

Statws/Status:
Cyhoeddus / Public



Adroddiad Adolygu Dylunio: 29 January 2008
Design Review Report:

Dyddiad Cyfarfod / Meeting Date: 16 January 2008

Lleoliad/Location: Bangor City Football Club

Disgrifiad o'r Cynllun Student accommodation with
Scheme Description: retail, leisure

Cleient/Asiant: Deiniol Development
Client/Agent: Watkin Jones [Jon Mendoza]

Developer/Datblygwr: Morbaine[John Parle,
Barris Liptrott]

Pensaer/Architect: The Harris Partnership
[Paul Mitchell]

Awdurdod Cynllunio: Gwynedd Council
Planning Authority: [Hywel Thomas]

Statws Cynllunio: Application submitted
Planning Status: August 2007

Y Panel Adolygu Dylunio/
Design Review Panel:
John Punter (cadeirydd/chair) Martin Knight
Cindy Harris (swyddog/officer) Kedrick Davies
Charlie Deng (swyddog/officer) Mark Hallett

Lead Panellist: Kedrick Davies

Sylwedyddion/Observers: Steve Jones, WAG DE&T

Cyflwyniad/Presentation

This proposal follows on from the previous consented application for an Asda foodstore, reviewed by DCFW in August 2004, which was not taken up by the retailer. Since that time the developers have been looking at alternative proposals and have now proposed a scheme which is mostly student accommodation, with 30% retail and some leisure uses [bowling alley, restaurant].

The site is in the valley bottom lying below the High Street to the south. There are residential properties to the west and north, but the frontage to the north east and east is open save for the church and a clinic. Pedestrian routes do not currently cross the site though they accessed the football ground. The football club has been relocated and the new club buildings are under construction.

This proposal is for an L-shaped retail block at ground floor level, rising 6-7 metres to a podium with a pedestrian link through to the High Street at this level for future residents. Four storeys of student accommodation blocks are located above the podium arranged in two 'C' blocks facing south-west. A north-east facing colonnade links all retail and leisure uses at ground level around the car park. A slate base runs behind the colonnade and the vertical stair towers are also finished in slate. Roof pitches slope down to meet adjacent buildings and the overall height of the blocks is similar to the heights of the buildings on the High Street, given the six metre level difference. The site has the constraint of an existing culvert, the Afon Adda, running east/west. The developer has identified a good opportunity for a landmark building to the east of the site on the land bordered by Deiniol Road and Sackville Road, to house a restaurant.

This is a site capable of sustainable, mixed use development close to the town centre, the university and public transport links. A proposed cycle route through the site will follow the line of the re-culverted Afon Adda. Pedestrian links will be enhanced between the town centre and the university. The roundabout at the northern entrance to the site from Deiniol Road is a requirement of the Highways Department.

The viability of this quantum of student accommodation has been well tested and the developer is confident of the demand. The mixed use nature of the proposal accords with the MIPPS on town centre retail development, and with the Gwynedd UDP.

The Local Authority representative confirmed that they support the proposed mix of uses, and noted that retail and leisure uses are already consented. They would have liked to see the inclusion of affordable housing [although the developer pointed out that students moving into this development would

release housing in the town that was likely to be affordable]. The Authority would also have liked to see the inclusion of the vehicle hire business site in the scheme, but despite repeated efforts this has proved impossible. Important considerations will be that the roofscape should relate well to the existing townscape, and that pedestrian links should be made attractive with good quality treatment and materials.

Ymateb y Panel/Panel's Response

The Panel too supported the principle of mixed use on this town centre site. However, we had major concerns about this proposal. We thought that a contextual analysis should have better informed the design strategy. A key requirement was that new buildings should seek to repair the urban fabric in this part of the town. Buildings which addressed and enclosed the streets, and extended existing blocks (particularly on Deiniol Road) would be an important part of this strategy. Smaller blocks of accommodation could have been dispersed around the southern edges of the site, responding to the finer urban grain of the town. The Panel felt strongly that this development should be seen as a new urban quarter which, at least on its edges, should continue the building line and street enclosure.

The Panel's key concern in reviewing this scheme was the site layout and the 'retail park' treatment of a mixed use development on a central urban site. We thought that the scale and massing were overpowering in this context and that the 'bowl' location did not compensate for this.

