

Addroddiad Adolygu Dylunio Design Review Report

Review Status: **Public**

Meeting date:	18th March 2009
Issue Date:	31st March 2009
Scheme Location:	Stradey Park, Llanelli
Scheme Description:	Residential
Planning Status:	Reserved matters application March 2008.

Part1: Presentation

The proposal received outline consent in March 2007, based on an illustrative masterplan by Stride Treglown Architects, and following a call-in by the Minister. Approval of the reserved matters application has been suspended following an Article 14 imposed by the Welsh Assembly Government.

The designers stated that the brief was for 450 residential units - mostly family housing with some apartments to the east. These are laid out according to Home Zone principles in a rectilinear layout, with key locations marked by extra heights. Vehicular access is from Maes y Coed Road to the south with a secondary access from the south west. Parking is provided at 200%, mostly to the rear of properties. The culverted Cille stream will be opened up with overflow areas to counteract flooding risk, and recreational space forming a green strip down the eastern boundary of the site.

The Local Planning Authority wish first of all to resolve the outstanding issues concerning surface water disposal, which has already been reduced from 35 to 14 litres per second. Other concerns relate to movement, for example the route across the site between two schools, and the proposed massing in relation to Denham Avenue.

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 important scheme, while regretting that we had not received a presentation at an earlier stage. It is crucial that the development responds to its townscape context and unique sense of place, and that the history associated with the site can be carried through into any new development.

However, this was not demonstrated by the design team, nor was any convincing rationale provided for the overall plan. In summary:

- The scheme is dominated by a complex layout of highways and courtyards, and this compromises the legibility and permeability of the overall site layout.
- A hierarchy of routes and public open spaces should be developed according to the principles of Manual for Streets. Note should also be taken of the place making principles in the Manual for Streets.
- The lack of an additional vehicular access from Stradey Park Avenue to the east is regretted.
- The palette of materials and building forms should be more responsive to the local context.
- There should be a mix of parking provision to include on-street and off-street spaces.
- The amenity of existing adjacent dwellings should be safeguarded.
- The proposed sustainability standard is poor and well below the anticipated minimum standard of Code for Sustainable Homes Level 3. Such a significant scheme should respond better to the WAG aspiration for low and zero carbon developments, and be seen to promote sustainable lifestyles.
- A comprehensive landscape strategy should be developed which integrates green space, public squares, play areas and recreational facilities into the whole site, and makes connections to the surrounding area.

Part 2: Discussion and Panel Response in Full

The Panel found no evidence of this being a 'flagship scheme', creating a unique sense of place or responding to the adjacent townscape character of Llanelli. There should be some recognition of the past uses and special associations that this site has for the local community. This is not just a question of architectural details, but depends on a thorough contextual analysis. There is no objection to traditional architectural solutions, but they should be authentic, simple and high quality. Key buildings and entrance buildings should be identifiable, differentiated from the main body of the development, and used to address and enclose public spaces.

The claim of providing a legible site layout with a hierarchy of routes is not borne out by the material presented. The site plan is highways dominated with an unattractive, fragmented primary route and no rationale for the few isolated shared surfaces. The Panel considered that a clear public realm strategy and design is needed. The hierarchy and detailed design of routes – particularly the tree planting - needs to be made more explicit. The road layout is unnecessarily complex, based on a strategy of using short road lengths and frequent changes of direction, in order to reduce speeds. However, there are better ways to achieve this and still maintain clear and legible routes especially for pedestrians and cyclists, which should also be linked to the adjacent Sustrans route.

Unfortunately there is limited potential for vehicular access from the north east, which would have facilitated a clear route through the site. The land in question is owned by a third party, who will allow pedestrian access only. Nevertheless we would like to see the possible future option of vehicular access from this point allowed for. The layout around

the main entrance to the site from the south creates a pinch point and a potential for confusion to the visitor, which will not be eased by a mini roundabout.

The extent of rear courtyard parking undermines the aspiration to create Home Zones and sociable streets. This could be better achieved by a mix of parking locations, to include designated parking bays on street, as well as on-plot parking. Any rear courtyards should have good natural surveillance and permeability.

There is a disappointing lack of any statement on sustainability other than proposals for waste minimisation. The developer stated that the scheme would be designed to meet EcoHomes 'Good' or equivalent, and that a higher standard would not be viable. Although this proposal will fall outside the letter of any new planning requirements for minimum sustainability standards, there is a clear intention on the part of WAG that significant new developments should be 'low carbon'. In line with this emerging policy and in the interests of future-proofing, the Local Authority should negotiate a minimum viable standard with the developer, which is higher than that proposed.

The original planning consent specified the provision of 0.9 ha of public open space. However, there is no overall landscape strategy or any evidence that the public realm has been consciously designed, rather than included as 'space left over'. In particular, the public squares should be designed to reflect a distinctive character. The linear park concentrates the green space in one area and there would be benefit in breaking this up and introducing more localised play and recreation areas. The landscape infrastructure to the east should be drawn through the rest of the scheme to inform a coordinated approach to design of the public realm. Connections should be made to the open space to the north along with a network of paths based on desire lines around the site. Provision should be made for management of all open spaces to ensure their long term usability and safety.

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.

Appendix 1: Attendees

Asiant/Client/Datblygwr:
Agent/Client/Developer

Taylor Wimpey [Andrew Bowen,
Brad Checkley]

Pensaer/Architect:

Focus on Design [Oliver Coles,
Mark Farrow]

Consultants:

Asbri Planning [Barrie Davies]

Awdurdod Cynllunio/
Planning Authority

Y Panel Adlygu Dylunio:
Design review panel:
Wendy Richards [Chair]
Cindy Harris [Officer]
Ann-Marie Smale

Lead Panellist:

Sylwedyddion/Observers:

Carmarthenshire CC [Eifion Bowen,
R. Bowen, P. Roberts, R. Davies]

Simon Carne
Lyn Owen
Richard Parnaby
Lynne Sullivan

Lyn Owen

David Harvey [DCFW Panellist]