

Statws/Status:
Masterplan:
Cyhoeddus / Public
Development Framework:
Cyfrinachol / Confidential



Adroddiad Adolygu Dylunio:
Design Review Report: 19 December 2005

Dyddiad Cyfarfod / Cyflwyno'r Deunydd:
Meeting Date / Material Submitted: 7 December 2005

Lleoliad/Location: Llanelli Waterside

Disgrifiad o'r Cynllun
Scheme Description: Masterplan +
Development Framework

Cynllunio:
Consultants: GVA Grimley
[Mark Brunson,
Scott Larcombe]

Cleient/Asiant:
Client/Agent: WDA [Huw Thomas
John Karseras]
Carmarthenshire CC
[Darrel Barnes apologised]

Pensaer/Architect: Chris Waterworth

Awdurdod Cynllunio:
Planning Authority: Carmarthenshire CC

Statws Cynllunio:
Planning Status: Outline consent for use exists
for Delta Lakes and North Dock

Y Panel Adolygu Dylunio/Design Review Panel:
Alan Francis (cadeirydd/chair) Howard Wainwright
Cindy Harris (swyddog/officer) Mike Biddulph
Wendy Hall Ewan Jones

Lead Panellist: Wendy Hall

Sylwedyddion/Observers: Charlie Deng

Design Review assistant

Cyflwyniad/Presentation

The five sites which are the subject of this masterplan are located south of Llanelli, from the Loughor bridge to North Dock, and form part of the Millennium Coastal Park. The necessary land reclamation and infrastructure works have been carried out and the project team is able to retain capital receipts and reinvest funds back into the project. They also have Objective 1 money for use as Property Development Grants to attract the private sector. So, the physical and financial foundations are in place. There has been an ecological assessment, a land use report, a commercial property report and substantial market research carried out. This project, with a new team and a new image, was publicly launched on 15 September 2005.

The 5 key sites are:

- Machynys, with proposals for 251 residential units on 25 acres next to the golf course and Pentre Nicklaus.
- Delta Lakes, a high-tech business park on 34 acres of brownfield land. Plot 1b is the first to be released, comprising 1.6 acres for 60,000 sq ft of office accommodation, with a £1.4m property development grant available. The Avenue site to the north east will be used for affordable housing and live/work units.
- North Dock, an 18 acre, mixed use site, including commercial office [60,000 sq ft], residential [430 units] and leisure [30,000 sq ft] uses, next to a residential scheme already developed by McCleans. There is a listed pump house on the site along with the new Discovery Visitor Centre. The second plot to be released will be for a gateway commercial building of 30,000 sq ft.
- Old Castle Works, a 7.5 acre brownfield site, with derelict buildings, some listed. Proposals for 100,000 sq ft of residential and leisure use including a new theatre.
- Sandy Water Park, 4 acres of greenfield site, for tourist related uses or low density housing [60 units].

This is a Joint Venture Partnership between the Local Authority and the WDA. The funding arrangements ensure the viability of the project and enable a high design standard to be specified, together with the creation of landmark buildings. There is a new link road to the east giving direct access to the M4, and good connections to the coast and the town.

With regard to the two sites to the south, Machynys and Delta Lakes, there will be a hierarchy of densities, with a relatively open grain towards the coast showing a seaside aesthetic, and a tighter terrace form towards the town. The circulation matrix will be pedestrian and cycle friendly. A development brief has been produced for plot 1b. The historic dock to the north will be preserved, and enhanced with a strong building frontage and a new public square. Each site will be tied back into the existing grain and will embody a holistic approach to regeneration, setting good precedents for future development.

A flood survey based on the requirements of TAN 15 has identified some potential problems with flooding, but the findings are in dispute.

There have been strong consultations with the local planners. Some of these sites are zoned in the Local Plan, some are allocated and some have development brief status. Outline

applications are due to be submitted for particular sites, and there is outline consent on use for Delta Lakes and North Dock.

