

**Statws/Status:**  
**Cyfrinachol / Confidential**



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| <b>Adroddiad Adolygu Dylunio:<br/>Design Review Report:</b>  | <b>20 June 2008</b>  |
| <b>Dyddiad Cyfarfod / Meeting Date:</b>  | <b>11 June 2008</b>  |
| <b>Lleoliad/Location:</b>  | <b>Gelligaer</b>   |
| <b>Disgrifiad o'r Cynllun<br/>Scheme Description:</b>  | <b>Primary Care Centre</b>   |
| <b>Cleient/Asiant:<br/>Client/Agent:</b>   | <b>Caerphilly LHB [Cilve Williams,<br/>Nigel Edwards]</b>  |
| <b>Developer/Datblygwr:</b>  | <b>Assura Property Ltd</b>   |
| <b>Pensaer/Architect:</b>  | <b>West Hart Partnership Ltd<br/>[Steve West, Jim Hart]</b>                                      |
| <b>Cynllunio/Consultants:</b>  | <b>LSP Developments<br/>[James Pritchard]<br/>Waterman Building Service<br/>[David Poulding]</b> |
| <b>Awdurdod Cynllunio:<br/>Planning Authority:</b>   | <b>Caerphilly CBC</b>  |
| <b>Statws Cynllunio:<br/>Planning Status:</b>  | <b>Pre-application</b>   |
| <b>Y Panel Adolygu Dylunio/<br/>Design Review Panel:<br/>Alan Francis (cadeirydd/chair)<br/>Cindy Harris (swyddog/officer)<br/>Charlie Deng (swyddog/officer)<br/>Phil Roberts</b> | <b>Kieren Morgan<br/>Ben Sibert<br/>Howard Wainwright<br/>Jonathan Hines</b>                     |

**Lead Panellist:**

**Howard Wainwright**

**Sylwedyddion/Observers:**

**Andrew Eustace, WHE  
Lynne Sullivan, Design Review  
Panelist**

### **Cyflwyniad/Presentation**

This GP practice and training facility providing academic support is directly managed by the LHB, who have purchased the proposed site. The brief for a replacement surgery forms part of the Heads of the Valleys initiative.

The proposed site is on a prominent corner within the town, adjacent to a recently developed public square and less than 500 metres from the existing surgery. An existing school on the site is no longer used and would be demolished, though the school house to the south east would remain, and an existing pharmacy is situated opposite the site across Penallta Road to the west. The design has been developed to maintain a good relationship with the street and the square, and to protect the amenity of the school house. The new building will be located on the footprint of the old school, and the main entrance will be highly legible. Existing boundary walls will be reused and rebuilt where necessary, with a new fence above.

Most habitable and regularly occupied rooms are located on the north side to protect against solar gain. The double height central reception area is daylighted from above, with visual connections between floors. A feature picture window to the north overlooks the square and connects with the waiting area. Consultation with the Local Authority, in particular the conservation officer, has been an integral part of this development.

The team has targetted a NEAT Excellent rating and will aim to achieve a 10% reduction in carbon emissions over the statutory minimum. A thermal modelling exercise will be carried out to ensure comfortable internal temperatures. Orientation and internal layout have been designed to protect against solar gain and the double height reception area will benefit from passive stack ventilation. Local contractors and suppliers will be employed and recycled stone from the demolished building will be used on parts of the elevations.

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

The Panel was disappointed by the lack of information in the presented material relating to the three dimensional nature of the site and the public

realm context. In particular, it was not clear how this development might enhance the difficult area of public space to the north which, although recently improved with hard landscaping, did not in our view merit the title of public square. The rather heavy and fortress-like appearance of the building suggested a defensive approach to the public realm and we thought the building would be better located to the west of the site, fronting Penallta Road, and the massing broken down more into its functional elements.

The team stated that the vehicular access to the site was fixed at the north west corner and could not be moved. Moving the building towards the west would compromise the amenity of and views from the school house garden, which was seen as more detrimental to the occupiers than a two storey building immediately adjacent to the house, as its northern elevation was largely blank.

Although this was intended to be a civic building it did not appear inviting or particularly accessible. The main entrance was recessed and flanked with heavy, blank stone walls – and oriented to catch the prevailing winds as shown on the site analysis. The designers stated that distinctive paving materials would be used to indicate the entrance but agreed that they would have liked more space to create a better sense of arrival.

It seemed to the Panel that basically the proposed building was too big for the site. We thought that a better site layout would be achieved by getting the building to address Penallta Rd and to turn the corner into the access road. We recognised the number of constraints inherent in this arrangement but felt that these should be negotiable, to allow a solution which would benefit the area as a whole. In particular, we thought that Highways considerations should not be allowed to dominate the design to the exclusion of other considerations and that the impact on the school house and garden would be less overall than the current proposal.

We thought it would be essential to provide a pedestrian crossing on Penallta Road linking the surgery with the pharmacy and the area of public space in front of the pharmacy, which was actually better used than the newly improved 'public square'. It was confirmed that there was a 2 metre wide pavement on the east side of Penallta Road where the overgrown hedge would be removed and the wall rebuilt. We found that the proposed boundary treatment of fence + wall was unacceptable in terms of relating well to the public realm and only served to emphasise the defensive response of the building itself. Ideally, if the building were relocated to the west, the landscaped edge shown here should be replaced with the building wall, coming up to back-of-pavement and providing security for the site. Even if the building remained in its current position, it should be aligned with the eastern boundary, again providing security without the need for a wall or fence.

The Panel advised that the forthcoming BREEAM Healthcare standard should be used in preference to NEAT, if possible. We noted the proposed 10% reduction in carbon emissions but thought this should be greater, given the WAG aspiration for 100% reductions by 2011. We would like to see solar water heating included and thought that the rest of the low-carbon measures itemised were basic good practice for energy efficient heating and lighting systems. We found the justification for the orientation and layout rather strange – protecting against summer overheating at the expense of losing useful solar gain in the winter.

### **Crynodeb/Summary**

The Panel appreciated the difficulties of locating a building of the required size on this constrained site. Nevertheless, we think the current proposal is an unacceptable response to the site and context. In particular:

- The building is fundamentally too big for the site and needs to be reconfigured, possibly rising to three storeys if all the proposed accommodation is considered necessary.
- We think the building should be relocated to the western perimeter and should turn the corner to the north west. Though we accept that this would mean relocating the vehicular entrance, we think this can be done and would create a better scheme in relation to its context.
- We find the massing heavy and defensive and the main entrance not sufficiently legible.
- We would like to see the roof form revisited and an optimum position provided for solar thermal panels.
- The sustainability targets and percentage carbon reductions need to be redefined, and the proposed orientation tested against a low energy servicing strategy.
- We think there should be a pedestrian crossing linking the surgery with the pharmacy across Penallta Road.
- We think the boundary treatment should be revised, using the building itself to provide security, along with a more positive response to the public realm.

### **Diwedd/End**

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