

Addroddiad Adolygu Dylunio Design Review Report

Review Status: **Confidential**

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| Meeting date: | 22 July 2009 |
| Issue Date: | 31 July 2009 |
| Scheme Location: | Nantgarw campus. |
| Scheme Description: | Education |
| Planning Status: | Pre-application |

Part1: Presentation

Coleg Morgannwg has adopted a strategy to reconfigure and rationalise its estate by reducing the number of sites. The overall space requirement for this site has been revised downwards to 10,000 square metres, although this may increase in the future. The initial 'courtyard' scheme developed by the design team was abandoned because of the reduced amount of accommodation required and changes to the site boundary resulting in a reduced site area. However, the client requires the design to allow for the possibility of integrated expansion in the future.

The current proposal shows two curved [faceted] parallel blocks, allowing for future development to the south, with a glazed street in between. The rear [north west] block rises to 4 storeys and the front block is 2-3 storeys. The main entrance is centrally located facing south east, although there will also be a central entrance from the rear. A pedestrian link will be provided across the estate road to connect with existing college buildings to the east. A creche is provisionally located to the south of the southern access road.

The Local Planning Authority have only recently seen this version and had commented in more detail on the courtyard scheme. They have concerns about the elevations facing the existing college buildings and the relation between them.

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

The Panel was pleased to review this scheme at an early stage. We could support this scheme if the following major aspects of design development are addressed and well resolved:

- The lack of external public spaces for informal social use needs to be remedied.
- Professional expertise should be employed to develop a landscape strategy which ensures a high quality public realm around the building, clearer access routes through the parking area, and appropriate boundary treatments.
- Ways should be found to reduce the impact of car parking on the space around the building.
- We support the team's efforts to vary the southern boundary and the position of the new access road, in order to release more space on site.
- There should be a strong connection with the existing college buildings to the east and the entrance at the eastern end of the internal street should be given equal prominence with the main entrance.
- Pedestrian and cycle routes from the west should link directly with the glazed street.
- A public art strategy should be developed and integrated with the rest of the design development, and should seek to integrate artwork with the building fabric or landscape design.
- Modelling needs to be carried out to assess the likely quality of the internal street environment, particularly with respect to acoustic mitigation and daylight penetration. The likely economics and performance of the ETFE roof should be re-evaluated.
- We support the commitment to BREEAM Excellent, but the strategy to achieve this needs to be integrated with the rest of the design development. The curved form presents a particular challenge, as the strategy will have to address the changes in aspect and orientation along the length of the building, and this detailed design will impact on the materials proposed.

From what we have seen, it is clear that much more work remains to be done, particularly with regard to modelling the building performance and proper integration of sustainability measures, and an August date for a planning application to be submitted is unrealistic.

Part 2: Discussion and Panel Response in Full

The Panel was informed that a 4 storey Technium building has been consented on the site immediately to the south of this scheme, although there are site contamination issues to be resolved.

Some benefits of the earlier courtyard scheme appear to have been lost in this revision, such as the undercroft parking. It is regrettable that the car parking is now much more dominant, with no external space allowed for informal socialising. The team stated that the reduced accommodation demand meant fewer car parking spaces were required, and in their view the courtyard scheme was not sufficiently flexible to allow for future expansion. They confirmed that the curved block design could accommodate an extra 3,000 square metres.

It is essential that this scheme makes provision for attractive external public space in what would otherwise be a large car park surrounding the building. We would support and encourage the team to pursue the possibility of varying the southern boundary, although we understand that a request to the Welsh Assembly Government to do this has been

turned down. An alternative approach would be to deck the north western staff car park in order to release space. The open strip of public space to the west, which is in the college's ownership, is too divorced from the building to work well as a gathering place for students, although this could be developed as a wildlife corridor with more direct pedestrian and cycle routes to the building.

The link across Heol Crochendy to the existing college buildings should be given the status of a crossing square rather than a traffic light controlled crossing, and the eastern entrance to the glazed street should have at least equal prominence with the central entrance from the car park. Pedestrian routes from the west and the Taff trail should also connect directly with the glazed street.

The overall concept of the internal street would be more convincing if it led somewhere. In this regard, there is the opportunity to create a social space to the south of the building accessed from the street, by omitting the vehicle link and limited amount of car parking between the staff and student car parks.

A landscape architect should be engaged as soon as possible to ensure best use of the external space. The radial parking arrangement currently shown does not work well and a strategy should be adopted to reduce the overall impact of the parking. There should be a clear separation between public and private areas, in particular between the car park and public footpaths/bus stop, and the landscape strategy should address this. Similarly, a public art strategy should be integrated with the design development from here on, using the building and landscape design as an integral part of this and avoiding an approach which might place discrete objects on a roundabout.

The overall impression conveyed by the front facade is of a corporate building rather than a community facility. The elevational treatment is too fussy and over-complicated, and should be calmed and rationalised.

The dimensions of the internal street were discussed and we thought the width might need to be increased. The staircases need to be well designed to encourage their use. It was uncertain how much daylight will actually reach the ground floor and we suggested that the artificial sky at the Welsh School of Architecture could yield valuable data. There may be acoustic interference at upper levels from ground floor activity. This needs to be modelled and some attenuation may therefore be necessary. We had specific concerns about the use of ETFE for the roof over the internal street. Experience from other projects has indicated problems with noise as rain hits the material. Although apparently a cheaper option, maintenance and running costs for this type of roof mean that costs are similar to glass in the medium term.

We support the commitment to achieve Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method [BREEAM] Excellent and the aspiration for BREEAM Outstanding. We were told that the pre-assessment score was over 70, the minimum necessary to achieve the Excellent standard. The shading strategy will be important to resolve in detail, given the large area of south-east facing glazing. The north west elevation will also be vulnerable to overheating from low level summer sun late in the day. The inclusion of a biomass boiler is not yet confirmed and the team is also evaluating an air source heat pump. We advised the team to check the local availability of wood pellets and to consider including solar water heating in their low energy strategy.

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

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| Asiant/Client/Datblygwr: Agent/Client/Developer | Coleg Morgannwg [Dennis Brackstone] |
| Pensaer/Architect: | Boyes Rees [Graham David, Huw Lewis] |
| Consultants: | Gardiner & Theobald [Richard Hinton] Hoare Lea [John Rhoden] |
| Awdurdod Cynllunio/ Planning Authority | Rhondda Cynon Taff [Janet Poole] |
| Y Panel Adlygu Dylunio: Design review panel: Wendy Richards [Chair] Cindy Harris [Officer] David Harvey | Steve Smith Jonathan Adams Phil Roberts Kedrick Davies |
| Lead Panellist: | Steve Smith |
| Sylwedyddion/Observers: | Councillors Paul Hinge Moelfryn Maskell Odwyn Davies Ray Quant Gareth Lloyd |