

**Statws/Status:**

**Cyhoeddus / Public**

DESIGN  
COMMISSION  
FOR WALES  
COMISIWN  
DYLUNIO  
CYMRU

<b>Adroddiad Adolygu Dylunio: Design Review Report:</b>	<b>19 April 2007</b>
<b>Dyddiad Cyfarfod/ Meeting Date</b>	<b>11 April 2007</b>
<b>Lleoliad/Location:</b>	<b>Ruabon</b>
<b>Disgrifiad o'r Cynllun Scheme Description:</b>	<b>Primary Care Centre</b>
<b>Cleient/Asiant: Client/Agent:</b>	<b>Wrexham LHB [Gaynor Edwards, Margaret Williams] Ruabon Medical Centre [Rosemary Bartley]</b>
<b>Developer/Datblygwr:</b>	<b>Oakapple Primary Care [Darren Oxley]</b>
<b>Pensaer/Architect:</b>	<b>Halliday Clark Architects [Mark Pettit]</b>
<b>Awdurdod Cynllunio: Planning Authority:</b>	<b>Wrexham CBC</b>
<b>Statws Cynllunio: Planning Status:</b>	<b>Planning application granted June 2005</b>
<b>Y Panel Adolygu Dylunio/ Design Review Panel: Wendy Richards (cadeirydd/chair) Cindy Harris (swyddog/officer) Charlie Deng (swyddog/officer) Carole-Anne Davies, CEO</b>	<b>Ewan Jones Michael Griffiths Ed Colgan Roger Ayton</b>
<b>Lead Panellist:</b>	<b>Ed Colgan</b>

**Sylwedyddion/Observers:**

**Mallory Armstrong, WHE  
Jerry Spencer, RENEW**

### **Cyflwyniad/Presentation**

The site for the proposed new Primary Care Centre lies on the same site as the existing surgery, just off the High Street in Ruabon. The starting point of the design therefore was to plan a building which would fit around the current facility, allowing the medical staff to continue working there until the new building was complete, at which point the former surgery [built 1984] would be demolished. The site is bounded by:

- A railway line to the north west
- Residential back gardens to the north east
- The rear of the library and car park to the south east
- Residential frontages to the south west

The proposed design addresses these constraints and the adjacent residential accommodation. An L-shaped building wraps around the existing building to the north and west and removes some of the surplus banking left over from the construction of the railway. The scale respects the residential context and is reduced to 1.5 storeys at its eastern end to avoid overlooking rear gardens. An economical building footprint, natural ventilation and high insulation levels will help to achieve a sustainable community building.

The Panel was informed that planning permission had been granted in 2005 and the project has been 'on hold' since then, although this is the first time it has been seen by the Commission.

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

Notwithstanding that the scheme currently has planning permission, the Panel considered that there were fundamental issues which need to be addressed and resolved, and this may require a revised application.

The Panel noted that the built form and location on site had been entirely determined by the location of the present building, rather than by a design-led approach or comprehensive site analysis. In our opinion, the position on site was not ideal and we thought it was unfortunate that a short term expedient had been allowed to determine the design parameters for long term development. The Panel was informed that it was impossible to extend the existing bungalow style building, but was assured that this option had been explored. We thought it was essential

to ensure that any new building on this site lasts considerably longer than its predecessor, in terms of future adaptability and sustainability. Future expansion space has been allowed for, to the north west, although it was established that this had not been required by the district valuer.

We understood that the site is part of a hub of community facilities, and within easy reach of a bus stop on the High Street. It has been designated for this use in the Ruabon masterplan.

The Panel thought that the main entrance was not sufficiently legible, and there was no distinction between public and private space. We would like to see some external staff amenity space provided, as well as a welcoming public gathering space around the entrance. We noted that pedestrian access would be through vehicular gates and across a car park and we would like to see improved direct pedestrian access, and a more attractive approach to the building.

Currently there is good informal use of the car park, as a village square and play area, and we would like to see this use continued and encouraged by the landscape strategy, both as an important amenity and to improve natural surveillance. We recommended that the parking requirements of both the surgery and the library be combined and rationalised with a view to minimising the parking spaces provided and maximising landscape and community space. We thought that a comprehensive landscape proposal should be prepared for the whole area up to the High Street and it was confirmed that landscape details are a planning condition. The Panel was told that the perimeter fence shown on the planning drawings will not necessarily be erected unless there are security problems.

The material treatment of the building would reflect the context of red/buff brick, render, and – in this case - artificial slate. The scale would be deliberately domestic. Ruabon bricks would be used if available. The Panel advised that timber windows and doors should be used rather than uPVC. We noted a large amount of empty roof space, used only by 3 ventilation stacks, and we thought the internal space should be organised more rationally. Given that this is a simple, unambitious building in design terms, its success will be entirely dependent on outstandingly good detailing and construction, and we found no evidence that this would be achieved.

The Panel was informed that, although the design has not progressed significantly over the last two years, solar water heating and ground source heat pumps have been considered for inclusion. In addition, the Panel advised the team to consider biomass heating and improved fabric performance over the statutory minimum, bearing in mind the requirement for a NEAT Excellent rating. We considered that a coherent sustainability

strategy should have been developed, and a NEAT assessment been carried out, before this stage. We thought more effort should go into making this building exemplary in terms of sustainability and low carbon performance. Unfortunately the 10 year estate strategy prepared by the LHB does not consider energy use.

### **Crynodeb/Summary**

The Panel was pleased to review this proposal, but in its present form we consider it an unacceptable response to the site and the brief. While we appreciate that the development process and community expectations have been held in abeyance for some time, it is the Commission's duty to ensure that all new healthcare buildings are of sufficiently high quality to meet 21st century healthcare service demands and the aspirations set out in Welsh Assembly Government strategies. We will therefore need to see revised proposals addressing the following points:

- The position of the building on the site and the built form should be justified in terms of design goals and site analysis rather than short term expediency.
- A comprehensive landscape strategy should be developed which encourages out of hours community use, minimises parking spaces and provides an attractive and welcoming sense of arrival.
- Following a NEAT assessment, a sustainability strategy should be formulated which adopts the most appropriate low carbon technologies and building performance standards.
- Both of the above should inform the revised design development, which should be carried out in conjunction with the Local Authority and the community.
- We would like to see more detailed visual material on internal spaces, particularly the entrance / waiting / reception area, in the re-submission.
- We support the appropriate use of local materials, including Ruabon brick if possible, Welsh slate and timber windows.
- A procurement method should be selected which protects the design quality, landscape and sustainability measures.

### **Diwedd/End**

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