

Adroddiad Adolygu Dylunio Design Review Report

Statws/Status: **Confidential**

Dyddiad Cyfarfod / Meeting Date: 20 August 2008

Lleoliad/Location: Mill Street, Risca

**Disgrifiad o'r Cynllun
Scheme Description:** Residential

**Cleient/Asiant:
Client/Agent:** Bird Group [Sonia Bird]

Developer/Datblygwr: Not known

Pensaer/Architect: Powell Dobson [Glyn Parker,
Oriana White]

**Ymgynghorwyr Cynllunio:
Planning Consultants:** RPS [Mark Roberts]

**Awdurdod Cynllunio:
Planning Authority:** Caerphilly CBC [Bryan Morgan,
Paul den Brinker]

**Statws Cynllunio:
Planning Status:** Pre-application

**Y Panel Adolygu Dylunio/
Design Review Panel:** Richard Parnaby
Steve Smith

Wendy Richards (cadeirydd/chair)
Cindy Harris (swyddog/officer)

Roger Ayton
Ewan Jones

Lead Panellist:

Wendy Richards

Sylwedyddion/Observers:

Barrie Todd, MAG, N Ireland
Emma Pearce, student

Cyflwyniad/Presentation

This scheme was presented as a gateway residential development designed to improve the poor visual approach to the town. This was part of the vision of the Risca Action Plan [2002]. The proposal is for 84 residential units in 2-3 storey blocks, rising to 4 storeys on the corner, and 99 car parking spaces.

A 12 metre wide drainage easement runs centrally down the site and the blocks have been arranged to avoid building over this, although it was accepted that it had been built over illegally in the past.

Ymateb y Panel/Panel's Response

The Panel was not convinced that this was a gateway site in need of a 'big statement', although we agree that an increase in height on the corner could be appropriate. However, the predominant local references should be to the two storey terraced development along Mill Street and the villa typology of Commercial Street, rather than to the larger commercial buildings across Commercial Street and the roundabout. This proposal is in danger of setting a precedent for future development which would encroach on the small scale and intimacy of Risca and the adjacent residential neighbourhood.

There is an over-riding need to begin to repair the town fabric and bind together the disparate elements in this 'edge-of-town' area. The setbacks of the proposed development along Mill Street would form negative spaces and we would like to see the buildings follow the line of the road with front doors facing Mill Street, perhaps behind small front gardens. We were emphatic in our view that a gated community which turns its back on the street would not be a positive contribution to the town.

This proposal would result in an over development of the site, and an unwarranted increase in scale and density. Four storey development could be appropriate (if sensitively handled) facing Commercial Street. A townscape appraisal of Risca should be undertaken, building on the information in the 2002 Action Plan, which would then

inform the development brief for the site in terms of the urban design qualities required. In response to this a review and development of how the building 'turns the corner' should be undertaken with a proposal for active frontages and possible commercial uses on the ground floor addressing the street.

The proposed finishes of the building need to be reviewed in line with the townscape appraisal in order to enhance the built context of Risca. If stone is used, then grey pennant stone, rather than buff stone, would be a more appropriate material to use on the elevations.

The canopy extent of the TPO tree as shown on the drawings, does not illustrate the Tree Protection Zone required in order to build adjacent to it. This may indicate that the building is located too close to the tree – in order to ensure its survival, these blocks should be relocated if required. The impact of the northern block on the adjacent terraces to the west would be significant and may be unacceptable.

We support the aspiration to achieve Code for Sustainable Homes Level 4 and we urge that this be made a firm commitment. We welcome the proposed site-wide CHP system to provide heating and cooling and we note that space for a plant room has been allocated. We urge the team to consider the integration of solar water heating as a relatively cost effective technology. The 'sun spaces' referred to in the Design Statement are in fact bay windows and balconies.

Crynodb/Summary

The Panel was pleased to have the opportunity to review this proposal but we think it is unacceptable in terms of its scale, design quality and response to its context. In particular:

- This is not a gateway site in need of a landmark building. The main aim of any development on this site should be to bind and repair the scale and grain of the existing neighbourhood.
- The development should follow a terraced form along Mill Street, with front doors facing the street. An increase in height on the corner may be justified but the density on the site overall should be reduced.
- An element of non-residential use on the corner would provide an active frontage and help the building relate well to both streets and 'turn the corner' satisfactorily.
- The extent of the tree protection zone should be verified and adequate space left between the TPO tree and any proposed building.
- The aspiration to achieve Code Level 4 should be made a firm commitment.

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.

Diwedd/End

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

Issued 3rd September 2008

Previous Reviews; None