

**Statws/Status:**  
**Cyfrinachol / Confidential**



**Adroddiad Adolygu Dylunio:**  
**Design Review Report:** 15 September 2005

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

**Lleoliad/Location:** Newport city centre

**Disgrifiad o'r Cynllun**  
**Scheme Description:** Mixed use scheme: retail,  
residential and hotel

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

**Developer:** Modus Properties  
[Tim Heatley]

**Pensaer/Architect:** Leslie Jones [Andrew Ogg,  
Steve Watson]

**Cynllunio/Consultants:** EC Harris [Martin Griffiths]  
Matthews & Goodman  
[M Ralph]

**Awdurdod Cynllunio:** Newport City Council  
**Planning Authority:** [Peter Williams, Wendy Hall]

**Statws Cynllunio:** Pre-planning.  
**Planning Status:**

**Y Panel Adolygu Dylunio/Design Review Panel:**  
Alan Francis (cadeirydd/chair) Ed Colgan  
Cindy Harris (swyddog/officer) Ann-Marie Smale  
Richard Parnaby Phil Roberts

**Ewan Jones**

**Lead Panellist:**

**Alan Francis**

**Sylwedyddion/Observers:**

**Gillian Wulff, DCFW**

### **Cyflwyniad/Presentation**

This scheme was last seen by the Design Review Panel in June 2005 and a detailed planning application is now imminent. The intention behind this proposal is to create a retail led scheme of urban blocks which complements the scale of existing buildings and re-establishes the relationship between the city and the river. Strong pedestrian links are a priority, and run both north/south and east/west.

A two storey 'galleria' or covered street sweeps in an arc parallel to Kingsway and the glazed roof continues into Usk Square. It is anchored by Debenhams across Llanarth Street to the south. The residential block facing the river has now been replaced with a hotel, and the residential units moved to Upper Dock Street and above the galleria. The residential tower at the northern end of the galleria remains. John Frost Square is reduced in size becoming a more sociable and intimate space, and a new Usk Square is created on the waterfront around the anchoring of the new footbridge. The cinema is slightly smaller and the bus station frontage is unchanged. The problem of buses accessing the bus station from the north will be solved either by a turning loop on the east side of Kingsway north of Usk Square, or via a semi-roundabout arrangement involving a separation of the carriageways in Usk Square itself. It is recognised that the way in which this scheme interfaces with the adjacent UBS Kingsway proposals is vitally important.

The Local Planning Authority is pleased with how the scheme is developing. There is some concern over the bus station which has only half the number of bays that it currently has, but which it is claimed will operate more efficiently. There remain a number of public transport and traffic management issues to be resolved. The authority also raised the need for a sympathetic interface with the conservation area to the west across Upper Dock Street.

### **Ymateb y Panel/Panel's Response**

The Panel welcomed many aspects of this revised scheme, such as the reduced size of John Frost Square and the introduction of a hotel. We would wish to see active frontages of at least two storeys around John Frost Square, which should come forward to meet a consistent building line. This could be done without compromising the visibility of the splayed Debenhams entrance, but would need to be achieved in coordination with the Kingsway redevelopment.

The Panel was very keen to see the pedestrian route from John Frost Square to the river enhanced and broadened with maximum visibility down it from Charles Street. We were concerned that the change in levels would hinder this and urged that these changes be minimised and the bridge linking the upper ground galleria with Debenhams be made as thin and unobtrusive as possible, so that the route underneath is read as one space, or be omitted altogether. We were unconvinced by the sweeping galleria roof which appears to cut across the desire line and intrude on the visual link. Photo images of this route especially

viewed from the west would be very useful in assessing how well the space would work. The Panel recalled earlier masterplan images showing a clear visual link between Charles Street and the river and was very disappointed that this may well now be lost.

The Panel questioned the location of the bus station, which appears to compromise the principles of the masterplan to establish Kingsway as a pedestrian-friendly boulevard. We were not encouraged by the prospect of Usk Square being dominated by an apparent traffic island, which would completely work against the notion of Kingsway becoming a low speed boulevard and more importantly destroy the aim of linking the new Usk Bridge with John Frost Square and Charles Street. We acknowledged that the compromise solution proposed incorporates a signallised pedestrian crossing for each direction of traffic flow with a length of pedestrian route between, but we thought that a better solution must be found.

The significant increase in car parking provision in the area, together with a reduced size bus station, does not appear to fulfil the aims of a sustainable transport strategy. The client pointed out that the new car park [part of the UBS scheme] replaces two existing ones, and that public transport is being treated as a priority. New routes would give better penetration of the city centre and improve the links between the railway station and the retail centre. There would actually be more capacity for buses within the city centre as a whole. The concentration of car parking spaces at this point would attract vehicles entering the city from the south east and deter them from entering the centre. Nevertheless, the Panel remained concerned at the large number of car parking spaces that have been imposed on the developers by the client.

The architectural treatment of the Debenhams frontage opposite the leisure centre is important, especially in view of the uncertainty over the future of the leisure centre site.

The relationship with the conservation area across Upper Dock Street needs careful thought, as does the treatment of awkward corners and left over space. The treatment of the cinema elevations will be especially important, so as not to overpower the small scale frontages on the north side of Upper Dock Street.

A commitment to sustainable development principles was not apparent in the presentation. Materials have not yet been considered, although some thought has already been given to the feasibility of a district heating scheme. Shopping developments are by their very nature extremely energy intensive, so the savings in carbon emissions that could be achieved by putting sustainability at the heart of the design process are potentially substantial. We urge the developer to aspire to matching or exceeding the best European standards of carbon emissions in this project.

### **Crynodeb/Summary**

The Panel were pleased to review this scheme again and we welcome the concept and principle of this development. Fundamental issues remain to be resolved, however, including:

- The way in which these proposals are integrated with the UBS scheme is critical, and the problem of the two schemes being at different stages of development appears unresolved

- We would expect a statement on how this scheme responds to sustainable development principles, particularly in delivering low carbon solutions, to accompany the planning application
- The main east/west pedestrian route linking John Frost Square to the river is in danger of losing its directional and visual clarity. We recommend the extended galleria roof into Usk Square and the bridges linking Debenhams and the galleria, be reconsidered.
- The elevations onto John Frost Square need to reinforce the building line and enclose the smaller space. More urban design images would be necessary to evaluate the scheme at this point.
- The number of car parking spaces, the problem of buses turning and the overall traffic management along Kingsway, all pose problems for a workable, sustainable transport strategy
- A traffic roundabout in Usk Square would be destructive to good permeability, legibility and pedestrian access [ref: the poor use of public space in Callaghan Square, Cardiff]. An alternative solution must be reached.
- The relationship with the conservation area to the west and the integration of the 'black box' of the cinema, remain to be resolved
- While we consider the height of the proposed tower acceptable, we believe that further design development work is necessary to produce an elegant and well proportioned solution, and we would wish to see evidence of this at a future review, including long views from key vantage points around the town.

**Diwedd/End**

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