

Statws/Status:
Cyhoeddus / Public



Adroddiad Adolygu Dylunio: 19 December 2005
Design Review Report:

Dyddiad Cyfarfod / Cyflwyno'r Deunydd: 7 December 2005
Meeting Date / Material Submitted:

Lleoliad/Location: Holywell, Flintshire

Disgrifiad o'r Cynllun Residential, 24 units
Scheme Description:

Cleient/Asiant: Macbryde Homes [Ian Hornby]
Client/Agent:

Pensaer/Architect: As above

Awdurdod Cynllunio: Flintshire CC
Planning Authority: [Peter Jones-Hughes]

Statws Cynllunio: Planning application
Planning Status: submitted February 2005

Y Panel Adolygu Dylunio/Design Review Panel:
Alan Francis (cadeirydd/chair) Howard Wainwright
Cindy Harris (swyddog/officer) Kieren Morgan
Wendy Hall Ewan Jones
Mike Biddulph

Lead Panellist: Howard Wainwright

Sylwedyddion/Observers: Charlie Deng
Design Review assistant

Cyflwyniad/Presentation

An earlier proposal for this site was not acceptable to the Local Planning Authority who considered it to be inappropriate in form, massing and detailing in the context of the site, with insufficient information on the impact of the proposal on distant viewpoints to north and west. Since April this year the current developer has been working to progress the scheme, with the aim of integrating the principles of Georgian architecture within the Holywell context. A major problem with drainage on the site has now been largely resolved.

The site is on a raised mound between two valleys, on one side overlooking St Winefride's Well and chapel, a scheduled ancient monument and Grade 1 listed building. Well Street, running parallel to the site to the west, is the oldest lane in the county and connects the Well site to the town. The mound on which the site sits terminates to the north in Castle Mound, a Norman fort. The steep banks of the mound have mature but unmanaged woodland, which is outside the application site, and retaining walls on the west bank require remedial work. The site is within easy walking distance of the town centre, and the developer is confident that there is a market for 2 bedroom apartments in this area. There are two undistinguished buildings on the site which have been partially vandalised. The original application has been changed to reduce the plan area and move the two blocks further apart. The fronts of the blocks face inwards and parking [ratio, 1:1.5] is in a staggered linear arrangement to the east.

The Local Authority conservation officer is working with the developer to produce an acceptable design, making reference to the Georgian context but avoiding pastiche. They would like to see the height brought down and the fenestration reduced, with a gradation of openings. A simpler window design is being developed to accommodate double glazing. The roofs are mainly hidden behind parapet walls and there are no views from above. This is a very shaded site and leaf fall is considered to be a problem, to the extent of providing canopies to protect parked cars.

Ymateb y Panel/Panel's Response

The Panel regretted that inadequate information had been supplied to enable a proper evaluation. In particular, there was no contextual information or site analysis, or site sections showing difference in levels. On the basis of the information supplied, the Panel judged that this was a poor solution and the distinctiveness and character claimed for it, was not apparent. Neither the form nor elevations appeared to take any inspiration from the town. The accompanying design statement bore little relationship to the scheme as shown, and appeared to be more of an aspirational 'wish list'. There was no evidence of the stated desire to achieve 'innovative contemporary design solutions'. The difference between the original and amended schemes was not great and if anything, the Panel thought that the original scheme was better.

Ideally the surrounding woodland should be properly managed and thinned, and the current informal access should be regularised and made safe. The Panel would like to see an arboricultural consultant and landscape architect appointed to the design team. We were told that a landscape architect has been appointed but that this

aspect of the design was on hold until planning issues were resolved. The Panel considered that a canopy over the parking areas was unnecessary and that the money could be better spent elsewhere, eg on tree surgery to reduce the leaf fall. We regretted the lack of any private outdoor space and thought that the parking spaces were too close to the blocks [in places only 0.5 metres away].

The suggestion was made, which received general support among the Panel, that the massing of the blocks could be split up to create four smaller blocks, and that this would allow for a better disposition of parking spaces, easier servicing, better daylighting and possibly better values, with very little adjustment to the floor plans which already divide each block into two. The Panel would much prefer to see a design solution using a contemporary architectural approach, based on the proportions of local Georgian examples. Indeed, precedents throughout the UK of contemporary reinterpretations of Georgian houses could be referred to and could inform a more positive solution.

The Panel was informed by the developer that a BREEAM EcoHomes assessment would not be carried out as this was essentially budget accommodation, likely to attract prices of around £120,000 for a 2 bedroom apartment.

We were informed that a conservation area assessment does exist and this prompted some discussion of the merits of attempting to reproduce Georgian features. The Panel thought that, as this was neither an infill or replacement site, the imperative to replicate these features was not appropriate. In fact the particular style adopted was less important than the quality of the design, and this in turn depended on the quality of the detailing. We would like to see a greater fenestration pattern for the living areas, and the upstairs apartments having as much fenestration as those below. The proposed arrangement of mansard roofs behind a parapet would probably not be appropriate for a scheme of four blocks, which should instead follow a contemporary 'villa' style with expressed eaves.

Crynodeb/Summary

The Panel considers the design approach as presented to be an unacceptable solution to the development of this site, and probably the result of a long history of attempts at compromise. The quality of the information presented made it difficult to understand the proposal and therefore to evaluate it. In particular:

- We welcome the design statement but regret that its aspirations were not translated into the design itself
- We think the massing should be broken up, with each block split into two villa-style blocks and re-oriented to take advantage of passive solar gain
- We think a contemporary design approach should be adopted, based on precedents which use such an approach to reinterpret historic styles.
- We would like to see the external spaces made into more of an amenity, with some private outdoor space at least for ground floor residents, and no external canopies at all used over the car parking
- We regret the complete failure to address the sustainability issues which should inform all new developments in Wales

Diwedd/End

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