

Date: Monday, January 27, 2003
Time: 3.30 p.m.
Place: Committee Room No. 1, City Hall

PRESENT:**Board**

F. Scobie Director of Development Services (Chair)
L. Beasley Co-Director of Planning
B. MacGregor Deputy City Manager
D. Rudberg General Manager of Engineering Services

Advisory Panel

W. Francl Representative of the Design Professions (Urban Design Panel)
J. Hancock Representative of the Design Professions
P. Kavanagh Representative of Development Industry
E. Mah Representative of Development Industry
D. Chung Representative of General Public
C. Henschel Representative of General Public
M. Mortensen Representative of General Public

Regrets

J. Leduc Representative of General Public

ALSO PRESENT:

R. Segal Development Planner
M. Thomson City Surveyor
P. Pinsker Parking & Development Engineer
D. Robinson Project Facilitator

687 Howe Street

B. Thom Bing Thom Architect
C. Phillips Philips Wuori Long Inc.
J. Mouzourakis Owner's representative

Clerk to the Board: C. Hubbard

1. MINUTES**550 Taylor Street - DE406939**

Mr. Beasley requested an amendment to p.4, paragraph 3, to add to the first sentence: "requesting public parking in the development".

It was moved by Mr. Beasley, seconded by Mr. MacGregor, and was the decision of the Board:

THAT the Minutes of the Development Permit Board and Advisory Panel Meeting of January 13, 2003 be approved as amended.

2. BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

None.

**3. 687 HOWE STREET - DE407114 - ZONE CD-1
(COMPLETE APPLICATION)**

Applicant: Allied Holdings Ltd.

Request: To construct a 50-storey, mixed-use, hotel/multiple dwelling building, containing 97 hotel units and 204 dwelling units and six levels of above-grade, ancillary, automated parking accessed off Howe Street, all atop seven levels of underground parking accessed off the rear lane.

Development Planner's Opening Comments

The Development Planner, Ralph Segal, presented this application for a mixed-use development comprising hotel and residential uses. He briefly reviewed the site context. Most of the principal issues, including height and massing, were dealt with at the rezoning stage. A series of Text Amendments to the CD-1 zoning will be considered by Council on January 29, 2003, relating to approximately 51,000 sq.ft. floor area exclusions and the proposed above-grade automated parking. Approval of this development application will be subject to Council's approval of these amendments. The proposed height of the development complies with the height established in the CD-1 zoning.

The main issue identified by staff is to ensure that the high quality of architecture proposed by this design team is carried through to the built project, noting this building will be much more expensive to build than a typical Vancouver high-rise development. Staff seek greater details on the proposed glass curtain wall and fritted glass, and on the surface treatments at the porte-cochere. Referring to glass samples (A and B), Mr. Segal noted the architect is still investigating exactly which glass will be used. Staff believe the higher degree of transparency of sample B is preferable. The quality that staff seek for the glass is that it has the highest degree of transparency possible, is the least reflective, and that it be a light colour. There are a series of detailed issues relating to achieving the proper functioning of the porte-cochere.

In summary, staff consider this to be a very ambitious scheme and a very sophisticated piece of architecture. It will be one of the of the tallest buildings in the city and highly prominent on the skyline. The Staff Committee recommends approval, subject to the conditions contained in the report dated January 15, 2003, and noting that approval is also subject to Council's approval of the Text Amendments and of the final form of development.

Questions/Discussion

In response to a question from Mr. Beasley regarding the Text Amendments, Mr. Segal confirmed that adjustments to the floor area calculations will not change the physical appearance of the building as presented in this application and the height is within the limit of the current zoning. The revisions necessary if the text amendments are not approved would be dealt with as Minor Amendments to the Development Permit.

Given the concerns about the appearance of the glass, Mr. Beasley commented it is important that the model is a true representation of what will be built, noting the model expresses an extremely transparent building. Mr. Beasley was also concerned about how much of the above-grade parking will be visible. Mr. Segal acknowledged that window coverings and final exterior glass selection will likely cause the built project to be darker than shown on the model. With respect to the above-grade parking, Mr. Segal explained the intent is that the façades not be completely blank and impenetrable. Through the use of fritted glass, with varying degrees of permeability, there will be some visual penetration into the parking.

