

Addroddiad Adolygu Dylunio Design Review Report

Review Status: **Public**

Meeting date:	18th March 2009
Issue Date:	27th March 2009
Scheme Location:	Loudoun Square, Butetown
Scheme Description:	Mixed use
Planning Status:	Application submitted December 2008

Part1: Presentation

This regeneration scheme is the result of a partnership between Cardiff City Council, Cardiff Community Housing Association and Cardiff and Vale NHS Trust. The proposal is for 48 apartments, 13 town houses, a new Health Centre, 11 retail units and new public realm with tree and shrub planting. The scheme will be built in three phases to ensure minimal operational disruption to the Health Centre and existing retail units. There has been extensive community consultation.

The planning application is due to go to committee in April or May. There has been a positive dialogue with the Local Authority who support the active frontages and the recently improved treatment of the public realm.

Summary of key points arising from discussion, to be read in conjunction with Part 2 of this report.

The Panel welcomed the opportunity to review this scheme and we strongly support the proposed mix of uses. However, we would have liked to have seen this at an earlier stage [pre-application], when our comments would have been more useful. With regard to the presentation, we would have liked more information on the vision behind the design response to the site and the brief. In general, further design development is necessary to address the massing, elevational treatment and public realm to ensure a high quality resolution. In summary:

- The site layout appears to have been too much influenced by the relatively complicated phasing requirements. The integration, location and quality of the

different functions was not adequately demonstrated except as a response to the phasing.

- The elevational treatment is poor and the architectural response appears fragmented between the different elements. More reference should be made to existing high quality schemes in the area.
- The massing is weak particularly on the south east corner.
- The fenestration and articulation need simplifying and this could bring cost savings.
- We support the commitment to achieve CSH Level 4, but have concerns about how achievable this is at the moment. A specialist M&E consultant should be engaged to advise on this as soon as possible.
- We are disappointed at the failure to create a high quality green space in the internal courtyard and regard this as a missed opportunity.
- Use of the flat roof areas could partially compensate residents with some private outdoor space, but the necessary flues and lift risers were missing from the plans.
- The need to provide even a minimal amount of parking at ground level has compromised the quality of the public open spaces.
- The location of consulting rooms in the Health Centre should be reconsidered.
- The space standards in the flats and narrow frontage houses, together with the extra wall thickness, will make it more difficult to ensure that these function as good living spaces.
- We understand concerns about budgets, but think that the design could be improved by simplification which would not necessarily add to cost.

Part 2: Discussion and Panel Response in Full

The Panel was concerned that the site layout had been overly influenced by the phasing requirements and we questioned whether the optimum long-term solution had been achieved. The scale of the blocks does not convey a strong street presence, and the single storey, chamfered corner block to the south east of the site is particularly weak. We understand that Loudoun Square to the north east, with the Community Hub, is intended to be the main public space but we still regard the lack of presence on the south east corner as a missed opportunity.

The fenestration arrangement across the whole scheme needs rationalising and simplifying. We appreciate that it is intended to express the function of the internal space, but there is an unnecessary amount of variation which, together with some of the articulation [eg. the slight increase in the height of the Hub] has the effect of adding cost with no apparent benefit.

The commitment to achieve CSH Level 4 for all residential units is supported, but we doubt that the daylight factors in some of the apartments would be sufficient to achieve this. Similarly, requirements for Lifetime Homes standards would need to be satisfied, and the space standards proposed will make this difficult to achieve. The proposal for solar water heating panels on north facing roofs would obviously not be appropriate. The team stated that the latter proposal had been superseded by the inclusion of a biomass boiler located on the ground floor of the western accommodation block. The building fabric will be highly insulated with 480mm thick walls, and a post-construction research and monitoring project will be jointly managed by the RSL and the company supplying the insulation material.

It is very unfortunate that the internal courtyard will be dominated by servicing and parking and we regretted the missed opportunity to provide high quality amenity space for residents and users of the Health Centre and Community Hub. Although the space will be managed and a caretaker will supervise the weekly transfer of refuse for roadside collection, we think it is unlikely to be the green recreational space which the community has requested. In partial mitigation, we suggested that the flat roof areas be brought into use to deliver some private outdoor amenity space. We urged the team to ensure that the walled garden was detailed and implemented and not lost as a 'potential' facility.

The team emphasised the work that had been done to reduce the parking numbers to a minimum, starting from a high demand. While acknowledging that and understanding the commercial pressures on the scheme, the Panel noted that an underground parking solution would have enabled a much higher quality of public realm, and we would encourage planning authorities to impose this requirement across the board for all urban sites. The provision of bus bays will remain unchanged and we urged the team to ensure the provision of good quality bus shelters and a safe pedestrian crossing of Bute Street.

The location of consulting rooms in the Health Centre, at ground floor and facing north to a public square, presents problems of privacy and confidentiality, which the defensive planting will not adequately resolve. Blinds are likely to be drawn during the day as a result, leading to dismal interiors and unnecessary use of artificial light. If the consulting rooms faced south, onto a more private green space, a more relaxing and healing environment would be created.

We support the proposed mix of uses and the flexibility of operations which will ensure maximum occupancy in the future. The community consultation process has been important in shaping the site layout and massing, but the end result needs to be design-led and informed by a commitment to established principles of architecture and urban design. In particular the type of finishes and detailing used on Steffani Court, which is cited as a precedent, could be more evident on the town house elevations.

The Design Commission for Wales Design Review Panel and staff welcome further consultation and will be happy to provide further feedback on this report and/or where appropriate, to receive further presentations. Thank you for consulting the Commission and please keep in touch with us about the progress of your project.

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

Declaration of Interest: Ann-Marie Smale declared that Powell Dobson Architects had tendered for this project at an early stage.

Appendix 1: Attendees

Asiant/Client/Datblygwr:
Agent/Client/Developer

Cardiff Community Housing Association
[Sara Brock]
Cardiff CC Neighbourhood Regeneration
[Teresa Doyle]

Pensaer/Architect:	Austin Smith Lord [Dennis Helyer, Samantha Pinn]
Consultants:	White Young Green [Catrin Oliver] Asbri Planning [Barrie Davies]
AwdurdodCynllunio/ Planning Authority	Cardiff CC [Nigel Hanson]
Y Panel Adlygu Dylunio: Design review panel: Wendy Richards [Chair] Cindy Harris [Officer] Lyn Owen	Lynne Sullivan Ann-Marie Smale Simon Carne Richard Parnaby
Lead Panellist:	Simon Carne
Sylwedyddion/Observers:	David Harvey [DCFW Panellist]