

Statws/Status:
Cyfrinachol / Confidential



Adroddiad Adolygu Dylunio: 19 December 2006
Design Review Report:

Dyddiad Cyfarfod / Cyflwyno'r Deunydd: 6 December 2006
Meeting Date / Material Submitted:

Lleoliad/Location: Dumballs Rd

Disgrifiad o'r Cynllun Mixed use
Scheme Description:

Developer/Datblygwr: David Wilson Homes
[Tim Blythe]

Pensaer/Architect: Holder Mathias Architects
[Philippe Moseley, Nic Downs]

Awdurdod Cynllunio: Cardiff CC
Planning Authority: [Nigel Hanson]

Statws Cynllunio: Pre-planning
Planning Status:

Y Panel Adolygu Dylunio/Design Review Panel:
Alan Francis [cadeirydd /chair] Douglas Hogg
Cindy Harris [swyddog/officer] Phil Roberts
Charlie Deng [design review assistant] Martin Knight
Lyn Owen Kieren Morgan
John Punter

Lead Panellist: John Punter

Sylwedyddion/Observers:
Kathy MacEwen, CABE

Cyflwyniad/Presentation

This is a mixed-use redevelopment scheme, consisting mainly of residential use with office, retail, hotel and workshops, to be submitted as an outline planning application. The 13 hectare site is in a central location between Cardiff city centre and Cardiff Bay, and the developer has managed to assemble the land parcel from 23 different land owners, which presents a good opportunity for the council to realize their redevelopment strategy for this area.

This is recognised as a key area – ‘Cardiff’s biggest urban design challenge’ - and the site plan attempts to introduce a ‘European style’ new city quarter to Cardiff, with new streets aligned east-west to link the banks of the Taff to Dumballs Road, and to provide new east-west pedestrian links from Grangetown to Bute Dock. A new footbridge is proposed across the river, and the site plan shows this located towards the north of the site adjacent to a major new public square and a new water bus stop. A riverside promenade will be created running the length of the site, mainly the pavement for a residential street fronted by town houses and 7 storey apartment blocks. The latter will step up to 12 storeys away from the river.

The proposal features generally well-defined urban blocks with raised landscape podiums in their centres, the largest of which will be designed as a public space. The main entrance to the site is from Dumballs Road. It is designed as a small parkette which acts as a traffic island, and leads directly to the new public square on the waterfront. To the south the scheme has to relate to both the Training College and the new park that separates the scheme from Century Wharf.

Semi-undercroft parking is introduced throughout the scheme, together with on-street visitor parking. Excavation to a depth of 1.5m is necessary to remove contaminated soil and it is claimed a ground floor level at 1.5 metres above grade can provide enough privacy to the residents and give some natural surveillance to the streets. Because of the height of the podium, stairs to the raised entrances of the town houses have to run parallel to the street. There are dedicated cycle paths along all pedestrian pavements and a public art trail through the site is proposed.

This is claimed to be a highly sustainable project with a district heating system driven by a ground source heat pump linked to underfloor heating. On the commercial side it will be carbon positive – ie it will export more energy than it imports from the grid. A residents’ car club will be set up and the developer has previous experience of establishing these successfully. Off site construction methods will be used and 30% of the housing will be affordable.

The Local Authority representative clarified that in policy terms the proposed development is identified for business / industrial use. They broadly support the scheme, especially its sustainability strategy, its hierarchy of streets and public spaces and improved connectivity. While welcoming the proposed new footbridge, they think the location should be moved further south to provide better links to both Grangetown and Butetown. Apart from residential use, the council also wants to retain the area as an employment location, and particularly supports the new start-up business units planned to replace an existing facility working with disadvantaged young people. It is hoped that design codes will be the

mechanism for ensuring the implementation of the masterplan and maintaining design quality.

Ymateb y Panel/Panel's Response

The Panel began by congratulating the developer and designers on taking such a positive approach to this run down site, and thinking strategically about its links with the wider area. We agreed that the strong streets, well enclosed by perimeter block development around well-landscaped courtyards, was the correct approach while the sustainability strategy appears to be exemplary. The Council were also commended for their brief/strategy which set out many key parameters.

The Panel queried the 'metropolitan' density, and wondered how appropriate this would be for Cardiff. It was clarified that this was 600 habitable rooms per hectare which equates to about 240 dwelling units per hectare, and was comparable with many other large provincial city centres. The intention was that in terms of density, this site should have more in common with the city than the Bay. Building heights are typically 6 storeys on the street, rising to 12 storeys on some corners and a proposed 24 storeys for the hotel. Thus, proposed densities exceed all but the densest, relatively small sections of the city centre.

The Panel was concerned that proposed east/west linkages were undeveloped, and not capable of being continued beyond the site to the east. We thought that the proposed footbridge across the Taff should align with the southern boundary, where it would be in a much better position to exploit links with Grangetown and Butetown. At this point it would also be midway between the two existing road bridges. The architect stated that they would prefer to see the bridge linked to the new public square, the central boulevard and the Taff trail on the west bank, and that there would be problems with the necessary groundworks on the Grangetown side of the river further south, where there is less buffer space. The observation was made that in some European cities, the problem would be solved by providing two bridges, but the Panel preferred the idea of the southern location to provide a strong pedestrian link from Grangetown through Butetown to Lloyd George Avenue and Bute Dock.

