

Addroddiad Adolygu Dylunio Design Review Report

Review Status: **Confidential**

Meeting date:	3rd November 2010
Issue Date:	11th November 2010
Scheme Location:	Mabbits Horn, Cardigan
Scheme Description:	Residential
Planning Status:	Pre-application

Part1: Presentation

This is a proposal for three new dwellings on a site currently occupied by a single house. The rationale for these numbers, in planning terms, is a like for like replacement, plus two infill units.

Given the site's orientation and the exceptional views to the north across the estuary, the architect has developed a simple house typology with living spaces above north facing, single aspect bedrooms. In the absence of a common architectural language in the vicinity, the architect has explored an appropriate contemporary idiom.

The informal layout has been driven by the site topography, existing vegetation, and protection of amenity. The sloping site allows the houses to be partially dug in to the slope, reducing the apparent mass. The ground floor is proposed as rendered masonry, and the upper floor a lightweight construction with wrap-around cladding for walls and roof which could be timber [cedar shingles], slate or zinc. Site boundaries will be retained as informal hedges.

The design team with the support of the client aims to achieve CSH level 5.

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

The Panel was pleased to see this proposal at an early stage. We understood the rationale for the numbers and site layout and we consider relatively minor issues remain to be resolved. In summary:

- We have some concern about the proximity of these permanent dwellings to each other, and the possible impact of the access road.
- The lack of any south facing / double sided living space is a major disadvantage, in terms of amenity and environmental performance.
- In view of the above, we recommend that consideration be given to reducing the number of dwellings on the site to two, in order to deliver a higher level of amenity and maximise value.
- A more celebratory architectural response to the setting was discussed, although we are equally appreciative of the modest contemporary approach adopted.
- A high quality of materials and detailing will be critical for the success of this scheme. A more limited palette of materials should be adopted and materials should be assessed for their durability and weathering characteristics.
- We strongly support the ambition to achieve Code 5, but advise that the built form should respond more directly to considerations of passive solar design and renewable energy generation, in particular roofscapes and space for renewables.
- The management of the open space and appropriate boundary treatments need to be developed further and a sensitive landscape design strategy developed.
- We urged the team to ensure a neutral cut and fill operation, and advised that an acceptable gradient for the access road be defined at an early stage.
- If the proposal for three dwellings remains, we suggest that the lower one be moved slightly further towards the road, to achieve more distance from its immediate neighbour but without losing the appearance of a courtyard.

Part 2: Discussion and Panel Response in Full

The Panel appreciated the early consultation and the quality of the presentation, although a simple 3D model would have helped to convey the site topography and context. A figure ground drawing of the adjacent plots would also help assess the proposal in its context. We thought that a tree survey should be included with the planning application, and we were assured that a landscape architect will be engaged.

The Panel understood that the dispersed layout on the site was designed to maintain views and minimise overlooking. However, this raises the importance of the boundary treatment between plots and the distinction between public and private space. We were informed that there would be dedicated private gardens and some communal space, while the steeply sloping area to the rear of the site will be designated as an environmental area. The locally predominant hedging will probably be repeated on site, and we urged the team to avoid high fences. Space for visitor parking should be designed in at this stage.

The access road runs uncomfortably close to plot 1 and this could be intrusive especially if the plots are to be developed as three separate, permanent dwellings [as opposed to holiday lets for example]. The Panel suggested that the house nearest the road could be eased down the slope slightly, to increase the space between plots 1 and 2 and avoid the pinch point in the access road. We were pleased to learn that the team were aiming for a neutral cut and fill arrangement on the site. The gradient of the access road should be determined at an early stage, as this may affect the layout [we estimated that it would be 1:3 at its steepest].

While the Panel welcomed the simple contemporary design approach, an alternative to be explored might be one which adopted a more horizontal elevational treatment - not necessarily with more glazing, but employing verandahs or balconies from which to enjoy views out across Cardigan Bay.

We thought that the palette of materials should be more restricted and that consideration should be given to how different materials would weather over time and appear in context between seasons. The success of this contemporary design will rely on the quality and detailing of materials, for example the integration of insulated window frames with the simplicity of the facade and the junction between rendered wall and ground plane.

The Panel was not convinced that three separate units was the right solution for this site. Given that these would be relatively expensive houses, it is possible that their value would be undermined by being too close together. Although a south facing clerestorey is provided, there is currently no useful south facing living space shown on the floor plans, which is an essential requirement for passive solar design. Ideally, living spaces would be able to enjoy the benefits of views to the north and solar gain and daylight from the south. While we understand the constraints of the site, we think that reducing the number of units to two, with more generous external space and aspect, would deliver a better level of amenity and potentially added value. In any event we advised the client to undertake a commercial evaluation of the different options.

Ideally the design should be developed as a series of slabs and planes, with openings to allow for parking and storage but without garage doors. The walls could be carried on beyond the floorplan to form boundaries and embed the house in the landscape, creating the impression of a farmstead.

The Panel applauded the commitment to achieve Code 5, but we thought this would be very difficult on a site with limited solar access. Some south facing roof pitches with good solar access will be necessary to accommodate solar thermal and/or solar PV panels, and this consideration should inform the design of the roofscape, as well as the site layout. We understood that a Code pre-assessment was imminent and that the strategy would be based on good fabric performance, which would limit the size of the north facing windows. Biomass boilers are under consideration and the team has previous experience of installing these on a similar sized site.

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:

Bedouin Group

Agent/Client/Developer

Pensaer/Architect:

Casa Architects [Adam Dennes]

Consultants:

CDN Planning [Kedrick Davies]

AwdurdodCynllunio/
Planning Authority

Pembrokeshire CC

Y Panel Adlygu Dylunio:

Design Review Panel:

Alan Francis [Chair]

Cindy Harris [Officer]

Simon Carne

Toby Adam

Roger Ayton

Martin Knight

Richard Keogh

Lead Panellist:

Simon Carne

Sylwedyddion/Observers:

Julia Podedworny [student]