

Addroddiad Adolygu Dylunio Design Review Report

Review Status: **Public**

Meeting date:	18th November 2009
Issue Date:	1st December 2009
Scheme Location:	Bryn House, Gower
Scheme Description:	Residential
Planning Status:	Application submitted 5/11/09

Part1: Presentation

This is a completely new proposal for this site, irrespective of its recent planning history. Previous proposals were reviewed by DCFW in March 2008 and July 2009. The client's aim remains the sympathetic blending of a contemporary building with its unique landscape setting, using a semi earth sheltered construction. The use of local Gower stone and grass roofs is complemented by a landscape strategy which uses indigenous species in terraced grounds which respond to the building form.

This design retains the strong sustainability credentials of earlier schemes and a CSH pre-assessment shows that Code Level 4 is achievable. Passive heating and ventilation will be used to minimise energy demands, and internal daylight levels will be maximised. An internal lift will provide easy access to all levels.

The Local Authority views this proposal as a pragmatic and valid response to the site, with its own design integrity. However, the required quality of detail and construction needs to be followed through. The first proposal for this site established the principle of a contemporary replacement dwelling. Nevertheless, this scheme is approximately 20% bigger than the consented scheme and is likely to be contentious.

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

The Panel is familiar with the background to this application and is sympathetic to the existing constraints. While we support the principle and the contemporary design approach, we have major concerns about the translation of the concept into reality. In summary:

- We have no objections to the proposed scale, the re-use of the existing frame, or the views into the site from local vantage points.
- The basic design concept is sound, but much refinement of the details needs to be carried out, and controlled through planning consent conditions.
- The landscape strategy is promising and needs to be carried through to the detailed layout and planting.
- The sustainability strategy urgently needs M&E input to successfully demonstrate how the building will meet Code Level 4, and that the most appropriate technologies have been used and integrated with the rest of the design.
- The internal planning concept is not carried through in detail and needs careful revision, to optimise the amenity and functionality of the layout and the spaces created.

Part 2: Discussion and Panel Response in Full

The Panel has no objection to the proposed scale, and the photographic images of views into the site give no grounds for concern. Seen obliquely from the front, the building has a horizontal emphasis which sits well with the landscape, and the slightly raised roof to the entrance level living room space adds an appropriate emphasis at the west end of the curved plan. We think the basic design approach is sound, but we do have concerns that the simplicity of the concept has been compromised by poor detailed planning.

For example, the roof geometry bears no relation to the internal layout and spaces, and the internal planning is unresolved. Details such as the large amount of wardrobe space in the guest bedroom, and the access to the master bedroom through the dressing room, were accepted by the client and architect as requiring development and further refinement. However, they are symptomatic of a number of unconsidered arrangements. In particular, we questioned whether the existing structural floor-to-ceiling height would be adequate, given the space required for services and insulation. While we understand that the client and architect have focussed on resolving other major issues first, we think that the lack of resolution of these details is indicative of more fundamental problems with the thoroughness of the design development.

The Panel noted that the kitchen space is at least 9 metres away from any natural light and whilst it was suggested by the designers that rooflights or sun pipes could be installed to introduce more daylight into the deep plan of the upper ground floor, the Panel was concerned that these aspects were not part of an overall concept. We would also like to see more daylight introduced to the north facing rooms and corridor on the lower ground floor. The Panel felt that considering these aspects together with the roof geometry might offer a potential solution that would help to give clarity to the internal arrangements.

The exact specification for the curtain walling, which is shown as opening up for the full elevation, will be complex and its details will have a major impact on the elevations. Similarly, the detailed construction of the extensive glass balustrade could be refined and elegant, or intrusive and clumsy. The fascias of the 'top hat' roof section over the living room are drawn at the scale of an uninsulated concrete slab whereas, once insulation is added, they will be significantly deeper, which would look clumsy. The detailing of the stone work needs to be resolved, along with the details of wall ends and openings. The team is discussing with the Local Authority the merits of random stone, versus cut stone in

stratified courses, and we agreed with the architect and Local Authority that sample panels must be built to help reach a decision and set the required standard.

These and other key details will define the quality and success of the design as a whole and need to be resolved, ideally before determination of the planning application, or at least controlled through detailed planning conditions. It was acknowledged that the Local Authority had imposed deadlines for the submission of the planning application and that consequently details had not been resolved. Nevertheless, they and we need to have confidence that the promised quality will be delivered.

The sustainability strategy was lacking in detail as to how the proposed Code 4 standard would be achieved. We thought there was an urgent need for the input of an M&E consultant to inform the Design & Access statement. Specifically, the ventilation strategy will be critical for an earth sheltered, well insulated and air tight building, and this could impact on floor-to-ceiling heights. We suggested that mechanical ventilation with heat recovery might be more efficient than purely natural ventilation with roof vents.

Low and zero carbon technologies such as solar water heating and heat pumps – air or ground source – require further site-specific evaluation. The ‘bolt-on’ nature of some proposed solutions, such as the balcony, brises soleil, and air source heat pump, gave us cause for concern. It is vital that sustainability measures are well integrated with the rest of the design.

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	Martin and Louisa Morgan
Pensaer/Architect:	Powell Dobson Architects [Kevin Matthews]
Consultants:	Landmark Design [Catherine Harris]
Awdurdod Cynllunio/ Planning Authority	CC Swansea [David Gill, Tom Gronow]
Y Panel Adlygu Dylunio: Design review panel: Ewan Jones [Chair]	Maria Asanjo

Cindy Harris [Officer]
Michael Griffiths

Simon Carne
Lyn Owen

Lead Panellist:

Michael Griffiths

Sylwedyddion/Observers:

Kieren Morgan [DCFW]