

**Statws/Status:**

**Cyhoeddus / Public**



<b>Adroddiad Adolygu Dylunio: Design Review Report:</b>	<b>13 February 2006</b>
<b>Dyddiad Cyfarfod / Cyflwyno'r Deunydd: Meeting Date / Material Submitted:</b>	<b>1 February 2006</b>
<b>Lleoliad/Location:</b>	<b>Friddoedd Rd Bangor</b>
<b>Disgrifiad o'r Cynllun Scheme Description:</b>	<b>Student accommodation and associated facilities</b>
<b>Cleient/Asiant: Client/Agent:</b>	<b>BDP for Bangor University [Alan Davies]</b>
<b>Developer:</b>	<b>Grwp Gwalia [Phil Roberts, Haf Roberts]</b>
<b>Pensaer/Architect:</b>	<b>PCKO [Gordon Evans]</b>
<b>Awdurdod Cynllunio: Planning Authority:</b>	<b>Gwynedd CC</b>
<b>Statws Cynllunio: Planning Status:</b>	<b>Outline consent exists Detailed application for Phase 1 - Jan 06</b>
<b>Y Panel Adolygu Dylunio/Design Review Panel:</b>	
<b>Alan Francis (cadeirydd/chair)</b>	<b>Paul Vanner</b>
<b>Cindy Harris (swyddog/officer)</b>	<b>Jonathan Adams</b>
<b>Ben Sibert</b>	<b>Douglas Hogg</b>
<b>Ed Colgan</b>	
<b>Lead Panellist:</b>	<b>Jonathan Adams</b>
<b>Sylwedyddion/Observers:</b>	<b>Charlie Deng</b>

## Design Review assistant

### Cyflwyniad/Presentation

BDP prepared the masterplan and obtained the outline planning consent which provided the basis for the present proposals. They continue to advise the University on planning and architectural issues and act as the client representative on this scheme. The redevelopment of the university's residential stock is necessary owing to the poor quality of existing accommodation and the need to attract students. The brief is for 1080 new ensuite bedrooms with associated facilities and parking at a ratio of 20%.

The Friddoedd site is on the edge of the Bangor conservation area and is embedded into the urban grain, with views out to the Menai Strait and Ynys Mon. The aim is to create a single integrated site, with a high quality physical environment, and an exemplar of sustainable design and construction. The construction of phase 1 on an existing sports pitch to the north east of the site will release for demolition the area of the planned phase 2 to the south west. The parameters for the construction, materials and landscape are set out in the masterplan. Outline consent was obtained in July 2005, and Gwalia was appointer preferred bidder in January 06. Phase 1 is due for completion in September 2007. Phase 2 and 3 are due for completion in September 2008.

The architects have responded to the masterplan and adopted the key principle of the linear green park running east-west through the site and linking the 'Summit Boulevard', 'Campus Green' and 'Parkway'. The Campus beacon will be a key landmark for orientation and legibility. Pedestrians and cyclists will have priority and car parking will be pepper potted throughout the site to increase natural surveillance. The main vehicular entrance will be moved slightly to the east to improve safety and the relationship with the local community. The landscape strategy includes structural planting, the creation of a buffer zone between the campus and local residents, and local landscaping to improve the relationship between buildings.

Architecturally, the approach is to create 'villas in a landscape', four storeys high, to enclose and define the space. The layout is designed to protect views, and to maximise accessibility and integration with the community. Photomontages have been commissioned to show views from key points on Ynys Mon, as specified by the local authority, and the developers believe that the new buildings will not encroach on existing views.

The sustainability agenda is addressed via: timber frame construction from sustainably managed sources; high levels of insulation and locally sourced materials; good energy management; and a solar-responsive site layout. The roof will be a metal standing seam construction, and the windows will be a composite timber and aluminium, both in dark grey. A dark earth-coloured brick will be used for most of the cladding. Inclusive design has been considered and level access is provided, along with good legibility and permeability, a secure sense of place, natural surveillance, and well linked spaces. Overall, the aim is to create a vibrant campus environment.

The developer pointed out that as a result of the nature and timing of the competitive process, some aspects of the design are not fully developed. Discussions are underway about alternative heating options, roofs and windows. They are working with the WDA Construct Wales programme, to maximise the use of local businesses and labour.

