

Addroddiad Adolygu Dylunio Design Review Report

Review Status: Confidential

NB This report supercedes all previous advice and reports from DCFW

Meeting date:	22 July 2009
Issue Date:	4th August 2009
Scheme Location:	Hereford Road Monmouth
Scheme Description:	Residential
Planning Status:	Pre-application

Part1: Presentation

This scheme was previously reviewed by DCFW in November 2008. At that time we were told that an application for conversion of the existing building, along with an element of new build, was submitted 18 months previously and had not yet been determined. This proposal involves demolition of the old cottage hospital and the construction of 21 apartments in a main block [reduced from 24], plus four town houses to the rear of the site.

The design approach is contemporary but responds to its conservation context and retains the 'stand alone villa' concept. In response to our previous comments, the number of North facing apartments has been reduced from 8 to 2, parking spaces have been reduced [as a consequence of the reduced number of apartments] and cycle spaces increased. The scheme is now being designed to achieve Code for Sustainable Homes [CSH] Level 4.

No Local Planning Authority [LPA] officers were present but they have registered with us their continuing opposition to the proposed demolition of the hospital building. Conservation experts have been commissioned by Redcliffe Homes to advise on the possibilities for saving and refurbishing the existing building. Although we did not have sight of their report, we were told that they conclude that this option is no longer viable.

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

The Panel was pleased to receive an updated presentation on this scheme. In our view, the conservation option for this site is still the most favoured one and needs to be properly

considered in conjunction with the LPA. The importance of an early resolution, in view of the building's ongoing deterioration, has already been stated and we urge the LPA to resolve the uncertainty over the existing application. Should no option for conservation be possible, we could support this scheme provided that the following major recommendations are adopted:

- Robust and detailed analysis of the conservation area and how the proposals tie into its qualities needs more thorough explanation.
- Whilst the architectural quality appears much improved, it needs substantiating with more information on the detailing, deliverability and the protection of quality in a Design & Build procurement process.
- This proposal still represents overdevelopment as evidenced by the remaining North facing apartments, which should be avoided with a slight reduction in numbers.
- The commitment to CSH Level 4 is welcomed but an M&E consultant needs to be engaged for the remaining stages of design development.
- Daylight penetration should be improved by using borrowed light where direct daylight access is not available.
- The proposed parking standard is acceptable and releases more land for private amenity space.
- The improvements in landscape treatment are welcomed, although the arrangement of the rear pedestrian access, frontages and colonnade need some re-working.

Part 2: Discussion and Panel Response in Full

As stated at the time of the last review, we emphasised the importance of conservation area considerations and the retention of the existing building where possible. We also stated that any new build solution would have to be of 'exceptional architectural quality', and were encouraged by the design development and the quality apparent in the most recent images.

The presented drawings are seductive in their promise of high quality, but this needs to be deliverable. If details have to be altered, for example inserting transoms and openable windows in the large glazed areas, this could compromise the quality of the elevations as a whole.

We regretted the absence of any LPA representative at this review, although we had received their written comments on early sketch proposals. It is disappointing that there is still a lack of engagement with the applicant over the existing application for conversion. It is now two years since this application was lodged and the applicant originally pursued this option as being more acceptable to the LPA. However, there has now been significant deterioration to the building fabric, and the applicant stated that this option was no longer viable, especially with the requirement for affordable housing of 20%.

Despite the reduction in the number of units, the Panel considered that this proposal still represents overdevelopment of the site. The scheme as a whole would benefit from a further small reduction in numbers, so that no north facing apartments remained. We did not accept that such apartments are inevitable and are certainly not desirable. In terms of

scale we accepted the argument in favour of the extra storey at the front, and noted that it was still lower than the ridge of the original scheme.

We welcome the commitment to achieve CSH Level 4, although we doubt that the form of this building would lend itself easily to off-site pre-fabrication. Daylight penetration should be improved and a top lit stairwell would enable borrowed light to be used in some of the deep plan spaces.

The 1:1 parking standard is acceptable to DCFW although the LPA require 1 space per bedroom. We advised the team to consult and reference the draft Wales Parking Standards [2008], to support this level of provision.

The landscape treatment has been enhanced and we were pleased to see the yew hedge retained and the increase in private external space. The stone boundary wall is preferred to brickwork, but the full height corner window facing the main access is too exposed; some defensible space is required here.

Provision of safe play space to the rear should be considered, especially round the family housing. The colonnade will need careful handling and the front doors should be pulled forward onto the rear pedestrian access. The bin store is within 30 m of the street so the refuse truck will not have to turn on site.

There is no published conservation character area appraisal for this part of Monmouth, but we suggested that the team might carry one out with respect to their chosen 'villa' typology, and run it through typical LPA tests.

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 Ltd [Tom O'Connor]
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]

Phil Roberts

David Harvey

Steve Smith

Kedrick Davies

Lead Panellist:

Phil Roberts

Sylwedyddion/Observers: