

Antonio Garcia  
Antonio Garcia Architecture  
38a Hope Street  
Liverpool  
L19BX

11<sup>th</sup> February 2009

Dear Antonio

**RE: The Sail, West Kirby  
Design Review Report, 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2009**

Thank you for bringing this scheme to Places Matter Design Review. It is an exciting new regeneration opportunity for West Kirby set in a beautiful coastal landscape. We applaud the ambition to create a sophisticated special destination for both visitors and residents. This is obviously part of Wirral Council's aspiration to improve this area in order to encourage more tourist visits.

You have given a very good presentation and we are very supportive overall. The hotel building has a good linear quality but it should fill the full length of the site along South Parade in order to reinforce that quality. The idea of cutting it short in order to keep one view open is unconvincing. The gap in the street that this generates seriously weakens the street at the southern end of the site and there is very little (if any) gain for the area in providing a view from Morrisons car park to the rear of the hotel.

We are also unconvinced by the argument for sub-floor car parking beneath and behind the hotel. This will entail very significant costs which could be better invested by your client in the surrounding public realm to the greater gain of the local community. It would also potentially make the design of the hotel entrance much more straightforward. With the space available on site and on the seaward side of the sailing club it must be possible to create a managed parking arrangement which will accommodate hotel guests and users of the sailing club.

In considering the windows along the front it is important not to be too rigid in predetermining the views. Allow for flexibility to see both Hilbre Island and the lake. We are not convinced by the entrance ramp to the hotel and suggest as part of tying the two buildings together the entrance might be better located onto South Parade. You should pay particular attention to the quality of render specified so that it doesn't become streaked.

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As this is a project of two buildings set across the street from one another it is well worth considering them together within a shared setting. Consideration must be given to the surroundings of these two strong architectural statements and the public realm design should be seen as a setting for them. We feel that the solution to this landscape is not trees which appear to be apologising for these buildings by hiding them and creating a screen.

This is a particularly exposed landscape that needs to be treated in a robust way. Surfaces should be linked across South Parade, between and around the buildings. The materials used should be capable of withstanding the salt, sand and harsh climate of this area.

We would recommend that the areas allowed for parking be designed as robust coastal hard landscape so that when not in use they don't actually look like empty car parks. Spaces for vehicles need not be marked at all but if they are this should be through limited use of studs or similar and not by painting of bays and direction arrows etc. Space should also be allowed for good cycle and motorcycle parking.

We like the viewing ramp on the Sail building itself. We suggest that with a few modifications you could extend this onto the roof of the café area as well as to the same level of the café. Look at how Snohetta Architects dealt with the Oslo Opera House. You could also consider a seating area at the front of the café overlooking the whole waterfront.

We would welcome this scheme back at a further iteration.

Yours sincerely



Charlotte Myhrum  
Design Review Manager

Cc. Howard Mortimer, Wirral MBC  
Mike Callon, Wirral MBC  
Alan Beer, Carpenter Investments