

Comisiwn Dylunio Cymru	Design Commission for Wales
Design Review Report:	9 June 2004
Meeting Date / Material Submitted:	3 June 2004
Location:	Sully Hospital
Architects / Design Team:	Atkins, Walters, Webster
Client:	Galliard Developments
Scheme Description:	Conversion to residential
Consultants:	Frank Woods, Conservation architect Mitchell Harris, Landscape architect WSP, Transportation consultant RVW, Engineer PSP, Project manager
Planning Status:	Full application submitted
Planning Authority:	Vale of Glamorgan
Case Officer:	Yvonne Prichard
Panel Members:	Richard Parnaby, Ed Colgan, Nigel Hanson, Ben Sibert, Geraint John, Paul Vanner, Rob Firth, Cindy Harris
Observing:	Steve Trigg, Architectural Liaison Officer, SW Police
Record of conflict of interest:	Carole-Anne Davies stepped out Avoiding potential conflict of interest with third parties

Presentation

Frank Woods, a specialist in modern movement conservation, began by describing the “phenomenally good” architecture of this building. He speculated that it would be the site of future architectural pilgrimages, and would stand as Wales’s best building of the 1930’s. With its clever use of symmetry and stunning setting, it was a jewel in a landscape, and aroused strong feelings of affection and loyalty in local people. These remain even though it was closed as a hospital ten years ago and has stood empty ever since.

In this project it is fortunate that there is a client who cares about modern movement buildings, and has had previous experience of working with them, eg the Hoover building and County Hall in London. The whole team is committed to respecting conservation parameters, while giving the building a new life through

sensitive development. They have been supported by the Vale of Glamorgan in avoiding pastiche and respecting the existing hierarchy of space.

The architects have developed a design manual as a working document to be used and referred to throughout the project. It shows details which should be retained and not modified, as well as how typical alterations should be carried out. The manual is an instructive guide for every member of the team and no departure from it will be allowed without referring back to the architects.

Ashley Davies for Atkins Walter Webster outlined the proposed treatment of the three separate blocks linked by a central corridor. The four storey nurses block is to be extended on both sides, retaining the original symmetry. Two glass stair/lift towers will be erected on either side of the main entrance, but physically separate from and linked by bridges to the main building. The central low-level administration block is to be extended to the east, to replace the incinerator building and form an additional internal courtyard, and added to on the south west, again to reinforce symmetry. Roof terraces and a series of courtyards will enhance the amenity of this section of the development. The ward block facing the Bristol Channel will have an extra storey added, with fully glazed elevations set well back from the original façade and expressed as a contemporary addition.

Key spaces such as the central spine corridor, the library, dining room, and larger wards will be retained and incorporated into the new units. The new blocks will be kept visually separate from, but will echo the materials, fenestration and proportions of the original. The mortuary building will be converted into a small shop, and all other ancillary and out buildings will be demolished.

Nick Lloyd for the Local Planning Authority explained that the scheme to date was the product of intensive negotiation. Some issues remained to be resolved, such as car parking, repair technology, landscape setting and current energy standards. Cadw and the National Assembly for Wales have still to be consulted.

Panel's Response

In answer to questions from the Panel, we were told that this development would comprise 234 units and 500 car parking spaces. The site would be gated, with some agreed public access, eg for Barry cricket club. The coastal path to the south and south east is of course a public right of way, but it was questioned whether those future architectural pilgrims would be able to get close enough to appreciate the buildings.

This scheme does not include any affordable housing which, with the high service charge involved, would not work commercially. The planning authority agreed to this in recognition of the high cost of dealing with the incinerator. Galliard will make a financial contribution to affordable housing elsewhere, and to enhance public transport to serve this site. Other Section 106 provisions include improvements to the main road and new footways. The developers thought that increased traffic to and from the site would not exceed that associated with the hospital use; a traffic impact assessment has been carried out by the Local Authority and will report soon.

Concern was expressed at some aspects of the design of the additions, such as the use of timber to echo the original brickwork around some windows, and the

treatment of the additional storey on the ward block, which was thought to be out of proportion when viewed from the land side (it was suggested that a contrasting material or surface colour could help create a more satisfactory composition). The design team agreed to reconsider these matters.

Some Panel members thought that the new staircase towers could be more solid with punched window openings, and in any event should be made weatherproof. It was suggested that covered walkways could link the buildings with the car parks, although this would not help to make the latter as inconspicuous as possible. It was agreed that further work is needed on the location and arrangement of the car parks to lessen their considerable impact on the landscape.

It was noted that all the submitted drawings were a small scale so it was difficult to comment on the fine detail that will be so critical in ensuring the quality of this project. It will be a particular challenge to deliver current best practice standards of thermal performance while preserving the visual character of the original glazing and internal details. The design team demonstrated that they were fully aware of these matters and were making determined efforts to find appropriate solutions.

The police representative offered help with the security aspect and suggested this could be a 'Secure by Design' scheme. There will be a 24 hour concierge.

Summary

The Panel were delighted to be presented with this proposed conversion, dealt with in a sensitive way and ensuring a new life for these very important buildings. They complimented the team on their design approach, which is very difficult to fault. In particular the submission of a design manual with the planning application was applauded.

The impact of car parking remained a concern, as did the question of public access.

The Panel looked forward to seeing these issues resolved and this quality development enhancing the architectural reputation of the area and Wales as a whole.

End

