

Statws/Status:
Cyfrinachol / Confidential



Adroddiad Adolygu Dylunio: 16 May 2006
Design Review Report:

Dyddiad Cyfarfod / Cyflwyno'r Deunydd: 3 May 2006
Meeting Date / Material Submitted:

Lleoliad/Location: Brewery Yard, Abergavenny

Disgrifiad o'r Cynllun Public realm
Scheme Description:

Cleient/Asiant: Monmouthshire CC
Client/Agent: [Colin Phillips, Rick Longford, Edward Holland]

Pensaer/Architect: MacGregor Smith [Tim Rose]

Awdurdod Cynllunio: Monmouthshire CC
Planning Authority:

Statws Cynllunio: Pre-planning. Application
Planning Status: imminent [June 06]

Y Panel Adolygu Dylunio/Design Review Panel:
John Punter (cadeirydd/chair) Kieren Morgan
Cindy Harris (swyddog/officer) Phil Roberts
Elfed Roberts Paul Vanner
Ed Colgan Ann-Marie Smale

Lead Panellist: Ann-Marie Smale

Sylwedyddion/Observers:
Charlie Deng Design Review Assistant
Angela Williams, Architecture and Design, Scotland

Cyflwyniad/Presentation

Brewery Yard is a critical link site and potential public space within the town of Abergavenny, situated between the main shopping street and the proposed new Walmart development on the cattle mart site. It is currently used as a market space on certain days of the week and a short term car park, but is inward looking, fragmented by changes of level, and surrounded predominantly by the backs of buildings. The local council received funding to develop the design thus far, including a traffic study and public consultation.

The aim is to develop the site as a 'high quality open space asset' and as a focus for many different activities and pedestrian routes. The site is currently cut in half by a three metre level difference and a line of existing buildings used as garages and stores, running east/west. This proposed design shows a curved fan form of paving, emanating from the northern corner of the Market Hall, and stepping down to the lower level, and the Cibi Brook which will be opened up a little more from its culvert. Two small amenity buildings – a kiosk, WC and shelter - will be provided at the upper level, with all parking [apart from six disabled spaces] at the lower level. A pedestrian space will be created at the upper level but it will be criss-crossed with service vehicles and those seeking disabled parking. A timber footbridge across the brook will link the car park to the rear of the Bethany Chapel. The site will continue to function as a market space and car park but with improved amenity space.

There will be a repaving of Market Street, and initially a one-way access from Cross Street to the west and two-way access from Lion Street, with a second access direct to the car park from further east on Lion Street.. The viability and appearance of existing shops in Market Street will be evaluated and improvements made. Gaps in the line of shops will hopefully be filled in with appropriate developments, although the three new units shown are illustrative only and not part of this application.

Street furniture and artwork will reflect the history and previous use of the site as a brewery. An artist has been involved from the beginning and has used barrel forms as bench seating and as pillars to enclose and delineate Market Street. Oversized 'shopping bags' brimming with local produce flank the main steps and these have become a local talking point, if a somewhat contentious addition to the design.

The kiosks will have copper roofs and walls clad with re-used stone from the demolition of existing buildings. Paving materials will be natural stone setts, locally sourced, together with clay paving to reflect the brickwork around the chapel. Uplighters will be located on steps and to highlight artwork features. Signage will be well integrated and will not contribute to clutter of the public space.

The project team acknowledged that the traffic assessment will need to be tested. The Local Authority conservation officer had no objections to these proposals and thought that the new space would help to secure viable uses for the listed buildings in the area. In particular a new use for the chapel, such as a restaurant, would ensure its reuse and retention.

Ymateb y Panel/Panel's Response

The Panel recognised that this was a very difficult site to develop, with a potential conflict of uses and users. It was confirmed that the main pedestrian access would be along Market Street and that the diagonal route across the site was no longer an option. There is a possibility in the future of a total pedestrianisation of Market Street, but this would depend on the projected impact on traffic flows, and would need to refer to the traffic assessment. The Panel noted that with stepped access only provided in Brewery Yard, access between the two levels for disabled and pram-users would have to be along Market Street, and would be very circuitous. Adequate pavements would need to be provided to ensure pedestrian safety on a narrow street with vehicular use.

