

Addroddiad Adolygu Dylunio Design Review Report

Review Status: **Public**

Meeting date:	22nd September 2010
Issue Date:	6th October 2010
Scheme Location:	Llan Ffestiniog
Scheme Description:	Extra care Residential
Planning Status:	Application submitted August 2010

Part1: Presentation

This is one of four extra care schemes identified as necessary within the Gwynedd Local Authority area. It will be mixed tenure and incorporate additional amenities and different levels of care provision.

The site sits 2.8metres below the A470 road to the south east, and 8 metres below most of the rest of the village. Spectacular views to Snowdonia open up to the north west. To the north east of the site is the Grade II listed chapel, Capel Peniel, and chapel hall. The main entrance to the development faces a quite steep access road down from the A470. It is a brownfield site having been operated as a Council works yard for many years.

The proposal shows a new terrace along the frontage of the main road in keeping with the existing terrace, with parking provided to the rear. The rear portion of the site accommodates three 3-storey blocks, configured at right angles to the back lane, with 2-storey linking elements, which help to minimise disruption to views from the existing housing on the A470, and to reduce the apparent bulk of the scheme. The linking units are finished with natural stone and green roofs while the 3 storey blocks are rendered with double pitch slate roofs. Recessed balconies with sliding glazing will be used to provide easy access to the fresh air and sunlight. External spaces have been landscaped to offer different environments and the potential for different levels of activity, and to relate to the wild landscape background.

An outline consent for extra care use [with no unit numbers specified] was granted in 2007-8 with all matters reserved. Since a detailed application was submitted earlier this year, there has been a lot of interest and comment from the local community. As a result the number of units proposed has been reduced from 40 to 35, and the height and massing of the rear blocks has been reduced. The Local Authority acknowledge that this is

a big development for the village, and the Council will try to accommodate all objections. It is also an important response to an ageing rural population and the facilities would serve a catchment area wider than the immediate locality,

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

The Panel was pleased to receive this very well presented proposal, although we would have preferred to see it pre-application. This is an important project in terms of its social value, and we are very sympathetic to the proposed use in this location. The Panel considered that the development needed to be this size in order to be viable, and the architects have tried hard to ensure that the buildings are the right scale. However, to work well the development needs a slightly bigger site, and if this could be achieved we believe a much better scheme could be delivered both for neighbours and new residents. This is the major issue to be resolved. In summary:

- Most of our concerns could be resolved by expanding the site slightly to the north west. This would allow space to move the building further away from the rear gardens of Peniel Terrace; it would also allow for a more generous landscape treatment and more garden space within the site, while reducing areas of overshadowing to the rear.
- The access routes are too tight to enable easy vehicular access and adequate servicing.
- The entrance to the main block should be made more legible, using the building and landscape design rather than signage.
- The elevations should be revised to give a more domestic, less institutional appearance. Through colour renders should be considered in colours that would weather better than white; and local details, such as overhanging and extended roof verges and eaves, incorporated.
- The fenestration should be rationalized and balanced to give good daylight access and exploit the views, without unnecessary heat loss to the north. The windows on the rear façade of the front block could be much more elegantly disposed to be more in character with the rest of the scheme.
- The impact of the lift shafts should be reduced.
- It is not clear that the design has been driven by sustainability considerations. We would question the compatibility of CHP, PVs and a backup boiler.
- The terrace block fronting the main road should have front doors facing the street. This could be combined with vertical circulation internally to give easy access to street level, particularly in winter conditions.
- Photomontage views from the street should be provided, together with full site sections.

Part 2: Discussion and Panel Response in Full

The Panel began by commending the design team on a well presented package of information and pre-review material. We think this is an appropriate use for this site, but we are concerned that the development appears to be squashed into the available space,

and that the amenities of existing residents are thereby compromised. The main access road from the A470 is very constrained and the back lane would be problematic for many service vehicles.

In view of the desirability of this proposal in general, we wondered whether there was any possibility of acquiring a small amount of extra land to the north west. This would allow the development as a whole to sit more comfortably within the landscape, the buildings themselves would have more breathing space, and the immediate impact on local residents would be reduced. The client agreed to pursue this possibility. The Panel recognised the importance of views to the north west for the residents of Peniel Terrace and advised that any interference should be minimised.

The Panel thought that the elevational treatment was weak in places. In particular, the rear elevation of the terrace fronting the A470 had too much glazing facing north west. A more rational strategy should be developed to justify fenestration patterns and ensure that the right balance is achieved between daylighting, views, solar gain, heat loss and solar shading. The long elevations were more convincing and cohesive, but we thought that the treatment of the lift elements was too strong a statement. The elevation of the main block onto the lane was too close to the road, and did not reflect local precedent of having a landscape buffer or threshold – a ‘front garden’ - between building and principle route.

Overall, the appearance of the blocks was too institutional and we warned that white render would not be very durable and would present maintenance problems. More local details could be picked up and incorporated into the design, such as the strong pattern of overhanging eaves and verges.

The Panel questioned whether sufficient disabled parking spaces were provided and recognised that this was yet another consequence of space constraints. We appreciated the explanation of the grading of spaces from inside to out, through a conservatory, covered deck, paved area and open green space. The financial viability of the scheme was questioned, given the reduced number of units, but the client cited other schemes of 30 units which were viable, and confirmed that they had confidence in the financial modelling which had been done.

The scheme will meet the statutory minimum sustainability requirements of BREEAM Very Good, and BREEAM Excellent for energy. A gas fired CHP is under consideration, along with solar PVs and rainwater harvesting, to supply WCs and the sprinkler system.

In the closed session following the presentation, the Panel explored the accessibility for pedestrians up to the A470 and were concerned that the gradient may discourage some residents from leaving the site. Therefore we suggested that the lift within the smaller building could be used to provide level access to the street. This has the added benefit of animating the main street frontage and creating visual interest.

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	Tai Eryri [Eleri Llewelyn]
Pensaer/Architect:	PRP Architects [Clare Cameron, Clare Hartnel]
Consultants:	CDP [Ian Carpenter]
AwdurdodCynllunio/ Planning Authority	Snowdonia NPA [Richard Thomas]
Y Panel Adlygu Dylunio: Design review panel: John Punter [Chair] Cindy Harris [Officer] Mark Hallett Jonathan Adams	Phil Roberts Lynne Sullivan Chris Jones Steve Smith
Lead Panellist:	Phil Roberts
Sylwedyddion/Observers:	Andrew Linfoot [DCFW] Sue Jones [DCFW] Guo Zheng PhD student Southeastern University, Nanjing Professor Yu Cheng Wu, National Cheng Kung University, Tainan, Taiwan