

Statws/Status:
Cyfrinachol / Confidential



Adroddiad Adolygu Dylunio: 17 August 2006
Design Review Report:

Dyddiad Cyfarfod / Cyflwyno'r Deunydd: 2 August 2006
Meeting Date / Material Submitted:

Lleoliad/Location: Rodney Parade, Newport

Disgrifiad o'r Cynllun Residential
Scheme Description:

Cleient/Asiant: WAG/DEIN [Lydia Haskey]
Client/Agent:

Developer/Datblygwr: George Wimpey [Ken Thomas,
Caroline Marsden, Terry Egan]

Pensaer/Architect: Gardner Stewart Architects
[Graham Kime, Ian Hudson]

Ymgynghorwyr Cynllunio: Boyer Planning
Planning Consultants: [Robin Williams]

Cynllunio/Consultants: Hoare Lea [Wynne Harris]
Tisdall King [Jason Holmes]

Awdurdod Cynllunio: Newport CC
Planning Authority:

Statws Cynllunio: Pre-planning
Planning Status:

Y Panel Adolygu Dylunio/Design Review Panel:
Alan Francis (cadeirydd/chair) Gerard Ryan
Cindy Harris (swyddog/officer) Mike Biddulph
Lyn Owen

Lead Panellist:

Lyn Owen

Sylwedyddion/Observers:

Anna Lerman

DCFW PhD student

Patrick Williams

MSc student

Cyflwyniad/Presentation

This proposal is for residential development in central Newport occupying land along the east bank of the river Usk, extending south from Newport Bridge to Maindee primary school. It is bordered to the east by Rodney Road and the Grade 2 listed former art college. The development area forms two sites of about 3.3 and 3.2 acres separated by an existing area of 2 storey housing at Colne Street, which is to be retained and incorporated in the layout. Derelict industrial buildings to the south are to be demolished following compulsory purchase orders.

The proposal is for 480 dwellings [mainly 1 and 2 bed apartments] to be built in 2 phases commencing from the northern end. Some town houses are included in the vicinity of existing retained housing. There is also a café-retail space in each phase, facing new squares to be created adjacent to Newport Bridge to the north [Clarence Square] and at the eastern end of the new footbridge linking the southern part of the site with Newport city centre [Dragon Way]. A third central public space [Grafton Square] links through to Grafton Road and opens up views to the Newport Arts Centre across the river. A riverside walk links the public squares and includes flood defences, which have raised site levels higher than originally thought and 2.5 metres higher than Rodney Road. Bio swales under the walkway will take surface runoff and treat it biologically before discharge into the river.

The layout shows a series of parallel blocks perpendicular to the river, giving good views from all units and creating a strong but permeable urban façade. Blocks range from 4 to 8 storeys in the northern part of the site, rising to 14 storeys in the south adjacent to the new footbridge. Parking is on two levels between pairs of buildings and is enclosed by ground level apartments creating active frontages. Parking standards are 100% for the 2 bed apartments and town houses, and 50% for 1 bed apartments. There is maximum connectivity with easy access to bus routes along Clarence Place and Corporation Road; the main bus and rail stations are within a 10 minute walk.

The design will achieve an Eco Homes 'Very Good' and is within 3 points of an Excellent rating, which is being targeted. There will be single heating systems for each pair of blocks, via efficient centralised gas boilers. No electric heating will be used and the feasibility of biomass, CHP and solar water heating is being investigated.

The landscape strategy uses the block layout to provide good physical and visual permeability linking with existing streets and the proposed riverside walkway. The ecology of the river bank will be enhanced with marginal planting. High quality hard and soft landscaping will be provided in public areas including bespoke artwork to reflect local character. Creative lighting will encourage evening use and protect public safety.

The tender process which selected the preferred developer was based on design led criteria. Public consultation on these proposals, as part of a wider regeneration area, has been led by

Newport Unlimited. This project is being taken forward with the support of DEIN. The design team believes that it is consistent with the objectives of the SPG Design Brief for the site. The target submission date for a detailed planning application to be submitted for the whole site is 30th November 2006.

Ymateb y Panel/Panel's Response

The Panel welcomed this residential scheme on a central brownfield site, with an appropriate density and small amount of mixed use, given the location and adjacent facilities. Clarence Square has been enlarged from its original size with a loss of 35 units and we supported their relocation elsewhere on the site, to maintain the proposed density.