Ymateb y Panel/Panel's Response

The Panel began by asking how the masterplan is to be implemented in a way which ensures the integration of the separate development briefs. We were told that a Landscape Strategy is being prepared for all open spaces, and that some sites will have planning gain attached for the development of the public realm. The Panel suggested that landscape infrastructure [such as the wildlife corridor] and physical connections between the sites and with the town, should be put in before development plots are brought forward for release, and this would enhance the offer. We understood that the JVP would control the developing design of the sites, but we were equally concerned with the areas in between.

The need to integrate the new communities with the existing town is particularly important, especially as none of these proposals have been adopted as SPG. Design coding is being considered, along with the retention of urban design advisers to develop a common language [Tony Jellard has been retained]. Currently, the new residential areas are severed from the existing town by a business park, with poor pedestrian opportunities/linkage and no bus route.

The layout seems to be heavily shaped by the pre-existing road infrastructure that will fragment the site, unless a strong message is given about the form of development that should be along it. The proposed layouts indicate islands of development unconnected to each other and turning their backs on neighbouring roads.

The landuse plan was vague, appearing to be a phasing diagram for selling sites, rather than a plan to influence the shape of future development. The Panel were concerned at the ambiguous status of the publicity material in terms of the message to potential developers. We felt that there was a lack of clear ambition in design terms, illustrated by the brief for Plot 1b where design quality does not appear to be one of the criteria. This was disputed by the client, but the Panel felt that the importance of quality for this exemplar gateway building was not emphasised sufficiently, and could be underlined with an indication of minimum requirements. The time scale will not facilitate the development of a quality design, but we were told that the Objective 1 money has to be spent before July 2007.

There has been close consultation with local representatives such as Communities First, and two public exhibitions, but no detailed community consultation with the wider public of Llanelli. There is now a need to consult on details and the content of Section 106 agreements, such as affordable housing.

There is a contractual requirement for commercial developments to achieve a BREEAM 'Excellent', which will be helped by the brownfield nature of the sites. This will not necessarily apply to the housing. The Panel suggested that the landscape strategy could be informed by flood remediation measures such as the creation of ponds and swales, but we were told that there was very little difference in levels across the whole site.

The site layout for Machynys shows a large number of culdesacs, which the Panel felt was not a good piece of urban design. We asked about bus routes but were told that transport issues had not yet been fully examined. The pedestrian strategy for North Dock was discussed, and how to overcome the barrier of the railway. We thought that the area of

substations to the north was not an attractive prospect, but we were advised that there was already a lot of commercial interest in this site.

With regard to the low density residential sites, the Panel suggested higher density developments in places, coupled with more open green spaces, so as to expand the choice of housing type and reinforce the context of high density housing in and around Llanelli. The architect argued that there was plenty of open space in the coastal park immediately adjacent, and that what Llanelli lacked was well designed executive homes of lower density.

Crynodeb/Summary

The Panel recognise that this is a huge regeneration project and that much work has already been done to bring it to this stage. We think that the current proposals are an acceptable response to the development of these sites, but nevertheless require major revisions. In particular:

- We are concerned at the lack of clear status, in planning terms, of the masterplan and associated publicity
- The importance of design quality [including urban design] should be paramount in all development briefs or codes
- A local transport strategy needs to be developed
- We would like to see more evidence of an overall landscape strategy, and a demonstration of how the new sites will link back to the town. While we recognise that some sites need further work, there is a considerable amount of urban design strategy still to be brought into the scheme, to ensure a comprehensive design solution
- We think that the infrastructure for landscape and connecting routes should be installed ahead of the various developments, to ensure continuing character and quality, and a proper system of implementation and future management needs to be agreed with the Local Authority or others.
- While we welcome the commitment to BREEAM 'Excellent' for the commercial sites, we would like to see this extended to the residential developments.
- We believe the timetable for construction of site 1b, as set out in the tender particulars, is seriously unrealistic if the stated intentions of achieving a high quality landmark building are to be met. We fully understand the pressure to release available funds by an agreed deadline, but a completed poor development will most probably be worse than no development at all.

Diwedd/End

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