

Addroddiad Adolygu Dylunio Design Review Report

Review Status: **Confidential**

Meeting date:	17th February 2010
Issue Date:	2nd March 2010
Scheme Location:	Pontio project, Bangor
Scheme Description:	Education / leisure
Planning Status:	Pre-application

Part1: Presentation

A multi-disciplinary team have been working on this project since October 2009. Grimshaw and Atkins have been appointed to see the project through to completion under a traditional procurement process. They have just completed Stage C, a cost plan is imminent, and they hope to submit a planning application by the end of April. The necessary funding is largely in place, and a large proportion [£15m] of the overall cost of £35m has to be spent before March 2011.

This scheme seizes the opportunity to strengthen connections between upper and lower Bangor, between city and university, and between different parts of the campus. The axis from the Memorial Arch to the main Arts Building is central to the design concept, which creates a new internal street linking a series of connected semi-public places. One of the wider aims of the project is to create a pedestrian circuit around the civic heart of Bangor encompassing the High Street, this site and College Park. To this end, the University is working in partnership with the Local Authority to achieve a high quality public realm solution at the pedestrian crossing of Deiniol Road.

The aim is to achieve BREEAM Excellent and an Energy Performance Certificate [EPC] 'A' rating, with a simple, robust and durable building fabric. The east facing facade is staggered in response to the steeply sloping site and for good daylight penetration, and there is potential for natural ventilation. The team will aim to gain credits for materials and waste, ecological improvement of the site, and a green transport plan.

The Local Planning Authority is pleased with the pre-application discussions that have taken place and has consulted its members. They are comfortable with the design concept so far, but warned that the issue of crossing Deiniol Road has to be resolved, in line with the council funded improvement scheme taking place opposite this site. The relocation of

the Student Union, higher up the slope and closer to residential streets, must not cause undue disturbance to local residents especially at night.

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

The Panel welcomed the opportunity to review this exciting project which has the potential to create a very positive impact beyond the site on the city centre. The emphasis on physical connections and social integration is strongly supported. We think the basic design concept is good but there are major aspects of the scheme which need to be addressed urgently given the timescale:

- The main internal route through the site is strong but adjacent external routes need to be defined and developed.
- A serial vision analysis of the proposed new street and the spaces it links would be useful as part of the design development.
- The public spaces need better articulation, their qualities of robustness and adaptability should be clear, and their accessibility to the public defined (eg 12, 18, 24 hours).
- An active frontage overlooking the arrival plaza is particularly important and the size and slope of this space requires more consideration.
- The solution for the pedestrian crossing on Deiniol Road needs to be developed in conjunction with the Local Authority and interface with other current public works.
- The landscape and public art strategies need to be developed urgently and integrated with the rest of the design development.
- The choice of materials and detailed expression of external fabric needs further consideration and justification.
- The sustainability targets are welcomed and this strategy appears to be well integrated and progressing.
- The work programme is worryingly tight but we are reassured that the team is competent and committed to achieving the desired quality.

Part 2: Discussion and Panel Response in Full

The Panel expressed broad support for the scheme design so far, with its emphasis on strengthening routes and connections. We recognised the importance of this project for the city as a whole, and welcomed the proposed circuit with the High Street which this building complex would help to define and reinforce. However, at the moment there is a disparity between this circuit following the line of the new street, and the separate axis created by the proposed crossing point on Deiniol Road which links directly to the new plaza and main theatre entrance.

The Panel sought more information on the character of the proposed plaza. We were told that it will be an arrival and performance space with soft as well as hard landscaping and will incorporate ramped access. The landscape details were still to be determined. The Panel was concerned that there was not sufficient evidence of active frontages facing the plaza, and the facade as a whole facing the town appeared rather blank and fortress-like.

The colour and texture of material finishes together with the landscape infrastructure will be very important in this context especially given the large scale blank elevations.

With regard to the new street, we would like to see a serial vision analysis prepared, visualising pedestrian movement through the sequence of spaces and built forms, and illustrating their different characters and functions. Detailed proposals for the crossing of Deiniol Road should include hard evidence of partnership with the Local Authority, to optimise the location and connect with strongly defined areas of public realm and landscape infrastructure on each side. More consideration needs to be given to the safety of alternative pedestrian routes when the internal circulation spaces are not accessible to students or the general public.

Given the challenging nature of the project and the very tight programme, the Panel wondered whether there was any flexibility in the funding arrangements or delivery timescales. The client was confident that the programme could be met and the team as a whole thought it would be counter-productive to split the project up into phases. The building and its spaces were designed to be multi-functional and would all need to be in place to appeal to new markets such as that for conferences and training courses in the vacation periods. The design team do not underestimate the complexity of the project but have already rationalised the functions and arrived at a pragmatic mix of uses.

The Panel was concerned that very little consideration appeared to have been given to landscape design and public art. We thought that the development was at a stage where it was essential that a landscape architect be engaged. It would be important to establish a connection between internal and external spaces and the material presented does not explore these opportunities. The landscape strategy will also have to be integrated with and respond to an existing university-backed scheme for College Park.

The Panel applauded the aspiration to achieve an EPC 'A' rating and welcomed the fact that the scheme was on course to meet BREEAM Excellent, in line with the requirements of the brief and WAG funding. The sustainability strategy is based on a passive approach and the integration of the environmental engineering measures into the design. Further work needs to be done on materials selection and site ecology. There will be some green roofs notably on the student union block, and porous paving will be used throughout.

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

Bangor University [Dylan Roberts]

Pensaer/Architect:	Grimshaw Architects [Ewan Jones, Kirsten Lees]
Consultants:	Atkins [Lloyd Roberts] Arup [Sam Wise]
Awdurdod Cynllunio/ Planning Authority	Gwynedd CC [Hywel Thomas]
Y Panel Adlygu Dylunio: Design review panel: John Punter [Chair] Cindy Harris [Officer] Wendy Richards	Simon Carne Elfed Roberts Simon Hartley
Lead Panellist:	Elfed Roberts
Sylwedyddion/Observers:	Matthew Kennedy [Grwp Gwalia]

Declaration of Interest: Ewan Jones is a member and joint chair of DCFW's Design Review Panel.