

Addroddiad Adolygu Dylunio Design Review Report

Review Status: **Public**

Meeting date:	19th May 2010
Issue Date:	2nd June 2010
Scheme Location:	Pontio, Bangor
Scheme Description:	Education / Leisure
Planning Status:	Application submitted 14th May

Part1: Presentation

The project team have made rapid progress since the last Design Review in February 2010, and are still on programme. The planning application has just been submitted and a public exhibition and consultation will be arranged in the next few days. A start on site is planned for January 2011.

There have been slight changes to the brief, resulting in a reduction in floorspace of 1000 sqm and the omission of the nightclub space. The auditoria have changed from the traditional 'horseshoe' format to a more adaptable 'shoebox' form. There has been an increase in the construction budget.

Progress has been made on establishing an active frontage to the plaza, and the choice and detail of materials and finishes, although the hard landscaping materials are yet to be finalised. The stone finish [natural or reconstituted] for the buildings will be a similar colour to the memorial arch but lighter in tone. A rougher texture stone will define the main route through the complex, and polished stone will define the theatre block. The elevations to Penrallt Road will be a light through-coloured render. The roofs are treated as the fifth elevation and will be a continuation of the stone finish used on the walls. Some roof areas will be used as accessible terraces. We were informed that Gillespies are working on a landscape design for the whole of College Park.

The Local Authority did not attend but sent in their comments prior to the meeting. They emphasised the importance of the relationship between the new development and its landscape context. They expressed concern that the application did not include plans for Deiniol Road.

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

This is a very exciting project offering huge potential for a high quality building and enhanced public realm. The Panel was impressed by the client's commitment and ambition and the quality of the design team, but we are aware of the dangers of quality being compromised by a tight timescale and budgetary pressures. In our view this is a very good design approach but we still have major concerns, relating to timescale, budget, materials and the relationship with the landscape:

- The monumentality of the blocks requires skillful handling to avoid appearing intimidating.
- The entrance from the south west needs enlivening and more active frontages on to the Deiniol Road piazza achieved, particularly in the dead corner formed by the service yard and the theatre.
- Natural and locally sourced materials should be used where possible. Non accessible roof spaces should be seen as an extension of the park, rather than the walls, and green roofs should be reconsidered.
- There is ambiguity and possible confusion over the different approaches and which one constitutes the main route and which is the primary entrance to the theatre.
- The principal pedestrian flow needs to be expressed in the positioning of the pedestrian crossing. The design of the pedestrian crossing, and the improvement of the public realm on both sides of Deiniol Road, are crucial and should not be allowed to fall between the two stools of the University and the Local Authority.
- The Panel has concerns about the vagueness of the Local Authority's plans for the area south of Deiniol Road, given the need to establish a clear enclosure and continuity for the public realm here. Otherwise there is a danger of 'lost space' becoming a characteristic of this locality.
- The integration of the landscape strategy for College Park with the developing design will be critical for the success of this project, as will the detailing of both hard and soft elements.
- The project creates a number of exciting spaces where student life will spill out into the park but these need to be clearly connected by a direct, 24-hour pedestrian route on the eastern side of the project.
- We are reassured to hear that the scheme is still on course to achieve BREEAM Excellent. This is essential for the reputation of such an important building and institution.

Part 2: Discussion and Panel Response in Full

The client stated that the main route through the development, linking the memorial arch with the main arts building, will be a 24 hour route. There will be differential access for other parts and functions, with appropriate security controls. All public routes will be fully accessible.

The Panel had some concerns about the monumentality of the blocks. This will need careful handling if it is to avoid appearing intimidating on the one hand, or too like a commercial block on the other. We noted that the night-time images appeared more lively

and the relationship of transparent to opaque surfaces will be critical. The proposal to project images on to the main façade seems to be an admission that it needs enlivening. We would like to see more animation on the entranceway leading from the memorial arch, while recognizing the corresponding need to provide more active frontages for the plaza. However, the deadness of the southwest corner adjoining the service yard is a cause for real concern, given the size of the new space proposed, and requires a greater degree of activity and uses appropriate to the desire line.

The Panel was not convinced that the cultural context and local references had been sufficiently explored in the design. Public art and materiality will be critical in this regard. We would prefer to see natural stone used rather than a reconstituted product, and we had some doubts about the robustness and durability of a Sto-type render on the Penrallt Road elevations. While we appreciated the treatment of the roofs as a fifth elevation and their use for sociable space, we suggested that the overall impact would be softened, especially when viewed from above, by the use of green roof finishes on non-accessible spaces.

The Panel thought that there was some ambiguity over the function of different entrances – one from the memorial arch, one from the entrance plaza – which access the foyer at different levels. The design team stated that the plaza entrance was intended primarily for members of the public attending evening events, while the diagonal access would be mainly for student daytime use.

The relationship with Deiniol Road and the open space to the south remains unresolved and is not part of the planning application. A pedestrian crossing at grade is proposed, but the treatment of the open spaces either side of the road, along with necessary improvements in comfort and amenity, remain undefined. The team recognise the importance of a high quality public realm in this area and stated that they are liaising with Gwynedd Council about this. One difficulty is that the public realm study being undertaken by the Local Authority is not subject to the same time constraints as this project. Also, it may be limited to considerations of “open space” and not have regard to the need for enclosure of some spaces by further built form

The landscape strategy will be designed to blur the edges between internal and external spaces, and to draw the landscape into the building. All the main social spaces will have important vistas framed by large areas of glazing. The university is actively pursuing funding for a parallel project to re-landscape the whole of College Park, and Gillespies are carrying out the feasibility study for this. We would like to see a more direct, 24-hour pedestrian route along the eastern edge of the project linking the Main Arts Building with Deiniol Road.

The Panel was reassured to learn that a traditional procurement route would be used in preference to Design & Build. However, the importance of retaining quality in the details, despite the speed of the process, was a cause for concern.

A BREEAM pre assessment has been carried out and the current score is 73% which indicates an Excellent rating. Ground source heat pumps have been discounted as the optimum solution, and a single CHP system [gas fired?] is now envisaged to serve the whole site. The boiler will be housed in a separate energy centre, part buried on the southeast corner of the site close to the street frontage. A flue will not be necessary as high level grilles are incorporated into the wall.

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	Bangor University [Dylan Roberts] Atkins [Lloyd Roberts]
Pensaer/Architect:	Grimshaw Architects [Ewan Jones, Kirsten Lees, Leandro Rotundi]
Consultants:	Arup [Neill Woodger]
Awdurdod Cynllunio/ Planning Authority	Gwynedd CC
Y Panel Adlygu Dylunio: Design review panel: John Punter [Chair] Cindy Harris [Officer] Kedrick Davies	Toby Adam David Harvey Chris Jones Phil Roberts
Lead Panellist:	Kedrick Davies
Sylwedyddion/Observers:	James Thomas [UWE student placement]