

Statws/Status:

Cyhoeddus / Public

DESIGN
COMMISSION
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DYLUNIO
CYMRU

Adroddiad Adolygu Dylunio: Design Review Report:	13 April 2006
Dyddiad Cyfarfod / Cyflwyno'r Deunydd: Meeting Date / Material Submitted:	5 April 2006
Lleoliad/Location:	Black Clawson, Newport
Disgrifiad o'r Cynllun Scheme Description:	Residential
Developer/Datblygwr:	Redrow Homes [Rhys Davies, Peter Taylor]
Pensaer/Architect:	Powell Dobson [Bernadette Kinsella]
Awdurdod Cynllunio: Planning Authority:	Newport CC [Wendy Hall, Andrew Dawe]
Statws Cynllunio: Planning Status:	Application submitted March 2006
Y Panel Adolygu Dylunio/Design Review Panel: Alan Francis (cadeirydd/chair) Cindy Harris (swyddog/officer) Ewan Jones	Mike Biddulph Douglas Hogg

Cyflwyniad/Presentation

The site sits within the Old Town Dock area of the Newport Unlimited/LDA masterplan, next to the new road bridge and the proposed new riverside park. 380 units are proposed on 3.8 hectares, with 86 affordable homes next to the bridge. These will be the the Debut model homes developed by Redrow. There would be

easy access for commuters on to the Southern Distributor Road, and family housing would be located nearer the city, facing East Dock Road.

The site layout follows the illustrative masterplan, with through routes running east/west linking the main road and city to the riverside, and landmark buildings at key points. These landscaped routes provide visual links as well as pedestrian/cyclist permeability, and form part of a hierarchy of public streets. The aim is to create a real sense of place and to set the tone for the rest of the development of Old Town Dock. Strong perimeter blocks front on to streets and urban squares, created where north/south and east/west routes cross. Landmark apartment blocks on the river edge, step up in scale towards the new bridge, although the designers have avoided the 12 storey option suggested by the masterplan at this corner. The largest block of 7 storeys is located centrally on the riverside .

The riverside blocks are effectively double fronted, with a greater than average setback and low level boundary walls or fences. They rely on the proposed ponds [understood to be part of the riverside park proposals] to give additional security. The design shows a contemporary aesthetic and a common language of materials. North/south streets will have shared surface treatment and traffic calming measures. Parking is mainly to the rear in shared courts, with on-street visitor parking.

As the detailed scheme has just been submitted, the Local Authority have not had a chance to form a response. However, they were concerned that the riverside park appears to be slightly pinched on the northern edge of site. It was confirmed that the developer would make a financial contribution to the development of the riverside park under a Section 106 agreement.

Ymateb y Panel/Panel's Response

The Panel was impressed with the proposed development and interpretation of the masterplan, and thought that this was a generous scheme in terms of public access. We queried whether the East Dock Road frontage was the right location for family housing and we noted that some of the public squares have blank ground floor and gable walls fronting on to them. We thought that the provision of both private and public outdoor space in the affordable housing section was meagre, and we would have preferred to see these houses pepper potted through the site. The developer pointed out that nationally, 70% of the take-up of Debut homes was by single people who are less likely to require outdoor space, but the Panel thought that this figure was likely to be due to the nature of the provision.

The Panel recognised that the design of the units was standardised and typical of volume housebuilding, but we would still have liked to see fewer blank facades and more local distinctiveness, with a better quality of finish. The 45 degree pitched roofs are not characteristic of the surrounding area and the handling of rainwater discharge routes around dormers and gables would be critical. It seemed anomalous that bedroom and living rooms had windows of similar size, and that small bedrooms had relatively high ceilings. We found the precedents shown in the Design Statement more pleasing than the current proposals. The architect acknowledged that the onus was on them to produce the desired quality of building and public space treatment.

The undercroft parking could appear intimidating to pedestrians, but we recognised the difficulty of locating parking where there are no 'back' areas, and the architect wanted to reinforce the built form. The Panel would like to see the ground floor apartments provided with some access to the space immediately outside their doors and windows.

We found the claimed hierarchy of roads unclear and we considered that East Dock Road was the main road, with other routes obviously secondary. The architect pointed out that the road network was based on the masterplan which has SPG status. We thought that the combination of no corner units and slightly wider streets served to water down the design intention, and we suggested that making some streets one-way could reduce their width. There may be proposals to calm traffic on East Dock Road, and if so these should relate to the east/west routes, with pedestrian priority. We thought that there should be a dedicated cycleway on one each of the north/south and east/west routes.

The Panel questioned how many landmark buildings a site of this size could accommodate, and whether there was any differentiation between them. The architect stated that they were in fact more stand-alone blocks and differentiated by their scale from each other and from the perimeter blocks. The Panel commented that none of the standard units were able to turn the corner, leading to very linear layouts with gaps at corners. One of the effects of this was a relatively large number of gable ends fronting East Dock Road.

The inclusion of continuous elevations went some way to helping our understanding of the scheme but parts of those elevations relate to public squares, which is not easily discernable from the drawings. We suggested that the squares should be treated separately with their own drawings.

The Panel noted that the block layout was not oriented to take advantage of either solar gain or the river views to the north. We were disappointed that no reference was made in the design statement or this presentation to energy efficiency or low carbon technologies in the non-affordable housing. We would have liked to see the community heating schemes used in the Debut units carried through to the rest of the scheme, and eventually to the whole of the Old Town Dock redevelopment.

The Panel were concerned that the buildings either side of East Dock Road should bear some relation to each other. The masterplan shows small scale housing on the west side, which would be compatible with this development. However, we found the proposed frontage to East Dock Road lacking in character or distinctiveness. We thought that the frontage to the New Bridge road and the junction with the riverside park needed better definition.

A planning application for the riverside park is imminent. Originally the Council intended to phase development from the north, but with this scheme coming forward, it would be necessary to start at both ends. The Panel hoped that the two schemes would proceed in tandem to ensure an effective interface.

The Panel felt there was some tension in the design concept. It seemed to be struggling to choose between a scheme of rear courtyard parking with dense tight main streets, and a more typical post-war suburban layout. We thought some

reduction in main street widths might be considered with the benefit of more private space to the rear.

More car parking has been provided than the required standard of 1:1. This was felt to be necessary in the interim before good transport links are established. The Panel was told that there were no plans for a small corner shop or newagent. Given that the nearest shop is some distance away, we thought that this possibility should be pursued further, possibly with existing local shopkeepers rather than big chains.

Crynodeb/Summary

The Panel considers the site layout well structured and the interpretation of the masterplan well executed. The public space provision, shared surface treatment and links to the riverside park are all welcome. We find these proposals to be an acceptable response to the site and the brief, with minor revisions. In particular:

- The nature of frontages onto the squares needs re-examining, and illustrations provided other than long elevations.
- The introduction of corner units could serve to reinforce the character of the three main squares.
- The amenity space for the affordable housing needs to be increased and developed to the same standard as the rest of the scheme.
- The streets would benefit from being narrower, with no parking, good landscaping and dedicated cycle routes.
- The dead frontages associated with the undercroft parking arrangement need addressing.
- We would like to see sustainability measures incorporated at an early stage and the Debut community heating schemes and EcoHomes rating extended through the site.
- The frontage onto East Dock Road should be re-visited and guidance provided by the Local Authority on the likely nature of development on the other side.
- Every effort should be made to introduce some retail element, however small, into the scheme.

Diwedd/End

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