

Comisiwn Dylunio Cymru	Design Commission for Wales
Design Review Report:	14 September 2004
Meeting Date / Material Submitted:	9 September 2004
Location:	Carmarthen
Scheme Description:	Food retail store
Client:	Tescos [Steve Douglas, Neil Sampson]
Architect:	Gordon White & Hood [Damian Withers]
Public/Other Body:	Carmarthenshire County Council
Planning Status:	Pre-planning
Panel Members:	Rob Firth, Cindy Harris

The developers undertook to hold further consultation with DCFW at their last meeting with the local planning authority. The latter are understandably unwilling to rubber stamp a standard design and require something distinctive and locally referenced on such a prominent site.

DCFW's main concerns from our last appraisal concern the south elevation, the roofscape, and the landscape/screening. The glazing and canopy which dominates the eastern elevation has been wrapped around the south east corner to break up the blank façade facing south and the main approaches into Carmarthen by road, and this helps to animate the building on this key corner. Alternative treatments for the south (and north) façade were discussed, such as the use of tile cladding with high level, staggered (ziggurat-style) glazing and/or a mix of Ranilla cladding and a rainscreen system. The Ranilla cladding panels are now proposed to be light brown rather than white, which should reduce the impact of the building.

We welcome the introduction of clerestorey roof lights, intended to reflect the terraces in the town, and a more varied roofscape. The increased daylighting will lead to a reduction in the use of artificial lighting, and will help to lower overall energy use to one third of that used by traditional stores.

The Panel appreciates the effort made to landscape the restricted areas around the perimeter of the site and screen the building as much as possible; we would encourage the retention and reuse of mature trees wherever possible. We urge that any high level signage be confined if possible to the eastern elevation above the main entrance.

We emphasise the importance of strong legible pedestrian routes linking the town with the store across the car park, and various possibilities were discussed. It seems likely that the main pedestrian 'island' running east/west across the car park will be roofed and become a major route, and the existing path running along the northern boundary may be upgraded.

Light pollution from car park lighting will be minimised with capped fittings. Some trees will be planted in the car park but low-level shrubs will be avoided.

The production of photo-montages to illustrate views of the building from the east and south in particular, would be welcome.

The Design Commission for Wales is very aware of the problems of fitting large commercial boxes on the outskirts of towns and cities across Wales. This proposal, like many others, is about trying to reduce the visual impact of a large rectangular structure by screening, material choice, colour and distinctive features which break up the mass of the building, and manipulation of the façade to animate or provide transparency into the building. All these aspects need to be addressed to ensure the best contextual relationship is achieved.

End