

# Addroddiad Adolygu Dylunio Design Review Report

## Review Status: **Public**

Meeting date:	17th February 2010
Issue Date:	26th February 2010
Scheme Location:	Monumental Works, Brecon
Scheme Description:	Residential
Planning Status:	Application submitted

## Part1: Presentation

A previous planning application in 2009 for a house on this site was withdrawn pending resolution of flooding issues. These are now resolved but discussions on design and appearance have not produced an acceptable solution and, although a revised application was submitted in January 2010, the views of the Commission are now sought.

The northern part of the site will continue in light industrial use as a stonemasons, although the future relocation of this business to an industrial park is being considered. In that event the existing building could remain as a showroom, or could revert to residential use.

The proposal is for a new family house on the southern part of the site, with a prominent gable end facing the river and promenade. A side wing to the east is set back and finished in lighter materials. To overcome flooding concerns, the ground floor is limited to low risk uses and most of the living and sleeping accommodation is at first and second floor level. It is intended that this will be a highly sustainable building, designed to use passive solar gain as well as heat pump technology.

The Local Authority acknowledge that this site has two frontages and therefore the principle of tandem development in the future has been accepted and is not part of this review. They stressed the need for any development on this prominent site to reflect its context and there is concern about the scale and massing. Planning officers would like to see a continuation of ridge and eaves lines that have been established by existing development.

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

The Panel was pleased to review this proposal and we consider the proposed scale, massing and position on site to be acceptable. This is a good design approach – with the potential to be very good. Our relatively minor concerns and recommendations are outlined below:

- The north and south elevations need to be simplified and coordinated. A revised treatment for the eastern gable end should be developed [as it will be a focal point for those walking west along the river bank] while protecting neighbouring properties from overlooking. The fenestration arrangement on the north elevation should be revised to present a more formal face to the road.
- The size of the south facing balcony should be reduced at the eastern end to protect the privacy of the adjacent property. The balustrading should be simple and unobtrusive.
- The sustainability strategy does not reflect the high aspirations outlined in the Design and Access statement. A commitment to achieve Code for Sustainable Homes Level 4 would seem appropriate, together with a consistent approach to using local, sustainable materials.
- If there is a Local Authority requirement to supply 10% of energy from on-site renewables, there should be a clearer understanding of what this means in practice.
- We welcome the client's active engagement with this project.

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

The Panel thought that the proposed scale and massing were satisfactory in the context of a varied and heterogeneous pattern of development. The siting of the building is acceptable given the lack of a consistent building line. We appreciated the contextual analysis that had been carried out to inform the design and we had no objection to the gable end emphasis. Perspective views showing the proposal in its context, in particular from the promenade, should be provided.

From our point of view there were two major issues to be discussed: namely the elevational treatment and the sustainability strategy.

With regard to the latter we tried to ascertain what the 10% on-site renewable target referred to, but there was a lack of clarity in this area. There will be a thermal store to supply domestic hot water and underfloor heating, and this in turn will be fed by a heat pump [air or ground source] and solar thermal panels. Given the ambitious claims made for this project we were disappointed to learn that it would reliably meet only Code Level 3. We thought the client should be aiming for at least Code Level 4 and should be made aware of the inherent advantages of a lower energy house.

The commitment to sustainable, low embodied energy materials should be carried through consistently and applied to roof finishes, timber sourcing, and insulation products. Care should be taken to avoid differential weathering of the timber cladding, particularly given the large eaves overhang. The large area of tarmac shown on the plans would be more

appropriately treated with porous surfaces and the landscaping could contribute more positively to the sustainability strategy.

While we do not consider that existing ridge lines need to be strictly observed, the elevational treatments do need a greater coherence and consistency. Both the south facing and east facing gables will be prominent in oblique views from the promenade, but they are treated very differently. The south facade is if anything too fussy, whereas the east facade is plain render with minimal fenestration. The two elevations need to sit comfortably together as part of the same building, while addressing any issues of overlooking. The fenestration of the northern elevation appears awkward and gives a disjointed appearance resulting from the difference in proportions of glazed to solid wall.

The south facing balcony is oversized and is in danger of overlooking the property to the east. Even if this view were to be screened, the scale of the balcony is too prominent and overbearing from the promenade. The treatment of the balustrade should be handled carefully, so as not to emphasise its scale.

**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	Mr and Mrs Evans
Pensaer/Architect:	CO2 Architecture [Sam Organ]
Consultants:	n/a
Awdurdod Cynllunio/ Planning Authority	Brecon Beacons NPA [Jonathan James, Jane Pashley, Tamsin Law]
Y Panel Adlygu Dylunio: Design review panel: John Punter [Chair] Cindy Harris [Officer] Carole-Anne Davies [CEO] Alan Francis	Wendy Richards Elfed Roberts Simon Hartley Simon Carne
Lead Panellist:	Simon Hartley
Sylwedyddion/Observers:	Matthew Kennedy [Grwp Gwalia]

