

Statws/Status:
Cyfrinachol / Confidential



Adroddiad Adolygu Dylunio: 16 November 2005
Design Review Report:

Dyddiad Cyfarfod / Cyflwyno'r Deunydd: 2 November 2005
Meeting Date / Material Submitted:

Lleoliad/Location: Morfa Village, Pentrechwyth
Swansea

Disgrifiad o'r Cynllun Residential. 400-500 units
Scheme Description:

Ymgynghorwyr Cynllunio: PMG Developments
Planning Consultants: [Philippa Cole]

Cleient/Asiant: Barratt South Wales
Client/Agent: [John Penaluna]

Pensaer/Architect: Holder Mathias [Nic Downs,
Craig Jones, Scott Frederick]

Awdurdod Cynllunio: City & County of Swansea
Planning Authority: [David Gill, David Owen, Elfed
Roberts]

Statws Cynllunio: Pre-planning
Planning Status:

Y Panel Adolygu Dylunio/Design Review Panel:
John Punter(cadeirydd/chair) Ed Colgan
Cindy Harris (swyddog/officer) Paul Vanner
Douglas Hogg
Lead Panellist: Douglas Hogg

Sylwedyddion/Observers: Zhaohua Deng,

Design Review Assistant

Cyflwyniad/Presentation

The site bordering the River Tawe to the west and with arterial roads to the north, east and south, has been allocated for residential use in the emerging UDP. This is despite the fact that it lies in an industrial commercial zone, with the new stadium across the river and a major big box retail complex to the north. It has been classified by the Environment Agency as a C1 flood zone. Access is from a roundabout to the north east and the ground slopes from east to west down towards the river. The proposals show a riverside walkway linking with open space to the south, part of the River Tawe Trail which is a major Council planning objective. There is a Grade 2 listed building on the site, incorporated into the central part of the otherwise modern factory buildings, but much of their original character has been lost though the gable ends are of particular interest.

The developers have been working closely with the local planning authority to develop this scheme. A full planning application will be submitted shortly which excludes the area around the listed building. The architects would like to demolish it to provide an area of public open space, but the local authority thinks that it should be retained. Although this is not an obvious location for residential development, the local authority initiated its allocation and would like to see the riverside opened up for public access and leisure uses.

Blocks of apartment accommodation, from five to seven storeys, front the river, with green courtyards in between to allow for views and to reduce the apparent mass. Two blocks of IPAD units to the southeast provide one-person accommodation at high density. To the east of the site a grid layout of streets creates a series of rectilinear blocks, turning their back on the arterial road. A mix of house types in blocks of 2-3 storeys is proposed at medium densities. Pedestrian and cycle routes are shown along the river and running across the site east/west. A solar shading diagram has been prepared, which shows shading distribution throughout the year, and this is unproblematic. Parking for the houses is in rear courtyards with a high degree of surveillance from rear terraces. Some undercroft parking is provided for the apartments, along with roadside spaces.

The designers are striving for a contemporary image, and modern elevational treatments will include white render and a copper-like cladding for corner and other key elements. Blue brick at ground floor level in the apartment blocks is repeated in the garden walls and some vertical elements to the houses. The tops of the apartment blocks will be articulated with a change of colour and a recurring channel detail.

Balconies on the apartments overlook the riverside walk and provide natural surveillance of the river walkway. There is a maximum 1.5 metre difference between ground floor level and walkway. A seven metre wide service zone runs between the walkway and the river bank. Flood prevention measures include a 'bund', formed by raising the ground level to form the walkway and then dropping it to the undercroft parking level. A public open space between riverside blocks is being developed by TACP but the early designs were not discussed. The streetscape throughout the site will be softened by planting, as will the visual impact of the substation at the entrance to the site.

Ymateb y Panel/Panel's Response

The Panel questioned why this site had been allocated for housing, as the context was an industrial/distribution area, part of the former Swansea Enterprise Zone, with few connections to other facilities except for a large retail park and commercial leisure centre. The local authority stated that they wish to establish a riverside park and are promoting residential use in this area along with other sites in council ownership. They agreed that links are important and they are looking to improve and establish pedestrian and cycle links with the local school, shops and the retail park nearby. It was acknowledged that this development is being led by policy.

The question of the listed building was discussed and it was stated that at the moment the plan is flexible enough to allow for different solutions. It was suggested that a community building could be provided on that site. The Panel agreed with the local authority that it should be retained and adapted. Although the building was listed fairly recently, it is one of the few surviving remnants of the copper industry in the area.

