

Statws/Status:

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DESIGN
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Adroddiad Adolygu Dylunio: Design Review Report:	13 April 2006
Dyddiad Cyfarfod / Cyflwyno'r Deunydd: Meeting Date / Material Submitted:	5 April 2006
Lleoliad/Location:	Adam Street Cardiff
Disgrifiad o'r Cynllun Scheme Description:	School of Creative and Cultural Industries
Cleient/Asiant: Client/Agent:	University of Glamorgan [Alan Woodruff]
Pensaer/Architect:	Holder Mathias Architects [Stephen Hill]
Awdurdod Cynllunio: Planning Authority:	Cardiff CC
Statws Cynllunio: Planning Status:	Planning application lodged Feb 06
Y Panel Adolygu Dylunio/Design Review Panel: Alan Francis (cadeirydd/chair) Cindy Harris (swyddog/officer) Mike Biddulph Ewan Jones	Kedrick Davies Jonathan Adams Douglas Hogg Wendy Hall

Cyflwyniad/Presentation

The University of Glamorgan is expanding its existing facilities in Trefforest. Its student base has grown from 3,000 in the late 1980s, to 20,000 today. They want this development to be a statement building in the capital city, close to the city center and easily accessible to Queen Street station. Holder Mathias, Davis Langdon, Hoare Lea and Arup are all involved on the design team and the University

board has also taken a keen interest and has signed off the current proposal. A decision on the planning application is expected next month and it is hoped that construction work will start then, with a completion by September 2007. A contractor was appointed last week and the procurement will be by management contract.

The proposal is for a conversion and extension of the existing BT building on Adam Street, on an island site between the prison and an elevated railway line. Because of likely movement patterns, a design decision was made to have two 'front' doors to the building, with a route through which separates the old and new elements and enhances permeability. The ground floor frontage has been opened up to encourage interaction, and there will be some public access eg for the theatre. Removal of the existing grass bunding will allow for a wide pavement/gathering point in front of the main entrance on Adam Street. Visual interaction between spaces within the building is seen as important. The generous floor to floor heights of 4.6m in the existing building are very appropriate for teaching spaces and have been repeated in the new build. In addition, the extension contains a double height theatre and studios.

The eastern corner elevation has a projecting bay that takes advantage of an existing full-height opening in the concrete structure. A similar projection on the new west elevation will promote public engagement with a dance studio. The existing building will be re-clad and extra insulation will be incorporated. The panel size which works on the existing building facade will be translated to the new building, which is the same height. The new element is intended to contrast with the existing, and be more sculpturally dynamic.

An area on the eastern edge of site will be used for external performances, and a small amphitheatre has been created, protected from the road by a stone 'bunker'. The car parking area to the north will have 100 spaces and there will be clear differentiation between vehicular and pedestrian access. There is a planned secondary access on the south west corner of site, off Adam Street, for servicing and occasional HGV access.

Ymateb y Panel/Panel's Response

The Panel regretted that we did not have the opportunity to review this scheme at an earlier stage. We also found the level of information supplied inadequate in some respects, and this made a thorough understanding and appreciation of the proposals, difficult.

The Panel were pleased to see an appropriate reuse of an existing building, and thought that the overall planning made good sense, with the separation of specialised and non-specialised spaces well resolved. However, we thought that the clarity and dynamism of the new extension's form was weakened by the 'busyness' of the irregular elements breaking through the form's surface. There is a difficult juxtaposition between the rectilinear box of the theatre and the projecting free-form curved wall above, which meets the ground in some places but not others. Likewise the projecting stairway, positioned on the new build to align with a similar element on the existing building, clashes with the primary surface. The Panel found these elements to be conflicting and arbitrary, adding superfluous articulation, but the architect reaffirmed his preference for these contrasting forms, and the legibility

afforded by the repeated projecting stairway. We found the internal spiral staircase was a further potential detraction from the strong clean lines in the extension's form.

