

# Addroddiad Adolygu Dylunio Design Review Report

## Review Status: **Confidential**

Meeting date:	23rd June 2010
Issue Date:	7th July 2010
Scheme Location:	Red Bank, Welshpool
Scheme Description:	Residential
Planning Status:	Pre-application

## Part1: Presentation

This scheme was seen previously at Design Review in June 2009, known then as 'Burgess Land'. The current proposal is the result of ongoing discussion with the Local Authority planners and highways officers. It also responds to some of the issues raised in the previous review, particularly with regard to layout, appearance, connectivity and sustainability. The density has been reduced considerably and a Manual for Streets approach has been adopted, incorporating more green space into the site plan. There will be a controlled bus link through the site.

The proposed layout follows the contours of the site. A more coherent set of dwelling types is proposed, and footpath provision and connectivity has been improved. The sustainability strategy is now better integrated with the rest of the design and a CSH assessor has completed a draft pre-assessment. Solar water heating is proposed along with air source heat pumps, a sustainable drainage scheme and a general improvement of the site's ecology and biodiversity.

The Panel was informed that the previous planning application was withdrawn. The LPA officers have worked well with the team since then to improve the design. They are positive about the latest scheme, especially the reduced density and better access and connectivity, but are not convinced about the details of the crib walling. They would be keen to see this scheme achieve CSH Level 4.

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

The Panel was pleased to see this scheme a second time and to note the progress that had been made. We appreciate the constraints of this site and the difficulties experienced by the design team, while recognising the aspirations of the Local Authority. However, this remains a poor design response with major issues to be addressed. In summary:

- The site analysis is not convincing and a proper contextual analysis should be included showing links and connectivity for a wider area including the town centre. Views into and out of the site would be useful, particularly from across the valley.
- A street layout based on Manual for Streets principles needs to be clearly demonstrated and this will be crucial for the success of the scheme.
- We think that the usefulness of a bus service and overall connectivity would be improved by an unrestricted, one-way route through the site. This could be a narrowed, speed controlled link that allows for cycle use as part of the landscape design.
- The open spaces do not have a clear function nor do they provide a coherent context and setting for the development. The input of a landscape architect would help to integrate the various green areas and contribute a clear character to these spaces.
- Natural surveillance should be maximised with buildings fronting onto open spaces.
- The apartment blocks, which appear isolated and have no external defensible space, could be used to turn corners and enclose spaces.
- The architectural approach is incoherent and unresolved. We recommended that the architecture should be set aside until the site plan is resolved. Meanwhile, precedents and exemplars should be identified to demonstrate and guide the design development.
- The input of a CSH assessor is welcomed, and we would like to see a commitment to achieving Code Level 4. The SUDS will bring important environmental benefits, but we are not convinced by the orientation of the streets and/or roof pitches. Local distinctiveness of materials should be incorporated.

## **Part 2: Discussion and Panel Response in Full**

The Panel welcomed the reduction in density from 112 to 71 units, and the consequent lessening of the dominance of the retaining structures. The removal of the access road which bisected the green space to the south of the site is a positive improvement. While we accept that east/west connectivity has been improved we are less convinced by the north/south connectivity.

There is no evidence of a Manual for Streets approach in the site layout. We understood that the detailed design was still being developed but we advised that the principles needed to be incorporated into the site design, access arrangements and street layout from an early stage.

The Panel was informed that the bus link is a requirement of the Town Council who will contribute to its funding. It will also link with other new residential developments to the north of the town. We would prefer to see a through link for buses, as part of a one-way loop, even at the expense of some additional traffic accessing Red Bank from the east. The Panel was not convinced that this would necessarily be a problem, although we were

aware of concerns relating to limited visibility at the junction of Red Bank with Adelaide Road. Such a solution would avoid the practicalities of controlling access with bollards, and would be seen to prioritise connectivity and public transport. The treatment of the link road itself should intrude as little as possible on the green space.

The site plan shows several unresolved areas of open space, with no obvious function or ease of maintenance. These need to be rationalised and made more secure with improved natural surveillance. In our view and as a general principle, building frontages rather than back gardens should front onto open space. Although we understand that this might conflict with parking arrangements specified by Secure by Design, we nevertheless consider that overall site security would be improved with better overlooking. Areas of undefined public space beside house frontages are also problematic and there needs to be a much clearer distinction between public and private space. A major concern is the lack of any private secure space around the ground floor apartments in the cluster blocks.

We thought that the overall quality of the material presentation was poor and that it did not serve to promote the design well. Details such as the terracing, which will be a major landscape feature, should be integrated with the landscape design and be clearly illustrated on the plan drawings.

The Panel was not convinced that the orientation of houses, with their varied roof pitches, would work well for passive solar access, and this will need to be demonstrated. As this site is steeply sloping and is already waterlogged in places, a sustainable drainage scheme will be important in helping to resolve existing problems and avoid future ones. The Panel encouraged the team to achieve CSH Level 4, and to include more local references in the materials used.

The proposed architectural treatment shows a large number of different features, forms and materials, and is not a convincing or coherent demonstration of high quality. We were told that the design concept was for a contemporary interpretation of the classic mid Wales house, but this was not apparent in the illustrations, which were unresolved and weak. We recommended that the team concentrate on fully resolving the site plan for the moment, and identify architectural exemplars which could be used as precedents for developing the house designs at a later stage.

The Panel questioned whether the scheme was viable and did not receive a firm answer. We suggested that a simpler solution would help address many of the concerns expressed and that more compact sub areas, for example , might help provide a more efficient layout that could accommodate a slight increase in number of units, although we would not advocate a return to the previous levels of density.

**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

Walker Sheppard Homes

Pensaer/Architect:

Hughes Architects [Jen Smith,  
Richard Lewis]

Consultants:

n/a

Awdurdod Cynllunio/  
Planning Authority

Powys CC [Andrew Paddison,  
John Pearson]

Y Panel Adlygu Dylunio:

Design review panel:

Alan Francis [Chair]

Cindy Harris [Officer]

Ed Colgan

Toby Adam

Jonathan Hines

Roger Ayton

Lead Panellist:

Ed Colgan

Sylwedyddion/Observers: