

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



**Adroddiad Adolygu Dylunio:** 29 January 2008  
**Design Review Report:**

**Dyddiad Cyfarfod / Meeting Date:** 16 January 2008

**Lleoliad/Location:** Bargoed

**Disgrifiad o'r Cynllun** Town Centre Regeneration  
**Scheme Description:**

**Cleient/Asiant:** Caerphilly CBC [Bryan Morgan]  
**Client/Agent:** WAG [Steve Slocombe]

**Developer/Datblygwr:** n/a

**Pensaer/Architect:** Barton Willmore [Andrew Jones,  
Martin Douglas,  
Simone Pottinger]

**Awdurdod Cynllunio:** Caerphilly CBC  
**Planning Authority:**

**Statws Cynllunio:** n/a  
**Planning Status:**

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

**Lead Panellist:** Mark Hallett

**Sylwedyddion/Observers:**

**Steve Jones, WAG; DE&T**

### **Cyflwyniad/Presentation**

Bargoed town centre has been in steady decline for the last 20-30 years and this project is seen as a catalyst for future regeneration of the area. The proposed site was identified as a potential retail area in the Camlin Lonsdale study which was reviewed by DCFW in May 2005. A main driver for this scheme is the new infrastructure works attached to the new relief road to the east, and the creation of a plateau from steeply sloping reclaimed land, which exploits the open views to the east and links back to the town. There will also be a new, relocated bus station, closer to the rail station and an improved rail service. The High Street will become north bound only once the relief road is operational.

The site is viewed as a gateway with the opportunity for a landmark building, small scale residential development and a new entrance square at the southern end. The northern half of the site is identified for a large foodstore, cinema, and small unit shops. Parking for approximately 500 cars takes up the central part of the site. An east/west pedestrian link terminates opposite the Hanbury Arms and connects with a walkway along the valley edge incorporating three lookout points. Improvements to Hanbury Square will be funded by the Local Authority and could include a new kiosk. A public art strategy has been produced which proposes public art as an integrated part of the project, to add richness and distinctiveness to the public realm. These proposals will necessitate the demolition of 13 properties on the High Street.

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

The Panel established that the development brief has already been put out to tender and the deadline for replies was two days after the date of this review. The team anticipate receiving five bids and hope to appoint a preferred developer in March 2008. The extent of capital receipt is unknown. Assessment criteria for selecting a preferred developer have been developed on the basis of a 70% weighting for design related issues, and 30% for financial issues. The Panel observed that a Design Review of this project would have been much more valuable at an earlier stage when the brief and code were in preparation. We were unsure as to why the scheme had not returned to review in the period between 2005 and 2008 and we requested that the team consult us again with the submissions from the preferred and reserve developers, before they are appointed.

The Panel welcomed the positive statements in the brief about achieving quality in building design and the public realm, but questioned how these

aspirations would be protected through the process of procurement and development. The development team stated that much depended on the quality of bids received, but that they were committed to a high quality urban scheme – rather than an edge of town supermarket – to act as a catalyst for future development in the rest of Bargoed. The Panel advised that it was important to establish the desired mix and composition of uses first, before the development of the design. We were informed that the viability of the proposed mix has been tested and that the cinema is a core element in the brief.

The Panel thought that the car parking provision was excessive, given a site which is very well serviced by public transport, and resulted in a car-dominated solution, particularly with the adoption of an extensive one-way traffic system and a second relief road for the town centre. The team stated that the proposed 500 spaces was considerably less than the CBC requirement for 800 spaces. In addition, the potential foodstore operators have their own expectations, and have agreed to this figure. The car park will be open to the public and will be detailed so that part of it could be used as a new town square, for example for an annual festival.

The Panel noted that the eastern edge of the plateau was an important asset, which was not being sufficiently exploited. There was discussion around the possibility of creating a parallel high street with more residential accommodation running along this edge, to enclose the site, shield the car park, and give animation and surveillance to the proposed walkway which is currently fronted by blank walls. The team cited engineering considerations – of building close to the plateau edge – as well as cost constraints. However, the Panel considered that a linear development in this location would add value to the project as a whole and would be much more sympathetic to the north-south grain of the existing town. Given the engineering implications of the proposed structures, we felt that a thin skin of smaller units would be structurally feasible.

The Panel observed that the images produced in the brief were largely metropolitan and European and did not adequately convey the context of a Welsh valley town. The linear nature of the existing town was not reflected in this scheme, nor was the potential pedestrian connection and legibility of the cross streets. The disconnections were in danger of making it an island site. It was agreed that the scheme's success would depend on it being well integrated with the High Street.