The Panel was disappointed by the insistence of the Highways Department on a roundabout to access the site and wondered whether this had been challenged or indeed discussed, given the disadvantages in terms of breaking urban frontages and making pedestrian-friendly links less likely. It would be much more difficult for students to cross the road in order to access the campus and return to their residences, and the Panel was inclined towards a traffic light solution. We thought that an alternative site entrance, and a new street to continue Sackville Road, could have been created at the north eastern corner of the site, running behind the restaurant building. The developer pointed out that it would be difficult to move the existing clinic. He considered that the 55 metre visibility gap along Deiniol Road was unusually narrow for a major retail park but the Panel felt that it was an anti-urban solution.

The Panel was informed that the car parking numbers represented the bare minimum that would be acceptable. However, we thought that the difference in levels between this site and its surroundings could have been used to deck the parking and mitigate its impact.

With regard to the 'stand alone' restaurant building, we supported the proposed use but thought that a more prominent building could be placed on

this important site, one which would punctuate the corner and the vista down Deiniol Road from the railway station. The developer agreed to revisit this part of the proposal with a view to strengthening this element, and possibly including residential uses above.

While the Panel appreciated the challenge of assembling appropriate uses for this constrained site, we questioned several aspects of the design and layout. We thought that the quality of the student accommodation next to the bowling alley would be poor, and the long internal corridors in the C-shaped blocks were in need of shortening. Both student blocks needed better defined, more legible entrances. We would like to see more articulation on the external facades and a richer level of detail, which could be provided by using brickwork rather than flat cladding panels.

It was confirmed that the high level pedestrian link to the High Street provided access to both accommodation blocks. However, we were not convinced of the safety, legibility and likely attractiveness of this western pedestrian link to the residences. We would like to see the pedestrian link on the eastern boundary continued northwards across the car park to provide a clearly defined, safe pedestrian route, one that linked directly to a pedestrian crossing to the campus. The same was needed from the entrance to the student residences.

The Panel considered that the scale of the monopitch roofs was out of character with the context, especially when seen from above, and that the impact would be mitigated if the roofs were flat, and/or if the roofscape were broken up more. A 'green roof' finish would also help to reduce the impact [as recommended in the previous review]. The developer stated that the pitched roofs accommodated rooftop plant, and added visual interest. We thought that the escape stair from the bowling alley, with its prominent vertical 'antenna', did not sit well with the church immediately opposite.

The Panel found that the sustainability strategy presented was of limited use, and contained generic information on many technologies that were inappropriate. It lacked any commitment to low carbon solutions, aspiring only to BREEAM 'Very Good' . We stated that there should be a commitment to BREEAM Excellent or equivalent, and an anticipation of the need to move towards zero carbon development by 2011. We were informed that solar water heating and rainwater harvesting for WC flushing will be included, and that a ground source heat pump may be used for space heating.

As a postscript, the developer informed the Panel that a proposed factory outlet development on Anglesey, if it were approved, would make it unlikely that this scheme would go ahead. The Panel was not in a position to comment on such schemes unless they were brought to Design Review.

Crynodeb/Summary

The Panel supported the principle of mixed use on this urban site, but was unable to support the scheme in its current form. We think that major revisions are necessary, as outlined below:

- The 'retail park' approach and layout is seriously flawed and has led to an essentially suburban solution. We think that this site should be treated as a new urban quarter, with urban blocks addressing the street and able to repair the fabric of the town.
- We think the scale, massing and roofscape is overpowering in its context. We suggest the monolithic roof design is re-visited and an alternative 'green roof' finish is considered
- We disagree that a relatively large roundabout is necessary on Deiniol Road, in view of the implications for good pedestrian links and urban frontages, and we are disappointed that this view was not challenged by the developer or the Local Planning Authority. We think that the 55 metre opening [scaled off the drawings at 57 metres] is one of the scheme's most negative features and is the antithesis of good urban design.
- Residential uses should be re-distributed to create better street frontages and to increase the presence of the entrance corner /restaurant building.
- The layout, external massing and architectural treatment all need to be refined. We would like to see more detailing and articulation of the facade.
- More attention should be given to defining and providing for safe and convenient student access, given that security measures can impact on student socialisation patterns. At the moment there is no dedicated link to the university. In particular, the footpath to the east should continue to and across Deiniol Road.
- The sustainability strategy is disappointing and lacks sufficient commitment to low carbon solutions. Consideration of passive solar design and natural ventilation should have been used to drive the design and layout, rather than being dismissed after the event.

Diwedd/End

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

