

<b>Comisiwn Dylunio Cymru</b>	<b>Design Commission for Wales</b>
<b>Design Review Report:</b>	<b>18 October 2004</b>
<b>Meeting Date / Material Submitted:</b>	<b>13 October 2004</b>
<b>Location:</b>	<b>Bryngwyn Road, Newport</b>
<b>Scheme Description:</b>	<b>Residential apartment block</b>
<b>Developer:</b>	<b>Lakefield Development Ltd [Craig Sugar]</b>
<b>Design Team:</b>	<b>Boyes Rees Architects [Dean Southcombe]</b>
<b>Public Body:</b>	<b>Newport CC [Roger Richards]</b>
<b>Planning Status:</b>	<b>Outline planning exists. Full planning application went to committee September '04. Decision deferred</b>
<b>Panel:</b>	
<b>John Punter (chair)</b>	<b>Richard Parnaby</b>
<b>Cindy Harris (officer)</b>	<b>Paul Vanner</b>
<b>Howard Wainwright</b>	

## **Presentation**

This edge-of-town centre site, opposite a school and in a predominantly residential area, covers 0.6 acres with an irregular frontage of 80 metres. Its previous use was for a car park and religious meeting hall. The proposal is for a 3-4 storey residential block, comprising 19 no. one-and two-bed apartments. 31 car parking spaces are provided to the rear of the building.

There have been objections from local residents, whose main worry concerns overlooking, the quality of design and how well the proposed new building would fit into the street and its context. The new proposal does represent a change of scale from the lower half of Bryngwyn Street. The Planning Authority is not likely to relax its parking standards (requiring 31 spaces) and is in negotiation with the Highways Department on the possible requirement for additional parking. At a recent committee meeting, a decision on this scheme was deferred pending a site visit by the members and referral to this design review panel. It will be re-presented to a committee meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> October.

## Panel's Response

It appears that this scheme has suffered from varying and contradictory inputs over the course of its development. The original density has had to be reduced because of parking requirements. The possibility of larger south facing windows to the rear, a sustainability bonus, was abandoned because of residents' fear of being overlooked.

Unfortunately, the drawings presented lacked appropriate analysis of the context and the design statement was confusing, referring to an earlier design. The profile comparisons revealed the attempt to reduce building heights, but this had not improved the design. The opportunity to close the view from the side street had been lost and in general the relationship to the townscape could be significantly improved.

The panel finds the height and massing of this scheme to be acceptable in this context, though it does not consider it to be the best solution preferring to see three separate buildings, each with slate roofs whose pitch matches those in the locality. We do not consider the reduction in roof heights will achieve any improvement to the amenity of the neighbours, and we are concerned that the current roof designs are out of character. In particular, the truncated hip details are clumsy and produce some awkward and difficult to maintain junctions.

As for the elevations, the rusticated render base sitting on top of brickwork is illogical and appears to be stuck on. Likewise the string courses picked out in the stonework appear irrelevant. The classical architectural references are not appropriate in this context, particularly the classical doorways which are not symmetrically placed on the facade. A gothic treatment would be more in keeping with the surrounding houses, with steeper roof pitches and larger windows. If pressed, the Panel would prefer to see a more modern solution using red brick and slate in a contemporary way, while respecting the scale and proportions of the housing in the area

The boundary treatment needs to be more convincing and in keeping with surrounding Victorian/Edwardian properties. In particular it should enclose the street in an urban way and offer some privacy and defensible space for residents. The lack of a street entrance to the housing is unsatisfactory and breaks with the traditions of the street. It is disappointing to see that the residents have no usable amenity space

There appears to be no sustainable development strategy for this scheme. The failure to exploit southern elevations for solar gain, possibly incorporating verandahs or balconies, and the chosen mix of materials – render, reconstituted stone and slate, and uPVC windows – all confirm the impression that sustainability considerations have been ignored.

The Panel are concerned that the Council is insisting on standard suburban housing parking standards in this town centre edge location within easy walking distance of a mainline station. If the car parking requirement was reduced the whole layout could be improved and the existing and new residents given more amenity.

### **Summary**

The Panel recognises the constraints inherent in developing this site and the compromises which have followed resident opposition. Similar difficulties might be avoided in the future by engaging with local residents to defend sound proposals and demonstrate that the back to back distances are an improvement on those enjoyed by most houses, and that the pitched roof heights are appropriate. In addition we would make the following points:

- We would prefer a reduced level of car parking in favour of a greater density or better amenity space. The imposed parking standards are not appropriate given the prevailing urban grain and we would hope that Newport CC would resist parking-driven development and support a proper intensification of use.
- We fully support the protection of existing mature trees on or adjacent to the site.
- The boundary treatment should be made more urban and front entrances provided on the street front.
- The south façade should be enlivened with larger windows. Balcony provision need not mean a greater physical proximity to existing buildings.
- All classical references in the elevations should be abandoned, particularly in favour of a steeper roof pitch and if necessary a raised roof line. Elevational treatments should be re-worked into a form more sensitive to the locality.
- A sustainable development approach should be advanced in relation to parking standards, density, materials, fenestration and insulation levels.

End