

16 March 2013

BY EMAIL

Chris Loyn
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Dear Chris

RE: 78F Porth Teigr Residential Element: Phase 01 (Plot L)

Thank you for meeting with members of the Design Review Panel of the Design Commission for Wales last Friday, as part of the preparation for Design Review of your scheme at 9.00am on Thursday 25 April 2013.

Our observations are set out below and are intended to highlight key design issues which will warrant detailed attention at the forthcoming review meeting with the full panel. Michael Griffiths will be the lead panellist assigned to this scheme and will carry out a site visit ahead of the review meeting.

The Commission welcomes early and iterative dialogue and we would be pleased to hear more about your pre-application discussions with the Local Planning and Highways Authorities in due course.

Thank you for consulting us and please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any further questions.

Yours sincerely



Carole-Anne Davies
Chief Executive
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Design Review Preparatory Meeting 78F Porth Teigr Residential Phase 01 (Plot L)

A meeting was convened to engage the Commission in early dialogue on proposals for the first residential phase of Porth Teigr, the Igloo Regeneration project at Cardiff Bay. These observations are prepared by Michael Griffiths, lead panellist and aim to assist the design team in their preparation for formal Design Review on 25 April 2013.

DCFW Scheme Reference: 78F Porth Teigr: Residential Phase 01 (Plot L)
 Review status: CONFIDENTIAL (at this pre-planning stage)
 Meeting date: 12 April 2013
 Scheme location: Porth Teigr, Cardiff Bay
 Scheme description: First Phase Residential
 Planning status: Pre-application

Background:

The site forms part of the Porth Teigr masterplan for a 38 acre mixed use development site wrapped around the southern edge of Roath Basin. Porth Teigr also comprises the BBC Drama Production Village and Roath Lock Studios, with further commercial and residential development planned over the coming years.

The first phase of the residential scheme (Plot L) comprises the northern rectangle of the Porth Teigr site and lies adjacent to Tyneside Road. The site is vacant remediate dockside land and has no extant built form.

Key observations and design considerations:

This is the first phase of the residential element and will set the tone for the evolution of the character of what is essentially and new place at Cardiff's dockside.

We understand the aspiration for this first phase of c250 dwellings with a commitment from the developer to a 25% affordable element to be completed by July 2016 and the desire to introduce a fresh approach to housing typologies and to achieve a high quality urban development. We also understand that the design approach is being informed by UK and European models.

The Commission welcomed this early consultation whilst it recognises that the project is at a formative stage. There are many opportunities alongside fundamental challenges with this dockside site that require the most inventive, high quality resolution at every stage. These should not be underestimated.

The discussion considered the integration of the scheme with the dock edges; block arrangement, circulation/movement/transport considerations as well as the topographical fall of c2m across the site and the required flood management. This last is significant with existing protection at c7m and Igloo's consideration of c8.5m is being further informed by a Cardiff study indicating that c10m could be required. The implications for habitable accommodation at street level are significant.

The design approach to matters of access, inclusive design, achievable permeability given the desire to avoid gating; habitable space at street level, exit routes, parking and services are all fundamental considerations.

Density and daylight; views through the scheme; front doors/garages; roof gardens/terraces capacity for communal space were all raised in discussion, along with landscape design, highways considerations, material quality and finishes. We noted the ambitious timescale and the importance of setting out a clear narrative, with reference to relevant precedents, to inform a planning submission.

At this stage we consider the following to be key considerations:

The general block layout seems to make sense with the creation of an 'urban' environment with defined street edges and courtyard/shared vehicle/pedestrian zones within. We also understand the concept of a taller building at the eastern end of site signalling its presence and exploiting views east over the docks.

There are opportunities yet to be realised:

1. The relationship of the scheme to the dock edge: Views across the dock onto the site need to be considered and fully illustrated. The current very rough model simply indicates the 'sawn-off' gable end of a terrace.
2. The junction with the adjoining site is poorly resolved at present. Odd triangles of space are left-over while the opportunity exists for public uses.

The work is at a very early stage and we accept this may be too early for the architectural definition or even concepts to have been illustrated. However, recognition of visual termination of axes etc (particularly at the entrance to the site) would be expected.

The disposition of the perimeter blocks at present implies there can be no 'front' and 'rear' elevations, which offers opportunities for spatial/plan interest and innovation in the houses/apartments. Definition of the mix disposition on the site has not been undertaken but should be made clear by time of Review.

A key issue is how the topographical fall of 2m across the site is dealt with. We need to see an explanation of considered options and the rationale for decision-making. We are not yet convinced by current proposals which could lead to indefensible parking undercrofts open to the public and with very poor surveillance. There is a risk of problems reminiscent of the 1960s and much more detailed consideration is required to achieve an appropriate, elegant, functional solution.

The taller building was discussed as containing 15 x 2 Bed apartments with potential community use at ground floor on street elevation and undercroft parking. The client advised that further appraisal is still to be undertaken on this element.

The possibility of a district heating system was discussed, linked to the local waste incineration plant under construction would seem an opportunity to be further explored. Elsewhere we recognise the fabric first and passive approach and look forward to further detail during Review. Climate analysis of site needs to be undertaken given strong dockside prevailing wind environment and potential overshadowing, using the masterplan massing.

The architectural approach verbally hinted at, with simple block forms enlivened by a component 'kit of parts' intended to add visual interest and variety, sounds interesting and further detail will be welcomed at Review. We note the client's comment that amenity spaces and terraces must add monetary value, and the ongoing discussions with valuing agents.

The proximity to public transport links (primarily bus) was discussed and we note a full transport plan will be required for the planning submission. Refuse/waste handling access to housing was raised and we look forward to further detail on solutions.

We were pleased to hear that a landscape consultant has been appointed and look forward to hearing more about the landscape design and treatment.

We understand and accept the commercial imperative to design to a defined budget though we have some doubts about precedents referred to, such as the high quality Accordia scheme, and their likely construction costs per sq.ft. Contractor discussions on construction techniques and costs have started and these will be essential to securing the desired quality within budget limitations.

The timescale to achieve a comprehensive, well considered design solution agreed in principle with the Local Planning Authority, prior to 250 home planning application being submitted c6 June 2013 is extremely ambitious. Similarly the DCFW Design Review on 25 April is challenging in terms of timescales, given that consultant reports to accompany the application would probably need to commence from a design freeze, two weeks prior to application.

The procurement strategy was discussed and we were informed of the likelihood of Loyn & Co being novated in a Design & Build form of contract post Stage E along with staged contractor appointments. More detail will be welcome at Review.

An overall project programme was requested by DCFW in time for the Design Review so that the Panel have a full understanding of timescales leading to completion in July 2016.

END