

Statws/Status:

Cyhoeddus / Public

DESIGN
COMMISSION
FOR WALES
COMISIWN
DYLUNIO
CYMRU

Adroddiad Adolygu Dylunio: Design Review Report:	19 December 2006
Dyddiad Cyfarfod / Cyflwyno'r Deunydd: Meeting Date / Material Submitted:	6 December 2006
Lleoliad/Location:	Pontypridd
Disgrifiad o'r Cynllun Scheme Description:	Mixed use
Developer/Datblygwr:	Riddell TPS [A Higson]
Pensaer/Architect:	Leach Rhodes Walker [Christian Gilham]
Awdurdod Cynllunio: Planning Authority:	Rhondda Cynon Taff [Mark Howland, Steve Smith]
Statws Cynllunio: Planning Status:	Planning application submitted
Y Panel Adolygu Dylunio/Design Review Panel: Alan Francis [cadeirydd /chair] Cindy Harris [swyddog/officer] Charlie Deng [design review assistant] Lyn Owen	Douglas Hogg Phil Roberts Martin Knight Kieren Morgan
Lead Panellist:	Lyn Owen
Sylwedyddion/Observers: Kathy MacEwen, CABE	

Cyflwyniad/Presentation

This scheme has been in development for the last two years. A previously consented scheme for the same site aroused local opposition particularly over the location of a multistorey car park in Ynysangharad Park, across the River Taff. The Pontypridd regeneration strategy has specific proposals for this site, which is critical in terms of delivering the strategy and there is a longstanding commitment from WAG/DIEN to progress the development.

This proposal includes residential and hotel use, as well as commercial and retail, and incorporates a shoppers car park for 550 spaces above the new anchor unit and adjacent to the hotel, as well as a separate car parking area for the residential units with 48 spaces. Connectivity and permeability are maximised and active frontages surround the perimeter of the block at ground level. The riverside walkway is on two levels, the upper level being a weather protected route leading from a vertical circulation core, through the shopping centre to Bridge Street, or across a new footbridge to the memorial park. Service vehicle access is from Taff Street via a ramp direct into the basement service area.

The Local Planning Authority support a high quality mixed use scheme on this site which is in urgent need of redevelopment.

Ymateb y Panel/Panel's Response

The Panel previously reviewed the consented scheme in 2003, and this scheme at an Internal Panel meeting in May 2006. We welcomed the additional visual material provided for this review, including a Design Statement and model. We were informed that a major imperative for this scheme was to deal with the problems of the previous one, and so the car park had to be incorporated into the main block, west of the river. However, it is screened from views on two sides and the mass is broken down with framed openings and louvers. The height has not increased compared with the previous scheme.

The architect stated that the street elevation also breaks down the scale, creating pavilion-like units. However, the Panel thought that the scale remained problematic, especially the need for a sympathetic relationship between the Tabernacle chapel and the proposed hotel, which face each other across Bridge Street. The stone facade of the hotel, designed to match the stone of the chapel, is not convincing and the bulk of the block at this point is too monolithic. Also, the angular corner detailing at the east end of this facade has an uncomfortable effect. We suggested that the design of the north end be further developed to reduce the visual impact, and that it could be treated in a similar way to Taff Street, with setbacks at higher levels. The architect stated that this was a gateway site which could accommodate the proposed scale, that there was a similar scaled police centre immediately to the west and that the intention was to use the detailing to lighten the effect. Traditional materials were used in a modern way, while punched openings reflect a more traditional reference. Nevertheless, the Panel considered that there was overdevelopment on this corner of the site.

The Panel thought that there were three or four different buildings in this scheme rather than one unifying concept, although we acknowledged that the podium could be a unifying theme. This could be developed further, with changes to the blocks and elevational treatments above the podium, and the roofscape treated as another landscape, with planting and green spaces. Currently, the outlook from the

office and residential blocks is bleak and uninspiring. The access route from the car park to the residential units deserves a higher quality treatment.

