

Statws/Status:
Cyfrinachol / Confidential



Adroddiad Adolygu Dylunio: 29 January 2008
Design Review Report:

Dyddiad Cyfarfod / Meeting Date: 16 January 2008

Lleoliad/Location: Bangor

Disgrifiad o'r Cynllun Residential
Scheme Description:

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

Developer/Datblygwr: As above

Pensaer/Architect: Tarmaster Jones [Matt Jones]

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

Statws Cynllunio: Pre-application
Planning Status:

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

Sylwedyddion/Observers: Steve Jones WAG, DE&T

Cyflwyniad/Presentation

This proposal is a joint venture partnership between Watkin Jones and Deiniol Developments. There is previous consent for a clinic on this site [which was to have been relocated from the football club site]. The brief for this development called for a bold, contemporary design, with a reasonable density of residential units aimed at the 'young professional' market.

This is an important corner site on one of the main roads in Bangor. The existing club house will be demolished. A new L-shaped plan gives an active frontage to both adjoining roads and allows for private amenity space to the rear. 49 units are provided giving an approximate density of 250 du/ha. A fully undercroft parking arrangement shows 38 car parking spaces at basement level with separate in / out access roads. An indicative landscape scheme only is shown.

External balconies are shielded with fins of cladding placed at slightly oblique angles to the external walls, to avoid overlooking. This articulation adds interest to an otherwise simple, contemporary building, finished with brick and metal cladding. Apartments are located off central corridors, giving an efficient internal layout with serviced areas grouped together. A sustainability statement will be included with the Planning Application.

The Local Planning Authority accept the need for redevelopment of this site. They would like to see the new development responding to the university buildings nearby, but set back slightly so as not to dominate the street scene. Normally there would be a 25% social housing requirement, but the Authority are willing to consider off-site provision, possibly on the football club site. They accept the reduced parking levels and support the proposed cycle storage and external amenity area. They regard the fins as performing a useful function and helping to articulate the facades.

Ymateb y Panel/Panel's Response

The Panel welcomed the clear and informative presentation and the well-detailed plans and accurate photomontages. We supported the perimeter block treatment, the undercroft parking, and separate in/out vehicular access. We found the scale and massing appropriate in this context, but we were slightly uncomfortable with the relationship with buildings across the side street to the east. The external appearance of this block appeared more commercial than residential, and we would like to see more dialogue and visual interaction with the existing residential properties. The corner treatment with full height windows reinforces the impression of an office building; we would prefer a more domestic fenestration arrangement and the spandrels filled in with brickwork.

The Panel thought that the penthouse at fourth floor level was less successfully resolved than the rest of the block. There was a lack of either vertical or horizontal

emphasis and we thought that the latter should be emphasised. We were unsure whether the louvred shading devices were functional and suggested that they should be re-assessed. While we understood the reasons for bringing the corner of the penthouse forward, to line up with the bay window, we thought it should be set back at this level so that the open balcony ran all the way round.

The Panel questioned whether the dimensions of windows in the opaque fins were sufficient to allow enough daylight into the living areas. The architect stated that the sizes were architecturally determined and while we appreciated that, we thought that the width of the window openings should be increased. We welcomed the overall architectural resolution but we thought that questions of privacy and avoiding overlooking had been given too much weight.

The Panel applauded the way in which the building was set into the slope of the site. We thought that the interface with the street at ground level worked well, but noted that there was insufficient information provided about the level differences with adjoining properties and how the boundary treatment, particularly to the west, related to the main entrance. We advised that the success of this scheme would depend on how well the design was translated into an appropriate quality of details, materials and workmanship. The developer stated that they would be constructing this building and would ensure the desired quality, especially as Bangor was their home town. A structural system would be used which minimised floor-to-floor heights.

With regard to the internal layout, we would like to see a more refined treatment of the long corridors with recessed front doors and personalised entrances. There would be advantages in some apartments having front doors opening onto the street where possible [flat numbers 1-4, and 9-10], and this would allow some reduction in corridor lengths. Similarly, some apartments could have front doors or french windows located off the rear courtyard, thus diversifying the units and widening their appeal. The potential for small private gardens, with or without front doors, should be maximised, especially given the internal area [48m² for a 1 bed flat]. Extra common storage facilities would help add value. We advised that more tolerance on the overall dimensions might be necessary as there is currently no room for 'slippage'.

The Panel advised that the sustainability statement to be produced should contain a firm commitment to achieve high environmental performance standards – such as Level 4 of the Code for Sustainable Homes. Increased levels of daylighting should be achieved, both in internal corridors and the car park. We were told that naturally driven, through-ventilation of the car park would be achieved by cutting a slot at the top of the courtyard. The heating strategy should be based around a single boiler and heating system, rather than 49 individual boilers and flues, and we advised that an M&E consultant experienced in low carbon design should be appointed as soon as possible. The Panel noted that ideally a sustainability strategy should drive the design from the beginning and not be retro-fitted to an existing design.

The Panel strongly urged that a landscape consultant be appointed at an early stage, to develop a softer, more suburban treatment of the street edge, particularly of the main corner space, as well as appropriate planting in the rear courtyard. Adequate space for bin storage and recycling waste should be incorporated. We were informed that the properties would be sold on a leasehold basis and that there would be active management of the communal areas.

Crynodeb/Summary

The Panel was very pleased to review this promising scheme, and we welcomed the quality of the architectural treatment and the site planning. The car parking, amenity area, access arrangements and density are all exemplary. We think this is a bold and innovative response to the brief, the site and the context and that, with good sustainability credentials, could become a benchmark development. We recommend the following minor revisions:

- In general we support the scale, massing and fenestration, but seek a more positive, less screened response to development to the east.
- Materials and fenestration details should reinforce the domestic nature and function of the building, and avoid commercial references
- The 'window' openings in the balcony fins should be enlarged to allow more daylight and solar gain
- Where possible, front doors [or french windows] should open directly on to the street or rear courtyard.
- The effect of long, artificially lit corridors should be mitigated, and daylight introduced
- A landscaping scheme should be developed which softens the site edges and reinforces the suburban character of the area
- Attention should be given to storage areas, both in the apartments and in communal areas such as the basement. Cycle and bin storage also needs to be identified
- The sustainability strategy to accompany the planning application will be crucial in achieving wholesale endorsement for this scheme. We would recommend a commitment to Level 4 of the Code for Sustainable Homes and specifically the inclusion of solar water heating; a single boiler with underfloor heating; and exemplary levels of insulation, air tightness and daylighting.

Diwedd/End

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