

Addroddiad Adolygu Dylunio Design Review Report

Review Status: **Public**

Meeting date:	22nd September 2010
Issue Date:	5th October 2010
Scheme Location:	Cambrian Centre, Newport
Scheme Description:	Commercial / retail
Planning Status:	Outline application submitted July 2010

Part1: Presentation

The site has been acquired from Modus by a developer with a background in city centre regeneration. The previous owner had secured consent for a mixed use development in 2007. These proposals are smaller in scale and include a bus interchange which has been public sector led. This is a commercially viable scheme, which also supports Newport's aspirations for a major foodstore in the city centre. The frontage onto Cambrian Road respects the conservation context with smaller grain retail units, and the main entrance to the complex faces the old arcade across Cambrian Road. It was suggested that the three level car park is wrapped with active uses on most sides. Each street frontage is designed to respect its opposite/adjacent context.

The Local Authority representative stated that their comments had already been taken on board through pre-application discussions. They are comfortable with the outline application in terms of scale and massing.

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

The Panel was pleased to see new proposals for this important site. While we appreciate the difficulties in realizing a commercially viable scheme on this site, especially given the changes in passenger access to the railway station, we think that this proposal is unsatisfactory, particularly in its treatment of the public realm. In summary:

- Currently none of the pedestrian routes shown around the bus station work well in terms of being attractive, legible and direct.

- The service route along Station Street and Railway Street would need to be enhanced and animated to encourage any pedestrian use.
- The new road crossing at the western end of the site should be direct rather than dogleg, and the existing crossing at the top of Cambrian Road should be retained and strengthened.
- Active uses should be provided along the new east/west route through the complex, which should be open 24 hours. Kiosk-type uses should be used to animate the glazed wall of the bus interchange, and more space introduced here so that there is adequate seating, and so that pedestrian movement does not interfere with bus queues.
- Insufficient space is provided for the pedestrian route across the north side of the bus station and pedestrian movement will be impeded by bus queues.
- We welcome the alignment of the entrance to the complex with the Arcade to the east, but the elevations to Cambrian Way should be more sympathetic to the conservation context, and the glazed entrance refined and made more of a focal point.
- The western end of the development needs something more than blank walls, and preferably some active frontage. The built form opposite the new station entrance needs to be more welcoming with an increase in scale.
- The supermarket should be more clearly expressed as a building form above the car park, and its transparency would be to the operator's commercial advantage by making it more legible.
- The eight storey office block on the north east corner should be reduced in footprint and made more refined, with a strong corner feature and entrance. Its relationship with the character of the adjacent conservation area needs improvement.
- We are not convinced that the service arrangements will work adequately given the necessity for two right angled turns in close proximity.
- A firm commitment should be made to achieve BREEAM Excellent for all elements, and an integrated site energy strategy should be prepared at this stage.
- A landscape architect should be involved as soon as possible to resolve the bus station layout and enhance pedestrian routes.
- We would like to see more information on the treatment of Queensway, but we do not think that the proposed treatment would make it a 'boulevard', as it should be.
- All of these recommendations will require major collaboration with the Local Authority. In order to protect quality and set guidelines for future development in this area, we advise that even at this late stage, a development brief should be prepared by the Local Authority, and the bus station and Queensway design refined, before the determination of this application.

Part 2: Discussion and Panel Response in Full

The Panel particularly wanted to interrogate the public realm aspects of this scheme including pedestrian movement and its relationship with the station. It was confirmed that the old ticket hall will close and there will be no access to the platforms from there. The Panel considered this to be an extraordinarily retrograde step in terms of pedestrian convenience and accessibility into town.

The Panel applauded the attempt to realise a viable scheme on this difficult but strategically important site. We noted that earlier proposals had shown greater permeability through the site, but we accepted that commercial and site constraints made this difficult to achieve in current circumstances. The Panel recognised that a new east/west link had been created through the scheme, linking to the arcade entrance to the east, and the new crossing to the station to the west. However, we had concerns that the pedestrian link between the city core and the new ticket hall through the bus station, with escalators to address the level difference with Cambrian Road, was convoluted, unsafe and far from legible. The alternative approach from the south, via Station Street and Railway Street, is not an attractive or direct route, and is fronted by car parking grilles and service access.

The Panel felt strongly that the starting point for the development should be to establish good pedestrian connections with 24 hour use, and these should inform the site layout. Details of these new routes and the strengthening of existing ones should be resolved now, and not left to a reserved matters application. This could include widening of the area between the arcade entrance and proposed foodstore entrance on Cambrian Road to create a 'stepping stone space', making the route to the station more legible rather than relying on signage. This space could accommodate steps and ramps to overcome the level difference up to the bus station within the public realm.

It will be important to animate the long east/west concourse through the complex, which has a blank wall along its southern edge, and to introduce staging points and destination indicators. We thought that kiosk-type uses could work well here, given the significant pedestrian flows, as well as at street level behind the glazed frontage [although space is very tight].

The involvement of a landscape architect is needed urgently to complement the public realm design and ensure that legible and direct pedestrian routes are not compromised. The Local Authority has already recommended this. We thought that there was wasted outdoor space in the bus station layout and that this should be revised to deliver more generous waiting areas and active uses. The pedestrian crossing to the new station entrance should be a direct crossing, and there needs to be a strategic approach to redesigning Queensway as a boulevard environment.

With regard to the Queensway elevation, we thought this was very homeneous and lacking any differentiation. We suggested that the upper element should stand out more clearly above the car park, as an illuminated object with a clear function. In our view the elevation to Cambrian Road does not sufficiently respect the conservation area, although we understand that the third storey is set well back and will not be visible from the street.

We have reservations about the 'landmark' building on the north eastern corner, in terms of its bulk and massing, and consider that it misses an opportunity to create a positive presence on this important corner. The western end of the site is poorly resolved and would benefit from more scale at this point. The fire exit opposite the new crossing is very understated and should be changed to a commercial unit with active frontage.

In general, a high quality scheme on this site would act as a catalyst for further development, and we think that a finer grain and more active frontages would deliver better value for the developer.

A BREEAM pre-assessment has been done for each of the three main components. They will achieve BREEAM Very Good and the developer is hoping to reach BREEAM Excellent for the office block. We encouraged a firm commitment to BREEAM Excellent throughout the development, and an approach to design which is driven by sustainability considerations. There should be an integrated energy strategy for the whole site, and we urged the team to pursue natural daylighting for the supermarket. As the proposal is based on the existing block layout, no new microclimatic studies were considered necessary.

The Panel thought that the Local Authority should be taking a more proactive approach to the development of this site, rather than reacting to proposals. We would like to see a development brief prepared for this area, to guide this and future development and protect quality. The Panel was surprised by the level of detail shown, which is more than would normally be required for an outline application, and we warned that if this application were granted as it stands, then there would be little room for negotiation at the reserved matters stage.

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	SDG [Newport] Ltd [Jason Rockett]
Pensaer/Architect:	Hurd Rolland [Chithra Marsh]
Consultants:	Capita Symonds – transport [Paul Turner] Red Property Services – planning [Mike Ralph]
Awdurdod Cynllunio/ Planning Authority	Newport CC [Ian Carter, Eluned Jones, Gail Parkhouse]
Y Panel Adlygu Dylunio: Design review panel: John Punter [Chair] Cindy Harris [Officer] Mark Hallett	Phil Roberts Steve Smith Chris Jones
Lead Panellist:	Steve Smith
Sylwedyddion/Observers:	Andrew Linfoot [DCFw]

Guo Zheng PhD student Southeastern
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Professor Yu Cheng Wu, National Cheng
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