

Plymouth Design Panel Review

Wednesday 28th October, Thursday 29th October 2008
Derriford/Elliot Terrace, Plymouth.

In Attendance

Les Sparks (chair)
Prof Adrian Gale
Martin Harradine
Rebecca Child
Mark Pearson
Tanya Griffiths (secretary)

Agenda Items

1. Derriford Multistorey Car Park, planning application
2. Forder Valley Masterplan, pre-application – confidential
3. Hellermann-Tyton, William Prance Road, pre-application – confidential
4. Princess Yachts, Millbay, planning application
5. Ker Street Phase II, pre-application not confidential
6. Devonport Police Station, pre-application confidential
7. North Cross Framework, pre-application confidential
8. Plymouth College of Art and Design (PCAD) Masterplan– Panel Briefing

Note: The developers of some of the agenda items have requested that the reports be treated as confidential at pre-application stage. If any of the pre applications discussions result in the submission of a planning application the Plymouth Design Panel report will be available on request and will be referred to in the Planning Officer's report. They will also be published on the Plymouth City Council website as a matter of record.

1. Derriford Transferium (Multi-storey car park) Live planning application

The panel was very pleased to see this key element of the North West Quadrant masterplan progressing and were generally impressed with the quality of the design. There were a few concerns and suggestions made as follows:-

Pedestrian Movement

A principal concern was the significance of pedestrian movement which the panel felt had not been fully acknowledged by the proposal including the principal routes to and from the hospital, the road crossing, the legibility of the entrances, orientation and routes through the car park. The relationship to the proposed reconfiguration of the hospital entrance forecourt to allow a more direct pedestrian route from the car park was felt to be essential to the success of the Transferium.

The prominence of the core on the north east corner of the site as the route most likely to be used by visitors and staff might be made more significant and the core itself might be more generous in size. It was not clear how a first time or infrequent visitor might orientate themselves from the south west core to get to the hospital.

It was noted after the meeting that the north east corner pedestrian entrance might have been better placed further up the high street to draw people along the street, thereby providing an opportunity for a retail unit on the corner which would benefit from significant footfall.

Vehicular entrances should strike a balance between being distinguishable, therefore providing ease of navigation, and to the impact on the urban streetscape of the High Street.

It was suggested that the nature of the pedestrian routes internally in the car park, particularly in relation to the north east core, be further explored. It was difficult to assess the gradient of all the vehicular ramps within the structure and whether these would be suitable for the more elderly and frail visitors to use, as pedestrians. The use of graphics to indicate routes could be enhanced by other architectural means to help orientate visitors.

The inclusion of a high quality stair access on the west side connecting the landscaped area to the terrace was thought to be a positive addition. However, the nature of the pedestrian experience and the value added by the external walkway on the second floor to the south and east were questioned. It was noted that there was an opportunity to improve the internal routes on this level by utilising the external walkway space to create a single much more significant (better protected) route which would help with way finding.

Massing and Phasing

The panel felt that the nursery made a very valuable contribution to the scheme but there was a concern that the courtyard and particularly the nursery roof terrace which is an important amenity for this facility would be overshadowed by the massing even within the phase 1 scheme and that this would be exacerbated with the addition of the second phase.

The panel wished to reserve its position on Phase 2: there were concerns about the architectural expression eg. how the blocks would be articulated, how the additional floors would integrate with the elevations and the overall impact on the massing within the masterplan.

Architectural Expression

The stratification and layering of landscape as a façade treatment was regarded as an exciting prospect.

The urban character which the Transferium brings to the High Street is crucial particularly as the cornerstone of the masterplan and because of the lack of enclosure onto the Care Square.

Summary

The panel were enthusiastic about the proposal and the standards it sets for the masterplan as a whole and hopes to see a higher degree of resolution on the issues it has raised in relation to pedestrian movement, the character of the high street, the roof top amenity and concerns about the second phase of work.