

Statws/Status:
Cyfrinachol / Confidential

DESIGN
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| Adroddiad Adolygu Dylunio: Design Review Report: | 2 March 2007 |
| Dyddiad Cyfarfod/ Cyflwyno'r Deunydd: Meeting Date / Material Submitted: | 14 February 2007 |
| Lleoliad/Location: | The Works, Llanelli |
| Disgrifiad o'r Cynllun Scheme Description: | Theatre and Arts Centre |
| Cleient/Asiant: Client/Agent: | Carmarthenshire CC [Phil Alder] |
| Developer/Datblygwr: | Mott MacDonald [Bob Piper] |
| Pensaer/Architect: | Lawray Architects [Martin Fox] ABK Architects [Paul Koralek] |
| Awdurdod Cynllunio: Planning Authority: | Carmarthenshire CC |
| Statws Cynllunio: Planning Status: | Pre-application |
| Y Panel Adolygu Dylunio/ Design Review Panel: | |
| Alan Francis (cadeirydd/chair) Cindy Harris (swyddog/officer) Charlie Deng (swyddog/officer) Ann-Marie Smale | Richard Parnaby Ewan Jones Ashley Bateson Jonathan Hines |

Lead Panellist:

Ann-Marie Smale

Sylwedyddion/Observers:

Carole-Anne Davies, DCFW

Cyflwyniad/Presentation

The presented scheme has grown out of the Council's requirement for a purpose-built theatre. A scoping study suggested that this should be a more ambitious project for a cultural centre, which would be part of a future cultural village. Community consultation suggested that an iconic building would be welcomed. It is hoped that 75% of the £25 million required will come through the BLF [Big Lottery Fund] Living Landmarks scheme. To meet the time frame of the funding stream, this project should reach RIBA stage D by the end of May 2007.

The proposed development is located to the north of the site, with an earth mound to its north and a lake beyond. A walkway and footbridge linking the town centre to the Millennium coastal park runs along the northern side of the site. The site is isolated by the railway line to the south and the main road to the east. The neighbouring houses to the east turn their back on the site. The design team described the site as bleak, exposed, and featureless and in need of buildings which create their own environment and make a strong and simple statement.

The architectural approach is to introduce a unifying roof covering a cluster of simple buildings, separate from but linked with one another. The scheme uses the existing Tinning House as one element of a U-shaped building form, surrounding a new public piazza which is stepped on one side for seating. The Tinning House will be refurbished to house a cafe and gallery. An arcade between the Tinning House and the piazza links the old and new structures together.

New bus stops and lay-bys are introduced opposite the piazza and formal tree planting is proposed on the east side, between the piazza and the main road. A new pedestrian route is created from the footbridge to North Dock and a further pedestrian route is introduced to the north of the Tinning House leading to the piazza from the rear car park. A 500 seat theatre is located to the west of the piazza, linking to a dance studio at high level and with the possibility of expansion into the foyer.

The design team stated that ABK is the concept architect and Lawray is the architect for the scheme. These two firms have been working together, responding to the client's requirement for an iconic building.

Ymateb y Panel/Panel's Response

The Panel considered that the scheme needed to address basic master planning issues such as connectivity. The railway station would be a key issue for this scheme and a driver for the new pedestrian route. The Panel supported the original design concept, but considered that this was not fully translated in the presented proposal.

The Panel doubted that the proposed access route from the car park would provide an appropriate sense of arrival, although the piazza itself would present a welcome environment for users arriving by bus. If the majority of users arrive by car, the piazza would be in danger of becoming a neglected and underused area. We thought it was important that the piazza should be the arrival point for all, irrespective of mode of transport. Given the potential to create a well used and animated public arena for a variety of events, the Panel urged that wind studies be carried out for the piazza, and the subsequent design response should ensure a sheltered environment.

