

Addroddiad Adolygu Dylunio Design Review Report

Review Status: Confidential

Meeting date:	3rd November 2010
Issue Date:	11th November 2010
Scheme Location:	Llantrisant Talbot Green
Scheme Description:	Mixed use
Planning Status:	Pre-application

Part1: Presentation

This proposal was formerly seen at Design Review in June 2010 although no formal report was issued. The site is allocated as a Strategic Site for a new town centre in the deposit LDP to serve the expanding residential settlements surrounding Llantrisant.

The masterplan shows two large format stores located on the eastern boundary, a new road link along the southern boundary, and a rise in scale from west to east. A transport hub will be located on Cowbridge Road to the west, which will be re-formed as a traditional high street. A network of pedestrianised shopping streets terminate in the town square, and the entertainment quarter links the square with Cowbridge Road. A smaller south facing square is surrounded by residential units. There are two multi storey car parks in the centre of the site, and a large at-grade car park serving the supermarket to the north east. The civic functions proposed for the north west corner are not yet fully defined.

The Local Authority supports the proposed mix of uses, although they have concerns about the two significant breaks on the north and south frontages. The access from the A 473 is still to be agreed with the highways department. Ideally the Local Authority would like to see at-grade crossings over the road and disused railway and they agree that the protected railway corridor is compromising the scheme. The impact on the existing school needs to be explored. Further concerns relate to the viability of new high street retail uses in this economic climate, and the danger of the centre of the site remaining undeveloped for some time.

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

The Panel continues to have serious concerns about the allocation of the site in principle, but we accept that this is now set in policy and is not relevant to this discussion. We think that the proposal as presented requires major revisions. In summary:

- We understand the constraint of the protected railway route, but we would prefer to see a temporary at-grade crossing over railway and road.
- If a bridge is deemed necessary, this should be in the form of a single or refurbished high level crossing, possibly terminating at first floor level in the shopping centre.
- There should be a positive engagement with the school. Their views particularly on access arrangements should be allowed to guide this aspect of the design development.
- The southern 'boulevard' needs to become a more civilised, safe and sociable environment. We welcome the re-routing of this road through the residential area to the south west, and would like to see residential uses continue further along its length.
- We think the 'market square' to the north has little useful function and it would be better to draw people into the centre of the site by re-aligning the north-south route to connect directly with the crossing point.
- The large gaps in the 'dead' north and south frontages need to be addressed and repaired. The entrance from the A473 should be separated from service access.
- More evening and 24 hour uses should be introduced throughout the development to create a genuinely vibrant urban space.
- Integrating the proposed supermarket into the pedestrian routes and encouraging pedestrian access to it, would assist in bringing greater activity to the town centre.
- We share the concern that this site may be left only partially developed for the foreseeable future and we urged the Local Authority to satisfy themselves about the potential for market take-up, if necessary by seeking further independent advice.
- The nature of the commitment to [and exclusions from] the proposed sustainability standards should be explicit in the documentation. The site-wide energy system should be CHP ideally with a low carbon fuel, and sufficient space should be allocated for centralised plant at an early stage in the design process.

Part 2: Discussion and Panel Response in Full

The Panel noted that there had been a challenging discussion at the previous review, which was not helped by the presentation of a significant amount of new material on the day. We were not immediately convinced by the allocation of this isolated site as a new town centre, which in our view is in contrast to current good practice.

The Panel acknowledged the constraint of the railway corridor which is protected in the LDP, and thought that an at-grade crossing would be preferable to the unsatisfactory combination of a bridge across the railway and an at-grade road crossing. We were informed that the possibility of a temporary at-grade crossing of the railway line was under discussion, and we noted that bonds could be put in place for a future bridge, should the railway ever be reinstated.

An alternative solution of a single bridge across railway and road, terminating at the first floor of the retail units with an appropriate attractor, may be worth consideration. The

design team pointed out that there were very few places where a new bridge could be accommodated, because of the requirement for ramped access, and even these were uncomfortably close to existing back gardens. We would prefer to see just one well designed new bridge, or an upgrade of the existing bridge to make it a striking feature.

