

Statws/Status:
Cyfrinachol / Confidential



Adroddiad Adolygu Dylunio: Design Review Report:	8 February 2007
Dyddiad Cyfarfod / Cyflwyno'r Deunydd: Meeting Date / Material Submitted:	31 January 2007
Lleoliad/Location:	Jacks Pill Newport
Disgrifiad o'r Cynllun Scheme Description:	Residential
Cleient/Asiant: Client/Agent:	Newport Unlimited [David Ward]
Developer/Datblygwr:	Edward Ware Homes [Iestyn Lewis]
Pensaer/Architect:	Stride Treglown [Gareth Davies, Pierre Wassenaar, Dominic Eaton] MacGregor Smith – Landscape [Rupert Grierson]
Cynllunio: Consultants:	
Awdurdod Cynllunio: Planning Authority:	Newport CC [Wendy Richards]
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) Ed Colgan	Elfed Roberts Lyn Owen Roger Ayton Martin Knight
Lead Panellist:	Roger Ayton

Sylwedyddion/Observers:

**Carole-Anne Davies DCFW
Huw ap Rhys DCFW**

Cyflwyniad/Presentation

This proposal is for three apartment blocks alongside the River Usk and the proposed new riverside park, just north of Jack's Pill. The site is bordered to the north by proposed student accommodation and to the south by a consented residential scheme by Westmark. There are aspirations for high standards of architecture and sustainability, together with an accessible and attractive public realm along the River Usk. A planning application is due to be submitted late February.

Following a recent internal review of the project, called to address the client's reservations concerning the 'kerb appeal' of the project, revisions have been made to the lower blocks and their facade treatment reducing the cantilevering, the industrial aesthetic, and the marine analogies. The lower 6-7 storey blocks on the west and north sides frame a private open space at first floor level above at-grade parking. A slender 16 storey tower on the south eastern corner punctuates the entrance to Jacks Pill and provides a landmark on the river. The inward and outward facing elevations are distinguished by different colours and fenestration patterns, and the vertical cores and plinth are expressed separately. The majority of apartments enjoy good river views.

The western block reinforces the urban frontage along Usk Way, while the northern block fronts an access way shared with the student accommodation. The latter includes public parking and service access to the river for the Environment Agency. A new bus stop and layby are provided on Usk Way and the four main entrances to the blocks have generous proportions. A cafe is included in the base of the tower, oriented more to the river than the Pill, but otherwise the waterfront is lined by car parking grilles. The private space on the podium level is given a very modern landscape treatment with wide walkways and seating areas. The intention is to integrate the podium edges and the car park grilles with the riverside park through the use of quality materials, planting and public art.

The Local Authority confirmed that there have been pre-application discussions, but they had not seen this latest version of the proposals. The urban form and massing is in accordance with the masterplan, which identifies the location for a possible tower. It was confirmed that the Environment Agency had imposed conditions to meet future flooding risks which made ground floor parking the only feasible option. The authority recognised that the non-active frontages were partly compensated by the wide entrances and the cafe on the waterfront.

Ymateb y Panel/Panel's Response

The Panel expressed concerns about the apparent exclusivity of this scheme and the strong separation between the public and private realm, arising partly from the difference in levels and the location of all the private space on an open podium. We were informed that it was intended to enhance the public realm with the inclusion of public art and that the car park grilles would be 'disguised' with a design in Corten steel. The Panel was not convinced by this as a satisfactory solution, or that the suggested design had been generated by a commissioned professional artist. The designers stated that in their view there was sufficient permeability around the edges of the block, given the riverside park and the boulevarding of Usk Way providing strong north/south routes. However, the Panel

considered the narrow east/west service route to the north, located between two long, seven storey elevations, would be a hostile environment. We acknowledged that the route along Jacks Pill to the south would have greater potential and recommended that the outdoor areas of the cafe be extended along this frontage to provide increased animation.

The Panel noted the intention to landscape the service route around the block, and for the east/west connections to take on the character of the riverside park, although we were not convinced that this was achieved to the north. It was confirmed that the public parking to the north was a requirement of Newport Unlimited. A 10 metre width around the Pill will be adopted for public realm. We were concerned that the functional requirements imposed on the east/west routes would reduce their amenity value and integration with the river park frontage.

