

Statws/Status:
Cyhoeddus / Public



Adroddiad Adolygu Dylunio: 15 August 2006
Design Review Report:

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

Lleoliad/Location: Sully House, Swanbridge

Disgrifiad o'r Cynllun Residential
Scheme Description:

Developer/Datblygwr: not known

Pensaer/Architect: Willdig Lammie
[Robert Willdig, Paul Treweeks]

Cynllunio: PV Urban Design
Consultants:

Awdurdod Cynllunio: Vale of Glamorgan
Planning Authority:

Statws Cynllunio: Detailed planning application
Planning Status: submitted 2 weeks ago

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: Mke Biddulph

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

Cyflwyniad/Presentation

This site is in a highly visible coastal location and the architect considers it to be a landmark site. It sits between the car park of a public house [The Captain's Wife] to the west and the small gated community of Swanbridge Farm to the east. There are views of Sully Island and the Bristol Channel to the south, and three well spaced detached houses to the north. A flood risk assessment has determined the level of access to the site, and the main approaching lane to the west will be widened up to the site entrance on the western boundary and a new pathway provided. The site slopes down to the north which allows the 41 car parking spaces to be at semi-basement level.

The proposal is for 3 x 1 bed apartments, 20 x 2 bed apartments, and 1 x 3 bed duplex, in two staggered blocks which take up the whole depth of the site and front the north and south boundaries. There is a conscious architectural reference to Sully Hospital and Pebble Beach in the design, which shows a contemporary maritime treatment. The regular but articulated facades incorporate balconies which provide solar shading. Shallow monopitched roofs are defined by sharply detailed edges. The proposed massing reflects the context, with higher corner elements rising to four storeys. It was stated that standard separation distances are exceeded for adjacent buildings and views out are protected as far as possible. Access to individual apartments is from galleried walkways.

The design team is confident of achieving an Eco Homes Very Good rating and possibly an Excellent. Permeable pavements and 'Grasscell' may be used to assist sustainable drainage or, if impermeable surfaces are used, rainwater harvesting will be considered. There will be a single district heating system and the possibility of a biomass boiler or micro CHP is being evaluated.

Ymateb y Panel/Panel's Response

The Panel was informed that the client brief was non-specific as to numbers of units. We were not convinced of the acceptability of the proposed scale of this development from a distance [eg Sully Island] as well as from the foreground. The design team maintained that the scale was justified by the prominence of the existing building and by the size of the site. The blocks step down to 2 storeys towards the northern boundary in response to adjacent buildings. Surrounding houses to the north and east have their backs facing this site and do not exploit views to the south and west.

The Panel found it difficult to understand the rear elevation, as presented, and felt uncomfortable about the open access walkway, especially when approached via an enclosed stairway [enclosed for fire prevention reasons]. It was confirmed that windows on the rear elevations, mainly to second bedrooms and bathrooms, were set back approximately 2 metres from the edge of the walkway. We suggested that the ends of the walkways on upper floors should be enclosed.

The Panel found the roof form too complicated for the simple plan and thought that simpler, more robust forms would better respond to the marine environment. We thought that too much reliance was being placed on the quoted precedent schemes.

It was suggested that the staggered western elevation might be replaced by angled party walls within an orthogonal form, which could then create separate entrance spaces on the rear elevation. We did not support the concept of special treatment for the corners, expressed in differing heights and colours, and we found the fully glazed corner with no external access to be incongruous.

The Panel encouraged the design team to achieve an Eco Homes 'Excellent' rating and to pursue the idea of solar water heating on this ideal solar site. We advised that the underfloor heating system should not be electric, but fed from the district heating system, which will probably be fuelled by gas. The feasibility of using a micro CHP should be investigated, which would make solar water heating unnecessary. It was confirmed that there is adequate sewage and mains services capacity for the site.

The Panel learned that the Local Authority had refused any pre-application discussions, but we questioned whether any existing planning guidance was relevant. We were told that there is no guidance which relates specifically to the site, but that general guidance on coastal locations, adjacent buildings, and transport has been taken into account. The designers stated that the site has been occupied for 100+ years, and the principle of development has therefore been established. They claimed that this proposal seeks to regenerate the site to an appropriate density as part of an existing settlement, and in a manner which is not too reflective of the adjacent buildings. In the absence of guidance from the local authority, the only way to establish what is deemed appropriate is by tabling a definite proposal. No advice has been received from Highways concerning traffic approaching from the east, but a highways specialist has been appointed to negotiate with the Vale. The design team argued that the increased traffic resulting from the site's recent use as a hotel and restaurant was more than what is currently proposed.

It was confirmed that the site is part of the Heritage Coast but is not individually identified. The Panel thought that it should not necessarily be treated as a landmark site. The proposed boundary treatments and their relation to the public space was not clear. We were told that the ground floor is 1 metre higher than the adjacent highway and the narrow green space immediately in front of the accommodation. We thought all the narrow green strips surrounding the blocks should be made more usable and accessible by residents, and in their current form were irrelevant in terms of amenity.

Crynodeb/Summary

The Panel found much to applaud in this scheme, in terms of the staggered layout and maintenance of views through the site. We consider the proposal an acceptable response to the site, albeit with some major revisions. In particular:

- We welcome the contemporary design approach which does not echo the surrounding buildings
- We support the principle of development but we are not convinced that this is a landmark site.
- The Panel is not convinced by the argument that this proposal shows an appropriate level of density.

- Our concerns about the form are more to do with proposed height than massing and we do not think that a corner tower is appropriate. We would prefer to see long, low-slung, sleek and streamlined elevations.
- We think the roof design is over-complicated.
- We do not think the motel-like walkways to access individual apartments would work well, in terms of privacy, security and daylight into the rear of the blocks .
- We are not convinced by the relation with and separation distances from The Wolves to the north.
- We are surprised that no request has come from the Local Authority for a highways assessment of St Marys Well Bay Road to the east.
- We think that the provision of a new footpath on the lane approaching the site entrance is unnecessary and suggest a more informal treatment.
- We recognise that this is not a particularly sustainable location but we support the sustainability measures proposed and urge the team to achieve an Eco Homes Excellent rating, evaluating in particular the feasibility of micro CHP.

Diwedd/End

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