

Statws/Status:
Cyhoeddus / Public



Adroddiad Adolygu Dylunio: Design Review Report:	16 June 2006
Dyddiad Cyfarfod / Cyflwyno'r Deunydd: Meeting Date / Material Submitted:	5 June 2006
Lleoliad/Location:	White House Hotel, Abersoch
Disgrifiad o'r Cynllun Scheme Description:	Five star hotel, brasserie and spa
Cleient/Asiant: Client/Agent:	Chris Chown Plas Bodegroes
Developer/Datblygwr:	David McLean
Pensaer/Architect:	Bluegreen Architects [Kevin Slack]
Awdurdod Cynllunio: Planning Authority:	Cyngor Gwynedd [William Elfyn Williams]
Statws Cynllunio: Planning Status:	Planning application submitted
Y Panel Adolygu Dylunio/Design Review Panel: Alan Francis (cadeirydd/chair) Cindy Harris (swyddog/officer)	Elfed Roberts Jonathan Hines
Lead Panellist	Elfed Roberts

Cyflwyniad/Presentation

There is a previous consent on this site for renovation of the existing building, although the Panel did not have the opportunity to view this in advance. However, it was found to be an unworkable proposition for a luxury hotel and the current proposal seeks permission to demolish the existing building – a 1930's house with various extensions and additions, now fallen into disrepair. It will be replaced with a 30 room, 5 star hotel, including a 120 cover brasserie and a self-contained spa forming the ground and lower ground floors respectively. Guest rooms will be provided on the first and second floors, set back from the brasserie facade. A sun lounge and roof terrace on the top level are set back again from the front facade. The enlarged existing car park at the front will serve the brasserie and spa, while a new car park to the rear serves the hotel. A new service access is created from the west.

The site is in a prominent elevated position, with panoramic views and mature grounds, and good access off the A499. The design is conceived as a white mass on a slate plinth, with a curved convex form taking advantage of the southern aspect and the sea views. The views are maximised by high levels of glazing to the ground floor dining areas, and by off setting the balconies to the bedrooms. Various roofscape studies were carried out and moved from an initial uncompromising contemporary approach to a 'middle ground' with some pitched slate roofs and flat roofed dormers, which are a local feature. Local materials of stone, timber, and slate will be used to create a crisp, clean effect. Terne coated steel will be used for cladding to the rear bays. The new rear car park will be well landscaped with island parking on gravel surfaces.

The principle of hotel use is supported by the local authority and the scale is recognised as appropriate. All previous interest in the site has been for residential use, and this is not favoured. The local authority strongly support this scheme brought forward by a local developer and a local operator, both with a track record of success. Most of the established gardens will be retained and the Highways department is content with the proposed 72 parking spaces in total. The planning officer thought that any problems of privacy or overlooking, including any impact on the residential development to the west, could be solved by thoughtful and sensitive design. The application is due to go to committee on 19th June with a recommendation for delegated approval. The time frame is important because of the opportunity for Objective 1 funding for a limited period.

Ymateb y Panel/Panel's Response

The Panel agreed with the Local Authority in supporting the principle of use, but thought also that the relation of the new building with its context was critical. In particular, we considered that the three closest properties: to the west [Hunters Moon], north [Ty Gwyn Bach] and east [Anhywel], were likely to be affected by physical overlooking and increased noise and traffic. However, more information would be necessary to properly evaluate the impact on these dwellings, including context plans and sections showing measured distances between buildings. It was noted that no adverse comments or objections from neighbours have so far been received, either to this proposal or the consented scheme.

The mature conifers and hedge screen that exist between this site and Anhywel are vital to the preservation of its amenity. Efforts should therefore be made to ensure

that the design and construction of the proposal would not compromise the trees. The Panel observed that the proposed new service road detracted from the existing amenity enjoyed by Hunters Moon to the west and served to increase its isolation by traffic. We would like to see alternative arrangements brought forward for service vehicle access, or else a better landscaped scheme if the presently proposed service access was agreed as the best possible.

The Panel welcomed the design approach of the sweeping curved form and applauded the way in which the design made good use of the site topography. We found the earlier sketches, showing a more clearly contemporary design, were far preferable to the current proposal, which appears to be an uneasy and unconvincing compromise. At the moment there is too great a mix of architectural styles and the Panel urged the designer and developer to remain true to their original instincts and follow through with a simple, elegant, crisp white block on a slate plinth. The pitched roof elements on the front elevation and over the main entrance on the rear, as well as the gable ends, should be abandoned. The removal of the dormers would avoid problems with awkward junction details, flashings and the routing of rainwater goods. We noted further that any changes that may be necessary to mitigate the impact on neighbouring buildings would be easier to achieve with a modern form.

The strength of the central bay was considered to be weakened by the single projecting balcony. We would have liked to see more details on the bay elevations and we recommend that if the application is resubmitted, a detailed bay elevation is included.

The Panel urged the developer to commit to a BREEAM Excellent rating and thought that the process of evaluation would help to identify the appropriate sustainability measures for inclusion, out of the current range of options. We recognised that most areas had good levels of daylighting, although these were difficult to achieve at the rear of the lower ground floor.

Crynodeb/Summary

The Panel was pleased to review these proposals for a luxury hotel on an outstanding site and we strongly support the proposed use. We find the scheme to be an acceptable response to the site and the brief, with some minor revisions. In particular:

- We applaud the overall concept of the curved form, and the creation of a simple and crisp white block on a slate plinth.
- We urge the design team to maintain their original commitment to a contemporary form and think that this should be applied rigorously, and the treatment of the top floor revised.
- We think that more contextual information should be provided with regard to issues of privacy and overlooking. However, we believe that any impacts can be minimised through good design and that this will be made easier with a contemporary building form.
- We suggest that an alternative service access be provided which is less intrusive on neighbouring properties.
- We would like to see a commitment to achieving BREEAM Excellent.

- The projecting balcony on the centre bay should be omitted and detailed elevations worked up for individual bays, paying particular attention to the overlapping planes of glazing and render.

Diwedd/End

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