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Development Brief

Palm Reefs, Harbour Road

1.0 About this Brief

1.1 This brief is intended to set the framework for a new development at the former Palm Reefs Hotel site. It contains guidance and advice that builds on the provisions set out in the 1992 Bermuda Plan.

2.0 The site today

2.1 The site is owned by The Palm Reef Hotel Ltd. It is approximately 41,600 ft² in area. The western portion of the site lies within Warwick whilst the eastern part is in Paget.

2.2 The site is bounded by Darrell's Wharf to the west, The Harbour to the north and east, and Harbour Road to the south. The site has been used as an hotel for many years and, in conjunction with the ferry stop has provided a focal point for the local area. At the western end of the site, adjacent to the ferry stop, the Dive Shop has added to the vitality of the area. On the Wharf itself there is a small single storey office. Apart from the hotel and the commercial uses at Darrell's Wharf, the area is predominantly residential.

2.3 At present the site accommodates a number of connected buildings of one, two and three stories in height. The buildings, for the most part, are of average to poor visual quality and condition. Most of the other buildings in the area are one or two storey. The exception to this is the three storey former hotel accommodation on Cobbs Hill. This has been recently refurbished for use as condominiums.

2.4 The site is relatively level but is overlooked by Cobbs Hill which rises steeply immediately to the south. Cobbs Hill Road connects Middle Road with Harbour Road and much of the Palm Reefs site is visible from the road and from the recently refurbished condominium development on the hill.

2.5 The site has a very important frontage onto Harbour Road, an important scenic visitor route. However, although the site is on the waterfront, there is no view of the Harbour through the site from Harbour Road.

2.6 There is a servicing yard that is accessible to vehicles from Harbour Road, and a small area for bike parking. The site to the south, across Harbour Road, provided undercover car parking for the Hotel. The area of on-street parking in front of the hotel entrance is used as the main area of bike parking for the hotel. There are also a number of public parking spaces for bikes and for cars at the

Wharf. These spaces are primarily for use in conjunction with the ferry service and it should not be assumed that they can be used as overspill parking for any new development.

2.7 As with many other locations in Bermuda the area has a significant amount of lush vegetation and this, combined with the modest scale of the buildings, particularly when viewed from the water, is an important contributor to the local character.

2.8 At the north east end of the site there is an area of the waterfront that consists of decking supported on piers. There is unlikely to be any objection on planning grounds to this area being made more permanent, but consultation with the Marine Resources Board will be required.

2.9 The developer will need to establish if there are any significant constraints on the site with regard to utilities etc.

3.0 Development Objectives

3.1 The Department of Planning objectives for the development of this site are;

3.1.1 To support a mix of uses that is compatible with the neighbouring uses and that maximises the potential offered by the waterfront location and the proximity to the ferry stop;

3.1.2 To promote an attractive, high quality development, consistent with the Bermuda Image, particularly when viewed from the water, Harbour Road or from Cobbs Hill Road.

3.1.3 To ensure that the scale and appearance of any new development harmonizes with the overall character of the area;

3.1.4 To ensure that adequate provision is made for parking and vehicle manoeuvring within the site, and that conditions for pedestrians are improved;

3.1.5 To encourage a high quality of landscaping, particularly in areas that are visible from the Harbour and from Harbour Road;

3.1.6 To encourage a development that provides views of the Harbour from Harbour Road.

3.2 The proposed development will be expected to fulfil, to the satisfaction of the Department of Planning, each of these objectives. As a further aid to the developer, the following development guidelines are provided;

4.0 Development Guidelines

Uses and activities

4.1 In the 1992 Bermuda Plan the site is zoned for Tourism use. New uses should generally be consistent with this zoning.

4.2 The site appears to be able to support a number of potential uses including; Hotel, residential, restaurant/ bar/ pub, small office, retail, water based leisure activity. A mix of some of these uses will be particularly welcome.

A high quality development

4.3 The proximity of the site to the important tourist route and its high visibility from the waters of the harbour demand a high quality development. This includes the requirement for a high quality landscaping scheme including trees on the waterfront. This is essential if the development is to be consistent with the Bermuda Image and, in particular, the character of this stretch of coast.

