

Addroddiad Adolygu Dylunio Design Review Report

DATGANIADAU O DDIDDORDEB

Mae gofyn i aelodau o'r panel, arsyllwyr a phartion perthnasol eraill ddatgan unrhyw ddi-ddordebau sydd ganddynt **ymlaen llaw** mewn perthynas â'r eitemau Panel Adolygu Dylunio Bydd unrhyw ddatganiadau o'r fath yn cael eu cofnodi yma ac yng nghofnodion canolog Comisiwn Dylunio Cymru.

DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Panel members, observers and other relevant parties are required to declare ***in advance*** any interests they may have in relation to the Design Review Agenda items. Any such declarations are recorded here and in DCfW's central records.

Statws adolygu/Review status

Cyfrinachol/Confidential

Dyddiad cyfarfod/meeting date	March 14th 2012
Dyddiad cyhoeddi/issue date	March 27th 2012
Lleoliad y cynllun/scheme location	Harlech Castle
Disgrifiad y cynllun/scheme description	Leisure/civic
Statws cynllunio/planning status	Cyn gwneud cais/ pre-application
Datganiadau o ddi-ddordeb/declaration of interests	None

Adran 1/part 1

Cyflwyniad/Presentation

This proposal is for the refurbishment of and extension to the Harlech Castle Hotel, as part of a wider programme to improve visitor facilities and enhance the setting of the Castle as a World Heritage Site. As well as providing a new visitor centre within the hotel, there will be a new interpretation centre in the Castle gatehouse, a new bridge link from the hotel/car park to the Castle, and improved public access and transport links.

The project team at Cadw have built on their experience of renovation works at Conwy and Denbigh castles, and produced an initial concept plan which has since been developed by EPT. Works to the ground floor of the hotel will enhance arrival facilities and improve visitor flow and movement into the castle. The upper two floors will be converted to apartments. Landscape improvements will be made to the hotel forecourt and parking area.

A change of use for the hotel was approved in 2010 and this supported Cadw's purchase of the building. Pre-application discussions on this project began in November 2011. On this extremely sensitive site, the local authority have some concerns about the proposed flat roof and choice of materials. They are not opposed to innovative design but it would have to be fully justified. It was noted that previous schemes on this site have resulted in planning refusals and dismissals at appeal, partly due to the impact on Ffordd Pen Llech. It will be very important to resolve the difficulties of parking and accessing the site, particularly as the project's over-riding aim is to promote the Castle as a visitor destination, with the expectation that visitor numbers will increase. The local authority expects this to be an exemplar project of its kind.

Crynodeb o'r prif bwyntiau a gododd o'r drafodaeth, i'w darllen ochr yn ochr ag Adran 2 yr adroddiad hwn.

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

The Panel welcomed the ambition behind this project to improve visitor access and facilities to this historically important and sensitive site, helped by the acquisition of the hotel. However, we think that decisions have been made for limited, pragmatic and circumstantial reasons which have compromised the design development and so do not result in the best possible solution for the client, local community or the prospective visitor. Consequently major issues remain to be resolved. In summary:

- It is regrettable that this proposal retains the car park on the best part of the site next to the Castle. The quality of the arrival experience to the Grade I listed Castle in its World Heritage Site setting should be an integral part of the brief.
- In proceeding with discrete packages the project is in danger of losing sight of the bigger picture of arrival, experience and learning.
- Transport and access issues need to be thoroughly investigated with costed options that address the wider potential of the destination, before any improvements to the site result in the desired increase in visitor numbers.
- The legibility of the visitor flow and circulation is compromised by the proposed layout.
- The entrance as proposed is at the side of the building, next to a blank wall, and appears subservient to the apartment entrance. In our view this would be better located at the front of the building where the entrance to the apartments is currently.
- The design of the bridge should ensure that it is an integral part of the overall visitor experience. Detail design of the bridge should be developed so that it progresses in line with other parts of the whole project.
- The impact of these proposals on Ffordd Pen Llech would be significant and consideration should be given to a further reduction in height of the new extension.

- The client would retain a greater level of control over the detailed design and construction phases if a single contractor was used. Whilst we understand that the hotel and gatehouse projects require different skills, the project is of such an integrated nature that the designers and contractors should be working within a team with shared goals.
- A commitment to achieve BREEAM Excellent should be made at this stage which will help to define priorities and ensure the early integration of sustainability measures.

Adran 2/part 2

Trafodaeth ac Ymateb y Panel yn Llawn Discussion and panel response in full

The Panel agreed with the local authority that transport and access issues are fundamental to the success of this project. Ideally the starting point for this project should be a full analysis of the visitor experience from first arrival. The project team acknowledged that their approach appeared disjointed, but they had to take advantage of funding opportunities as they arose. Cadw felt that it was important to secure the hotel building in order to safeguard access to the Castle. They expect to franchise the restaurant and the management of the apartments and hope that this would bring some local employment to the area.

