

Addroddiad Adolygu Dylunio Design Review Report

Review Status: **Confidential**

Meeting date:	20th October 2010
Issue Date:	29th October 2010
Scheme Location:	Ty'r Bobin, Llangynidr
Scheme Description:	Residential
Planning Status:	Pre-application

Part1: Presentation

The site for this proposed new dwelling is within the garden of an existing house, Glan yr Afon, where the clients have lived for nearly 20 years. They need to downsize but wish to remain in the village. The design for this house has evolved over a long period and includes a swimming pool for therapeutic use. The clients intend to respect the relationship with the existing house, while making a contemporary statement.

The garden contains significant trees and an arboricultural assessment has identified the large oak and ash as worthy of retention; these form the northern boundary of the development. Smaller trees and shrubs to the south will be cleared. The building has been oriented on the site to take advantage of the views to the north, east and west, and living accommodation has been placed on the first floor for the same reason. The architect describes the appearance of the building as an extruded timber box which appears to have landed on two masonry ground floor blocks surrounding an entrance courtyard. On the basis of a Code for Sustainable Homes pre-assessment, the team is committed to achieve CSH Level 3, and is aiming for Level 4.

Outline consent was granted approximately 18 months ago, with all matters reserved, but the indicative footprint was for a more modest building. The site is within the Brecon Beacons National Park, on the edge of the settlement boundary and parts of the garden are outside this boundary. The Local Authority have concerns about overdevelopment and they are not convinced about the proposed scale or the resolution of the gable end.

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

The Panel applauded the quality of the drawings and detailed Design & Access statement. We were particularly impressed by the ambitious vision behind this proposal and the degree of client involvement, and this has gone some way towards allaying our initial concerns. We think that a number of relatively minor issues remain to be resolved. In summary:

- The case in favour of this contemporary dwelling in a National Park needs to be more fully justified. Photomontage views and a visual impact assessment of the building in its context should be provided.
- Material should be provided to demonstrate that the proposed development responds sympathetically to the existing buildings.
- We are not convinced by the proposed scale although we accept that the architect and his clients have carefully considered the impact of this building on its immediate context, and that the architect is capable of producing a high quality design response.
- We understand the reasons for a pitched roof, although it serves to add to the problem of scale. A timber roof finish of whatever variety will inevitably have a short life and require regular maintenance.
- We have doubts about the internal layout and consequent accessibility of the courtyard, but understand the rationale for this.
- Although there is no statutory requirement for a minimum Code Level in this case, we understand that Code Level 3 will definitely be achieved and we would encourage the clients to aim for Code Level 4.

Part 2: Discussion and Panel Response in Full

The Panel appreciated the well executed presentation material and attractive images provided, but we thought that the case had not been fully made, for a contemporary building in the National Park. The visual impact of the proposed development will be significant, and more viewpoints should have been included in the D&A statement. We think that this would lead to a better argued case and a more robust design.

The Panel questioned whether the proposed scale was appropriate. The client pointed out that the existing wall and hedge would obscure the ground floor, and the upper timber-clad storey would appear to have landed in the surrounding mature trees. We were not convinced that describing the proposal as a tree house was accurate or helpful - indeed we thought there was a danger that it would dominate the context without adequately responding to it.

The Panel accepted that the design attempted to reference and re-interpret key details from the existing house and other local buildings, such as the enclosed courtyard and the pitched roof, although these aspects could benefit from a more considered response to forms and materials. The possible merits of an alternative flat roof design were discussed and it was thought that this would frame the views better. However, the Panel understood the desire for increased volume and height internally which a pitched roof would offer.

The wrap-around horizontal timber cladding for walls and roof, with secret gutters incorporated, is appealing architecturally. However, irrespective of the particular type of timber product used, this will almost certainly have long term maintenance implications. The choice of a render finish for the ground floor blocks was made in order to contrast with the upper storey and to provide sharp detailing. However, emphasising the volumetric separation of the architecture in this way, arguably conflicts with the aspiration to absorb the proposal in its setting and to reference a modern approach to traditional forms.

The inversion of a conventional passive solar layout, with large windows facing north to take advantage of the views, presents particular challenges in terms of glazing efficiency and heat loss. We questioned how well used the south facing entrance courtyard would be, given the location of kitchen and living room at first floor, but were persuaded that the clients had thought this through, and that a lift would facilitate reasonable access.

The Panel encouraged a commitment to achieve Code Level 3+, which requires only a small additional carbon reduction beyond that required by the current Building Regulations, and if possible to achieve Code Level 4. We advised the team to consult the latest Energy Savings Trust report on air source heat pumps before making a decision on space heating. The use of a single solar thermal array to heat the swimming pool as well as domestic hot water may not be the best solution, as these two uses require different temperatures and relate to different volumes of water.

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	Lyn and David Waddington
Pensaer/Architect:	Russell Jones Architects [Russell Jones]
Consultants:	n/a
Awdurdod Cynllunio/ Planning Authority	Brecon Beacons National Park [Helen Rice]
Y Panel Adlygu Dylunio: Design review panel: Webdy Richards [Chair] Cindy Harris [Officer] David Harvey	Simon Carne Kedrick Davies Kieren Morgan Roger Ayton

Lead Panellist:

Simon Carne

Sylwedyddion/Observers:

Mike Simmons [Pembrokeshire CC]

Harriet Brown [Pembrokeshire CC]