

Statws/Status:

Cyhoeddus / Public

DESIGN
COMMISSION
FOR WALES
COMISIWN
DYLUNIO
CYMRU

Adroddiad Adolygu Dylunio: Design Review Report:	30 August 2007
Dyddiad Cyfarfod / Meeting Date:	22 August 2007
Lleoliad/Location:	Junction 33, M4
Disgrifiad o'r Cynllun Scheme Description:	Commercial office
Cleient/Asiant: Client/Agent:	Westgate Park [Cardiff] Ltd WAG DE&T [Mike Cuddy]
Developer/Datblygwr:	Not known
Pensaer/Architect:	Aukett Fitzroy Robinson [Raul Curiel, William Hulbert]
Cynllunio: Consultants:	Savills [Chris Potts] Macfarlane Wilder [Peter Wilder]
Awdurdod Cynllunio: Planning Authority:	Cardiff CC
Statws Cynllunio: Planning Status:	Outline application submitted October 2006
Y Panel Adolygu Dylunio/ Design Review Panel: John Punter (cadeirydd/chair) Cindy Harris (swyddog/officer) Richard Parnaby	Gerard Ryan Jonathan Adams Phil Roberts Ashley Bateson

Lead Panellist:

Richard Parnaby

Sylwedyddion/Observers:

Steve Smith, RCT CBC

Osian Roberts, CDN Planning and

MA student

Cyflwyniad/Presentation

The presenting team stated that the WAG property strategy had identified the need for a premier business park in 2004 and this was supported by the Wales Spatial Plan in 2006. In addition Cardiff CC has re-stated the need for such a facility, most recently in a report commissioned from Price Waterhouse Coopers. The proposed location is also supported by WAG, Cardiff CC and the PWC report, to which the Panel did not have access.

The development/design team accepted that the business park was essentially a single use development, but pointed out that residential areas did exist within a three mile radius. The landscape strategy and site layout has been informed by the topography, as shown in January 2007. The east/west river valley and the north/south disused railway line have helped define the three compact clusters of buildings on the highest points, surrounded by green corridors. The site plan has now been amended to bring the clusters closer together with more direct connections to create a more interactive and urbane complex.

The transport hub has been developed as a concept and is now located more centrally, at the end of the entrance boulevard. It will include a conference centre and five star hotel and be equipped with the latest in digital technology. Cycleways are being developed in conjunction with Sustrans and more parking has been placed beneath the business space. The 1000 spaces provided at grade to the east of the site have a regional function as part of a Park & Ride scheme and are not primarily there to service this development.

The team confirmed that there is a commitment to carbon savings, particularly from the client, but they questioned the usefulness of the BREEAM standards. Sustainable drainage will be included as part of a high quality infrastructure strategy. There is also a commitment to design quality, possibly to be embedded in a Design Code or a set of Business Park planning standards.

With reference to our comments at the previous Design Review of January 2007, the team stated that car parking spaces at ground level had been reduced, a more compact site layout had been produced, and

internal pedestrian travel distances had been minimised. However, it was accepted that this was not a mixed use scheme, and that the environmental standard in place was still BREEAM Very Good. The team noted that they thought the BREEAM method of measurement was not a useful tool.

Ymateb y Panel/Panel's Response

The Panel regretted the absence of any pre-review material which offered information of design developments since the last review of January 2007. As such, our response could not be fully considered and we informed the team that we may have to reserve judgment in certain areas. We also regretted the absence of a Local Authority representative.

The Panel acknowledged that, in reference to our comments in the previous review, evidence was produced on the day showing the need for a premier business park in Wales, and supporting the choice of location. While accepting the commercial business strategy, we were nevertheless not convinced by any sustainable development strategy. The supporting premises for such a development in this location appeared to us to be based on twentieth century thinking. This was not appropriate for the 21st century and a new, low-carbon era, where energy efficiency and minimisation of the need to drive to work were planning fundamentals.

We re-stated our previous position that this should be a fully mixed use scheme and essentially treated as an urban extension of Cardiff. We noted that space around the site boundary, created by a tightening of the development footprint, could provide space for residential expansion now or in the future. However, it was noted that there is no policy guidance or housing strategy to support this from the Local Authority.