There are currently only 20 parking spaces outside the hotel and other parking sites would need to be made available, such as the St Davids Hotel site to the south of the town, or a lower level site some 50m below the Castle. This in turn would necessitate a shuttle bus service and/or funicular railway or cable car – an option which has been considered in the past but was found to be too costly. The narrow and congested streets of the town serve to exacerbate the problem and this should be addressed by clear signage and instructions to approaching drivers. The team are in negotiations with the traffic advisor at Gwynedd CC.

The Panel thought that the proposed circulation from arrival to castle entrance was rather tortuous, with too many options and gates, partly due to having to fit in to an existing layout. All access routes should be clearly legible, and we suggested the option of a new building with its own entrance and lobby to house the whole visitor centre. If the visitor centre is to be located in the hotel, the main entrance should be part of a more legible concept. As currently designed the prime elevation of the hotel, facing the castle, is used for the entrance to the apartments which are very much subsidiary to the project. This should be reconsidered.

The project team acknowledged that decisions had been made on the basis of what was already there on the site. They had considered the possibility of a new building on the playground site to the north – which is owned by the community council – but did not want to remove a community facility or obscure views from the site towards Snowdonia. Likewise, demolition of the hotel was considered and would have had financial benefits, but would have been contentious locally. While we understood the advantages of a pragmatic approach, the Panel felt that a greater

level of ambition was necessary in this context, in order to achieve the best possible solution and an exemplary scheme for this superb historic site.

Although the bridge design is still at feasibility stage, the team confirmed that it would be included with the visitor centre in one planning application and we thought that this should include the gatehouse as well, so that the project can be considered as a whole. Currently the bridge is shown as a light, visually permeable structure, so as not to detract from views. The observations of the Cadw archaeologist particularly noted the significance of the bridge and its historic role.

It is likely that works to the hotel and gatehouse will be undertaken by separate contractors and the bridge could be combined with either one. A traditional procurement route will be used for the hotel building, but the gatehouse is likely to be a two stage D&B. The Panel emphasised the benefits of using a single contract in terms of ease of management and maintaining visitor access.

While we appreciated the stepping down of the built form to the rear of the hotel, we nevertheless had concerns about the impact of these proposals on the low level houses on Ffordd Pen Llech. In addition the impact of servicing and deliveries needs to be assessed.

The Panel welcomed the aspiration to BREEAM Excellent but thought that this should be translated into a firm commitment. Even with upgrading and refurbishment works, this is a feasible target as other similar projects have recently shown. We welcomed the 'fabric first' approach to the existing building including internal insulation, and warned against the 'token' inclusion of renewables, e.g. PVs on the entrance canopy which would generate very little energy.

DCfW is a non-statutory consultee, a private limited company and wholly owned subsidiary of the Welsh Government. The comment recorded in this report, arising from formal Design Review through our Design Review Service, is provided in the public interest for the consideration of local planning authorities as a material consideration, and other users of the Design Review Service. It is not and should not be considered 'advice' and no third party is bound or required to act upon it. The Design Review Service is delivered in line with DCfW's published protocols, code of conduct and complaints procedure, which should be read and considered by users of the service.

***Mae copi iath Gymraeg o'r adroddiad hwn ar gael ar ofyn.
A Welsh language copy of this report is available upon request.***

Atodiad 1/appendix 1 Mynychwyr/attendees

Asiant/Client/Datblygwr
Agent/Client/Developer

Cadw (Stephen Jones, Neal O'Leary,
Kate Roberts)

Pensaer/Dylunydd Trefol Architectural/Urban Designer	EPT (John Evans) Mott MacDonald (John Farrow)
Ymgynghorwyr/Consultants	ND Conservation (Neil Daniels)
Trydydd Parti/Third Party	n/a
Awdurdod Cynllunio/Planning Authority	Snowdonia National Park Authority (Richard Thomas, Gwilym Jones)
Y Panel Adolygu Dylunio/ Design Review Panel Cadeirydd/Chair Swyddog/Officer Prif Banelydd/Lead Panellist	Alan Francis Cindy Harris Simon Carne Glen Dyke David Harvey Steve Smith
Sylwedyddion/Observers	Kate Cabbage (RSAW) Katie Weston (CC Swansea)

Mae Panel Adolygu Dylunio Comisiwn Dylunio Cymru a'r staff yn croesawu rhagor o ymgynghoriad, a bydd yn hapus i ddarparu rhagor o adborth am yr adroddiad yma a/neu lle bo'n briodol, dderbyn cyflwyniadau pellach. Diolch am ymgynghori â'r Comisiwn a chadwch mewn cysylltiad â ni os gwelwch yn dda ynglŷn â hynt eich prosiect. A fyddech gystal â'n hysbysu o ddatblygiad eich prosiect. Diolch yn fawr am ymgynghori â'r Comisiwn.

The Design Commission for Wales Design Review Panel welcomes further consultation and we will be happy to provide further feedback on this report and/or where appropriate, to receive further presentations. Please keep us informed of the progress of your project. Thank you for consulting the Commission.