the most significant aspect of this scheme is the opportunity to complete the city square and continue the quality already established by the Nicholas Hare building. We think the proposal is in principle an acceptable response to the site and the brief, but requires some major rethinking. In summary:

- The improvement of Callaghan Square is our major concern and we remain to be convinced that the mix of scale, the gaps in the frontage and the staggered plan form will deliver the required sense of continuity and enclosure. We worry that the spaces between the buildings intended for seating and outdoor café use will be in shadow for large periods, underused, and will detract from the central space.
- We question the location of the tall building on the site and fear that it will block views and break the historic link between the city and the bay.
- We support the intention to enhance activity in the central space, possibly by building along the eastern edge.
- We share the concerns of the design team about the desirability of continuing development to the east of this site.
- We understand the desire for permeability but we are not convinced by the amount of permeability proposed, or the desire lines of the diagonal routes
- We applaud the sustainability aspirations of the developer and the track record of the design team. We advise that the documents accompanying the outline application should refer specifically to WAG targets for low and zero carbon development and specify a strategy for delivery

- The choice of materials will be an important determinant of quality and needs to be resolved as soon as possible.
- We would like to review this proposal again prior to the submission of a reserved matters application

Diwedd/End

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