

**Statws/Status:**

**Cyhoeddus / Public**

DESIGN  
COMMISSION  
FOR WALES  
COMISIWN  
DYLUNIO  
CYMRU

<b>Adroddiad Adolygu Dylunio: Design Review Report:</b>	<b>25 April 2007</b>
<b>Dyddiad Cyfarfod / Meeting Date:</b>	<b>11 April 2007</b>
<b>Lleoliad/Location:</b>	<b>Newport</b>
<b>Disgrifiad o'r Cynllun Scheme Description:</b>	<b>Mixed use</b>
<b>Cleient/Asiant: Client/Agent:</b>	<b>Modus Cambrian Ltd [Damian Flood, Mike Ralph]</b>
<b>Developer/Datblygwr:</b>	<b>Modus Cambrian Ltd</b>
<b>Pensaer/Architect:</b>	<b>Holder Mathias Architects [Stephen Hill, Brian Coles]</b>
<b>Ymgynghorwyr Cynllunio: Planning Consultants:</b>	<b>Matthews Goodman [Nikki Sills]</b>
<b>Awdurdod Cynllunio: Planning Authority:</b>	<b>Newport CC [Andrew Dawe, Wendy Richards]</b>
<b>Statws Cynllunio: Planning Status:</b>	<b>Full application submitted Oct 06</b>
<b>Y Panel Adolygu Dylunio/ Design Review Panel:</b>	
<b>Carole-Anne Davies (cadeirydd/chair)</b>	<b>Ed Colgan</b>
<b>Cindy Harris (swyddog/officer)</b>	<b>Michael Griffiths</b>
<b>Charlie Deng (swyddog/officer)</b>	<b>Roger Ayton</b>
<b>Ewan Jones</b>	

**Lead Panellist:**

**Ewan Jones**

**Sylwedyddion/Observers:**

**Jerry Spencer, RENEW**

### **Cyflwyniad/Presentation**

Proposals for this site from a different developer were previously reviewed by DCFW in September and October 2004. Planning consent was granted in October 2004 and the site was sold to Modus in 2005. DCFW reviewed a revised scheme in May 2006 and a planning application was submitted in October 2006.

The architects were pleased to receive a revised brief from Modus which included more retail use and hence active street frontages for this site, which is identified in the Newport masterplan as ideal for a mixed use redevelopment. Multi-deck car parking is located above the double height ground floor retail units, forming a 6/7 storey base plinth which includes a hotel towards the western end of site. 880 car parking spaces are provided including dedicated areas for residential, hotel and office use. The new office block fronting Railway Street comprises 8 storeys of office accommodation, also above double height ground floor retail. The new residential block sits above the hotel and rises to 30 storeys overall, comprising 228 apartments over 22 levels. The vertical core is now located on the northern side of the block, in response to earlier comments from DCFW.

Opportunities for sustainable design and construction have been maximised. The narrow floor plate of the office building will facilitate natural ventilation and good daylighting. A combination of horizontal and vertical solar water heating panels will be incorporated into the facades and roof of the office block, and helical wind turbines will be mounted on top.

The Local Planning Authority have tabled various concerns over the revised scale and massing of this proposal, and the relationship of the office block with the adjacent conservation area.

### **Ymateb y Panel/Panel's Response**

The Panel appreciated the design response to our earlier comments, but we noted the major concerns expressed by the Local Authority and questioned the increase in scale. We were informed by the developer that this was a commercial necessity and that the anticipated return to them of 9-10% was much lower than would normally be the case.

Nevertheless we had serious reservations about the brutalising impact of the proposed office block on the conservation area and the new images provided only served to reinforce our concerns. The Panel considered this to be defensive architecture, not related to the existing street fabric and too big for its site. While we understood that the main driver for the increased height was the extra two storeys of retail, and while we welcomed the provision of additional retail and the consequent increase in active frontages, we thought that this should be achieved in a way which preserved and enhanced the conservation area. In particular, we thought that the environment of Railway Street would not be enhanced by the circular car access ramp. Elsewhere, the built form appeared very dominant with narrow slotted spaces at ground level and an irregular rhythm of plot sizes.

The Panel considered that the podium only serves to emphasise the scale of the development as a whole and reinforces the squat proportions of the tower when seen from certain viewpoints. The unified treatment of the podium obscures the separate functions and we thought it should be more vertically differentiated.

The Panel was surprised and concerned to learn that a wind study of the site had not been requested by the Local Authority, or carried out by the developer. We thought that the results of such a study might be very significant and would certainly affect the design of the entrances and windows. It was confirmed that the pedestrian route to the east of the tower, connecting Queensway with the new Railway Street, was 5 metres wide at its narrowest. While we welcomed the increased permeability, we thought that this pinch point may be adversely affected by down draughts and a venturi effect of concentrated wind speeds. The sun path diagrams provided do not show the full extent of shadows in plan and only increase our concerns about the inappropriate scale of development.

The Panel requested more details on the sustainability strategy and we were told that in addition to solar water heating and wind turbines [which it was agreed would produce a negligible contribution to the energy use of the new development], there would be high levels of insulation, a sedum roof on the car park drum, and a single district heating scheme, possibly with CHP. A BREEAM Very Good rating will be achieved and the developer has a good record of sustainability on other schemes.

We were informed that of the 890 total car parking spaces, 550 were replacing existing spaces and 170 were dedicated for residents, giving a parking ratio for the residential block of less than 1:1.

## **Crynodeb/Summary**

The Panel was pleased to have the opportunity to once again review proposals for this important site in Newport. However, we do not think that this revised proposal should be granted consent without major revisions. In particular:

- The relationship of this proposal to its surroundings, especially the conservation area, is brutally dominant and represents significant overdevelopment.
- The views of the tower from surrounding vantage points [eg photomontage 6, the view from St Woolos] demonstrate the inappropriate scale and negative impact.
- The apparent bulk and massing is reinforced by the unified treatment of the podium.
- A detailed wind study should be carried out for this or any future proposal for this site.
- A more detailed and justified sustainability strategy should be developed and integrated with the design development as early as possible.
- We question the increase in car parking for this city centre scheme, in the light of current policy and future trends.

**Diwedd/End**

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