

Addroddiad Adolygu Dylunio Design Review Report

Review Status: **Confidential**

Meeting date:	8th December 2010
Issue Date:	16th December 2010
Scheme Location:	Pistyll, Gwynedd
Scheme Description:	Leisure / Residential
Planning Status:	Pre-application

Part1: Presentation

The two sites are located within a Heritage Coast and the Llŷn Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) close to the village of Pistyll. On one site are the remains of a derelict hotel, and on the other bases for static caravans and a number of holiday cottages, a recent conversion of the former Pistyll farmhouse and outbuildings. To the east of the farmhouse is a Grade 1 listed church. The developer has a portfolio of high quality self-catering accommodation in prime rural locations throughout the UK and Ireland.

A planning application was submitted by the previous owner to convert the hotel into holiday apartments in 2009, but the approved conversion scheme has not been implemented to date. An approved application in 2007 to replace the static caravans with wooden lodges laid out in a more informal plan has been commenced, with the bases for the lodges in place.

The proposal, based on the total number of approved units, seeks to concentrate new development on the Plas site and reduce the impact of development on the farm site. The derelict hotel is demolished and replaced with a 30 unit contemporary holiday apartment building with an undulating grass roof. The building form seeks to take advantage of the sea views and sunpath. All the lodge bases to the north west of the farm house will be removed, and 11 new units will be added in a more compact development around the existing converted stable block and farm buildings, giving a total of 22 units on the farm site. The Local Authority requires 2 parking spaces per unit and this has been challenging to accommodate within the site.

The Local Authority is concerned with the suitability of a contemporary design in this locality, although they agree that new build is the right solution for the hotel site. Other key issues include the impact of the development on the character of the AONB with regard to

its size, scale, form, layout and quality. There are concerns that the number of units may create an over-provision of holiday units in the area. There is also the question as to whether the location of the new holiday cottages can be considered as previously developed land and therefore viable to build on as referred to in Policy D15. The team sought guidance on whether this scheme would be covered by BREEAM or CSH.

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

The Panel recognises that this is a unique opportunity to provide an exciting and high quality leisure facility in a stunning location. However, much work remains to be done and we think that major issues remain to be resolved. In summary:

- A strong and robust rationale is needed for the farm site layout, the form of new development on the Plas site, the distribution of units between the two sites, and the architectural resolution.
- This rationale should refer explicitly to the surrounding landscape, topography and vegetation, and explain how these aspects inform the design development. It should form a central part of the Design and Access Statement (DAS) and make use of the Countryside Council for Wales tool LANDMAP.
- We welcome the contemporary architectural approach to the replacement of the derelict hotel, but we think this needs to be more simple, elegant and refined.
- The concept of developing units on the farm site as a 'coastal settlement' could be pursued, and possibly more units could be developed here at the expense of numbers on the Plas site.
- The required parking ratio of 2:1 is unjustifiably high and we would recommend a 1:1 ratio, or at most 1:1.5, which would enable the parking to be accommodated more sensitively within the site.
- We would urge the client to commit to a BREEAM Excellent rating for this scheme, and to appoint an energy consultant as soon as possible to ensure a well integrated sustainable design.

Part 2: Discussion and Panel Response in Full

The Panel agreed with the decision not to pursue the static caravan development which had been approved, and instead to develop a more compact 'settlement' layout. The plan needs to be developed from a site analysis and assessment of design options, to uncover a rationale for the proposed layout of the farm site. The legibility of the proposed layout was not clear, and the nature of the arrival, movement, parking and spatial relationships were not defined.

The Panel was uncertain of the main design concept that was driving development on the Plas site, and specifically whether the initial intention was to hide the building under the undulating grass roof. It was agreed that a building of this size in this location was bound to have an impact, and we thought that justification of its disproportionate scale would be challenging. This would be a key requirement given the local context and landscape. We questioned the distribution of accommodation between the two sites and thought that the

quantum on the farm site could be increased, to form a coastal settlement, and the number of units at the Plas correspondingly reduced to achieve a smaller building or buildings. These could be developed as forms in the landscape nestling into the topography.

The Panel thought that the importance of the landscape context (not just the AONB) was not sufficiently emphasised in the draft DAS. Its analysis should be a key component of the design. The cultural and historical associations should be fully explored in the DAS and be shown to have influenced the design development. This sensitive site demands a rigorous analysis and interrogation of the relationship between built form and topography. Currently the sweeping roof form appears arbitrary, and lacking any connection to the landscape. In addition, we thought that the curved form of the building would be difficult to achieve in practice while maintaining the desired quality.

While the Panel appreciated the contemporary design approach, the current resolution feels awkward and unresolved. For the contemporary approach to work, the design and building has to be simple, elegant, refined and beautiful, and based on a strong design concept. The design development should be demonstrated with concept sketches, diagrams and analysis, and a 3D working model of the sites and their surroundings would be very useful in showing the relationship of the building with the context.

There is insufficient information on the proposed construction materials for a full planning application, but we were told that the intention is to reuse as much of the demolition material as possible, probably supplemented with locally sourced stone.

In our view the parking requirement is too high and we think that 1 space :1 unit would be more appropriate, even though we understand that public transport access is minimal in this location. Facilities for cyclists should also be incorporated and given high priority.

The team confirmed that an energy specialist will be appointed, and that a biomass district heating scheme is under consideration. We agreed that solar water heating would be a good match for this technology in a site wide energy strategy, and we suggested that Passivhaus standards might be an appropriate response in this context. The Panel advised that this scheme would probably be dealt with under the BREEAM multi-residential assessment method. It is important that a BREEAM pre assessment is carried out as soon as possible, so that sustainability measures are well integrated with the design development, and a high standard of performance can be achieved. We recommend that a commitment is made in the planning application to achieve BREEAM Excellent.

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	Natural Retreats [Robert Fradley]
Pensaer/Architect:	Quad Architects [Nick Davies]
Consultants:	n/a
AwdurdodCynllunio/ Planning Authority	Gwynedd CC
Y Panel Adlygu Dylunio: Design Review Panel: Alan Francis [Chair] Cindy Harris [Officer] Toby Adam	Simon Carne, Jonathan Hines Ashley Bateson Kieren Morgan
Lead Panellist:	Simon Carne
Sylwedyddion/Observers:	Elly Englefield [DCFW]