The Panel supported the idea of a riverside park, and the interspersal of blocks with green spaces. We welcomed the pedestrian routes created and the relationship between the blocks and the river walkway. The contemporary approach to the design was endorsed, but we thought that the roofscapes on the riverside needed further attention. The level changes across the site have been dealt with well, in a series of stepped terraces, but without section drawings we were unable to judge how these would work as landscape and in terms of views to the river.

Essentially the site has been divided in two, with apartment blocks set in large tracts of open land by the river, and a conventional rectilinear, medium density housing estate sloping up behind. The Panel considered that the two parts did not knit together well. We thought that the site could take taller buildings on the river, and that the changes of level could be exploited through better landscaping to link the estate with the river and its green spaces. The relationship between views down the streets to the apartment blocks and the river should be carefully thought through.

The development turns its back on the surrounding industrial and transport infrastructure with fences and garden walls, and a few trees in places where the fence line is set back. The Panel found this edge treatment to be unacceptable and sought a much stronger landscape treatment with more planting of mature trees. The large number of blank gable walls was also problematic and the designer agreed that more interest and fenestration for the gables would be introduced. The Panel accepted that this design was a move away from the Barratt standard layout towards a 'home zones' treatment of external space, with reduced size parking courtyards, and we thought that more traffic calming measures would be beneficial.

A vital ingredient to the success of this scheme is a very strong landscape treatment, and this was not evident in the presentation. Without better landscaping of the streets to create a 'green frame', the layout will appear very harsh. The developers wish to create meaningful pockets of amenity space, and the possibility of a 'green screen' along the riverside frontage was discussed. The southern part of site in particular will need intensive landscaping, incorporating the wooded bank leading up to the road which includes some possibly listable structures, including the remains of an old lime kiln. The landscape and tree planting should flow into the estate to make the pedestrian routes as pleasant as possible. Pedestrian links to the retail park and bus stop need to be made as direct and safe as possible.

The Panel thought that the parking standard [1:1 + 1:5 for visitors, for the apartments and 2:1 for the houses] could be further reduced. It was pointed out that surface parking for the apartments will be partly hidden by the level differences and mitigated with landscape treatment. How this is handled will be another important test for the landscape team. Ideally, we would like to see a bus route running through the site, probably exiting via the emergency access, but we recognise that this may not provide as efficient a service overall as the existing route along the perimeter.

In terms of sustainability, this is a brownfield site with the potential for good pedestrian and vehicle connections. The developer has ISO 14001 accreditation and takes its corporate social responsibility seriously. Barratts will launch their eco- village at Chorley next year. They are working with their suppliers to control waste and improve efficiency. Energy efficiency standards will exceed the current building regulation minimum; the buildings will have a SAP score of 97 [out of 120] and will be fitted with 'A' rated appliances. The Panel noted that the site layout appeared to have little, if any, relationship to solar access. The local authority observed that an EcoHomes rating will be a future requirement for all schemes.

Crynodeb/Summary

The Panel considers this to be an interesting proposal on a challenging and even hostile site, and we recognise the local authority's desire for a change in land use. This should be the beginning of a process to civilise an industrial environment and establish a riverside park. In particular:

- We welcome the proposals already made for landscape treatment such as the green edge and fingers, and we think that this needs to be strengthened, in conjunction with the riverside walk, and made a very prominent part of the scheme
- The Panel would like to see the retention of the listed building and its adaptation for community or mixed use.
- More landscape design work needs to be done on the edge treatment, to provide a buffer to the road for the residents and to create a more satisfactory streetscape on the arterial road..
- The layout, massing and landscaping should be re-examined to integrate the two parts of the site and their different building forms.
- Given the level differences, we would have liked to see a site-wide section drawing, to assist our evaluation. How these levels are handled is very important to the quality of environment on this site.
- The Panel appreciates the architectural treatment, in particular the crisp, 'no frills' approach, and the repeated detailing.
- We think the two central towers on the river front could be higher, especially if this improves the amenity space and setting.
- We would like to see the achievement of an EcoHomes 'Excellent' standard for this development, and more thought given to optimising the solar orientation of the various blocks and terraces.
- Pedestrian routes through and off the site, particularly to the retail park and bus stop, need to be made safe, attractive and easy to use.
- Parking standards should be reconsidered and the parking layout dispersed more across the site.

Diwedd/End

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