Statws/Status: 
Cyhoeddu / Public

Adroddiad Adolygu Dylunio: 15 May 2007
Design Review Report:

Dyddiad Cyfarfod / Cyflwyno’r Deunydd: 9 May 2007
Meeting Date / Material Submitted:

Lleoliad/Location: Old Station Road, Porthcawl

Disgrifiad o’r Cynllun / Scheme Description: Residential

Developer/Datblygwr: Not known

Pensaer/Architect: Quorum Associates [David Morgans]

Ymgynghorwyr Cynllun / Planning Consultants: n/a

Awdurdod Cynllun / Planning Authority: Bridgend CBC [Tony Gore]

Statws Cynllun: Planning application submitted
Planning Status: October 06

Y Panel Adolygu Dylunio / Design Review Panel:
John Punter (cadeirydd/chair) Ashley Bateson
Cindy Harris (swyddog/officer) Phil Roberts
Charlie Deng (swyddog/officer) 

Lead Panellist: Phil Roberts
Cyflwyniad/Presentation

The design approach has been largely determined by the nature of the site, which is located next to a major access road into Porthcawl. This dual carriageway road runs on the western boundary of the site and severs the residential/mixed use area around the site from the town centre. This area has now become run down and is in need of regeneration.

The quarter circular form of the building is intended to lead people in to the town. The north facade is largely blank while the south facing aspect opens out towards the town and takes advantage of the best views to the sea. The orientation and fenestration have been informed by the solar access and sustainability considerations. There are two apartments on each floor and all the main habitable rooms face south or east. Local precedents for this design include the Pavilion and the lighthouse on the sea front and an attempt has been made to incorporate a seaside aesthetic. A glazed staircase is shown on the north west facade, the glass etched with a mural, and it is intended to hold a local competition for the artwork of the mural.

The construction will be timber frame, in order to accommodate higher insulation levels, and to achieve better buildability for the curved form. Underfloor heating and grey water recycling are included, along with solar PV panels to light the public areas. A ground source heat pump is under consideration, but may not be feasible as the site is on rock.

The Local Planning Authority recognise the importance of the site and of the taller building proposed and consider this merited referral to DCFW. A regeneration strategy exists for areas to the west, east and south of this site, and the proposed building would be highly visible from those areas. It would be the first building in the area of this type, size and design, and would therefore serve as a benchmark for future development. An SPG for tall buildings has been approved by committee but not yet by the full council.

The LA requested a shadow survey to show the current and proposed impact on the buildings to the north. The existing building on site [2.5 storeys] casts a substantial shadow on these buildings and their gardens. Because of the narrower profile and the curve of the proposed building, the survey showed that it would have positive benefits at some times of the year [especially mid-summer], and disbenefits at others [especially mid-winter]. There would be less shading of the gardens and rear elevations in the afternoons. Thus, it was judged that the proposal would pose no overall disbenefit, compared with the current situation. The authority would have preferred to see the building positioned further forward on the site, but recognised that there were issues of land
ownership and an existing sewer as a constraint. The community and
town council have been supportive.

Ymateb y Panel/Panel’s Response

The Panel appreciated the clear explanation of the design philosophy
underpinning this proposal. However, we would have liked to see the
results of the shadow survey and a wider contextual analysis. Our major
concern had been with the proposed height of the building and its impact
on adjoining properties, but we were reassured by the reported
conclusions of the shadowing survey concerning the buildings to the
north.

The Panel was informed that the depot site which adjoins this site to the
east, is likely to be developed for light industrial use and to include the
relocated garage repair workshop which belongs to the owner and
developer of this site. Two other sites to the south and southeast of this
site [known as the car park site and garage site respectively] have
received planning permission for residential use, with white rendered two
to three storey apartment buildings with a similar aesthetic to the current
proposal.

It was confirmed that the proposed parking standard is 1 per unit plus 1
per 5 units for visitors [14 spaces in all]. The amount of cycle parking is
not yet determined, but it was stated that the site could easily
accommodate 14 spaces. Similarly the location of a bin storage area was
unspecified.

The Panel advised caution with a six storey timber frame construction,
and in particular advised that adequate provision should be made for
movement and settling of the frame in order to ensure the integrity of the
render.

The Panel received further details of the sustainability strategy including
individual condensing gas boilers with underfloor heating delivery. This
will entail vertical flues and service ducts, as well as air inlet panels on
the facades. We pointed out that a single central boiler with heat meters
for individual apartments would give better energy efficiency and could be
adapted in the future to run off biomass. This heating system could be
extended to the adjoining sites about to be developed, and the mix of
commercial and residential uses would optimise the efficiency of the
system as a whole. Omitting the ventilation panels from the facades
would improve the architectural treatment.

Although we were pleased to note the client’s commitment to
photovoltaic panels and grey water recycling, we questioned whether
these particular technologies were the most appropriate, and suggested
that they be re-evaluated according to the criteria of cost and minimising carbon emissions. We thought that solar thermal panels, rainwater recycling with efficient appliances, and biomass heating would probably deliver a better environmental performance and we encouraged the client to commit to achieving an EcoHomes Excellent rating. The Panel also suggested that composite timber/aluminium windows would be preferable to aluminium, and that a sedum roof would offer environmental advantages. We thought that high level windows (to prevent overlooking of adjacent properties) should be included on the north facade over living rooms and kitchens which would otherwise lack good levels of natural daylight.

The Panel noted that this area of Porthcawl was dependent on an underpass connection for pedestrian access to the town centre and we wondered whether this might be improved as part of a Section 106 agreement. We were informed that a contribution to improvement of local parks has already been requested. We were pleased to note that expressions of interest in these new residential units has come from younger people, and agreed that the addition of private housing to existing Local Authority and Housing Association housing would support the planned regeneration and environmental improvements.

Crynodeb/Summary

The Panel was favourably impressed with this presentation. We consider the proposed building to be well designed and elegant and we support the contemporary seaside aesthetic. As part of a wider programme of residential development in this area, this proposal should contribute to the substantial regeneration of this part of Porthcawl.

Our general support and endorsement of this proposal, however, is conditional upon the development of a justified and coherent sustainability strategy. This should be progressed with the input of an M&E consultant. A commitment to achieve EcoHomes Excellent would set an important precedent and be an exemplar of best practice. The following points should be noted:

- The proposed height of the building did originally arouse our concerns, but we are prepared to be reassured by the shadow study evaluation and comparison with the existing impact. We would still like to see the results of the shadow study and request that 3 copies be sent to the Commission.
- The sustainability strategy should propose an optimal combination of measures and technologies, based on the criteria of cost and low carbon performance. We suggest that a single heating system be evaluated, together with solar water heating, rainwater collection
and recycling, and a sedum roof. We think that the deep plan living spaces and kitchens should have more daylight introduced from the north in the form of high level windows.

• We would like to see a contribution made to the improvement of the public realm, in particular the underpass and its approaches.

Diwedd/End

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