

Statws/Status:
Cyhoeddus / Public



Adroddiad Adolygu Dylunio: 16 November 2005
Design Review Report:

Dyddiad Cyfarfod / Cyflwyno'r Deunydd: 2 November 2005
Meeting Date / Material Submitted:

Lleoliad/Location: Dol Gorwel, North Cornelly,
Bridgend

Disgrifiad o'r Cynllun 95 residential units
Scheme Description:

Cleient/Asiant: Redrow Homes [Glyn Mabey,
Client/Agent: Keith Annis, Lee Hawker]

Awdurdod Cynllunio: Bridgend CBC [David Davies,
Planning Authority: Elizabeth Woolley]

Statws Cynllunio: Planning application made
Planning Status: Decision deferred

Y Panel Adolygu Dylunio/Design Review Panel:
John Punter(cadeirydd/chair) Ed Colgan
Cindy Harris (swyddog/officer) Paul Vanner
Elfed Roberts Douglas Hogg

Lead Panellist: Elfed Roberts

Sylwedyddion/Observers: Zhaohua Deng,
Design Review Assistant
Robin Shaw,
Director, Transport Wales

Cyflwyniad/Presentation

The principles of the 'Debut' prototype housing design were presented first, as these will affect not only this scheme but other proposals that are in the pipeline for Ebbw Vale and Wrexham. The design was developed by Redrow in response to John Prescott's challenge to the industry to design a house that could be built for less than £60,000. It is intended to address the current inadequate provision of affordable, 'open market' homes and to stimulate the 'first time buyer' market. At prices of £49,950, the houses will be affordable to anyone earning over £17,000 per annum.

Redrow has worked with Local Authorities and other stakeholders to develop the design and is currently looking at its own land holdings to identify suitable sites for this type of housing. 'Debut' is intended to be fully replicable, yet still convey a sense of place and community. It offers quality in a contemporary style and makes full use of the benefits of Modern Methods of Construction [MMC] – essentially prefabrication. The main benefit is speed of construction with construction times of 12-13 weeks already achieved. The houses have been designed to achieve EcoHomes 'Excellent', with 'A' rated thermal and acoustic insulation. A cement particle board is used externally as a look-alike timber cladding. Communal heating plant will serve 12 houses each, using low NOx, gas fuelled boilers.

The houses will be sold on a leasehold basis and Redrow will operate management contracts to maintain quality in the longer term. Buyers will have no personal external maintenance responsibilities, but will be charged a reasonable service fee. Investors will be excluded from purchasing through a contractual restriction. Communal spaces replace private gardens and there is a high degree of permeability and natural surveillance in the layouts. The mix of hard and soft landscaping will be of high quality. Parking [at a ratio of 120%] is dispersed in rear courtyards and does not dominate outdoor space.

This site is the western corner of a much larger site that is currently under development for 2-5 bedroom houses by Bellway and Redrow. The previous permission was for 17 houses on the site. The site is close to local rail (1km) and bus services and local shops are within 400 metres. There will be a mix of apartments and houses providing 95 units in 2-3 storey blocks.

The design brief from the LPA provided for landmark 3 storey buildings at the corners of blocks. The site, formerly a sewage works, is served by one principal access road. A detailed planning application has been made and was recommended for approval by planning officers. However, at committee a decision was deferred pending consultation with DCFW. Objections were made to the proposal on the [mistaken] assumption that it was for social rather than affordable housing, and because of the large number of 1 bed units.

Ymateb y Panel/Panel's Response

The Panel applauded the concept of providing good affordable housing for first time buyers. However, the layout in this case confuses parking with hard landscaping and through routes. We thought that a stronger urban design concept was necessary, which offered a more connected set of spaces, possibly in the form of a traditional street, with good pedestrian connections to the local footpath network and the

surrounding countryside and SSSI. The parking ratio [120%] is higher than Redrow thought appropriate [at 100%] and this, together with the requirement for turning heads, has served as a constraint which they have had to work with. The Panel agreed that the relatively high parking ratio had adversely affected amenity areas, although it was acknowledged that this was an edge of settlement site where higher car parking ratios might be justifiable. Because of its proximity to the M4, this would be seen as a good commuter location.

The Panel was disappointed that the presentation did not set the context of the site. We requested more information on pedestrian and cycle routes and links to the local school and town, as well as to the dunes and coastal SSSI. All links are via the lane to the east or the riverside walkway. An area of public open space borders the site to the west. A section 106 requirement was that information on the facilities in the area be delivered to all occupants.

The Panel questioned what the effect would be of a high turnover of occupants – made more likely by the lack of any private outdoor space, children’s play area, or even balconies. The developers stated that 2-4 bed family houses would be available elsewhere on the Marlas Farm site, for prices in the range of £100,000. Garden squares in between blocks would be semi-private spaces that were still publicly accessible, increasing the permeability of the scheme.

The developers emphasised that the ‘Debut’ product was more than a collection of buildings. External works costs were relatively high in recognition of the need for high quality landscaping. The Panel suggested that mature planting be used where possible to temper the immediacy of a new development and provide an instant maturity. Elevational materials, roof pitches and overhangs are all details which need further development. It was agreed that this kind of urban architecture will not be appropriate for every site, and the budget allows for a diversity of materials to reflect the local context.

There appeared to have been no consideration given to solar orientation, or the capturing of views, in the orientation of the blocks. Both of these were considered to be of major importance to the quality of life for residents. The developers are considering the feasibility of solar water heating.

There is no intention to control resale prices and as yet there has been no experience of resale values.

Crynodeb/Summary

The Panel welcomes the concept of providing decent affordable housing on the open market, particularly when low maintenance and running costs are built in. We consider this to be a suitable site for the Debut concept, but wish to emphasise the critical necessity of achieving a high quality of external space and contextual response. The layout should be refined to address the following issues:

- The highways and parking restrictions are compromising the design quality and we would wish to see a reduction of parking standards.
- The layout of the paved communal spaces does not maximise their amenity or usability, and they would be better designed as an elongated street with

buildings set back to provide incidental squares. It is important to identify building entrances when defining these spaces.

- We support the concept of keeping parking to the rear of the properties, but want to ensure the minimum of car access and parking over and on the communal open space at the front of the buildings.
- A stronger landscape concept is needed relating the development to its green fringe and riverside walkway, and the planting scheme requires more definition.
- The layout does not make good use of the aspect to the fields to the west.
- We would want to ensure that the diversity of elevational treatments responds carefully to local character on this edge of settlement location
- We would emphasise that the lack of private external space means that communal spaces must be particularly well designed and car free as far as possible.
- We warmly welcome the commitment to an EcoHomes 'Excellent' rating, and the measures taken to reduce energy and water consumption, in particular the communal heating systems. We would encourage this strategy to be extended to include solar water heating.

Diwedd/End

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