The Panel questioned whether microclimatic studies of the podium area had been carried out and was informed they will be done and that a mitigation strategy will be developed for the base of the tower to counter any adverse effects of wind strength and direction. The Panel advised that a tower solution imposes local microclimatic and spatial requirements that need to be integrated with the design solution and we would wish to have seen more detail on this aspect. The designer stated that the massing of the tower allows daylight and sunlight into the courtyard, but the Panel thought that there may be microclimatic benefits in turning the tower through 90 degrees so that its narrower dimension faced south.

The designer stated that several different massing options and configurations had been explored, and the differing character of the links had been exploited. It was agreed that more could be made of the entranceways and the various areas provided by the recessing of the built form, to provide more active frontages. The Panel was generally content with the proposed massing but the fundamental problem remained, of ground floor parking giving rise to long dead frontages on the waterfront, and the creation of a private realm that was exposed, potentially windswept and unenclosed.

The Panel suggested that a solution might be to provide 2/3 storey town houses on the south and east perimeters to create active frontages and much greater pedestrian safety on the river walkway, as well as to better enclose the private space. We regretted that the Environment Agency's dismissal of a half basement car parking solution was driving the form of development, and we thought that a more flexible approach would enable a more commercially viable development, which would also work better in terms of urban design.

The Panel was informed that pedestrian links across Usk Way would improve as the boulevarding works progressed. A new pedestrian crossing will be installed opposite this development, and the roundabout will change to a different type of junction. It is hoped that public transport providers will agree to run a new bus route along Usk Way and East Dock Road. The Panel was disappointed that the proposed development on the west side of Usk Way did not appear to have informed the design for this site.

The Panel was reassured that the design team is committed to achieving an EcoHomes Excellent rating, based on a post-construction assessment. There will be one centralised boiler per core – five in all – which will be fuelled by mains gas but with the potential to convert to biomass in the future. Provision will also be made to link into a future district heating scheme serving the sites either side as well as this one. Green roofs are under consideration, as is rainwater harvesting for irrigation.

The Panel noted that the riverside park coincides with an area of SSSI and we thought that a hard landscape treatment would not be appropriate at this point. It was acknowledged that a previous owner had encroached the site boundary. The design team stated that their priority would be to remove accumulated rubbish from the river bank, and work together with the Environment Agency and the Countryside Council for Wales to improve the currently poor condition of the river edge and the Pill edge, and to create new riverine habitats.

Crynodeb/Summary

The Panel considers this proposal to be promising, with the major problem being the location of parking at ground level. We recognise that the design team are still in negotiation with the client, Local Authority and other statutory agencies, and we would therefore suggest the following major revisions:

- We prefer the latest design version which moves away from aggressive forms and an industrial aesthetic towards a more sophisticated approach with lighter materials.
- Street and riverside frontages need to be made more active, taking commercial advantage of what would otherwise be a missed opportunity. Residential town houses on the south and east sides of the block would be one way of achieving this.
- We would have much preferred to see a semi-basement approach to parking, which would have made it easier to avoid the problems of dead frontages on the riverside. Car park grilles, however disguised, are not acceptable in this situation. While we recognise the need to minimise future flooding risks, we think a more creative design response could be achieved through dialogue and negotiation.
- Proposals for the inclusion of artworks are welcomed when they engage the skills of experienced professional artists early on and as part of a comprehensive public art strategy. Designers and artists are poorly served when works are proposed to mitigate fundamental design issues. We would encourage this strategic approach to be taken by the developer and the local authority, who might use the opportunity to develop consistent public art policy or SPG.
- We would like to see an improved treatment of the car park access and the pavement and landscaping of the street to the north, and a better interface with the student building to the north. The management of the public parking in this location will be critical to its function as a public space.
- We need to be convinced that the microclimate of the private space and the riverside will be ameliorated by the final design and recommend that the technical design of any mitigation be included in the submission.
- We would like to see a coherent treatment for Jacks Pill as a whole and an integration of site spaces with the building form. We suggest the design of the footbridge could be the subject of an architectural competition.
- We applaud the commitment to an EcoHomes Excellent rating and the provision for future incorporation of biomass district heating, although we would prefer to see low carbon fuels used from the outset.

Diwedd/End

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