

# Addroddiad Adolygu Dylunio Design Review Report

## Review Status: **Confidential**

Meeting date:	19th November 2008
Issue Date:	4th December 2008
Scheme Location:	Abergavenny Cattle Mart
Scheme Description:	Retail + Library
Planning Status:	Pre-application

## Part1: Presentation

Outline consent for development of this site, which is owned by Monmouthshire County Council [MCC], was obtained in 2004. MCC then entered into a contract with developer Henry Boot whose application for a mixed use development including retail, residential, library and cinema was rejected by the Planning Committee in October 2006. Since then, a limited architectural competition has been held with a restrictive brief and only two compliant submissions were received. The winning submission from Stubbs Rich (with some modifications based on feedback at the competition interview and subsequent consultations) is the subject of this review.

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

We are disappointed at the lack of genuine mixed use on this site close to the centre of a thriving market town, especially given the earlier aspirations of the local authority and the clear messages of previous design reviews. However, given the constrained nature of the revised brief agreed between the council and the developer, we are encouraged by the urban design strategy adopted by the new professional team and the design development evident in the work carried out since the competition submission. The following major issues remain to be resolved:

- The library is well sited and must be a stand-alone, two storey building, of genuine civic quality and architectural merit.
- The landscape design should address the different aspects of the car park, square and pedestrian route, and provide a comprehensive and deliverable solution.

- The proposal that the supermarket is to be naturally lit is welcome, but the lack of aspiration in terms of sustainability is unacceptable in the light of the clearly stated policies of the Welsh Assembly Government. There should at least be a commitment to achieve BREEAM Excellent throughout the development.

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

While noting the troubled history of this project and while we regret that a genuinely mixed use scheme has not been realised, this review is concerned only with the substantive proposal before us. In terms of architecture and urban design, this proposal is a clear improvement compared to those we have seen before.

We particularly welcome the improved north-south connection linking Market Street with Bailey Park and the adjacent public car park. The reinforcement of this route with a line of substantial trees seems highly appropriate. However, the use of trees in the on-site car park itself is less successful. The line of trees shown in the centre of the car park is unlikely to work for technical reasons and those on the north edge seem inappropriate given the strong boundary provided by the existing stone wall and the established park on the other side of the main road. The existing northern boundary of stone wall and mature trees should be used and integrated into the landscape design.

The new public space at the south edge of the site opposite the end of Market Street is quite restricted and mature trees may not be appropriate here. The landscape architect should provide a comprehensive assessment of the deliverability of the square, the car park planting, and the connection to the north.

We would prefer to see the car park ramp located at the northern end of site, but were told that this does not work from the point of view of traffic flow and efficiency of vehicular movement. However, we would like to see this arrangement revisited to see if an alternative location can be made to work, in the light of the urban design advantages of moving the ramp to the north.

While we strongly support the idea of providing active frontage to Lion Street, we are not convinced of the viability of the small retail spaces on the south end of the food store. They need to have sufficient depth for future flexibility and to attract a variety of retail uses. A two storey solution here would reinforce the urban quality of Lion Street.

As a public building, the library should be separate and distinct from the surrounding retail uses. A two storey building devoted to library and associated uses should be retained in this location. The architectural treatment shown is disappointingly mundane and should be revised to convey a more civic presence, with a high quality of detailing and materials. This is particularly urgent if a detailed planning application is to be made in the near future.

We would like to see the glazing that has been included in the roofscape of the food store extended to the walls facing Lion Street, so that views out could reinforce a sense of place. While we understand that the need for active frontages and shelving compete for wall space, it is still important for people to have external references and a sense of location and orientation.

There is no reference to environmental standards in this presentation, despite the policy aspirations of the Welsh Assembly Government for publicly owned sites. We commend the introduction of natural daylight into the heart of the store, which in itself was deemed impossible only a few years ago. The design team stressed the difficulties in achieving BREEAM Excellent – which we recognise but we urge the developer to take a more active approach to the issue of sustainable design especially given the importance of giving something back to the local and wider community. It is simply not acceptable for a project of this significance to be aiming for such modest standards. We advised the team to consult BRE as soon as possible to get their advice and arrange for a bespoke assessment if necessary.

The quality of space in the underground car park will be improved with even small increases in ceiling heights. The lighting design should ensure that the car park is fully integrated with access routes to the store, and help to deliver a well used and secure space. Sensitive controls and zoning of the underground car park could realise reductions in energy use during off-peak periods.

**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 Development 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: Wendy Richards [Chair] Cindy Harris [Officer]	Martin Knight Richard Parnaby Phil Roberts Ashley Bateson Elfed Roberts
Lead Panellist:	Richard Parnaby
Sylwedyddion/Observers:	Mark Newey [WAG Planning Division]

