

Addroddiad Adolygu Dylunio Design Review Report

Review Status: **Public**

Meeting date:	10th December 2008
Issue Date:	19th December 2008
Scheme Location:	Pontypridd
Scheme Description:	Regeneration strategy
Planning Status:	Pre-application

Part1: Presentation

The regeneration strategy for Pontypridd is being updated after three years, to focus attention on the areas that will bring greatest economic and social benefits to the town over the next 5-10 years. LDA have been engaged to produce a deliverable strategy using public and private investment. The project will now be developed to take advantage of new European funding opportunities, and the emerging strategy is being tested through extensive public consultation.

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

The Panel is very supportive of the aims and aspirations which underpin this project. We commend the commitment of the project team and the comprehensive consultation process. We think the process is on the right track but needs to address the following issues as it develops:

- Clarity of the message is important. This needs to be delivered in simple straightforward terms along with the hard information and research on which it is based.

- The prioritisation process of the key projects and their likely/preferred phasing should be made explicit.
- We welcome and encourage the expected re-design of the Taff Vale scheme to include a smaller scale approach and greater integration with the town fabric.
- We would welcome a more conservation-based approach, and the exploration of refurbishment options to improve the sustainability and feasibility of the project.
- The strategy needs to allow for a flexible response from developers and sufficient space for smaller infill projects.
- Temporary 'meanwhile' uses should be exploited wherever possible, to engage the community and build future value.
- The carbon strategy needs to be developed urgently, to inform development briefs and establish a green infrastructure.
- The strategic use and design content of development briefs will be crucial and we are happy to be consulted on these in the future.

Part 2: Discussion and Panel Response in Full

Although the presentation material includes proposals for the wider context, the Panel decided to confine its comments to the town centre. This has suffered from recent decline especially on peripheral sites, and long term blight because of large scale but over-ambitious development proposals. It now requires a reconcentration of facilities and amenities for successful regeneration.

The project team confirmed that they wish this document to become SPG to support the new Local Development Plan, where the town centre would be indicated as a key area of change. As such it would be the subject of a separate consultation exercise.

A study carried out by DTZ, comparing Pontypridd with similar size towns elsewhere in the UK, identified the need for a substantial increase in retail and commercial space [230,000 sq ft and 190,000 sq ft respectively] as well as leisure facilities, and this has informed this strategy. Development briefs for key sites will be formulated, as planning applications come forward, by the team of consultants being coordinated by LDA. Proposals for phase 1 of the Taff Vale scheme are expected early next year and the Panel would be keen to review these.

The public exhibition material is comprehensive but dense, and lacks a consistent rationale stemming from a clear information base. A clear set of priorities should be identified showing desired outcomes and 'early wins'.

Of the 29 projects identified, the criteria of value-for-money and regeneration potential were used to identify seven key enabling projects, split between public and private ownership and funding. The team anticipates that these 'early wins' will build

confidence and provide sufficient stimulus to bring forward more of the desired improvements.

The transport consultants [Hyder] have identified which transport and parking elements would need to be implemented at which stage, to support the continuing phasing. Some spare capacity exists already for both short and long stay parking requirements but, in the longer term, more will be needed at edge of town centre sites. A multi-storey car park is proposed for Sardis Road, and a smaller one for Broadway.

The proposals should build on the existing character of Pontypridd town centre and its sub areas. It should allow for diversity of retail units, some small as well as larger ones, and the former might help to engage local traders. There should be the facility for flexible responses to changing economic circumstances, including for example possibilities for refurbishment and re-use rather than demolition. Temporary or 'meanwhile' uses should be pursued which would establish an increased level of activity and amenity, and build value for the future.

The Panel supported the integrated nature of the design team which has been engaged to work on this project for the medium term, and the strong officer working group representing the client. We were assured that the team is aware of the need to protect design quality through the procurement process. They recognise the wide variety and quality of the existing townscape and the Panel welcomed the promised design guidance on heights, surfacing and materials. The team is also aware of future maintenance implications and will consider setting up or using a local management company.

The Panel welcomed the early development of a carbon strategy, but this is now urgent and needs to inform the development briefs and any design codes. There is potential for a district heating / cooling system, possibly using the river, and the Carbon Trust are advising on this.

We would like to see more relevant aspirational imagery used in the document, in order to reflect the particular character and history of Pontypridd. We strongly advise against any suggestion of 'gateway' public art on roundabouts.

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	WAG, DE&T [Hamish Munro]
Pensaer/Architect:	LDA Design [Paul Connelly] Stride Treglown Davies [Pierre Wassenaar]
Consultants:	n/a
AwdurdodCynllunio/ Planning Authority	Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC [Mark Howland]
Y Panel Adlygu Dylunio: Design review panel: John Punter [Chair] Cindy Harris [Officer]	Jonathan Hines Mark Hallett Ed Colgan Lyn Owen Roger Ayton
Lead Panellist:	Lyn Owen
Sylwedyddion/Observers:	Jianqiang Wang [Cardiff University] Eleanor Englefield [DCFW]
Declaration on Interest:	Mark Hallett declared that he is currently employing LDA on a separate project.