

Addroddiad Adolygu Dylunio Design Review Report

Review Status: **Confidential**

Meeting date:	2nd December 2009
Issue Date:	8th December 2009
Scheme Location:	Callaghan Square, Cardiff
Scheme Description:	Development brief
Planning Status:	No status [Consultation document].

Part1: Presentation

Cardiff City Council is seeking to complete the eastern side of Callaghan Square and to replace the heavy rail bridge across Herbert Street in order to reduce the traffic bottleneck at this point. The latter is an Assembly duty and is seen as an important starting point to facilitate development on the south and east sides of the Square. Consequently officers were asked by the Planning Committee to prepare a development/planning brief as a strategy for developing the Square as a whole. This document was presented to the Panel and it was agreed to structure the session as an informal workshop.

The brief shows an indicative masterplan, with the carriageway on the north side of the Square removed, thus creating a stronger and more intimate open space. Some new development is shown on the Square itself to provide vitality. Strong building lines and frontages enclose and define the Square and surrounding roads. The widened span of the Herbert Street railway bridge could incorporate a public transport interchange. A north/south link to the Bay, along Canal Parade, is anticipated in the layout of the southern plot.

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

The Panel was pleased to have this opportunity to comment on the formulation of a development strategy for this very significant part of the city centre. We fully support the council's intention to complete development around the Square and encourage better public use. In summary:

- We welcome the suggestion to close the northern carriageway around the existing Square.
- Careful thought should be given to the nature of the space created and future uses for the Square which will inform its, size, layout and the location of any new development.
- A single block along the southern side of the central space, reflecting the Eversheds building opposite in form and scale, would provide a strong enclosure and would then form one side of an interesting new street running towards the Herbert Street railway bridge
- A pedestrian movement study should be undertaken to inform the location of buildings and the landscape strategy.
- We agree that a replacement railway bridge is necessary to enable the change in road layout, which is a fundamental prerequisite for the success of the scheme. This should be a simple structure, reflecting the existing railway architecture, and with the widest practicable span.
- Given the lapsed plans for a Light Railway Transit system running along the south side of the existing Square, we recommend that the strip of land in front of the MEPC site be released, to enable the blocks to come up to the road and address the north east corner of the site.

Part 2: Discussion and Panel Response in Full

The Panel strongly supported the suggestion to close the road to the north of the Square, and understood that this would necessitate a four lane highway on the southern side. This will create the possibility of a smaller, more intimate and inherently attractive public open space, the vibrancy of which should be ensured with active uses.

While the Brief contains core objectives, it lacks a vision for the Square and its desired uses – which might include open air concerts, farmers markets, beach volleyball. We thought that if these could be articulated and inform the dimensions of the space, then active public use would follow.

We were not convinced by the disposition and height of the blocks on the southern side of the new Square, which appear too disparate and scattered. We suggested that a single block along the southern edge, mirroring the Eversheds building to the north, would work well to define and enclose the Square. This in turn would have implications for the height and massing of that part of the MEPC site immediately to the south.

The Panel advised that a full pedestrian movement study should be carried out, to inform the layout of the central Square, and pedestrian and cycle routes around and across it. Buildings should frame movement routes, with active ground floor uses where possible. We supported the reinforcement of the north/south link running through the MEPC site.

With regard to the proposed new bridge, the Panel agreed that this was a key piece of infrastructure which could release development opportunities to the east of the Square and along Lloyd George Avenue. We agreed that this avenue should become a more humane corridor linking the city with the Bay, and that east/west links across the railway line should be addressed in future development proposals. The bridge structure itself should be kept

simple and subdued, with the widest possible clear span opening, and should reference existing bridges and underpasses along this route. It will be important to ensure that the replacement railway bridge is a deliverable part of the scheme within a reasonable timetable.

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 City Council [Nigel Hanson, Simon Gilbert]
Pensaer/Architect:	n/a
Consultants:	n/a
AwdurdodCynllunio/ Planning Authority	n/a
Y Panel Adlygu Dylunio: Design review panel: Alan Francis [Chair] Cindy Harris [Officer]	Jonathan Adams Chris Jones Ashley Bateson
Lead Panellist:	Chris Jones
Sylwedyddion/Observers:	Tim Raine WAG [DE&T]