

Addroddiad Adolygu Dylunio Design Review Report

Review Status: Confidential

NB. This report should be read in conjunction with the report on Castle Gardens

Meeting date:	30th September 2009
Issue Date:	14th October 2009
Scheme Location:	Castle Lane Swansea
Scheme Description:	Residential
Planning Status:	Pre-application

Part1: Presentation

The site is in the Wind Street conservation area and adjacent to the Grade I listed castle. This scheme offers the opportunity to connect the city centre with the Strand, albeit across a 5.5m level difference. Three residential blocks are proposed of 3-6 storeys, around two north facing courtyards with high boundary walls to the south. An A3 unit is provisionally located on the corner with Wind Street with 2 floors of office space above. A Tourist Information Centre may be included on the ground floor of the middle block. A small amount of parking is provided at ground floor level.

The design team would like to demonstrate the industrial use of copper and use it to sculptural effect on the elevations. Reconstituted stone will be used for the ground floor. The path down to the Strand will be widened and the gradient improved. The fenestration arrangement has been changed on the Wind Street elevation to give a more conventional pattern for a commercial office.

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

The Panel commended the quality of the urban analysis, but think that the conclusions of this have not necessarily been followed through in the proposal. This is a bold scheme but the risks inherent in this approach are too great in this context, and we are unable to support it for the following reasons:

- The scale and form of the blocks conflict with the buildings and setting of the Castle.
- The complexity of the roof form will be difficult to deliver.
- Important functional details are unresolved, and could well impact on the views of the Castle and the pure form of the architectural treatment on the site.
- The workability of internal spaces needs to be demonstrated before the design is developed further.
- The quality of the external courtyards needs to be realistically assessed and public and private areas should be better defined.
- The site is currently overdeveloped. We think the scale should be further reduced, and the architectural treatment calmed.
- The team would benefit from more specific guidance from the City and Cadw on the parameters for development in this location.
- The aspiration to achieve Code for Sustainable Homes Level 4 across the site, should be made a firm commitment by the client, especially given their experience of achieving this elsewhere in Swansea.

Part 2: Discussion and Panel Response in Full

Although the Panel supported the reduction in scale and the improved fenestration pattern, we think that the scale and facade treatment are still in serious conflict with the Castle. The roof form and the successful integration of the roof terraces is unconvincing. The 3D views provided are somewhat premature and functional details – such as fire escape provision – have not been resolved and will impact on these views and the setting of the Castle.

The dimensions of the internal spaces as shown appear unworkable and the architect accepted that these are not well resolved at the moment. There appears to be a lack of understanding of the different uses through the scheme, their different requirements both operationally and technically. Particular attention needs to be paid to the A3 and office use in this respect. The private nature of the courtyards appears to conflict with the proposed access to offices on the upper floors. The proposed bridge link is over-ambitious and the necessary structural support would have an additional impact on the courtyard below.

Although the contextual and urban analysis is excellent, the current proposal is inappropriate for this infill site. We think the treatment should be much calmer, less provocative, and more subservient to the Castle - as were the historic buildings highlighted in the context study. A simplification of form and function would yield a more successful solution.

While we thought the proposed use of copper could work well, we had doubts about the use of a single facade material across the whole site. The inset balconies will have an impact on daylight levels internally, and this should be checked to ensure they are adequate. The simplicity of the form will inevitably be compromised by details such as rainwater goods or solar shading, and these need to be evaluated within the overall design concept. There may be additional costs in retaining the purity of form – such as secret gutters.

There appears to be overdevelopment of the site and we would like to see less development on this site, and more residential units disposed on the Castle Gardens site, to further inhabit the Strand. The courtyards will not function well as sociable spaces, given the orientation and poor definition between public and private space. The careful design and surveillance of Castle Lane will be important to create a safe and well used route.

The sustainability statement appears to address the relevant issues, but in fact relates only to aspirations. The client confirmed that they wish to go beyond the minimum environmental standards and we encouraged them to commit to achieving Code Level 4 across the site and possibly exceeding that with certain units. They have confidence that a similar scheme of theirs in SA1 has achieved Code 4 with relatively low additional capital costs.

It was confirmed that all existing trees on the site have been removed.

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	Coastal Housing [Robin Blakley, David Fry, Steve Griffiths]
Pensaer/Architect:	Friedrich Ludewig [Acme Architects]
Consultants:	BDP [David Littler] NLP Planning [Gareth Williams]
AwdurdodCynllunio/ Planning Authority	City and Council of Swansea [David Gill, Huw Mowbray, Steve Smith]
Y Panel Adlygu Dylunio: Design review panel: Alan Francis [Chair] Cindy Harris [Officer] Ann-Marie Smale	Roger Ayton Phil Roberts John Punter
Lead Panellist:	Phil Roberts
Sylwedyddion/Observers:	Simon Hartley [DCFWD] Gerard Ryan [DCFWD] Terry Morley, Julian Morgan, [Holder Mathias Architects]

