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| Design Review Report: | 21 January 2005 |
| Meeting Date / Material Submitted: | 13 January 2005 |
| Location: | Cardiff city centre |
| Scheme Description: | St Davids Two: retail, mixed use |
| Architects: | Benoy Architects: James Utting, Graham Izzard, Arthur Leydon, Glyn Rees |
| Client/Developer: | Land Securities: Matt Holman, Andrew Dudley |
| Planning Consultants: | Turley Associates: Craig O'Brien |
| Planning Authority: | Cardiff City Council: Helen Hodgson |
| Planning Status: | Outline planning approval exists |
| Date for detailed application (if known) | January 2005 |
| Design Review Panel: | |
| Alan Francis (chair) | Lyn Owen |
| Cindy Harris (officer) | Howard Wainwright |
| Wendy Hall | |

Presentation

The presenting team apologised for the lack of advance material. Recent consultation with the local planning authority has been frequent and time-consuming. It was agreed to base the agenda for this meeting on the last Design Review report and the summary of outstanding issues.

The Hayes

The massing of the residential blocks has been reduced by stepping of the roofline and by a series of setbacks, some progressively staggered. The combined effect of these changes reinforces the apparent difference in height of the different blocks when seen from the street. The north-west corner block retains the same height as previously, but is slimmer (by 4.5 metres) and no longer features the overhanging glazed roof. The reduction in depth has come about as the Council has requested that the public realm in this area be enhanced and consequently has been widened to create a larger space. The Council have no objection to the height, which is deemed to mark the corner in an appropriate way.

A continuous canopy is proposed along the frontage to shelter pedestrians. The recently completed daylight study of the Hayes shows the main street to be clear of shadow by 10am in December. The study of wind effects shows some turbulence at the southern end of the Hayes, but is 'benign' in Tredegar St and Hills St. There may be problems at the east end of the Bridge Street arcade. The whole of St Davids Two remains naturally ventilated without lobby doors.

The Arcades

The current stage of design development favours a pitched roof with exposed steel trusses and timber boarding on the underside. Glazed ridge panels provide a central daylight source, becoming a fully glazed roof at the main intersection. The Grand Arcade has a strong architectural form providing a simple backdrop and regular rhythm for the retail units. Shop frontages are characterised by solid piers and steel framed portal openings, possibly recessed. Bridges are treated as separate elements rather than extensions of the internal street. The triple height approach to Bridge St arcade from the Hayes is light, elegant and transparent and serves to break up the massing on the Hayes. The designers confirmed that all roof plant will be controlled and screened from view.

Hills Street Links

The Hills Street link has now been reduced to 12 metres in width, and the Tredegar Street link to 11 metres, from an original 17 metres each. The latter retains the through link at first floor level, but changes orientation at street level, to become a 24 hour, east/west link with a simple, cable supported canopy. At Hills St, the proposed link is in the form of a planar glazed box, with a reduced height. However, this remains a point of contention with Cardiff City Council who prefer a lightweight structure, with the aim of keeping the buildings either side as separate as possible.

John Lewis Store

The 'blade' signage has been removed and the architects are working on the design of a canopy around the north-west facing 'prow'. This will be in the same language as those on the Hayes, with a lightweight structure and detailing. Currently the point of the prow features a stone column and discussions with JLP to 'round the point' are ongoing. The developers are working with JLP to introduce active frontages where possible and the Council are looking for tree planting and fenestration on Hayes Bridge Rd. The line of the Library has been moved back by two metres along Hayes Bridge Rd, to the original back-of-pavement line.

Environmental Strategy

The designers confirmed that underfloor heating will be used in the arcades, and that active solar measures are being explored. Enquiries on the financial feasibility of using Welsh granite have not been successful and the price differential is considered too great for this to be considered. The developers agreed to continue to research possibilities for inclusion of some locally sourced and referenced finish material.

The East End – Markets, Cinema, Public Realm

The intention is to retain the existing market on Barracks Lane, with the possibility of providing lock-ups in which traders could store stalls overnight. The City's requirement for 155 cycle storage places will reduce the active frontage in this area. No further solution is proposed to the improvement of the public realm and traffic flows around the cinema, although the possibility was raised of repeating the

proposed experiment in Exhibition Rd, Kensington [not yet implemented], where all barriers and traffic control measures would be removed.

Panel's Response

The Hayes

With regard to the residential blocks on the Hayes, the Panel are pleased to see the measures taken to reduce the apparent massing and to provide a more solid, slimmer and simpler corner building on the northern end. We are still not entirely comfortable with the massing at the southern end, or with the continuous heaviness of the bulkhead above the first retail storey. Although the Panel is pleased to see the adjustments made to the residential massing as a whole, the wire frame perspectives appear to give a heavy horizontal emphasis to the fascia above the first floor retail. The panel have concerns about this, as it seems at odds with the general massing of the street and with the proposed disposition of the new retail (which also occurs at 2nd floor level) and gives an uncomfortable overall composition in the block. Trees may shield this view (as they did in the original perspectives) but the composition needs to work in its own right.

