

# Addroddiad Adolygu Dylunio Design Review Report

## Review Status: **Confidential**

Meeting date:	21st July 2010
Issue Date:	3rd August 2010
Scheme Location:	Sennybridge
Scheme Description:	Community gym
Planning Status:	Pre-application

## Part1: Presentation

Glasu is a rural development initiative funded through the Rural Development Plan for Wales. Through its Low Carbon Futures programme it has funded the feasibility stage of this project, equivalent to partial RIBA stage A. The Feasibility report will be sent to potential funders, but no contractual arrangements are yet in place to take this further.

The proposal is for a new community gym and swimming pool in the grounds of a primary school which would share the facilities. The site is just outside the settlement boundary. Sketch designs show a deliberately non-orthogonal building with a gridshell roof over a triple height entrance space. Each elevation is designed to respond to its immediate context and views to the south east are exploited,

A detailed energy strategy proposes a biomass district heating system for the gym, school and potentially nearby housing and doctor's surgery. There is strong community support especially from users of the current [inadequate] facilities located in the school.

The Local Authority will need to have regard to the impact on residential amenity to the east, and how the building would interact with the school.

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

The Panel was very supportive of the commitment and high aspirations of the community sponsors and the design team, but we were concerned about the nature of the development process so far. We had insufficient information on which to make a proper assessment. However our main observations are set out below:

- While we understand the constraints of the limited appointment for the architects, the material presented lacked important information on site and context.
- Basic parameters for the project should now be set out in a rigorous brief and a realistic budget, supported by a business case analysis.
- The budget in turn will determine the form of the building and internal spaces, bearing in mind the stringent technical requirements for this type of building.
- We think that a high quality building is more likely to be achieved within a fixed budget, if the design is kept simple, functional and robust.
- Care should be taken to avoid an overbearing relationship with the dwellings to the east.
- The 'fabric first' approach to energy efficiency and low carbon development should be fully explored and made explicit in the design, prior to consideration of renewable technologies.
- It was not clear how the building will be used and managed, for example between school and community uses, and it would be sensible to plan a typical day-to-day and week-to-week operating regime to maximise efficiencies and avoid conflicts.
- It is important that the hopes and expectations of the client, school and community are managed in a realistic way, and that the high level of support is retained to facilitate delivery of the project.

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

The Panel welcomed the aspirations of the client and project team, but we had serious concerns about the rate at which the scheme was progressing and the degree of confidence being offered to the community regarding the deliverability of the project, before fundamental questions of use and budget have been decided. While we appreciate that exciting sketch designs are important for fundraising, it is equally important to be clear about the parameters – for example whether this is a £1m building or a £10m project, and who the owner and operator will be. Furthermore, the client should understand that the complexity of the current design will inevitably add costs and reduce flexibility.

For the project to progress any further, wishes and ambitions must be developed into decisions and facts. We would like to see a business case prepared, to set parameters for the project and to help with the development of a rigorous brief. Although this will require additional time and money now, we believe it is essential for the proper management of the project and would establish its credibility with potential funders. Ideally, this would then form the basis for a design which is no less ambitious in terms of its community value and importance but which is simpler, less complex and more easily executed. This should start with basic adjacency and use planning of rooms, so as to achieve the most flexible and efficient layout and avoid duplication. The function of the building means that it will be relatively high maintenance and high capital cost, and this needs to be factored into the Business Plan from the outset.

The brief for the building should state clearly the proposed use patterns of the different functions [gym, swimming pools], and the degree of interaction between school and community use in particular. The physical relationship of the building to the school, the surgery, and surrounding dwellings needs to be defined, and be seen to have influenced

the design. It was difficult for us to judge these relationships given the lack of topographical information or site sections.

We were not convinced by the design approach, which seemed to be courting an unconventional form without a clear rationale. The building footprint does not sit well within the rectangular site, and we think that the scale could be overbearing to the low level residential development to the east. Our main concern is with the finished quality of the form, details and materials of the building, and we fear that this quality could be put at risk by trying to realise a complex design on a limited budget.

The renewable energy strategy is admirably detailed, but the basic sustainability requirements of fabric efficiency should be clearly stated and be evident in the design. For example, the lack of a draught lobby would detract from the energy efficiency of the building, and the glazed south facing wall of the swimming pool would invite glare and overheating, with or without brises-soleil. Similarly, centralised and adjacent changing rooms would deliver a more efficient internal layout.

**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	Sennybridge Gym Users Group [Julian Jenkins]
Pensaer/Architect:	Mundo Design [John Pearson, Agnieszka Pearson]
Consultants:	Glasu [Sue Thompson, Grant Thomas]
AwdurdodCynllunio/ Planning Authority	Brecon Beacons NPA [Rhodri Davies]
Y Panel Adlygu Dylunio: Design review panel: Ewan Jones [Chair] Cindy Harris [Officer] Phil Roberts	Martin Knight Glen Dyke David Harvey
Lead Panellist:	Glen Dyke
Sylwedyddion/Observers:	Trevor Skempton [DCFWD Commissioner]

Chris Morgan [BBNPA]  
Cllr Katherine Silk [BBNPA]