

**Statws/Status:**  
**Cyfrinachol / Confidential**



**Adroddiad Adolygu Dylunio:**  
**Design Review Report:** 12 August 2005

**Dyddiad Cyfarfod / Cyflwyno'r Deunydd:**  
**Meeting Date / Material Submitted:** 3 August 2005

**Lleoliad/Location:** Sherman Theatre, Cardiff

**Disgrifiad o'r Cynllun**  
**Scheme Description:** Renovation and new build,  
Leisure and residential

**Cynllunio / Consultants:** Edmond Shipway [Ian Smith]

**Cleient/Asiant:** Sherman Theatre Ltd  
**Client/Agent:** [David Stacey]

**Pensaer/Architect:** Capita Percy Thomas  
[Jonathan Adams,  
Richard Davies]

**Awdurdod Cynllunio:** Cardiff CC  
**Planning Authority:**

**Statws Cynllunio:** Pre-planning  
**Planning Status:**

**Y Panel Adolygu Dylunio/Design Review Panel:**

John Punter (cadeirydd/chair) Ed Colgan  
Cindy Harris (swyddog/officer) Lyn Owen  
Howard Wainwright

**Lead Panellist:** Howard Wainwright

**Sylwedyddion/Observers:** Gerard Ryan [DCFW Commissioner]  
Peter Roberts [DCFW]

## Cyflwyniad/Presentation

This ambitious project arises from the urgent need of the Sherman Theatre to refurbish its premises. Built in the 1970s, it was intended to be a stop-gap provision, pending the construction of a National Theatre for Wales. Currently the theatre buildings are no longer fit for purpose, with leaking roofs, no disability access and poor service access, inadequate rehearsal space and poor staff working conditions.

The site is on the old Taff railway and is arguably neither part of the city centre nor the surrounding residential area. The proposal is to renovate and extend the facilities with a view to creating a landmark building. Arts Council and other funding is being sought, and it is intended raise the necessary 25% non-lottery funding by developing the air space to the south east of the site for residential use. The narrow service road to the rear will be widened by removing a strip of the existing building. At the front the building line will be brought forward to the back of pavement and the ticket desk and restaurant will be accessible from this level. Part of the building structure and the balcony will be removed from the reception space and replaced by columns. A new rehearsal space will be provided and a new youth theatre built out on to a flat roof area. Administration offices will be re-housed at second floor level. The new residential component begins at level 3 and continues up to level 8.

The designers wanted to achieve a unified external treatment irrespective of internal use, rather than the appearance of a theatre under a block of flats. The elevations presented suggest a metallic skin cladding, but this has not been finalised. A pebble dash finish with different coloured aggregates is also being considered.

Two preliminary meetings have been held with the local planning authority and the scheme has progressed to stage C. Some concern has been expressed over the possibly controversial nature of the proposals.

## Ymateb y Panel/Panel's Response

The Panel expressed concern at the sheer scale and bulk of the proposed building, the heaviness of which is accentuated by the unifying treatment. It appears to bear little relation to its context, and certainly overpowers the Victorian villas nearby. The residential development at the southern end serves to significantly increase the mass and make the building appear top heavy. The Panel suggested that an alternative approach would be to develop a taller, narrower residential component, making use of the facade on 360 degrees with a central stair/lift core, rather than dual aspect apartments around a central light well. The current proposal for 60 two bedroom apartments could be changed to 40 larger ones, which would require fewer parking spaces at a ratio of 1:1. **[Correction: proposal is for 41 two and three bed units].**

The architect replied that a different elevational treatment for the residential component would make it look dominant. The intention is that the theatre defines the identity of the building, growing up and enveloping other uses. He emphasised that historically the site belongs neither to its residential neighbours nor to the civic centre of Cardiff. This design approach allies it predominantly with the adjacent University buildings, while creating a distinctive, stand-alone structure. All the available space needs to be used to make the scheme as a whole viable.

Nevertheless, the Panel remained concerned at the major impact this proposal would have on local residents, given the doubling of the existing building height. Although most of the proposed new massing is on the south end of the site it would cause significant extra shading of houses and gardens in the afternoons and evenings. The Panel thought that the large cantilever created by the residential block would be disturbing and uncomfortable when viewed from street level.

The Panel applauded the internal organisation and layout of the many different functions and facilities. We recognised the difficulty of meeting such a complex set of requirements in very limited space and considered that this had been done with skill and ingenuity.

### **Crynodeb/Summary**

While the Panel support the refurbishment of the Sherman Theatre in principle, we feel strongly that the current proposals represent a gross overdevelopment of the site. The aggressive form and elevational treatment, as well as the increased bulk and massing, will dramatically increase the intrusion of the theatre into residential Cathays which has a coherent Victorian character and a pleasant domestic scale. The proposed development appears to pay this little regard. There is also the matter that the western side of the railway is a Conservation Area and demands a sensitive response. The Panel recommend:

- The residential component should be made as unobtrusive and light as possible, with a minimal footprint
- A series of form studies should be undertaken before planning the elevations.

However, the Panel seriously doubt the feasibility of funding the improvements of the theatre through such a residential development as the number of units required will set such a bad precedent for future development in the locality. Perhaps the Sherman needs to seek a new and better located home in the city.

### **Diwedd/End**

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