The impact of these proposals on views from the public balconies of St Davids Hall should be considered, even at this late stage.

We remain to be convinced that the proposed canopies will be effective protection in the microclimate of the street, and are not just there for signage or delineation.

There has been no progress in negotiations with the Tabernacle church on the Hayes concerning their desire to retain 24 hour vehicular access.

The Arcades

The Panel welcomes the approach currently being taken to the design of the arcades, including the pitched roof form with steel trusses. In particular the elegant entrance from the Hayes into the Bridge Street arcade is appreciated. We would like to see more vertical emphasis in the treatment of the shopfront openings, with supports visibly brought down to the ground and the higher bulkheads/fascias separated vertically. The crossing point of the Grand arcade with Bridge Street arcade is vital and its treatment as a courtyard, with spaces to linger in, is appropriate. We are disappointed that no measures have been taken to introduce daylight into the eastern end of Bridge Street arcade, where it passes under the car park.

The shop units on Bridge Street arcade should face the arcade wherever possible. Where a corner unit occurs and faces the Grand Arcade, the returned frontage down Bridge Street arcade should be as animated as possible and incorporate entrances. We applaud the increased number of smaller units and kiosks.

Bridges and Links

The Panel endorses the design decision to treat the bridge links as separate entities, making connections between distinct buildings. We have sympathy with the views of the city council concerning the form and width (although reduced) of the bridge across Hills Street, and think it should be a lighter structure than that proposed. The developer stated that the driver behind their approach was commercial rather than design led.

JLP Store

The Panel welcomes the loss of the 'blade' signage at the north/west corner, but we remain extremely concerned to see that the form of the 'prow' is no less

protuberant, and is to be surrounded by a canopy intruding even further into the junction of the Hayes with Hayes Bridge Road. Despite the setting back of the library, we remain apprehensive at the narrowing of the entrance to Hayes Bridge Road, and fear that this historic route will become little more than a service road. We still believe that this corner of the JLP store needs to be re-addressed so as to be less aggressive and to open up a proper alignment to Hayes Bridge Road. The relationship of built form and massing between the library, JLP and the corner of St.Davids Two at this point needs to be reviewed in respect of this.

The elevational treatment of all sides of the JLP store need further work, with the aim of maximising active frontages. We support any efforts made to reduce the impact of the 'prow' such as rounding the sharply angular point.

The pedestrian route from Bute Terrace and Meridian Gate, across to the south side of the JLP store and northwards via Hayes Bridge Road to the Hayes, should be protected.

The East End

We are still concerned about the lack of detailed solutions for the treatment of the east side of the scheme. These concerns relate to the need for the appearance of the eastern facades to be of a good standard, and not in any way be viewed as a 'back end'. This will require attention to the details of massing and materials, particularly of the car park. The eastern entry to the Bridge Street arcade should be well detailed. The proposed relocation of the Barracks Lane market is supported, subject to seeing further details .

The public realm at the eastern end also requires more detailed consideration to ensure it is attractive and safe. The adjacent cinema and Cardiff International Arena generate heavy pedestrian usage, which will at times mingle with vehicular and pedestrian flows to the new St Davids 2 scheme. Careful design must ensure that this variety of movements takes place along clear and safe routes.

View from Cardiff City Council

Local planners are keen to preserve and replicate the local and historic distinctiveness of the arcades. They are determined that all links and bridges, particularly the one in Hills Street, be lightweight and not lead to the coalescing of opposing buildings. The city advanced and supports the suggestion to round the point of the JLP projection. There is concern about the environment around the cinema and the east end of the Bridge Street arcade, and about the massing of the car park.

It is intended that a reserved matters application will be submitted on 31st January. The confirmation of the outline application is still awaiting finalisation of the section 106 agreement.

Summary

In brief, we welcome the aspirations for the arcades as outlined in the presentation and we support the developing changes to vary the massing of the elevations along the Hayes, subject to resolution of the 2nd floor fascia. The re-worked Tredegar Street link is an improvement, as is the new arrangement for the Barracks Street market. However:

- We are strongly opposed to the extent to which the JLP frontage intrudes into the view down the Hayes, where the library should predominate, and into the historic north/south route linking the City to the Bay along Hayes Bridge Road.

- We remain concerned that the eastern side of the scheme still has many unresolved elements, and we wish to see this area treated with the same quality of design and attention to detail as the rest of the scheme, with a secure and accessible public realm.
- We support the need for a lighter treatment of the Hills Street bridge.

We require more details in the following areas:

- Daylight analysis of the Hayes
- Typical sections and elevations for the JLP store
- The impact on the view down the Hayes from St Davids Hall
- The elevations to the car park
- Details for treatment of the public realm at the eastern side.
- Details and sections of the canopies on the Hayes and on the JLP store
- Detailing of the spandrels in the arcades

End

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