

**Statws/Status:**

**Cyhoeddus (Public)**



<b>Adroddiad Adolygu Dylunio: Design Review Report:</b>	<b>15 July 2005</b>
<b>Dyddiad Cyfarfod / Cyflwyno'r Deunydd: Meeting Date / Material Submitted:</b>	<b>6 July 2005</b>
<b>Lleoliad/Location: Disgrifiad o'r Cynllun</b>	<b>Emag site, Brynmawr</b>
<b>Scheme Description:</b>	<b>Residential Development</b>
<b>Ymgynghorwyr Cynllunio: Planning Consultants:</b>	<b>Harmers LTD [Andrew Muir]</b>
<b>Client/Agent Cleient/Asiant:</b>	<b>Richard Hayward Properties [Richard Hayward] Newport Holdings Ltd [Bob Carlton-Porter]</b>
<b>Pensaer/Architect:</b>	<b>Graham Frecknall</b>
<b>Awdurdod Cynllunio: Planning Authority:</b>	<b>Brecon Beacons National Park [Eric Bowles, Bernard Eacock] WDA [Andrea Manfield]</b>
<b>Statws Cynllunio: Planning Status:</b>	<b>Application submitted</b>
<b>Y Panel Adolygu Dylunio/Design Review Panel:</b>	
<b>Alan Francis (cadeirydd/chair) Cindy Harris (swyddog/officer) Ann-Marie Smale Jonathan Adams</b>	<b>Kedrick Davies Ed Colgan Douglas Hogg Wendy Hall</b>
<b>Lead Panellist: Ed Colgan</b>	
<b>Sylwedyddion/Observers:</b>	<b>Peter Roberts</b>

## **Cyflwyniad/Presentation**

This proposal is for a residential development of 93 dwellings on the site of the former Emag factory, Brynmawr. The site is located within the Brecon Beacons National Park but is recognised to be a brownfield site due to the existing industrial development on the site.

The scheme first came to Design Review in July 2004, prior to the submission of a planning application. The Panel were largely supportive of the scheme at this time but suggested a number of improvements including: improved links to the town and to the National Park footpath network; a good mix of house types that take reference from the locality; greater consideration as to how the development responds to the topography of the site; and to ensure methods through which these aspirations could be realised in the submission of a full planning application.

A revised scheme that intended to respond to these suggestions was submitted as an outline planning application in January 2005. Following its submission, the Design Commission for Wales was consulted and further comments were issued.

In the revised scheme DCfW considered that many of the positive elements of the scheme had been lost. In particular there were reservations about: the loss of access points to the north of the site; the appearance of a car dominated environment; the relationship between fronts and backs of dwellings; the loss of good street frontage; and the degree of landscaping provided within the scheme. The architects are confident that most of these issues could be solved in the detailed design of the scheme and see it as a design challenge to make the relationship between the fronts and backs of dwellings work.

Standard house types have been developed in such a way that they are able to have 'add-ons' in order to offer a greater variety of dwellings within the scheme. The design of the houses aims to reflect traditional Welsh cottages, while at the same time taking advantage of the solar orientation and views. Alternative materials are being investigated for the construction of the dwellings including the possible use of local stone.

Brecon Beacons National Park Authority recognised the need for the development to meet the needs of Brynmawr for more 'executive' homes, as well as solving problems of housing affordability within the Park. Although there is no requirement for an affordable component on this non-allocated site, committee members will be keen to see this issue addressed. The Local Authority would require a sustainable and innovative development that will enhance the area, and they would like to see a design brief presented with any future application. The WDA and Blaenau Gwent CBC support the proposed change of use.

## **Ymateb y Panel/Panel's Response**

The Panel welcomed the opportunity to review the scheme again and were encouraged to hear that the developer had attempted to modify the design based on the previous comments provided by DCfW.

The Panel confirmed their support for the terraced form of development which it was suggested could be done in an innovative way and should seek to reflect the character of Brynmawr, as well as settlements across the valleys.

Although it was indicated that the development would be self-contained in character, no facilities are included within the development and therefore we thought that it should be considered as part of Brynmawr, with strong pedestrian links into the town. The proposed link to the south west of the site would benefit from being enlarged and would require some dwellings to overlook it and make it a well used route.

The Panel suggested that the southwestern part of the scheme could be reworked so as to reduce the amount of space given over to the traffic island in the square. This would allow a greater area in which to create a safe, overlooked public footpath and play space, rather than its current design which is at the rear of gardens and is unlikely to be well used.

The Panel considered the current proposals for the main square to be a missed opportunity. There is the potential to make this bigger and more formal, with a useable public space at the centre. This would require a more solid building form surrounding the square and would benefit from house types that are designed to turn the corner, positioned appropriately. The main through route should be distinguished from other roads around the square.

The Panel remained concerned over the relationship between fronts and backs of dwelling in some parts of the scheme. Although we recognised that it is possible that this can work, it requires very careful treatment of the boundaries and wherever possible we considered that a clear definition between the fronts and backs of dwellings would be preferable.

The Panel observed that the rear parking within courtyards in the previous scheme has been replaced by parking in garages and driveways and this is now likely to dominate the scheme. We would encourage parking to be provided through a variety of methods, with some in courtyards and some on-street. The current design could be improved by pushing the proposed garages to the back of plots, which would lessen their impact on the street and could also allow for visitor parking on the drive. Where parking is provided within courtyards we encouraged some residential use also within the courtyard, so as to provide an element of built-in surveillance.

The Panel encouraged the developer to obtain approval from the highways authority for the reduction from three access roads to one. It is considered that this may not meet highways requirements and would therefore require a redesign of the northern half of the site. We recommended that confirmation that the current arrangement is acceptable be gained before designs are developed any further.

The Panel welcomed the proposed use of local stone within the scheme although we were unsure as to whether it would be an appropriate primary building material. Rendered facades are considered to be more traditional to the South Wales Valleys. However, local stone obtained from a properly managed source would provide an interesting secondary material for elements of the scheme, including boundary walls.

The Panel welcomed the attempt to achieve high levels of sustainability within the scheme. We were pleased to see that the orientation of buildings has been considered so as to maximise solar gain, and we endorsed the approach of aiming to achieve high levels of energy conservation before incorporating renewable

technologies. We would encourage continued consideration of sustainability measures throughout the design and build of the scheme including the use of local, sustainable materials.

### **Crynodeb/Summary**

The Panel recognise that this site has great potential and through the right design could become a development of distinct character and quality. We welcome the way in which the developers have modified the scheme in response to previous comments from DCFW and see the following points as further elements of the design that should be addressed in order to fulfil the site's potential.

- We feel that a more inviting and legible footpath link should be created with Brynmawr.
- We suggest a variety of solutions to parking locations, with some on-street parking and some rear courtyard parking with residential units overlooking.
- The current relationship between the fronts and backs of dwellings should be resolved and tested to ensure that they are able to function suitably.
- A hierarchy of spaces, with a clear distinction between front and back gardens, should be evident.
- The suitability of a single access road to the site should be checked with the highways agency prior to any further development of the design.
- We welcome the extensive landscaping strategy included within the proposal that will assist in the integration of the development within its surroundings.
- Although we recognise that efforts to improve the sustainability of the scheme have been made, we encourage the developer to keep sustainability as a priority within the scheme and would welcome the inclusion of any further measures.

### **Diwedd/End**

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