

Addroddiad Adolygu Dylunio Design Review Report

Review Status: **Confidential**

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| Meeting date: | 19th November 2008 |
| Issue Date: | 4th December 2008 |
| Scheme Location: | Hereford Rd Monmouth |
| Scheme Description: | Residential |
| Planning Status: | Pre-application |

Part1: Presentation

The Panel received new information concerning this proposal from the presenting team, namely that an application for conversion of the existing building, along with an element of new build, was submitted 18 months ago and has not yet been determined. Furthermore the Panel was informed that the local planning authority has serious reservations about the submitted proposal. However, the nature of these concerns was not known at the time of Review. The developer is now pursuing a new build option for 24 apartments, showing a compact built form arranged around a central core and designed to respond to the context analysis which has been carried out. Four town houses are located to the rear and we were told that rear development on this site has been accepted in principle by the Local Authority.

The Local Authority submitted written comments stating that, while they support an appropriate alternative use for the site, they oppose the proposed demolition of the existing hospital building.

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

We regret that we were not informed of the existing application prior to the review. It is very unfortunate that there has been little positive engagement between the applicant and the Local Authority, with respect to this proposal and the existing application. Given that the existing building is deteriorating over time, the importance of an early resolution is obvious and we are disappointed that the Local Authority representative was not present at this review.

An acceptable solution for this site could potentially be either a sensitive renovation or a new build development of exceptional architectural quality. Based on the limited information that we were presented with regarding the new build option only, the applicant has failed to demonstrate that this proposal would deliver the quality demanded, or that it contributes to the character and appearance of the conservation area. For any solution to be considered acceptable, it must either preserve or enhance the site and its context.

In addition to these general conclusions we would make the following specific points:

- The quality of the architectural design and detailing would not meet the very high standards required for the replacement of a period building in a conservation area.
- The scale and massing of the proposed development needs to be reduced, especially to the rear.
- North facing single aspect units are not acceptable in a new build development on a site in this context and should not be seen as an inevitable result of the proposed density.
- The architectural treatment is not genuinely contemporary and is compromised by a too literal interpretation of local references.
- The town houses should be clearly secondary to the main block and at present this relationship is confused.
- Issues of parking and landscape design need to be reconsidered and resolved with the input of a landscape architect. The existing yew hedge should be retained.
- There should be a clear commitment to achieve CSH Level 4, and a strategy for achieving this should be included with any planning application.

Part 2: Discussion and Panel Response in Full

Although not listed, this is obviously a significant period building with distinctive character located within a conservation area where tighter planning controls and higher design standards apply. Given that the local planning authority is guided by planning policy to presume in favour of the retention of buildings that positively contribute to conservation areas, the option of retention and sensitive conversion should therefore be fully explored. Any proposal for demolition and new build would need to demonstrate that this would be a significant improvement on what is already there.

We understand that this is a concept scheme and still at the feasibility stage. However, the designs presented fall short of a genuinely contemporary architecture, and demonstrate a too literal interpretation of local and period references. While the solid-to-void ratio and floor-to-ceiling heights of the original have been retained, the overall impression is of a 'modern Georgian' house with contemporary extensions. Detailing would need to be of a high quality and the scheme should aim for simplicity.

In this instance we do not think that the case for demolition, based upon the quality of the proposal outweighing the loss of a building of historic architectural merit, has been made. The exceptional architectural quality that would be needed to justify demolition has not yet been demonstrated.

The massing to the rear of the block is excessive and the relationship of the main block with the town houses is unclear. The latter should be clearly subservient to the former, following the traditional relationship of a villa with its outbuildings, but well integrated into the overall scheme.

The amount of parking directly adjacent to the buildings does not allow for any useful private amenity space, and the increased traffic impact on adjacent properties needs to be evaluated. Moreover, the excessive level of parking [a direct result of the proposed density] compromises the sense of space and generous landscaped grounds that a villa-inspired development should achieve at this location. The finishes of the car park will be important and specialist landscape expertise should be engaged as soon as possible to coordinate the external design works. The existing yew hedge should be retained and could be used to shield parking. The coniferous trees are especially vulnerable to root disturbance and given their TPO status will need to be well protected.

The internal amenity is compromised by the inclusion of north facing, single aspect units [8 out of 24]. We do not accept that this is an inevitable result of development on this site. If necessary the density should be reduced to allow for dual aspect units with reasonable levels of daylight and solar gain.

The current aspiration to achieve Code for Sustainable Homes Level 3 is not sufficiently demanding, especially to justify demolition in a conservation area. We suggest that there should be a commitment to achieve Code Level 4, as a sign that the development would be giving something back to the local and wider environment. An M&E consultant should be appointed to develop the sustainability strategy pre-application. Affordable housing will be provided on site and will need to be well integrated.

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

Asiant/Client/Datblygwr:
Agent/Client/Developer

Redcliffe Homes

Pensaer/Architect:

Powell Dobson Architects
[Bernadette Kinsella]

Consultants:

n/a

Awdurdod Cynllunio/
Planning Authority

Monmouthshire CC

Y Panel Adlygu Dylunio:
Design review panel:
Wendy Richards [Chair]
Cindy Harris [Officer]

Elfed Roberts
Phil Roberts
Martin Knight
Ashley Bateson
Richard Parnaby

Lead Panellist:

Phil Roberts

Sylwedyddion/Observers:

Mark Newey, Hywel Butts [WAG
Planning Division]