

Statws/Status:
Cyfrinachol / Confidential



Adroddiad Adolygu Dylunio: 16 May 2006
Design Review Report:

Dyddiad Cyfarfod / Cyflwyno'r Deunydd: 3 May 2006
Meeting Date / Material Submitted:

Lleoliad/Location: Erddig Estate, Rhostyllen,
Wrexham

Disgrifiad o'r Cynllun Residential
Scheme Description:

Cleient/Asiant: National Trust [Gavin Hogg]
Client/Agent:

Pensaer/Architect: Esha Architects
[Willie Harbinson]

Awdurdod Cynllunio: Wrexham CBC
Planning Authority: [Gerry Kellett]

Statws Cynllunio: Pre-planning. Outline
Planning Status: permission for residential use
2004

Y Panel Adolygu Dylunio/Design Review Panel:
John Punter (cadeirydd/chair) Kieren Morgan
Cindy Harris (swyddog/officer) Phil Roberts
Elfed Roberts Paul Vanner
Ed Colgan Ann-Marie Smale

Lead Panellist: Phil Roberts

Sylwedyddion/Observers:

Charlie Deng Design Review Assistant
Angela Williams, Architecture and Design, Scotland

Cyflwyniad/Presentation

The site is part of the Erddig estate, which breaks even but has no funds for capital programmes. The disposal of the site is an opportunity for the Trust to re-capitalise its assets. At the same time the Trust takes a proactive interest in the way in which its land is developed, and is looking for an exemplary sustainable development which is well integrated with the existing community. There has been extensive public consultation and the proposed mixed use nature of the development has been endorsed by the Community Council. The Local Authority also support the primarily residential use of this site. A design brief was drawn up in 2004. ESHA were appointed in 2005 and developed a draft design statement, which is the subject of this presentation. It is envisaged that constraints will be placed on the eventual developer to ensure a high quality sustainable development.

The National Trust owns the majority of the site, which is 1 km southwest of Wrexham in the former mining village of Rhostyllen. It is a mostly level, long triangular site with a half mile long frontage onto Wrexham Road [A5152] to the north west and bounded by a railway line to the east. Along the Wrexham road frontage two 'bites' out of the site are occupied by a church, two commercial garages and four houses. Housing on the other side of Wrexham Road varies from Victorian villas to 1930s semi-detached. There is an area of floodplain near the Glan-yr-avon brook on the southern boundary which will be developed as a 'pocket park'. The park's future management will be shared between the Trust and Wrexham CBC who own the land. An existing footpath across the site will be diverted.

Twelve urban blocks are proposed that define a series of linked spaces and separate public fronts from private backs. An area to the east of the site will be treated as a Home Zone. Parking is mostly in rear courtyards with some on-street visitor parking. Two access points off Wrexham Road are designed as major streets and converge on the two main squares. A community hall is provided along with cafes and shops [although there is provision for these to be converted to residential use in the future]. 25% of the housing will be affordable and pepper potted across the site. The architecture is simple and deferential and reflects the best of traditional local examples. There is a generous provision of public open space. Natural traffic calming measures will be used and walking and cycling encouraged. A frequent bus service runs along Wrexham Road and there are bus stops within 250 metres of all parts of the site. Provisions will be made to facilitate home working and the development will be run by a residents' management company.

As a result of recent consultation, the community hall has been repositioned to front the main square, green spaces have been reconfigured, and the four storey building on the main square reduced in height.

The Local Authority are very excited at the prospect of this exemplary development, which demonstrates a minimal reliance on cars and is achievable within the necessary timeframe.

Ymateb y Panel/Panel's Response

The Panel appreciated the aspirations of the client and recognised that these proposals are a step up in quality from average residential estate layouts. We strongly supported the

emphasis on sustainable construction and energy conservation, and would wish to see these aims protected and translated into delivery on the ground. The Panel considered the density of nearly 30 dwellings per hectare to be appropriate in this context. We applauded the intention to include a mix of uses, although we thought the flexibility required by the local authority could be seen to signal a lack of confidence.

The Panel found that the claimed 'local distinctiveness' of the building design bordered on the pastiche and we would like to see a bolder, more contemporary approach. We were informed that the architectural style was a response to the wishes of the local community and was confirmed by the choice of architect. It was agreed that the success of this approach would depend on the quality of the detailing and materials. In particular verges, eaves overhangs and window proportions should be constrained and carefully detailed.

Although the Panel supported the partial adoption of Home Zone standards, including a 5mph speed limit, we were concerned that the rear parking courts with multiple entrances would create problems of amenity and security. The police have been consulted and would like to see the rear courts made capable of being closed off. We repeated our concerns that future gating could prejudice community ownership and maintenance standards, and thought it was important to achieve a workable solution to parking at the design stage, which might include a reduction in the parking ratio.

The project team confirmed that all homes would be built to an EcoHomes 'Excellent' standard. Provision of solar panels will be included in the instructions to the developer and a centralised biomass CHP heating system is being considered. The Trust will seek to ensure that their sustainability aspirations are carried through by a rigorous selection process, and by issuing a 'licence to build' to the developer, who will not own the land. The Trust will retain control of the development until completion. The Panel noted that the orientation of blocks was not defined by solar access and that any difference between north and south facing facades was driven primarily by aesthetic considerations. The designer agreed that the development of perimeter urban blocks took priority and confirmed that every house would be individually designed.

The Panel endorsed the formality of the cafe square and the relocation of the community hall within the square. However, we thought that the hall should front onto the square more deliberately, rather than appearing to be squashed in at one end. While we noted that the number of public open spaces had been reduced, and that the green area at the north point was private space, we still thought that the layout of the community spaces was too fragmented, and we would like to see a more central children's play area.

There appeared to be a relatively large area of hard surfaces within the scheme. We suggested that the road to the east could be omitted and the houses brought right up to the green space, possibly with overflow parking under the trees. On the other hand, with Home Zone treatment, this road would be less dominant. The Panel was pleased to note the positive support from the local highways department for a Home Zone.

Traffic calming measures on the Wrexham Road will include two controlled junctions and two other crossings. There are three bus stops along the length of the site boundary, but no lay-bys.

The future management company will appoint a warden to promote green transport measures, and to oversee the physical management of unadopted spaces. A Section 106 agreement will ensure that the affordable housing element remains in perpetuity.

Crynodeb/Summary

The Panel welcomed the presentation of these proposals which signify a step change in terms of quality and sustainability. We applaud the aspirations of the client and their commitment to ensuring that these are delivered. We consider this scheme to be an acceptable response to the site and the brief, with some minor revisions. In particular:

- The traditional approach to architectural design requires careful detailing based on local precedents.
- We have concerns about the proposed parking arrangements and we think that lower parking numbers would lead to a better urban design solution.
- The proposed sustainability measures and procurement method are very encouraging but their delivery will require continuing commitment. We would like to see a greater resolution of the conflict between passive solar and aesthetic considerations.
- The location of the community hall and its relation to the square, needs re-thinking

Diwedd/End

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