

Addroddiad Adolygu Dylunio Design Review Report

Review Status: **Confidential**

Meeting date:	23rd September 2009
Issue Date:	7th October 2009
Scheme Location:	Brackla
Scheme Description:	Mixed use regeneration
Planning Status:	Pre-application

Part1: Presentation

The centre of the site is currently in multiple private ownership with an informal assortment of light industrial buildings occupied by small and medium enterprises. The surrounding land to the north east and south west is under the control of the Welsh Assembly Government [WAG] and all highways on the site are adopted. The aim of this study is to stimulate regeneration of the wider area through consolidation and improvement of the existing business uses, and the introduction of new complimentary uses.

There will be some downgrading of the road network to encourage use of the new roads – the A4061 to the west and the Coity relief road which cuts across the north east corner of the site. New areas for employment use will be established, mainly along the western boundary fronting the A4061. A new residential area to the east will link with the existing community of Brackla, and front the Coity bypass. Sites for two ‘mixed use centres’ are identified and a ‘sustainable energy centre’ is proposed to house a CHP district heating system linked to the nearby hospital and prison. This is a ‘Carbon Pathfinder’ project and all new buildings will be required to meet Code for Sustainable Homes Level 3 or BREEAM Excellent.

The development brief is intended to bridge the gap between the UDP and LDP. It will provide for phased development over the next 15 years, and set key development parameters. As the project progresses, further guidance on layout and design will be produced.

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

The Panel welcomed the opportunity to comment on this proposal at an early stage. We recognise that this is an emerging masterplan and needs more detailed work to become a development brief. In order to evaluate this in a useful way, we would need the following major issues to be addressed:

- Further development of the masterplan documentation should address the issues of building scale and height, local character and mix of uses, in what is a difficult context.
- The aspirations are laudable but could be seen as formulaic, and need re-working to reflect the specific local context.
- We would like to see a pragmatic and flexible approach taken to this regeneration strategy which includes the retention of existing uses and promotion of 'meanwhile' uses. The documentation should reflect this approach with realistic and relevant images.
- The sustainability aspirations are very disappointing in light of the project's Carbon Pathfinder status. We urged the team to be more ambitious and commit to a green infrastructure, enhanced energy / CSH / BREEAM targets, and an embedded public transport strategy as soon as possible.
- Good connectivity and physical integration of any new development will be important together with a coherent approach to urban design which considers the block form, neighbourhood character, road layout and edge treatment.
- The development of individual blocks or zones should not be progressed until a proper masterplan is agreed and in place.

Part 2: Discussion and Panel Response in Full

The Panel sought clarification on whether this document was a regeneration framework, development brief or masterplan, all of which terms have been used to describe it. The team agreed that it is best described as a framework masterplan, moving towards a development brief. However, we doubted that it could yet satisfy any of the above functions and noted that it was primarily a desk-based study.

The Panel welcomed the laudable aspirations contained in the vision statement, especially the status of Carbon Pathfinder project. However, we noted that there is already an eclectic and vibrant mix of uses and activity on the site and we advocated a pragmatic approach to regeneration, which acknowledges the importance of safeguarding and improving existing uses and retaining them by good estate management and an imaginative approach to meanwhile uses. This preferred approach is not supported by what we would consider an inappropriate use of 'high-end' precedent images in the documentation.

Given its Carbon Pathfinder status, we found that the minimum standard required of CSH Level 3 was very disappointing. This does not distinguish this scheme from any other development of a similar size and it is hard to see how the goal of 'pioneering and exploring means of delivering the zero carbon aspiration' will be achieved. It is also difficult to see how private land owners could be persuaded to commit to higher standards unless WAG sets a good precedent on its own land.

We acknowledged that the energy centre and CHP district heating scheme had the potential to become an exemplar demonstration of a green infrastructure project, but this would require a definite commitment from an early stage. The team should consider setting energy targets for all new developments.

We were informed that current public transport provision was poor. This proposal includes two bus routes through the site, but again these need a firm commitment at an early stage if they are to be successful and in place before any new development is completed. The team confirmed that they are looking at parking standards and seeking to agree a provision of 1 space per 40/50 square metres of commercial space.

It is important that any new development is well integrated with the surrounding townscape and residential communities. Currently the blocks are shown as having a hard, urban edge, whilst the road layout is predominantly 'edge-of-town'. The development brief needs to contain much more information on the treatment of the spaces between blocks and the desired character and context. The importance of physical as well as visual links needs to be emphasised and defined, particularly with the existing communities of Coity and Brackla.

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	WAG; DE&T [Chris Delve, John Karseras]
Pensaer/Architect:	Barton Willmore [Martin Douglas, Ben Stephenson]
Awdurdod Cynllunio/ Planning Authority	Bridgend CBC
Y Panel Adlygu Dylunio: Design review panel: Ewan Jones [Chair] Cindy Harris [Officer] Jonathan Hines Ed Colgan	Mark Hallett Howard Wainwright Simon Carne
Lead Panellist:	Mark Hallett

Sylwedyddion/Observers:

Glen Dyke [DCFW]

Maria Amparo Asenjo [DCFW]

Declaration of Interest: Mark Hallett is working in a joint venture with WAG on a separate project