

Statws/Status:
Cyfrinachol / Confidential

DESIGN
COMMISSION
FOR WALES
COMISIWN
DYLUNIO
CYMRU

Adroddiad Adolygu Dylunio: Design Review Report:	29 July 2008
Dyddiad Cyfarfod / Meeting Date:	16 July 2008
Lleoliad/Location:	Skinner Street, Caernarfon
Disgrifiad o'r Cynllun Scheme Description:	Residential
Cleient/Asiant: Client/Agent:	Mr N Pritchard
Developer/Datblygwr:	n/a
Pensaer/Architect:	Dobson Owen [Gareth Dobson]
Ymgynghorwyr Cynllunio: Planning Consultants:	CDN Planning [Rhys Davies]
Awdurdod Cynllunio: Planning Authority:	Gwynedd CC
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)	Jonathan Adams Ed Colgan Ashley Bateson Michael Griffiths Elfed Roberts
Lead Panellist:	Elfed Roberts

Cyflwyniad/Presentation

The site lies within a conservation area and is located close to the World Heritage Site of Caernarfon Castle and the town walls. The design team was appointed to examine the potential for development of the site. The architect has developed a flexible residential scheme for one or two bed apartments up to a maximum of 17 in number, depending on market conditions, with the possibility of commercial or retail space on the ground floor or the option of live/work units.

The design reflects the narrow frontages and vertical emphasis of neighbouring properties, and proposes a block of 3-4 storeys fronting the narrow and steeply sloping street.

Pre-application discussions have been held with Gwynedd County Council and it was agreed to consult DCFW as early as possible in the process.

Ymateb y Panel/Panel's Response

The Panel felt strongly that any development on this sensitive site would need a comprehensive conservation area character analysis which should then inform the architectural response. The architect stated that he had considered the proposed scale and massing and thought it was appropriate, but the evidence to support this had not been provided. The Panel was not convinced that four storeys was an appropriate scale in this location. We re-stated our view that the case for any proposal on this site should be demonstrated and fully justified.

It was agreed that some element of mixed use would be desirable. The Panel considered that ground floor non-residential uses would not only improve the architectural potential of the scheme but also avoid the poor security and quality of life that residents on the ground floor would experience at this location. The feasibility of different uses would need to be determined but could include office accommodation or live/work units. We advised the team to work with the regeneration team in the Local Authority to develop the important link between Y Maes and Victoria Dock.

The Panel thought that the architectural resolution should be simple and well detailed, with a subtle acknowledgment of the local historic features. We understood that this was not a high market value scheme, and we were concerned that it might not therefore receive the necessary finesse. The glass facade on the rear deck access was intended to provide weather protection and an amenity space, but we thought that it was likely to be relatively expensive in relation to its value and may cause acoustic problems.

We were told that all service protrusions would be located to the rear and while we appreciated the intention to keep the frontage clean and clear, we thought that this would compromise the amenity value of the glazed deck. To clarify these issues we urged that the services strategy be resolved as soon as possible, and prior to a planning application, and that soil pipes and other services be located internally where possible.

In discussions following the review, the Panel thought that access via front doors from the street may be more appropriate than rear access and the available budget better spent on improving the front elevation, including a greater variety of texture and fenestration in what is currently a rather bland facade. For example, a variation in floor levels leading to a more stepped roofline would provide some modulation and better reflect the finer texture and grain of Caernarfon town centre.

The Panel noted that if this were to be social housing, the scheme would need to achieve Code for Sustainable Homes [CSH] level 3. We would prefer to see Code Level 4 specified, and suggested that particular attention was given to improving daylight levels internally. We supported the decision to avoid car parking on site, due to its central location, but urged that cycle parking and storage be included. We thought the creation of a service bay in this narrow street was unnecessary. Areas for refuse/recycling and heating plant should be identified as soon as possible.

Crynodeb/Summary

The Panel appreciated the opportunity to comment on the development of this sensitive site, but found it difficult to do so given the inadequate information provided. In summary:

- A contextual analysis is necessary to inform the design development of form and elevations from the beginning, and to justify the proposed scale and massing.
- A simple 3D model would be extremely useful in assessing the impact of this development in its context.
- We support the proposed use and the intention to incorporate an element of mixed use.
- The architectural treatment should be kept simple, subtle and well detailed.
- We commend the intention to reinforce the building line and suggest that front doors be included in the street to provide an active frontage.
- We are not convinced by the claimed advantages of the glazed rear deck access.
- We urge the team to achieve CSH Level 4 and to incorporate the necessary sustainability measures in the design from this early stage.

- The servicing strategy should be determined prior to the planning application. We are not convinced of the need for a servicing bay in the street.
- We support the absence of car parking in this scheme to encourage more sustainable forms of transport.
- We would welcome an opportunity to consider this proposal again when a contextual analysis has been prepared, and the design amended to reflect this and the other matters raised in this report.

Diwedd/End

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