

Statws/Status:
Cyfrinachol / Confidential



Adroddiad Adolygu Dylunio: 14 November 2006
Design Review Report:

Dyddiad Cyfarfod / Cyflwyno'r Deunydd: 1 November 2006
Meeting Date / Material Submitted:

Lleoliad/Location: Rodney Parade Newport

Disgrifiad o'r Cynllun Residential
Scheme Description:

Cleient/Asiant: WAG, DIEN [Lydia Haskey]
Client/Agent:

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

Pensaer/Architect: Gardner Stewart Architects
[Graham King]

Cynllunio: Boyer Planning [Robin Williams]
Consultants: Hoare Lea [Wynne Harris]

Awdurdod Cynllunio: Newport CC
Planning Authority:

Statws Cynllunio: Pre-planning
Planning Status:

Y Panel Adolygu Dylunio/Design Review Panel:
John Punter (cadeirydd/chair) Ewan Jones
Cindy Harris (swyddog/officer) Mike Biddulph
Charlie Deng [swyddog/officer] Douglas Hogg
Michael Griffiths

Lead Panellist: Mike Biddulph

Cyflwyniad/Presentation

This scheme was first reviewed in August 2006, at which time the Panel considered that the proposal responded positively to the site and required some minor revisions. These concerned:

- The lack of active frontages on Rodney Road
- The interface between public and private areas on the river bank
- The lack of facilities for children and families
- Servicing arrangements
- The quality of Clarence Square as a public open space
- The deliverability of the desired quality
- The achievement of an EcoHomes Excellent rating

The revised proposal shows significant changes from the previous one, and includes an expansion of the site to the south. It consists of three phases of development. The first two phases are divided by the existing terraced houses in the middle of the site, and the third phase occupies the extended part of the site to the south. With regard to our previous comments, the streets have been narrowed and Rodney Road is more enclosed by built form, with 2 storey apartments breaking up the spaces between the larger blocks and providing active frontages. There will be ground floor access to the blocks from Rodney Road. On Dragon Way the floor to ceiling height of the ground floor units will make future commercial use possible. Service access has been rearranged and the secondary staircases removed to give a more rational layout and maintain parking numbers. The core has been integrated into the tower forms. The design for Clarence Square has been simplified.

The commercial uses still cluster around Clarence Square and the end of Dragon Way on the waterfront, but the overall commercial space has been doubled. The façade treatments remain the same, with glass curtain walling facing the river, and brick elevations onto Rodney Road. A hard deck along the riverbank accommodates the riverside walk while protecting the river bank through minimal piling. Terraced gardens between the apartment blocks on the waterfront will screen parking and increase biodiversity. The scheme will deliver flood defences for the whole of East Newport. The proposal commits itself to an EcoHomes 'Very Good', with aspirations to achieve 'Excellent'. CHP, biomass district heating and solar water heating have been ruled out. Gas fired boilers will serve two blocks each.

Recent public consultation has produced largely favourable responses. It has not proved possible to incorporate specific play facilities.

Ymateb y Panel/Panel's Response

The Panel was pleased to see the positive improvements to the proposal, especially the more sympathetic treatment of Rodney Road and the increase in commercial floor area to provide livelier ground floor uses.

We agreed that the design of Clarence Square has been simplified and improved, and the controlled car parking made less dominant. Although we would rather not see the car parking included at all, we thought the current layout was the basis for a good urban design solution and would like to see this worked up and refined. We questioned the scale of the towers to the south of the square and how well the rounded corners related to the square.

The Panel was reassured that a softer edge to the riverbank was proposed, which would facilitate natural vegetation growing underneath and retain as much greenery as possible. We suggested that any section 106 payment could be used to clear the unsightly accumulation of litter from the river.

However, the Panel was not convinced by the layout of the most southerly blocks. We thought that the lack of enclosure of the riverside, with ground floor car parking fronting the walkway especially on the southern-most block, was unacceptable. The architects admitted that their designs for these blocks were not yet fully considered.

The Panel was also concerned about the significant changes of scale within the project, especially the juxtaposition of the 8 to 12 storey tower blocks adjacent to the existing two storey houses. We were surprised that no wind tunnel tests had yet been carried out, and we would expect that to be a planning requirement.

Vehicular access to the site from the south is particularly convoluted and we thought a more direct route should be devised, to avoid increased traffic on existing residential streets. The project team confirmed that they were exploring ways to minimise the impact of construction traffic on residents

Given the length of the development along the river bank – around 1 kilometre – the Panel thought that there should be a greater variety of architectural treatment, to avoid an oppressive uniformity. We were told that there would be design consistency throughout phase 1, but that more variety would be introduced in later phases. We thought that more detailed facade treatments and elevations should accompany a detailed planning application and we were told that these were being prepared. We would like to see the Local Authority condition any approval pending more detailed information, to be discharged for each block. It is estimated that the first two blocks will be completed by the end of 2008.

The Panel enquired what extra measures the team were considering to gain the additional three points needed to achieve an EcoHomes Excellent rating. We were told that daylighting provision and rainwater harvesting would yield extra points. While welcoming the aspiration to an Excellent rating, the Panel expressed its disappointment that a scheme of this size and prestige within Newport had no renewable energy generation or specific low carbon technologies.

Crynodeb/Summary

In general the Panel was pleased to see the progress that has been made since we last saw this scheme, and note that most of the issues we raised then have been seriously addressed. We welcome the substantial increase in commercial space and the introduction of live/work units. However, we would like to see further minor amendments, in particular:

- We welcome the improvements that have been made to civilise the street environment on Rodney Road and urge that active street frontages be maximised.
- We agree that the terraced gardens on the river front help to delineate private from public open space.
- We welcome the lighter touch in the treatment of the river front walkway.
- We accept that the provision of play spaces is problematic on-site.

- We understand that detailed architectural work is still ongoing and we urge the Local Authority to condition any approval, pending detailed design elevations for each block
- We welcome the intention to vary the architectural treatment between, but not within, the different phases of the scheme.
- We would like to see townhouses all along the riverside between the apartments in phase 3.
- We consider it essential that an EcoHomes Excellent rating is achieved, for commercial viability as well as sustainability, and we would still like to see the inclusion of low or zero carbon technologies
- We consider the car parking arrangement is an improvement on standard provision and a step towards the ideal of a basement or semi-basement arrangement.

Diwedd/End

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