

Addroddiad Adolygu Dylunio Design Review Report

Review Status: **Confidential**

Meeting date:	22nd September 2010
Issue Date:	6th October 2010
Scheme Location:	Bargoed
Scheme Description:	Retail
Planning Status:	Pre-application

Part1: Presentation

The Local Authority representative stated that this proposal is in line with the Council's planning policy, and their wish to integrate large retail uses with the town centre. They are keen to encourage private sector investment in an area of high deprivation, and reverse the trend whereby most residents shop for food in other centres. Apologies were received from Clare Stonelake of WAG; she was to have attended this review but unfortunately is ill.

The new plateau that has been created is 9 metres below the level of the High Street, and the rear elevations of any new development will be very visible from the country park across the valley. The elevation of the proposed supermarket is on three levels, topped by a saw-tooth roof profile oriented north/south, with possibly a green 'living' wall to the two levels of car parking. A cafe in the south east corner of the supermarket will take advantage of the views across the valley.

This detailed application will relate only to phase 1 of the development – ie the supermarket, retail units and car park. The cinema, pub and residential units have yet to attract an end user and are not yet designed, but they are included in the parking, waste and energy strategy for the site as a whole. These proposals are more modest than the previous version. The retail units are reduced in number and occupy a single level above the supermarket at the level of the High Street.

The development will be designed to the BREEAM Excellent standard, with good levels of daylight internally and a CHP heating system will be used. The development agreement is in the process of being finalised, with the involvement of WAG. It has been challenging to arrive at a commercially viable scheme for this site at this time.

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

The Panel was pleased to see this latest proposal for the site at an early stage. We appreciate the problems of commercial viability and the architectural challenge involved, and we advised that the latter needs to be resolved with adequate resources. We have noted the improvements in this scheme compared to previous versions. However, there remain major issues to be resolved. In summary:

- Compared to earlier versions, this scheme would deliver a better mix of uses, some important public realm improvements, and an enlivened eastern elevation of the supermarket facing across the valley.
- We welcome the smaller retail units on the High Street, but would recommend a strong supermarket presence at street level, to encourage supermarket shoppers to make better use of the town centre.
- We welcome the commitment to good sustainability standards and a CHP system to serve the whole site. The BREEAM Excellent standard should apply to all phases and the whole of each building, including the fitout.
- All phases of the development are necessary to achieve a comprehensive regeneration of the site and we urge the team to promote and bring forward the second phase as soon as possible after the first.
- Unfortunately, the recently completed new road layout has left an awkward site for residential development, but we think it is crucial that no apartments are left as single aspect and north facing, and that the ground floors are as pedestrian friendly as possible.
- We are concerned about the use of the 'landmark site' as a pub, given the car dependency and drive-in character suggested by its location.
- We support the idea of a dual entrance for the cinema, linked to a pedestrian crossing to the south, and emphasise the need for traffic calming measures on the access road, to help create a high quality, integrated public realm. The creation of a lively, transparent frontage to face the supermarket is welcomed.
- The surface car park should have clear and direct pedestrian routes across it and should be appropriately landscaped to reduce the visual and physical intrusion of the vehicles.
- All levels of the development must be made fully accessible for as long as some areas at least are open to the public. This will probably mean ensuring that the lift and staircase linking the street and supermarket levels are fully operational for at least 18 hours a day, or preferably 24 hours.
- Further work is needed to demonstrate that the character of the town will be protected and reflected in the new development. The High Street elevations should be carefully integrated into the streetscene and respect the character of the town.
- We would like the opportunity to comment on each phase of the scheme as it comes forward for detailed permission. We are particularly keen to ensure that the quality of materials used in the proposed public realm improvements are maintained, and that they respond to the character of the town.
- We would encourage the preparation of a strategic urban design framework for the agglomeration of valley towns made up of Bargoed, Ystrad Mynach, Blackwood and Newbridge.

Part 2: Discussion and Panel Response in Full

DCFW has always supported the principle of a mixed use development on this site and the Panel welcomed the inclusion of residential use. While we acknowledge the difficulty of negotiating a commercially viable scheme in the current circumstances, we think that the recession may have led to improvements on previous proposals, in several respects.

