

Statws/Status:
Cyfrinachol / Confidential

DESIGN
COMMISSION
FOR WALES
COMISIWN
DYLUNIO
CYMRU

Adroddiad Adolygu Dylunio: Design Review Report:	19 June 2008
Dyddiad Cyfarfod / Meeting Date:	11 June 2008
Lleoliad/Location:	Coverack Rd, Newport
Disgrifiad o'r Cynllun Scheme Description:	Residential
Cleient/Asiant: Client/Agent:	Tim Webber
Developer/Datblygwr:	As above
Pensaer/Architect:	Jonathan Adams
Cyllunio/Consultants:	Capita Symonds Transportation [David James]
Awdurdod Cynllunio: Planning Authority:	Newport CC
Statws Cynllunio: Planning Status:	Pre-application
Y Panel Adolygu Dylunio/ Design Review Panel: Alan Francis (cadeirydd/chair) Cindy Harris (swyddog/officer) Charlie Deng (swyddog/officer)	Kieren Morgan Howard Wainwright Phil Roberts Jonathan Hines
Lead Panellist:	Phil Roberts

Sylwedyddion/Observers:

**Lynne Sullivan, Design Review
Panelist**

Cyflwyniad/Presentation

The client owns the site in question, which has been in his family for generations, and was previously in use as a factory making bitumen. He was advised to approach Newport Council to see what sort of development they would support, and both they and Newport Unlimited specified residential development, and encouraged an increase in height compared with surrounding residential buildings.

The site is on the east bank of the River Usk, but well above flood levels, and directly south of the George Street bridge. The U-shaped block turns its back to the bridge, with a relatively blank north facade, and faces south/south east. There will be a pedestrian link to the bridge from the fourth storey, but the listed status of the bridge will be respected.

The height of the building ranges from 5 storeys to the east, 7 storeys in the centre and 14 storeys to the west facing the river. Most apartments have dual aspect and those with single aspect face south. Units are generously sized, many are two storeys, and most have either a balcony or roof garden. Balconies benefit from being recessed and relatively enclosed. Parking [at 1.5 spaces per unit] is located on the first two levels, but wrapped with accommodation on the south and west sides. Additional secure parking will be provided under the bridge. There is a requirement from the Council for 20%-30% affordable housing.

A single heating system is planned for this development and a target of Code Level 2-3 has been set. The block is well oriented for solar gain and solar water heating is included at this stage. Elevational materials are reconstituted stone, coloured render, and a standing seam metal finish on the roof and top three storeys.

Ymateb y Panel/Panel's Response

The Panel recognised the hostile nature of the site and immediate environment, the dominance of the bridge, and the new developments across the river. In this context we found the proposed height and massing acceptable.

We thought that the internal layout was ingenious and we welcomed the relatively high level of amenity provided. We did question whether the scheme as it stood was financially viable in this location, especially given the

affordable component, and it was agreed that more research was needed to establish this. We urged the client to commission a commercial feasibility appraisal.

In particular we welcomed the good solar access, exploitation of views and dual aspect units. However, we thought that the recessed balconies would be more appropriate to Mediterranean conditions and in this climate their amenity value would not compensate for the reduction of daylight in living areas.

We noted that the surrounding public realm was currently intimidating and, while we supported the use of the under-bridge area for parking, we questioned whether safe access could be assumed, particularly late at night.

We thought that the architectural concept needed more consistency and some contextual reference. All four elevations were different and while we accepted that they were responding to different situations, we felt that the multiple cultural references were confusing and the design as a whole required a final resolution. What currently seemed to be a collection of different buildings should be integrated into a single coherent whole, calmed and simplified.

The Panel found that some aspects of the fenestration needed rethinking, such as the uniformity of the balconies, the smaller windows in the central block, and the blank south [or south east] facade of the main tower. The strong profile of the roof, pitched to the east, might be better pitched to the south to accommodate solar thermal panels.

It was accepted that the deck access units in the central block would probably be the affordable ones, and we thought that this would be a highly problematic arrangement for social housing units, especially with blank walls facing the deck.

While we appreciated that the pedestrian bridge link would encourage walking rather than driving into the city, we suggested that a link to the river walk might be a better contribution to the public realm. The development would benefit from some local landscaping, particularly around the substation.

The Panel noted that Code Level 2-3 was not a sufficiently high standard for affordable housing. Currently Level 3 is required, and the intention is to move up to Code 4 as soon as possible. We welcomed provision for a single heating system and advised that M&E consultants with experience of low-energy design should be brought in to advise on the design development at an early stage.

We were informed that a transport study has looked at the capacity of adjacent road junctions and concluded that the extra traffic generated by this development would not impact significantly on the local transport system.

Crynodeb/Summary

The Panel accepts that the proposed scale and form are appropriate in this context. We welcome the high level of external and internal amenity provided and the ingenious internal plan. We think this is an acceptable response to the brief and the site, but that some major revisions are necessary:

- We think the architectural treatment should be simplified and made more coherent.
- The impact of the recessed balconies on internal daylight levels should be investigated, and the balconies modified if necessary. The fenestration should be arranged to optimise daylighting and be more responsive to solar orientation.
- We have grave concerns about the proposed use of deck access with blank facing walls especially for social housing units.
- We think that Code Level 3 is the minimum acceptable target and we would encourage the client to anticipate future requirements and aim for Code Level 4.
- Further consideration should be given to creating a more attractive and welcoming public realm with appropriate landscaping, particularly around the substation, and safe access to and from the off-site car park.
- We have concerns about the commercial viability of this scheme and urge that this be tested as soon as possible.

Diwedd/End

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