

Statws/Status:
Cyfrinachol / Confidential



Adroddiad Adolygu Dylunio: Design Review Report:	22 March 2007
Dyddiad Cyfarfod / Cyflwyno'r Deunydd: Meeting Date / Material Submitted:	14 March 207
Lleoliad/Location:	Ebbw Vale
Disgrifiad o'r Cynllun Scheme Description:	Hospital
Cleient/Asiant: Client/Agent:	Gwent Healthcare Trust [Karen Jones, Alex Howells, Peter Sampson] Gwent NHS Trust [Dave Jones] Blaenau Gwent LHB [Bobby Bolt]
Developer/Datblygwr:	HBG Construction [Richard Griffiths]
Pensaer/Architect:	Nightingale Associates [Nick Durham]
Cynllunio/Consultants:	Arup [Anne O'Riordan] Davis Langdon [Simon Williams]
Awdurdod Cynllunio: Planning Authority:	Blaenau Gwent CBC [Richard Crook]
Statws Cynllunio: Planning Status:	Pre-application
Y Panel Adolygu Dylunio/ Design Review Panel: John Punter(cadeirydd/chair) Cindy Harris (swyddog/officer) Charlie Deng (swyddog/officer) Carole-Anne Davies, CEO, DCFW	Phil Roberts Douglas Hogg Ashley Bateson
Lead Panellist:	Phil Roberts

Cyflwyniad/Presentation

DCFW reviewed a previous proposal for a hospital on this site in May 2006. The client found our previous comments helpful and they have been used to inform this design approach from a new team of architects working in conjunction with the team who have produced the masterplan for the whole ex-steelworks site. The outline application for the masterplan has been submitted and the team expect a response in June. This site, known as the Westgate site, will be the first to be redeveloped.

The design is still in the process of development and seeks to respond to the main street and new public squares to the east, in particular to the adjacent Hospital Square, as well as establishing landscaped links to the valley slopes. The site analysis produced a schematic internal layout which located in-patient accommodation to the south with the best views and solar access; the outpatients department more centrally next to the main entrance; and the mental health facility to the north in a more private and protected location. The in-patient wings open up to the south, enclosing an open green public space and an enclosed 'winter garden' for the use of patients and visitors, for therapy and relaxation all year round.

The main access to the site is from the east, although service access is provided from the north west.

The design has recently been modified to take account of the requirement for 100% single bed rooms and the desire to minimise travel distances internally, and this has led to a part two storey option being developed. A strip of land on the north east edge of the site has been given back to the masterplan team, possibly for residential development, and this will provide an urban edge to the spine road on the site boundary. Differing site levels have been used to establish a positive relationship to the public square and the green bank to the west. Material specification is still under discussion, especially the roof finish.

A biomass heating system is included in the proposal, along with solar water heating. A thermal analysis of the single room layout has optimised the glazing and shading options. The use of natural ventilation will be maximised.

The landscape advisers for this scheme are the same ones as on the masterplan team. Although no detailed landscape information was included in the presentation material, the development of the enclosed and semi-enclosed garden spaces will be a central feature of the development. An urban plaza outside the main entrance will link to the new public square. New woodland planting will be carried out to the south and west.

Ymateb y Panel/Panel's Response

The Panel had found the presentation materials, submitted in advance of the meeting, difficult to follow, with insufficient scale of drawings and description of the design development, and this had hampered our assessment of this proposal. The lack of any section drawings also made an assessment of site levels and their impact on the design difficult. We were informed that there was a 750mm level difference across a 15 metre setback to the west, and a 1.4 metre level difference across 30 metres from the main entrance to the public square.

The Panel expressed concern about the location and legibility of the entrances, with the main entrance set back and above the road at an oblique angle, particularly as there appeared to be three separate entrances serving different functions with visitor access currently driving past all three to reach the car park. We would like to see more prominence given to the main entrance, using appropriate signage.

The Panel thought that if future expansion space was likely, it should be shown in these drawings as something more than a dotted line. It was confirmed that if expansion were to occur there would be space for the existing car park to be moved further north.

The Panel found the built form, architectural treatment and palette of materials to be simple but could, if not handled properly, border on the dull and bland. The detailing will be crucial to achieving a quality solution and the architect agreed that the challenge was to break up the elevations. The Panel would not wish to see escape stairs on the gable ends of the wings facing south, and thought that these demanded a positive architectural statement by virtue of their prominence.

