

# Addroddiad Adolygu Dylunio Design Review Report

## Review Status: **Confidential**

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|---------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Meeting date:       | 18th February 2009                  |
| Issue Date:         | 3rd March 2009                      |
| Scheme Location:    | Brithwen Road, Waunarlwydd, Swansea |
| Scheme Description: | Residential                         |
| Planning Status:    | Pre-application                     |

## Part1: Presentation

The site was acquired by Gwalia to develop affordable homes for sale. It is an 'edge of settlement' site, surrounded to the east and south by a dense tree line and sloping downhill to the south. Approximately one third of the area lies outside the UDP boundary and the applicant will argue for its inclusion, which would potentially be acceptable under a further policy allowing exceptions for affordable homes.

The proposal is for 11 dwellings, linked in a straight terrace and oriented to face east/west. Each house has generous outdoor space to the front and rear, linked by a brick service strip running through the house. The access into the site will be shared use for pedestrians and vehicles, and laid out to conform to the design principles in Manual for Streets. The design aspiration is to achieve Code for Sustainable Homes Level 4.

The Local Planning Authority welcome the design quality shown in the scheme. It is seen as raising the bar in terms of affordable housing provision and is eminently replicable. The boundary issue remains to be resolved.

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

The Panel was very pleased to review this scheme which we think could become an exemplar for the development of affordable housing in suburban areas. We welcomed the high standard of design and site planning and found the architectural solution persuasive and ultimately convincing. In summary:

- We recommend that the UDP boundary line is revised to allow full development of the site.

- We accept the advantages of the single line terrace solution, which avoids intruding on the privacy of properties to the west and preserves the views to open country of the houses to the north. The amenity of adjacent homes is very well protected and the tree canopy to the east is respected.
- The architecture is well conceived and refined and the choice of materials contributes to the clean lines, while the screens and storage are neatly combined to provide privacy at the front of the building.
- The hard and soft landscaping and simple layout of parking combine to produce a very well ordered home zone.
- The internal layout appears to work well in general but we have some reservations about the space standards particularly in relation to the second bedroom.
- We would like to see an increase in the floor to ceiling height, which is currently minimal and appears rather mean.
- A commitment to CSH Level 4 should be the minimum requirement, and we advised that this would require particularly good fabric performance in terms of insulation and air tightness.
- Accordance with Lifetime Homes standard would be an additional benefit and we noted that this would mean changes in the ground floor internal layout.

## **Part 2: Discussion and Panel Response in Full**

The Panel is very supportive of the ambition shown in this proposal, as well as the design quality, affordability and replicability. We fully agree with the applicant that the UDP boundary should be extended in this location to allow full development of the site. In order to make a convincing case for this, additional material should be supplied showing the extent of the existing mature trees as a reinforcement of the existing site boundary, and any proposals for new planting. The team agreed to supply this as a matter of urgency. [NB: the site plan submitted showed retention of only one of three existing trees considered of importance and there seems no reason why one of those on the Eastern boundary cannot be retained.]

With regard to the site layout, we were told that the possibility of closing the end of the site, with houses turned at right angles to the slope, had been discussed. This arrangement was discounted, mainly because of the threat to the amenity of the detached house to the south west, and the wish to avoid any danger of overshadowing [although the earlier plan in the ecology report suggests any overshadowing would be minimal]. It would also have involved the development of two house types and consequent increase in costs. On reflection, we agreed with this assessment.

Parking will be provided at a 1:1 ratio, but there will be sufficient space in front to accommodate a second / visitor's car. We noted that the site layout meant that there would be little potential for natural surveillance of the road and we assumed that the client was content with that. We questioned the internal space standards and in particular the second bedroom arrangement.

The Panel supported the aspiration to achieve Code 4 but this should be made a firm and minimum commitment. We noted that, with gas condensing boilers and solar water heating specified, the fabric performance would need to be very good indeed to achieve

Code 4. An accessible downstairs toilet and sufficient space to create a downstairs bedroom would be necessary to achieve the Lifetime Homes standard. The floor to ceiling heights [2300mm, scaled from the drawings] are minimal and should be made more generous to increase the sense of space on a tight footprint. The team agreed to explore this.

This project was originally intended for shared ownership with some rental properties, although this is open to review in the current economic climate. It was confirmed that Gwalia would be responsible for managing and maintaining shared facilities [including the proposed treatment works, for example] and all public spaces. The integrity of the design and the promise of the proposal as a living environment will require a committed involvement by the client over time.

The hard strip running through the site and internally through the kitchen, would be of hard surface cleanable bricks. The proposed sweet chestnut cladding is appropriate in this context and the team confirmed that they could source it locally. It will be allowed to weather naturally and should require minimal maintenance. Given the need to provide additional sewage treatment for this scheme, it was suggested that the team might consider biological [reed bed] sewage treatment.

**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**

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| Asiant/Client/Datblygwr:<br>Agent/Client/Developer   | Ty Gwalia [Elfed Roberts]                        |
| Pensaer/Architect:   | Loyn & Co Architects [Chris Loyn,<br>Dan Benham] |
| Consultants:   | Asbri Planning [Richard Bowen]                   |
| Awdurdod Cynllunio/<br>Planning Authority  | CC Swansea [Steve Smith]                         |
| Y Panel Adlygu Dylunio:<br>Design review panel:<br>John Punter [Chair]<br>Cindy Harris [Officer]<br>Ewan Jones | Roger Ayton<br>Lynne Sullivan                    |

Lead Panellist:

Lynne Sullivan

Sylwedyddion/Observers:

Simon Carne [DCFW Panellist]

Nia Morgan [DCFW placement student]