

Addroddiad Adolygu Dylunio Design Review Report

Review Status: **Public**

Meeting date:	19th May 2010
Issue Date:	2nd June 2010
Scheme Location:	Bishopston, Gower
Scheme Description:	Residential
Planning Status:	Application submitted February 2010

Part1: Presentation

This is a bespoke dwelling on a greenfield site within the village envelope of Bishopston in the Gower AONB. An existing dwelling fronts the road to the south of this site. The proposed building is a tandem development disposed in a courtyard form, exploiting views to the north and protecting the privacy of the occupiers and neighbours on the east and west and to the south.

The scheme is promoted as an energy efficient dwelling, with green roofs, porous paving, and ground source heat pump, and aims to achieve CSH Level 4.

In principle the Local Planning Authority supports good quality contemporary dwellings in the countryside, and acknowledges that this site is within the village boundary. They do have some concerns about the proposed size of the development, particularly the triple garage and workshop, which they note is twice the size of the cottage immediately to the south, and which they think detracts from the undulating horseshoe form.

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

The Panel welcomed the opportunity to review this interesting project, although we would have preferred to see it at the pre-application stage. We understand the reservations expressed by the Local Authority but do not share them in this particular context. The design approach is a good one, but we do have major reservations largely concerning the proposed plan and orientation. In summary:

- The proposed size of the dwelling is acceptable given the fact that it is largely invisible from the road and has no undue impact on the public realm.
- We would have liked to see a stronger design concept and a rationale for the building's location and footprint on the site.
- The built form and massing appears to us rather random and arbitrary, and there is a lack of congruity between that and the internal plan. However, the high level of client involvement gives us confidence that the decisions have been well worked and tested.
- While we accept that the proposal addresses the north/south issues of views and privacy versus solar orientation and daylight, we have serious reservations about the usability of the north facing terrace.
- The sustainability strategy is not fully resolved and, given the promotion of this aspect of the scheme and the potential of the site, we think it could be even more ambitious. Local materials and finishes are preferred.

Part 2: Discussion and Panel Response in Full

The Panel thought that the plan form as shown appeared to be random and at odds with the external massing and volumetric space. We wondered what the main design drivers were that led to this particular built form. The architect stated that the specific client requirements were for a dwelling built round the needs of a family with teenage children, and designed to optimise high level views to the north. The second floor master bedroom was angled to exploit a particular long distance view of farm buildings, which was a personal preference of the clients.

The Panel suggested that there might be other generators of the built form which could be taken from the landscape. The current footprint appears to be deliberately idiosyncratic. We were not persuaded by the architect's claim that this was partly for structural reasons, owing to the use of SIPs panels.

With regard to the overall size, the Panel did not consider this to be a major issue in this location. We were persuaded by the applicant that this building [of 400 sqm] was not particularly large when compared with recently approved houses to the east, or with other properties in the neighbourhood.

The north facing terrace is obviously a focal point in the design and we questioned how usable it would be in reality given the inevitable areas of shading, particularly those areas directly adjacent to the house. The removal of the first floor balcony would help reduce shading, but this is a client requirement. The clients pointed out that there is a south facing terrace available and that the massing steps down in the centre to allow more solar access to the terrace.

Nevertheless, in our view the north facing terrace appears counter intuitive and we are not convinced that it will fulfil the desired function of a central gathering space. We were informed that the lack of connectivity between the terrace and the side wings is a deliberate decision to ensure a degree of privacy within the household.

The Panel noted that there was relatively little direct daylight in the snug, and none at all in the kitchen which would require permanent artificial lighting. The clients stated that the

snug was meant to be enclosed and cosy, and the central position of the kitchen with good visual connections was key to their requirements. Although facing north, the family space is well daylit from the south.

Along with the built form, the fenestration is designed to respect privacy, both onto and out of the site. The location and orientation of bedrooms has been carefully considered and tested against the clients' requirements. The home office on the first floor with restricted access has also been designed to suit the needs of the client. The recessed main entrance is a response to the client's wish to avoid visitors walking past the living area. We thought that this entrance was too hidden and suggested that the entrance lobby could be pulled forward, creating a more generous internal space.

It was established that there is a firm commitment to achieve CSH Level 4. Although this has been explored within the team, we advised that a BREEAM pre-assessment should be carried out as soon as possible to verify the team's assumptions and integrate the sustainability features with the rest of the design. We advised the team to consider a wood pellet boiler, given the electricity demand associated with heat pumps, and to consider using natural grasses on the roof rather than sedum. We would like to see local products used, such as the product similar to Thermowood being manufactured in Ebbw Vale. We were reassured that the budget allows for triple glazing.

It is proposed not to have a visible boundary to the north of the site which opens on to a meadow owned by the clients. However, the Local Authority warned that this may not be acceptable.

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 R Pountney
Pensaer/Architect:	Gillard Associates [Alan Gillard. Carlos Nicolini]
Consultants:	n/a
Awdurdod Cynllunio/ Planning Authority	City and County of Swansea [Steve Smith, Lynne Davis]
Y Panel Adlygu Dylunio:	

Design review panel:
John Punter[Chair]
Cindy Harris [Officer]
Kedrick Davies

Toby Adam
David Harvey
Christopher Jones
Phil Roberts

Lead Panellist:

Toby Adam

Sylwedyddion/Observers:

James Thomas [UWE placement student]