Although we did not have elevations for this proposal, it appears that there will be a finer urban grain on the High Street, and improved pedestrian flow through the site. We welcomed the creation of a new public space on the south east corner of the site and although it is quite small, we think it fits with the typology of the town and will be well used, provided that it has the necessary enclosure. Correspondingly, we are pleased to see that no claims are being made for the car park as a 'public square', and that the petrol filling station has been moved off site.

There is better exploitation of views across the valley from the site, and an improved resolution of the eastern elevation which will be seen from across the valley. We think the enclosure of the car park and the sawtooth roof profile works well and we note that the latter could be used to introduce daylight into the centre of the store and to generate solar energy. We welcome the improved treatment to the backs of existing properties facing Hanbury Road.

The Panel was aware that more design work was needed before a detailed planning application could be made, and we recommend that this part of the development process should be adequately resourced. We found the lack of elevations disturbing if a planning application is imminent, and the exact status of the different images presented was confusing, as many related to previous schemes.

The Panel had some concerns about the phasing and delivery programme. Both phases are absolutely necessary for the comprehensive regeneration of the site and the successful containment of the large area of surface parking, and we would have hoped that firm options could have been in place for the residential development, the cinema and the 'landmark building'. We were told that this site might be procured directly by the Local Authority and that a pub would be seen as an appropriate use. All elements of the development will need to be fully integrated with a public realm design which in turn must relate to the High Street and proposed improvements to the town centre. The effect of locating the service yard at the bottom of the steps will require some mitigation.

The commitment to BREEAM Excellent is supported but this should apply to the fitout, rather than just the shell of the building. We understood that the CHP will probably be gas fired, and will feed the infrastructure for the whole site. The Panel advised the team to make good use of their BREEAM assessor, to advise on the best way to meet the required standard, and on the benefits or otherwise of air source heat pumps. The living wall around the car park would be a strong visual attraction, but would require intensive maintenance and we suggested that an alternative might be to use climbers in front of a conventional wall. Construction materials should be locally sourced and low embodied energy wherever possible.

It is unfortunate that the road formation on the entrance to the site has left an awkwardly shaped space for residential use, which will be difficult to develop successfully. We were

informed that the position of the road access had been driven by geometry and topography, and that the ground level of the residential blocks would be used for car parking. The layout of the residential units should be reworked to ensure that there are no single aspect, north facing apartments.

The Panel had concerns over the first impressions of visitors entering Bargoed from the south, and seeing the side of [presumably] a social housing block with no active frontage at ground level, and the back of a 'big box' building [possibly with garish signage] on a traffic island. A pub does not seem to be an appropriate use on a site which invites arrival and departure by car. It will be important to ensure a good pedestrian crossing across this road and linking into the cinema [which will hopefully have a dual entrance] and traffic calming measures.

All levels of the development should be fully accessible during periods of use. The lower car park will probably stay open until 1am and the lifts should therefore be kept open on at least an 18 hour basis to allow easy access between the cinema and the High Street, and should be maintained by the developer / supermarket operator.

In order to encourage people shopping at the supermarket to enter the High Street, we suggested that one of the retail units could serve as an entrance to the supermarket level, giving it a greater presence on the High Street, possibly with a newsagent function at street level.

It has yet to be demonstrated that the character of this development will be appropriate to the town of Bargoed, and this is an extremely important aspect of the proposal. We think it is vital that the architecture is individual and derived from the vernacular of the area, not simply cloned from other developments 'anywhere' in the UK. We do not regard the recent development in Carmarthen as a good precedent.

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

Simons Group [Chris Newsome,
Graham Cosgrove]

Pensaer/Architect:

Holder Mathias [Carolyn Merrifield]

Consultants:

WAG [Clair Stonelake]

AwdurdodCynllunio/

Caerphilly CBC [Roger Tanner]

Planning Authority

Y Panel Adlygu Dylunio:

Design review panel:

John Punter [Chair]

Cindy Harris [Officer]

Mark Hallett

Jonathan Adams

Lynne Sullivan

Chris Jones

Steve Smith

Phil Roberts

Lead Panellist:

Mark Hallett

Sylwedyddion/Observers:

Andre Linfoot [DCFW]

Sue Jones [DCFW]

Guo Zheng PhD student

Southeastern University, Nanjing

Professor Yu Cheng Wu, National

Cheng Kung University, Tainan,

Taiwan

Declaration of interest: Mark Hallett declared that Holder Mathias is working with constructors of his project for the Drama Production Village at Roath Basin.