

Statws/Status:
Cyfrinachol / Confidential



Adroddiad Adolygu Dylunio: Design Review Report:	29 March 2007
Dyddiad Cyfarfod / Cyflwyno'r Deunydd: Meeting Date / Material Submitted:	14 March 2007
Lleoliad/Location:	Land opposite George IV Hotel, Criccieth
Disgrifiad o'r Cynllun Scheme Description:	Residential
Developer/Datblygwr:	BL Butterworth Not present
Pensaer/Architect/Designer:	Dewis [Dewi Williams]
Ymgynghorwyr Cynllunio: Planning Consultants:	CDN Planning [Rhys Davies]
Awdurdod Cynllunio: Planning Authority:	Gwynedd CC
Statws Cynllunio: Planning Status:	Pre-application
Y Panel Adolygu Dylunio/ Design Review Panel: John Punter (cadeirydd/chair) Cindy Harris (swyddog/officer) Charlie Deng (swyddog/officer) Carole-Anne Davies CEO, DCFW	Ashley Bateson Douglas Hogg Phil Roberts
Lead Panellist:	Ashley Bateson
Sylwedyddion/Observers:	Ian Roberts, Candice Coombs, DEIN

Cyflwyniad/Presentation

This proposal has been developed in consultation with the site owner, who also owns the George IV hotel, a Grade II listed building across the High Street in the centre of Criccieth. A previous proposal for 41 residential units was refused planning consent in April 2005 on the grounds of scale and massing. The conservation area was extended to include this site in 2005. The conservation area appraisal, which was unfortunately not included in the presentation material, identified important views from the hotel across High Street to the castle. The report apparently supported the principle of sensitive development on this site which would enhance the conservation area. As a result, the proposal uses the least sensitive part of the site for the proposed building. A formal garden will be recreated opposite the hotel on the eastern part of the site, and the western part, opposite Capel Mawr and other residential properties, will accommodate an L-shaped block facing north and east and addressing the High Street and the garden.

The proposal is for 40 residential units in a sheltered housing scheme with an element of affordable or local needs housing included. The design is still at the concept stage and aims to complement the conservation area and preserve important views with an open aspect in front of the hotel. The existing car parking for the hotel on the site will be replaced with 14 basement parking spaces, and resident parking will be provided for 30 per cent of the units. Sustainable technologies and materials will be used including geothermal heating and rainwater harvesting. A glulam frame construction is being considered, which compares favourably with a steel frame in terms of costs, and locally sourced oak windows and doors will be used.

Pre-application discussions have been held with the conservation officer at Gwynedd CC, who is reported to be broadly supportive.

Ymateb y Panel/Panel's Response

The Panel was informed that the business case for specifying 40 units was based on surveys carried out by Bangor University in 2003. The Local Authority accept the local need for this type of development and potential end users [including Housing Associations] have been identified to run and operate the scheme. The Panel advised that the selected partner should be included in the design development process as soon as possible.

The Panel asked whether daylight impact studies had been carried out to determine the effect of this proposal on buildings to the north including the Chapel and numbers 15-19 High Street, which are three storey residential properties. No such studies have been done. The presenter pointed out that building height was not identified as an issue on the previous application, although the Panel noted that the previous building was set much further back from the road. We were concerned about the implications of protecting the views from the hotel, at the expense of

neighbouring properties. It was confirmed that the garden opposite the hotel would be private space but with full public access, including an informal footpath through to the car park adjacent to the railway.

The Panel found no justification in the presentation for the proposed built form, the orientation, or the architectural design. The facades did not respond to differential solar access and we thought that the north facing apartment interiors would not be pleasant spaces. The architectural style is pastiche and would not provide a sensitive response to the conservation area. The preferred response should focus on the predominant two to three storey built form of the High Street, rather than on the exception of the George IV hotel. The fact that the building would have open spaces either side only increases the apparent scale and massing, by exposing the four storey end walls to views up and down the street. The Panel thought that this proposal represented overdevelopment of the site and that the proposed number of units should be based on a more detailed site and context analysis, rather than being pre-determined by the developer. We thought that a proposal with fewer units and without a basement car park could be viable. Alternatively, a revised massing arrangement with more floor space located away from the main road might provide an acceptable solution to achieving the required number of units.

We noted that no support facilities necessary for servicing sheltered housing were shown on the drawings, and these would have a major impact on the floor plans. We thought there was insufficient communal space and, from the basement plan, there appeared to be no convenient way to access the communal lounge, dining room and kitchen. We thought that the main vehicular access ramp off High Street was not well located, breaking the pavement line and intruding on the garden.

The Panel was informed that the proposed geothermal heating system would use vertical boreholes, but the ground conditions on site have not been examined to ensure they are suitable. The Panel advised the developer to carry out further research on whether this was the best option of the available sustainable technologies, and to look again at solar water heating which would be mounted on the roof pitch facing away from the road. There would be financial savings to be made in running costs with a geothermal system, but there may not be net carbon savings. We suggested that the proposed cladding material should be local oak rather than red cedar, and we urged the developer to have an EcoHomes assessment carried out as soon as possible.

Crynodeb/Summary

The Panel accepted that there was a case for development on this site, and that a well landscaped garden with full public access could be seen as a valuable contribution to the public realm. However, we find the proposal as presented an unacceptable intrusion into the conservation area and traditional Welsh streetscape. In particular:

- We think this is an overdevelopment of the site and the proposed block form is too large and monolithic. The proposed development is out of scale and character with its context.
- A more sophisticated architectural approach developed by an experienced architect, which redistributes the massing towards the south, would be necessary to achieve an acceptable solution.
- The elevations need to be refined and the choice of materials re-thought, with greater use of local stone and Welsh Oak replacing Western Red Cedar and used more sparingly.
- The orientation and internal layout do not respond to solar access for passive heating and daylighting. The blank gable wall facing the garden is not a welcome feature.
- The internal space planning does not include the necessary support facilities or adequate means of access to communal spaces.
- Ideally the main vehicular access should be from the rear of the building
- We applaud the commitment to sustainability and urge the developer to carry out an EcoHomes assessment and research the most appropriate sustainable technologies.
- We would like to see a firm commitment from the eventual operator and their advice on design and layout used to inform the project development.

Diwedd/End

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