

**Statws/Status:**

**Cyhoeddus / Public**

DESIGN  
COMMISSION  
FOR WALES  
COMISIWN  
DYLUNIO  
CYMRU

<b>Adroddiad Adolygu Dylunio: Design Review Report:</b>	<b>15 September 2005</b>
<b>Dyddiad Cyfarfod / Cyflwyno'r Deunydd: Meeting Date / Material Submitted:</b>	<b>7 September 2005</b>
<b>Lleoliad/Location:</b>	<b>Kingsway Centre, Newport</b>
<b>Disgrifiad o'r Cynllun new Scheme Description:</b>	<b>Retail refurbishment and Multi Storey Car Park</b>
<b>Cleient/Asiant: Client/Agent:</b>	<b>UBS Chester Properties Newport Unlimited [David Ward]</b>
<b>Pensaer/Architect:</b>	<b>Colman Architects [Pat Story, Trevor Colman]</b>
<b>Awdurdod Cynllunio: Planning Authority:</b>	<b>Newport CC [Roger Richards, Wendy Hall]</b>
<b>Statws Cynllunio: Planning Status:</b>	<b>Full planning applications submitted</b>
<b>Y Panel Adolygu Dylunio/Design Review Panel: Alan Francis (cadeirydd/chair) Cindy Harris (swyddog/officer) Richard Parnaby Phil Roberts</b>	<b>Ewan Jones Ed Colgan Ann-Marie Smale</b>
<b>Lead panellist:</b>	<b>Ewan Jones</b>
<b>Sylwedyddion/Observers:</b>	<b>Gillian Wulff DCFW</b>

## **Cyflwyniad/Presentation**

UBS purchased this site in 2004 with Chester Properties as their asset managers. They have established a positive working relation with Modus as developers of the adjacent new retail scheme, and with existing tenants such as the Dolman theatre where work is already nearing completion on a new theatre entrance. Substantial investment has already been made and the developers are committed to this scheme. The site sits in between two conservation areas.

There was an open brief for improvement of the existing Kingsway Centre, together with local loyalty and commitment to fulfil the potential for a high quality shopping centre. The current problems of access and circulation were identified along with the poor quality of internal design, the lack of a corporate identity, and the present tenant mix. Various options were explored, each with differing levels of intervention and Debenham's involvement through the Modus scheme was obtained. It was decided to remove extraneous structures and elements, and open up the main routes, vastly improving daylight and visibility, especially at node points such as Bridge Square. New entrances have been designed to give a more contemporary feel with a recognisable identity. Units from the Lower Ground floor will be moved to the Modus scheme and this centre will be anchored by the Wilkinson store. New shop frontages will be established on John Frost Square with an altered entrance to the Art Gallery and Museum.

A new multi storey car park is planned to replace two existing ones providing a total of 1400 spaces on eight levels, with one up-ramp and one down-ramp between each floor such that both entering and leaving vehicles pass through the parking areas. It will be clad in a metal mesh at ground floor level and this will extend upwards in full height vertical sections. A new piazza is planned between this car park and the leisure centre.

The Local Planning Authority have been involved with this scheme over a long period. It is difficult to arrive at an assessment without the Modus scheme being developed to a similar stage and the authority would not want to put forward the application as it stands. The status of Kingsway at this point and its relation to site boundaries and servicing are not fully resolved - moreover the public realm treatment lies with the Modus team. It was confirmed that Kingsway will be either fully pedestrianised or will carry a relatively small number of buses in one direction only.

## **Ymateb y Panel/Panel's Response**

The existing building has few elements of merit and in an ideal world it might be replaced altogether, but there are environmental reasons for retaining it and the Panel noted that the proposed scheme is not a short-term facelift. The Panel also welcomed the principle of new entrances on to Kingsway and Commercial Street, and the internal re-design with high levels of daylight and improved permeability.

Serious concerns were expressed about the new car park in terms of its height and massing. The fact that it juts out into the road makes its bulk even more apparent, and mature trees will be lost. The 3D images show no context to this part of the proposal and the architectural treatment appears to be all skin and no structure.

The accompanying design statement refers to the creation of a 'more domestic scale' which is patently not the case. The uncertainty over the future of the leisure centre only adds to the need for a sensitive development of this site.

The Panel would like to see the same sensibility shown in the interior design of the Kingsway centre applied to the car park, while recognising that the requirement to fit such a large number of cars on the site at this point presents a huge challenge. The bulk and massing of this building needs to be tamed and civilised. Urban design principles suggest that the frontage should reinforce the street line rather than breaching it with a sharply angled protrusion. We suggested that the starting point for the design should be the establishment of a frontage parallel to the existing street edge (even if this had to be some distance forward of that line). The views down the street are important and would be improved by introducing more movement into a gently flowing facade. Once the boxiness has been softened, attention should then be given to animating the street scene. The ground floor would need careful treatment to create an appropriate, pedestrian-friendly, active frontage. We strongly urge that this and perhaps other possibilities be explored before an amended application is submitted.

The frontage to the art gallery in John Frost Square appears as an imposing series of disconnected boxes. We thought they should be better integrated as a unified facade, and show a lighter touch. Screens or pergolas might be included if the frontages to the buildings cannot be aligned. The fragmented composition as presented is not appropriate or proportionate for a smaller and more intimate gathering and meeting place. The view from Charles Street past the square down to the river needs to be reinforced with simpler buildings on either side.

### **Crynodeb/Summary**

The Panel welcomes the internal re-design of the Kingsway Centre and the new external entrances to the streets north and south. We recognise the problems created by trying to phase in with the Modus scheme, but we think this is necessary and worth waiting for. Any delay could be used to revisit the design of the car park, which is where our major concerns lie.

- We believe that the requirement for such a large number of car parking spaces is misconceived, especially given Newport's proposals for traffic calming in the Kingsway area, and we also question the satisfactory operation of the proposed layout.
- The massing of the car park should be re-addressed and its bulk reduced. The angled protrusion into the street, high corners and exposed gable ends, are unsympathetic to the context and will not enhance Newport's reputation.
- The impact of the car park in the context of longer views needs to be considered and demonstrated. The "greening" of the elevation with hanging/climbing plants is one of several ways of mitigating its visual impact.
- The relation between structure and cladding should be clearly shown.
- Consideration needs to be given to animating the street along this part of Kingsway and providing a vibrant environment for any future redevelopment of the leisure centre site
- The new elevation to John Frost Square needs to be reconsidered to better form part of the new city space being created, by simplifying and unifying the massing of the proposed new elevations

- It is unfortunate that we have not had the opportunity to comment on this scheme at an earlier stage and that a planning application has perhaps been made prematurely.

**Diwedd/End**

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