We were informed that on the other side of the main street to the east, land was designated for commercial, mixed use blocks of 2-3 storeys, built hard against the street. The boundary treatment is still under discussion, with input from the police, but in the Panel's view the landscaping needs to achieve a successful transition from the soft parkland on the southern edge to a more formal urban edge along the spine road. Attention needs to be given to the design of the pedestrian route from the bus stops on the A4046, as at present this promises to be long and lonely.

The Panel was concerned that the proposed new Hospital Square would not be a useful and attractive addition to the public realm. It lacked definition and enclosure, and would be separated from the hospital entrance by a drop-off loop, as well as the two lane entrance way to all the car parking. We were not convinced by the proposed solution and thought it was important to separate the different traffic movements (drop off, car parking, ambulances etc) in order to minimise traffic through the square. One idea was to access the car parking (certainly staff car parking) from the northern service road and this could form the main entrance to the site, entering halfway along the northern boundary.

The Panel noted that the building to the north of the square was not yet defined, nor any definite uses to the east and south. The plot of land reserved for residential development would not serve to enclose this northern edge, which should also include some commercial or community use. The designer suggested that the square should be treated in two parts, in terms of its relation to the hospital and its relation to the street, and these could be defined by a retaining wall broken up by ramps and stairs. The Panel wanted to see the square more enclosed by buildings of an appropriate scale with active ground floor uses.

We thought that some of the sustainability aspirations had been lost in the design development and we were surprised to learn that the potential to include green roofs was being discounted on the grounds of maintenance, risks, and the assumption that a flat pitch was necessary to support their use.

The Panel requested more detail on the comfort control strategy and we were told that the design had moved away from thermal mass to a concrete raft and steel frame with lightweight infill walls. Precast concrete planks which could be exposed internally were considered, but judged inappropriate for the large spans involved. The Panel advised that they can span 11-12 metres. Large service voids had been incorporated for future proofing and the design team agreed that there was an opportunity to introduce daylight into the building where gaps occurred in the plant. The clerestory windows were a firm commitment, but we thought it was important to get daylight directly into the corridors. We were told on behalf of the client that natural ventilation was always the first option, with low velocity mechanical ventilation where necessary. A biomass heating system was included but the CHP option was still under review, although there was a possibility of linking up to a larger district heating scheme in the future.

The Panel took issue with the intention to heat the winter garden, in order to ensure its year round use. We thought this would be a huge energy drain and, as a semi external space, it should be passively heated and cooled and its use restricted by natural conditions. Although the principle of pleasant, genuinely useable space was appreciated, avoiding the courtyard approach, the Panel thought an honest assessment of the nature of this space should be undertaken. If it was essential to have year round use, the winter garden should be treated as internal space and part of the insulated building envelope, with correspondingly less glazing. The Panel noted that the proposed ETFE roofing material relied on a constant use of fans to maintain the inflated pillows, thus increasing energy demand, and that such roofs could be difficult to maintain, were likely to be noisy in rain or harsh weather, and were prone to damage by vandalism, weather and birds.

The team confirmed that the BREEAM Excellent rating would be based on a post-construction assessment. The Panel was told that Richard Crook, Director of the Steelworks Project, jointly represented DEIN and Blaenau Gwent CBC, and that the planning case officer for this proposal was Steve Smith of BGCBC.

Crynodeb/Summary

The Panel appreciated the opportunity to see this proposal at an early stage. We support the concept scheme, the single room approach and the contextual analysis, but we think that there are major masterplanning issues which have not been resolved. We accept that this is work in progress and the following points signal our principal concerns:

- The relationship of this scheme to the masterplan needs further development, including the design of the square, the relationship of the building to the street, legibility of entrances, establishing an urban presence and pleasant pedestrian routes.
- We support the decision to sell off the strip of land for housing but more land should have been sold at the southern end to allow development to properly enclose the square on the north side.
- Alternatives to the main vehicular access and traffic routes should be considered to protect the pedestrianised space of the public square.
- A more developed landscape strategy should resolve the transition from soft to hard boundary treatment and differentiate the urban and natural edges of the site.
- The architectural and material treatment is understated and must avoid appearing bland and basic by ensuring high quality detailing and material specification. The changes in levels on the site could be used to articulate the blocks more effectively. The escape stairs should be relocated away from the south facing ends of the wing blocks.
- We broadly support the sustainability strategy, but would like to see the case for green roofs re-examined in the light of more accurate information.
- It is essential that more daylight is introduced into the long corridors.
- We are not convinced by the arguments for heating the winter garden and think that this would seriously undermine any claim to be low carbon in operation. We think that the arguments in favour of CHP for this type of building are strong and should be re-examined.

Diwedd/End

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