

Statws/Status:

Cyhoeddus / Public

DESIGN
COMMISSION
FOR WALES
COMISIWN
DYLUNIO
CYMRU

Adroddiad Adolygu Dylunio: 22 October 2007
Design Review Report:

Dyddiad Cyfarfod / Cyflwyno'r Deunydd: 3 October 2007
Meeting Date / Material Submitted:

Lleoliad/Location: Usk Way, Newport

**Disgrifiad o'r Cynllun
Scheme Description:** University campus

**Cleient/Asiant:
Client/Agent:** University of Wales, Newport
[Derek Lawther]

Developer/Datblygwr: HBG

Pensaer/Architect: BDP [Chris Harding,
James Cooper]

**Cynllunio:
Consultants:** Faber Maunsell [Chris Lynn]
Mott Macdonald [Mark Smith]

**Awdurdod Cynllunio:
Planning Authority:** Newport CC [Andrew Dawe]

**Statws Cynllunio:
Planning Status:** Full application submitted
September 07

**Y Panel Adolygu Dylunio/
Design Review Panel:**

John Punter (cadeirydd/chair)	Lyn Owen
Cindy Harris (swyddog/officer)	Ed Colgan
Charlie Deng (swyddog/officer)	Michael Griffiths

Ashley Bateson

Lead Panellist:

Ashley Bateson

Cyflwyniad/Presentation

The long narrow site is located south of the new footbridge and public square on Usk Way Newport and fronts the river walkway. It has good views across the river and across the city. The design aims for a transparent building with a high level of animation and interaction with the boulevard, square and walkway. There is good public access through the building at ground floor level, and up to the 'plateau' level of the restaurant and library. There is clear vertical organisation with flexible teaching spaces located above these core functions, and above this a sky garden overlooking the garden and some corporate space. At either end of the building there will be three floors of research space clad in wood on the river side but metal on the other elevations. The western elevation facing Usk Way has been kept simple with the lower levels glazed and the upper levels divided into three sets of accommodation and defined by horizontal metal bands on the upper levels. Landscape screens are provided at the road level. The riverside elevation is more transparent above a base of lecture halls and lobby space. All spaces benefit from good levels of daylight and a generous roof overhang and louvres protect from overheating and glare. The underside of the roof will be timber lined, as will the curved pod of the 'hothouse' where researchers will interact. The designers would like to use black zinc for the metal cladding and slate for the ground floor on the river side. The building will have a very striking night time presence.

Considerations of sustainability underpin the whole design. Solar shading has been optimised and high performance glazing will be specified. Good air tightness and insulation levels are included along with exposed thermal mass. Natural ventilation will be used wherever possible but problems with noise levels from Usk Way may restrict the location of vents on this elevation. A BREEAM Excellent rating has been set as a key requirement and solar thermal, photovoltaic and ground source heat pump technologies are all under review.

The subject of this review is phase 1 of an integrated three phase project. Exemplars that the design team have consulted include buildings at the University of Plymouth.

The Local Authority support the proposed use. They are excited by the design but have not yet had time to fully assess the application. They will

seek to clarify the permeability through the building, the control of traffic movement through the public square and drop off area, and the exact relationship with the space south of the new pedestrian bridge. The quality of materials, and especially the roof finish, is seen as crucial.

Ymateb y Panel/Panel's Response

The Panel welcomed the quality of the presentation and the clear explanation of the scheme. We supported the openness and transparency of the proposed building and the exciting design approach. We had some concerns about the legibility of the entrance, which was not immediately obvious from the drawings. In terms of materials, we supported the timber lining for the underside of the roof, but thought that the relative exposure of the protruding pod made timber cladding a less obvious choice. The Panel appreciated the design idea of discrete parts unified under one lightweight reflective roof, and urged the team to keep the elevations simple and uncluttered.

The Panel welcomed the sustainability aspirations and urged the team to make specific commitments and protect them from any value engineering. The BREEAM analysis should be used as a design tool to ensure that an Excellent rating is achieved. It was confirmed that a 10% improvement in carbon reductions on Part L 2006, is the 'aspirational target' set for the development. However, we were informed that the three phases would have separate heating systems and we urged the team to pursue the assessment of a single district heating system [as promised in their sustainable development statement]. We would like to see Newport Unlimited and the City Council facilitate the development of a wider district heating scheme to link all the new development sites on this river bank.

The Panel acknowledged that the University's green travel plan was an important part of the sustainability strategy and that displacement ventilation with chilled beams offered the best low-energy cooling options. The team stated that there would be no unsightly plant protruding above the roofline. We would like to see a commitment to higher sustainability standards for phases 2 and 3 embedded in the brief.

The Panel was not convinced by the proposals for traffic management around the main entrance, including shuttle bus, disabled parking, and VIP taxis. We thought this would lead to confusion and congestion and suggested that the team may need to consider a secondary entrance from the south, without downgrading the main entrance. The proposed boulevard treatment for Usk Way should include adequate lay-bys to serve as drop-off spaces and this should be complemented by an urban

edge to the building. Secure cycle parking should be well distributed around the site.

The Panel was concerned that the landscaping should flow across the site boundary and integrate with the treatment of the square and riverside walk. It was confirmed that BDP Landscape [part of this design team] are in contact with Gillespies, the landscape architects for the riverside walkway which is being implemented by Newport Unlimited and Newport City Council. The Panel trusted that this would ensure consistency of materials, which would need to cater for heavy and intensive public use particularly on the square. We were assured that the recycling centre and bin store by the southern entrance would be screened but would be well-designed and retained and adapted in phase 2. The building would not have a large delivery requirement and the designers would aim to avoid a service yard feel to the area on the south side. External security would be provided by good overlooking, CCTV, and possibly a manned entrance. The design team stated that it was their intention to consult the police on these matters.

Crynodeb/Summary

The Panel welcomed the presentation of this exciting project and applauded the transparency, public permeability and community outreach, in the form of galleries and theatres. We consider this to be an acceptable response to the site and the brief, with minor revisions necessary. In particular:

- We are not convinced that the design development has been driven as much by sustainability considerations as by architectural ones. We think the two should go hand in hand. We would have liked to see a more convincing approach to energy supply and generation, based on low carbon solutions, and the development of a single heating/cooling system to serve all three phases. Further improvements should be made by a firm commitment to the highest possible standards of environmental performance.
- We applaud the low level of parking, cycle provision and green travel plan for this city centre building.
- We think the main entrance needs to be made more legible.
- We would have preferred to see a 'green' roof treatment but accept the justification for a pure form and a reflective finish.
- We welcome the use of timber in appropriate locations, but think that an alternative cladding should be used for the exposed pod.
- The boulevard treatment of Usk Way should be used to provide drop off points for the building, and the main entrance should remain predominantly pedestrian. The drop off loop should be removed.

- Pedestrian desire lines should be reinforced and road crossings on Usk Way aligned clearly with pedestrian routes and side streets to the west.
- We support the landscape approach and treatment of the SSSI.
- We would want to maintain the high level of transparency on the lecture halls on the riverside elevation, but are concerned that provision for blackout will deaden the riverside frontage.
- We have slight concerns about the temporary nature of the southern ege, given the future phasing, and would like to see a public square developed as a permanent interface between the two phases.

Diwedd/End

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