

# **THE BERMUDIANA HOTEL SITE DEVELOPMENT GUIDE**

**Department of Planning  
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## **1 The Purpose of this Document**

The advice and guidance contained in this report is intended to aid developers and their designers to understand the key planning and site development aspirations of the Planning Department. It is also intended to be the start of a dialogue that will lead to a first class development on the Bermudiana site.

## **2 Concept**

The Bermudiana site has the potential to create a top quality development which expresses the commitment to Bermuda of the developers of the site, and which creates an attractive and pedestrian friendly addition to Hamilton's built fabric. These are not mutually exclusive aspirations. The architecture of the buildings can create a fresh and contemporary expression of the developers image and identity, protecting privacy and security where needed, and creating, a positive association in visitors and residents minds of the developers sensitive and sympathetic approach to investing in Bermudas built environment. The development can have attractive and safe streets and comfortable, enjoyable and lively hard and soft spaces where lunchtimes and evenings are animated by activity, and where people take advantage of one of the best views in the city.

## **3 Summary**

The development will be expected to contain the following components:

- \* Mixed-use development
- \* Lively and interesting ground floor/ pedestrian environment
- \* Landscaped buffer to Pitts Bay Road
- \* Publicly accessible new open space, possibly including a small square overlooking the harbour
- \* Integration of the work of artists into the buildings and landscape
- \* Potential for contemporary design response to the site
- \* Potential for a mix of architectural styles on different elements of the site
- \* Unambiguous public and private zones
- \* Minimum setbacks as identified in the Planning Statement

- \* Maximum height of any structure on the site will be 128 feet o.d.
- \* Maximum building heights as identified in the Planning Statement
- \* Opportunity to break up the monolithic nature of the site by creating smaller blocks
- \* Scope for skyline features
- \* Underground parking will be provided at a ratio of 1 space per 500 ft<sup>2</sup>
- \* Vehicular access into the site will not be allowed from Pitts Bay Road
- \* Vehicular access into the site must be set well back from junctions
- \* Conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians should be minimised
- \* There will be a need to carry out highway improvements, particularly junction improvements
- \* Existing bus and cycle parking facilities will be expected to be retained
- \* The site is large enough to be successfully subdivided into 2 or 4 sites
- \* If the development is phased, the undeveloped portions are to be landscaped until ready for development
- \* Demolition of the existing structures and temporary landscaping of the site is encouraged

## **4 Introduction**

The Bermudiana site is probably the most important urban site in Bermuda. It is important for Bermuda's image, and for business and investor confidence. Consequently, it demands a development that Bermuda can be proud of, and which will stand favourable comparison with other international urban places of recognised quality.

In its present form the site is a significant eyesore. However, once developed, the resulting environment will be expected to last perhaps 60 years or more. Therefore it is important to ensure that any development on the site complements the area with an appropriate mix of uses and makes a positive contribution to Bermuda's built form.

## **5 Analysis of the Existing Site**

The Bermudiana site in its present condition presents a very poor image for Bermuda. This is particularly the case for the western extent of the city of Hamilton and its waterfront aspect.

The existing Bermudiana block presents a barrier to pedestrian movement in this increasingly important part of town. Its walls, hedges, gates and other barriers emphasise the inward looking and private nature of the existing development. This sense of impermeability is most acutely felt when faced with the rock outcrop at the junction of Pitts Bay Road and Bermudiana Road.

The only positive feature of the existing site is the attractive and mature landscaping belt facing onto Pitts Bay Road. This is not only significant at pedestrian level on Pitts Bay Road, but is particularly important when viewed from the harbour.

As well as this attractive aspect of the planting, the view of the harbour from the existing apron at the top of the landscaped belt is exceptional.

The area is subdued in terms of activity at present largely due to the influence of the derelict and unused Bermudiana complex. At present, a part of the site is being used for surface level commuter parking. Around the site there is a mix of uses consisting of a park to the south, some office but mainly residential to the west, and a mix of ground floor retail and restaurants, with upper floor offices to the north and east.

The existing built form around the site is of modest architectural quality. There is no strong sense of local identity in the urban environment. The newer office architecture is bigger in scale, massing and height than some of the sites more

domestic neighbours, which gives variety to the streetscape, but overall the area lacks a positive and distinctive character.

