

Statws/Status:
Cyhoeddus / Public



Adroddiad Adolygu Dylunio: 17 August 2006
Design Review Report:

Dyddiad Cyfarfod / Cyflwyno'r Deunydd: 2 August 2006
Meeting Date / Material Submitted:

Lleoliad/Location: Conwy Quay, Conwy

Disgrifiad o'r Cynllun Retail / Leisure
Scheme Description:

Developer/Datblygwr: Shaftesbury Estates
[Graham Dale]

Pensaer/Architect: Lawray Architects [Martin Fox]

Awdurdod Cynllunio: Conwy CC [Paula Jones,
Planning Authority: Dave Rigby]

Statws Cynllunio: Planning application submitted
Planning Status: April 2006

Y Panel Adolygu Dylunio/Design Review Panel:
Alan Francis (cadeirydd/chair) Gerard Ryan
Cindy Harris (swyddog/officer) Wendy Richards
Ann-Marie Smale Lyn Owen
Mike Biddulph

Lead Panellist: Alan Francis

Sylwedyddion/Observers:
Anna Lerman DCFW PhD student
Patrick Williams MSc student

Cyflwyniad/Presentation

This proposal seeks to improve a derelict and underused area of Conwy Quay, to create an active, vibrant environment attracting year-round use and contributing to the economic regeneration of the whole town. It is intended that the built form will be congruous with that of a working quay, and will not involve a pastiche imitation of any particular architectural style. This proposal has evolved over the last three years, when Shaftesbury were appointed as the preferred developer, and during that time extensive discussions have been held with the Local Authority, Cadw and the Environment Agency to satisfy their particular concerns. The requirements for full disabled access and sustainability have also been addressed. It is considered that alternative energy generation is not appropriate on this site, but energy and water efficiency measures will be implemented and will be conditioned in the tenancy agreements. Although a planning application has been submitted, the applicant is willing to amend the application if necessary.

The design intention is for the new buildings to remain subservient to the town wall and this fits well with Cadw's requirement for improved visual and physical access to the wall. Approval to demolish the existing derelict and semi-derelict buildings has been granted. The proposed new buildings are mostly single storey, in 2 groups of 3 plus a single unit, with gables facing the quay. Built in flexibility means they can be let as single units of 70 square metres or combined to form bigger units. In addition, a new bar/restaurant is proposed at the eastern end of the site next to Porth Isaf and, together with the new harbourmasters office which requires good views of the harbour, form the only two storey buildings. Flood protection measures include strengthening the first 900mm of external wall, limiting opening widths to 2 metres and placing window cills a minimum of 900mm above ground level.

There is a clear 3 metre wide zone between the new buildings and the wall and it is hoped that walkways between buildings will draw people through the site to inspect the wall. Granite setts currently being laid in front of the site will be carried through to the rear of the buildings. Construction materials will be Welsh slate, render and some brickwork, to create a cohesive built form. Diagonal timber cladding will reflect the detail on the nearby mussel treatment plant. Local materials and labour will be used as far as possible in a traditional construction process. Apart from the bar/restaurant, the units will be naturally ventilated.

It was confirmed that Conwy CC are the landowners and have identified the site for this kind of development. They wish to conserve the town wall while opening up the area to pedestrians and creating a car-free zone. The tender from Shaftesbury responded well to the requirements of the brief. Conwy's conservation area advisory panel and the local planning authority support the scheme, with some reservations concerning the detailing of the bar/restaurant. There is strong opposition from the local Civic Society.

Ymateb y Panel/Panel's Response

The Panel was informed that units will be developed as simple shells for general A1 use, with the exception of the bar/restaurant, for which an operator has already been identified, and the harbourmaster's office. Tourism links will be encouraged and there is the possibility of a brewery visitor centre. Access for servicing will be

restricted to certain times of day and will be via the road to the west, which is suitable for HGVs up to the mussel treatment plant.

The Panel welcomed the proposed scale but thought that in spite of the intention, the buildings looked forced, as if they had been dropped in place. The repeated individual symmetry of the waterfront blocks appeared unnatural and the detailing seemed to draw on inappropriate precedent. The Panel would like to see the simplicity of the boat house form taken further. We suggested that the roof form was over-complicated and that the gables could be simplified with all the ridges running in one direction. The architect agreed to consider this and the Panel stressed that the verge detailing would be critical. The fisherman's store at the western end of site is designed to express the stone wall which it will replace and the Panel suggested that it should be built of reused stone from the demolition of the existing wall.

The Panel considered that the central block was too symmetrical and the detailing too domestic, suggesting a 'chalet' style. We do not consider the elevation of the bar/restaurant to be sympathetic with the predominant urban form and think it should have a more positive relationship with the Liverpool Arms public house opposite. The conservatory and roof terrace look like additions or extensions on either side, rather than integral parts of the whole facade. We think the elevation is unnecessarily fussy and needs a calmer, more neutral treatment. The roof form of the conservatory against the main double gable, does not work well.

The Panel was not convinced that the public space created to the rear of the buildings would function well as a pleasant recreational area. We were told that public access to the wall was a Cadw requirement and that appropriate lighting and CCTV would be installed, but we still felt it could become a neglected and shaded 'back' area. Double aspect units would certainly help to counteract this tendency. Failing that, the Panel suggested that a better solution would be to allow public access around the central walled tower only and to gate off the rest of the space to the rear.

The Panel was concerned that future tenants might want larger window openings and signage, which could defeat the original design intentions. We were reassured that occupational leases would exercise strict control on the degree of alteration allowed, and this would be supported by the planning authority. Current signage zones are likely to be above doors or possibly swing signs.

Crynodeb/Summary

The Panel recognised the difficulty of creating a retail scheme in an industrial setting on a very sensitive site. We consider the proposal to be an acceptable response to the site and the brief, with some minor revisions. In particular:

- We support the proposed scale of the development.
- We think the elevational treatment, particularly on the bar/restaurant, should be simpler and better integrated.
- We would like to see a less complex roof form, with simple ridges carried through the depth of the buildings and running perpendicular to the quay.
- We are not convinced that the narrow area to the rear of the retail units will be a successful public space, particularly with no natural surveillance.

- We support the intention to use local materials, but doubt whether pvc downpipes, painted render and stained timber will be sufficiently robust in this situation.
- We urge that future signage be restricted to preserve the original design intention.

Diwedd/End

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