In response to a question from Mr. Mortensen, the Development Planner confirmed the residential units will be required to be air-conditioned.

Applicant's Comments

Bing Thom, Architect, commented this is a very challenging site and much of the difficulty comes with saving the Georgia Hotel. With respect to the model, Mr. Thom noted that plexiglass is available in only a limited number of shades so it can never replicate the appearance of real glass. He stressed they have tried to build the model in the spirit of their description of the project. Regarding the above-grade parking, Mr. Thom said it is their intention that it will not be very visible. He described the proposed fritted glass system, noting the intention of the design is to go from a very solid base, which reflects and complements the Georgia Hotel, to gradually more clear glass as the building increases in height. He described the fritted glass concept in greater detail and how it picks up rhythm of the bays of the Georgia Hotel. Mr. Thom said he believes very little of the parkade will be visible in daylight, but it will be more visible and interesting at night.

With respect to the glass, Mr. Thom stressed he is in full agreement with Planning staff about trying to achieve the qualities of maximum transparency, least reflectance, and colour, all of which have to be counter balanced with energy performance and appearance. For this reason, Mr. Thom requested some flexibility in the conditions with respect to the glass, noting they intend to build a full-size, 2-storey model so that the best choice of glass can be made. They think the 12" x 12" samples are too small to be reliable and believe it is unrealistic to definitively determine the choice of glass at the development permit stage. He added, however, that it will be beneficial to all concerned to be in agreement about the direction to be taken.

Regarding the canopy, Mr. Thom said they think it would detract from the special expression of the building. He noted that Howe is not a retail street. He added, they developed the porte-cochere as an announcement of the building entry and to keep the traffic off Howe Street. Their concern is that a canopy would encourage more activity on the sidewalk and the street, which they are trying to avoid.

With respect to lighting, Mr. Thom said they intend to do something very innovative at the top of the building. He concurred with the request for a lighting proposal, noting it will take some time to develop.

Questions/Discussion

In response to a question from Mr. Beasley regarding weather protection, Mr. Segal advised that policy indicates streets where weather protection is preferred and streets where weather protection is required. Policy with regard to Howe Street, which is not a retail street, is silent with respect to canopies.

Mr. MacGregor raised a question about the caulking to be used on the building. Mr. Thom said they hope not to use black and would prefer to use grey. This will also be tested in the proposed full-scale mock-up.

Mr. Francl advised the Urban Design Panel agreed the success of this building will be in the quality of the glass. He noted that glass is very difficult to convey realistically in a model and the proposed 2-storey mock-up will be very important in determining what the building should look like. In discussion, Mr. Segal drew attention to the Note after the major design conditions, which stresses the high quality materials and details are to carry through to construction. In response to a question from Mr. Beasley, Mr. Thom confirmed he was comfortable with the conditions as written. Considerable discussion ensued regarding the quality of the glass.

In response to a question from Mr. Scobie concerning the date for compliance with the conditions, Mr. Thom requested this be amended from April 23, 2003 to July 31, 2003 (condition B.1.2). With respect to the extensive commentary from Processing Centre-Building (Appendix C), Mr. Thom explained their original proposal was for the tower to be further forward on the site but this was not possible with the retention of the existing Georgia Hotel. This created problems with respect to the demising wall. Discussions on this issue are continuing with the Building Department.

Mr. Kavanagh sought the architect's response to the suggestion that a canopy would announce the building entry. Mr. Thom advised the usable entry will be within the porte-cochere. A canopy would provide some weather protection but would not announce the entry. Mr. Mortensen raised a question about the impact of the scale of this building at street level without a canopy. Mr. Thom noted the glass is articulated to add interest at pedestrian level, and any horizontal element attached to the base will detract from the building's intended image. In this particular case, Mr. Thom said he believes a canopy is not appropriate and it will be difficult to integrate into the design. The owner's representative, Mr. Mouzourakis, added he was not convinced either way and will accept either solution. In discussion, Mr. Segal advised staff's first priority for weather protection is along the lobby frontage. He confirmed staff would have no objection to the architect deciding on an appropriate architectural response to weather protection.

Mr. Henschel sought clarification with respect to the sky lobby. Mr. Thom advised the ultimate design for the sky lobby will depend on which hotelier is successful and whether or not a swimming pool is included in the concept.

