

Statws/Status:
Cyfrinachol / Confidential



Adroddiad Adolygu Dylunio:
Design Review Report: 12 May 2005

Dyddiad Cyfarfod / Cyflwyno'r Deunydd:
Meeting Date / Material Submitted: 5 May 2005

Lleoliad/Location: Princess Way, Swansea

Disgrifiad o'r Cynllun
Scheme Description: Retail + Residential

Cynllunio: APS Project Management
Consultants: [Noel O'Donnell]

Cleient/Asiant: Thurleigh Estates
Client/Agent: [Graham Drake]

Pensaer/Architect: Holder Mathias
[Terry Morley, Jamie Yeoman,
Fred Chan]

Awdurdod Cynllunio: Swansea CC
Planning Authority: [Elfed Roberts, Bryan Graham,
Huw Mowbray]

Statws Cynllunio:
Planning Status: Pre-planning

Y Panel Adolygu Dylunio/Design Review Panel:

Alan Francis (cadeirydd/chair)	Wendy Hall
Cindy Harris (swyddog/officer)	Ewan Jones
Geraint John	Phil Roberts
Kedrick Davies	Lyn Owen

Cyflwyniad/Presentation

These proposals are for the redevelopment of the former House of Fraser [David Evans] department store in the centre of Swansea for mixed retail and residential use. The Local Authority have worked on a number of previous proposals for this site and are currently developing a city centre framework document. This scheme would be the first phase of a major regeneration of the city centre and is seen as a catalyst for future development, especially the completion of this urban block.

The new buildings will respect the existing pattern of development, which is fairly modest in scale, and the height of the retail units will follow the parapet height established by the David Evans store and adjacent buildings. Where additional height is proposed, this takes the form of a pavilion set on top of a city block. The two/three storey elevations to the retail units show a simple repeating frame with glazed bays, and will incorporate a consistent lighting and signage strategy. Triangular projections into Castle Square and Princess Way are shown at second floor level. The building on Castle Street will be retained and refurbished for residential use, with a new two storey pavilion on top, set back behind the existing parapet wall. This follows the precedent set by the proposed redevelopment of Castle Buildings opposite. There will be a link through to the rear of the Princess Way block.

High quality, contemporary materials will be employed to create an elegant but restrained appearance. Terracotta rainscreen cladding above a Portland stone clad base will be complemented by flat metal cladding panels [shown in blue] to the projecting form at second floor level. All plant will be located at street level adjacent to the rear service road, or at high level behind screens.

These proposals include a reduction in the width of Princess Way to 17-18 metres, to create a more comfortable scale that relates to the width of the other main retail streets in Swansea. Future public realm design is envisaged to complement works currently underway on Lower Princess Way, but is not part of this proposal.

The appointed developer acquired the site originally with a view to refurbishment, but now wishes to take advantage of the greater potential offered by the proposed narrowing of Princess Way which creates more area for development. Earlier design concepts included a taller building for hotel and/or residential use, but this proved impractical due to parking requirements.

The local authority is broadly supportive of these proposals and the contemporary design approach. The two previous schemes were more ambitious, but undeliverable and aroused public opposition. The quality of execution and detail, together with an appropriate scale, are considered important. The narrowing and enclosure of Princess Way is welcomed, along with active frontages and consistent signage. Material specification is still not resolved and the Council would prefer a more solid, less 'clip-on' solution to the cladding. A planning application is envisaged for June/July 2005.

Ymateb y Panel/Panel's Response

The Panel welcomed the principle of mixed use development on this critical city centre site, especially the architectural treatment of the block on Castle Street. We found the treatment of the blocks on Princess Way more problematic, and would like to see more information on the site context, including sunpath diagrams and the likely effects on the microclimate of the new buildings and street restriction. An elevational treatment which reflects the different orientations would be more appropriate, and we think that a more environmental design approach should inform the architectural solution. The Panel supports the Council's preference for a more traditional, solid cladding material.

We welcome the treatment of the framed elements, but find the triangular projections unconvincing and think the large overhanging soffits could have an oppressive effect at street level. These could easily become victims of poor detailing and cost cutting, and the effect of this would be disastrous. The combination of triangular projections, open cut-back corners and angled blue elements provide too many disruptions of the regular stone and glazing facade grid. Where an architectural element breaks the grid, it should be for a clear purpose and the junctions thus created between different systems are critical details.

The Panel consider the upgrading of the public realm on Princess Way to be vital to the success of this development. The Council have a grant bid in to replicate the improvements on Lower Princess Way, but failing that they intend to enforce the obligation on the developer to carry out appropriate external works.

The proposed east/west link will be underground when entered from Castle Street but will emerge at grade on Princess Way due to a substantial difference in levels. Concern was expressed at the poor quality of the rear spaces dominated by the service access road. This is an adopted 2-way road, but parking restrictions are largely ignored, and the Council intend to make it one-way and improve access by trimming blocks where necessary. The Panel questioned the intention to open up Castle Square and use the building form to draw people into Princess Way. This contradicts the inherent function of a square as a contained space, enclosed by buildings.

The Panel would like to see the control of signage conditioned at the planning stage, along with a closer definition of materials. We welcome the idea of a rooftop cafe if it can be made to work, and the screening of any rooftop plant. [Some doubt was expressed as to whether the plant would really be invisible and it was suggested that a policy on this might be developed by the local authority.] We would like to see the large flat roof area used for renewable energy generation and/or a sedum roof as part of a sustainable drainage system. The suggestion of rooflights or sun pipes to introduce more daylight into the deep plan was felt by the developers to be more appropriate for the residential block. The Panel advocated consideration of a centralised heating system, rather than individual [electric] systems, and advised that the services design should anticipate the standards likely to be contained in the new Part L of the Building Regulations, and if possible exceed them.

The Panel felt strongly that choice of materials and quality of detailing need great care and attention for the successful execution of the design. The interaction between different types of panelling and the details of junctions need to be thought through meticulously, and again could be controlled via detailed conditions. The method of delivery will also be crucially important for the success of this development. The proposed method will be via competitive tender, in partnership with Swansea CC, once the bulk of the concept design has been produced. The architects are likely to be novated to the contractor at a stage

immediately prior to Building Regulations approval. A partnering approach with the design team fully involved would be more likely to succeed.

Crynodeb/Summary

The principle of mixed use development on this site is welcomed, along with the provision of active frontages and the elevational framework. In particular:

- The two storey pavilion on top of the residential block works well, although once this is done, all elevations are visible and have to work well from different aspects.
- We applaud the way in which signage has been considered especially at second floor level.
- The inclined prow at the south west corner and the triangular projections are not sympathetic or appropriate features and should be reconsidered.
- The elevational treatments and fenestration should respond more directly to the different solar orientations
- More consideration should be given at this stage to energy saving features, renewable generation, and low-carbon systems and fuels
- The local authority should ensure that the upgrading of the public realm in Princess Way is delivered with this scheme.
- Necessary basic improvements to the rear service area should be carried out
- The possibility of a rooftop cafe overlooking Castle Square should be pursued
- We would prefer to see an enhanced Design and Build route used, and strongly recommend the architects be novated at a later stage [E / F].
- If cost pressures are applied during the design development, we would prefer to see a simpler elevational treatment, with the quality of materials and detailing retaining the necessary priority.

Diwedd/End

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