

Statws/Status:

Cyhoeddus / Public



Adroddiad Adolygu Dylunio: Design Review Report:	15 July 2005
Dyddiad Cyfarfod / Cyflwyno'r Deunydd: Meeting Date / Material Submitted:	6 July 2005
Lleoliad/Location:	George Street Newport
Disgrifiad o'r Cynllun Scheme Description:	Speculative office development
Cleient/Asiant: Client/Agent:	Mission Estates [Kim Tonks]
Pensaer/Architect:	Wigley Fox [Martyn Hayman, Chris Young]
Awdurdod Cynllunio: Planning Authority:	Newport CC [Bob Bowler, Wendy Hall]
Statws Cynllunio: Planning Status:	Planning application submitted
Y Panel Adolygu Dylunio/Design Review Panel:	
Alan Francis (cadeirydd/chair) Cindy Harris (swyddog/officer) Ann-Marie Smale	Kedrick Davies Ed Colgan Douglas Hogg
Sylwedyddion/Observers:	Peter Roberts
Cyflwyniad/Presentation	

The principle of office development on this site has been established and the location, shape and volume of the building has already been determined by virtue

of the site and the brief. External works are being undertaken by Newport CC and this proposal relates only to what is inside the building footprint.

The site is next to the conservation area of Lower Dock Street on its south west side, and a new Magistrates Court will be located to the north east. The client has specified the same elevational treatment on all four sides. It is judged that the roof or 'fifth façade' will not be seen from the George Street bridge once the Magistrates Court is built.

The requirement for flexibility of use in the future has led the architects to propose a central entrance and service core, which allows for easy subdivision. Six metre grids and four metre floor-to-floor heights support this requirement. The basic elevation was agreed with Newport Unlimited some time ago, and work is now progressing on developing a palette of materials, including 'stone' and through colour render. The fenestration reflects the variety of styles and sizes on the other side of George Street and indicates a homogeneity of function throughout the building. The desire for active street frontages has been responded to by lowering the cill level at ground floor. The finish on the central tower will not now be stonework, but a darker render. The main curved concave roof and the raised central roof over the tower contain all plant.

For the Local Authority, the conservation officer described the architectural context of the conservation area as grand houses, mercantile buildings and a masonic institute. The site itself has no architectural features, having been crossed with tram lines and served as a railway station and coal transit yard. In many ways they would have preferred the more traditional approach originally proposed by the developer, but their main concerns now are with details and fenestration in particular.

Ymateb y Panel/Panel's Response

The Panel considered that the design brief provides useful guidance and has been only partially satisfied. As submitted, the drawings do not respond to the requirements of the brief in a completely satisfactory way. We think that a greater variety and diversity is required in the elevational treatment and that a single architectural treatment is questionable, given the different contexts surrounding this building.

The composition of the front facade appears grandiose and palatial, responding to the future civic buildings rather than to the existing conservation context. We would prefer to see more penetration at ground floor level and a more informal, smaller scale but still contemporary treatment which conveys the impression of three distinct storeys. A less monolithic structure, well detailed and stripped back to a simpler statement, possibly with a different roof form, would be more acceptable. The fenestration needs to be completely reconsidered and probably made smaller scale.

We find the central tower problematic, and the view through the larged glazed window appears to give on to the back wall of the WC block. Certainly the promise of an atrium which the facade suggests, is not realised. More entrances in the 70 metre long frontage, and an off-centre, one-sided service core, would actually provide greater future flexibility and a more active street presence. The forced symmetry around the tower should be abandoned, and the building should be presented as having a top, middle and bottom. The treatment of the fire escapes

on the sides is essentially the same as the office space, making them appear more significant than they really are, and what is worse, would expose stair flights where this is clearly not intended.

The corners of the site appear as unintegrated, left over spaces, and there is an uncomfortable relationship with the rear parking area. The Panel thought that a building angled to align with the site boundaries [as shown on the plan accompanying the design brief] would better reflect the surrounding grain, but as we were reminded, the floor plate was laid down by existing constraints. The juncture of the corner of the building and curved site boundary to the south forms an unfortunate pinch point. The suggestion was made for a pedestrian crossing linking this site with Ruperra Street.

The developer is committed to achieving a 'Good' BREEAM rating, but is unlikely to offer any sustainability features above and beyond this. Air conditioning will almost certainly be installed, and forced ventilation is necessary with a plan depth of 18 metres. The Panel regretted that a 'green' roof had not been considered, which could have been part of a sustainable drainage scheme, provided valuable amenity space, and softened the appearance of the building if and when viewed from above.

Replying to some of the points raised, the developer stated that a more traditional building had been considered originally, but this approach had not found favour with the client. They were targetting a certain kind of market occupier and were satisfied that the degree of flexibility shown here would be sufficient. Many issues concerning the location of the building on the site were already imposed and the external treatment was outside their remit. Multiple entrances would be difficult to manage commercially.

Crynodeb/Summary

The Panel fully understands the constraints and difficulties under which the designer and developer are working. However, the current aesthetic is not contemporary but represents an uncomfortable compromise. In particular:

- We would prefer to see a simpler, more informal but still contemporary architectural treatment, which responds to the conservation context, and with the three floors clearly expressed
- The treatment of any central entrance feature, together with the fire escapes, needs rethinking
- We suggest that a more diverse response be adopted to the different contexts around the building.
- We would like more sustainability measures to be incorporated and regret the 18 metre floor plan depth, which necessitates forced ventilation. Ideally a 'green' roof would be considered.
- We accept the developer's assessment of flexibility requirements
- We would like to see the 'pinch point' on the southern corner reworked
- We suggest that some form of solar shading may be desirable on the south west facade.

Diwedd/End

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