

Addroddiad Adolygu Dylunio Design Review Report

Review Status: Public

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| Meeting date: | 24th June 2009 |
| Issue Date: | 7th July 2009 |
| Scheme Location: | Newport |
| Scheme Description: | Magistrates Court |
| Planning Status: | Application submitted 6th June 2009. |

NB. This report supercedes all previous reports and advice from DCFW.

Part1: Presentation

This proposal was last reviewed by DCFW in March 2009. The building is intended to be a civic statement for Newport, and will provide essential facilities for Her Majesty’s Courts Service.

The location of the main entrance remains facing south addressing the newer developments of Newport, although there will be a service access from George Street. A more restrained fenestration arrangement has been developed, while lightwells and clerestories provide maximum daylight internally. The team is confident of achieving BREEAM Excellent, as evidenced by pre-assessment scores. Landscape materials include Pennant stone paving and Welsh slate gabions, and the strategy uses fixtures and planting as part of the security cordon.

The proposed scheme has gone out to OJEU, and a two stage D&B contract will be used. The architects will produce indicative detailing and will work alongside the contractor to finalise detailed drawings.

The Local Authority has no objection to the orientation and location of the main entrance, which is in line with the George Street SPG. They do have some reservations about the civic nature of the building and the Usk Way elevation and would like to see opportunities to incorporate public art. They are reserving judgement on the proposed use of brickwork, pending further details.

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

The Panel recognised and welcomed the progress that has been made since the last review. We support this scheme with the following minor recommendations:

- We still have concerns about the location and legibility of the main entrance, though we understand that the location is acceptable to the client and the LPA and therefore is unlikely to change. However the legibility needs to be improved and the sequence of entry should be considered to ensure aspects including security, access and wayfinding are all successfully integrated without compromising the building form.
- Similarly we would have preferred to see an underground parking solution and we regret that the car park will be the dominant visual aspect when approaching from the city centre to the north and north west.
- We welcome the improved elevational treatment and more restrained fenestration in response to our previous comments, although the north and west elevations need further development.
- We are not convinced by the landscape strategy and would like to see a hard, urban solution using one dominant material and replacing the proposed gabions with sharply detailed stone walls.
- We support the commitment to BREEAM Excellent, although we think a sustainability strategy should be submitted as part of the detailed planning application.
- The pure 'box' form needs excellent detailing and construction in order to work well, and it is therefore important that the architects are retained to work on the detailed design.

Part 2: Discussion and Panel Response in Full

The pure geometrical form of the 'box', if it is to be successful, has to be a beautifully crafted object and the 'pavilion in landscape' approach may not be an appropriate design precedent for this tight urban site. The quality of detailing will be crucially important; the team recognise this and believe that the two stage Design & Build procurement process will allow them to monitor the detailed design. The same design quality should continue into the interior spaces, including finishes, lighting and signage.

We are still not convinced by the location of the main entrance and think that the failure to address the city centre is a serious concern. The legibility of the entrance from different approaches is not sufficiently clear and needs improving. An entrance sequence needs to be developed including all the security implications and their influence on internal layout and design, and we were assured that this is being done. The elevations are not all of equal status; the north and west elevations are not sufficiently well developed and need further work, even given the custodial function on the western side.

In other aspects, particularly the fenestration, the development of the design from the previous version is welcomed and delivers a much stronger resolution of the design concept. The architect referred to the serious business taking place on the upper floors and

this is reflected in the solid brick upper and open glazed lower parts of the south elevation. We would like to see this development continue to evolve so that all four elevations achieve the same quality of resolution in their composition and so that the building reads in the round, with the corner junctions between discrete elevations properly considered. Access for cleaning and maintenance should be included in the overall elevational design. We were told that access for security vans will be managed and van docks integrated with the building.

The landscape strategy appears to be confused and unresolved. We would favour a hard urban precision to the public spaces – as opposed to the softer imagery of the 3D visuals we were presented with. Sharply defined stone walls would be more appropriate than gabions, and the use of one main material, such as Pennant stone, would help to deliver a better solution. Public art should be well integrated with the landscape and/or the building fabric, bearing in mind the predominant coat of arms, three flags and other signage.

The commitment to achieve BREEAM Excellent was emphasised and although we were not presented with a strategy to achieve this, we were assured that the M&E consultants, Aecom, were fully engaged. The client is concerned that running costs should be as low as possible and the Panel stated the importance of training the building users and monitoring building performance, so as to ensure that the design intentions are realised in practice.

There will be a public vehicle drop-off point to the west of the building, and any lay-bys will need to be dedicated and adequately sized, so that the access road is not blocked. Informal drop off's on Usk Way will be discouraged. The secure parking area to the rear will be bounded by a steel mesh screen with brick piers. We welcomed the lightweight transparency of this solution and suggested a more horizontal emphasis might be introduced, with the brick piers omitted to maintain the clear distinction between building and landscape elements.

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

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| Asiant/Client/Datblygwr: Agent/Client/Developer | HMCS [Alan Davies] Ministry of Justice [Jon Wallsgrove] |
| Pensaer/Architect: | HOK [Femi Oresanya, Stephen Herbert] |
| Consultants: | Turner and Townsend [Mark Drewe] |
| AwdurdodCynllunio/ Planning Authority | Newport CC [Eluned Jones] |

Y Panel Adlygu Dylunio:

Design review panel:

Ewan Jones [Chair]

Cindy Harris [Officer]

Ed Colgan

David Harvey

Martin Knight

Ann-Marie Smale

Ashley Bateson

Lead Panellist:

Ann-Marie Smale

Sylwedyddion/Observers:

Eleanor Marks [WAG; DE&T]