

# Addroddiad Adolygu Dylunio Design Review Report

**Review Status: Confidential**

Meeting date:	24th June 2009
Issue Date:	3rd July 2009
Scheme Location:	Abergavenny Cattle Market
Scheme Description:	Mixed use
Planning Status:	Pre-application

**NB. This report supercedes all previous reports or advice from DCFW**

**Part1: Presentation**

This project has been seen at Design Review five times since 2004, and was last reviewed by DCFW in November 2008. The team stated that the planning application will be submitted in the next few weeks and therefore there will be no opportunity for major changes at this stage. All the main partners remain fully committed to delivering a high quality, mixed use scheme for Abergavenny.

Since the last review, an element of residential use has been included on Lion Street, in the form of 6 no, 1- and 2-bed apartments. The library is now a stand alone, two storey building with some civic presence. The car parking arrangement has been reconfigured. The residential element will achieve CSH Level 3, and the non-residential buildings will achieve a BREEAM 'Pass' standard.

The Local Authority acknowledged the difficult history of this project, and believe they have now achieved the successful integration of a large food store within the town centre, as opposed to out-of-town proposals which are now coming forward. They are particularly pleased with the way this scheme relates to Brewery Yard.

**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 scheme again, although frustrated to be told that there was little scope for further amendments. We support the principle of town centre location for large food stores and appreciate the continuing consultation. It is regrettable that we had apparently been given only a selection of the full amount of material available, and this

made our assessment more difficult. In summary, we are unable support this scheme unless the following major recommendations are adopted:

- More work needs to be done to ensure that the library building has an appropriate public and civic presence. The current proposal does not achieve this.
- While we support the principle of including residential use, the proposed solution appears tokenistic, especially if the shallowest 3m depth could be seen as a thin veneer. If it is to be made workable on this very small part of the site, the number of units would have to be reduced.
- In terms of sustainability and environmental performance, the level of ambition for the non-residential uses is shockingly mediocre. A BREEAM Very Good rating should be the minimum commitment from the developer and requirement from the Local Authority. We dispute the estimated increased costs of realizing this and suggest that further professional advice is taken.

## **Part 2: Discussion and Panel Response in Full**

The level of detailed material supplied to the Panel was considered insufficient for a full planning application, especially for such a significant scheme bordering a conservation area. It appeared that we had been provided with only a summary of the full application material, which we were assured existed and was adequate. It was confirmed that, despite the suggestion from one of the drawings, there are no immediate plans to pedestrianise Lion Street.

The presentation material includes the team's response to the summary contained in the most recent Design Review report, but there are some inaccuracies in the presentation of those summary points. Firstly the Panel in November 2008 recommended that a BREEAM 'Excellent' be achieved, not a BREEAM 'Pass' as suggested here. Secondly, our comments concerning the glazing on the Asda store were misinterpreted in the discussion. We supported the roof lights but recommended an improved relationship with Lion Street, through increased glazing on this elevation.

The Panel supported the stand-alone two storey library, as the most important and prominent public building on the site, and we were pleased to note the single use across both floors. However, it is not readily identifiable as a civic building and the architectural treatment is bland and lacks civic character and presence. The proposed design does not respond well to the contextual analysis and precedents shown in the presentation material, nor to key local buildings. The main entrance faces the new public square to the east, but it is also important that the building addresses the town on its southern elevation, which at present is given over to cycle parking. The internal layout should be considered as part of the design development, and elevational treatments should complement internal uses.

The six residential units proposed are on a very tight site – just 3m deep at its narrowest - and we do not think this is a feasible part of the development, as shown. We suggested that fewer units be proposed on the widest part of the site, so allowing a manageable depth of development. The western end of this small site could then be opened up to allow some small area of glazing on the Asda store facing Lion Street, as recommended in the previous Design Review report, 'so that views out could reinforce a sense of place'.

Parking for the units will be in the basement car park and full access will be allowed within the overall security arrangements.

The line of trees shown to the west of the car park appears to be close to the line of the culvert, and care should be taken to select appropriate species and allow sufficient space for root growth. Cycle parking is provided, although its position should be considered within overall movement patterns and so as to complement building planning. There are no plans to use sustainable urban drainage [SUDS] technologies.

The Panel was very disappointed with the approach to sustainability contained in the documentation. This is the first time in our experience that we have seen a corporate client committed to achieving such a very low BREEAM rating, or a Local Authority possibly prepared to accept one. A BREEAM 'Very Good' rating should be the minimum acceptable for this scheme, and this is in line with the latest Welsh Assembly Government policy which specifies this standard for all large, non-residential developments from September 2009. We disputed the estimate of increased cost to achieve an Excellent rating for the food store, of 30-35% on top of a Building Regulations compliant building, and best estimates indicate that the likely increase would be more in the region of 5-10%.

A site-wide sustainability strategy should be in place which embraces the diverse building types and uses, and includes issues such as waste management and drainage, as well as an approach to energy efficiency and low carbon development. There was no evidence of such work in the review material, but we were assured that it will be adequately described in the application documents.

**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

Henry Boot Developments Ltd  
[Craig Mathias]

Pensaer/Architect:

Stubbs Rich [Simon Coles]

Consultants:

n/a

AwdurdodCynllunio/  
Planning Authority

Monmouthshire County Council  
[George Ashworth]

Y Panel Adlygu Dylunio:  
Design review panel:

Ewan Jones [Chair]  
Cindy Harris [Officer]  
David Harvey

Martin Knight  
Ashley Bateson  
Ann-Marie Smale  
Ed Colgan

Lead Panellist:

Martin Knight

Sylwedyddion/Observers:

Eleanor Marks, WAG, DE&T