

# Addroddiad Adolygu Dylunio Design Review Report

## Review Status: **Public**

Meeting date:	24th June 2009
Issue Date:	6th July 2009
Scheme Location:	Buckleys Brewery, Llanelli
Scheme Description:	Residential
Planning Status:	Application submitted September 2008

## Part1: Presentation

This proposal is phase 3 of a phased masterplan for the Buckleys Brewery site and comprises 12 no. 1-bed flats, 8 of which are new build, and 4 are located in a refurbished block. The site is adjacent to a conservation area which includes several listed buildings. The design aim is to create an urban courtyard development, using the southerly orientation to achieve passive solar benefits and reflecting the proportions of adjacent buildings in the massing and elevational treatment.

The scheme is designed to meet the EcoHomes Good standard, which was the requirement when grant funding for this scheme was allocated. Grwp Gwalia is currently exploring options for further grant funding to achieve CSH Level 4.

The Local Authority has concerns over the capacity of the existing sewerage system, and is awaiting further advice from CCW and EA. Some objections have been raised by Highways concerning access, and local objections have been received relating to scale, height, contemporary design and the impact on the conservation area. Some design revisions have already been agreed with the applicant.

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

The Panel welcomed this proposal and generally endorsed the proposed use for the site, the design approach and the commitment of the client / developer. We would support this scheme with the following minor recommendations:

- The apparent bulk of the new block should be minimised with a set back and change of materials on the top storey. This would also improve improve the compositional relationship with the neighbouring buildings fronting Thomas Street and the relationship with the conservation area, and reduce the impact of the new development in distant views.
- The design of the courtyard should be developed as an attractive usable space, and parking minimised.
- We hope that further funding can be made available to improve the relatively modest sustainability standards [although the historic reasons for this are acknowledged] in order to make this development compliant with planning policy at the time when it will be built.
- Ways should be found to introduce more daylight into the single aspect, deep plan apartments.
- We endorse the proposed vehicular access from the west and would not anticipate any problems with visibility or blocking of traffic.
- We support the client's commitment to improving the environment of the riverside walkway.

## **Part 2: Discussion and Panel Response in Full**

In general this is a well designed scheme with generous internal living spaces and active street frontages. It was also well presented with an appropriate level of detail. In terms of the relative proportions of the new build block in relation to its neighbours, we support the proposed height but would like to see some set back and change of material on the top storey, to step the form down the hill and balance the composition. The glazed corners to the south west and south east should be made more solid and opaque, to bring clarity to the 'front' of the building facing Thomas Street. The courtyard is potentially a major asset, adding both amenity and identity to the scheme. It should be optimised with planting and minimal parking, and the line of the gate set back from the street. The design of the gate should be taken as an opportunity to add quality rather than to simply impose security.

The Panel had concerns about the probable lack of daylight, particularly in two of the single aspect apartments [nos 7 and 10]. We understand the boundary conditions which apply but urged the design team to explore ways of admitting more daylight from the north, and to use high level internal glazing and a top light into the stair core, to maximise the use of borrowed light.

The reasons for the relatively low sustainability aspirations were explained and we strongly support the client's efforts to improve the environmental performance of this scheme and raise the necessary funds to do so. It would be unfortunate if this development were to be built to a standard which was out of date and did not meet the current minimum requirements of the Welsh Assembly Government.

Given the importance for this site of drainage and flooding issues and the impact of any discharge on the estuary, we recommended the specification of low flow sanitary appliances, taps, showers and washing machines. A broader strategy for water conservation and sustainable drainage, to include porous surfaces and rainwater harvesting

for irrigation and WC flushing, may be an appropriate way to demonstrate high environmental performance.

We understood that the concerns raised by Highways related to visibility around the proposed access from Thomas Street. Our impression was that, given the 5 metre wide footpaths and the low level of use, there is little risk of entering vehicles obstructing the carriageway to allow for emerging vehicles, and any future problems with visibility would be unlikely. We support the principle of accessing this site from the west off Thomas Street. We would not support access from the riverside walk, which would involve partial demolition of the existing building and deny the area a potentially enjoyable pedestrianised route.

The riverside walkway will need environmental improvements to become an attractive public space, and the funding for this was dependent on the development of the old maltings building [phase 4] which is currently on hold. The client agreed with the desirability of these improvements and is currently researching other funding possibilities. The client defended the 1 metre 'privacy strip' to the south of the refurbished block bordering the walkway as essential to give residents a minimal defensible space, but the Panel stressed that the detailing would be critical. A hard urban solution would be required, possibly with a change of level.

**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	Grwp Gwalia [Elfed Roberts, Rosy Steel, Jonathan Hughes]
Pensaer/Architect:	Powell Dobson [Andrew Cross]
Consultants:	n/a
Awdurdod Cynllunio/ Planning Authority	Carmarthenshire CC [Rob Davies, Ian Thomas]
Y Panel Adlygu Dylunio: Design review panel: Ewan Jones [Chair] Cindy Harris [Officer] Ed Colgan	David Harvey Martin Knight Ashley Bateson

Lead Panellist:

Ed Colgan

Sylwedyddion/Observers:

Eleanor Marks [WAG; DE&T]

Declaration of Interest:

Ashley Bateson stated that Hoare Lea were currently working with Powell Dobson on other projects.