

Addroddiad Adolygu Dylunio Design Review Report

Review Status: **Confidential**

Meeting date:	21st April 2010
Issue Date:	12th May 2010
Scheme Location:	West Rhyl
Scheme Description:	Masterplan
Planning Status:	Pre- application

Part1: Presentation

This proposal relates to the masterplanning and regeneration of approximately 12 streets of mostly 19th to early 20th Century houses in the western part of Rhyl. This is a "deprived" area with "a very poor reputation". Houses are arranged in terraces of 2-3 storeys with frontages directly addressing pavements.

The vision is to create a place with an aspirational feel that will attract middle income families, in order to raise the value of the neighbourhood and promote long term, family-led regeneration. The area needs to attract positive investment for the client, and its negative reputation needs to be eradicated in order for the regeneration to work and a better sense of place to be established. The project team believes that the vision has to be very high quality and unique for regeneration to take effect.

It is intended to generally maintain the structure of the existing streets, but to open up a new central space to create a new public park. The proposal requires areas of significant demolition and clearance, removing identified buildings and replacing them with new buildings better suited to encouraging new people into the area. Displaced people will be re-housed in forty acquired properties surrounding the area.

The design team identify the practical challenges as:

- Presenting a residential offer for higher income families and appealing to lower-middle income households for starter homes.
- Concern that people will not be attracted unless the reputation of the area is improved, which requires radical surgery.

- The need to concentrate on what should be kick-started initially to begin to attract people into the area.
- Concern that the area would not appeal to middle income families as there are no back gardens, therefore demolition to provide larger gardens was an important part of the proposal.

There have been consultation workshops with the public over the past 10 months. Supplementary Planning Guidance is being developed to guide future development of the area, and this will be developed for further public consultation in the summer.

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

The Panel recognises that town centre renewals are difficult and we welcome seeing the scheme at this early stage. However, we think that the current scheme is poor and we have the following major concerns:

- The study area considered is very tightly drawn and is not presented as part of an overall vision for the town.
- We were not convinced that the proposals had been guided by a thorough conservation area character appraisal.
- We believe that the extent of demolition proposed without the benefit of a detailed urban design study, including connectivity and movement analysis, will adversely affect the structure and inherent character of the area.
- Demolition within part of a conservation area is proposed without adequate justification.
- Partial area clearance to deliver social change is the proposition. The Panel considers this to be a flawed approach to regeneration.
- The energy strategy needs to be thoroughly considered and integrated with environmental sustainability, to the benefit of every home owner in the area.

Part 2: Discussion and Panel Response in Full

The Panel accepted that regeneration is a difficult and complex process, but the proposal to deliver area regeneration by introducing a new community based on physical change to the area, was not convincing.

The Panel was concerned that the wider area of Rhyl had not been addressed. Whilst the design team claimed that this small area is particularly poor and in need of regeneration, there are obvious examples of deprivation in other areas close by – e.g the High Street. We understood that there were strategic planning proposals for other North Wales coastal towns, but the justification for this tightly drawn area and the intention to make major changes to upgrade the town as part of an overall vision, have not been convincingly demonstrated. By considering the wider area, the opportunities for a better and more sustainable solution might be forthcoming.

Without a thorough urban design analysis the removal of large parts of the area for reasons of urban design is not justified. In addition to these over-riding concerns, the Panel was also critical of a number of more detailed aspects of the proposal. These included:

- The removal of the north side of Gronant Street, which had been environmentally improved, to create the new park.
- The perceived need for the new park and for a new public square at the north end of Crescent Street, given their close proximity to the new park, play spaces and public open spaces on the sea front.
- The potentially hostile microclimate created by large open spaces, unsheltered from the west and north (onshore) winds.
- The adverse effect on the existing street pattern, with a key route from Vaughan Street to Abbey Street interrupted by the new development.
- Demolition of parts of the eastern conservation area without consideration of conservation area character and distinctiveness.

The Panel was concerned that justification for the proposed new homes was based on the desire to reduce density in the area. Whilst a number of houses are in multiple occupation, thus increasing the actual density, this is not universal and there are other forms of tenure in the area. We do not consider that high density in itself is sufficient reason to justify the removal of existing built fabric without consideration of other approaches to regenerating the area. In fact for some alternative energy schemes high densities are preferred, and can provide revenues for stakeholders and communities.

The Panel was not convinced that an alternative strategy - retaining and improving the best properties and knitting these into a mixed new-build/refurbishment scheme - had been properly explored, notwithstanding the more complex delivery mechanism which would be required. Such a strategy would have the potential to maintain a strong character to the area and a mix of unit types and values, as opposed to the uncertainty of attracting middle income families. The Panel was sceptical that high quality housebuilders could be attracted to the area to develop high end market housing.

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

Welsh Asembly Government
Denbighshire County Council [Angela
Loftus, Simon Kaye]

Consultants:

DPP Shape [Mick Timpson]
Arc4 [Helen Brzozowski]

Awdurdod Cynllunio/
Planning Authority

Denbighshire County Council
[Angela Loftus, Simon Kaye]

Y Panel Adlygu Dylunio:
Design review panel:
Alan Francis [Chair]
Elly Englefield [Officer]
Simon Carne

Jonathan Adams
Lynne Sullivan
Simon Hartley
Ed Colgan

Lead Panellist:

Simon Carne

Sylwedyddion/Observers:

Glyn Jones [Flintshire County Council]
Cara Owen, Glyn Gruffudd [Gwynedd
County Council]