It was confirmed that the new shoppers car park is smaller by about a hundred spaces than that previously seen by the Panel. It would be mainly for short term use and shared with the hotel. Management of that facility and the separate residential car park remains to be fully developed. There is a long term car park for office workers nearby. With regard to the entrance ramp, the Panel accepted that this was a question of design rather than principle. We were told that the bridge across Taff Street would be lightweight, slender and transparent with feature lighting, and would provide a point of interest with dynamic activity. The access to the ramp from Morgan Street could feature a stone or slate wall, although the design of that area is not completed. We accepted that the ramp and bridge access has the advantage of reducing traffic flows along part of Taff Street, and redeveloping poor quality buildings on its western side. However, the Panel stressed the need for high quality design and thought that other, more imaginative ways should be found to minimise the impact of heavy civil engineering adjacent to low scale domestic development. We also stressed the need for safe pedestrian movement in that area and more generally in the area between the bus station and the new development, with safe crossing provision.

The Panel suggested that the main entrance to the scheme off Taff Street should be aligned with Crossbrook Street opposite, where currently the service bay is located. The designer stated that from a commercial point of view, the entrance point is in the right place and that the service doors are in the best possible position for turning vehicles.

The Panel explored the idea of locating the upper blocks towards the east side of the podium next to the river, where a setback would not be necessary. This would give a better aspect for all uses and the roofs in between could be developed as green spaces. The architect stated that a major design idea had been to create 'bookends' for this urban block. He thought there would be a problem in moving the main office entrance to the riverside, as this does not have 24 hour access, and he had concerns about bridging the mall with the office block. We thought the bridging would be insignificant especially if the office block was rotated through 90°.

The Panel recognised that the riverside walk had been improved, and welcomed the provision of active facades, the new footbridge and the links with Bridge Street and the memorial park. We accepted the partial overhanging of the walkway to enable its year round use. We expect to see a high standard of design and materials for the hard surfacing, the lighting scheme and the riverside wall. Public art should be treated as an integral part of the structure and materials used. The new substation should also demonstrate good design quality, including the boundary treatment.

The Panel noted the large scale of the framed openings, especially when viewed from across the river. It was suggested that smaller forms and less heavy materials might be a more sympathetic solution. The architect considered that the overall scale of the scheme and its setting could accommodate the proposed scale of these features.

The Panel urged the developer to achieve a BREEAM / EcoHomes target of Very Good as a minimum, and to aim for an Excellent rating. We thought that the size

and mixed use nature of this scheme made it appropriate for a single district heating system, ideally with CHP and/or renewables.

Crynodeb/Summary

The Panel welcomes the principle of the proposed use and acknowledges the benefits it will bring for the town. We applaud the improved riverfront walkway, the new bridge and the integrated servicing arrangements. However, we think there are still major revisions required if this scheme is to respond successfully to this important site and the brief. In particular:

- We have concerns about the proposed massing, particularly at the northern end of the site. A more sensitive solution to accommodate the hotel while respecting the scale and appearance of the adjacent Chapel and historic bridge should be sought.
- We are not convinced by the scale and materials of the framed openings, and suggest that a more subtle form and detailing could be used to the benefit of the scheme
- We would like to see the disposition of the upper blocks rethought, with a view to relocating them on the riverside edge.
- We recommend that a landscape architect be consulted to advise on the sensitive integration of this scheme into the townscape and riverside setting
- The open roofscape should be developed as an attractive amenity area with improved access for the residential units
- While accepting the principle of the ramp and bridge access to the car park, we think that the impact of the ramped entrance on Morgan Street, and on either side of the bridge on Taff Street, needs minimising and screening, to reduce adverse visual effects and to ensure the safety of pedestrians and car users.
- We would like to see a more coherent sustainability strategy, including a district heating system and high environmental ratings
- We would like to see safe pedestrian routes to the scheme from the nearby bus station area

Diwedd/End

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