

Statws/Status:
Cyfrinachol / Confidential



Adroddiad Adolygu Dylunio:
Design Review Report: **11 March 2005**

Dyddiad Cyfarfod / Cyflwyno'r Deunydd:
Meeting Date / Material Submitted: **2 March 2005**

Lleoliad/Location: **The Old Mart Site
St Catherine's Walk, Carmarthen**

Disgrifiad o'r Cynllun **Town Centre Regeneration**
Scheme Description: **Scheme**

Cleient/Asiant: **Simons Development**
Client/Agent: **[Giles Walter]**

Pensaer/Architect: **Clarity NS [Keith Neil Smith]**

Awdurdod Cynllunio: **Carmarthenshire County**
Planning Authority: **Council [John Thomas]**

Statws Cynllunio:
Planning Status: **Pre-application**

Y Panel Adolygu Dylunio/Design Review Panel:

Alan Francis (cadeirydd/chair) **Douglas Hogg**
Cindy Harris (swyddog/officer) **Wendy Hall**
Howard Wainwright **Nigel Hanson**

Sylwedyddion/Observers: **Gillian Wulff**

Cyflwyniad/Presentation

The site area is to the north of the town centre and potentially doubles the retail core of the town. The former mart site is now a car park with a predominantly 'residential back gardens'

edge. Some demolition is required with the realignment of Fair Lane, replacement of the existing indoor market building and demolition of a derelict petrol filling station. The site slopes from north to south.

The procurement of the design team and developer was won through competition in which the council were a partner. The two main commercial drivers for the scheme were identified to be the incorporation of Debenhams and a multiplex cinema. The relocation of the market hall within the scheme is also important in preserving its central position.

The historic urban development of the town was considered, describing how the town centre has been pulled to the south towards Tesco and the Greyfriars development, and the aim is to rebalance this and pull back to the north, using the street patterns and links to the clock tower and routes to the market. The aim is to remedy some of the breaks, in particular the re-siting of the market hall to mitigate the current blockage created by the market hall, and the reconnecting of Mansel Street. The result has been the creation of a series of urban blocks. The car park had no historic movement patterns through it, and is considered a sensible location for future parking, creating a trinity of car parks with the town centre in the middle.

A number of issues have arisen, in particular concerns that the permeability of the scheme be reduced to ensure market viability - the issues of big users to the north of the scheme - and market concerns about moving development north of St Catherine Street. The intention to introduce an element of pedestrianisation on St Catherine Street meant that Debenhams agreed to be located to the north. The market users wanted to remain central rather than move further north.

The plan form proposals provide new retail units, a smaller open Market area around the clock tower, with the relocated market hall to the west. New public spaces connect with the existing centre and draw customers north through the site to Debenhams and a multiscreen cinema. The link to the north is needed and it is considered important that Fair Lane be realigned and straightened. Barnsfield Terrace is currently a dead end and the aim is to continue and integrate it into the scheme. The aspiration is for a mixed use scheme, though currently there is no enthusiasm for residential uses.

Early sketches for the department store illustrate a contemporary building, with the possibility of using stone and render, and creating a fairly grand frontage. The overall aim is to define the massing which can then form a brief to define other blocks, with the opportunity to return to the DCfW as plans progress.

Carmarthenshire County Council would expect adequate provision for public transport. Concern was expressed with the servicing lanes off Barn Road. The Council are pleased that attention is being directed to the market hall, which they foresee as being a potential hub. At present no planning application has been submitted, though it is proposed that a detailed outline application will be submitted considering retail impact and movement impact assessment. Detailed design will form part of the reserved matters.

Ymateb y Panel/Panel's Response

The Panel commended the approach taken by the design team, including the examination of the historical aspect. It was considered that the urban form, particularly the market area, works well, helping to break down the mass of big buildings. We were apprehensive about

the service orientated nature of Fair Lane and the challenge of dealing with backs throughout the scheme. The Panel were impressed with the precedence of historic routes and urged that important historic references be maintained which could aid in the pedestrianisation scheme. Consideration was given to how this scheme might add to the character of Carmarthen and the Panel were encouraged by the suggestion that blocks be designed by different people.

Concern was expressed over the impact on the residential area, of introducing big blocks, particularly the volume issues that arise in such a small scale, residential urban grain. The presence of the decked car parking and the visual impact of the car park particularly along St Catherine Street were of concern. The option to dig buildings into the slope to the north may help to resolve height issues.

The Panel were informed that a town wide survey has been completed which models this scheme and the proposed Tesco scheme. The scheme is found to work on a particularly pedestrian basis.

The Panel greatly encouraged the inclusion of a residential element to the scheme. The most appropriate site might be the most southerly aspect of the scheme above the proposed retail.

A key design consideration is the treatment of boundaries and frontages. Active uses along St Catherine Street present a challenge, along with boundary treatment to the north and south. There is also an awkward interface with the backs of gardens.

Reference was made to the removal of two public houses, a use deemed suitable in the scheme. In particular, the old historic wall is integrated into the fabric of the pub on St Catherine Street, a reference which could be maintained.

The Panel was concerned at the lack of consideration for public transport. Although Carmarthenshire may be a very car borne town at present, this is a very unsustainable route to follow and the Design Commission would expect to see a strategy incorporated into the scheme. Questions were also raised over where the redirected traffic will go with the part pedestrianisation of St Catherine Street.

The market hall should be considered as a statement civic building and sustainability intentions should be outlined. Consideration should be given to lighting/shading and use of photovoltaics or green roof. The materials have yet to be considered, though the Panel agreed with the aspirations that they should be of good quality, laid simply and in a robust way.

Crynodeb/Summary

The Panel congratulates the team on an excellent presentation, welcoming the way in which pedestrian movement has been handled. In addition:

- The Panel supports the approach to dealing with the gradient, incorporating units of differing levels. A small potential issue is the cross over point at St Catherine Street.
- The treatment of the St Catherine St frontage, particularly around Debenhams, is a real issue, and concern is raised over boundary treatment.
- The Panel commends digging the retail units into the slope to resolve the volume issues with the existing small scale residential urban grain to the north.
- The Panel feels that residential use should be incorporated into the scheme, and agree its location at the southern end is most desirable.
- The Panel share the view that the market hall be an exemplar building in terms of architecture and sustainability. Given its likely size, the low pitch shown in the sketch may not be appropriate.
- Consideration should be given to retaining the old pub along St Catherine's Street.

In general, we consider this to be a well handled scheme and the Panel would be pleased to comment on this project as the design progresses.

Diwedd/End

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