

Statws/Status:
Cyfrinachol / Confidential



Adroddiad Adolygu Dylunio: 19 December 2005
Design Review Report:

Dyddiad Cyfarfod / Cyflwyno'r Deunydd: 7 December 2005
Meeting Date / Material Submitted:

Lleoliad/Location: Newport city centre

Disgrifiad o'r Cynllun Mixed use: retail, residential
Scheme Description: leisure

Cynllunio: Waterman Environmental
Consultants: [David Brown]
Matthews & Goodman
[Mike Ralph]
Gillespies [Jim Gibson]

Cleient/Asiant: Modus Properties
Client/Agent: Newport Unlimited
[David Ward]

Pensaer/Architect: Leslie Jones Architects
[Andrew Ogg,
Stephen Watson]

Awdurdod Cynllunio: Newport CC, [Wendy Hall,
Planning Authority: Peter Williams]

Statws Cynllunio: Pre-planning
Planning Status:

Y Panel Adolygu Dylunio/Design Review Panel:
Alan Francis (cadeirydd/chair) Howard Wainwright
Cindy Harris (swyddog/officer) Mike Biddulph
Ewan Jones

Lead Panellist:

Alan Francis

Sylwedyddion/Observers:

Charlie Deng
Design Review assistant

Cyflwyniad/Presentation

This scheme is part of an overall vision to change a part of the city which has been dominated by transport infrastructure, to one dominated by pedestrians, with dramatically improved facilities. The centrepiece of these proposals is a new 2 storey curving arcade, linking the new anchor store [Debenhams] to the new bus station. There is a new hotel along the waterfront, with a residential tower block to the north. Numbers of residential units have been increased along with the scale of the urban blocks. Servicing is mostly below ground level. Unfortunately it has not been possible to downgrade the existing traffic flow on Kingsway and Usk Square, which will incorporate a new bus turning link. The brief for the bus station is being developed to the same quality as the rest of the scheme, and will use a different architect.

The area of public realm is one third of the application footprint, and is given a high priority. John Frost Square will have a more elongated east/west orientation, emphasising the route to the river and footbridge. It is designed to be a flexible space, able to accommodate regular markets as well as seasonal events. There is a fountain feature in the north west corner, and trees will line either side. The Galleria or 2 story arcade, will be paved in high quality outdoor materials. The key link to the river will be through Usk Plaza and across a reconfigured Kingsway 'boulevard'. This will not be a place to sit or relax in, but it will be a high quality through route, with trees, new lighting and coloured materials. There will also be soft planting and a water feature in the central reservation. Upper Dock Street will feature new pavement materials, street planting and a water feature. Roof gardens above some of the retail units give a third dimension to the landscape.

Sustainability has been considered from the beginning, and a sustainability statement will be prepared to support the planning application. The aim is to achieve a 'Very Good' BREEAM rating, with natural ventilation of the galleria, and maximisation of passive solar gain. A centralised 'heat rejection' system using renewables is planned and there will be maximum reuse of construction waste.

The Local Planning Authority are supportive of this scheme although they point out that its delivery is what really matters. An outline application will be submitted to committee in February 2006.

Ymateb y Panel/Panel's Response

It was confirmed to the Panel that this scheme will be delivered as one phase including the residential component. All being well, the project will start on site early in 2007 and will last for two years. A public exhibition was held for one day earlier this month.

The Panel welcomed the new layout of John Frost Square and emphasised the importance of a high quality civic design for this piece of public realm. It was recognised that the two schemes fronting on to John Frost Square need to be well integrated and that it is up to the

Local Authority to ensure that this happens. We were pleased to be told that there is a continuing dialogue between Modus and UBS.

The question of the visual link from John Frost Square to the river was discussed again, and the Panel again voiced our concern that the clarity and primacy of this link is being lost. The developers are trying to deliver the best available compromise, and think that the route down Llanarth Street will still be legible. The Panel was pleased that one half of the first floor car park link had been removed, but still felt more could be done to open up the visual link from Charles St through the scheme to the new river footbridge. We accepted that the remainder of the link across this route is to allow evening access to the cinema from the car park and will link to an outdoor promenade outside restaurants.

The Panel still has concerns about the quality of public space on Usk Square, with pedestrian flow controlled by traffic lights. We were reassured that it is still intended to have a 20mph speed limit between the bus station and the leisure centre. More experimental methods of traffic calming, such as that envisaged for South Kensington, are unlikely to gain approval in Newport, as the Council would have to accept the insurance liabilities. The Panel still thought that this approach was worth pursuing. The pedestrian route and crossing point of Kingsway Boulevard towards the waterfront development site should be given as much attention as the route towards the new bridge, so that pedestrians can make very direct connections.

The scheme's relation with the conservation area on Upper Dock Street received the Panel's approval and we were told that recent acquisitions by the developer will enable some new facades to be built on the other side of the street.

The Panel thought that the elevations of the tower were over complex and we queried its east/west orientation which means that half the rooms will be north facing, although all will have good views of the river. We thought that the inclined offset on the upper floors was ambitious and would lead to difficult junctions between skins, requiring continuous monitoring and high quality execution. We suggested that the tower should be brought to the ground more convincingly, reoriented by 90° and moved to the north to expose the street underneath

The Panel would like to see the specification of a BREEAM 'Excellent' rating, though we accepted that this could be onerous. We suggested that an Energy Design Advice Report be commissioned at the detailed design stage, as recommended in TAN 8. The centralised 'heat rejection' system could lend itself to ground source cooling, and we welcomed the suggestion to include solar photovoltaics. We applauded the servicing arrangements throughout the scheme.

The Panel recognised that the elevational treatment and form of the residential blocks will have a major impact on the townscape, but we would need to see more details to evaluate them fully.

We questioned the desirability of the proposed footbridge linking the tower to the riverside, as this will diminish the public realm at ground level. However, this is the natural level to access the galleria from the north, and the idea of running the bridge into the Udex building [which Newport Unlimited are purchasing] at first floor level appealed to the client and developer.

It is intended that access through the scheme will be 24 hrs/day, 7 days/week, and there will be no doors to the arcades. The Panel would like to see this issue resolved in the planning process. It was agreed that wind tunnel tests are needed and will be carried out.

Crynodeb/Summary

The Panel greatly welcomes the progress of this scheme which we have no doubt will add greatly to the attractiveness and quality of Newport's appeal and which is certainly a huge improvement to the existing fabric of the city. We consider these proposals to be an acceptable response to an ambitious brief and, apart from the tower, we consider that minor revisions only are necessary to achieve the desired high quality. In particular:

- We would like to see a fundamental review of the location, form and orientation of the tower.
- We welcome the changes that have been made to John Frost Square and Upper Dock Street.
- We fear that the main axis linking John Frost Square with the river will become eroded and illegible by virtue of the sweeping high level roof, first floor link and protrusion of the Debenhams store
- We are concerned about the quality of public space which is achievable in Usk Square, without more dramatic methods of traffic control and calming.
- We would like to see a more ambitious approach taken to sustainability measures, and in particular the achievement of BREEAM 'Excellent'.
- We have concerns that the new footbridge could prejudice the quality of the public realm around it.
- The accessibility of the scheme should be determined at an early stage, as part of the planning process.
- We commend the servicing arrangements.
- We believe that the chosen procurement method will affect the quality and deliverability of this scheme, and would like to discuss this at a later date.

Diwedd/End

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