The Panel considered that the relationship of the scheme to Century Wharf was deeply problematic. Clearer plans for the proposed park and footpath needed to be developed by the Council, and then the designers could respond more positively with a stronger sense of enclosure and surveillance.

Generally the Panel supported the treatment of Dumballs Road and the intention to make it a strongly enclosed and walkable street. The focal building on the bend of the road is a positive move, creating a quality townscape, while the active uses at ground floor are also welcome. The 'creative quarter' buildings are rather unresolved and need more thought. Generally the mix and disposition of uses in the scheme is commendable

The Panel thought that the block layout showed a fundamental confusion between the fronts and backs of the residential blocks, and between public and private space. We considered that the 'public' spaces created in the centre of the perimeter blocks were actually semi-private, especially as they would be raised 1.5m above street level. We would like to see an even stronger enclosure of the street, especially at the corners, and a reinforcement of the street with a clear demarcation between public and private space. We

thought that the planted traffic island at the main entrance was unlikely to be well used as a public space and urged a more pedestrian-accessible design.

The Panel thought that the semi-underground parking arrangement and the flights of entrance steps parallel to the frontages undermined the potential quality of the street. We recognised that the undercroft parking poses a dilemma for schemes such as this, but we would prefer to see almost full basement parking throughout. We were informed that flood constraints indicated a ground floor level of 1.5m above grade, and that the car parks would still need venting. However, we thought that, if the semi-basement option was absolutely necessary, the few steps should follow the Georgian model and be at right angles to the street, with the ground floor height reduced to 0.75m above street level. There appeared to be an over-provision of cycleways, given the calmed nature of the streets.

It was confirmed that most of the accommodation would be 1-2 bed apartments, but with some family housing. The 30 per cent affordable requirement was very important on this site and the suggestion that the majority of this be social housing was warmly welcomed. The Panel would encourage a bigger mix of housing types including more family housing and even some sheltered units in a scheme of this size which is promoted as a new community. Parking standards are 1 space per unit, plus 1 space per 5 units for visitors. The Panel questioned whether this parking standard was unnecessarily high, given the proximity to public transport nodes. The control and management of on street parking is yet to be determined. We recommended that shelters for bus stops be well designed to encourage use of public transport.

The Panel would like to see a more sympathetic relationship between the riverfront buildings and the two storey terraces on the other side of the River Taff, in terms of their grain, detailing and materials. We were told that the apartment blocks have direct access to the riverfront at ground level, and might be physically connected to the townhouses. The Panel thought that the townhouses should form a continuous residential frontage to the river, enclosing and landscaping the car park roofs behind. The decision to strengthen these riverside blocks and create a single walkway between them was also applauded.

The Panel strongly supported the high environmental standards proposed for the apartments and offices and we were told that these would be incorporated into the design codes and planning approvals. We thought it was critical that there should be a commitment to district heating, preferably with CHP, at this early stage. We recommended that the site layout be tested under an artificial sky to eliminate any problems of overshadowing, and that wind tunnel tests should be used to identify any problems, particularly in both the apartments and the courtyards to the rear of the riverfront blocks. The blocks which are predominantly aligned north/south should have internal layouts redesigned, with dual aspect apartments to give residents better aspects, solar access and ventilation.

The Panel noted that there was no mention of phasing in the presentation and was told that the first phase was likely to be the riverfront area. We would like to have more detailed information about the phasing as it becomes available.

Crynodeb/Summary

The Panel welcomed the opportunity to review this well considered scheme for such an important site. We applaud the attention paid to the development of streets, squares,

footbridge and east/west linkages. In the context of our strong support for the overall concept of the scheme, we nevertheless think that major changes are necessary to achieve a truly successful scheme. In particular:

- We are firmly convinced that the footbridge should be relocated to the south in order to offer good east-west pedestrian/cycle connections between Grangetown and Bute Dock
- We think that the confusion between public and private space needs resolving and the perimeter blocks reinforcing, so that both high quality private amenity space and well enclosed streets can be developed.
- We were not convinced by the design of either the riverside square or the entrance parkette; both need to be re-thought to provide more vitality and accessibility. Further greening of the Taff Embankment and the creation of more linear park space here were recommended.
- We welcome the way that Dumballs Road is designed, together with the active ground floor uses provided both here and in other parts of the scheme.
- While we commend any attempt to bury parking below ground, we are disappointed at the negative impact of the semi-underground car parking and access points on the quality of the street environment. We would prefer to see nearly full basement parking provision as outlined above.
- We would like to see a more deliberate attempt to link the architectural treatment of the riverside blocks to the built form of Grangetown across the river.
- The massing of the scheme needs further work to ensure that the high densities proposed do not deprive apartments and public and private spaces of sunlight and daylight.
- We greatly welcome the strong sustainability aspirations for this scheme and note that both developer and local authority are committed to ensuring that these are followed through in the design and construction.
- We would like to see more attention given to a mix of housing types and tenures

We would welcome the opportunity to review this scheme again as the design develops.

Diwedd/End

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