

Statws/Status:
Cyfrinachol / Confidential



Adroddiad Adolygu Dylunio: Design Review Report:	23 May 2008
Dyddiad Cyfarfod / Meeting Date:	14 May 2008
Lleoliad/Location:	Bargoed
Disgrifiad o'r Cynllun Scheme Description:	Town centre regeneration
Cleient/Asiant: Client/Agent:	Caerphilly CBC [Roger Tanner, Bryan Morgan]
Developer/Datblygwr:	ASM Properties Ltd [Keith Beynon, Warren Beynon, Mike Gibbins]
Pensaer/Architect:	ASM
Ymgynghorwyr Cynllunio: Planning Consultants:	n/a
Awdurdod Cynllunio: Planning Authority:	Caerphilly CBC
Statws Cynllunio: Planning Status:	Pre-application
Y Panel Adolygu Dylunio/ Design Review Panel: Wendy Richards (cadeirydd/chair) Cindy Harris (swyddog/officer) Charlie Deng (swyddog/officer) Roger Ayton	Gerard Ryan Mark Hallett Ewan Jones

Lead Panellist:

Mark Hallett

Sylwedyddion/Observers:

Eric Dawson, A+DS

Esme Farewell, WAG

Nicola Powell, Welsh Health Estates

Cyflwyniad/Presentation

Since this scheme was last reviewed in January 2008, it has been put out to tender. Five developers were shortlisted and following a robust evaluation exercise by WAG DE&T and CCBC, ASM Properties Ltd were appointed as the preferred developer. Work is currently ongoing to create the plateau and a planning application is expected in the autumn.

At the level of the main street, Hanbury Road, small retail units line the eastern side, and a gap in the frontage opposite the Hanbury Arms leads to a 'retail concourse' and access to the cinema and a two storey restaurant/cafe. The 'anchor' supermarket is located below this, and undercroft parking a further level down. To the south of the supermarket is a further two storeys of car parking providing about 500 spaces in all. Altogether there is a ten metre level difference between the plateau and Hanbury Road. North lighting brings daylight into the body of the supermarket. All roof plant is screened and servicing will be from a rear yard to the north east. A glazed atrium to the south of the retail block houses travelators linking to all levels and there is a separate lift pod.

The residential element, in the form of three storey apartment blocks, wraps around the corner to the west of the entrance point and aims to continue the existing building line. There are east/west pedestrian links into the town and a new promenade with lookout points will be created on the eastern boundary above the valley.

Structural materials will comprise steel frames over concrete decks, and natural daylight and ventilation will be maximised. Various renewable and low carbon options are being evaluated, and the aim is to create a 'flagship low carbon regeneration development'. It is claimed that the team have 'achieved an optimum sustainable design solution'.

The Local Authority will deliver improvements to Hanbury Square, the pedestrian and cycle route, and enhancement to the plateau edge, dependent on convergence funding. These works will not depend on receipts from this development.

Ymateb y Panel/Panel's Response

The Panel had previously expressed serious concerns about the development brief and the concept scheme. We understood the desire to regenerate this run-down community and provide retail and leisure facilities, and we welcomed the proposed investment in the area. However, we thought that the development brief was seriously flawed, particularly in urban design terms. The team stated that they would welcome a frank discussion and any suggestions for improvement. The importance of integrating this scheme with the existing town was recognised on all sides.

The Panel asked whether our previous comments had been passed to the developer and we were told that they had, but not before the bids had been returned to the development team. There had, therefore, not been the opportunity to respond to them within the bidding process. As the scheme was now being progressed, the developer stated that where our comments had contradicted the brief, they had followed the latter.

The Panel repeated our concern about the dominance of the car park, and the lack of response to the existing context and the character of Bargoed and the valley towns. We questioned the design of the car park as another large rectangular element, in addition to the food store, and thought that for a slight loss of efficiency, the car park could be made to follow the site contours and profile more closely and sympathetically. The Panel was concerned that the layout of the parking requirements as presently proposed would compromise a more considered design response to the site.

We thought the 'town square' and the 'entrance square' were misnomers, and unlikely to be used as such. We questioned the extent of demolition and thought that the opportunities presented by the site were being lost, such as the possibility of lining the car park to the east with active uses. Residential units in this location would likewise exploit the value and amenity of the site. The team stated that engineering considerations to do with the construction of the plateau, meant that placing buildings near the edge would be problematic. Earth banks had been used rather than reinforced concrete retaining walls.