## **6 Uses and activities**

It has long been the position of Government that a mixed-use development is expected in this location. This could include a mix of residential, hotel, retail, restaurant or open space, as well as offices. The site is zoned for commercial development in the 1992 Bermuda Plan.

It is acknowledged that office floorspace will provide a major component of the future use of the site, but the Department would not expect it to be developed as a single function site. The investment and jobs that the financial and insurance businesses bring to Bermuda are welcome, but the visitor market remains equally important to the economy. The city is a 'shopwindow' for Bermuda - it is visited by almost every tourist. As a result, the development of this vital site offers an opportunity to add to the attractiveness, friendliness and positive image of Hamilton experienced by visitors and residents alike.

A mix of uses on this site will help to animate the pedestrian environment and will avoid creating unattractive and 'dead' frontage. The kind of ancillary, small scale uses that would support this include, for example, newsagents, bars, restaurants, sandwich shops, dry cleaners, photo processing etc.

## **7 Pedestrian Movement and Open Space**

In order to provide pedestrians with greater choice, and to improve the way in which pedestrians experience Hamilton, usable and attractive routes through the development will be encouraged. By breaking up the site into smaller blocks and reintroducing human scale, new streets, paths and open spaces can be created for use by pedestrians. If carefully thought through and considered as part of the overall development of the site, the access by pedestrians need not disturb private areas of the site.

The development should be comfortable, safe and attractive for pedestrians whether they are in the heart of the site or walking along its street frontages. Therefore great care should be taken when producing plans for the Gorham Street, Bermudiana Road, Pitts Bay Road and Woodbourne Avenue frontages.

It is expected that the landscaped buffer on the Pitts Bay Road frontage will be retained and enhanced. However, it is equally important that significant areas of new open space on the site, whether they are hard or soft, are accessible and usable. To this end consideration should be given to exploring the ways in which the existing underused park at Barrs Bay could benefit from the development of

the Bermudiana site. Similarly, the location, size and treatment of any spaces within the site should be considered in the context of the overall distribution of usable open space and pedestrian routes in the area. Clearly the site developers will wish to create spaces within the development that are for the exclusive use of the occupants. Ideally these areas should avoid the excessive use of security barriers etc.

The attractive view of Hamilton harbour is enhanced by looking over the park at Barr's Bay and its palm trees. As part of making the city more attractive for users, a public meeting place in the site, taking advantage of this striking setting, would create a lively and active focus. This could also provide a natural location for terrace dining and small shops.

## **8 The architecture of the site**

The style and quality of the Bermuda architectural idiom is a major contributor to the overall attractiveness of the Islands. However, it is unlikely that this traditional style and use of materials will be appropriate for a large scale, capital city centre development. What the site needs is a contemporary design response to the site, its location and its function.

The Department considers there is the potential for different architectural styles/solutions to be put forward for different elements of the site. This will contribute towards reinstating the scale of city block appropriate for this location. However, it is imperative that this, and other key issues, are progressed through an agreed and approved urban design plan for the whole site as set out in the summary.

## **9 Footprint**

Very careful consideration will need to be given to the footprint of the buildings as they sit on the site, particularly how buildings relate to their context, and how they relate to the spaces that they create within the site. It would be helpful to have a clear understanding of which is the front and which is the back of each building, as well as being clear about which are the public and private zones of each building and its grounds. For example, it would not be acceptable to have the back of a building (including servicing areas for vehicle deliveries etc.), abutting a main street.

The Planning Statement identifies the minimum setbacks, and these appear in the appendix. However, for a scheme of considerable quality, these setbacks may be reviewed.

## **10 Massing, Scale and height.**

The absolute height limit on this site is set by the height of the existing structure, at 128 feet o.d. The Planning Statement indicates that the maximum building height shall be at the discretion of the Board, subject to exceptions, which are set out in the appendix. However, for a scheme of considerable quality, these heights may be reviewed.

The existing building sits in the core of its site with very little relationship to the city around it. It is also a very large block with little or no dynamism or relief in its basic building form. The opportunity exists in the redevelopment of the site to create a more varied and finer grained environment.

