

Comisiwn Dylunio Cymru	Design Commission for Wales
Design Review Report:	9 June 2004
Meeting Date / Material Submitted:	3 June 2004
Location:	Holton Reach, Site N2A, The Waterfront, Barry
Architects / Design Team:	Redrow Homes
Landowner/Developer:	Associated British Ports (ABP) Welsh Development Agency (WDA)
Scheme Description:	Mixed use, residential and community facilities
Consultants:	Wyn Thomas Gordon Lewis Cooke & Arkwright Chesterton
Planning Status:	Outline permission May 1997 Full application lodged March 2004 for whole development minus bridge
Planning Authority:	Vale of Glamorgan
Case Officer:	Yvonne Prichard
Panel Members:	Richard Parnaby, Ed Colgan, Nigel Hanson, Ben Sibert, Geraint John, Paul Vanner, Cindy Harris
Observing:	Steve Trigg, Architectural Liaison Officer, SW Police
Record of conflict of interest	Carole-Anne Davies stepped out Rob Firth stepped out Avoiding potential conflict in relation to third parties

Presentation

Geraint Bowden, on behalf of the WDA and ABP, gave an overview of the development of this project to date. The development brief, which is deliberately not prescriptive, has been iteratively developed over a long period with the help of Gordon Lewis and others. It includes a commitment to mixed use, community benefits and a step up in design quality over previous schemes. Community benefits include a health centre, a 100 place nursery, coffee shop, nine adult education classrooms, and a place of worship. The land to house these developments has been dedicated to the promoters

at nil value. Redrow Homes were selected as developers in 2003, although their financial offer was not the highest.

This scheme in turn is part of the wider development of Barry waterfront – in itself a long term project. Three different designers have been involved on the design for the doctor's surgery, the community centre, and the housing. The first two have been treated in a contemporary manner, while the latter is more traditional. A fourth designer is involved with the design of the footbridge, but this is not part of the current application.

For Redrow, Keith Annis pointed out the key constraints on the development, such as the number and type of different uses. As developers, they needed a scheme with fairly high density. The affordable housing component of 26% will be in blocks of the same architectural style as the rest of the development. The design guidance they received was to reflect the style of the adjacent Persimmon development. The layout and access to the community facilities were arrived at in conjunction with the Highways Department.

Panel's Response

The panel asked the presenters to identify the aspects of the scheme which they thought represented a step up in design quality. Keith Annis mentioned the arrangement of different uses and the linkage between town and waterfront, which would be established via the new footbridge in particular. In terms of building design, this scheme reflects the surrounding schemes as requested, and includes "a rich tableau of forms and shapes". However, the panel considers that the adjacent Persimmon scheme is an example of the poorest quality in modern housing design, and not something to be matched or emulated. The design of the surgery and community centre are intended to act as a foil between the non-retail development to the west, and the housing.

The panel questioned the wisdom of the decision to locate the community facilities at the rear of the development, 'tucked away'. This seemed counter-intuitive and would make access relatively difficult. However, the developers stated that in their present location they are nearer to the existing surgery and are meant to serve other parts of town as well as this development. In addition they are low level buildings which it would not have been appropriate to site on the frontage.

The size and location of public space was discussed, as was the position of the bridge and how best to optimise the legibility of the link from the town, through the development to the waterfront. At the moment the developers are relying heavily on branding, with imprints on footpaths and signs, to guide people through. The importance of maintaining views and visual goals, was emphasised.

The panel agreed that the frontage on to Ffordd Y Mileniwm should make a stronger statement and be more continuous, with fewer gaps between the buildings. There seemed to be no functional relationship at the joining line with the Persimmon development to the east, but it was pointed out that what appear on plan to be roads that terminate adjacent to the site boundary in that development are in fact private drives.

The Panel thought that permeability could be improved, particularly with regard to respecting 'desire lines' eg providing access to the site in the south west corner. It was suggested that parking could be shared with the adjacent retail development, although it was pointed out that there was already shared parking between the surgery and community centre.

Concern was expressed about the security of certain areas, especially less well used areas along the northern and western boundaries. The fact that there is to be open public access to the community

facilities for most of the time, makes surveillance more difficult. There appears to be no ownership of certain areas of car parking, which leads to the possibility of car theft and dumping.

Summary

The panel welcomes the aspirations behind this scheme and appreciates the amount of time and effort that has already been invested in meeting the difficult goal of marrying the requirements of a diverse set of uses and clients. However, the panel's consensus is that this scheme does not deliver the required step up in design quality referred to in the design statement. There is no indication of how the proposal addresses the initial masterplan / urban design framework.

They understand and accept the intention to respect the context established by the recent developments on adjacent sites but do not consider the Persimmon scheme to be exemplary. The panel suggest that the design team should not necessarily model the architecture and detailing of their design on that project.

The panel does not consider that the site layout and the building forms combine to create the coherent sense of place that the design team aspire to and refer to in the design statement. In particular, the layout and siting of the open space, affordable housing and the new bridge need to be looked at again, to achieve a better definition of the spaces within the development. The routes across the site are not well defined and the shared spaces lack identity. Despite the explanation offered in the presentation, the panel was not convinced that the location of the public buildings on the northern edge of the site is appropriate.

The panel was disappointed in the quality of the drawings and other material submitted. Few of the drawings show the context of the proposals; those that do are diagrammatic. The coloured images are not realistic and the drawing of the bridge in particular is not acceptable as anything other than a preliminary sketch.

It is important that design schemes are illustrated in a manner that enables their intended audience (that will include people without training in reading technical drawings) to make reasoned judgements on the character and quality of the development in its setting. Wherever possible presentation material should include images that indicate clearly the three-dimensional character of the buildings and surrounding spaces. Simple three dimensional computer generated images can be very effective tools for exploring and explaining the character of a development proposal.

With regard to the community buildings, the panel was given insufficient information on which to make an assessment. – for instance the relation of the community centre to the adjacent large retail outlet is not shown.

There is a need to address the sustainability agenda more systematically. There was no evidence in the material submitted that the developer and the design teams had aspirations to deliver anything more than meeting minimum standards (although the developer noted verbally that the company's specifications exceed Building Regulations standards). The panel encourages the team to be more ambitious in this area -- perhaps by increasing insulation levels well above the minimum required, or by making more use of solar gain to reduce heating loads.

On behalf of the Local Planning Authority, Rob Thomas also wanted to see more context in the drawings and plans. He supported the idea of a more continuous frontage which did not prejudice permeability, and thought that the corner unit was fussy and over-detailed.

The developer agreed to re-address the composition of the frontage along the main road, and to look again at the lattice work of roads and pedestrian routes throughout the site. The Panel would be happy to re-consider these proposals, especially the non-residential buildings, in the future as the detailed design develops.

Finally it was explained that design work on the new footbridge was still at an early stage and that this would be the subject of a further application in the near future. However, the footprint of the bridge was fixed in terms of the layout of the rest of the development. Again, the Panel would welcome the opportunity to comment on this design once more detailed drawings are available.

End