The Panel would like to see a much greater simplicity in the treatment of the open space and buildings, and less 'clutter'. We found the amenity buildings rather over-designed, overly traditional and poorly sited, competing unnecessarily with the basic simplicity of the market stalls. Similarly the street furniture requires a simpler, lighter touch. The Panel found the quality of the proposed artworks poor and the 'theming' very artificial and non-civic. Neither contributed to the kind of high quality environment required in the brief, which would be better delivered by simplicity of form, clarity of movement and use, and clear separation of vehicles and pedestrians as far as possible. We thought that the line of barrels along Market Street would constitute a visual barrier, but we were informed by the designer that they serve to define the edge of the street and echo the colonnade further up Market Street.

The Panel considered the proposed relationship between the rear elevation of the Market Hall and the space immediately outside. We would like to see a secondary entrance to the hall serving to improve public circulation and enliven the outdoor space, and provide a focal point for the external works. The possibility could be explored of incorporating the amenity structures and functions into a new rear entrance, in a contemporary way. We suggested that the windows could be extended to meet the ground, while keeping the existing proportions. It was pointed out that the Market Hall is a listed building but we did not think that this was necessarily a bar to all elevational alterations. The Market Hall has a central role to play in this scheme, and there are many examples of successful contemporary additions to, and openings into, traditional buildings.

The designer stated that changing the rear elevation of the hall had been considered, but a decision was made to adapt the scheme to suit the building, rather than vice versa. Dropping the cills would affect the internal space used by market traders. The Panel still thought that the upper level of Brewery Yard was unnecessarily congested and ill-defined, and this would negatively affect the quality of the public space. The question remains as to whether this is a genuinely pedestrian space, a servicing area, or disabled parking area. Clarity of purpose and pedestrian priority was considered to be all important on this upper level outside the Market Hall.

The Panel supported the gradual approach to pedestrianising Market Street, possibly beginning with closure of the southern end and ensuring that all traffic approached from the north. This would also permit greater pedestrian priority on Cross Street, a major environmental improvement for the town. We applauded the opening up of the stream and would like to see this extended to include the culvert. However, we were informed that the stream would be well below the car park at this point, and any opening would constitute a

narrow slot which could collect rubbish. A wider, banked opening would involve an unacceptable loss of parking spaces.

The Panel would like to see a more integrated, holistic approach to the regeneration of this area on the part of the Local Authority. At the moment it appears that there are different schemes being progressed in isolation, without reference to a wider design brief or masterplan. We were told that such an integrated approach was being attempted, including the possibility of enhancing the conservation area buildings on the perimeter of this site.

Crynodeb/Summary

The Panel welcomed the presentation of this scheme and acknowledged that it does form part of a coherent strategy for public realm enhancement in the town. We support the aim of creating a high quality and accessible public space, and the process of consultation. We consider this proposal to be an acceptable response to the site and the brief, but with some major revisions necessary. In particular:

- The overall design should exhibit qualities of elegant understatement and refinement. A contemporary approach to the design of the space with quality lighting, paving and walling materials and furniture would better complement the historic setting.
- We have strong reservations about the quality of the public art, which suffers from too much theming and intervention, and is out of scale with the context.
- The kiosk / shelter could be combined into a single building, or into a new rear entrance for the Market Hall. The design should be robust and simple with high quality materials.
- We would like to see a gradual pursuit of the eventual goal of total pedestrianisation of Market Street
- A pedestrian ramp should be provided within Brewery Yard for those who cannot use steps, and this could be made into an interesting design feature.
- Disabled parking should be located at the lower level and the upper level kept free from vehicles apart from servicing.
- The rear facade of the hall should be sensitively exploited to add quality and interest to the external space, and promote a greater interaction between inside and outside.

Diwedd/End

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