

Addroddiad Adolygu Dylunio Design Review Report

Review Status: **Confidential**

Meeting date:	17th November 2010
Issue Date:	30th November 2010
Scheme Location:	Theatre Royal site, Barry
Scheme Description:	Residential [Extra Care]
Planning Status:	Pre-application

Part1: Presentation

This proposal is for 42 extra care residential units on the site of a disused theatre in Barry. The nature of extra care provision means that 40 units per development is the minimum number for viability. Given the tightness of the site, this has resulted in an unusually dense scheme. The intention here is to make best use of an accessible, central site and integrate the scheme with an existing residential community. A masterplan is being developed for the area around Broad Street and Gladstone Road by Powell Dobson Urbanists.

The proposed design refers to the character and use of the much loved Theatre Royal building, which will be demolished, and signals a transition from civic to residential use while remaining a landmark building with active ground floor uses. The ground floor brick plinth is surmounted by four floors of residential units clad with hung slates, and the timber clad top floor is set back from the facades. Floor plates are staggered either side of an internal glazed street, with access to individual units off shared decks. There is no on-site parking.

The aim is to achieve BREEAM Excellent, both to reduce CO2 emissions and to tackle fuel poverty. Fabric performance and daylighting will be maximised, and the potential for including micro CHP, rainwater harvesting and solar thermal panels is being assessed.

The Local Authority acknowledged that this was a striking design and likely to be contentious. They are not yet convinced by the 'landmark' element of the stair tower, but they do support the zero parking provision, backed by a green travel plan.

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

The Panel welcomed the high level of client involvement, the ambition and the quality of the design work which has gone into the project so far. We recognise the local importance of the site and existing building, and therefore the controversial nature of this proposal. We are broadly supportive of the scheme, but we think there are major issues which remain to be resolved. In summary:

- The commitment to BREEAM Excellent and the efforts to reduce fuel poverty for residents of this scheme, are commendable. More detail on how this will be achieved should be included in the Design & Access statement.
- The inequality of solar access for residents of the north and south facing blocks is unacceptable. While we appreciate the difficulties of an alternative layout, a way should be found to improve the daylighting of the three middle apartments on each floor of the north facing block.
- We acknowledge that potential overheating and noise pollution on the south side has been addressed but we consider that more needs to be done to reduce solar gain, particularly on the windows which are not protected by brises soleil.
- We accept the rationale for zero parking provision, backed up by a green travel plan.
- The Panel welcomed the lively ground floor uses and the treatment of the immediate public realm. It is important that the wider public realm is upgraded, especially to provide safe and accessible routes along Broad Street and across the roundabout.
- The impact of this development on Ellis Fisher Court should be very carefully assessed with the help of accurate scale drawings, photomontages and shadowing studies, to avoid excessive overlooking, overshadowing, or an overbearing aspect.
- We would like more consideration given to the layout of the internal balconies to encourage social interaction and movement between floors.
- The architectural treatment should be calmed, and a coherent treatment of all four frontages achieved. However, we support the concept of a landmark building, the strong corner treatment, and the clear definition of base, shaft and top. The atria might be more strongly expressed at ground floor on the west elevation and this would also improve internal lighting.
- The palette of facade materials should be re-thought and we are not convinced that slate or tile hanging is appropriate in this context. We would argue for a more extensive use of quality brick to respond to the Barry context.
- It will be important to establish and maintain a high quality of materials and crisp detailing, avoiding for instance the heavy pointing shown in some of the images.

Part 2: Discussion and Panel Response in Full

The Panel welcomed the quality of the presentation and the level of ambition behind the proposal, and we fully accepted the demographic and locational analysis. The mix of uses on the ground floor and the lively public realm created were strong points of the scheme, as was the inclusion of a roof top communal room and terrace.

The benefits of the central atrium were acknowledged, but the Panel had serious concerns about the inequality of solar access, between north facing and south facing apartments. The number of effectively single-aspect, north-facing apartments will be 12-15 out of a total of 42, which is a significant proportion, and the reduced daylight levels will be exacerbated particularly on the ground floor by a row of mature trees to the north. This matter is particularly important given the data presented, which shows that elderly residents may spend 90% of their time indoors. In our opinion, the quieter aspect and view of the park from the north facing units would not be sufficient compensation for the lack of direct sunlight. The architect stated that the current layout was a product of the tight site and required density, and confirmed that alternative block plans had been tried.

