

Addroddiad Adolygu Dylunio Design Review Report

Review Status: **Confidential**

Meeting date:	2nd March 2011
Issue Date:	22nd March 2011
Scheme Location:	Tesco, Machynlleth
Scheme Description:	Retail
Planning Status:	Pre-application (previous application withdrawn)

Part1: Presentation

This proposal was seen previously at Design Review in April 2010. In response to our comments from that review, the designer has changed the position of the building on the site. Although it remains set back at a higher level, the entrance and signage are now visible from the road. A new residential use has been introduced on the street frontage and the main access has been moved to the west to improve visibility from the south. There will be a new shared surface crossing at the war memorial to the south, to facilitate pedestrian access.

The applicants claim that the size of the store has been reduced by 25%, from 20,000 ft² to 15,000 ft² of net retail space, and parking numbers have been correspondingly reduced, from 162 spaces to 139. A layby for the bus stop is provided on the route into the site, and service traffic is diverted away from the public car park. A separate service access from the rear of the site has been considered but proved unfeasible. A public footpath runs along the eastern boundary and is screened from the service yard by a high fence.

The building uses a non-standard design to respond to local details, such as vertical fenestration, white render and reused stone from the existing buildings on site. Low impact materials include larch cladding and a structural timber frame. All signage is in the elevation and there are no sky signs proposed.

The local authority stated that they are lacking certain essential information, such as a retail impact assessment. They received the traffic impact assessment and details of the revised layout just a few days ago, and it is therefore difficult for them to comment in any detail. Vehicle access remains a key consideration however, along with pedestrian links to the town centre, public realm, landscape and sustainability. The bus stop may be better located on the exit rather than the entrance road, and the team awaits comment from the trunk

road agency. While acknowledging that the street scene is improved and the choice of materials is more relevant, local authority representatives noted possible problems of noise pollution for neighbouring residents.

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

The Panel was pleased to have the opportunity to comment on this revised proposal. While acknowledging that some improvements have been made, we think there are major issues still to be resolved. In summary:

- The issues of scale and proportionality of the retail space for a town like Machynlleth remain unresolved and these aspects of the proposal remain unjustified.
- We accept that some attempt has been made to reduce the amount of retail space, particularly with regard to comparison goods, and this will reduce some of the adverse impact on the town. However, we remain concerned that the size of the supermarket will have a major deleterious impact on the town centre shops.
- We do not consider that the changes made to the design of the front facade of the scheme improve its fit into the townscape. We think that a high quality, modern design might be more appropriate and provide a better entrance (and perhaps more shelter) for the public.
- We welcome the inclusion of new residential units on the street, although we question whether sufficient information is provided for detailed consent within a conservation area.
- We think much more needs to be done to 'preserve or enhance' the conservation area and to reduce the impact of the wide gap that will be carved into the townscape. Further adjustments should be made to enclose the street and to 'turn the corner' into the site with buildings.
- The access from the A487 requires a much more sensitive treatment overall, and a stronger enclosure by buildings on both sides, possibly using the existing buildings (rebuilt if necessary). Moving the bus layby further back into the site would help this.
- The pedestrian access to this site is still problematic, and only marginally helped by improvements to road crossings either side of the war memorial.
- The contribution from this scheme to the public realm is minimal, and we think much more could be done to improve the pedestrian environment, the street frontage on Heol y Doll and to repair the conservation area. The proposed footpath on the east side of the scheme seems particularly unsafe and ill-considered.
- We urge the developer to commit to achieving BREEAM Excellent, and to explore ways of reducing energy use on site over the lifetime of the buildings.

Part 2: Discussion and Panel Response in Full

The Panel recognised that positive progress had been made with regard to layout and orientation. However, we still have concerns about the appropriateness of the proposed scale of the scheme in relation to the town and the conservation area. There is no conservation area analysis in the Design & Access statement, and it is impossible to assess the effect on existing retail outlets without a retail impact assessment. The team

pointed out that Planning Policy Wales (PPW) encourages development within the town centre or edge-of-town locations, and that they have carried out a similar development in Scotland and have consent for one in Churchdown, Gloucester. In our view the question of proportionality and the justification for a development of this size, remains to be resolved.

