

**Report Title:** Perth Town Centre Retail Development  
**Issue Date:** 4<sup>th</sup> February 2008  
**Client/Developer:** KW Perth Ltd  
**Lead Designer:** CDA  
**Local Authority:** Perth and Kinross Council  
**Location:** Perth  
**Planning Ref:** 07/02516/FUL  
**Details:** Proposals for a large retail development for Perth town centre



Architecture+DesignScotland  
Ailtearachd is Dealbhadh na h-Alba

## **INTRODUCTION**

This report relates to a current planning application for a retail development proposed for the centre of Perth. The design, as referred to us by the planning authority, was considered at an internal design review session. Preliminary designs were presented to an A+DS Design Review panel on 11 September 2007. The current proposal has not changed in any significant manner since that date. The views expressed in this report are therefore based on those expressed in the earlier restricted report, dated 3 October 2007.

## **A+DS VIEWS**

### **1. General comments**

1.1 We commend the formation of an open street rather than a closed shopping mall, and the collaborative working between the project team and planning authority. We believe the full potential of the scheme has not yet been achieved and that it would benefit from further design development to address the following points.

### **2. Car park**

2.1 We are concerned at the visual dominance of the car park, in particular the impact of the gable, which will be highly visible from a number of directions. The scale and extent of the parking structure, and its relationship to adjacent elements such as Fairmaids House, needs further consideration. We question whether the amount of parking could be redistributed to other sites, or if this is not possible, whether residential or other uses could wrap around and conceal the car park.

### **3. Public realm**

3.1 We welcome the intention to create a high quality public realm to link elements such as the Theatre and Concert Hall; however, while we understand the principle of stopping up Mill Street to through traffic we see merit in retaining the original form and width of the street and protecting the visual connection between these areas. The current proposal breaks the natural east-west street pattern that characterizes this part of the town and could result in Mill Street becoming little more than a service zone, to the detriment of the space and the surrounding uses.

3.2 A wider opening up of Mill Street from that currently proposed - by the removal of 'unit 2' - would improve accessibility and ensure a greater civic presence for the area. We suspect that this may have consequent commercial benefits.

3.3 We remain to be convinced about the quality of the pedestrian experience when passing through Curfew Row, where the pend appears to be overly confined and visually restrictive.

3.4 We suggest that the potential of the lade has not been realised; the water feature presents a unique townscape opportunity; and one which could reveal part of Perth's heritage.

3.5 The design is based on a retailing proposition; however, a mix of uses is required to animate the spaces and make them attractive to pedestrians outwith normal shopping or business hours. We encourage the introduction of uses such as hotels, cafés or restaurants which can enrich the area, and the incorporation of residential uses at upper levels would not only boost the density of the development but also assist in making a safer and more vibrant inner city.

3.6 We question the offset alignment of the new retail street relative to King Edward Street to the south. Whilst we recognise the rationale justifying this approach we wonder whether a contemporary link to the space bordering the Concert Hall should be based on a civic axial approach rather than an interpretation of a medieval offset relationship.

3.7 We encourage a high quality of materials' specification throughout the public realm to extend and unite the spatial qualities through the consistency of the floorscape.

3.8 We believe that elevation treatments, particularly at the junction with the High Street, require further development. We question the double height colonnade in this context, and note that the building at the head of King Edward Street will play a significant townscape role as a visual stop.

## **CONCLUSION**

We welcome the ambition to enliven Perth city centre; however, we believe that the potential of this important development has still to be realised. We are very disappointed that there have been no significant alterations to the overall design since we reviewed the project at pre-application stage.

We continue to have concerns about fundamental aspects of the design which need to be reworked. Our concerns primarily relate to issues of scale and connectivity and include: the visual dominance of the car park, the break in the east-west street pattern due to the narrowing of Mill Street, and the lack of integrated mixed-use activity.

We trust that our comments will be taken into consideration. We wish to be consulted on an amended design and to be informed at the earliest possible opportunity should the planning authority be minded to recommend approval of a design that does not address our concerns.

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