

Addroddiad Adolygu Dylunio Design Review Report

Review Status: **Confidential**

Meeting date:	28th October 2008
Issue Date:	6th November 2008
Scheme Location:	Lawrenny, Pembrokeshire
Scheme Description:	Residential
Planning Status:	Pre-application

Part1: Presentation

This proposal is for 30 dwelling units and six workshops on a central site in the village of Lawrenny. The site is currently occupied by agricultural buildings which are proposed to be relocated to a more appropriate site on the outskirts of the village. The landowners and developers wish to enhance the existing community and make it more sustainable in the long term, by attracting more residents to the village and by making the new buildings as low energy as possible. The scheme includes a biomass community heating system, a new village square and new community allotments.

It is hoped to submit a planning application in April 2009.

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

The Panel is completely supportive of the development concept and regards it as a potential exemplar of sustainable rural development. The site analysis is thorough and we are satisfied that the developer understands and can work with the potential barriers and constraints. We think the proposal is an acceptable response to the site and the brief with the following minor revisions:

- A detailed strategy needs to be developed for the provision of a low carbon energy supply. Alternative approaches, such as PassivHaus + solar, should be considered.
- The commitment to achieve Code Level 5 is commendable although that in itself carries certain constraints such as very low permissible air leakage rates, which may be difficult to achieve

- The finished quality of the scheme will depend greatly on the quality of materials and detailing. The sourcing of authentic local materials and traditional construction skills is of paramount importance.
- Our greatest concern is the central square, which does not yet have all the ingredients for a well-used, attractive and sociable space to benefit the whole community.
- It is important to activate streets and parking areas and this will impact on surface treatment, heights of walls and fenestration.
- The fundamental design concept of 'walled gardens' needs testing and justifying to ensure that it works on all levels and that any conflicting design aims are resolved.

Part 2: Discussion and Panel Response in Full

We strongly support the aims and aspirations of the project team, and the commitment already shown to procure high quality design for an exemplar of sustainable rural residential development. Although the lack of public transport mitigates against the sustainability of new development in this rural area, we accept that a critical mass of people is necessary to deliver improved infrastructure. The existing local bus run by villagers and the encouragement for working from home, are positive aspects.

Within the context of this overall support, we think that some of the specific aims will be difficult and/or costly to achieve. The durable, natural, local materials of stone, slate and timber may prove difficult to access. Although the developers have direct access to local timber and limestone, the extraction and preparation will be labour intensive. The quality of construction and availability of the right skills to achieve a 'dry stone wall' appearance are critical to the architectural concept and successful delivery. The developer has already delivered training locally on building with lime, and is confident that they can access skilled stonemasons who can build to a cost of £50-60/m². However, this cost – for low garden walls – might be expected to increase substantially for two storey walls with openings.

We commend the intention to achieve Code for Sustainable Homes Level 5, and to ensure a high performance envelope for each house. The ambitious standards for air tightness in particular will require the right choice of construction materials and building methods, and a high degree of vigilance and supervision on site. A biomass community heating scheme is proposed and various options are currently being reviewed to integrate the whole community with a proposed CHP plant and methane digester at the owner's nearby farm, for which a separate business plan is being developed. The eventual strategy will also depend on the future of ROCS [Renewable Obligations Certificates] and other subsidies. An alternative approach would be to develop the low energy design to Passiv Haus standards and avoid the need for a heating system altogether. This strategy could then be complemented with solar water heating and solar electric panels.

We were less convinced by the function, location and treatment of the new square. If this is to work as an amenity for the whole village, it should ideally have a shop, pub or other community facility located there. A range of active uses [children's play; quiet sitting areas] should be provided and car access should not necessarily be excluded although it would need to be properly managed.

It will be important to ensure that the shared use lanes which access the square do not become dominated by cars, and that surface treatments and boundary treatments provide attractive areas for pedestrians. Achieving a balance between a natural desire for privacy and an open and welcoming environment, will be critical. There should be a high level of visual permeability across and out of the site, which will impact on heights of garden walls. Issues of privacy and boundary treatments in relation to rear access routes, also need to be resolved.

The procurement will be a conventional form of contract with a main contractor. While costs are coming under increased scrutiny, given the economic climate, the developer has engaged a QS and is confident of the scheme's viability.

The question of affordable housing provision is under discussion with the Local Authority, whose current policy requires 20% affordable housing.

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.

Please note that DCFW's Design and Access Statement Guide is now available on our website www.dcfw.org

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

Appendix 1: Attendees

Asiant/Client/Datblygwr: Agent/Client/Developer	Lawrenny Enterprises [Adrian Lort-Phillips, David Lort-Phillips]
Pensaer/Architect:	Tom Russell Architects [Tom Russell, Victoria Emmett]
Awdurdod Cynllunio/ Planning Authority	Pembrokeshire Coast National Park
Y Panel Adlygu Dylunio: Design review panel: Alan Francis [Chair] Cindy Harris [Officer]	Steve Smith Ed Colgan Jonathan Adams
Lead Panellist:	Cindy Harris
Sylwedyddion/Observers:	Vicki Hurst, Cathy Milner [PCNPA] Huw Jenkins [CC Swansea]

Melissa Howells [PembrokeshireCC]
Anthony Hayward [Pembrokeshire CC]