There is scope for skyline features on the site which would replace the existing unattractive and monolithic hotel structure. The site is large enough to take more than one extension into the skyline, providing of course that any such features are architecturally excellent. The existing landmarks on the skyline represent public buildings of significance; the Cathedral, City Hall, Sessions House, the Methodist Church etc. There is an opportunity presented by this site for the business world to add a structure (or structures) of quality and confidence that sits comfortably with these prominent landmarks. A top quality development on the Bermudiana site would help to focus on the positive contribution that the business world can make to Bermuda's quality of environment as well as its economy.

As well as being prominent from the harbour and Harbour Road, the development has a significant impact on views from Front Street, Reid Street and on Langton Hill. The impact on the skyline will need to be fully considered from these locations when designs for the site are being developed.

## **11 Parking and road improvements**

The Department expects that the on site parking will be provided, underground, at a ratio of one space per 500 ft<sup>2</sup> (gross), although the Board has discretion regarding the total number of spaces.

Access to the site for vehicles will not be permitted from Pitts Bay Road. Entrances and exits to the site from Gorham Street, Bermudiana Road and Woodbourne Avenue must be set well back from junctions. Conflicts between pedestrian and vehicular movements should be minimised, as should any visual intrusion on the pedestrian environment.

In order to accommodate the extra traffic related to this development, there will be a need to carry out highway improvements identified by Works and Engineering, and the Corporation of Hamilton. These are likely to be needed to

facilitate left turning into Pitts Bay Road from Woodbourne Avenue, from Pitts Bay Road into Bermudiana Road, and from Gorham Road into Woodbourne Avenue. It is also likely that an increase in traffic at the north of Bermudiana Road will cause vehicles to back up to, and impede the Gorham Road/ Bermudiana Road junction. It is also likely that the existing on street cycle parking and bus stop/layover space will need to remain.

## **12 Subdivision of the site**

As referred to with regard to massing, the site is large enough to be sub divided successfully, to enable two to four discreet sites to be developed. The Department is unconcerned at this stage over land ownership. However, it is important that multiple ownership is not expressed in fences and walls between different elements of the site.

## **13 Phasing**

Due to the size of the site, it is unlikely that it will be developed in one go. If the development is phased, it will be a condition of any approval that the rest of the site be laid out in a manner approved by the Planning Department prior to the beneficial use of the site.

Short-term demolition and planting of all or some of the site would be a welcome stop gap measure to improve the appearance of the site until phased development can take place.

## Appendix 1

### Submission requirements

In order to assess the proposals accurately, the following plans and supporting information are suggested:

- 1 A short written design rationale that identifies how the scheme has been arrived at;
- 2 A site plan at 1' to 30' showing the existing features, including contours;
- 3 X Sections through key parts of the existing site, particularly at the S/E corner;
- 4 A site plan at 1' to 30' showing the main features of the proposed scheme, including building footprints, public and private space, pedestrian route network, vehicular circulation, planting';
- 5 X Sections through key parts of the proposed development, including the S/E corner;
- 6 Sketches of the proposed scheme, as seen from pedestrian level from;

The Harbour;  
Front Street;  
Reid Street;  
Langton Hill;

## **Appendix 2**

### **Consultations**

Corporation of Hamilton;

Works and Engineering (Highways);

The Water Authority;

Environmental Health;

Environmental Authority.

## **Appendix 3**

### **The Planning Statement**

The following provisions shall apply to the Bermudiana Hotel site -

- (a) tourist accommodation shall be a permitted form of development;
- (b) encouragement shall be given to the inclusion of residential floorspace particularly in any development which does not include tourist accommodation;
- (c) the maximum building height shall be at the discretion of the Board subject to the following exceptions for buildings within 75 feet of a public road;
  - (i) on Bermudiana Road, except for development within 75 feet of Pitts Bay Road, the maximum building height shall not exceed four storeys and a penthouse; and,
  - (ii) on Gorham Road and Woodbourne Avenue, and on Bermudiana Road within 75 feet of Pitts Bay Road, the maximum building height shall not exceed three storeys.
- (d) the minimum setbacks shall be as follows:
  - (i) the minimum setback from Pitts Bay Road shall be 75 feet, except at the junction with Bermudiana Road, where the setback shall be at the discretion of the Board;
  - (ii) the minimum setback from Woodbourne Avenue shall be 15 feet; and,
  - (iii) the minimum setbacks from Gorham Road and Bermudiana Road shall be at the discretion of the Board.