

# Addroddiad Adolygu Dylunio Design Review Report

## Review Status: **Confidential**

Meeting date:	17th February 2010
Issue Date:	2nd March 2010
Scheme Location:	High Street, St Davids
Scheme Description:	Retail / leisure
Planning Status:	Pre-application

## Part1: Presentation

The developer is a charitable trust formed to purchase and restore historic buildings and bring them into commercial use, as corporate retreats and 5 star hotels. Examples of their ongoing projects in the area include Roch Castle, Penrhwiw Priory, and the Twr y Felin hotel.

This proposal is for a new building to replace an existing commercial property providing a restaurant at street level with two storeys of retail above and a small spa facility above the retail and to the rear. Pedestrian access to the rear will be provided on each side of the site. The innovative contemporary design will add interest to the streetscape on the route into the town and the curved form is judged to fit the site well.

The developer aims to achieve a BREEAM Excellent rating and work on the pre-assessment is beginning. The intention is to make a planning application as soon as possible. There has been no community consultation yet.

The Local Authority were not present, but submitted a context brief and notes on their response to the limited information they have seen with regard to this proposal. While they are unlikely to object to the demolition of the existing building, they have strong reservations about the proposed scheme, largely relating to its scale, mass and siting, and they consider it inappropriate for this important site.

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

The Panel welcomed the opportunity to review this interesting project and appreciated the client's involvement and aspirations for the area. We are supportive of the wider agenda of

economic regeneration, and the provision of appropriate commercial opportunities. However, this proposal is unsatisfactory and we have the following fundamental reservations:

- We do not think that the proposal responds adequately to the conservation area context, since it neither preserves nor enhances its character.
- The proposed height and scale are inappropriate in this largely domestic streetscene context.
- The proposal would be an overdevelopment of the site.
- We welcome a contemporary design approach but this should be executed with a simplicity and sensitivity which is not evident in the current proposal.
- The site requires a 'background' building rather than one which seeks to be very much a 'landmark' in this street composed largely of vernacular domestic buildings.
- The BREEAM aspiration is supported but we advised that sustainability measures should be fully integrated with the design development from the beginning.

## **Part 2: Discussion and Panel Response in Full**

The Panel queried how the design development had evolved into the double-fronted 'upturned boats' form presented. The team explained the benefits of the curved form in terms of volume to surface area, and the way in which the form would allow more daylight into the narrow alleyways on either side of the building. Local examples of buildings which used curved forms in plan or elevation were cited, including the new Visitor Centre at St Davids, St Justinians, and Twr y Felin although, as the Panel noted, these are all 'pavilion' buildings. There is also an intended reference to the local tradition of shipbuilding and the construction method will include the diagonal boarding techniques used in that craft.

The Panel regretted the lack of site sections in the presentation material and was informed that there was level access off the High Street with a 2.5m level drop from the front to the rear of the site. The building is effectively 3.5 storeys at front, and 1.5 storeys at the rear. We were assured that the alleyways on either side of the site were 1.2m wide and fully accessible.

Given that the site is in a Conservation Area, the proposal has to demonstrate that it will preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area. There is a need for stronger justification of the proposed scheme in this respect. This information is currently lacking and should be included in a detailed Design and Access statement.

The Panel was not convinced that the proposed height and scale were appropriate in the streetscape. This part of the High Street is predominantly residential in use and domestic in scale. It is important not to confuse residential and commercial scales, and the corresponding difference in floor-to-ceiling heights would jar in the streetscape. This highly commercialised development, also intended to be a landmark building and a corporate statement, does not sit well in this context and we suggested that this was the wrong site for the brief.

The challenge of fitting such a building into this conservation area and townscape context has not been met in the proposed design. While we have no objection to a contemporary

design approach, we think it should be expressed in a quieter, more subtle built form which reflects the simplicity and ordinariness of the existing buildings and demonstrates a high quality of detailing and materials.

The Panel welcomed the aspiration to achieve BREEAM Excellent, but warned of the dangers of a 'bolt-on' approach to sustainability. The findings of the pre-assessment exercise should be explored in the Design & Access Statement and used to inform the design development.

**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	The Retreats Group [Keith Griffiths]
Pensaer/Architect:	Acanthus Holden Architects [Peter Holden, Linda Jones]
Consultants:	n/a
Awdurdod Cynllunio/ Planning Authority	Pembrokeshire Coast National Park
Y Panel Adlygu Dylunio: Design review panel: John Punter [Chair] Cindy Harris [Officer] Carole-Anne Davies [CEO] Wendy Richards	Elfed Roberts Simon Hartley Simon Carne
Lead Panellist:	Wendy Richards
Sylwedyddion/Observers:	Matthew Kennedy [Grwp Gwalia]