

8th March 2012

Matt Wakelam
Cardiff Council

Dear Matt

Re: Cardiff Central Square proposals, early consultation with DCfW

Thank you, your team and consultants for approaching the Commission with this project and for your time during our recent meeting.

The Commission was pleased to receive a presentation of the project proposals in a consultative meeting. As this was not a formal Design Review we will need to talk with you again very shortly about further engagement with us, including a second 'workshop' meeting and a subsequent Review as the scheme develops and comes through the planning process. I know you have already been in touch with Cindy about this and we look forward to established programme dates.

During the meeting you informed us of planning policy and strategies including draft SPG, which will be used to establish key parameters for the scheme and we look forward to further specific consultation as these progress.

Below we have very briefly summarised the observations of the Commission so far and the areas which will need more detailed analysis and which we will expect to come forward in subsequent meetings.

We hope the meeting was helpful and look forward to the subsequent programme of engagement as the project progresses.

Yours sincerely

Carole-Anne Davies
Chief Executive
cad@dcfw.org

CC Stride Treglown
Aecom

Meeting of the Design Commission for Wales, members of Cardiff Council Stride Treglown and Aecom, 22 February 2012.

Declarations of interest were made by Alan Francis in relation to client relationships for St David's House and by Mark Hallett in relation to widespread connections with industry consultants. The declarations were accepted by Cardiff Council.

Present:

DCfW: Carole-Anne Davies, Chief Executive; Wendy Richards, Development Director; Alan Francis, Chair of the Commission; Mark Hallett, Commissioner John Punter, Commissioner.

Cardiff Council: Matt Wakelam, Operational Manager, Economic (Major Projects) City Development; Paul Carter, Operational Manager, Transport Strategy and Projects; Nigel Hanson, Operational Manager, Development Management; Lawrence Dowdall, Planning Officer.

Stride Treglown: Chris Jones, Matthew Jackson, Paul Seaver, Graham Stevens.

Aecom: Catherine McKay, George Lunt

The Commission was pleased to receive a presentation regarding the proposals for Cardiff Central Square and to have an early opportunity to be fully appraised of the scheme.

Key points:

- The re-stated commitment to a project comparable with European standards was welcomed; an indication of precedents (such as Farringdon in London) would assist clarity of vision for the project, which should be a national exemplar.
- The robustness of partnerships/negotiations with Network Rail among others will be vital to the success of the project, as will the proposed acquisition of Marland House and the future of St David's House.
- The masterplan is currently confined to Central Square, when what is needed is a study of a much larger area to establish the principles of pedestrian, vehicular and public transport movement, the future land use pattern and desired building form, and the disposition of open space. This study area should also make direct reference to CBD/Enterprise zones for the city and links to Callaghan Square. Not to

fully consider the function of the south side of the station, the future limits of the central business district, the location of any convention centre and improved access to the Millenium Stadium while developing this project, will prejudice any urban design ambitions and the future of the city centre at large.

- The proposed location and layout of the bus station was welcomed but it was recognised that detailed design of its entrances and those of hotel and office uses needed to be developed to avoid conflicting flows of pedestrians. Doors on to streets and active frontage should be provided wherever possible.
- More thought is needed to establish the arrival experiences, which should be commensurate with European precedents and should focus on public amenity, views and quality of spaces. In particular an appropriate front entrance and sense of arrival for the bus station should be prioritised, where necessary, over the demands of the adjacent commercial development.
- The current proposal would create challenges at the north end to 'close off' the bus entrance visually, and even greater challenges at the southern end, where the public realm is reduced to a thin strip. The southern entrance will require very careful design and very slow speed bus movements so that the safety of pedestrians crossing the bus lanes can be guaranteed and the character of the conservation area protected. The team agreed to consider closing off the southern bus entrance altogether, or possibly reducing the buses to one lane.
- In setting out the development blocks, desire lines should be considered rather than viewpoints, especially in the case of the new street that separates the two new office buildings and which is not shown connecting to the stadium. The suggested viewing corridors need justification and future proofing if the envisaged adjacent demolitions / developments do not materialise.
- New development blocks should concentrate their architectural focus at ground / first floors, and be more 'backdrop' above. The new buildings fronting the square should have some unifying characteristics in term of the treatment of their bases, shafts and tops with all plant hidden from view.
- Block heights should have a direct relationship with the scale of the square and both should be justified by a physical model. The height of the buildings opposite the station was considered appropriate for the location, but the taller tower on the north end of the bus station needs further justification and view studies
- The floor plan of the buildings opposite the station are fixed by existing street lines. This is a missed opportunity to generate a more rational public realm and to create more commercial value.
- Wind tunnel testing of the proposed blocks and the proposed tall building should inform a micro-climate analysis.
- We suggested joining the buildings on the northern side of the square, and potentially creating arcades between them.

- Discussion about appropriate materials focused on developing a palette that was consistent with the recent improvements across the city centre, with the simplicity of the Hayes considered a good model. Brick finishes to Central Square were not considered appropriate but the idea of a bowl shown in some sections was worth pursuing.
- The landscape strategy was detailed to an extent that is premature. A broad public realm strategy and movement framework is required which clearly connects into the wider city centre and towards the Bay, and from which the functions of different streets and spaces can be determined, prior to any detailed design. A greater commitment to quality of the public realm should be apparent as driving the quality of the scheme as a whole. Such a public realm strategy must properly consider year round quality of experience in balance with the transitory nature of the space as well as seasonal events. It too should be a European exemplar.
- Greater consideration of the Grade II listed rail terminal building is required.
- More detailed analysis and formulation of the function of the south side of the existing rail station is required, including connections and future capacity as well as enlivening through commercial opportunities. The link through the rail station is seen as essential for the permeability between two key city spaces. In particular a 20 hour public pedestrian route to the east of the existing station should be a firm aspiration to improve connectivity and would require appropriate access from the north.
- Aspirations for the sites north of Wood Street should be clearly stated.
- Sustainability issues at every level should be embedded in future design development.
- The aspiration for underground taxi parking is welcomed, but must be well designed in order for the space to be appealing to all users. Concerns over the financial viability of the proposed underground taxi route may result in a less satisfactory solution
- The integrated hub needs further functional specification and detailed design consideration.