

**Statws/Status:**  
**Cyfrinachol / Confidential**



**Adroddiad Adolygu Dylunio:** 16 December 2005  
**Design Review Report:**

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

**Lleoliad/Location:** Nantgarw Business Park,  
Trefforest

**Disgrifiad o'r Cynllun** Office accommodation  
**Scheme Description:**

**Cynllunio:** TACP [Steve Welchman]  
**Consultants:** Cowlin Construction  
[Dave Lloyd]

**Cleient/Asiant:** WDA [Jeff Perrin]  
**Client/Agent:** Babcock & Brown  
[Giles Frost]

**Pensaer/Architect:** Holder Mathias [Nic Downs]

**Awdurdod Cynllunio:** Rhondda Cynon Taff  
**Planning Authority:** [Jim Bailey apologised]

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

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

**Lead Panellist:**

**Kieren Morgan**

**Sylwedyddion/Observers:**

**Charlie Deng  
Design Review assistant**

### **Cyflwyniad/Presentation**

This scheme was last seen at Design Review, along with the other WISP proposals, in September 2005. The Panel thought that the 'pavilion in a landscape' approach worked well, but we expressed concern about daylight levels in some areas if they became cellularised. Since then Babcock and Brown have been appointed as the developer and were asked specifically by the WDA to rework the Nantgarw scheme, as this was seen as the least satisfactory of the three WISP schemes. A design strategy for the site has been prepared by Soltys Brewster but remains confidential. Future development is envisaged along Heol Crochendy.

The proposal now consists of two unequal rectangular wings, 15 metres deep, forming an L shape, with a fully glazed corner feature at the intersection of the wings and facing the roundabout. This element is 4 storeys in order to mask the roof plant and has a large roof overhang and brise-soleil to the south. The roof plane is lifted slightly above the two rear walls which project outwards as red fins, framing the glazed walls. The 3 storey wings have a rendered finish, horizontal ribbon windows and red panelled stop end walls.

The landscape buffer remains, between the business park and the residential area to the south and has been widened, a recommendation from the Design Strategy under preparation by Soltys Brewster, which has amended the red line boundary of the WISP site. The strategy is to de-prioritise Cardiff Road in favour of the approach from Heol Crochendy, where trees and Blue Pennant sandstone walls will reinforce the linear route and the gateway image. The car park is largely hidden and there is a generous 5 metre band between parking rows which will feature earth mounds and trees. The space in front of the glazed corner facing the roundabout will have a more formal treatment.

The WDA prefer this design to the last one as providing more functional and flexible internal space. They emphasise that the tenancies will be small – in the range of 1500-2000 sq ft, with the smallest 250 sq ft, and hence the need for lots of communal space and interaction between floors.

### **Ymateb y Panel/Panel's Response**

The Panel considered this solution to be weaker than the previous one, which had a strong architectural idea, although there were problems with the layout. We felt that these could have been solved without a complete change of form. This design shows a confusion between the scale of the wings and the corner feature, and lacks cohesion between the different elements. The gable ends are very blank and compare unfavorably with the elliptical extensions on the SA1 scheme. The fact that there is little context to work with only reinforces the strength of the original submission. The architect stated that they had tried to retain and amend the original concept, but it could not be made to work.

However, the Panel felt that the internal layout is still dysfunctional, with poor connections between the wings and the central space. The core is located too far from the main entrance and makes access and circulation problematic. It would be better located on the internal corner, next to the entrance from the car park. The position of the reception area, which turns its back on the cafe, needs to be rethought. The first floor bridge should be wider.

The WDA confirmed that they will fund the cafe, and be responsible for facilities management and external maintenance.

In terms of the presented elevations, the Panel commented that the glazed wall will look quite different with brise soleil, and we questioned whether the roof plant will be hidden from all angles. The glazed corner is a good candidate for natural ventilation but will in fact be heavily air conditioned, and we suggested that it could be treated as a semi-outdoor space with single glazing only, although this would impact on the intended use of the top floor for a meeting room. The brise soleil should be carried round to the west elevation overlooking the car park.

The entrances from north and south appear mean in relation to the grand scale of the glazed corner feature. We were told that there is a small canopy and projection of the main roof over the entrance from the car park, and we suggested that this entrance could be made two storey. There was some discussion over the position of the front door and we suggested it could be moved to the eastern facade, behind the red fin and closer to the bus stop.

The Panel were pleased to see the new site boundary to the west, giving more room for planting, and to learn of the planned 5 metre bands between parking rows, which we thought should be protected throughout the design development. The landscape treatment of the front area gives a contemporary look but will require a high level of maintenance.

The outbuildings for cycles, refuse storage and substation should be moved from the line of the exit doors and placed more conveniently for all tenants.

### **Crynodeb/Summary**

The Panel is deeply concerned that, unlike the previous scheme, this proposal is not an exemplary gateway feature offering grade 1 office accommodation, but is more likely to become a standard office building. While we are aware that the architect has had little time to rework the scheme, we find this proposal to be an unacceptable solution to the stated aims behind the WISP project. In particular:

- The lack of cohesion between the different elements means that the entrances and internal links are problematic.
- The position of the core needs rethinking.
- The inadequate proportions of the first floor bridge are an indication that the adjacencies and connections are not working
- We would like to see a stronger link to the bus stop, for instance marked by paving materials, as suggested in our last report
- The details of the rendered walls at ground level and at the coping will need careful treatment to maintain the desired quality

- The Panel regret the lack of an environmental strategy or any evidence of a sustainable design approach.
- We think the boundary treatment is progressing well, although it needs to be handled with more conviction, and we welcome the 5 metre separation bands in the car park.

**Diwedd/End**

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