

Statws/Status:
Cyhoeddus / Public



Adroddiad Adolygu Dylunio: Design Review Report:	11 December 2006
Dyddiad Cyfarfod / Cyflwyno'r Deunydd: Meeting Date / Material Submitted:	6 December 2006
Lleoliad/Location:	Abergavenny Cattle Mart site
Disgrifiad o'r Cynllun Scheme Description:	Mixed use
Developer/Datblygwr:	Henry Boot [Craig Mathias. Julian Painter]
Pensaer/Architect:	Boyes Rees [Gary Loo]
Awdurdod Cynllunio: Planning Authority:	Monmouthshire CC [George Ashworth]
Statws Cynllunio: Planning Status:	Application refused
Y Panel Adolygu Dylunio/Design Review Panel:	
Alan Francis (cadeirydd/chair)	Douglas Hogg
Cindy Harris (swyddog/officer)	Phil Roberts
Charlie Deng [Design Review assistant]	Lyn Owen
Martin Knight	Kieren Morgan
Lead Panellist:	Douglas Hogg
Sylwedyddion/Observers: Kathy MacEwen, CABE	
Cyflwyniad/Presentation	

The proposed scheme remains largely as we saw it in March 2006.

In the northwest corner of the site a pedestrian crossing point at the beginning of the ramp to the car park has been given a raised surface. The architect repeated that any residential use on Lion Street was not considered to be commercially viable. It was claimed that active frontages on Lion Street had been maximised and the use of a more traditional style and materials was considered to be more sympathetic to the context. The paving materials to be used on the renovation of Brewery Yard will be carried through into this scheme to help emphasise the north/south pedestrian routes. The architect stated that the previously expressed concern that there were too many architectural styles had been addressed and resolved. The stone wall to the service yard has been increased in height.

The Local Planning Authority representative pointed out that they had strongly advised against any housing on Lion Street, as this was to be a predominantly retail area which should not be split off from the town centre. Also the non-food retail units were included at the suggestion of the LPA, as they wanted to avoid retailers moving out of the town centre. The scale of car parking was actually below recommended standards at 373 spaces.

Ymateb y Panel/Panel's Response

The Panel noted that the scheme had changed very little since we last saw it in March 2006. We accepted that the stone cladding of the residential blocks to hide the 'pilotis' was an improvement, but we thought that attempts to treat the superstore in a more 'traditional' way have not succeeded and have produced a worse design solution. Indeed, the Panel has never objected to a contemporary approach and we think that a 'traditional supermarket' is a contradiction in terms. We did think that sustainability measures should be included in the supermarket design, such as breaking up the roof form to introduce natural daylighting into the deep plan, as Asda has done elsewhere.

The Panel considered that there remained significant and major problems with this proposal and that most of our comments and recommendations from the last review have not been addressed.

We called for an 'ingenious' approach to the urban design and a 'careful handling of the mix of uses and their scale' and the current proposals do not reflect this.

We greatly regretted the failure to animate the north side of Lion Street, and disagreed with the LPA's suggestion that residential [or any other animated use] should be avoided in this location. We were also disappointed with the failure to address our suggestion of some residential use over unit 1, which would have gone some way towards delivering this. We were informed that any increase in the scale and height of unit 1 was not considered desirable and that this particular mix of use was not considered commercially desirable. The Panel thought that, because supermarkets have only one active facade which in this case will face west towards the car park, the southern frontage on Lion Street would remain 'dead', irrespective of any superficial treatment. We believe that the only solution to this is to introduce a more active use, and to recognise that a 'mixed use' scheme will only succeed if the different uses work together and complement each other.

The Panel considered that the quality of the design and surrounding amenity of the proposed housing on Priory Lane was lamentably poor. The internal layout of the

blocks with single aspect units, and the sheer quantum of car parking to the rear and below, severely compromised the potential for desirable living accommodation.

