

Statws/Status:

Cyfrinachol / Confidential



Adroddiad Adolygu Dylunio: 19 January 2007
Design Review Report:

Dyddiad Cyfarfod / Cyflwyno'r Deunydd: 10 January 2007
Meeting Date / Material Submitted:

Lleoliad/Location: Maelfa Centre

Disgrifiad o'r Cynllun Residentail and retail
Scheme Description:

Pensaer/Architect: Powell Dobson
[James Brown]

Awdurdod Cynllunio: Cardiff CC [Jon Winder,
Planning Authority: Hannah Dineen]

Statws Cynllunio: Pre-application
Planning Status:

Y Panel Adolygu Dylunio/Design Review Panel:
Wendy Richards (cadeirydd/chair) Phil Roberts
Cindy Harris (swyddog/officer) Richard Parnaby
Charlie Deng (swyddog/officer] Gerard Ryan
Jonathan Adams Ben Sibert
Ashley Bateson

Lead Panellist: Jonathan Adams

Cyflwyniad/Presentation

The presented masterplan is in the process of development, and shows Cardiff Council's intention to redevelop the run-down Maelfa Centre located to the north east of Cardiff city centre. The scheme is under consultation prior to the submission of an outline application in the next few months.

Originally built in the 1970s, the site contains a mix of flats, shops and community facilities. The existing street layout, inspired by the principle of separating vehicles and pedestrians, is currently a block to easy movement and access. There is a significant change of level on the north west corner of the site, where the block of flats [which is to be retained] sits on top of a levelled podium. Occupancy rates are declining and maintenance costs are high and increasing. In public consultation, the community expressed the need for better local facilities. The client expressed their need for a deliverable masterplan, which would identify development opportunities, incorporate sustainability aspirations and use traditional techniques of place making to achieve an economically, socially and environmentally successful scheme.

The masterplan intends to relocate the community facilities together in the north-west corner of the site which, together with the retained block of flats, will surround a semi-public parking courtyard. A new public square, accessed from a new junction to the west, includes public parking. A new foodstore to the southwest is located close to an existing bus stop, with a discreet servicing area. Residential perimeter blocks are introduced on the east of the site, incorporating courtyard parking and integrating the existing copse of mature trees into the landscape. This new residential area is high density, with good solar aspect and an enhanced play area. The plan also improves the Powerhouse car park to the north. The masterplan is supported by the following guidelines:

- Comfortable, people friendly streets
- Legible layout
- Comfortable public spaces
- Blend of uses
- High density residential development
- Well designed hard and soft spaces
- Interesting roofscape and response at all levels
- Clearly defined boundaries and edges
- Architectural richness
- Maximise opportunities for achieving high standards of environmental design.

The Panel was told that the reason for dealing with the proposal as an outline planning application rather than an SPG, was due to the complexity of the scheme and would deliver more certainty for the developer. Any consent would be for access only, with all other matters reserved. We were informed that the Powerhouse was not included, as significant public investment had already been made in this building.

Ymateb y Panel/Panel's Response

The Panel began by trying to clarify the motivation which formed the basis of the design development. It was acknowledged that the necessity for self-funding meant that the quantity of development had to be maximised, with retail units located on the most visible parts of the site, and the rest given over to housing. A complicated phasing programme would ensure that existing retailers were decanted and were able to continue trading. The Panel was told that the Local Authority would be in a strong position to ensure the delivery of the desired quality as they are the landowner.

The project team considered that it would not be financially viable to abandon the podium and to restore the original contours in the north-west corner. The Panel regretted this and thought that an opportunity to reduce its isolation from the rest of the site and surrounding

areas and inform future development, was being lost. The Panel was not convinced by the setting of the north-west block and thought that there was no effective public space attached to those buildings, as the internal courtyard would be used mainly for staff parking.

The Panel was reassured to be told that the original suggestion for two distinct architectural styles had been changed to a contemporary one throughout, as guidance only.

The Panel appreciated the figure ground presentation, which provided the only definitive information and showed a better urban grain for the scheme. However, the Panel was not convinced by the layout of the of new residential blocks and thought that there were too many gaps to justify the claim of perimeter blocks. We suggested that the frontages should be more continuous to provide a real sense of street enclosure. Furthermore, we recommended the introduction of residential units facing over the space to the rear of the foodstore, to provide a more secure and usable public space.

Despite the claims of the applicant, we thought that in some respects the proposal presented an anti-urban environment with chicanes and kinks in the road layout, impenetrable streets and hidden green spaces, instead of introducing traditional permeable streets. The Panel encouraged the project team to develop a tighter definition and clear east/west legibility.

The Panel urged that for a development of this scale and mix of uses, a community heating system should be seriously considered and a feasibility study undertaken. This would need to be carried out before the groundworks stage of construction to allow for the installation of the necessary infrastructure. We also strongly advised that a long term sustainability strategy be adopted to reduce long term running costs. This could be done by specifying minimum performance standards, such as BREEAM or EcoHomes 'Very Good'.

The Panel was convinced from experience that an SPG would be more useful than an outline planning application in signalling to developers the seriousness of the Council's ambition to deliver a high quality, sustainable development. The Panel commented that the design of the scheme appeared to be driven by pragmatism, which was not a good place to start when developing a vision, or a masterplan. We thought the current proposal and procurement method would have the effect of stifling innovation and discouraging high quality bids, and that an opportunity was being lost to encourage good design.

Crynodeb/Summary

The Panel welcomed the opportunity to review this scheme and supports the ambition to improve community facilities and promote good design. We are pleased to see the attempt to apply urban design principles and improve the urban grain. However, we think that in many areas an opportunity is being missed to achieve real quality, and would make the following recommendations:

- The Panel is encouraged by the intention to improve current community facilities and refurbish the residential units. A useful start has been made in showing the development capacity of the site.
- The proposal fails to show genuinely usable areas of public space. The public realm treatment needs to be more diagrammatic or greener.

- A clearer street pattern should be developed, especially to strengthen the east-west linkage through the site.
- It is important that sustainability criteria are embedded in the brief or tender documents, with minimum performance standards specified. The feasibility of a district heating system should be explored at an early stage.
- We think that using SPG would be a more effective mechanism to deliver the desired quality, and recommend that the project team review their procurement process.

Diwedd/End

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