

Statws/Status:
Cyhoeddus / Public



Adroddiad Adolygu Dylunio: 19 April 2006
Design Review Report:

Dyddiad Cyfarfod / Cyflwyno'r Deunydd: 5 April 2006
Meeting Date / Material Submitted:

Lleoliad/Location: Sophia Gardens, Cardiff

Disgrifiad o'r Cynllun Cricket ground development
Scheme Description:

Cleient/Asiant: Glamorgan County Cricket
Client/Agent: Club

Pensaer/Architect: HLN: [Neil McOmish, Anthony
Jellard, David McQuitty]

Ymgynghorwyr Cynllunio: Boyer Planning
Planning Consultants: [Robin Williams]

Awdurdod Cynllunio: Cardiff CC [Phil Williams,
Planning Authority: Ian Whittaker]

Statws Cynllunio: Detailed application submitted
Planning Status:

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

Cyflwyniad/Presentation

The site at Sophia Gardens is a Grade 2 listed park and the landscape analysis is based on a historical assessment of the garden's development, which was opened to the public in 1858 . The Glamorgan County Cricket Cloub [GCCC] wish to upgrade

facilities with a view to holding full test matches, and therefore require seating for 16,500 as opposed to the current 7,500 permanent seats. Existing buildings on the site include the National Indoor Academy, a pavilion, media building and temporary stand, as well as some portacabin-style buildings and toilets. Since the original application was made the scheme has evolved and responded to concerns from Cadw, the Strategic Planning department, and other interested stakeholders. The consented scheme [1997] shows development on three sides of the ground with a 500 space car park on the fourth. The car park was subsequently replaced with an ice arena, but this has now been removed from the current proposals. The new grandstand is three meters lower than in the consented scheme, owing to the loss of the third tier.

The current proposal shows a bowl of seating which defines the public space behind it. The new grandstand, which is the tallest element, is close and parallel to the existing Welsh Institute of Sport building, and the new stands adjacent to the Taff trail and riverside walk are lower than the existing tree canopy. Car parking for 80 cars is provided behind the main pavilion. There is good permeability at ground level and links with the Taff trail. The new pavilion building to the north west of the site is centred round a three storey glazed atrium and entrance space, and is stepped back at the top floor to provide open balconies with some shading. It also houses the National Cricket Museum and corporate function suites. The new media centre is located where the consented pavilion was due to stand and is three meters higher, but it 'floats' over the raked seating, bridging two stairs and allowing views in and out. Disabled access is provided to highest levels. The visual impact of this scheme is much softer than in previous versions and has a more open sense of enclosure on the east side facing the river. The development does not impinge on the open spaces of Pontcanna Fields to the north, and the line of beech trees on the northern boundary will be protected by moving the car park further away. It is intended that this will be a flagship development, with state of the art cricket facilities.

The Local Authority has a more positive reaction to these proposals than to previous ones, and thinks that Cadw will also look more favourably on this version. Cadw's main objection was to the loss of open space to the north of the new pavilion, which has now been largely reinstated. It is intended that this proposal will go to committee on 10 May.

Ymateb y Panel/Panel's Response

The Panel was told that no structural engineers have yet been engaged to assess the proposal. Concessions and WCs will be distributed all round the ground floor levels. Some car parking is provided under the stands but this will not be used on cricket match days. The staircases are enclosed and intended to form a counterpoint to the stands. The museum will be open to the public. Subsidised non-cricket uses could be controlled by planning conditions, but these would have to be fully justified.

The Panel expressed slight concern that the grandstand wrapping round the corner slightly disrupted the 'village' feel of discrete stands. The pavilion has rather too much gravitas and solidity. We thought that the rear elevations would look better without the screens, but they were included at the Local Authority's request.

However, the Panel was much more concerned by the fact that, even with the knowledge of a fast-track programme, scheme design has progressed without a

fully coordinated architectural / structural solution, and that a structural engineer had not yet even been appointed, which on other projects (eg Lords) has proved to be extremely beneficial. We thought that the elevated upper stands would be complicated to construct and the engineering solution will inevitably impact on the design. The design team stated that a previous engineer's comments from an earlier Design and Build scheme have been incorporated.

The position of the car park was discussed. The Panel thought that from the point of view of pavilion users, a green / picnic space immediately outside the building would be preferable, with the car park moved to the northern boundary. However, the boundary with Pontcanna Fields and the provision of green open space at this point, was seen as critical by Cadw. The picnic area is intended as a buffer zone between the new development and Pontcanna Fields. A new beech hedge will be planted between the car park and picnic area. The surface of the car park will be porous block or fixed gravel.

The Panel thought that this was still a significant encroachment on former green space and requested details of further mitigating landscape proposals to screen the development. We were informed that there would be long term replacement of mature trees on the riverside and some replanting on the Pontcanna Fields boundary. It was confirmed that the proposed lighting standards are necessary, and that GCCC have no intention of any further expansion to these facilities in the future. Certainly, the open ground to the north would be treated as sacrosanct within any planning consent. The Local Authority confirmed that these proposals have probably reached the limit of acceptable impact and that any further proposals would reactivate Cadw's concerns.

The new buildings will be primarily naturally ventilated. Rainwater harvesting and recycling will supply non-potable uses . The designers are negotiating with Coed Cymru for a supply of Welsh Larch cladding.

The intention is for a single phase construction programme, which will involve some down periods. However, as the primary function is to provide test cricket facilities [and this will be the major source of revenue] the construction of these facilities has to take priority. On the architect's advice, the client is considering using a traditional procurement method. It is hoped to start on site on 1st October 2006, with a possible Ashes test in 2009. In any event, the team is confident that this newly developed ground will be awarded category A test match status.

Crynodedb/Summary

The Panel welcomes the improvements which have been made to this scheme and appreciates the appropriate scale of the development. We consider this proposal to be an acceptable response to the site and the brief, with minor revisions. In particular:

- We are surprised that a structural engineer has not yet been appointed and we consider this to be necessary and urgent. We believe that a building of real and lasting quality will only result through a close collaboration between the architect and structural engineer.
- We query the position of the car park but understand the reasons for its proposed location.

- We applaud the sustainability measures incorporated so far and would like to see these extended as far as possible.
- We are not convinced by the screens on the rear elevation or the tensile roof structures, in terms of function or aesthetics.
- The detailing on the staircases and their relationship to the rest of the stand is unclear.
- We are concerned about the tight programme and think that achievement of the necessary quality will be determined by the procurement method and the quality of the team.

Diwedd/End

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