

Addroddiad Adolygu Dylunio Design Review Report

Review Status: **Confidential**

Meeting date:	19th November 2008
Issue Date:	5th December 2008
Scheme Location:	Bangor University
Scheme Description:	New theatre, education facilities; students union
Planning Status:	Pre-application

Part1: Presentation

This project has been developed to feasibility stage with the involvement of the main stakeholders, namely: Welsh Assembly Government, the Arts Council for Wales, Gwynedd County Council, and Bangor University. A key element of the brief is to bridge the current divide between Upper and Lower Bangor, and between town and university. Connectivity within the university campus and with the underused College Park is also important and the form of the building responds to this requirement. Further phases of expansion are envisaged to the west and the south, eventually to create a central square spanning Deiniol Road.

The Local Authority sees this development and the proposed physical links as essential for the improvement and evolution of the city of Bangor. The most important element in this context is the Main Arts Building and this development should not compete with that. The roofscape will be important as predominant views will be from above. There are some concerns about the space formed by the arches beneath the proposed podium around the main entrance, and whether this would encourage anti-social behaviour. Consultees to date include the Theatres Trust, Police liaison officers and the local archaeological trust.

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

The Panel commended the breadth of the study and the concise presentation. We are encouraged by the masterplanning approach and think that this is an entirely acceptable approach to the brief and the site. Future design development should address the following points:

- The covered, recessed entrance courtyard and colonnaded space formed by the arches beneath the podium do not present a positive relationship with the street. It will be very important that these areas are well managed, well daylit, inclusive and attractive.
- The relationship of the hard linear edge of the podium with the curved form of the drum is not fully resolved.
- We are not convinced that the bridge access above ground level will work well. Ideally the connections would be made at ground level by creating a civic space spanning Deiniol Road and resolving issues of traffic management at an early stage. Highways engineers should be involved and encouraged to 'buy in' to a more civilising treatment of the road, using boulevarding or 'crossing squares'.
- The southern elevation of the student union block should be treated as permanent and resolved accordingly.
- Circulation routes within the campus, especially those running along the rear of the teaching blocks, will need to be made safe, well lit, and intuitively legible.
- The sustainability strategy is impressive and will need developing in further detail for inclusion in a planning application.
- A transport study should be carried out and its conclusions used to inform the design development.

Part 2: Discussion and Panel Response in Full

The Panel commend the ambition of the client team and welcome the detailed and comprehensive submission material, which goes far beyond the scope of what would normally be considered a feasibility study. The model was very useful in justifying the scale and height relationships between this building and the Main Arts block in particular. While many aspects are still fluid the curved form has been developed carefully through many iterations and consideration of alternatives. The proposed bridge link cannot be guaranteed at this stage but the design does everything possible to facilitate this and there is a high level of local support. The land across the road which would be incorporated into a new square is owned by the Local Authority.

We found the architectural treatment interesting and challenging. The slate clad drum form would be a striking addition to the Deiniol Road corridor and the sculptural form of the upper part of the building, with the glazed slots, would create a dramatic effect especially at night. Given the civic importance, scale and location of the project, there is an opportunity to add to the architectural legacy of Bangor with a 21st century statement building midway between the University and Cathedral.

Our greatest reservations concern the ground floor interface with the street, and the nature of the covered, recessed entrance space. This should be re-evaluated particularly with regard to the implications for internal daylight levels and for the creation of a safe, sociable space. We are not convinced by the awkward juxtaposition of the arched podium with the curved form of the superstructure both in visual and practical terms.

We have some concerns that this complex, multi-functional building will, in trying to belong to both town and university, end up being owned by neither. The proposed bridge would have the effect of divorcing the main means of access from ground level, and the

truncated end of the students' union block would appear incomplete until the bridge is built. We think that this southern elevation should be resolved now, independently of future development, and be shown to work within this phase. Ideally access across Deiniol Road should be at ground level and the associated traffic impacts should be dealt with at an early stage. Although we recognise that this is a busy trunk road, it would be possible to develop significant tree planting along the road to create a strong sense of place and signal that you are entering a different space, which links the Memorial Garden with the Bowling Green and College Park.

The sustainability strategy is robust and convincing and we commend the commitment to achieve BREEAM Excellent. The teaching blocks have a shallow depth [7 metres maximum] to enable single sided ventilation, and will have 'green' roofs.

The corridor routes and circulation spaces behind these blocks will be toplit, and it is important that they feel safe and secure so that they are well used and self managed. The legibility of these routes needs to be so good that navigation through them is absolutely intuitive and foolproof. The lighting design will be of critical importance, and could be used to enhance the building's presence by using digital projections on to prominent elevations.

The client is extremely aware of the need to protect the desired quality through the procurement process. This awareness will be extremely important if future expansion included a commercial development to the south. The phases of construction will be influenced by existing uses.

We would like to see this scheme again at Design Review, at RIBA Stage C or D prior to submission of a planning application.

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

Bangor University [Dylan Roberts]

Pensaer/Architect:

Capita Percy Thomas [Jonathan Adams,
Nicola James]

Consultants:

King Shaw Associates [Doug King,
Michael Shaw]

Awdurdod Cynllunio/
Planning Authority

Y Panel Adlygu Dylunio:
Design review panel:
Wendy Richards [Chair]
Cindy Harris [Officer]

Lead Panellist:

Sylwedyddion/Observers:

Gwynedd CC [Hywel Thomas]

Ashley Bateson
Elfed Roberts
Martin Knight
Richard Parnaby
Phil Roberts

Ashley Bateson

Mark Newey, Hywel Butts [WAG
Planning Division]
Kwanphil Cho [Austin Smith Lord]