

**Statws/Status:**

**Cyfrinachol / Confidential**



<b>Adroddiad Adolygu Dylunio: Design Review Report:</b>	<b>29 April 2008</b>
<b>Dyddiad Cyfarfod / Meeting Date:</b>	<b>16 April 2008</b>
<b>Lleoliad/Location:</b>	<b>Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama, Cardiff</b>
<b>Disgrifiad o'r Cynllun Scheme Description:</b>	<b>Education / leisure</b>
<b>Cleient/Asiant: Client/Agent:</b>	<b>RWCMD [Hilary Boulding]</b>
<b>Developer/Datblygwr:</b>	<b>n/a</b>
<b>Pensaer/Architect:</b>	<b>Hamiltons Architects [Jason Flanagan, Paul Bavister]</b>
<b>Cynllunio/Consultants:</b>	<b>Mott Macdonald [Tim Blissit]</b>
<b>Awdurdod Cynllunio: Planning Authority:</b>	<b>Cardiff CC [Richard Cole]</b>
<b>Statws Cynllunio: Planning Status:</b>	<b>Pre-application</b>
<b>Y Panel Adolygu Dylunio/ Design Review Panel: Alan Francis (cadeirydd/chair) Cindy Harris (swyddog/officer) Jonathan Adams</b>	<b>Ashley Bateson Phil Roberts</b>

**Lead Panellist:**

**Jonathan Adams**

**Sylwedyddion/Observers:**

**Mark Hand, Newport CC**

### **Cyflwyniad/Presentation**

The Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama is the national conservatoire for Wales, the only equivalent institution in Wales, and the only one in the UK without its own concert hall. They wish to develop their role as a leading training venue and attract the best students. This aspiration has formed the basis of the brief, for a 450 seat concert hall designed mainly for chamber performances, with acoustic flexibility built in; a new courtyard theatre; refurbishment of the existing Bute theatre; and four separate rehearsal spaces. Altogether this comprises 4500 square metres of new space. There will be no full fly tower on the theatre, and this will help keep the height down.

The design process has proceeded from the inside out, and has developed into a linear drama block, sharing foyer and back-of-house facilities with the existing theatre. The foyer will be the linking element for all functions and the front door accessing the foyer will have a strong street presence. Full height vertical baffles on the street facade will give oblique views in and out. A top lit arcade running the length of the new block links the music and drama elements, and forms a galleria and exhibition space. A unifying flat roof links all the new elements together. The precise orientation of the concert hall is still under discussion, the question being whether to align it with the arcade or slightly twist it to lead into the park access.

It is intended to clean up and re-render the existing visible facades and improve the acoustic insulation. The setting between the Hopkins and Raymond Edwards buildings will be improved and opened up to create public space. There will be some limited demolition. The trees along North Road will be replaced by a new row of limes, arranged slightly randomly. The link into Bute Park along the northern site boundary will be reinforced.

The environmental strategy is centered around using thermal mass, stack effect natural ventilation, and active systems such as a ground source heat pump alongside the existing boilers, and solar water heating.

The Local Planning Authority is pleased with the degree of involvement they have had to date and the positive response to their ideas and concerns. They generally support

the scheme as it stands and endorse the design approach, of developing component parts rather than one large entity.

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

The Panel complimented the team on an excellent presentation and looked forward to a high quality development on this constrained site. Like the Local Authority, we welcomed the component part approach, of three discrete buildings which could be separately controlled. We thought that the danger of a monolithic appearance had been successfully avoided, but we questioned how deliverable the sharp, blade-like roof would be in reality. We were told that there would be a concave channel at the edge rather than a bull nose detail, and flat honeycombed panels for the underside in ply or concrete. The architects have managed to adjust the heights to accommodate all elements under the roof and there will be no plant on the roof. In the concert hall the platform will be one metre below foyer level and there will be a mini fly tower only, for teaching purposes, and no pit. We suggested that a full fly tower should be built anyway, as one may be needed in the future, but the client stated that there were other priorities for future development.

The main entrance will be highly legible on the street facade and is intended for the general public. The [existing] secondary entrance will be used by students, staff and school groups. It was confirmed that the rehearsal spaces do not need to be co-located with the theatre but their footprint mirrors that of the stage. The 'get-ins' will be done through the arcade and access for large vehicles will be directly off North Rd via the pull-off space.

The Panel broadly supported the design approach as presented and our major concerns were to do with delivery and protection of the desired quality through the procurement process. The team stated that they hoped to use a traditional procurement route and intended to get as much detailed design work as possible done and agreed before handing over to the contractor. The Panel advised the team to consider adopting a partnership approach, as the whole project would benefit from the early involvement of the contractor. The materiality achieved would be critical and we thought it was important to present this as a civic building and to avoid any commercial references. The detailing of the curved timber facade would present challenges and we trusted that differential weathering could be avoided, given the two metre gap between roof and wall.

The team confirmed that they would undertake a bespoke BREEAM assessment, and we encouraged them to commit to achieving an Excellent rating. The Panel considered the sustainability strategy to be well developed for stage C, and applauded the setting up of an integrated team. We suggested that air leakage from the foyer would be minimised by double doors or rotating doors, but we endorsed the design decision to

treat the foyer as a buffer space. We urged the team to use locally sourced durable timber, although the team are considering FSC certified cedar. It was confirmed that the flat roof would have a sedum finish, and that factor 15 noise reduction was deemed satisfactory by Arup. It was suggested that water from the dock feeder could be used for underfloor cooling, and we advised the team to check with the Environment Agency concerning extraction.

The team stated that the existing bridge across the dock feeder was considered sufficient access, and was the point where all the footpaths converge. We thought it would be important to ensure security, especially at night, and we emphasised the importance of not crowding the public route alongside the solid timber wall of the concert hall, and keeping it hospitable and accessible. Ideally we thought that the zebra crossing across North Road should be opposite the main entrance. There will be a gap in the trees immediately outside the main entrance.

The team stated that they expected to be able to start on site at the beginning of 2009. Budget costs were £3500/sqm, and WAG funding of £10m had been secured, of which £3m would be repaid.

## **Crynodeb/Summary**

The Panel commended the outstanding presentation, and we regard this scheme as a potential exemplar. At present it is an acceptable response to the site and the brief, in need of minor revisions only. In summary:

- The building needs to achieve a civic presence and we warned that the commitment to quality and the type of procurement process chosen will be critical in maintaining the promised quality. We would like to see a partnership approach explored and the architectural team retained throughout.
- The programme envisaged for a start on site by the beginning of 2009 is tight for delivery of the required quality building, unless the client accepts some cost risk, and will need some flexibility.
- We welcome the breaking down of the scale and massing and we are reasonably reassured that the continuous flat roof will be sharp and crisp.
- We applaud the sustainability strategy of using the building fabric and form to regulate the environment, and we welcome the integrated team approach. We would like to see a firm commitment to achieving BREEAM Excellent and reference to WAG's aspiration for zero carbon buildings by 2011.
- We think there is a danger of the public access to Bute Park being overshadowed and dominated by the concert hall and we advise that this needs to be kept as open and welcoming as possible.
- We look forward to seeing the scheme again, prior to the submission of a detailed planning application.

**Diwedd/End**

**NB A Welsh language copy of this report is available upon request.**