

Addroddiad Adolygu Dylunio Design Review Report

Review Status: **Public**

Meeting date:	22nd April 2009
Issue Date:	30th April 2009
Scheme Location:	Parc Cybi, Holyhead
Scheme Description:	Residential
Planning Status:	Outline application submitted March 2009

Part1: Presentation

This proposed residential development is for 135 units ranging in size from 1 bed flats to 3 bed houses, with one 4 bed house. The density is 36.4 du/ha and there will be an affordable component of at least 30%. Parking will be provided at a ratio of 1.37 spaces per property.

The site is located to the south of Holyhead, approximately 1 mile from the town centre, close to a new business park which is currently under construction. The new link road connecting the site to the A55 and Kingsland Road, and a roundabout access to the south of the site, are already built. A spine road proposed to run east/west through the site could connect to future developments to the north.

The Local Authority representative commented on the changing context of the southern part of Holyhead, primarily in the form of numerous new retail developments, and noted that this area is now becoming part of the town. They will wish to ensure good connectivity and public transport routes.

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

The Panel supports the choice of site for this significant development, and the design-led approach and commitment to high quality and successful place-making contained in the masterplan. However, we do have major reservations about the proposed solution:

- Connectivity to and integration with the Kingsland area of Holyhead should be improved in both physical and visual terms, and attractive pedestrian routes provided across the A55 where appropriate.
- The proposed 'home zones' should be better connected as part of a genuinely continuous network of streets.
- The layout should be revised to avoid the problem of the visual impact of back gardens and boundaries on the main access route into the site, and from more distant viewpoints on Kingsland Road.
- We support the relatively low parking ratio but are not convinced by the strategy for location and distribution, and its effect on the public realm of the Crescent.
- The massing of the 3 storey blocks should be checked to avoid any problems of overshadowing to the north.
- A re-assessment of the size of units and likely social mix may also have impacts on the massing.
- A separate landscape study should be undertaken for Lon Trefignath using a specialised consultant, with a view to preserving and enhancing its rural charm. This should form part of the masterplan.
- The sustainability strategy should reference CSH Levels 4 and 5, rather than Code Level 3. Every effort should be made to provide a future linkage with the CHP system in the business park.
- Appropriate Welsh references should be used in any planning documents, masterplans or development briefs. In this case a contextual appraisal should be undertaken to identify the local character of the surrounding area, focusing on streetscene, architecture and materials.
- The status of the masterplan and future development briefs are vital for future quality control. These in turn could inform SPG to guide potential developers. They should form part of any planning consent and be linked to planning conditions.

Part 2: Discussion and Panel Response in Full

The Panel supported the choice of location for this quantum of development, and welcomed the aspirations and design-led approach to development contained in the masterplan. We share the desire for good connectivity and a design approach based on Manual for Streets.

However, the site layout appears rather self-contained and introverted, and not fully integrated with the town. Although there are footpath connections to the town, this could be improved with a more connected layout and more visual connections [while maintaining most of the tree belt to the north]. The 'home zones' as shown do not form part of a genuinely continuous network of streets.

We accept that the position of the access road is fixed and we were told that access from Kingsland Road would have been difficult due to restricted visibility. However, this does raise problems in terms of connectivity and integration with the town. It is particularly unfortunate that back gardens [and probably 1.8m high fences] will be highly visible on approaching the site from the roundabout. A landscape solution to this problem, as suggested by the architect, would in reality be difficult to achieve.

The asymmetry of the central spine road, combining dense 3 storey development on one side and fragmented 1.5 storey houses on the other, is problematic. We are not convinced that a continuous line of 3 storey development is appropriate in this location. The massing should be re-assessed in the light of possible overshadowing of the gardens and the two storey houses to the north, and this should be tested by a sunpath study.

In terms of unit size and the likely social mix, there are probably too many apartments in the overall scheme. The parking distribution along the crescent does not appear to reflect the differing densities, and the lack of design detail gives us concern that the extent of parking needed, even for a low density, will dominate the public realm. The use of retaining walls for the smaller houses is unlikely to be cost effective, given the size of the units.

A more convincing landscape strategy should be developed for Lon Trefignath, with dry stone walls and indigenous trees and shrubs used to retain its rural charm. We strongly advise that this should be incorporated within the masterplan. Parking space for walkers, if necessary, should be located elsewhere. The pedestrian link to the north west of the site through a wooded area should be assessed for security implications. The 'park' at the north west end of the crescent is not well located, or of a useful size for public open space.

The sustainability strategy contained in the masterplan and development briefs should refer to the Welsh Assembly Government aspiration for all new buildings to be zero carbon [CSH Code 5] by 2011, which is when this development is likely to begin construction. Any mention of Code 3 at this stage is likely to be misinterpreted as a future requirement. The opportunity to link this scheme to the district heating system to be installed in the business park should be taken and any necessary infrastructure works installed, either prior to marketing the site or as a condition of sale.

It is regrettable that the images presented as examples and precedents for local vernacular were from Scotland. It is extremely important that appropriate reference material is used. The masterplan should contain an overview of local character in the form of a contextual appraisal as advised within the document TAN 12: Design.

The LPA advised that the project was the subject of an outline application with all matters reserved. It is important that the LPA further review the principle of this to avoid the scheme design becoming irrelevant. The status of the masterplan will be instrumental in determining the quality of the eventual development. If outline consent is granted, the masterplan in its entirety should form part of this approval in the form of a planning condition to be applied when determining all future applications for this site. We support the use of development briefs and/or SPG prepared by the Local Authority for adoption on site and linked to the sale of land. These should strongly reflect the principles of the masterplan, including any changes made as a result of the outline planning process. Crucially any planning consent should make clear what are absolute requirements, and these should be contractually binding.

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	WAG. DE&T [Terry Stevens, Jeff Porter]
Pensaer/Architect:	Austin-Smith:Lord [Niall Murphy, Peter Jones]
Consultants:	Atkins [Rhodri Jones]
AwdurdodCynllunio/ Planning Authority	Isle of Anglesey CC [Dewi Francis Jones]
Y Panel Adlygu Dylunio: Design review panel: Alan Francis [Chair] Cindy Harris [Officer] David Harvey	Phil Roberts Elfed Roberts Ed Colgan
Lead Panellist:	Elfed Roberts
Sylwedyddion/Observers:	Edward Parry Jones [WAG. DE&T]