

Addroddiad Adolygu Dylunio Design Review Report

Review Status: **Confidential**

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| Meeting date: | 17 September 2008 |
| Issue Date: | 25 September 2008 |
| Scheme Location: | Blaenavon |
| Scheme Description: | Health, Education, Leisure |
| Planning Status: | Pre-application |

Part1: Presentation

The proposed Blaenavon Community Campus is a new £15 million integrated development comprising a primary school and nursery; community leisure facilities; a Primary Care Resource Centre; and other community services. Five possible sites within the town were considered, and the preferred site is that of the former Blaenavon Recreation Centre, now demolished.

The Local Planning Authority is broadly supportive of the use in principle, and of a contemporary design for the development.

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

The Panel welcomes the integrated, holistic approach to the provision of community services. We accept the reasons for the choice of the preferred site and note that other uses are proposed for the site of Hillside school. We support the ambition of the proposed scheme but there is a lack of detailed information to support the masterplan concept, and major revisions are necessary:

- A full detailed planning application should be made rather than an outline, to include landscape, energy and movement/transport strategies. The importance of resolving these issues at an early stage should override any problems of phasing.
- Connectivity between the site and the town centre needs to be improved and enhanced
- Pedestrian circulation within the site needs to be integrated into a movement strategy that minimises traffic along Middle Coedcae Road, which should be designed as a pedestrian friendly and sociable hub.

- The building form and layout needs to be thoroughly reviewed, including plan depths, roof pitches and elevational treatment.
- Boundary treatments should achieve a balance between security and community access, and should not detract from the quality of adjacent public routes.
- An integrated energy strategy needs developing now, based on achieving BREEAM Excellent and exploiting the opportunity for district heating and renewable generation.

Part 2: Discussion and Panel Response in Full

Further justification for the choice of site was given – in particular for the rejection of Option 3, the site of Hillside Primary school and the most central site. The reasons given related to access, the constraints of Upper Hill Street [steep, narrow] and the architectural merit of the existing school building which made it worthy of retention. Although we thought that access from the north eastern corner of the site would be possible, we accepted that the site would be equally appropriate for the proposed residential use .

We supported the integrated approach to the provision of community services for this small town, and we urged the team to adopt a similarly integrated approach to energy provision. The combination of uses would lend itself well to a community CHP scheme, which could be operated by an ESCO [energy supply company]. This needs to be embedded in the masterplan and to inform all aspects of the design development. It was confirmed that BREEAM Excellent will be the required standard for all the buildings on site.

A new vehicular entrance is planned into the site from the south, to access a new car park serving the health and leisure facilities. However, due to highway restrictions, exiting vehicles will have to use Middle Coedcae Road. The site is within 150m of a bus stop and buses run every 15 minutes, but efforts will be made to re-route buses within the site. We were seriously concerned that these proposals would prejudice the intention to create pedestrian priority along Middle Coedcae Road. There will be a serious danger of congestion especially at certain times of the day [eg school collection times], and the calmed and intimate quality of a pedestrian friendly space will not be achieved.

We strongly support the idea of the central street as a hub, but this needs supporting with more detailed proposals for traffic management directed by the site layout and built form, rather than a plethora of signage. A movement diagram should now be developed which clearly identifies the different functions and their access points, based on patterns of use throughout the day. This should then be used to inform the layout and development of the central street as a safe and sociable space. It is possible that a downgraded speed limit along Ton Mawr Road would enable the southern entrance to become two-way. The team needs to consider options for setting back the buildings from Ton Mawr Road and introducing a lay-by which would allow for dropping off, possibly a bus stop, and for improved sight lines for vehicles exiting the site.

It is important that all boundary treatment and details are included on the masterplan, as this will affect how the development relates to its immediate context. Although we understand that some security fencing will be necessary, the quality of the pedestrian footpath to the east should be enhanced. The design should enable maximum community

use of the sports and leisure facilities, which in turn will bring a degree of community ownership and protection.

The deep plans and shallow roof pitches shown on the drawings are not typical of the area, and the design development should respond better to local references. In addition the importance of introducing daylight to interiors, and the optimum angle for solar collectors, should be considered. The three storey elements of the healthcare building are in danger of overshadowing the leisure centre. We thought the two entrances to the PCRC would cause confusion and that the southern one would tend to be used as the main entrance, contrary to the design intention. Parking spaces to the south nearest the entrance could be reserved for staff, thus encouraging patients to approach the building from the north and helping to avoid users tending to park next to the lower entrance.

The precedents and palette of materials presented are too broad and many are inappropriate. The architectural treatment needs to be grounded in the locality and robust materials used on this exposed site.

There is a danger of finalising the proposed footprint and the scale without more detailed design work to develop realistic internal layouts leading to realistic block sizes. We think that this proposal should be the subject of a detailed planning application in the first instance.

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

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| Asiant/Client/Datblygwr: Agent/Client/Developer | Kier Western [TCBC] Assura [Torfaen LHB] |
| Pensaer/Architect: | Powell Dobson [Chris Gentle, Mark Farrar] |
| Consultants: | LSP Developments [James Pritchard] |
| Awdurdod Cynllunio/Planning Authority: | Torfaen CBC [Paul Matthews, Rachel Standfield, Paul Wheeldon, Graham Screen] |
| Y panel adlygu Dylunio: Design review panel: Alan Francis [Chair] Cindy Harris [Officer] | Ed Colgan Phil Roberts Martin Knight Michael Griffiths |

Lead Panelist:

Ed Colgan

Sylwedyddion/Observers:

None present