It will be important to initiate a positive engagement with the school, with the support of the Local Authority. The Panel wondered whether there might be a more direct link through the scheme from the northwest market square to the school. We accepted that the proposed indirect link would be widely used, but felt that an alternative link via the southern boulevard might help enliven what would otherwise be a 'dead' and insecure street. The boulevard is already compromised by the secure boundary required by the school and the long 'dead' frontages of the car park, service yard, and back of large department store. We would like to see this route lined with more active and sociable uses, such as residential. Mature planting could be used, in conjunction with some natural surveillance, to civilise the route and the crossing, if necessary by reducing the width of the carriageway.

The size of the north facing 'market square' has been reduced, as we suggested at the previous review, and the south and west facing open spaces have been given more prominence. However, there is still a set-back on the north west corner and we thought that this space should have a clearly defined function, so that it can be sized appropriately. Although it is seen as a 'gateway', the effect at the moment is still to dilute the central square. The Panel suggested that the north/south route through the site could be re-aligned to meet the pedestrian crossing point and draw people into the site, rather than providing an ill-defined gathering space.

The two major 'wounds' in the site frontages to north and south significantly weaken the scheme and should be addressed at an early stage. The Panel noted that the main vehicular entrance to the site from the north appeared to coincide with access to the service yard. Although we were informed that there would be no conflict with service vehicles, we thought that this would not be an attractive introduction to the centre, and the junction layout should be reconsidered.

Although the plan shows some indicative development to the west across Cowbridge Road which is outside the scope of this proposal, it is important that any new development on the east side of Cowbridge Road lays the groundwork for a successful two-sided shopping street, with shared surface treatment of the road.

In our view, the two major facades to the east are too important to be left to the reserved matters stage, and a clear approach to their resolution [if not their detail] should accompany the outline application.

The Panel welcomed the presentation of plans showing the scheme in its wider strategic context, but were disappointed to see that no connection was shown across the Clun corridor to the proposed new housing development at Cefn yr Hendy. We were informed that the team was working on this, but there were significant ecological constraints to be accommodated. The Panel noted that the deposit LDP states that resolution of this connection is a pre-condition of development on the study site itself.

The Panel understood the commercial pressures for zonal development, but emphasised the importance of introducing more residential and leisure uses into the centre of the scheme. This would save it from becoming another out-of-town retail park, and enable it to function well as a safe and social urban space. We were concerned that pedestrian routes through the site will not be actively supervised or used outside shopping hours, and so will be seen as unwelcoming and consequently avoided. Evening uses should be complemented with appropriate surveillance and security, and we regretted the dismissal of flats over shops as one possible way of achieving this. If the supermarket were to have 24 hour opening this would also help, especially if it were to be re-positioned so that it had an active frontage on an inner street and thus made a positive contribution to the pedestrian routes.

The Panel questioned the amount of new retail provided but, in terms of viability, the design team stated that the letting agents they had consulted were confident that there would be a demand for retail space. The Local Authority confirmed that there was a leakage of spend from this area, and that the proposed quantum of retail space is set out in their policy documents.

The masterplan documentation states there is an aim to achieve BREEAM Excellent and CSH Level 4. We welcomed the confirmation that this was in fact a firm commitment, apart from the retail units which will be delivered as 'shell and core'. A site wide energy strategy is being formulated with centralised plant, although this is not yet shown on the plans.

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	Valad Developments [Llantrisant] Ltd [David Wells] WAG [Mike Cuddy]
Pensaer/Architect:	Holder Mathias Architects [Peter Mathias, Philippe Moseley]
Consultants:	n/a
Awdurdod Cynllunio/ Planning Authority	Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC [Jim Bailey, Simon Gale, Robert Chiat]
Y Panel Adlygu Dylunio:	

Design Review Panel:
Alan Francis [Chair]
Cindy Harris [Officer]
Simon Carne

Roger Ayton
Toby Adam
Martin Knight
Richard Keogh

Lead Panellist:

Toby Adam

Sylwedyddion/Observers:

Julia Podedworny
[student, Cardiff University]