

Addroddiad Adolygu Dylunio Design Review Report

Review Status: **Confidential**

Meeting date:	20th October 2010
Issue Date:	29th October 2010
Scheme Location:	North Dock Boulevard, Llanelli
Scheme Description:	Public Realm
Planning Status:	Pre-application

Part1: Presentation

This proposal for a 'boulevard' strip of public realm along the northern edge of North Dock is part of a wider masterplan proposal ['Llanelli Waterside', reviewed by DCFW in December 2005] and Arup have very recently been commissioned to revisit the aspirations of the masterplan and develop them further. A linear route is proposed, connecting the Millennium Coastal path with the Pump House and other uses around North Dock.

The site itself has good solar access but is exposed to the prevailing wind and weather. The eastern half of the route runs alongside the dock, and the preferred option here is a split level layout providing a high quality waterside setting for future retail/leisure/residential development. The western half links the dock with the beach and coastal park, and provides a landscape form modelled on sand ripples, as a setting for future residential development.

The Local Authority is acting as the client in a Joint Venture between Carmarthenshire CC and Welsh Assembly Government [WAG]. Given that the Local Authority is both the client and the planning authority, they acknowledge the importance of having an independent view of the proposal. The adjacent development plots to the boulevard have been identified as suitable for mixed use development. The listed Pump House is an important reference point and is currently being renovated for use as a restaurant and chef training facility.

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

The Panel was pleased to review this proposal for what could be an exciting and innovative piece of public realm. However, without the benefit of a strong masterplan to respond to, it risks becoming an isolated and arbitrary intervention. We think that the proposal is unsatisfactory in the sense that any pending application would be premature, before the masterplan is fully re-evaluated. In summary:

- We would like to see the client prioritise the progress of the masterplan before bringing forward this proposal, which should then demonstrably respond to the masterplan and be part of a strategy for establishing good east/west connections.
- In particular the pedestrian/cycle link to the town centre will be critical.
- The relationship between public realm and buildings requires further definition, in order to inform the sympathetic integration of both elements. A simple 3D model would be very helpful in this regard.
- The design and layout should respond to microclimatic issues, based on actual data, with a view to ensuring maximum use and comfort. The built form could be part of the solution to offer protection and shelter.
- We would like to see a public art strategy for this route, to link with work going on in the town centre and linking with the character of the coastal path. Provision should be made within the budget for its implementation.
- We hope to review the developing masterplan again, at an appropriate stage.

Part 2: Discussion and Panel Response in Full

The Panel had concerns about developing this strip of land in isolation, with no destination driver at either end. We thought that establishing connections to east and west was at least as important as the development itself, and a failure to do so would risk this becoming a stand-alone and underused piece of public realm. On the other hand, as a high quality urban edge in a coastal context, which reinforces links with the Pump House and the Coastal Park, it could be very successful. What is missing here is good connectivity with the town centre and a clearer response to an updated master plan.

While we understand that this is outside the remit of this particular proposal, the fact that the same consultants have been asked to revisit and develop the wider masterplan presents an opportunity for a more integrated approach to the development of the whole area. In our view the evolution and progress of the masterplan should precede this development and should lay the groundwork for good connectivity and a holistic approach to regeneration. Any final decisions on this scheme should be held back until there is an opportunity to respond flexibly to the masterplan. The client agreed to try and ensure that the two projects develop in tandem, and confirmed that there was no constraint on timing for budget expenditure.

In particular the Panel questioned the wisdom of proceeding with public realm works without any indication of how that would relate to future building thresholds and profiles. The relationship between these two elements will be crucial for the success of both buildings and the public open spaces.

The proposal as shown does not appear to respond to issues of microclimate on this admittedly exposed site. We thought that wind study tests should be done, and the results

used to inform the site layout so that a certain amount of protection was offered. This would help to ensure good year-round usage. Indicative built forms could be used to offer shelter and assist with placemaking, although we accept that this would require a wider brief and/or a stronger link with the emerging masterplan. The design team stated that they had dismissed the idea of buildings on the water's edge, as this would restrict access. We did not accept that this was necessarily the case and restated our position that the microclimate could not be ignored in the design and layout.

In terms of the western element, this is in danger of becoming a wind tunnel, with high wind speeds close to the coast and accelerating 'venturi' effects. The Panel did not agree that the landforms created in the shape of sand ripples would offer adequate protection, nor that the dogleg in the route would mitigate the effects of strong winds.

We thought that the proposed route should incorporate different events or responses along the way, to detain and interest visitors. The team stated that they had considered building into the water, as represented by the 'curved option', but this was not achievable within the budget. It was confirmed that the original dock walls will be exposed where possible.

The Panel was informed that there was good road, rail and cycle access to the site, although it was accepted that pedestrian links with the town centre were unresolved. The triangular extension at the north east corner aligns directly with the Pump House plaza.

Sustainable, locally sourced materials that are also robust and durable will be preferred, such as local oak boarding, recycled plastics and composite materials. The team is developing a strategy for avoiding the use of railings along the dock edge and we supported this.

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: Agent/Client/Developer	Carmarthenshire CC [Steffan Jenkins]
Pensaer/Architect:	Arup [Ewan Smith, John Smith]
Consultants:	n/a
Awdurdod Cynllunio/ Planning Authority	Carmarthenshire CC [Robert Davies, James Yeandle]

Y Panel Adlygu Dylunio:

Design review panel:

Wendy Richards [Chair]

Cindy Harris [Officer]

Kieren Morgan

Kedrick Davies

Roger Ayton

Simon Carne

David Harvey

Lead Panellist:

Roger Ayton

Sylwedyddion/Observers:

Mike Simmons [Pembrokeshire CC]

Harriet Brown [Pembrokeshire CC]