

Addroddiad Adolygu Dylunio Design Review Report

Review Status: Confidential

Meeting date:	8th December 2010
Issue Date:	17th December 2010
Scheme Location:	Porth Teigr, Cardiff Bay
Scheme Description:	Digital Media Centre
Planning Status:	Pre-application

Part1: Presentation

This scheme was seen previously at Design Review in January 2010. Since then, through extensive consultation and a rebranding exercise, the name of the wider project has been changed from Roath Basin to Porth Teigr. Local access groups and potential end users for the Digital Media Centre have also been consulted.

Timber Street is being developed as a two way street but with no through access for vehicles. It will be pedestrian dominated with shared spaces and surfaces, and a simple uncluttered treatment. Five on-street parking spaces will be provided together with some temporary parking on the plot to the south west, pending future development.

The imagery of timber is still present in the building design, but slightly modified from the previous iteration. It is now represented as a series of stacked crates or cargo and this effect is apparent on the end elevations, which are clad in larch boards and glazing. The main elevations will be plain brickwork, probably using a brown brindled brick. Protruding pods will signify the main entrance, and house a cafe and meeting room. The layout for the upper floors allows for future flexibility, and A3 uses are planned for either end of the ground floor.

The Local Authority is generally more supportive of this design development of the building, the proposed massing and the active frontages, particularly as this block will be seen in isolation for some time. They would like to see a temporary bridge installed to deliver pedestrian access across the lock to the north east, and a commitment to delivering public realm to the waterfront. The public realm design for Timber Street and the waterfront needs further development. A design code should be agreed to specify, for example, the use of a common palette of materials. The full application for this building

would be in the context of an outline application for the masterplan which is yet to be granted.

Summary of key points arising from discussion, to be read in conjunction with Part 2 of this report.

The Panel was pleased to see the design development of this important building, which will be the first waterfront block in Porth Teigr. In our view, minor issues remain to be resolved:

- The development of a public realm strategy for the waterfront and Timber Street is now urgent and this should be integrated with a public art strategy.
- We welcome the development of a basic design code, to ensure a commonality of design approach which will help to give Porth Teigr a distinctive sense of place.
- We have some concerns about the design, form and location of the main entrance.
- We find the internal planning is somewhat contorted and illogical, and is not helped by the effect of the pods.
- We applaud the commitment to BREEAM Excellent and the site-wide, future proofed energy strategy. We would urge the team to achieve BREEAM Outstanding if possible.
- While we would discourage any large signage on the building, we think that all signs should be bilingual.

Part 2: Discussion and Panel Response in Full

The Panel emphasised the importance of the relationship between the building and streets and considered that this was not yet fully resolved. We understood that the scale of Timber Street was subservient to Tiger Way, but the aim was to maximise activity, using the view of the waterfront and the protruding boxes to invite engagement. The waterfront is not yet designed and we urged the team to build in a distinctive sense of place for the waterfront and Timber Street, combining a well integrated public art strategy in the detailed design. The permanent and temporary bridges should be seen as an important connection within the public realm strategy.

The design concept is for a strong but simple, background architectural approach, given that this building will eventually be surrounded by other blocks. Currently it is envisaged that future development will be in the form of a C shaped block wrapping around this one. The team is developing a strategy for the urban grain and massing and will submit a design code along with the DMC application. We thought it was important to establish a common architectural language to avoid the development of individual 'statement' buildings without reference to their context. Materials will be sourced from within a 50 mile radius where possible, but this will not be feasible with regard to the brick currently specified.

The Panel warned that the purity of the pods was being undermined by the current form. We think they should be treated as more autonomous units and that allowing access to their roofs (eg for small meeting areas) weakened the desired effect of loosely scattered 'crates'.

The Panel had concerns about the entrance pod, in terms of its design and location. It appears to be angled to attract attention from Tiger Way, but then requires a 180 degree turn for visitors looking for the reception desk. The architect explained that the shape of the entrance pod was intended to represent the crane (originally a vertical signifier of the entrance) lying on its side. We thought that the architectural narrative was compromising functionality in this case, and that the pod should have an autonomous justification, apart from the 'story'.

The Panel questioned why the main entrance was not located off the major road, Tiger Way. The team stated that a central entrance and core was better for accessibility and legibility, and that their aim was to draw people down Timber Street and reinforce the cafe/retail uses on the waterfront. We thought that to achieve this, the entrance could be even more pronounced, offering covered space to shelter and linger. We were informed that the proposed cycle rack located at the main entrance will be covered. Our main concern is that the ground floor plan and elevation should present a cohesive and legible public face to Timber Street.

The idea of 'stacked crates' expressed externally at each end of the building does not appear to have an internal impact or a logical relationship with the interior planning. We thought that the internal layout was unnecessarily contorted and the sub-division of internal spaces was not clearly demonstrated.

The Panel welcomed the BREEAM pre-assessment which showed a score of 78, without the addition of renewable technologies. The team will work to target BREEAM Outstanding, probably using roof mounted solar PV panels, which would be a good match with the main energy demand. A brown roof finish is under consideration, and the roof will no longer be open to public access. There is potential to obtain waste heat from the newly approved Energy from Waste plant at Trident Park, and the infrastructure works will include ducting for future connection to a district heating network.

The Panel questioned the suitability of Larch as the timber cladding in this exposed location. We did not doubt the team's capacity to detail this well and avoid the effects of differential weathering, but we thought that any softwood would start to deteriorate after a relatively short time and this would pose issues of maintenance and long term value.

The Design Commission for Wales Design Review Panel and staff welcome further consultation and will be happy to provide further feedback on this report and/or where appropriate, to receive further presentations. Thank you for consulting the Commission and please keep in touch with us about the progress of your project.

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

Appendix 1: Attendees

Asiant/Client/Datblygwr:
Agent/Client/Developer

Igloo Renegeration (Mark Hallett)
WAG (John Karseras)

Pensaer/Architect:

Ash Sakula (Robert Sakula)

Consultants:

Hoare Lea (John Rhoden)
LDA Design (Sophie Thompson)

AwdurdodCynllunio/
Planning Authority

Cardiff CC (Richard Cole)

Y Panel Adlygu Dylunio:
Design Review Panel:
Wendy Richards [Chair]
Cindy Harris [Officer]
Kieren Morgan

Toby Adam
Jonathan Hines
Simon Carne

Lead Panellist:

Kieren Morgan

Sylwedyddion/Observers:

Carole-Anne Davies (DCFW)