

**Statws/Status:**  
**Cyhoeddus / Public**



<b>Adroddiad Adolygu Dylunio: Design Review Report:</b>	<b>17 January 2006</b>
<b>Dyddiad Cyfarfod / Cyflwyno'r Deunydd: Meeting Date / Material Submitted:</b>	<b>11 January 2006</b>
<b>Lleoliad/Location:</b>	<b>Carmarthen town centre</b>
<b>Disgrifiad o'r Cynllun Scheme Description:</b>	<b>Mixed use redevelopment</b>
<b>Ymgynghorwyr Cynllunio: Planning Consultants:</b>	<b>Freeth Cartwright [Tamsin Cottle]</b>
<b>Cleient/Asiant: Client/Agent:</b>	<b>Simons Developments Ltd [Giles Walter, Niall Southwell]</b>
<b>Pensaer/Architect:</b>	<b>Clarity: NS. [Keith Neill-Smith] Rio Architects Ltd [Huw Jones, Richard Roberts]</b>
<b>Awdurdod Cynllunio: Planning Authority:</b>	<b>Carmarthenshire CC [Eifion Bowen, John Thomas Anupama Vembar]</b>
<b>Statws Cynllunio: Planning Status:</b>	<b>Outline application submitted</b>
<b>Y Panel Adolygu Dylunio/Design Review Panel: Richard Parnaby (cadeirydd/chair) Cindy Harris (swyddog/officer) Elfed Roberts Ann-Marie Smale</b>	<b>Phil Roberts Kieren Morgan Lyn Owen</b>
<b>Lead Panellist: Sylwedyddion/Observers:</b>	<b>Phil Roberts Charlie Deng Design Review assistant</b>

## **Cyflwyniad/Presentation**

This proposal was first reviewed by DCFW in March 2005 and further comments were made in December 2005. An outline application has now been submitted for approval of siting, access and design only. Landscape and external appearance have been reserved for later consideration, although a landscape design statement has been submitted. These proposals relate mainly to the form, scale and massing, supported by illustrative elevational sketches.

Traffic calming measures will be used to give pedestrians priority on St Catherines Street, and it is proposed that this thoroughfare will be subject to partial closure between 0930 and 1730 Monday to Saturday. The new public square to the north will provide a focus for the leisure area of cinema and cafes. Servicing in general is from the rear, partly via the relocated Fair Lane.

In developing the site layout, the architect has tried to follow the natural subdivision of blocks and to keep the scale consistent with the grain of the town. Thus the scale steps down nearer to the town centre, and is allowed to grow larger north of St Catherines Street. The scale is also broken down on corner sites adjacent to existing buildings, with recessed upper storeys. All plant is contained within a servicing strip at first floor level which receives a different elevational treatment. A local palette of materials is shown, mainly render with some brick and stone, and timber louvers on the multi-storey car park. The treatment of the public square will be simply expressed, with high quality local materials, using textures rather than patterns. The gradient from the town centre has been improved and the buildings sunk into the slope to reduce their height. The proposed link with Barnsfield Terrace has proved unpopular with residents who fear increased parking, but the developer thinks it can be made to work. The site to the north of the cinema, which is outside the current proposals, will be developed as a new health centre, possibly with some new housing.

The new market hall, designed by Rio Architects, is located slightly nearer to the town centre, which pleases the traders. While the old hall is the object of much emotional attachment locally, it is inadequate for contemporary requirements. The architects wish to retain the vitality of the original and give the new building a contemporary expression. The metal roof will lift to open up a generous north facing clerestory, and southern light will be excluded to avoid summer overheating. The new hall will be wrapped with covered units to create an external street market.

The local authority are still discussing the partial closure of St Catherines Street and the implications for traffic movement and the capacity of the adjacent road network.