The Panel was concerned that the proposed site layout would not reinforce and expand the use of the High Street as a retail and service area as intended, but on the contrary would encourage car journeys at the expense of pedestrian movement. To counteract this possibility we suggested locating the foodstore, or at least its main entrance, on the High Street itself, and the team agreed to explore this option, while acknowledging the need to balance commercial constraints.

The Panel thought that the proposal for residential blocks at the southern end of the site was an important and desirable part of the mix, but not at all resolved in the presented material. Instead of the scattered block approach, we suggested that a row of new houses could be incorporated, backing on to the existing houses along the south western boundary, and facing the valley. The team thought that there would be insufficient space for this, with the current parking standards, and also did not want to be too prescriptive in the brief and pre-empt innovative design suggestions from coming through. However, the Panel pointed out that the drawings and illustrations produced in the brief will inevitably influence the design response and should always have a design integrity rather than creating new design problems.

The Panel applauded the commitment to achieving BREEAM Excellent or its equivalent, and added that the environmental strategy adopted should anticipate the WAG aspiration for zero carbon buildings by 2011. Rather than orienting the non-domestic buildings for maximum solar access, we suggested that north-facing lights would be more appropriate, to ensure good levels of daylight while minimising the risk of overheating and the need for artificial cooling. A single district heating scheme, with an optimal mix of residential and commercial demands, would be an important step in reducing carbon emissions and delivering energy more efficiently

The Panel appreciated the submission of a Public Arts Strategy and asked for details of its status. We were informed that it has been accepted as part of the tender documentation by the CBC, and that the £265,000 figure quoted is enshrined in the budget as a minimum, to cover six major projects as well as street furniture and mitigation of the walkway frontages. It was confirmed that the consultant Simon Fenhoulet would be retained as part of the development team. However, the Panel considered that the ring fenced amount was insufficient for the programme set out in the strategy and more work would be needed to secure funding and extract value from budgets by enhancing street furniture etc. The strategy, although detailed and part of the suite of tender documentation, is not supported by adoption at local authority level or by SPG. It therefore remains aspirational and risks being overlooked in the development process. Concern was expressed over the prescriptive nature of the strategy and the number of interventions aimed at mitigating the bland environment of the car park. The consultant might be asked to work with the team to develop fewer, higher quality projects from high calibre artists and in particular, meaningful projects with the resident community.

### **Crynodeb/Summary**

The Panel appreciated the opportunity to review this important proposal, but regretted that DCFW had not been engaged earlier, when the documents were at draft stage and when our comments would have been more useful in finalising the brief and adding value. We welcome the initiative and the

proposed investment in the area, but we consider the concept scheme which underpins the guidance to be highly flawed in urban design terms, while the accompanying Code is inappropriate and lacks adequate recognition of the Welsh Valley context. The guidance package is unlikely to achieve a positive, well-functioning and integrated development which will significantly regenerate the town. In particular:

- The Development Brief is considered to be of a poor standard and is unlikely to elicit appropriate responses from the developer bidders. We think the brief should have concentrated more on defining specific elements of mix, movement and layout, and less on the architectural details
- The dangers of tendering with what is in effect a concept design with unrealistic and irrelevant imagery is that the developer bidders are likely to follow this guidance verbatim and would feel mis-directed if they were not credited for doing so.
- It is essential that this new scheme is well integrated with the High Street, consolidates the predominantly residential nature of the town, and relates well to the new square (which we doubt will be a particular asset to the town) and service area
- The island nature and treatment of the site is compounded by the lack of resolution of the residential component, of pedestrian and vehicle movement, of edge treatments and enclosure of traffic routes.
- We have major reservations about the car parking strategy, and the way in which it drives the development of the site
- We think the residential element could be better resolved and exploited to add overall value to the site and reflect the north-south street pattern of the town
- We would like to see a residential development lining the street along the plateau edge to take advantage of the views across the valley, to reinforce the belvedere, and to give the town a positive new face.
- We welcome the commitment in the brief to high standards of environmental performance and we would encourage an additional commitment in response to the 2011 zero carbon target. The fenestration of the non-domestic blocks should respond to daylighting needs rather than solar gain and a district heating scheme should be evaluated for its contribution to reducing the carbon footprint of the development
- We are pleased that a professional public art consultant will be retained through the design development and we support the aspiration for high quality, integrated artwork but warn this will require strong support from the public sector partners and the development team.
- We would like to review the responses to this development brief before a preferred and reserve bidder are appointed, or failing that to review the preferred development proposal prior to submitting a planning application.

**Diwedd/End**

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