The danger of overheating for the south facing units has been addressed by the use of a concrete frame, providing some thermal mass, and by the partial use of 'brises soleil' and projecting fins as well as [possibly] glazing which limits solar gain. The key design driver is to provide affordable thermal comfort, based on a maximum internal temperature of 26 degrees for 99% of the year. A mechanical ventilation system will obviate the need to open windows, and so provide acoustic protection from the busy road. Sun space provision on the south facade had been considered but rejected on the grounds of cost and noise.

The Panel accepted the rationale for zero parking provision on site, but questioned access arrangements for ancillary staff and visitors. Given the level of public transport, nearby public car parks, and the promotion of a green travel plan, we were reassured that this approach was workable. With a high level of electric buggy use by residents, the routes to local facilities such as the supermarket and clinic need to be made adequate and safe. The Local Authority stated that plans for enhancing the public realm immediately adjacent to this site were underway, but that the Powell Dobson plan was illustrative only.

The impact of this building on Ellis Fisher Court to the north east should be carefully modelled to ensure that this proposal will be an improvement on the existing building, which presents a 3.5 storey blank gable wall to the internal courtyard. We were assured that the height of the proposed building will be below the current ridge height and that the image showing the proposed elevation from Ellis Fisher Court, was accurate. However, we noted that while the proposed height will be below the apex of the ridge of the existing building, the proposed building has a level parapet and so the height of building mass closest to Ellis Fisher Court will be significantly higher than existing.

Ease of access between internal decks or balconies was discussed and we accepted that, with only half a flight of stairs dividing each level, the staggered arrangement provided efficient use of space combined with the opportunity for social interaction. We would encourage the use of the balcony space for events such as temporary exhibitions. Adequate storage space for buggies is provided internally at ground floor level, but the Panel thought that access for residents would be made easier if parking space and charging points could be provided outside each apartment.

The Panel was not convinced by the reference to a 1930s aesthetic relating to flamboyant public entertainment buildings, notably cinemas and theatres, and resulting here in a confusion between the civic/landmark nature of the scheme and its residential function. We would like to see much less flamboyance on the corner treatment and certainly no

searchlights / laser beams for nighttime illumination. Although we appreciated the broad disposition of elements, including the glazed vertical staircase marking the atrium and the active ground floor, the Panel thought that the elevational treatment should be toned down and a better relationship achieved between the busy corner frontage and south elevation, and the calmer elevation to the north.

The Panel thought that there were simply too many different materials in the elevational treatment. We questioned whether slate hanging was appropriate at all in this context and we advised that artificial fibre cement slates would not weather well and would cheapen the appearance of the building over a relatively short time period. With regard to the high level timber cladding, the Panel accepted that the architect was aware of the importance of detailing and the danger of differential weathering, and had experience of using a sustainably sourced timber [Louro] which had performed well elsewhere.

Maintaining the quality of details, materials, and finishes will be vital to ensure the long term success of this building. We advised the team to look again at the window proportions, and to avoid the use of tinted glass, in favour of deeper reveals.

A BREEAM pre assessment has been carried out which shows the design achieving an Excellent rating. The micro CHP system will be linked with solar thermal and PV panels, although the opportunity for trigeneration [to include cooling] has not been explored. The possibility of expanding the CHP to serve other nearby sites is not feasible, as there are no other potential end uses which match this timescale.

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

Hendre Group [Lynn Bunch,
Dafydd Cantwell]

Pensaer/Architect:

Pentan Partnership Architects
[Ed Green]

Consultants:

Asbri Planning [Damian Barry]
McCann M&E [Matt Williams]

Awdurdod Cynllunio/
Planning Authority

Vale of Glamorgan Council [Steve Ball]

Y Panel Adlygu Dylunio:

Design Review Panel:

John Punter [Chair]

Cindy Harris [Officer]

Martin Knight

Simon Hartley

Ed Colgan

Michael Griffiths

Lead Panellist:

Simon Hartley

Sylwedyddion/Observers:

Kieran Gandhi [student planning officer]