The Panel requested details of materials and was told that metal cladding panels had been envisaged on most facades, with vertical circulation elements in render, and the theatre 'box' in stone. The intention was for a mainly white building, as a contrast to the reddish brown of the existing building and as a response to the opportunity created by an island site. The fly tower has now been taken out of the scheme and a 2 storey cinema has been added. This has had an effect on the budget, which may lead to the original metal cladding being replaced by render. The Panel considered that this is probably too small a building with too dynamic a form, to take a metal cladding system easily, and that alternative cladding solutions should be investigated. Render was suggested but the Panel was worried that this part of Cardiff might be dominated by that material (Altolusso / student accommodation etc) and thought this should be considered only as a last resort. It was confirmed that the railway retaining wall will be cleaned and upgraded.

The Panel was told that the building will be open 7 days/week, but probably not 24 hrs/day, although there will be 24 hour security with CCTV. The Panel preferred the use of a porter's lodge and human presence by the northern entrance, as well as the use of CCTV, and acknowledged the importance of widening the pavement and enhancing the bridge. The designer is committed to examining ways in which the approach from the north can be made as comfortable as possible.

We would like to see additional planting in the car park, and a controlled pedestrian crossing opposite the building on Adam Street. The Panel appreciated the opening up of the main entrance on to Adam Street and the provision of public gathering space at this point [although this would be eroded by a bus layby]. We would like to see facilities at the southern entrance for users of the building to meet and briefly sit outside, as well as facilities for smokers to be provided on what will be the sunny facade. It was confirmed that ample provision for cycles was included, together with benches, to the north west of the site, away from the car parking. We accepted that sociable spaces immediately to the rear of the building would be shaded and therefore better placed further north.

The University stated that existing students have been involved in planning the external works. They are negotiating to buy the Depot building on the western edge of site. There is no strategy for public art, as it is felt that all spare funds should be spent on improving the external works. However, we suggested that art could be integrated into the building fabric and used to animate the foyer, where there will be an exhibition space.

The Panel suggested that servicing requirements for this building are likely to be heavy, and doubted whether there was adequate service access, or areas for loading and unloading given the lack of a 'back door'. The proposed road access by the tunnel could present difficulties and may not be approved by Highways officers. The designer agreed to look at this again.

We thought that the appointment of a specialist theatre consultant was vital, and could help prevent expensive mistakes being made. The space around the cinema needs reconsidering and more break-out space will almost certainly be needed. We suggested a cafe might be provided for the cinema on the upper level to take

advantage of views. It would be an advantage to be able to cross the internal street at upper levels. Acoustic insulation and vibration isolation will need to be carefully specified in view of the proximity of the railway, and this is likely to be expensive.

The University representative stated that they were committed to a sustainable development. They have ISO 14001 certification for all their operations. However, no specific extra commitment to low carbon performance was offered. The building will be air conditioned and natural ventilation was deemed inappropriate, partly for acoustic reasons and partly because of the relatively deep floor plan of 18 metres. No provision has been made for daylighting the centre of the floor plate. The heating system will be gas fired, with a BMS. The Panel was disappointed that nothing better than standard energy performance was proposed.

Crynodeb/Summary

The Panel welcomes the appropriate reuse of the existing building, together with the intelligent planning and integration of the new element, and good access and links to the surrounding areas. We think that the development could contribute significantly to the townscape and enhance the reputation of the University. However, we are concerned that changes to the brief are continuing to affect the design, and that the programme is almost impossibly tight. Providing that no more major design changes are required, we find these proposals to be an acceptable response to the site and the brief, with minor revisions. In particular:

- We are not convinced by the juxtaposition of the rectilinear and curved forms within the new extension.
- We think that a metal cladding system could look clumsy and that an alternative [or a non-white render if nothing else is possible] would be more easily handled.
- We would like to see more planting in the car park and the provision of outdoor seating and shelters for smokers.
- The Local Authority should consider providing a controlled crossing on Adam Street opposite the main entrance.
- The central foyer space will be critical to the public and user's appreciation of the building and we would like to see the integration of some form of public art.
- The servicing arrangements need a thorough re-evaluation and the likely requirements should not be underestimated.
- We consider it essential that a specialist theatre consultant is involved as soon as possible.
- We would like to see more commitment to a sustainable building with low carbon technologies.
- We are pleased that the procurement will be by management contract, with the retention of the architect, as this should help to maintain the desired quality.

Diwedd/End

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

