

**Statws/Status:**  
**Cyhoeddus / Public**

DESIGN  
COMMISSION  
FOR WALES  
COMISIWN  
DYLUNIO  
CYMRU

<b>Adroddiad Adolygu Dylunio: Design Review Report:</b>	<b>15 May 2007</b>
<b>Dyddiad Cyfarfod / Cyflwyno'r Deunydd: Meeting Date / Material Submitted:</b>	<b>9 May 2007</b>
<b>Lleoliad/Location:</b>	<b>Penrhosgarnedd, Bangor</b>
<b>Disgrifiad o'r Cynllun Scheme Description:</b>	<b>Residential</b>
<b>Developer/Datblygwr:</b>	<b>Not present</b>
<b>Pensaer/Architect:</b>	<b>Not present</b>
<b>Ymgynghorwyr Cynllunio: Planning Consultants:</b>	<b>Jan Tyrer Planning [Jan Tyrer]</b>
<b>Awdurdod Cynllunio: Planning Authority:</b>	<b>Gwynedd CC</b>
<b>Statws Cynllunio: Planning Status:</b>	<b>Pre-planning. Application submitted June 06</b>
<b>Y Panel Adolygu Dylunio/ Design Review Panel: John Punter (cadeirydd/chair) Cindy Harris (swyddog/officer) Charlie Deng (swyddog/officer) Jonathan Hines</b>	<b>Ashley Bateson Jonathan Adams Phil Roberts</b>
<b>Lead Panellist:</b>	<b>Jonathan Hines</b>

## **Cyflwyniad/Presentation**

A full planning application for this scheme was lodged in June 2006 and an officers' report to the Planning Committee in November 2006 recommended refusal 'on policy grounds relating to design issues with specific reference to the site's surroundings/context, scale and massing of the proposed building.' At the suggestion of the Local Authority, the applicant has brought the scheme to DCFW and specifically requested the Commission's comments on:

- The suitability of the scale and massing of the proposal, and
- The location of the building on the site and its compatibility with adjoining properties.

The proposal is for a block of 15 no, 1-3 bed apartments, to replace a pair of derelict semi-detached properties. The corner site is located on the high point of the ridgeline south west of Bangor, on a significant junction of local distributor roads, and faces towards a roundabout which connects to the entrance to Ysbyty Gwynedd hospital and to the A5 coastal road. Good bus services link the site to the city centre, and to nearby settlements. A proposed new road from the south east connecting to this roundabout would make it an even greater focal point. This road would serve a large residential land allocation of 357 dwellings. The Hospital generates a range of local facilities and, as a major employer, is likely to provide a local demand for apartments. The area is suburban in character with a mix of bungalows and two storey houses and lacks visual interest. Existing developments and estates appear insular and houses typically face away from the road.

The applicant stated that an increased density produces a different type of built form and the intention was to create visual interest and a landmark building on this prominent corner site. The double frontage is used to good effect to create a private area to the rear and the massing of the building, the staggering of the facade and its stepping down to adjacent properties, attempts to reduce the bulk of the three to four storey block.

The Local Authority was unable to send a representative but did send a letter explaining their position and a copy of the committee report.

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

The Panel appreciated the troubled history of this proposal, and we regretted the sole appearance of the planning consultant, unsupported by the designer or developer, to explain the proposals. We supported the principle of development on this site, and the principle of residential intensification. However, we considered this proposal was too dominant

and the mass was inappropriate in the context. Furthermore, we had serious concerns about the accuracy of some of the images and photomontages submitted to us, and considered that these significantly under-estimated the impact of the proposal on the streetscene and adjacent properties. We noted the lack of any elevations of the site shown in context, which would have conveyed a more realistic idea of the relative scale of the proposal, and considered this to be a major flaw in the presentation material, along with the lack of a contextual site plan.

The Panel was unable to endorse the design approach, which has produced a heavy, boxy and rather institutional appearance. The internal layout was poor and did not appear to meet basic space standards. We were convinced that a high quality design, demonstrating a lightness of touch and a sensitivity to the context, was absolutely essential to a successful resolution for any proposal on this site. We advised the applicant to make use of the RIBA / RSAW client advisory service to engage a competent and qualified architect.

In terms of scale, we thought that a predominantly two storey block, rising to three storeys on the corner, would be appropriate. With a reduced number of units and therefore parking spaces we would expect to see some outdoor amenity space for residents included. We would like to see the creation of front gardens which relate well to the street, and a lower perimeter wall with railings and access points aligned with front doors facing the street and the corner. The Panel advised that shared apartments were not likely to give a good return on investment, and the business case for them should be revisited. It is important that any development is commercially viable so that budgets and quality of construction are protected.

It was suggested that the current full planning application be converted to an outline application, but the applicant thought it unlikely that this would be acceptable to the Local Authority.

The lack of any considered sustainability strategy was noted and this alone would make it impossible for us to support the proposal. The Panel urged that any revised proposal should be informed by sustainability considerations from the outset and should aim for a high EcoHomes rating.

The Panel was informed that the retention of the existing access off Ffordd Menai was acceptable to the highways department. We would support a lower parking ratio than the 1:1 proposed, in view of the proximity of a major employer and good public transport connections. At least an equivalent number of cycle parking spaces should be provided.

## **Crynodeb/Summary**

The Panel was pleased to be consulted about this proposal and appreciated the willingness of the planning consultant to attend alone. However, the review process would have benefitted from the presence of the other parties involved.

We consider this proposal to be an unacceptable response to the site, in terms of its scale and the quality of the design. In particular:

- The submitted drawings were inadequate and lacked a contextual site plan and elevations. The photomontages were misleading and we think underestimated the scale of the proposed development.
- While we support the principle of residential intensification for this site, we find the proposed scale excessive. A 2/3 storey solution which responds well to the corner and addresses the street, would be more appropriate.
- The key to the success of any proposal for this site is a high quality architectural treatment. A major redesign by a qualified and competent architect is necessary.
- A well researched and justified sustainability strategy should inform the design development and, together with a commitment to achieve a high EcoHomes rating, should be part of any future planning application.
- We would encourage the developer and Local Authority to consider a lower parking standard. At least 1 cycle space per unit should be included.

## **Diwedd/End**

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