4.4 There is the potential for the development to allow views and glimpses of the harbour from Harbour Road and Cobbs Hill Road.

Massing, height and scale

4.5 Development must be consistent with the Bermuda Image. In this instance it will be particularly important that the massing of the development, when viewed from the harbour, does not dominate the coastline. This stretch of coast is characterised by small scale buildings set amongst lush vegetation. The present development on the site is inconsistent with this image and the opportunity to correct this should be taken.

4.6 The majority of the development should be no greater than 2 storey, but there will be opportunities for parts of the development to be 3 storey. Designs that create an interesting and varied roofscape will be particularly encouraged. The overall character should reflect the traditional style of coastal buildings in the area. Large, monolithic blocks will not be acceptable. The air conditioning equipment and other plant and machinery needed by the development should be considered early in the design process and should be concealed from public view.

4.7 Paragraph TOU.6 (2) in the Planning Statement states that on a site zoned for Tourism, the Board “*may approve a density of residential development which exceeds the maximum permitted in the surrounding area, but only if the size and nature of the existing building(s) are such that a higher density can be accommodated without detriment to the environment of the surrounding area...*” This clearly allows greater flexibility for the development of the site compared

with a residential zoning, but it places greater responsibility on the need for the development to be sensitive to the character and scale of the surrounding area.

Setbacks and the relationship to the waterfront and Harbour Road

4.8 A minimum setback of 15 ft from the waterfront edge is recommended. This will provide relief to the waterfront aspect and will provide the opportunity for planting. The introduction of boardwalks or decks is likely to be unobjectionable. However, any such encroachment into and over the water will be subject to agreement being reached with Government for the acquisition or lease of the area concerned.

4.9 On a more detailed matter, the facing treatment of the quayside has a considerable impact on the appearance of the scale of development when viewed from the water. If the quayside is painted the same colour as the development it tends to overemphasise its scale. However, if the quayside is finished in a neutral, natural colour - ideally Bermuda stone - this tends to minimise the visual impact of the development.

4.10 Some building will be permitted at the back of pavement, but this should not exceed 50% of the length of the site. Consequently, there is not a requirement for a setback from Harbour Road.

4.11 There is no requirement for a setback at Darrell's Wharf.

4.12 The amenity of the residential neighbour to the east of the site is to be protected by a setback of at least 15 ft.

Accessibility, movement and parking

4.13 The location of the vehicular access to the site will need to be carefully considered. The Ministry of Works and Engineering should be consulted at an early stage to ensure that the proposed arrangements for access, internal circulation and egress are satisfactory.

4.14 All parking required for the development will need to be accommodated within the site at the standards set out in the 1992 Bermuda Plan. The availability of parking on the south side of Harbour Road will allow better development of the site as it will create greater flexibility in potential layouts.

4.15 Pedestrian access to the site should avoid potential conflicts with vehicle movements. The sidewalk along Harbour Road on the south side of the site will be reinstated by the developer to a standard to be approved by the Ministry of Works and Engineering.

5.0 Summary of Development Standards

Mix of Uses includes;

5.1 Hotel, residential, restaurant/ bar/ pub, small office, retail, water based leisure activity.

Maximum height;

5.2 3 storey (33 ft to eaves above existing grade) onto the waterfront, although the majority of the development (65% of the footprint of the development) will be 2 storey.

Minimum setbacks;

5.4 The following setbacks are recommended;

Minimum setback from waterfront	15 feet
Minimum setback from Harbour Road	n/a
Minimum setback from Darrell's Wharf	n/a
Minimum setback from the eastern boundary	15 feet

6.0 The process for achieving high quality

6.1 The brief is intended as the start of a dialogue with the developers and their designers. The smoothest route to a top quality development will be to continue this dialogue throughout the design process. This will be particularly important in the early, concept stages of the design.

7.0 Conclusions

7.1 This site presents a superb opportunity for a development to transform this important Harbour front location. The site demands a high quality, imaginative and sympathetic design response. The Department of Planning looks forward to participating in the creation of a first rate development for this site.