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

The Panel appreciated the efforts which had been made by the developer to address the points raised in our previous review. However, we expressed disappointment that no residential uses had been included in this scheme, and felt that this detracted from its claims to be genuinely mixed use. We also thought this would mitigate against the integration of the new scheme, which would be unlikely to have the same 24 hour use as the current town. The developer pointed out that this proposal had been the catalyst for likely residential developments nearby, such as

the health centre site to the north, and would enhance links between existing residential areas.

The Panel's main concerns related to the proposed massing – a concern voiced in our previous review. We shared the architect's reservations and were encouraged by his attempts at mitigation. However, this aspect of the design needs to be carefully monitored and controlled throughout the design process. The multi-storey car park in particular is a massive block with a single entrance for a possible 900 cars, and we wondered whether some of this parking could be dispersed to other areas of the town, or the height reduced to two storeys with a basement.

Another major concern related to the nature of the facades and the impact on adjacent development. We thought there should be a greater reference to the vernacular in terms of form and materials while avoiding pastiche, particularly in the boundary areas. We found that the relationship of old and new on the northern boundary was still problematic. The impact of servicing routes on local residents needed further proof of its acceptability.

The Panel emphasised that good pedestrian links are vital to the successful integration of this scheme. We urged that the residents of Barnsfield Terrace should receive reassurances of controlled parking, in order that pedestrian access into the scheme at this point may be opened up. While we accepted that the partial closure of St Catherines Street has clear advantages, the eventual solution to re-routing traffic should be acceptable to local residents. The Design Review report of March 2005 recorded 'concern at the lack of consideration for public transport' and advocated the adoption of a strategy to promote it, which is currently lacking.

Although we were presented with the designs for the market hall without any prior information, we appreciated its contemporary design and thought that it could become an important civic building. At present it does seem rather weighty and would benefit from a lighter touch, to evoke the lightweight building it replaces. We were less sure about the total exclusion of south light which could have been used for winter warming. The building is, however, very dominant in its square and consequently the visibility of the clock tower from the approaches to the square is compromised. The Panel would like to see more space left around the clock tower, to enhance its presence – and possibly to allow for it to be seen from more places in the town.

The Panel was disappointed at the lack of reference to sustainable design principles, both in the design statement and the presentation. It is important that this approach is taken seriously and used to inform the detailed development, for instance by maximising daylight which can bring commercial benefits.

The Panel was particularly concerned at the prospect of building volumes being approved without consideration of significant elevational treatments, such as the Debenhams frontage on to St Catherines Street. We urged the planning authority to be robust in insisting on high quality treatments and a sensitive response to the existing fabric, under reserved matters. The possibility of using a design code, design guide or pattern book, in order to control these important aspects of the development, was discussed and the Panel would recommend this.

## **Crynodeb/Summary**

The Panel appreciates the opportunity to be updated on the progress of this scheme which we reviewed previously in March 2005. The development of the core spaces is progressing in a positive way and we find the current proposals to be an acceptable response to the brief, with minor but significant revisions. In particular:

- We remain concerned about the scale and massing, and we support the architect's efforts to reduce this, especially in the sensitive transition areas
- We recommend the adoption of some form of design code which reinforces the scale and character of the town, to control the development and implementation of the concept design.
- The lack of residential accommodation within the scheme is disappointing, detracts from its mixed use character, and represents a lost opportunity to reinforce the essential character of the town.
- There needs to be more explicit reference to sustainable design and a coherent strategy developed for minimising the lifetime environmental impact of this development
- Considerations of traffic movement and road capacity are important and need to be made compatible with good pedestrian and public transport links and accessibility. Pedestrian access should be maximised by controlling parking where necessary. A strategy to promote and improve public transport should be developed.
- We are concerned about the scale and mass of the car park, its impact on the surrounding residential areas, and on the volume of traffic brought into what is, in effect, a cul de sac.
- The new market hall should not crowd the square, and more space should be left around the clock tower

We would like to review these proposals again at the reserved matters stage.

## **Diwedd/End**

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