The Panel repeated the view, which we have emphasised throughout, that the north/south pedestrian route is critical for the success of this scheme, and that it should be well landscaped and screened from the car park. The Market Street entrance was still not working well, and the entrance from the north west was severely compromised by the car park ramp. There were no detailed drawings available of the point at which this route crosses the car park ramp, and we thought that this was likely to be a cramped and unpleasant area. Any increase in height of the wall to the ramp, whether or not it displays public art, is likely to exacerbate the problem. We thought that the notion of a piazza in this location was not viable and that the designers should either remove the car park ramp or seek some other means of pedestrian access. No mention was made of the pedestrian crossing over the A40 and our advice that it be realigned.

The architect stated that the suggestion to move the basement parking underneath the superstore, which would offer significant advantages in terms of site layout and the quality of the public realm, was not considered feasible because excavation would raise concerns of archaeological sensitivity, according to a desk top study. In addition the extra cost would be significant. The Panel thought that the opportunity to relocate even some of the basement parking – or indeed to explore other above ground solutions – would offer enormous benefits and should continue to be explored.

The Panel noted and regretted the continued lack of any significant landscape proposals or strategy.

Crynodeb/Summary

The Panel thought that the lack of architectural coherence and a consistent vocabulary remained as a major flaw in the overall design concept. We were surprised and disappointed to see that this proposal had changed very little since the March Design Review, and during the subsequent consultation and planning process. We think that, of the eight points of concern that we raised in March, all but one remain unresolved* and our comments in these areas still stand. In particular:

- There is no architectural coherence or consistency
- Lion Street remains devoid of active uses on its northern side
- The relocation of, or alternatives to, the basement parking merit further investigation
- The treatment of the northwest corner of the site, and the interface between pedestrians and traffic, should be reconsidered.
- The north/south route should be strengthened and landscaped.
- The design of the housing should be of a higher quality

This proposal is an unacceptable response to the legitimate expectation for a high quality scheme in this important location. The Design Review Panel repeats our earlier view that a complete re-design is necessary.

Diwedd/End

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

*** The points we refer to are detailed below, as per the Design Review report dated 1st March 2006**

- The proposed intensification of use on the site places an even greater emphasis on the need for ingenious urban design, the careful handling of the mix of uses and their scale, and the reduction in conflict between pedestrian and vehicular movement.
- We would like to see the restoration of Lion Street as a mixed use street, with finer grained and active uses and enclosed on both sides. Since the south side of the street is a conservation area, a more sympathetic architectural treatment is imperative.
- We would like to see some residential units on Lion Street and we think the idea of extending the block over Unit 1 merits further exploration. All housing should be entered directly from the street or the walkway at ground level.
- The reinforcement and attractive treatment of the north/south pedestrian route is fundamental, and is an issue we have raised as a priority in the two previous reviews. The whole route needs a high quality treatment, good landscaping to provide shelter and protection from vehicles, and the north and south entrances should be made more inviting. The southern entrance should be narrower and the pedestrian space within the courtyard be more substantial, while the negative impacts of the car park ramp on the northern entrance should be ameliorated. There should be a shared surface with pedestrian priority where the walkway crosses the car park ramp. The pedestrian crossing over the A40 should be aligned with the route as it emerges from this site.
- We would like to see the basement parking taken under the food store, and we think this would bring significant advantages in terms of overall site layout, creating the opportunity for ground-oriented housing and a real courtyard atmosphere at the heart of the scheme..
- There needs to be a much more robust, hard and soft landscape treatment and a use of trees to help improve pedestrian amenity, and break up the expanse of car parking.
- A greater coherence in terms of architectural treatment is necessary. We do not object to a contemporary approach, but it should have good environmental credentials and should relate positively to the townscape and vitality of the streets of Abergavenny.
- Although it is unfortunate that the slaughterhouse buildings cannot be reused, we do not object to their demolition, given the inclusion of two new and valuable public uses. We do consider that the library and cinema need more thought as regards their setting and relationship to pedestrian movement patterns.