

**Statws/Status:**  
**Cyfrinachol / Confidential**



**Adroddiad Adolygu Dylunio:** 19 December 2005  
**Design Review Report:**

**Dyddiad Cyfarfod / Cyflwyno'r Deunydd:** 7 December 2005  
**Meeting Date / Material Submitted:**

**Lleoliad/Location:** Atlantic College,  
St Donats

**Disgrifiad o'r Cynllun** Student and houseparent  
**Scheme Description:** accommodation

**Cleient/Asiant:** Atlantic College  
**Client/Agent:** [Tony Davies]  
Boyes Rees  
[Lyndon Bailey]

**Pensaer/Architect:** Latitude Architects  
[Michael Griffiths]

**Cynllunio:** BDSP [Ian Duncombe]  
**Consultants:**

**Awdurdod Cynllunio:** Vale of Glamorgan  
**Planning Authority:** [Nick Lloyd,  
Rhodri Davies]

**Statws Cynllunio:** Pre-planning  
**Planning Status:**

**Y Panel Adolygu Dylunio/Design Review Panel:**  
Alan Francis (cadeirydd/chair) Howard Wainwright  
Cindy Harris (swyddog/officer) Kieren Morgan  
Wendy Hall Ewan Jones  
Mike Biddulph

**Lead Panellist:**

**Mike Biddulph**

**Sylwedyddion/Observers:**

**Charlie Deng  
Design Review assistant**

### **Cyflwyniad/Presentation**

Atlantic College accommodates 340 resident students, on a 150 acre site surrounding the 12th century St Donats castle and next to the heritage coastal footpath. There are currently seven student housing blocks, built in the 1960's, which are suffering serious maintenance problems and are in need of replacement. A two-stage international competition was held in 2004 for the replacement of three student houses, which 96 practices entered and which was won by Latitude Architects. The brief called for an inspirational response to the 'College's vision of a more dynamic and open environment for student life'. The college is dependent on voluntary funds and student fees and is currently raising the money to fund this development.

Two sites were identified initially and the current proposal relates to the first stage of this phased development, which is one accommodation block located on site A, close to the college's main entrance. The site is relatively level, slightly sloping to the south and with dramatic views of the Bristol Channel to the south west. The design is informed by sustainability considerations and all rooms are designed to benefit from good views and solar access. A houseparent's house is also required, close to but separate from the student block, and an assistant houseparent's 2 bedroom flat will form part of the ground floor of the block, close to the main entrance. The ground floor also accommodates a dayroom, kitchen, studies, showers and wet room. Student bedrooms are arranged on first and second floors of the L shaped block, with a galleried hallway in the corner of the 'L'. The 4-bed bedrooms have ensuites and can be subdivided to appeal to the conference market. One bedroom on each floor is designed for disabled use.

The concrete ground floor podium uses thermal mass to store solar heat during the daytime, and supports a lightweight, two-storey structure of cross laminated timber panels. Oblique vertical timber fins give privacy to the bedrooms while maintaining views. The full height glazing has opening windows top and bottom, and a monopitched roof forms a south facing clerestory along the length of the building. External materials will be local and natural where possible and the designers are investigating rainwater harvesting, solar panels and occupant-controlled lighting. The site as a whole already has a district heating system, partly fuelled by biomass [wood chip].

Mature trees will be retained but not the existing copse, which is fairly nondescript. New planting will screen the building from the north and the main entrance. The building is partially bermed into the slope so that the height will be within the tree line and no higher than the ridge of adjacent buildings. Its exact position on the western boundary of the site is under discussion with the planners, who would like it to be set back from the boundary to minimise visual intrusion when seen from the coastal path.

The client is very excited by the scheme, and the way in which it will facilitate the college's future development. They have worked closely with the architects from the beginning.

Initially concerned with the proposed height, they are now satisfied that it will be well integrated with the rest of the site.

The Local Authority emphasised the sensitive historic building and landscape setting. Their main concern is with the possible visual impact from the coastal path, but they have been reassured by the proposed 3 metre setback from the boundary. They welcome the contemporary architectural style, and pointed out that the site has had a similar previous use.

### **Ymateb y Panel/Panel's Response**

The Panel began by congratulating the client on the approach taken to commissioning the building, and the designer on the quality of the material submitted. We sought reassurance that any shortfall in funds would not result in a loss of quality and the client affirmed that their intention is to set the standard for future development and if necessary to defer the start date until funds are in place. The involvement of a QS gives them confidence that their plans are well-costed and robust.

The Panel sought clarification of the exact position of the building in relation to the boundary. We would have liked to see it brought up to, and even forward of, the boundary. However, the consensus between client, designer and planner seemed to be for a 3 metre setback, and there is a clear policy to preserve the open park to the west from any development. There are outdoor areas in other parts of the site for social activities, barbecues etc, so the grassed area around the new building will be used for relaxing, rather than organised activities. The possibility of students accessing the building using the fire escape as a shortcut, was recognised.

The Panel had some concerns about the acoustic performance of the gallery and felt that the circulation space was becoming overcrowded, with the protrusion of the lift. Another concern was that the facade treatment had become more formal, with a hierarchy of expression, and had lost its earlier simplicity. We regretted the loss of the fins from the earlier drawings but recognised the need to maintain views and to provide for easy maintenance and window cleaning. We were told that the current cladding arrangement houses a track system for solar shading shutters.

The relation of the student block to the houseparent's accommodation creates a sheltered courtyard with minimal shading. The Panel thought that the enclosed Ink would be better replaced with an open canopy. We considered the change to a more opaque cladding for the galleried hallway to be entirely appropriate.

The Panel commended the sustainability aspirations of the brief and the way in which they have been incorporated into the early design. We urged that every effort be made to source local timber for structure and cladding, and suggested that the roofscape be reworked to accommodate solar water heating which would be an excellent seasonal match for the biomass heating system.

The Panel was delighted to learn that a traditional form of procurement was planned, with the architects retained by the College right the way through. We warned of possible difficulties in finding suitably experienced timber frame contractors and joiners in the local area. The designers are researching the viability of the proposed system of construction and will prepare a report for the client with their recommendations.

## **Crynodeb/Summary**

The Panel was delighted to be presented with this intelligent and sensitive scheme which demonstrates the benefits of contemporary architecture in a historic setting. We recognise that it is the product of a forward-looking client taking a responsible approach towards commissioning, and that the proposed quality will be protected by the choice of procurement route. We consider this to be an exemplary scheme, in need of some minor revisions only. In particular:

- We would prefer to see the building taken right up to the western boundary of the site.
- We welcome the use of timber, ideally sourced locally, but emphasise that the finished quality depends on finding a contractor with the right skills.
- While we understand the reasons for the form of the monopitch roof, we would like to see the form revisited to include solar water heating panels, providing this does not unduly increase the mass and height of the building from the main site entrance.
- We think that the linked walkway between the two buildings does not need to be enclosed.
- The galleried hall and stairways should be kept as open and spacious as possible.
- We very much welcome the client's commitment to a traditional procurement route and the involvement of the architect throughout the design and construction process

## **Diwedd/End**

**NB A Welsh language copy of this report is available upon request.**