## Ymateb y Panel/Panel's Response

The Panel commended the overall design approach and the effort that has been made to break up the monolithic nature of the blocks. While there is inevitable repetition in the facades of such residential accommodation, the question of how much to vary the elevational treatment merits consideration. The Panel queried whether varying floor levels and a break in the rhythm and size of the fenestration might be considered, to achieve a more subtle and complex pattern. The designer's approach was to articulate the ends and corners of blocks, and to create distinctiveness between blocks. The developer welcomed the Panel's comments and agreed to feed them into the ongoing debate.

The Panel welcomed the development approach based on a well executed masterplan. We found the presented drawings beguiling, but we recognised that they were no guarantee of delivered quality. The developer and client insisted that although changes were still being discussed, they all represented potential improvements and more sustainable options. The object of the dialogue was not to reduce costs but to arrive at quality based specifications. The finished scheme needs to attract students in a competitive education environment. Moreover under the PFI arrangement, Gwalia will be managing the scheme for the next 25 years.

The Panel supported the existing sustainability measures, and suggested the inclusion of others, such as rainwater recycling, renewable generation, sustainable drainage and biomass heating. The developer confirmed that they are all under discussion, although they may not all be achievable. With regard to solar orientation it was accepted that most rooms in the phase 1 blocks would face east or west. The Panel expressed concern about the spaces in the northern internal corners of the cruciform and suggested that they could be made non-habitable spaces. However, it was also accepted that the likely pattern of usage meant that the rooms would be unoccupied for large parts of the day, and the communal spaces at the top of the blocks had good solar access.

We questioned whether the repetition of the villa style in Parkway was appropriate and suggested that a different approach might be tried. The designer stated that this was not unthinking repetition but the use of a repeated language, with blocks treated independently. The wings of the cruciform plan are there to create enclosure. The Panel stated that the front doors of all blocks need to be made legible and accessible.

We were not convinced by the amount of brick cladding over four or five storeys, especially given the structural timber frame, and we were surprised and concerned by the colour of brick chosen. However, the client had wanted a single main elevational treatment and had favoured brick, with other materials used to accent certain areas or act as contrast. The Panel thought that brick was not necessarily the best option, from the point of view of long term maintenance.

The glazed top floor will include some opaque panels, using a window/wall system which sits back from the brickwork. Although the drawings indicate well crafted buildings, the treatment and detailing of panels and openings in the powerful element of the top floor, will be crucial. There is a danger of the articulation being lost and it is important that a sense of depth in the facades is retained with eg projecting mullions. We recognised that this might be difficult in a thin wall timber frame construction, but nevertheless would be vital to the architectural quality of this scheme.

The Panel appreciated the sequence of outdoor spaces with different characteristics. We thought that the landscaped areas with lawns between blocks may be better treated as urban courts with hard landscaping. While the Panel welcomed the pepper potting of parking areas, it will be important to discourage driving from one to the other, around the site. Pedestrian links with the town and the educational campus will be maintained and improved.

Our biggest concern is with the procurement and achieving the promised quality within such a tight timescale, given a start on site of June 2005. The developer stated that the construction partner is already on board and taking part in detailed discussions. There is still time [although limited] to introduce new or alternative options, although it was acknowledged that detailed design time is very short, even if the scheme were already frozen.

### **Crynodeb/Summary**

The Panel applauds the background approach based on the masterplan and welcomes the current proposals wholeheartedly, as a good exemplar of this type of development. We consider the scheme to be an acceptable response to the site and the brief, with minor revisions. In particular:

- The elevational treatment and massing of the blocks needs developing further. We suggest that further consideration be given to the elevational treatment, perhaps by an adjustment in the fenestration, the long elevations and varying floor levels.
- We have concerns regarding the brick proposed and the treatment of the top floor detailing.
- We strongly support the design team's commitment to achieving exemplary standards of environmental performance and overall sustainability, and we urge that this be given high priority in the current discussions
- We are concerned with the short timescale available to develop detailed designs and resolve outstanding issues. Strategic decisions will need to be made very soon in order to protect quality.

### **Diwedd/End**

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