

Statws/Status:
Cyfrinachol / Confidential



Adroddiad Adolygu Dylunio: 27 October 2006
Design Review Report:

Dyddiad Cyfarfod / Cyflwyno'r Deunydd: 18 October 2006
Meeting Date / Material Submitted:

Lleoliad/Location: Mountain Ash

Disgrifiad o'r Cynllun Primary Care Centre
Scheme Description:

Cleient/Asiant: RCT LHB
Client/Agent: [Paul Western]

Developer/Datblygwr: RCT CBC Corporate Estates
[John Lewis]

Pensaer/Architect: Nightingale Associates
[Jamie Brewster]

Awdurdod Cynllunio: Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC
Planning Authority:

Statws Cynllunio: Pre-planning
Planning Status:

Y Panel Adolygu Dylunio/Design Review Panel:
Wendy Richards (cadeirydd/chair) Ann-Marie Smale
Cindy Harris (swyddog/officer) Elfed Roberts
Charlie Deng [swyddog/officer] Mike Biddulph
Douglas Hogg

Lead Panellist: Elfed Roberts

Sylwedyddion/Observers: James White, DCFW
Mallory Armstrong, WHE

Cyflwyniad/Presentation

The proposed development will house four GP practices, which are currently in substandard accommodation, in a bespoke structure and will also include a '1-4-all' shop offering various Local Authority services.

The site is adjacent to the Mountain Ash railway station and occupies the space in between the existing road into Mountain Ash [Oxford Street] and the new relief road [Henry Street]. There are views of wooded hills to the north and north east. An existing sewer runs parallel to the south western boundary, and an existing pedestrian route runs NE/SW across the site and links the bus and train stations. As the site is on a flood plain, the Environment Agency has stipulated that the ground floor is raised by 1.5 metres and other attenuation measures are implemented.

The new building is located in the north east corner, partly to avoid the cost of re-locating the sewer. The larger two storey block follows the curve of the boundary and accommodates the primary care centre, with all clinical accommodation on the ground floor. A double height waiting area located in the northern corner takes advantage of the views. Consulting rooms are strung around the north east perimeter with good views out. A shared foyer and entrance on its south west corner links this block with the single storey 1-4-all shop, which fronts onto Oxford Street. An internal courtyard separates the two blocks and there are shared staff facilities at first floor level.

The design approach is contemporary but contextual. Red brick is used on the primary care centre to reflect a nearby Victorian shop unit, with snapped headers giving a textured finish. The raised ground floor level helps to achieve privacy and planting will be used to shield the sub-floor void. The single storey elements will be white, self-coloured render, with coloured panels denoting the main entrance. It is intended to relocate the existing sub-station away from the entrance. There are a small number of dedicated parking spaces provided, including 3 disabled spaces.

The Local Authority is broadly supportive of these proposals. They would welcome the Panel's views on the architecture, materials and response to the roundabout in particular.

Ymateb y Panel/Panel's Response

The Panel appreciated that the site and surrounding area were in need of enhancement. We wondered why that particular site had been chosen given the flood risk, and we were informed that other possible sites had been rejected because of more severe constraints. It was acknowledged that the site was relatively isolated from other developments and was therefore vulnerable to vandalism. The designer stated that the team had decided not to adopt a fortress mentality and but to entrust the local community with a high quality facility. Although there is little natural surveillance, a sensitive lighting scheme and CCTV would help deter intruders. Out-of-hours community use of the building would also greatly increase a sense of ownership and provide an effective deterrence.

The Panel supported the contemporary design approach and the enhanced legibility resulting from the use of different materials. We thought that the curved form of the social

services office on the south side should be made rectilinear as it tended to weaken the main curve to the north east.

However, we had more serious concerns about aspects of the internal layout. The shared entrance foyer could not be viewed from either of the two reception desks and it was agreed that this arrangement should be improved and the WCs relocated. We thought that the main waiting area was not ideally placed to capture views, and the 'sub' waiting area-cum-corridor, with the consulting room doors opening off it, would not function well as a calm private space. The courtyard was separated from waiting areas by treatment rooms, and so the potential for a landscaped green space to generate views and therapeutic contemplation was lost. We had reservations about how well the rooftop terrace would be used, and thought that the plant room dominated both that area and the street frontage.

We thought that the key to a more successful internal layout was to exploit the possibilities of the courtyard, which is currently not at all well integrated. It should be positioned so as to attract maximum daylight and have a clearly defined function and access routes.

The Panel supported the sustainability strategy to reduce energy demand and achieve a robust envelope with enhanced insulation and natural ventilation. However, we were concerned that a NEAT assessment had not yet been carried out, as the implications of different low carbon technologies need to be incorporated into the design from the beginning.

We were told that the building had been positioned as far forward as possible, given the existing sewer. It was recognised however, that this compromised its relationship to the street and made the courtyard more cramped than it might otherwise have been. The Panel thought that the green planted edge to the south west would not be a useful area of public realm and suggested that the entrance should be opened out more, to create a social space and greater visual permeability.

While we appreciated the minimum parking provision, we thought that the current parking arrangement compromised the quality of the main entrance and that it was essential that the existing sub-station be relocated. If parking is to be retained close to the entrance it should be designated solely for disabled badge holders and 'parent and child' use. The Panel was told that a high quality paving would help to mitigate the bleak environment. We thought that the brickwork should be taken to ground level and that planting in front of the void would be unlikely to succeed.

Crynodeb/Summary

The Panel appreciates the complexity of the site and its constraints. We welcome the contemporary design approach and consider that the proposals require relatively minor revisions. In particular:

- The courtyard should be made more accessible and opened up to improve visual permeability
- The internal layout needs revising, to improve the quality of the waiting areas and the relation between reception desks and entrance foyer.
- We would have liked to see a NEAT assessment carried out at a much earlier stage, to give reassurance that all sustainability measures are properly integrated

- We would like to see some usable public realm incorporated into the scheme, and the relationship with the street improved.
- It is essential that the existing sub-station is relocated away from the main entrance. We would like to see the paving scheme extended up to the front door.
- We support the promotion of out-of-hours community use as the best way of avoiding vandalism

Diwedd/End

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