



Statws/Status:

Cyfrinachol: (Now Public Application submitted May 2005)

Adroddiad Adolygu Dylunio: Design Review Report:	10 February 2005
Dyddiad Cyfarfod / Cyflwyno'r Deuny: Meeting Date / Material Submitted:	2 February 2005
Lleoliad/Location:	Parc Eirin, Tonyrefail
Disgrifiad o'r Cynllun Scheme Description:	Masterplan
Cynllunio: Consultants:	Arup [Janette Shaw] TACP [Hilary Morgan]
Cleient/Asiant: Client/Agent:	WDA
Pensaer/Architect:	B3 Burgess: [John Mottram, Elio Leo]
Awdurdod Cynllunio: Planning Authority:	Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC [Keith Warren]
Statws Cynllunio: Planning Status:	Pre-planning
Y Panel Adolygu Dylunio/Design Review Panel: John Punter (cadeirydd/chair) Cindy Harris (swyddog/officer) Douglas Hogg	Lyn Owen Ed Colgan Kieren Morgan
Sylwedyddion/Observers:	Gillian Wulff (DCfW)

Cyflwyniad/Presentation

The WDA has commissioned this masterplan study for a 21 hectare site which it owns. The site was prepared previously by the WDA as part of their inward investment programme. In 1998 this restored and levelled former colliery site was granted outline planning permission for B1, B2 and B8 employment use. Since then circumstances have changed and the site has remained vacant and a visual scar on the valley landscape. These proposals seek to put forward an appropriate use for the site based on the current and future needs of the community and the region.

The residential element of the proposal consists of a total of 260 units in a mix of 2, 3 and 4 bed houses, and 1-2 bed flats with some community facilities. The proposals for the north west corner of site include three business units, one at 4,650m² and two at 2,325m². A 21 acre section of the site in the southwest corner has been granted separate planning consent for industrial use, together with an access road from a roundabout on the main road (A 4093) to the south-east.

This design statement supports an outline application for mixed use, employment and residential development with community facilities. The residential design seeks to create a contrast to the conventional cul-de-sac development to the north, and attempts to create an enclosed streetscape and sense of place appropriate to the South Wales valleys, with active facades and a permeable layout. Strong east/west pedestrian routes combine with physical links to the north to maximise access to open space.

A landscape strategy is included in the masterplan and seeks to integrate this development into its surroundings, establishing pedestrian links to the west and the existing public house and recreational land to the south. The surrounding landscape is fragmented and visually bland, so a strong landscape design is envisaged and includes screening for the access road and the adjacent back gardens. This will be carried through to the village green and pedestrian boulevard. There will be a landscape buffer between the residential and industrial parts of site.

Ymateb y Panel/Panel's Response

The Panel pointed out that while this is a brownfield site, it is not in an accessible location well served by public transport. It fails to satisfy many of the criteria for sustainable development set out by the WDA in their development strategy 'Working Differently', particularly those seeking to improve accessibility to schools and commercial facilities, developing community cohesion, encouraging compact settlement patterns and developing legible development patterns. While the design team have done their best to overcome the inherent unsustainability of this site as a location for residential development, the proposed housing appears remote and inward-looking. It does not make sufficient connections with its surroundings or help consolidate the existing settlement patterns of Tonyrefail and Gilfach Goch. Rather the proposal contributes to further urban sprawl between these two settlements creating difficult access to local schools and shops. The designers stated that this scheme would consolidate the most recent development in the

area and could be a starting point for wider regeneration, but this would need a strong development framework. What is required is a much stronger lead from the local planning authority to ensure that new development reinforces rather than undermines existing settlement patterns, and uses its allocations of housing and employment land far more strategically (and sustainably) than hitherto.

The Panel noted that the Planning Statement and Technical Report were not available for comment. We understand that no public consultation has yet been carried out on these proposals. The development of community facilities will be important in establishing links with the development to the north (160 units) and they would therefore be better placed to the north, as shown in an earlier sketch design, where they could also be used by residents of the adjacent estate. The intention behind their current location facing the main road is that they can take advantage of passing trade and this is sensible for commercial facilities. The location of the bus stop should reinforce this. Apart from the public house and the occasional corner shop there are no commercial facilities in the area. More work and public consultation is needed to define the function, type and size of both commercial and community facilities.

The Panel questioned the proposal for an east/west axis or boulevard which does not appear to focus on any particular views or join any proposed spaces. It utilises an urban typology which may not be appropriate in a rural setting. The nature and character of the axis is seen as inconsistent, being highly landscaped and pedestrian to the east, and vehicular and functional to the west. The single vehicular access proposed will entail industrial traffic passing close to houses; consideration should be given to segregating traffic flows to provide a more positive and safe environment.

Bus routes will not penetrate the site and a bus stop will probably be located in a lay by to the east. It was accepted that the link to the existing development to the north will be pedestrian rather than vehicular, and this is seen as a priority.

The proposal to provide a mix of house types in a combination of terrace blocks surrounding courts was seen as partially successful. The Panel would like to see a more thorough reinterpretation of the terrace type tailored to current needs and issues, in particular sustainability. Such an approach would be based on a layout sensitive to solar orientation. It was suggested that such an approach might benefit from locating the residential area in a ribbon development along the north edge of the site, thereby engaging with Nant Erin stream, and linking better to the existing housing to the north and the public house to the west.

The visual impact of the employment units should be considered, especially if they are to be typical box-like 'tin sheds'. We recommend that options for blending and screening these buildings into the landscape be considered, such as specifying 'green' roofs using turf or sedum, or the use of earth banks or berms. The designers agreed to consider all these options.

Aspirations to create a more sustainable community and energy efficient buildings need to be clearly defined and stated in the Design Guide. Given the WDA involvement in this scheme, the recommendations contained in the WDA document 'Working Differently' should be followed through. In spite of their absence we were assured of the WDA's commitment to high quality sustainable design.

Crynodeb/Summary

The Panel feels strongly that the proposed development on this site is essentially unsustainable despite its mix of employment and housing. We can appreciate the problems for the designers and developers in trying to make this scheme work, but the WDA should be reviewing all its sites and deciding which are capable of sustainable development and which are not in the short, medium and long terms. The WDA has a special responsibility to ensure the success of this scheme in terms of its own stated objectives for sustainable development.

In summary we would make the following points. The proposed development should:

- Rethink the disposition of industrial and residential uses to achieve a better integration between the two and a better fit into the landscape.
- Establish meaningful links to the existing community and especially to the housing estate to the north
- Position community and commercial facilities where these can be easily used by residents on both housing estates. Any shop should be on the main road by the bus stop.
- Explore a more radical re-appraisal of the rural terrace house typology that can embrace the rural setting and the topography as well as passive solar energy considerations.
- Specify that the 'Excellent' EcoHomes standard is achieved
- Give the landscape and open space proposals a more strategic dimension to integrate the developments more carefully into the landscape
- Ideally the local authority should initiate a settlement strategy for the locality as part of their new Local Development Plan, start to direct development to more sustainable locations, and phase site development more intelligently.

Diwedd/End

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