In terms of sustainability, the Panel was disappointed to learn that there was still a lack of commitment to the highest possible standards. We thought that some compensation for building on a greenfield site should be rendered, by achieving an outstanding environmental performance. We were unsure what the team had in mind as an alternative to BREEAM, but thought that a commitment could be made, over and above a BREEAM Excellent rating, to reduce carbon emissions eg by 25% - 50% compared to the Building Regulations minimum. Above all we wanted to see a firm commitment to BREEAM Excellent on the B1 accommodation as a minimum requirement, rather than an aspiration.

We thought that a site appraisal should be carried out to identify the options for renewable energy generation, and that a medium size wind turbine [if deemed technically appropriate] could act as a signpost for the development and advertise its low carbon credentials. Similarly, the

feasibility of providing community energy networks, CHP, tri-generation and biomass heating, should be evaluated. It is possible that the site could be self-sufficient in terms of water supply, all drainage and sewage treatment – this should be investigated and would inform the site layout. A solar analysis of the site should also be used to achieve an optimal block layout.

The presenting team stated that this development would have to conform to the WAG policy on sustainable construction and moving towards zero carbon buildings. However, we found no evidence of any firm commitment towards achieving this, or of using the particular opportunities and constraints of different low-carbon technologies to inform the design development. We thought that a development which could demonstrate environmental excellence and a good live/work balance would gain a market advantage.

The Panel thought that the transport strategy should be based around a high-speed link with the city. As presented, we think the development would lead to a net increase in car journeys and noted the intention to remodel junction 33 as an acceptance of this. The design team's projection of 30% of journeys being non-car was welcomed, but its achievability doubted. We were informed that the recent SEWTA report, which voiced concerns about the capacity of the M4, had been evaluated in relation to this proposal. In response to these concerns the development team were confident that the capacity of the M4 could be significantly increased through further traffic management devices.

The presenting team voiced their disappointment at the concentration of the questioning on issues over which they have no control. The Panel stated that these had dominated the presentation, and that for us, these issues were fundamental to our assessment of the scheme. We believed that the team could address the sustainability issues which we raised and this would benefit the scheme enormously. However, we shared the same frustration over the lack of strategic planning policy guidance and up-to-date local development planning which necessitates such short term, unsustainable decision-making.

It was acknowledged that several substantive points had not been fully addressed in this review, partly due to lack of time and partly to the lack of pre-review information. These included:

- The layout of the large at-grade Park and Ride car park and the possibility of decking
- The design of the transport hub and its relation to the central public space
- The intrusion of the approach roads on the main valley and its impact on the landscape and water course
- What design aspects would be covered by any design code

Crynodeb/Summary

The Panel noted that the lack of any new pre-review material has not helped us in our evaluation of this scheme. We conclude that we have not moved significantly from our previous position and we think that this is an unacceptable location for a development of this kind. In particular:

- We think this development should be located on the line of a rapid transit link into the city that can also serve the communities to the north. At present it remains a proposal oriented to the demands and constraints of private car transport, and dependant on a dramatic increase in bus services. We remain to be convinced that the transport hub will deliver a 30% reduction in car use.
- This scheme should be treated as a core component of a new urban extension and as such provided with all the mix of uses, balance of residential and employment space, commercial and community facilities and infrastructure, that one would expect. We accept that such strategic planning issues are outside the control of the current developers, but they are a fundamental part of our holistic assessment.
- We welcome the revisions that have been made to the site layout, the increased compactness, and underground parking. However, we think that the green landscape 'fingers' are undermined by the wide, dual carriageway boulevards and the large roundabouts.
- A firm commitment should be made to achieving BREEAM Excellent, and further carbon reductions in addition. A site appraisal should inform the block layout, options for renewable energy generation and site-wide water supply and waste treatment. The feasibility of a district energy network should be seriously evaluated for long term carbon and financial savings.
- We wish to repeat the concluding sentence from the last report which is as relevant now as it was then. 'It is essential that the promoters demonstrate that this is an integral part of a coherent sustainable development strategy for Wales as a whole [and] so far that evidence has not been forthcoming.'

We would like to see this scheme again and would hope to be able to focus more on the details of the scheme, given sufficient advance material. In the meantime we would appreciate sight of the PWC report referenced in the presentation.

Diwedd/End

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