

Statws/Status:
Cyfrinachol / Confidential



Adroddiad Adolygu Dylunio: 16 June 2006
Design Review Report:

Dyddiad Cyfarfod / Cyflwyno'r Deunydd: 5 June 2006
Meeting Date / Material Submitted:

Lleoliad/Location: Station Road, Bethesda

Disgrifiad o'r Cynllun Primary Care Centre
Scheme Description:

Cleient/Asiant: Gwynedd LHB [Heather Merrick]
Client/Agent: Bethesda Surgery [Dr WJ Mithan,
Dr Nicki Heinersdorff, Jo Oliver]

Developer/Datblygwr: Medical Centre Developments
[Tim Downs]

Pensaer/Architect: Halsall Lloyd Architects
[Miriam Cobrin, David Rudkin]

Awdurdod Cynllunio: Gwynedd CC
Planning Authority: [John Wyn Jones]

Statws Cynllunio: Pre-planning
Planning Status:

Y Panel Adolygu Dylunio/Design Review Panel:
Alan Francis (cadeirydd/chair) Elfed Roberts
Cindy Harris (swyddog/officer) Jonathan Hines
Nick Davies

Lead Panellist Jonathan Hines

Cyflwyniad/Presentation

There is a recognised need for a new primary care centre to serve Bethesda and surrounding villages. An Aedet exercise was carried out in October 2005 as part of the development of the first design option. Welsh Health Estates did not support this design, on the grounds that it did not reflect an integrated plan form, nor an integrated three dimensional form. As a result a second version was developed with interlocking monopitch roofs intended to reflect the surrounding mountains. These two design options were then the subject of a more detailed critique by Nightingale Architects, resulting in a third version which the Panel had in advance of this review in sketch form only. The brief is still in the process of being finalised. The design team have incorporated the healthcare design principles advocated by CABE.

The site is level and located off the main Bangor Road in Bethesda. It is bordered by back gardens and a Territorial Army centre to the north east, and overlooked by the mountains of Snowdonia to the south east. The Snowdonia National Park lies nearby, immediately on the opposite bank of the River Ogwen. The main vehicular entry is from Station Road to the east. The site has served previously as a station yard and bus depot and still accommodates a rugby club / community centre.

The architects have sought to produce a strong but simple response to the dramatic scenery and surrounding buildings typical of a Welsh quarrying village, including the dominant red brick chapel. The third design option brings the different functions together into one block, leaving a minimum of 3 metres between the building footprint and the site boundary. A simple clear entrance path leads to an entry porch which is designed to frame the view. A double height waiting area benefits from views to the mountains and through to an internal courtyard. On one side of the courtyard is a row of consulting rooms, while the other wing houses associated treatment rooms, a pharmacy and dental service. The lift is placed centrally.

The Local Authority emphasised that this was a much needed facility. They had originally favoured the first concept and still prefer that to the second. They had not seen details of the third design until today, but they think that it looks promising.

Ymateb y Panel/Panel's Response

The Panel was told that the core design idea was to emphasise the sense of arrival and exploit the views to the mountains. The relation of the public space with the more private, secure areas was important and the architect felt that the courtyard now gives a sense of progression between different types of space. The main entry point has been placed on a particular axis to frame the views. In the previous schemes, patients had to approach through the car park which then interrupted the view. The Panel wondered whether the space in front of the entrance could be developed even further, into a garden or external waiting area, and the parking located elsewhere. However, the importance of weather protection for most of the year was noted. Ideally the walkway approaching the main entrance should be completely pedestrianised, rather than treated as a shared space with vehicles.

The Panel thought that there was an absence of three dimensional design in the two former schemes, but that this was now more apparent in the third version. The treatment of massing and elevations and the development of the detail, combined with sensitive selection of materials, should be progressed now that a clear direction has been identified.

The Panel thought that the transparency through the waiting room to the courtyard worked well. However, the single large block now appears rather dominant and the reception area forbiddingly vast. A ceiling would help to counteract this but might prejudice the views. The courtyard needs a positive landscape design to make it work as an amenity rather than just left over space. Its function and access also need to be clarified, along with the division between public and private space. The very high, rear end gable wall is not conducive to an informal intimate space. The Panel suggested that the chapel-like form should be retained for the central axis of the building, with smaller low-roofed wings framing the main entrance and the staff entrance to the rear. This would enable omission of the large floating front gable which encloses an uncomfortably tall outdoor space. We recommended that the three rooms fronting on to the courtyard be relocated and the courtyard be surrounded on both its long sides by a glazed public corridor. The courtyard itself may need to be reconfigured and made smaller, simpler and more open.

The Panel thought that the building still appeared to be squeezed between two roads. We would like to see these combined into one road which could access the staff car park, rugby club and any future park and ride facility, in order to give the building and surrounding landscape more room. We were informed that this might increase security problems and that the planning policy department wanted a separate access to the land beyond this site for a possible park and ride scheme. Nevertheless, the Panel considered that losing one road would give a softer edge to the building, allowing it to move slightly towards the northeast boundary, as well as more amenity to local residents.

With regard to the main entrance, we suggested that the slate paved surface could be carried through the waiting and reception area and out into the courtyard. A glazed ridge light and glazed lift shaft would help to keep the interior spaces light and airy, in contrast to the solid exterior. However, the users thought that people in the lift would want privacy, in which case the Panel suggested the lift could be relocated, although it is currently placed centrally to allow for future flexibility.

The doctors who would be occupying this centre pointed out that there was no private area in reception shown, or a private entrance to the group room. A waiting area upstairs was shown but was not required, as this was a staff area and the users were not in favour of providing more patient space at this level. The lift would be primarily for disabled staff.

The Panel commented that with its high ceilings and relatively large areas of external wall, this would probably be an expensive building to heat and manage. We encouraged the client team to specify an AEDET Excellent rating, and applauded the intention to use natural ventilation, aided by the shallow floor plan which resulted from the courtyard design. The Panel thought the round window as a reference to the existing chapel was not convincing and would prefer to see it omitted. It was confirmed that this design version does not include red brick, but does include areas of smooth render. More thought needs to be given to the means of enclosure and boundary treatments.

Crynodeb/Summary

The Panel thought that this latest design shows a strong idea centered round the internal courtyard, replacing the central circulation space. We support this as the basis for a scheme which will be an acceptable response to the site and the brief, albeit with some major revisions to its current form. In particular:

- We think the design approach should aim for a contemporary building, rooted in its surroundings.
- The large block form and section are too dominant and need reducing in scale, although we think the large section could be retained in the middle of the building.
- The floorplan should be simplified in order to arrive at an appropriate scale, and the rear gable should be reduced in height.
- More clarity is needed on how the courtyard will be used and what type of space surrounds it. We suggest this should be a cloister-like public circulation space.
- The three rooms 'within' the courtyard should be relocated and the courtyard area reduced.
- We would prefer to see the circular window abandoned.
- We suggest that a continuous slate surface linking internal and external spaces would help root the building in its surroundings.
- We support the intention to exploit the separate wings and shallow plan for natural ventilation, and urge that an AEDET Excellent rating be achieved

Diwedd/End

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