We noted, however, that the masterplan showed a much greater degree of engagement with the river and the street in the northern part of the site. The architects stated that in their view the arrangement shown in the masterplan did not work to promote active frontages - for example buildings adjacent to the bridge approach turn their backs to it. By contrast, they have chosen to maximise permeability and street activity, with discreet parking, and to include and integrate existing housing. The Panel still had reservations about creating seven separate blocks and, while appreciating the permeability, wondered whether it was in fact excessive and beyond a certain point would not result in better used spaces. The architect maintained that creating a strong link between the river and development to the east, as well as across the river, would not be helped by a continuous wall of development along the river. Instead they have adopted an approach of filtered openness, with all blocks having ground floor frontages.

The southern part of the site is characterised by a different approach, based on the primary pedestrian route cutting diagonally across the site from the new footbridge to Corporation Road. A reduced scale with active frontages prevails along this route and the smaller scale is extended towards the Colne Street housing.

The Panel was concerned about the quality of the street environment on Rodney Road as a result of this proposal. The pedestrian experience would depend largely on the nature of the interface between street and private dwellings, especially with the ground floor raised and set back slightly, and this needed careful attention. We were informed that a 3 metre boundary wall would be used in front of the raised car park areas, punctuated with architectural metal louvers or inserts. The project team has been advised by the Local Authority to maintain the width of Rodney Road to accommodate visitor parking. However, it is not intended that it should be used by visitors to the rugby ground. The Panel welcomed the reduced parking standards for the 1 bed units. We thought that a highways strategy for the whole area should be part of these proposals, including any plans to divert traffic over the bridge.

The Panel wondered whether a scheme of this scale needed some variety of architectural expression and questioned whether the facades were too repetitive. The architects stated that the strength of the treatment derived from the rhythm of similar buildings with similar functions. It was confirmed that about half of the apartments were single aspect, but that each corner had dual aspect units.

We thought that the treatment of the enlarged Clarence Square appeared overdone and slightly fussy, and we were not convinced by the location of the kiosk. The square is in a difficult position, next to a busy main road, and requires a defining edge to give enclosure and safety. We were told that the current layout is of necessity work in progress and the project team needed more guidance from the Local Authority on the functional

requirements for this space. It was noted that the former art college building now has permission for refurbishment as residential units and needs 20 new parking spaces to support this use. The Panel thought that if these had to be provided in the square, this should be done in an informal way so as not to intrude on the public realm. We advised that family facilities and play areas should be included in the design of public spaces.

The Panel thought that the spaces between blocks, which currently are 19m at their narrowest, could be reduced further to create the character of side streets and allow more space for development.

The Panel would like to see retail or small commercial uses integrated with the residential on the bridge approach. The developer confirmed that the retail uses could be flexible and changed to eg banks or estate agents.

The Panel welcomed the presentation of a coherent energy strategy, and urged that an Eco Homes Excellent rate should be achieved. We applauded the communal heating systems and suggested that micro CHPs might be an effective modification, giving the extra points needed to achieve Excellent and obviating the need for solar water heating. We were told that servicing arrangements were yet to be resolved.

The Panel inquired about the phasing and was told that work on the riverside infrastructure was due to start in August 2007. Newport CC want the river walk and flood defences in place as soon as possible. Building works would start at the northern end with Clarence Square and would form a two year programme. A technical team has already been formed, including the main contractor, to look at issues in an integrated way.

The design team presented seductive images of the residential towers which appeared to show extensive areas of glazing. The Panel queried this and whether the quality of such a proposal could be sustained. We were assured that the promised quality of architectural treatment will be followed through and delivered because of the procurement method and design led tendering. There will be continual monitoring against the aspirations of the brief, the SPG and the proposed design. Materials and details, especially to the glazing, will be critical and their specification and installation will be closely scrutinised. However, the question of affordability remained unanswered.

Crynodeb/Summary

The Panel welcomed the opportunity to review this significant and exciting scheme for Newport. We support the aspirations of the design statement and consider this proposal to be an acceptable response to the site and the brief with minor revisions. In particular:

- We are satisfied that the departures from the masterplan in the site layout are justified and form part of a coherent urban design approach.
- We support the proposed density and think it could be higher, with narrower streets.
- We applaud the environmental and energy analysis and the commitment to targetting EcoHomes Excellent.
- We remain extremely concerned about the quality of the street environment on Rodney Road, and think this needs more built form rather than architectural grilles in front of car parks.

- The interface of the private areas with the public realm and riverbank needs further analysis and detailing. Facilities for families and children should be included in the public spaces.
- The servicing arrangements need addressing and integrating into the overall design.
- Clarence Square needs to work as a lively public open space for the success of the whole scheme, and the designers need greater clarity in the brief from the client and the Local Authority.
- The successful treatment of the elevations will depend on good quality materials and detailing, and the current commitment to this quality needs protecting throughout the design and development process.

We look forward to reviewing this scheme again as the design development continues.

Diwedd/End

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