The team noted the requirement of the brief: that the Hanbury Road facade should respect the existing built context, but that the outer facing elements should be more contemporary and dramatic. The Panel did not think that the proposed new shop fronts would be well integrated with the high street. The large setback, and the opening into the 'concourse' would only serve to fragment the urban grain, and we would like to see the new units brought forward to back-of-pavement and better reflect the existing scale. The Panel emphasised that we were not against contemporary design, nor were we seeking a traditional pastiche, and our comments here were more concerned with urban form than elevational treatment.

We thought that the requirement for a dramatic contemporary appearance to the east relied crucially for its success on high quality detail and materials, and we found insufficient evidence that this would be delivered. The risk of not delivering the necessary quality and character would be a failure to genuinely regenerate the town and surrounding area. It appeared that technical and engineering constraints had imposed certain design solutions, and we thought this could prejudice the viability of the scheme as a whole.

The Panel thought that the residential elements as shown appeared too suburban and we urged the designer to ensure that they followed the street line and character of the townscape context. We were told that they will be primarily used for social housing.

The Panel enquired about the progress of the sustainability strategy, particularly given the ambitious claims. We were told that it would depend on the particular users who came forward, but the Panel felt strongly that a site-wide sustainability strategy should be developed urgently and integrated with the design development. This should be driven by a good site analysis, based on sunpath and wind studies, and an evaluation of the various options in terms of their carbon savings. We found no real evidence that this would be a flagship low carbon development, or that an optimum sustainable design solution had been achieved. At the very least, we thought that at this stage the developers should be planning for a district heating system to be included in the infrastructure works, and identifying areas for biomass plant and fuel storage. If this work was left until later and an attempt was made to 'bolt on' various technologies, we were sure that the sustainability credentials would be severely compromised.

The Panel was informed that the architectural input would come from within ASM Design and we regretted that no designer was present at this review. We were also told that the proposed major retailer had been identified but that there was no formal agreement yet.

The Panel was concerned about how this development would look from across the valley, and we suggested that the designer refer to precedents for siting large objects on valley sides. We also suggested that inventive ways of screening the car park should be explored. The Panel was keen to see the difficult topography of the site modelled and would recommend a simple massing and level model used as a design tool to assist understanding of the potential for this significant site.

The Panel questioned how inviting and usable the open spaces would be in practice, and whether the necessary footfall would be generated in all areas of the development. In particular, the microclimatic conditions of each of these spaces for pedestrians should be reviewed - the possibility of excessive wind funnelling through the retail concourse was a concern to the panel and should be investigated urgently. We noted that there was no natural loop in the various circulation options nor a good relationship between

the major attraction of the foodstore and the other outlets, and we thought that the development was in danger of being used solely for car-based shopping trips.

The Panel noted that there was a huge investment of public money in this project, not including the public realm improvements which depended on raising more funds, and we questioned whether this proposal represented good value. The Panel thought that retail uses alone would not activate regeneration, but the team stated that a critical level of development was necessary to stimulate the provision of improved services.

Crynodeb/Summary

The Panel was pleased to review this important scheme again, but we found no evidence on which to revise our previous assessment. We find this proposal to be an unacceptable response to the site and the brief, which is in itself seriously flawed. In summary:

- The proposal is not well integrated with the existing townscape and appears more like an out-of-town development, bolted to the town centre and dominated by car parking.
- The new retail units should relate to the grain of the existing high street and follow the back-of-pavement line.
- The contemporary elements require a high quality of detailing to be successful and we are not convinced that this will be delivered.
- We are disappointed that there were no designers present at this review.
- We would like to see a skin of development on the eastern side of the car park. We think that the advantages of this should be tested against the engineering constraints.
- We have major concerns about the delivery of the ambitious sustainability objectives and we think they will not be met unless they are embedded into the design from an early stage.
- We question how well the open spaces will work, in terms of their connection to all aspects of the scheme and the outdoor environment created.
- The appearance of the development on the southern approach and from across the valley needs to be tested with photomontages and 3D models, which also refer to the existing context.

We would be happy to continue working with the team to achieve the best possible outcome and we would like to see this at Design Review again before a planning application is submitted, which we understand is likely to be in October 2008.

Diwedd/End

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