

Status:
Public



Design Review Report:	21 January 2005
Meeting Date / Material Submitted:	12 January 2005
Location:	Bangor
Scheme Description:	Tesco replacement retail store
Architect:	Building Design Partnership Richard Brook
Planning Consultants:	Development Planning Partnership: Eleanor Pickles
Client:	Tesco Stores Ltd: Adam Mayfield
Planning Authority:	Gwynedd County Council
Planning Status:	Full application submitted
Design Review Panel:	
Alan Francis (chair)	Nick Davies
Cindy Harris (officer)	Jonathan Adams
Richard Parnaby	Douglas Hogg
Phil Roberts	Kieren Morgan
Observers:	Gillian Wulff Peter Roberts

Presentation

The current store with approximately 51,000 sq ft of retail space was built in 1996. It is currently 'over-trading' and Tesco gained planning approval for an extension in 2003. The key principles agreed then inform the current proposals, which result from Tesco's decision to rebuild rather than extend the present store. They are:

- scale, giving a total of 91,000 sq ft.,
- the position of the building on the north-east part of the site,
- an extension to the carpark resulting in 600 spaces
- highways and access design, as agreed
- landscaping proposals also consented.

The application under consideration was submitted in November 2004 and no objections or adverse comments have been received. The local planning authority's response is broadly favourable, although they do still have concerns about the landscaping of the carpark, the location and screening of any roof plant, and the nature of any new signage. It is intended that the proposal will go to committee on 2nd February 2005.

The new store will differ from the present one in two main respects:

- it will typify a cleaner, more efficient 'warehouse' design approach, as opposed to the 'barn' typology developed in the 1980's, and used throughout the 1990's.
- the new store will be oriented towards the north west, facing the town, which the old store turned its back on.

The service yard arrangement and petrol filling station are largely unchanged, although the latter will be rebranded with a new slate-faced wall. There is a bus route into the site with direct pedestrian access from the bus stop to the main entrance. Existing mature planting will screen the store from the main road, and the embankment to the rear will be landscaped. A customer café and staff canteen are located on a rear mezzanine level.

The developers are keen to use some materials with local references. Gabion cages filled with a flint aggregate are planned for the plinth on the Caernarfon Rd elevation. Vertical slate hanging is featured together with a more textured 'slate block' finish. The designers are investigating a hung gabion rainscreen system, 50mm thick, using a slate aggregate.

Panel's Response

The Panel endorses the design approach to raise the stakes in terms of high quality local materials, in this retail corridor. However, we questioned the adoption of a particular nationwide 'typology' (which actually refers to cladding systems) with 'add-ons' reflecting a particular locality, rather than a design approach which begins with a specific site.

The Panel questioned the decision to replace a building which is less than 10 years old and asked the designers to explore and maximise the potential for materials reuse and recycling. This will be done in conjunction with the contractors when they are appointed.

The roofline of the new building is substantially higher than the existing one (at 8 metres floor-to-ceiling height) which, even allowing for the depth of structural rafters and signage requirements, seems excessive to the Panel. The developer pointed out that some first floor accommodation was planned and that the advantages of vertical emphasis to balance the predominant horizontality, and the creation of a light, airy internal space, outweighed the extra cost. There is also an element of 'futureproofing' with regard to possible future expansion at first floor level.

The main glazed elevation faces north and is therefore a potential area of heat loss, but is double glazed and has the advantage of avoiding glare.

The Panel suggested that further evidence of the visual impact of this development from surrounding vantage points, such as Ysbyty Gwynedd, be provided in order to determine the extent of any visual impact. The developers were willing to adjust the colour of the single ply membrane roof finish, and the Panel advocated the use of a 'green' or sedum roof. The opportunity for introducing daylighting into the depth of the store and animating the roofscape with rooflights ought not to be missed, especially as the existing tall glazing was justified by the designers as a

means of introducing daylight into the store. We were assured that any roof plant will be well screened with eg louvred upstands.

The developers were asked to consider more planting in the carpark. However, this would impinge on the number of parking spaces which is already less than the standards adopted by the local council. The car park itself is well screened by mature boundary planting. The question of the surface finish of the carpark was raised but not fully discussed. The Panel advised that the covered walkway should be moved to the next island to the north, which aligns better with the main entrance, and this was accepted.

Tesco plan to erect a temporary store towards the south of the site, so that they can continue to trade during the construction programme, which will be kept to a minimum of around 16 weeks. The external signage on the main road will remain as existing, with a gantry sign in each direction.

Summary

The Panel welcomes the opportunity to comment on this proposal and appreciates the clear advantages of the new design approach and the attempt to incorporate some local identity and a high quality finish. However, we remain unconvinced about the general strategy based on a nationwide typology.

We appreciate the Tesco Group's Environmental Statement and think that this document should have been made available at an earlier stage. The Panel strongly advocates a genuine approach to futureproofing by designing in environmental measures from the beginning. We believe that a developer of this size and reputation should take a lead in setting standards in this field. Prime candidates for environmental improvement of this scheme include:

- a 'green' turf or sedum roof finish, both to ameliorate visual impact of a taller building on this low-lying site surrounded by higher ground, and to attenuate rainwater runoff and so lessen the impact of storms on drainage systems and the potential for flooding in an area of relatively high rainfall.
- The introduction of daylight into the body of the store, thereby reinforcing the connection between inside and outside which the glazed entrance begins to establish, and substantially reducing the greatest portion of the store's electricity use and CO2 emissions
- A better justification for demolition of a building less than ten years old, in particular by maximising the potential for reuse or recycling of the existing building components, and making this requirement a determining factor in appointing a main contractor
- The landscaping of the carpark is vital to the success of this scheme, and we would like to see further consideration given to this
- Any external lighting should be well shielded and as unobtrusive as possible

End

NB A Welsh language copy of this report is available upon request.