Responding to a question from Mr. Chung regarding the above-grade parkade, Mr. Segal advised the City does not normally permit above-grade parking but has agreed to it in this instance because of the limitations of this site. Staff believe concerns about its impact on the street are being adequately addressed with the proposed fritted glass concept. In response to a question from Mr. Mah about the track record of the proposed automated parking system, Mr. Thom advised considerable research has been undertaken, involving operating systems in Europe and Asia. It has a number of advantages and they are convinced it will become more prevalent in North America.

Comments from Other Speakers

None.

Panel Opinion

Mr. Francl advised the Urban Design Panel strongly supported this application and said he thinks it is a great piece of architecture. He confirmed the major design conditions respond to issues raised by the Panel and will adequately protect the City as the design continues to evolve. With respect to the canopy, Mr. Francl said he sympathized with the architect's concern about having a prescribed solution. He recommended that Mr. Thom be given an opportunity to respond as creatively as he can. Mr. Francl recommended approval of the application.

Mr. Hancock said it is an exceptional piece of work and more detailed thought has gone into it than is immediately apparent. While the model is somewhat artistic in its presentation, and the finished building will look different, he noted there is a strong commitment to make it lighter and brighter as it increases in height. Mr. Hancock said he had no concerns about the canopy and was satisfied to leave it to the architect to work out. He said he hoped the issue of the spatial separation has been fully explored because it is critical to the whole scheme. Mr. Hancock added, it may be possible to improve the entrance location by setting it in slightly further to the north to provide a little more space between the doors and the bollards. Otherwise, Mr. Hancock said it is a wonderful piece of work. He recommended approval.

Mr. Kavanagh thanked the applicant for a very thoughtful proposal. He recommended an amendment to condition 1.1 and suggested 1.4 should be a consideration item. Mr. Kavanagh commented he did not believe the model is intended to be a realistic representation of the building but it portrays the intended quality of the concept. With respect to the canopy, he said it not only provides weather protection but provides some experience of scale at the street level. Mr. Kavanagh recommended an additional condition, calling for design development to signify the entrance on Howe Street.

Mr. Mah supported the proposal and concurred that condition 1.4 should be a consideration item.

Mr. Chung agreed with amending condition 1.1. With respect to the glass, Mr. Chung said he would be pleased to take part in the assessment. He agreed with adding a condition to signify the Howe Street entrance. Mr. Chung added that while a parkade is not visually attractive it could be interesting to be able to see the silhouettes of the vehicles at night. He recommended approval.

Mr. Mortensen said he found the building very attractive. Its impact on the public realm will be quite significant and it will be a landmark in the city. Given the sheer face at the front of the building, Mr. Mortensen said it would be advantageous to have better entrance identity for greater legibility. With respect to the parkade, he said it would be interesting to see a subtle reveal of its operations. He said he would also appreciate some weather protection, noting a canopy of some kind would also provide a break in the scale of the building for passersby. He urged that it be a requirement rather than a consideration item, adding that greater attention to human scale at the ground level will be beneficial for pedestrians.

Mr. Henschel agreed the canopy should be a requirement. He was concerned that the lobby entry seems unworkable. He said it will be interesting to see the cars in the parkade to some extent. With respect to the sky lobby, Mr. Henschel said the proposed cube design is inelegant and could be improved. He added, the building would be better if it was taller.

Mr. Kavanagh added he would like to be able to view the proposed mock-up of the glass, if possible.

Board Discussion

Mr. MacGregor said the proposal is a very strong architectural design for this difficult site. With respect to the glass, he said his main concern was to ensure that what is promised to the Board is followed through on. He also suggested the Board might be given the opportunity to view the proposed mock-up. He moved approval of the application, with amendments to the conditions. He stressed it is critical to ensure the glass is transparent and said he believes the architect understands what the Board is trying to achieve. He said he wished to maintain weather protection as a requirement but would leave it to the architect to arrive at an appropriate solution.