There was some confusion over the exact size of the revised store, and the team stated that the gross internal area was now 2,210m², as opposed to the original proposal for 2,700m². In the absence of any floor plans, the Panel judged that there was no reduction in the non trading area, and the team stated that staff facilities would remain roughly the same.

The reduction in size needs to be justified as appropriate for the intention to retain spending within the town, while not impacting adversely on existing provision. The team stated that the reduced floor area reflects a reduction in comparison goods; there will be no pharmacy, and only minimal lines of CDs, books and clothing. 85-90% of the floor area will relate to food sales. The Local Authority questioned the assumptions made about the relevant catchment area which extends as far north as Barmouth.

The southern part of the site, which includes the four new residential units, is within the conservation area. It was claimed that these 'cottage style' houses will blend in to the street scene and enhance the conservation area. In the new store, the reuse of stone from existing buildings, together with other traditional elevational details such as vertical fenestration in the store frontage, was intended to constitute an adequate response to the conservation area. The Panel was not convinced by this argument and stated that the response should be apparent in the quality of design, rather than reusing specific materials and details. Given the store building's recessive relationship with the street, it could equally well be a contemporary design, but would have to be of exceptional quality to justify the claim of enhancing the conservation area.

While the Panel welcomed improvements to the public realm and access around the war memorial, this is a limited and minimal measure to ensure pedestrian accessibility to the site. This scheme should deliver more public realm benefits to the town, in particular around the access off the A487.

The increase in vehicle movement as a result of this scheme has been estimated at an additional 7-9 delivery vehicles a day. The access and service yard has been sized to accommodate the largest vehicles in the Tesco fleet, but smaller ones will also be used. Peak use of 180 cars per hour has been estimated, but the store will operate in daytime hours only.

The entrance layout is clearly driven by the needs of turning large vehicles, including delivery lorries and the bus which now stops within the site. Given this constraint, a shared space approach on its own is unlikely to be successful. The current proposal for changing surface materials will not be sufficient to achieve a good design response, or one which balances the needs of all the various users. The landscape design of the entrance needs to be considered as an integral part of the design, with attention to the details of the adjacent boundaries, trees and appropriate planting.

The Panel questioned whether the team had considered an entrance option which does not have the splitter island. This would reduce the number of signal heads, and create an

opportunity for an 'all red phase' for pedestrians to cross without the need to wait on an island. The views do not show any pedestrian guard rails on the island, and we suspect that these may be required, creating significant visual clutter. The entrance to the housing parking area resembles a service yard entrance, with the gap widened by two footpaths.

The Panel would expect the developers to commit to achieving a BREEAM Excellent rating for sustainability. We welcomed the provision of rooflights to increase daylight levels within the store and we were interested to learn that a new Tesco store in North Wales will include a CHP system. A similar scheme on this site linked with the residential units could provide real and long term benefits in terms of energy efficiency and carbon reductions.

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	Tesco (Mark Thorne)
Pensaer/Architect:	Inspire Design (Charles Champion, Andrew Cook)
Consultants:	DPP (Meryl Lewis, Gary Sutton) TPA (Julian Clarke)
Awdurdod Cynllunio/ Planning Authority	Powys CC (Andrew Paddison, John Pearson)
Y Panel Adlygu Dylunio: Design Review Panel: John Punter [Chair] Cindy Harris [Officer] Carole-Anne Davies	Roger Ayton Andrew Linfoot Jonathan Adams Richard Keogh Ewan Jones
Lead Panellist:	Jonathan Adams
Sylwedyddion/Observers:	Geraint Talfan Davies (Institute of Welsh Affairs)

Declaration of Interest: Andrew Linfoot is employed by Halcrow who carried out the transportation assessment on the previous scheme.