

Statws/Status:
Cyfrinachol / Confidential



Adroddiad Adolygu Dylunio: 14 July 2006
Design Review Report:

Dyddiad Cyfarfod / Cyflwyno'r Deunydd: 5 July 2006
Meeting Date / Material Submitted:

Lleoliad/Location: Callaghan Square Cardiff

Disgrifiad o'r Cynllun Glamorgan Record Office
Scheme Description:

Cleient/Asiant: Glamorgan Record Office
Client/Agent: [Gary Tuson]

Developer/Datblygwr: Vinci Investments [Martin Hunt]

Pensaer/Architect: Atkins [James Harrison,
Bill Martin,
Eugene Travers-Jones]

Cynllunio: Turner & Townsend
Consultants: [Paul Evans]

Awdurdod Cynllunio: Cardiff CC
Planning Authority: [Nigel Hanson]

Statws Cynllunio: Pre-planning
Planning Status:

Y Panel Adolygu Dylunio/Design Review Panel:
John Punter (cadeirydd/chair) Ewan Jones
Cindy Harris (swyddog/officer) Howard Wainwright

Lead Panellist: Ewan Jones

Sylwedyddion/Observers: Anna Leron, DCFW

Cyflwyniad/Presentation

The Glamorgan Record Office was established in 1939 and provides an archive service for six local authorities in south east Wales. Their collection continues to grow and their current premises are inadequate for their needs, involving off site storage. The preservation of documents relies on a stable internal environment, with tightly controlled temperature and relative humidity, and this is reflected in the brief. There are also stringent security requirements, combined with a need for public accessibility. The front of the building is designed to be welcoming and the conservation studio, which is particularly popular with visitors, has been brought to front of house. Following the OJEU procedure, Vinci have just been appointed as the preferred developer.

The main architectural concept is that of a 'box containing boxes'. The aim is for a prominent modern building, which would advertise the presence of GRO. The site is centrally located just off Callaghan Square on Tresillian Way and has excellent public transport connections. The architects have a lot of previous experience of designing records offices [including contributing to the relevant British Standard] and adopt an approach which links the architecture with the engineering solutions. Hence the use of high thermal mass construction to help deliver stable temperatures, and a double wall construction forming an environmental buffer space around the repository. The facade is highly glazed to the north, which is the public side, and opaque on the other three sides where the storage is located. The brickwork facades to the south, east and west incorporate coloured bands or 'strata' indicating different historical uses of the site over particular periods of time.

There is a combination of natural ventilation with mechanical conditioning, according to the function of the space. Full air conditioning is used only in the repository. There is 4 hour fire protection. The brief requires a BREEAM 'Excellent' rating and the provisional score that the design achieves at the moment is 711 [a score of 675 is necessary to achieve 'Excellent']. The Design Quality Indicators, generated by the client and used to evaluate the tenders, will be monitored throughout the design development.

The local authority representative very much welcomed this development on a strategic level, as Callaghan Square would benefit from a public building with a civic presence. There are concerns relating to how the building sits in the context of present and likely future development. Ideally, this scheme would serve as a catalyst for the comprehensive redevelopment of the whole site and its immediate surroundings, including the derelict terrace of housing to the west on Dumballs Road. The Panel learned that the exact location of the building on the site was still under discussion, and the opportunity should be taken to ensure that narrow strips of land on Dumballs Road did not prejudice the redevelopment of the whole south west corner of the Callaghan Square development.

Ymateb y Panel/Panel's Response

The architects provided further justification of their design approach, which was essentially pragmatic, to produce a functional building purposely designed as a 'box to contain boxes'. The height of the building was set by the height of the repository, but was also consistent with the rest of the new buildings around the square. The intention was to create a balance between the transparency of the front and solidity of the rear, reflecting their different functions of staff/visitor space and storage space respectively. The cladding materials will

be stone coloured brickwork (though yellow brick to match the buildings to the west was also mentioned) and aluminium frame curtain walling, with a mix of clear and obscure glass panels. All glass will be treated for UV protection.

The Panel thought that the 'box' was potentially a strong and workable concept, but was weakened by essentially pragmatic decisions – for example the cut away entrance and the plan dimensions not being quite square. We would prefer to see an internal lobby on a square [in plan] entrance, together with a perfectly square floor plan, which would be a more rigorous interpretation of the 'box' concept. We think that the height of the parapet wall should be increased, both to screen the roof plant and improve the proportions, which would also give the building more prominence. While recognising that these options might be more costly, it was agreed that key priorities needed to be decided within the budgetary constraints.

The Panel recognised the concern of the local authority over the building's relationship with its context, but we thought that stylistically this could be treated as a stand alone building. We considered that historical references in the facade treatment were rather obscure and might be seen as gestural. The key to the success of this scheme would be to make the box form work and follow it through with high quality materials and detailing. The Panel was unsure whether the brickwork was intended to reflect the AA building (yellow brick) or Eversheds (off-white brick) and while this detail was not yet resolved, the designers stated their intention of creating a building that stands out but is still sympathetic to its surroundings.

The Panel discussed what precedents this building would set for future development. We acknowledged the relative pros and cons of moving the building further east and further west, and the difficulties created by the uncertainty over the future of the terraced houses to the west, which ideally need to be demolished so that the whole block can be satisfactorily redeveloped. However, we thought it essential that the exact position of this building on the site be resolved as soon as possible. This would affect, among other things, the optimum position of the main entrance. Unless the building moves to the far eastern corner of the site, we think that the entrance should be relocated to the north west corner of the building, so that it better addresses the pedestrian crossing and the main pedestrian flow from the station. Either way, our preference would be for the building to address a corner of the site.

The need to create a balance between security and a pleasant open space around the building, within a particularly hostile environment, was generally recognised. The Panel was told that there would be brick boundary walls to the east and west, and metal railings to the rear car park, which would be open to the public while the building was in use. It is hoped to involve an artist in the design of the front entrance gates across the access route. The local authority are especially aware of the potential problems and conflict of uses that could arise to the rear of the building, and will seek a solution which embraces the consented housing schemes to the south west and other impending changes in the area.

The Panel welcomed the commitment to a BREEAM 'Excellent' rating, and in particular the minimal use of air conditioning, and the solar influenced layout. We would like to see an alternative to individual electric water heaters and we would encourage some form of on-site renewable energy generation.

Crynodeb/Summary

The Panel was pleased to see this proposal for an important public building on a city centre site. We are concerned, however, that the exact position of the building on the site has not yet been determined. However, assuming that this issue is resolved speedily and satisfactorily, we consider these proposals to be an acceptable response to the site and the brief, with some minor revisions. In particular:

- The position of the building's main entrance should be reconsidered depending on its exact eventual location.
- We recommend that the building should front the street on one or other of the two northern corners.
- We support the 'box' concept and think that this should be applied more rigorously at all levels of design, with a high quality of materials and detailing.
- We applaud the BREEAM rating and provisional score, and we would like to see some renewable generation included, possibly as an alternative to electric water heating.
- The landscape and boundary treatment will need to take account of security issues to the rear, while maximising good quality public realm. The boulevard treatment to the north should be reinforced.

Diwedd/End

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