

Statws/Status:
Cyfrinachol / Confidential



Adroddiad Adolygu Dylunio: 27 October 2006
Design Review Report:

Dyddiad Cyfarfod / Cyflwyno'r Deunydd: 18 October 2006
Meeting Date / Material Submitted:

Lleoliad/Location: Well Street, Holywell

Disgrifiad o'r Cynllun Residential
Scheme Description:

Developer/Datblygwr:

Pensaer/Architect: TFH Architecture
[Tom Hughes, Carl Roland]

Awdurdod Cynllunio: Flintshire CC
Planning Authority:

Statws Cynllunio: Pre-planning
Planning Status:

Y Panel Adolygu Dylunio/Design Review Panel:
Wendy Richards (cadeirydd/chair) Ann-Marie Smale
Cindy Harris (swyddog/officer) Elfed Roberts
Charlie Deng [swyddog/officer] Mike Biddulph
Douglas Hogg

Lead Panellist: Douglas Hogg

Sylwedyddion/Observers: James White, DCFW

Cyflwyniad/Presentation

A previous proposal for this site was reviewed by the Panel in December 2005. The planning application was not progressed to determination and the current proposal is from a different developer and designer. This scheme is at the sketch concept stage and aims to address some of the previous concerns raised by Flintshire CC and DCFW. The site lies within the Holywell conservation area, close to St Winifrede's Well and Chapel which are grade 1 listed and Scheduled Ancient Monuments. It forms an elevated ridge which runs north/south and provides a crucial transition between the town and the historic sites. The banks of the ridge are covered with mature trees and there are some Tree Preservation Orders in place.

The client brief to the architect was to design 26 no. 'Bath style' 3-bed town houses with front and rear gardens, and to achieve good design with minimum construction costs. Parking is provided at a standard of 2 spaces per unit. The architect has used passive solar design and sustainable principles and materials. A reduced number of 16 town houses have been arranged in three blocks running across the site and facing south, linked by 2 courtyards, one of which will be used for parking, the other for amenity. A tree survey has been conducted and provision has been made for future maintenance of the western slope.

Pre-application discussions have been held with the Local Planning Authority, who have produced a Design and Conservation Brief for the site.

Ymateb y Panel/Panel's Response

The Panel considered that the reference to Georgian style in the architectural treatment of the blocks was not helping to achieve a quality design response to the site and context. Both DCFW and the Local Authority have stated their preference for a simple contemporary design on this site which still respects the scale, proportions and detailing of the prevailing historic buildings.

The proposed site layout does not respect traditional building lines and would compromise the view down Well Street. We thought that a linear block running east/west would be more appropriate and noted that an earlier design approach, which showed a row of 26 town houses in a sinuous terrace form, did offer some benefits in terms of site layout, although the density was too great. The justification offered for the present orientation is to maximise solar access, but the Panel observed that this approach was compromised by shading [by trees and the blocks themselves] and by inappropriate fenestration. Some of the gardens would be north facing. We thought that the connection between internal living areas and outside amenity spaces was not well resolved.

The Panel noted the requirement in the Planning Authority's brief for a separation between the town and the historic monuments and we would like to see the feeling of open space retained. We thought that the sensitivity of the site was a much more important consideration than maximising density. Ideally we would like to see the development concentrated at the southern end of site, with the scale reducing towards the northern end. We thought that any new development on this site should not exceed 2.5 storeys. While we recognised the need for commercial viability, we considered that the proposed massing resulted in an overdevelopment of the site. We suggested that a mix of town houses and apartments might be more appropriate.

The Panel supported the inclusion of solar water heating and rainwater harvesting and recycling. We requested details of the locally sourced materials that were claimed to be included and were told that this meant purchasing from local retail outlets. We thought that this was an unusual interpretation and did not accept that this contributed to the sustainability of the scheme.

The Panel thought it was important that a comprehensive landscape strategy for the site and its immediate surroundings was included in any development proposal.

Crynodeb/Summary

The Panel was pleased to have the opportunity to comment on the most recent proposals for this important site. However, while we recognise that this is a difficult site to develop, we think that the current scheme is an unacceptable response to the site and the context. In particular:

- We think the current site layout does not work well, from the viewpoint of both design and sustainability.
- We repeat our preference for a contemporary design solution which we think would help to free up more space on site
- We think the massing is inappropriate and the site consequently overdeveloped.
- We would like to see a more cohesive and better justified sustainability strategy
- Plans for the future management of the surrounding landscape should be an integral part of any proposal for this site.

Diwedd/End

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