

Glasgow Urban Design Panel

Committee Room, Glasgow City Chambers
Thursday 5 March 2015

Proposal: Park Circus
Address: Park Quadrant, West End, Glasgow
Status/Ref: Pre-Stage 2 review
Developer: Espresso
Presentation: Holmes Miller Architects

The Panel thanked the developer and architect for their introduction, and the architect for their presentation, for their proposed design for Park Quadrant in Glasgow's West End and recorded the following observations:

1.Site analysis including historical, social, architectural background.

An analysis of the surrounding area was presented, showing the diverse and contrasting characteristics of Park Circus at its centre, and the outward facing Park Terrace and Park Quadrant. The outer ring's distinctive roofscape and detailed elevations were highlighted. It was shown how the area's layout was not as axial or symmetrical as might be assumed. A more focussed evaluation of the site indicated how its development would be an extension of a 4 storey bay windowed terrace with additional basement and loft storeys, which lay to the west.

2.Site levels.

In the proposals, changes in level along the site were dealt with by stepping the building at each party wall. In this respect the design presented made a good start to resolving this important issue. However the levels for rear landscaping and car parking had not been fully considered, and it was unclear whether the landscaping would be a continuous horizontal zone, or be stepped to reflect the building's changes in level.

3.Orientation.

The plans presented showed public rooms facing north, to the front, but critically the design had not yet addressed the contrast between the north and south sides of the building, both in terms of appearance and function; for example it was not shown how the possible addition of south facing balconies, which was referred to, might affect the functionality of many flat plans, by drawing activity to the south. There was a specific lack of complete design proposals for the south elevation at the equivalent level of detail as provided for the north.

4. Access, front and rear, pedestrian and vehicles.

Each close had pedestrian access from the front, and access to bin and cycle storage areas at the rear. At the front of the building the plans appeared to indicate the potential for generously proportioned ground floor entrance halls, which should be encouraged. Access from rear close entrances to basement car parking did not seem to be fully resolved, as the strategy for dealing with levels to the rear was unclear. Vehicular access to the car park would be off Park Circus Lane.

5.Flat planning including double and single aspect.

Options for developing a terrace of between 10 - 12 cores were presented, illustrating a range of possible flat configurations and layouts. In some cases a proportion of north facing single aspect flats would be included, but these were eliminated from options with 11 or more cores, and this was to be welcomed.

6. Height, scale, massing, cross-section and ratios of solid to void.

The north facing façade exhibited a hierarchy of elements, including pairs of bay windows attempting to continue the type of rhythm on the existing building to the west. This, together with an expressive roof profile, reflected the building's context. The proposed section showed 5 floors below a

penthouse level; probably accommodating small flats at ground floor level, and grander apartments with higher ceiling heights on the intermediate floors. While ceiling heights were not fully resolved, ideas for such well-proportioned rooms facing the park were to be encouraged. Design opportunities for the south side of the building had not been as thoroughly considered, although the possibility of incorporating balconies was being contemplated.

7. Facade design including depth, string courses, materials.

Only the front façade appeared to have been fully examined, with emphasis on verticality, uniformity, and repetitiveness; while this north elevation was encouraging, a closer exploration of fenestration and detailing was required. Ideas shown for a flamboyantly profiled penthouse roof contributing to the area's roofscape were to be welcomed, but were very much work-in-progress and would need further refinement if a *schizophrenic* relationship to the stone façade below was to be avoided.

8. Entrance and close access including natural light.

Front entrances to each close featured a portico which, while not detailed, could potentially include decorative metalwork. As these elements would make an especially important contribution to the development's image, they should be celebrated with carefully considered features, so that in conjunction with elegantly designed entrance halls they could promote an attractive lifestyle to people in what was not traditionally a tenemental area. It was indicated how stairwells on the south elevation might break it up visually and could let natural light into the cores.

9. Servicing, refuse, exterior drying areas

Bin storage and provision of clothes drying had not yet been resolved. Solutions were likely to be closely related to the car park and landscape design, which had not been advanced beyond a general concept. However it was suggested that the final answer for refuse collection was likely to require a factoring input, rather than be a self-managing proposal.

10. Landscape setting including silhouette.

A landscaped deck would be constructed over the car parking to the rear, providing amenity space allocated to individual ground floor flats and also as common areas. This was presented in only very general terms, and both its function and concept design needed consideration.