

# Addroddiad Adolygu Dylunio Design Review Report

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

<b>Dyddiad Cyfarfod / Meeting Date:</b>	<b>20 August 2008</b>
<b>Lleoliad/Location:</b>	<b>Old Town Dock, Newport</b>
<b>Disgrifiad o'r Cynllun Scheme Description:</b>	<b>Residential. Affordable housing</b>
<b>Cleient/Asiant: Client/Agent:</b>	<b>Fairlake [Rhys Parry]</b>
<b>Developer/Datblygwr:</b>	<b>As above</b>
<b>Pensaer/Architect:</b>	<b>Powell Dobson Architects [Bernadette Kinsella, Mohammed Shaath]</b>
<b>Cynllunio/Consultants</b>	<b>Hoare Lea [Wynne Harris] Davis Langdon [John Dudley]</b>
<b>Awdurdod Cynllunio: Planning Authority:</b>	<b>Newport CC [Gail Parkhouse]</b>
<b>Statws Cynllunio: Planning Status:</b>	<b>Pre-application</b>
<b>Y Panel Adolygu Dylunio/ Design Review Panel: Wendy Richards (cadeirydd/chair) Cindy Harris (swyddog/officer)</b>	<b>Ewan Jones Roger Ayton Richard Parnaby Steve Smith</b>
<b>Lead Panellist:</b>	<b>Richard Parnaby</b>

**Sylwedyddion/Observers:**

**Barrie Todd, MAG N Ireland**

### **Cyflwyniad/Presentation**

This residential proposal is being delivered as a partnership between Fairlake, (a Registered Social Landlord), Newport City Council and Newport Unlimited for 104 affordable housing units. This is part of the affordable provision for the whole of the Old Town Dock Development [the target within the Development Brief is to deliver 30% affordable housing]. Three apartment blocks of 4-6 storeys are located on the northern part of the site, while to the south of the central service zone more traditional family housing is provided adjacent to the Redrow development, Alexander Gate. Outline planning permission for this scheme was approved in April 2008.

Regular meetings have been held with the regeneration and development control teams within the Local Planning Authority whose main concern is the relationship of this development with the riverside park. The development team hope to submit a full planning application in September 2008 and start work on site in January 2009.

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

The Panel noted that ideally affordable housing should be integrated within the developments to which they relate, rather than being grouped together on one site.

Many of the key issues on this scheme arise from the high proposed density and building configuration, such as the degree of overshadowing and daylight/sunlight levels especially in ground floor apartments. The surface parking arrangement dominates the public space around the blocks resulting in a functional environment lacking amenity. In particular, the entrances and pedestrian circulation routes appear illegible and unwelcoming. Residents need to have ownership of these spaces if their management and value is to be effective. The Panel thought that parking levels should be reduced and underground parking should be a planning requirement for development at this density. In particular the 20 metre 'no build' zone to the north should be used for planting, not for parking, and instead more on-street parking should be considered which could also serve to calm traffic.

The Panel felt that the design does little to respond to the distinctive character of Newport or the form and materials of adjacent buildings. The composition of the elevations seems arbitrary – more about making an external pattern than responding to the uses of the various rooms of the flats. The north facing elevation of the large blocks, which will probably be the one most visible from both inside and outside the site, seems to signify the 'back' of the development. The intention to introduce vertical greenery here may soften the elevations but we are worried that it may not be well maintained. We understand that the requirements for good permeability and solar access have driven the site layout but the permeability

achieved is mainly visual and we are unconvinced by the overall massing strategy and the particular arrangement of the three blocks.

The active frontages on East Dock Road are a good response to this edge, but we think there should be greater permeability with direct access from the road to every accommodation block (including direct access to the street-facing ground floor flats) and more links through to the riverside park. The controlled access into the park at pre-defined points is inconsistent with the principles of good urban design and we think that residents of this development should have direct access to the riverside park (especially given the very high density and the consequent absence of on-site amenity space). The significant planting identified in the landscape design between this development and the park will have the unfortunate effect of minimising interaction and access and we support the efforts being made to reduce the scale of this planting.

We are particularly concerned about the link to the north of the site which will have ground floor parking along both sides. The location of service installations and plant station in the centre of the site is regrettable, however well screened. The fact that this service zone is at a key focus point and directly at the end of the main cross route identified in the masterplan is unacceptable. These observations raise questions about the implementation of the masterplan by the Local Authority.

Reviewing this scheme and others emerging in Old Town Dock, our observation is that the practical implementation of the LDA Development Brief seems to be problematic. The vision and strength of the masterplan was recognised to be its urban design qualities and we fear these are now being eroded, with no Design Champion coordinating proposals.

We applaud the commitment to achieve Code for Sustainable Homes Level 5 in this development. However, the exclusion of solar thermal technology from the carbon reduction strategy is surprising and the carbon offset measures required will need to be retained as an integral part of the specification. Low impact materials should include FCS certified timber, recycled steel, and thermally treated timber cladding.

## **Crynodeb/Summary**

The Panel conclude that major revisions are necessary to ensure the success of this development. In particular:

- We are not convinced by the site layout and we think there should be more physical permeability through the site and direct access to the riverside park, [which could be achieved with a more linear form which could also give good views to more apartments]. The rationale for the lack of active frontages on the riverside should be re-examined.
- The quality of the external communal spaces and entrances is unacceptable. We are disappointed at the extent of surface parking.

- The fenestration and elevational treatment require further development. The configuration of the blocks should be re-considered to maximise solar access and views.
- We have serious concerns about the implementation of the masterplan, particularly in terms of the quality of the northern link, the restricted access to the riverside park, and the impact of the telemast and pumping station in the centre of the site. We urge the Local Authority to re-evaluate this and other emerging schemes in the light of the overall vision.

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**