

Cardiff County Council
Development Control
Regulatory Services
City Hall
Cardiff
CF10 3ND

27th February 2008

Dear Sirs

Re: Capitol Apartments - Planning Application 08/00190/C

I would like to commence with a general expression of concern relating to the consultation process. In total, Landmark Place comprises 280 apartments, a large number of which are owned by non-resident leaseholders. Whereas I do not doubt that Cardiff County Council will have fully honoured the consultative legislative requirements, it does seem unfortunate that awareness of a proposed development of such a scale is dependent on those affected having had sight of a notice pinned to a neighbouring lamp-post or, in this instance, one of four copy notices that someone in the Planning Department kindly thought appropriate to forward to our concierge. Fortunately, the concierge saw fit to display them on our public area notice boards, although that would be of little benefit to non-resident leaseholders. We can therefore only surmise as to how many of the 280 Landmark Place leaseholders are in reality aware of the proposed development.

As regards the actual proposals, I would add that I personally visited City Hall on two separate occasions to view the plans and obtain copies to share with others. As a result, I would like to make the following comments and observations:

Firstly, it is notable that despite the large bundle of submitted drawings and plans, few appeared to give a representative indication of the proposed tower's relative impact on Landmark Place itself. (I have estimated the distance between the two buildings to be less than 14 meters in width). It is self-evident that Landmark Place would be the most affected local building and at 20 storeys high the proposed tower would be overshadowing Landmark Place by some distance. However, excepting the "Capitol Centre Cluster" diagram, I feel that the supporting documents do not go any way toward illustrating the undoubted impact the proposed tower would have as far as the residents in an immediate neighbouring building are concerned. Whereas there are a number of renders illustrating the visual impact of the proposals from as far back as Newport Road and Dumfries Place, the most affected area hardly features. And it is not as if the architects are unfamiliar with the immediate area, as I understand that Powell Dobson themselves designed Landmark Place some years prior.

Traffic Congestion. There are four key sources of traffic feeding into the relatively limited space of North Edward Street, which at peak times becomes extremely congested. These are the British Gas underground car-park (160+ spaces), Churchill House (47 spaces), Landmark Place (200 spaces) and the Capitol shopping complex (400 spaces). In addition to the frequent traffic movements generated by those four sites is the routine through traffic exiting from Churchill Way into nearby main roads.

With the exception of the Capitol complex - which has dedicated road lanes to facilitate entry and egress - driving in and out of the aforementioned buildings is already problematic, particularly so when delivery vehicles block the road and / or tailback queues form for entry to the Capitol car park.

As such, the consequential traffic movements resulting from the creation of an extra 200 car parking spaces in the Capitol complex can only exacerbate the congestion and will doubtless add to the existing pollution emanating from cars caught up in the daily peak time jams.

Visitor Parking. The lack of on-street parking for those occasionally visiting either Landmark Place or the nearby The Aspect is already an issue. Neither site contains visitor spaces, and there are some 80 Landmark Place apartments which are without any allocated parking space at all. Adjacent commercial car-parks are particularly expensive for longer stays, and vacant neighbouring on-street pay and display parking spaces are notoriously difficult to find during shop opening hours. Likewise in the evening, when those attending cinemas, concerts and similar events tend to monopolise the spaces, as during those hours parking is free. It is thus logical to assume that the creation of an additional 164 apartments within the immediate area will only add to the problem.

Light and Privacy. For my part, I already experience poor lighting by virtue of the opposite Churchill House and the position of my 6th floor apartment within Landmark Place itself. (On a less than sunny day it is often necessary to turn on lights for reading by as early as mid-afternoon). To date, the principal natural light source into my living area comes in over the less built-up Capitol car park complex, as that does not extend past the equivalent of four floors and so allows light from the north to shine directly in. It is therefore of concern to learn that the proposed addition of a further two parking levels would bring the Capitol complex to a like level and potentially compromise that very natural light source and the final vestige of any distant view.

Given my limited technical expertise, I have not been able to assess whether the proposed tower would be wholly visible from my own particular apartment - although I suspect that the western aspect will be well within line of sight. (The north wing of Landmark Place frustrates a full east-side view from my window). Either way, given the height, size and proximity of the proposed tower, there will nevertheless be some impact on privacy, due to the potential for those in either development being able to clearly view apartments just opposite.

Finally, having read through the Council's City Centre Strategy document, I was unable to gain any clear indication of corporate policy as regards the desirability (or not) of a development such as that proposed. Whereas a number of affordable housing units seem to be included within the proposals, I am assuming this to be by way of satisfying planning gain and that the proposed development is still primarily a purely business venture. It is therefore to be hoped that the views of established local residents will be given full regard in determining the application; particularly those on the north side of Landmark Place who would be the most adversely affected. It is further hoped that due consideration is given to the likely effect on existing owners of allowing yet another apartment block to be built, as there is increasing evidence of an over-supply of flats in Cardiff and which is already having an adverse effect on resale values and rent levels.

In conclusion, I would like to state that whereas any attempt at an improvement of the dead zone that is the rear of the Capitol complex is to be welcomed, I personally regard this particular proposal to be overly intense and disproportionate for the area in question. For this reason, and for the reasons outlined earlier within this letter, I would like to record my personal objection to this planning application.

Yours sincerely