

Statws/Status:
Cyfrinachol / Confidential



Adroddiad Adolygu Dylunio: Design Review Report:	21 November 2007
Dyddiad Cyfarfod / Meeting Date:	14 November 2007
Lleoliad/Location:	West Parade, Rhyl
Disgrifiad o'r Cynllun Scheme Description:	Residential
Developer/Datblygwr:	LW Properties [Lee Webster, Louise Webster]
Pensaer/Architect:	Richard Broun Associates [Steve Furnell]
Ymgynghorwyr Cynllunio: Planning Consultants:	CDN Planning [Rhys Davies]
Awdurdod Cynllunio: Planning Authority:	Denbighshire CC [Sarah Stubbs]
Statws Cynllunio: Planning Status:	Pre-application
Y Panel Adolygu Dylunio/ Design Review Panel:	
Wendy Richards (cadeirydd/chair) Cindy Harris (swyddog/officer) Charlie Deng (swyddog/officer) Ashley Bateson	Howard Wainwright Roger Ayton Kieren Morgan Mark Hallett
Lead Panellist:	Roger Ayton

Cyflwyniad/Presentation

The site is part of Rhyl's regeneration area and is identified in the West Rhyl Regeneration Strategy for residential redevelopment with a stated minimum density of 90 du/ha. It is seen as a gateway site, reinforced by the Ocean Plaza development which will provide a strong presence on the western entrance to the town.

67 apartments are provided, ranging in size from 1-bed to 3-bed, in 6-7 storey blocks, with set back penthouse accommodation forming an eighth storey. Parking is provided at lower ground floor and externally to the rear, totalling 77 spaces and including 7 cycle spaces. The existing vehicular access from Sandringham Avenue will be retained and improved.

The proposed building takes advantage of the double aspect of the site, with sea views to the north and distant hill views to the south. The massing responds to the height of adjacent buildings by stepping back the upper floor on the front elevation, and stepping down the height and roof line at the rear to respect the 2/3 storey residential properties of Sandringham Avenue. The corner of West Parade and Sandringham Avenue is marked by a corner tower feature. The ground floor is elevated by approx 1.2 metres above grade to minimise risk of flooding and allows for undercroft parking. Robust materials will be necessary in this maritime environment.

The Local Authority has been involved in pre-application discussions with the developer. They generally support the proposal and endorse the contemporary approach.

Ymateb y Panel/Panel's Response

The presenting team stated that the design intention was to achieve a bold statement given the corner site and the scale of future development. The Panel was not convinced by this justification, given the domestic context to the rear and thought that a more transitional scale and massing would be more appropriate. The design should relate better to the townscape and be informed by it, and the Ocean Plaza development should not be the only reference.

The Panel noted that the building line had been brought forward, serving to emphasise the scale from street level, although we were informed that there was still a 1.5m setback from the back-of-pavement on West Parade. While recognising the setback of the upper floors to reduce the apparent mass on the front elevation, the Panel nevertheless considered that the apparent height of the proposed building was considerably higher than the eaves height of the adjacent Palace Hotel. We accepted that, without the tower, it was a similar height to the proposed Ocean Plaza development.

The Panel considered that the proposed street frontage would not contribute to a vibrant public realm, and pedestrians would be faced with a long line of ventilation grills surmounted by a relatively tall and imposing mass. The team responded with the observation that the new Drift Park development nearby provided an improved area of public realm.

We noted that the proposed density of 240 du/ha was much higher than the minimum required by the Local Authority and thought that this was leading to an overdevelopment of the site. We were informed that the minimum requirement applied to this site and the adjacent Palace Hotel, where the density was slightly lower. The higher density compensated for this but was also determined by commercial viability.

The Panel nevertheless thought that the current proposal was unsympathetic to the site and context. We did not object to a contemporary solution, but thought that more could be done to learn from the context, such as breaking up the facade into more vertical elements with greater articulation, and enlivening the street frontage with front doors. More entrances would allow for reduced width corridors and a better internal layout, which we thought would also add value.

Similarly, small areas of private or semi-private outdoor space and/or play areas to the front and rear would help to increase social cohesion and provide a sense of ownership and an element of natural surveillance. We suggested that a podium extending over part of the rear car park would offer amenity space and an improved aspect for the south facing units. The Panel thought that improvements to the public realm and residential amenity, as well as a more humanised and sensitive response to the streetscape, were essential in justifying the relatively high density.

The Panel considered that the parking numbers could be reduced even further, given the proximity of the town centre and public transport routes, and more cycle spaces provided. Failing that, the visual impact of the large rear parking area should be mitigated, either by a podium as suggested above, or by re-arranging the internal layout. We noted that facilities were provided for recycling waste.

Despite a requirement to achieve EcoHomes Excellent, the Panel was surprised to learn that no assessment had been done, especially given that a planning application was imminent. We noted that the deep plan of the blocks and single aspect layout of the units were not conducive to good daylight levels, and the roof overhang on the northern elevation would serve to worsen daylight access. The Panel urged the development team and the Local Authority to consider a district heating scheme which would link this with future development sites, and to avoid individual electric heating. Not only would this latter be a high carbon solution but would presumably involve multiple flues on the facade. The Panel queried the robustness and maintenance requirements of white render in this environment.

The Panel was not convinced that the physical process and its consequences were being fully integrated with the aspiration for sustained economic change. The future of West Parade is a complex and significant challenge and the commercial risks involved need to be managed actively by the Local Authority whose contribution is essential for a successful long term regeneration. The Panel was concerned that the site development needs to deliver more than simply the provision of new accommodation. We considered that the quality and coherence of the physical development needs to be integral to the delivery of the wider improvement programme over the long term.

Crynodeb/Summary

The Panel welcomed the opportunity to review this scheme which would undoubtedly be significant in the wider regeneration of Western Rhyd. However, we consider this proposal to be an unacceptable response to the site and the context and see it as a missed opportunity to develop a building of real quality in this location. In summary:

- We have major concerns relating to the proposed scale and massing, and the relationship to the overall site context. We advise the team to return to the design statement approach as contained in TAN 12.
- We have no objection to a contemporary design solution but it would need to be done more convincingly and with a greater reference to the context.
- We think that the lack of active frontages will be detrimental to the creation of a vibrant public realm, and the lack of outdoor amenity space is a lost opportunity to add value and promote social cohesion.
- The proposed density requires the development to give something back to the area, in terms of design quality, sensitivity, and improved public realm.
- We applaud the intention to achieve EcoHomes Excellent but we are concerned that the necessary measures which should have informed the design development, have not so far been carried out.

Diwedd/End

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