Addroddiad Adolygu Dylunio
Design Review Report

Review Status: Public

Meeting date:	2nd March 2011
Issue Date:	11th March 2011
Scheme Location:	Admiral HQ, Cardiff
Scheme Description:	Commercial
Planning Status:	Pre-application

Part1: Presentation

First brought to Design Review in November 2010, the team have returned for further consultation on the developing design of this scheme, ahead of a planning application to be submitted in a few weesk time.

The architects are mindful that this is a tall building in relation to its context and that all facades are important. Natural daylight in internal spaces has been maximised and the floor to ceiling heights of 3.2m are generous. The intention is to create a calm, simple, high quality building, articulated as two blocks and linked by a lighter glazed element. The roof plant is screened by an extension of the facade treatment and all four elevations now reveal double storey spacings internally. There will be a restricted palette of materials comprising glass, precast stone and aluminium frames.

The target for BREEAM Excellent remains and the 600 m^2 of PV panels will be integrated into the vertical glazing and/or located on the roof.

The new area of public space to the west of the building links the food court at St David's 2 (SD2), the CIA and the cinema and it is hoped that this will generate active evening uses, complemented by cafe uses on the ground floor of the proposed office building. Paving materials will be mixed granite as used in the Hayes and public art will be integrated through the scheme rather than being a single element.

The local authority have had productive discussions with the team and are reasonably happy with the way the scheme is developing. Outstanding issues remain the public realm treatment and confirmation of materials.

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

The Panel was pleased to be further consulted on this important project for Cardiff city centre. Progress on the design development was welcomed, as was the productive discussion. The Panel has confidence in the team's capacity to resolve the remaining minor issues in a satisfactory way. In summary:

- The public ream design has developed positively, but we still have some concerns about the interface with SD2 to the west and how well used this new public space will be. It is a narrow, potentially dark and windy space and its comfort needs to be assured as regards wind tunnel tests and any necessary amelioration.
- The green space and tree planting on Mary Ann Street should be reconsidered and perhaps extended to shield the public realm from car park traffic. The geometry of the darker bands of paving across all the public realm should be given a clearer logic.
- We would like to see stronger and safer pedestrian links with Barrack Lane and Mary Ann Street. The location and treatment of the pedestrian crossings on Bridge Street and David Street should be revised and improved.
- The importance of the relationship to the Charles Street conservation area and the need to avoid Bridge Street becoming a 'dead' service area, both point to the importance of retaining an active use on the north east corner of the scheme.
- The quality of materials and sophistication of detailing will determine the success or otherwise of the building, and the Panel welcomes the attention being paid by the design team to these matters.
- A strategy for integrated public art should be progressed with the public realm design and should respond to Cardiff Council's Public Art Strategy.
- We welcome the commitment to achieve BREEAM Excellent and the integration of PVs, either on the elevations or the roof. If utilised in the glazing on the southern elevation, the color and transparency of the glass should not be dramatically altered.

Part 2: Discussion and Panel Response in Full

The Panel sought clarification on the responsibility for future maintenance of the public realm and we were informed that the streets to the north, east and south were the responsibility of the highways department. Land to the west would be maintained by Land Securities up to the line of columns on the proposed office building.

The Panel appreciated the promised quality of paving materials, but thought that the coloured bands as shown on the drawings appeared arbitrary. We agreed with the suggestion that they respond more closely to likely desire lines and spaces, and that they run through the building using the same material treatment inside and out at ground floor level.

The Panel was concerned that Bridge Street would effectively be downgraded to a service road and emphasised the importance of retaining active ground floor uses and high quality treatment on all sides. This is especially important in terms of the building's relationship to the adjacent conservation area. The pedestrian crossing which aligns with the north west corner of the building does not address the continuity of pedestrian desire lines. Although

its position has been determined by the SD2 safety audit and forward visibility splay requirements, we suggested this should be re-visited in the light of the guidance in Manual for Streets. Both crossings on Bridge Street and David Street appear to be arbitrarily sited and not designed to encourage pedestrian use or traffic calming. We would like to see a shared space approach used for these crossings and the local authority representative agreed to pursue this.

The Panel questioned the retention of the green area to the west, which restricts the area of public access. However, we accepted that it serves to separate and screen the public space from the road and the car park, and that it could be extended and reconfigured in conjunction with changes to the junction layout on the south west corner.

We noted that the north and south elevations of the building were now virtually identical and the architect confirmed that aesthetic considerations had driven the desire to carry the horizontal lines right round the building and to emphasise the strong stone frames on two sides of the building. The profiles of the mullions will vary and some will be chamfered in order to admit daylight while still providing shading. Although there is only one main entrance, it is situated on the south west corner and addresses two sides of the building and surrounding space.

While in general the square columns work well, the Panel highlighted the weakness of the central columns at the base of the north and south elevation bays, that do not continue into the facade above. The architect acknowledged that these detailed issues needed to be resolved.

A desk top wind study has been carried out which showed a slight increase in wind strength on the site, and this has led to a full wind tunnel test which will inform the landscape design. The team confirmed that they will meet the "sitting" conditions defined by Lawson Comfort Criteria .

The Panel requested further details on materials, colours and finishes. The stone elements will be off-white and the anodised aluminium will be a champagne colour, which we thought might be too strong and difficult to handle with the stone. The team said that they were also considering a grey colour, which we preferred. The Panel stressed the need for careful consideration of the treatment to the glazing frames, as a bright anodized finish of the kind proposed may compromise the clear definition of solid and void that distinguishes the proposed elevations. The team stated that the glass will be as neutral as possible, joints as seamless as possible, and the framing will be largely concealed behind the stone mullions. The effect of any integrated PVs in terms of shading, daylight and colour will be carefully assessed and good daylight levels will be maintained. We suggested that a small open joint be used between different materials, avoiding visible sealants. The Panel was surprised that a building of this type did not have integrated window cleaning equipment.

The design team noted that there was still significant design work required to finalise the roof top plantrooms. The Panel was concerned that the horizontal screen over the highest level was limited to each end of the roof and that this lack of a complete screen would be clearly visible from street level.

The Panel was pleased that a professional public art adviser was in place. However this aspect needs to progress swiftly, alongside final designs for the public realm as a whole.

We would not wish to see artworks employed to mitigate the challenges identified in the public realm, but rather used to properly enhance the urban design solutions. A sound strategy for integrated works is required, including consideration of temporary or ephemeral works. The strategy should respond to the local authority's own Public Art Strategy and could be informed by the approach taken by Land Securities on SD2. Aspirations for performance areas require careful consideration, with input from artform specialists, so as to avoid a legacy of designated but unused performance spaces. The success of such spaces relies on properly funded and programmed events and commitment will be needed from the local authority and partners in order to ensure success.

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	Stoford (Gerard Ludlow)
Pensaer/Architect:	Glen Howells Architects (Stephen Spencer)
Consultants:	Turley Associates (Tom Rocke) HED Landscapes (Chris Butten) Arup (Matt Chambers)
AwdurdodCynllunio/ Planning Authority	Cardiff Council (Lawrence Dowdall)
Y Panel Adlygu Dylunio: Design Review Panel:	
John Punter [Chair]	Richard Keogh
Cindy Harris [Officer]	Roger Ayton
Jonathan Adams	Ewan Jones
Carole-Anne Davies	Andrew Linfoot
Lead Panellist:	Andrew Linfoot
Sylwedyddion/Observers:	Geraint Talfan Davies (Institute of Welsh Affairs)

Declaration of interest: Gaunt Francis Architects, one of whose directors is Chair of DCFW, is currently acting for the developer, Stoford, with responsibility for the fit-out.