

Statws/Status:

Cyhoeddus / Public

DESIGN
COMMISSION
FOR WALES
COMISIWN
DYLUNIO
CYMRU

Adroddiad Adolygu Dylunio: Design Review Report:	21 September 2007
Dyddiad Cyfarfod / Cyflwyno'r Deunydd: Meeting Date / Material Submitted:	12 September 2007
Lleoliad/Location:	Leckwith, Cardiff
Disgrifiad o'r Cynllun Scheme Description:	Glamorgan Records Office
Cleient/Asiant: Client/Agent:	Glamorgan Archives Joint Committee [Gary Tuson]
Developer/Datblygwr:	PMG Estates Ltd
Pensaer/Architect:	Wigley Fox [David Morley]
Awdurdod Cynllunio: Planning Authority:	Cardiff CC [Martin Morris, Janet Davidson]
Statws Cynllunio: Planning Status:	Planning application submitted July 2007
Y Panel Adolygu Dylunio/ Design Review Panel: Alan Francis (cadeirydd/chair) Cindy Harris (swyddog/officer) Kedrick Davies Ashley Bateson	Mike Biddulph Martin Knight Ann-Marie Smale
Lead Panellist:	Kedrick Davies
Sylwedyddion/Observers:	David Clague,

**Constructing Excellence,
Timothy Cantrell, SW England
Design Review Panel.**

Cyflwyniad/Presentation

Glamorgan Records Office provides a statutory archive service to 6 Local Authorities in Wales. The records are currently housed in sub-standard conditions of storage across a number of sites. The aim of this proposal is to bring all material and functions together on a single site and to create a new public building which is accessible and inviting. The mission of the archive team is to collect, access and preserve, and strictly controlled environmental conditions have to be maintained within the storage areas. Funding has been secured from the 6 Local Authorities for this development. Unfortunately a previous scheme for the GRO, located on Callaghan Square and reviewed by DCFW in July 2006, proved unviable.

The current site at Leckwith lies adjacent to the proposed new football stadium and retail park. The availability of good public transport links is seen as an advantage. Although on-site parking is limited, stadium parking could be used on non match days.

Because public records are treasures, to be valued and protected, the building which houses them could be seen as a treasure chest. The 'box within a box' design concept has been adopted from the earlier scheme to create a robust concrete structure for the archive, which enables control of internal conditions. A lighter weight, more glazed block to the west accommodates the main entrance and public areas. The transparent openness of this block is intended to be inviting, welcoming and advertising its presence.

The Local Authority consider that this publically accessible and open wing confers civic presence on the proposal. They are conscious of the wider context and are content with the general form and colour.

Ymateb y Panel/Panel's Response

The Panel understood the cost constraints involved in the site selection and development, but nevertheless regretted the loss of the city centre site. Although sites had been investigated in Pontypridd and Barry, it was confirmed that the six participating authorities all agreed that Cardiff was the right location for the new building. The client acknowledged that there was a growing demand for virtual access rather than physical access, and

that this was not an 'impulse, drop-in' destination, but rather the object of a planned visit. A strong public presence was therefore not a key driver. Nevertheless, the architect stated that the building would be highly visible to the considerable numbers of people using the stadium and the retail park.

It was confirmed that the principal access to the site will be from the spur road off Sloper Road. The Panel noted that this involved approaching the building from the side, along a narrow [six metre] access road and pavement, with a two metre high security fence to the west. Obviously, the parking area for the retail park behind the fence to the west is an area over which the Records Office would have no control. The Panel thought that this was not an auspicious way in which to approach a major civic building with an important public function. We thought that the entrance should be moved to the recessed part of the north elevation, addressing the corner and the approach road. This could also help define the two separate functions of the building. The internal layout would obviously need to be revised to accommodate this change.

We accepted that the site was edge-of-city, but it is essentially a backland area surrounded by a 'ring of tin' in the form of industrial and retail 'large sheds'. The design team stated that accessibility to public transport was of key importance, the site being served by two railway stations within walking distance, a park and ride scheme and regular buses. It was also convenient for cars, being next to the PDR link road. The Panel disputed the accessibility of buses and noted that the only bus service along Sloper Road runs every 30 minutes, and in a loop rather than two-way, which could lead to a bus journey of nearly an hour, followed by a minimum 230 metre walk.

The building itself is surrounded by roads and parking on all sides. It was claimed that both side roads were needed for deliveries and emergency access, and the rear yard had to be made secure, with a gate at the building's south west corner.

The Panel felt strongly that the professed values of care, quality and treasure were not reflected in the building design, which in our view does not express any evidence of civic pride or quality. The scheme appears to be two buildings side by side and, while we appreciated the different functions and performance required, they should nevertheless work together as a whole. The client stated that the sheer bulk of the repository wing expressed the quantity of the collection, which in itself was a source of pride.

The Panel regretted the lack of any contextual information in the pre-review material, the lack of a North point on the plans, and the absence of any information on the scale of adjacent developments. It was

confirmed that the site would be owned rather than leased and that sufficient expansion space was provided in this scheme for the next 25 years. We were told that a cafe on the site would not be viable.

The Panel was disappointed to note that an earlier commitment to achieve a BREEAM Excellent rating, had been reduced to Very Good. There was very little information given on any sustainability strategy in the design statement. The Panel was told that brises soleil and treated glass would provide solar shading for the glazed areas and that thermal modelling was being done by BSRIA. The need for mechanical cooling is still under debate. The amount of glazing in the public wing has been reduced, and obscure glazing introduced, presumably to avoid overheating and reduce the need for mechanical cooling. The Panel advised that in this situation the whole elevational treatment should be re-visited.

Crynodeb/Summary

The Panel supported the objective of integrating the record collection in one place and commended the commitment of the client to achieve this. However, the early cost agreement, signed prior to the finding of a site or early design work, would appear to be constraining what can be achieved. We have grave concerns about the proposed location and the quality of design and materials, and we think this is an unacceptable response to the original brief. In summary:

- We do not believe that the site is an appropriate one for a civic building with an important public function.
- Given the choice of site, there is still a demonstrable lack of civic quality in the proposed design and layout.
- We think the entrance should be relocated to the north, to dramatically improve the sense of arrival and avoid the need to approach the building down what is effectively a service road.
- The external materials and finishes should reflect the value of the contents
- The quality of the submission drawings was inadequate for a detailed planning application and a Design Review presentation.
- We are disappointed in the reduced sustainability aspirations and would like to see the aim for BREEAM Excellent restored.
- We particularly regret that, despite the obvious commitment and effort shown by the client to procure a quality building, their aspirations remain unfulfilled.

Diwedd/End

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