

Statws/Status:
Cyfrinachol / Confidential

DESIGN
COMMISSION
FOR WALES
COMISIWN
DYLUNIO
CYMRU

Adroddiad Adolygu Dylunio: Design Review Report:	1 August 2007
Dyddiad Cyfarfod / Meeting Date:	24 July 2007
Lleoliad/Location:	Connahs Quay
Disgrifiad o'r Cynllun Scheme Description:	Primary Care Development
Cleient/Asiant: Client/Agent:	Flintshire LHB [Paul Bowker]
Developer/Datblygwr:	Haven Health [Michael Luckley]
Pensaer/Architect:	Holder Mathias Architects [Iestyn Wyn Jones]
Cynllunio/Consultants:	Hoare Lea [David Hilton]
Awdurdod Cynllunio: Planning Authority:	Flintshire CC [Cheryl Berry]
Statws Cynllunio: Planning Status:	Pre-planning
Y Panel Adolygu Dylunio/ Design Review Panel: Wendy Richards (cadeirydd/chair) Cindy Harris (swyddog/officer) Gerard Ryan	Lyn Owen Elfed Roberts Nick Davies
Lead Panellist:	Elfed Roberts

Cyflwyniad/Presentation

The site is owned by the Local Authority and is situated centrally in the town, behind a row of retail units which front the main street. It is currently used mainly as a car park, and includes a Labour Club, which is to remain, and a public toilet block and house which are to be demolished.

The design has been informed by the site constraints [existing culvert, sewer and power cable] but also by the desire to establish good linkages and connectivity with the site's surroundings. Potential routes through the site and the creation of a new public space have helped to define the built form.

Two linked blocks [one two-storey; one three-storey] have been arranged around two external courtyards and are linked by a glazed central space and a shared core. A third block fronting Fron Road is planned to accommodate Town Council offices, a cafe and pharmacy. The architect has used different materials to break up the elevations, with robust blocks on the ground floor and a lighter cladding system at higher levels.

There have been pre-application discussions with the Local Authority, who support the scheme in principle.

Ymateb y Panel/Panel's Response

The Panel acknowledged that the site selection for this primary care centre was well located, being close to the town centre and to public transport. We were told that three existing surgeries would be combined in the new facility.

The Panel noted that the building faces south towards the car park and the views to the south west, and consequently appears to turn its back on the town centre to the north. The design team stated that the major footfall and approaches to the surgery would be from the west, across Fron Road. The catchment areas of the existing surgeries are all to the west of this site. Nevertheless, the Panel remained extremely concerned at the prospect of neglecting this important link and of reinforcing anti-social uses of the area to the rear of the shops, where there is a significant level change and proposals for a fence on this site boundary.

The design team considered that it would be inappropriate to change the orientation of the building. They informed the Panel that the land to the rear of the precinct is not in the control of the developers of this site. Haven Health have negotiated with the precinct's previous owners [St Modwens] and are in discussion with the current owners, with a view to

improving the through route and, although the owners are generally in favour, it is unlikely to be achieved within the timescale of this proposal. While aware of the possible problems caused by the 1.8m change in level across the site from south to north, the design team insisted that they are not precluding future opportunities to establish a connection with the main street and improvements to the rear of the shops. In the meantime, however, they have to make their site secure and erect a fence.

It was agreed that this was a key regeneration site for the town and the Panel suggested that a Development Brief could usefully be prepared for the surrounding area by the Local Authority. Ideally, a high quality building in this location would have a knock-on effect, in terms of encouraging improvements to buildings on the main street. We suggested that a greater degree of mixed use could be considered for this relatively large site, but the team pointed out that residential use would entail the provision of more parking. We would have liked to see greater certainty that the Town Council block and pharmacy would be built. We thought that this was integral to the success of the scheme as a whole and if it were to go ahead without this element, we thought that the design would be compromised.

In general, the Panel welcomed the contemporary design approach and considered that the internal layout worked well, with clear connections and good visibility. We appreciated the large, double height, well-daylit waiting area. However, we thought that some of the quality of the conceptual scheme had been lost in the design development. In particular, the opportunity to provide a link across the site, from the main street to the green space at the rear, is much regretted. We thought that the long thin car park may create problems of security and supervision, and that the strength of the landscape framework outlined at the conceptual stage of the project should be reclaimed as much as possible.

The Panel was disappointed to note the lack of a detailed sustainability strategy. We were informed that natural daylight and ventilation would be maximised and we urged that a means should be found of delivering daylight to the ground floor corridors. A sustainable drainage system would be included and green roofs used on part of the roof surfaces. The M&E consultant confirmed that solar water heating was to be included but biomass heating was not considered financially viable. The Panel suggested that biomass might be viable if the future economy and security of fossil fuel supplies were factored in, and we advised that the environmental advantages of green roofs be maximised by applying this approach throughout.

We were assured that consultations will be held with the adjacent Labour Club and we emphasised the importance of establishing a dialogue with all adjacent neighbours.

Procurement will be via a D&B contract with the architect novated to a late stage. The developer confirmed that there will be a high level of detail in the tender documents and very little leeway allowed for the contractor to alter or substitute.

Crynodeb/Summary

The Panel welcomed the opportunity to review this scheme and we support the central location. We think the good, contemporary design and logical internal layout form the basis for a successful development. However, we regret that the essential element (the link through to the main street) has so far proven to be undeliverable. In general, we have serious concerns about some aspects of the scheme and we think that major revisions are necessary. In particular:

- While we understand the constraints, we think it is essential to establish a safe, well-lit, high quality access route through the site, linking the town centre to the north and the green spaces and park to the south. This will improve connectivity, stimulate regeneration, provide natural surveillance and promote animation in the new public space.
- The design team should provide a credible solution for making this link work, given the difference in levels. We think that if it is not built into the scheme from the outset, it will be difficult to retrofit.
- To facilitate this we would like to see the Local Authority prepare a development brief for the areas surrounding this site and encourage discussions / negotiations with adjacent land owners.
- We think that more empirical justification is necessary for the design decisions that have been made. We would like to see a catchment area analysis, movement framework, access statement and parking strategy
- We are not convinced by the arguments against providing a greater mix of uses on the site. Some residential use, which would bring security advantages, appears to us to merit further consideration.
- We think the far reaches of the car park will probably be underused and will suffer from security problems due to a lack of natural surveillance. In addition we would like to see a site layout which minimises parking numbers.
- If the town council block does not go ahead as part of this scheme, the whole design approach should be revised, and any planning consent should reflect this.
- There is a lamentable lack of detail on sustainable design and environmental performance, and we would like to see a fully justified and site specific strategy based on minimising the building's carbon footprint.

DCFW will require a further full Design Review of this proposal to address the recommendations contained in this report. In particular we would like a representative from the Local Authority regeneration department to attend.

Diwedd/End

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