The Panel expressed concern that the quality of design and materials might be compromised by a funding shortage. It was agreed that the business case needs to be very robust, and KPMG have been appointed as financial advisers. The framework partnership includes Carmarthenshire County Council, who have identified a large community demand for local bands and theatre activity and have already increased their maintenance budget in anticipation of this development. Backstage and training facilities would be provided in conjunction with the local college and the studio theatre would also be a teaching resource. A nearby site at Festival Fields has been designated for outside performances.

The Panel was informed that the new buildings would relate to the Tinning House in scale, but the material treatment was still to be decided. They would be developed as a cluster of objects under one roof, with a simple cubic form, coloured render and punched windows. The Panel would like to see the roof extended right over the Tinning House to provide a unified image for the whole scheme. Given the extra capital cost that would arise, we suggested that the frame at least could be extended, although it was pointed out that EFTE panels are relatively cheap. We were not convinced by the proposal to render the Tinning House and suggested that at least the part under cover could be left as it is. The potential to use it as a main entrance / reception area should be explored. The design team cited a number of design precedents, including Aberystwyth Arts Centre, Bournemouth Winter Gardens and Newport Riverside.

The Panel noted that the distinctive roof would account for much of the cost in this project. It was acknowledged that the EFTE material was

noisy in rain, and the mesh membrane which would mitigate the noise would also exclude a lot of daylight. Maintenance issues would need to be considered especially where two roofs narrowly overlap. The Panel stated that maintenance and repair of the roof's inflated pillows at such a height would make this a delicate operation. The replacement of high level lighting, the long term roof replacement strategy [typical life expectancy of 15 years] and the possibility of vandalism all need to be considered. The business case should take account of annual operational and maintenance costs as well as capital expenditure. It was agreed that future management arrangements needed clear agreement from the outset.

The Panel thought that the high level pedestrian route which currently ends in the foyer should link through to some further destination such as North Dock. Alternatively, the route could remain outside the foyer, as balcony and spill over space, and could then link down to the piazza via a ramp or stairs.

The Panel was informed that an M&E consultant was fully involved, but we did not see evidence of this in the submission. We advised that a strategy for heating, lighting and ventilation [particularly for the auditorium] should be used to inform the design development, starting now. The project team suggested that they would aim for a BREEAM Very Good rating, which we advised would need to be based on a bespoke assessment, and that they were considering a biomass heating system via a central boiler. The Panel supported the proposal to use biomass and stated that the location for fuel storage should be considered at an early stage. The lighting strategy should extend beyond these buildings, and illuminate pedestrian and cycle links to the town. We would also like to see a strategy for sustainable materials, excluding PVC and specifying sustainably sourced timber.

The Panel was informed that the mound to the north would be regraded and would become a parkland setting with some tree planting, although views from the footbridge to the roof would be protected. Paving materials and other landscape details for the piazza were not yet resolved although recycled demolition materials would be favoured.

Crynodeb/Summary

The Panel considered the design concept was very exciting and welcomed the opportunity to review the proposal at such an early stage. We believe that this could be a successful scheme if the following issues are addressed and used to inform the future design development:

- The current access routes from the car park and the footbridge are not the best way of approaching the site. We suggest that the

piazza or the Tinning House could be used as the main entrance to the site, with all access routes directed to a single point.

- We would like to see the roof extended to cover the Tinning House, but we accept that this could be prohibitively expensive.
- We support the proposed scale and massing of the buildings in relation to the Tinning House and expect the materiality to follow in the next stage of design.
- While we think the unifying roof is an interesting design concept and the key to the project's success, we are concerned about the future maintenance implications and costs. We urge the design team to consider the long term economic feasibility of this structure including value for money and whole life costs.
- We would like to see the new north/south pedestrian route from the town continue through the site to link up with North Dock.
- A full M&E strategy should be developed, to include a biomass heating system and a good external lighting scheme.
- The Panel would very much like to see this project succeed, and we encourage the partnership to concentrate on developing a realistic budget and a robust business case.

Diwedd/End

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