

Statws/Status:

Cyhoeddus / Public

DESIGN
COMMISSION
FOR WALES
COMISIWN
DYLUNIO
CYMRU

Adroddiad Adolygu Dylunio: Design Review Report:	16 May 2007
Dyddiad Cyfarfod / Cyflwyno'r Deunydd: Meeting Date / Material Submitted:	9 May 2007
Lleoliad/Location:	Abergele
Disgrifiad o'r Cynllun Scheme Description:	Primary Care Centre
Cleient/Asiant: Client/Agent:	Abergele GP practice [Dr Jeremy Honeybun] Conwy LHB [Wyn Thomas]
Developer/Datblygwr:	Primary Asset [Ashley Heath] Lend Lease [Ian Johnson]
Pensaer/Architect:	Lend Lease [Paul Farr]
Cynllunio/Consultants:	Appleton Group Landscape Architecture [Lorna Cruice] Asbri Planning [Robin Williams]
Awdurdod Cynllunio: Planning Authority:	Conwy CBC
Statws Cynllunio: Planning Status:	Full planning consent granted October 2005
Y Panel Adolygu Dylunio/ Design Review Panel: John Punter (cadeirydd/chair) Cindy Harris (swyddog/officer)	Jonathan Adams Phil Roberts

Charlie Deng (swyddog/officer)
Ashley Bateson

Jonathan Hines

Lead Panellist:

Ashley Bateson

Cyflwyniad/Presentation

To serve the expanding demands of a modern health service, the Abergele GP surgery has been looking for a new site for the last 10 years. After considering seven other sites, a site located beside the entrance to the North Wales Business Park was chosen. This is a greenfield site on the edge of Abergele town centre. Three bus routes pass along the A547 and a new bus stop will be located immediately outside the surgery. The practice's catchment area extends some way inland over an area of 100 miles² and the edge-of-town location will enable the new surgery to provide more parking facilities [65 spaces in all] for rural patients travelling by car.

The design has deliberately followed the parameters, in terms of built form and materials, laid down by the masterplan for the Business Park. The adjacent site, between the proposed surgery and the A457 road, has been provisionally allocated for a dispensing pharmacy. The landscape strategy seeks to establish clear visual links and markers for patients and suppliers, with an uncluttered but coordinated approach to planting and materials. Focal points include a water feature by the entrance to the north, a pedestrian boulevard through the car park to the surgery entrance, and resting zones near entrances.

The interior layout has been informed by the requirements of the healthcare team. A patient hub is located centrally with clinical spaces and consulting rooms wrapped around the perimeter and accessed by a separate corridor. The treatment suite is located on the northern edge, with separate access for clinical waste. Natural light and ventilation are maximised by full height glazing and internal travel distances are minimised with good visual connections. Openable windows and overhanging eaves contribute to internal comfort. A ground source heat pump and condensing gas boilers will be used for heating / cooling. All materials and fittings will be robust and durable. The design has scored 72.5% on a NEAT assessment and has an AEDET rating of 5.6.

In granting planning consent, the Local Authority has accepted the choice of site and are content that the design reflects the business park masterplan.

Ymateb y Panel/Panel's Response

The Panel wished to register its disappointment at the choice of an edge-of-town site for such an important public and communal function. As well as encouraging car use, this represents a lost opportunity for a piece of town centre regeneration. The design team pointed out that Abergele is a small town of less than a mile across, and the maximum bus journey time would be 4 minutes. In addition, the site is close to a residential hub on the western side of town. However, in our view this does not compensate for the advantages of a town centre location and the potential for healthy and sustainable travel to and from the surgery.

The Panel thought that the building's orientation was poor, in terms of solar access and taking advantage of the best views to the north and south. In particular, we were concerned that the deep plan waiting area would get very little natural daylight, and we noted that the solar water heating panels as proposed would face west rather than south. The Panel considered that the car parking dominated the site and that the entrance to the building was car dominated and unattractive. If the building were re-oriented through 90 degrees to face south, it would allow a much more sustainable solution while also creating a much better street presence, providing much more attractive amenity space and improved legibility for patients and visitors. The design team stated that the built form was intended to respond to the masterplan, and this orientation had been adopted as the site had originally been much smaller, and had later been expanded to the west to allow increased car parking. They had hoped to address any problems with landscape and signage but agreed to look again at reorienting the building. In that event, we advised that the position of the pharmacy building should also be reconsidered, to avoid overshadowing of the surgery.

The Panel felt strongly that as a public building, the design of a medical centre should be better than a business park office block. The design standards contained in the masterplan should be treated as the minimum acceptable, and not used to constrain better practice. We recognised that re-orienting the building would probably entail a new planning application and urged the team to use this opportunity to revisit the whole design approach and integrate considerations of sustainability from the beginning.

With a new and distinctive design approach which departs from the masterplan where necessary in the interests of sustainability, we would expect to see a more legible and welcoming entrance with a new, well landscaped south facing public space, and good connections between internal and external spaces which are currently missing. A reoriented building would allow the creation of sheltered, usable well-landscaped spaces for staff and patients.

The Panel was told that the predicted need for cooling was marginal, and cooling cassettes had been included as an option, to be used if necessary. We strongly advised that further thermal modelling and testing be carried out and that passive design solutions be used to mitigate the risk of overheating. Passive stack ventilation with some fans might well be sufficient and should be explored. We were puzzled by the raised roof feature, which appeared to be linked to a passive ventilation system but was located over the stairway. We suggested the use of an atrium to bring daylight into the deep plan and assist passive ventilation.

The Panel regretted that the masterplan for the business park did not include provision for a district heating system and we urged the team to continue to explore this option. We suggested that a green roof would bring environmental advantages over an aluminium roof finish and we urged the team to explore the potential of a sustainable drainage system.

Crynodeb/Summary

The Panel welcomed the clarity of the presentation. However, we are unable to support the proposal for the following reasons:

- While we have serious concerns about the peripheral location, which will have implications for sustainable development and town centre regeneration, we very reluctantly accept the choice of site.
- The building's orientation should be changed to face south, in order to optimise solar access, views, street presence and legibility. This will entail revising the layout of the pharmacy site to the south.
- The roof feature over the stairway is confusing. The architecture should be better integrated with the servicing strategy. We suggest an atrium be used to improve natural daylight and ventilation.
- A new planning application will be necessary and should be used to develop a radical re-design for a distinctive public building, driven by sustainability considerations and resulting in an exemplar building. We would expect that such a design approach would attract strong support from the Local Planning Authority
- We would like to see the district heating option pursued and passive ventilation used to control overheating. In all cases the most appropriate low carbon solution should be identified.
- A more positive landscape approach should be adopted, using hard and soft landscaping to create an attractive, sunny, welcoming and active entrance space, facing the town and the street

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