

# Addroddiad Adolygu Dylunio Design Review Report

## Review Status: **Public**

Meeting date:	22 July 2009
Issue Date:	4th August 2009
Scheme Location:	Penmaen, Gower
Scheme Description:	Residential
Planning Status:	Retrospective application submitted April 2009

## **This report supercedes all previous reports and advice from DCFW**

### **Prior to the start of the presentation the Chair made the following points:**

1. Notwithstanding the circumstances of the application, it was unprecedented for the Commission to see a scheme that was already under construction.
2. The purpose of the review was to focus on two key issues, a) Do the proposed modifications retain the original scheme qualities? b) Is there an adverse landscape and visual impact on the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) as a result of the modifications proposed?

### **Part1: Presentation**

It was agreed by all those present that this review should focus on a comparison between two schemes – the previously consented scheme by PCKO Architects and the revised scheme which is the subject of a retrospective planning application.

The newly appointed architects believe that the original design concept is intact, is not undermined by changes on site, and has minimal additional impact when seen from public viewing points. The ground levels created on site are a discrepancy which was caused by a misinterpretation of the original data and was a genuine error. The result is a building that is 1.5m higher than the original proposal, with a slightly larger footprint. Powell Dobson confirmed that their design uses the concrete frame which has been erected on site. No alteration to this existing frame was discussed. The stone demolition material salvaged from the previous building which was to have been re-used in the walls of the new building has proved insufficient in quantity and quality for the precise linear coursing specified on the previous design drawings.

The Local Planning Authority [LPA] repeated their intention to separate design issues from the planning history of this scheme and to concentrate on the former. Originally the LPA wished to support an example of exceptional modern design in a rural area and designated AONB. In their view, the applicant should either implement the consented design or justify the new proposal. The vertical emphasis of the original scheme has disappeared and the original concept has been compromised by the change in levels, which were a very specific part of the planning consent. The ultimate decision will depend on whether these differences are considered to be material.

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

The Panel was pleased to be updated on the progress of this scheme, and to be asked to comment on the design issues involved. However, we cannot support this proposal for the following reasons:

- The elegance and subtlety of the original scheme and its strong relationship with the landscape context has been lost in this revised proposal, and the design quality has been eroded.
- We are very disappointed that the existing landscape of trees and hedges has been destroyed, and the landform irrevocably altered.
- In our view any revised proposal should have attempted to remain as faithful as possible to the original.
- The discrepancies in the documentation do not give us confidence in the accuracy of the information presented.
- The increases in the height, width and depth of the building are significant.
- We welcome the continuing commitment to achieve Code for Sustainable Homes Level 4.
- We strongly advise that, however matters progress, the client should retain the services of an architect beyond Stage D.

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

DCFW's support for the original design concept, which we reviewed in March 2008, was based in part on the way the building responded to the landscape setting, stepping down the site and nestling into the existing vegetation which both protected and screened the new building. The sensitivity of the original scheme to its site context was a major factor in gaining our support.

However, it now appears that trees, a hedgerow and other vegetation to the north and east have been cleared and the existing landscape and topography have been completely disregarded. No explanation or justification for this was offered and the architects appeared unaware of the clearance. In fact, the Design and Access statement prepared by Powell Dobson shows the line of trees to the north east still in place.

It would have been perfectly possible for the revised design to have followed the original one more faithfully. Some design changes have been made which were not strictly

necessary in order to resolve the discrepancy in levels and other changes made on site. The design team agreed that they have varied the design concept to give a more horizontal emphasis to the building, and to improve views from the master bedroom.

The Panel noted some discrepancies in the presented material, relating to exactly how much the footprint of the building had been increased, but this was not resolved. The reference in the documents to the original drawings showing window heights on the north facade so low that they clashed with kitchen base units, did not make sense as the kitchen was located to the south. The like-for-like comparison images in the documentation are not strictly comparable and have the effect of making the newly proposed building appear smaller.

We questioned the rationale for a 3m high basement underneath the whole footprint and were told this was for constructional reasons. The original scheme showed a floor-to-soffit level lower than necessary to install some of the mechanical systems.

The developer is still committed to achieving Code for Sustainable Homes [CSH] Level 4 and the architects are confident of meeting this standard. However, they have been given no assurance that they will be retained beyond RIBA Stage D, in the event that approval is granted.

**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	Daphne Power, representing Mr and Mrs Morgan
Pensaer/Architect:	Powell Dobson [Andrew Nixon, Kevin Matthews]
Consultants:	n/a
Awdurdod Cynllunio/ Planning Authority	County and City of Swansea [Dave Gill, Tom Gronow, Steve Smith]
Y Panel Adlygu Dylunio: Design review panel: Wendy Richards [Chair] Cindy Harris [Officer]	Kedrick Davies David Harvey

Jonathan Adams

Lead Panellist:

Kedrick Davies

Sylwedyddion/Observers:

Councillor Moelfryn Maskell