Mr. Beasley said he did not believe there was a public objective to be served by requiring weather protection as a condition of approval; however, for a building that portends to address a high degree of elegance and luxury, to enter the front door via a driveway seems to diminish the impact of the experience of the building. He suggested it would be prudent for the applicant to consider this issue very carefully. With respect to the parkade, Mr. Beasley said he feels no compulsion to romance the car in this building, regardless of the innovative automated parking system, and stressed he supports the proposal because not much of the parkade will be visible. He added it is appropriate to give consideration to pedestrians and it is a responsibility of the building to contribute to the sidewalk with some weather protection. He agreed the Board should not prescribe exactly what form this should take, noting the architect has arrived at clever solutions for every aspect of this building. He supported Mr. MacGregor's amendments and seconded the motion of approval.

Mr. Rudberg supported the approval, as amended. He said he appreciated the sensitivity with respect to the transparency of the glass and said he believes the architect understands what is intended. He said he was not so much concerned about the design and its execution but the operation of the building on this very tight site. The porte-cochere will be very congested and there is a risk of a spill-over onto the street across the sidewalk. The conditions require this situation to be addressed but a lot of attention must be given to the operating plan. Mr. Rudberg said he was not as much interested in being able to see the cars in the parkade, but commented there may be an opportunity to create some animation on the street by lighting the cars' destination within the parkade. He said it is a great design and is confident it will be executed well. He urged that it also be operated well so that it does not become a burden on Howe Street or the lane.

Mr. Scobie encouraged the applicant to revisit the lobby entrance from the point of view of the concerns expressed about crush space in this is a very constricted area.

Motion

It was moved by Mr. MacGregor and seconded by Mr. Beasley, and was the decision of the Board:

THAT the Board APPROVE Development Application No. 407114, in accordance with the Development Permit Staff Committee Report dated January 15, 2003, with the following amendments:

Amend 1.1:

final selection of an exterior vision glass assembly to incorporate the lighter, more transparent visual characteristics of submitted sample Type B combined with ~~the least possible degree of reflectance (mirror effect)~~ *minimal reflectance (mirror effect)* so as not to reduce transparency . Refer also to Standard Condition A.1.14;

Amend 1.4:

design development to incorporate ~~an appropriately detailed clear glass canopy system that subtly breaks the sheer face of the tower as well as providing pedestrian weather protection~~ *pedestrian weather protection along a portion of the frontage;*

4. OTHER BUSINESS**Board Procedures**

Mr. Scobie referred to the draft procedures discussed in earlier meetings. In consultation with the Law Department, concerns have been raised about whether the Board should ever meet in camera, so this will be removed from the draft procedures. In discussion, Board members noted that on the rare occasions when the Board has met in camera it has been in the interests of expediency, to clarify particularly complex situations. The in camera discussions avoided the necessity of deferring an application to a subsequent meeting.

Mr. Scobie raised the question of whether the Board should make decisions on applications in advance of Council considering by-law amendments that may be necessary to enable the permits as proposed. Mr. Beasley agreed this is an area of concern. He said he is comfortable if the Board is dealing with an application that is subject to text amendments still before Council but addressing technical aspects that have no meaningful impact on the form of development, but not if the text amendments would have form of development implications which may be of interest to the general public. In general, Mr. Beasley said his preference is for the Board to deal with adopted policy rather than potential adopted policy. The Board agreed that staff should be instructed to avoid having the Board pass judgment on development applications that are still before Council in terms of zoning amendments. This will be reflected in the procedures.

Mr. Scobie also raised the issue of public submissions being circulated to the Board in advance of the meeting. It was noted that submissions addressed specifically to the Board are generally circulated in advance of the meeting. However, those submissions submitted to Development Services in response to notification are summarized in the Staff Committee Report. Mr. Beasley commented that the best procedure is that which is the most transparent. In discussion, Board members agreed to continue the current practice of circulating material ahead of the meeting if so requested by the writers. This will be included in the Board procedures.

Revised procedures will be circulated to the Board for adoption at the next meeting.

687 Howe Street - DE407114

Mr. MacGregor advised of an omission in the approval of this application.

Motion

It was moved by Mr. MacGregor and seconded by Mr. Beasley, and was the decision of the Board:

THAT the Board amend condition B.1.2 of the Development Permit Staff Committee Report dated January 15, 2003, to indicate the date for compliance as July 31, 2003.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 6.00 p.m.

C. Hubbard
Clerk to the Board

F. Scobie
Chair

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