

Statws/Status:
Cyfrinachol / Confidential



Adroddiad Adolygu Dylunio: 16 May 2006
Design Review Report:

Dyddiad Cyfarfod / Cyflwyno'r Deunydd: 3 May 2006
Meeting Date / Material Submitted:

Lleoliad/Location: Corus site, Ebbw Vale

Disgrifiad o'r Cynllun New Hospital
Scheme Description:

Cleient/Asiant: Gwent Healthcare NHS Trust
Client/Agent: [Alex Howells, Karen Jones,
Glenn Evans, Peter Sampson,
Dave Jones]
Welsh Health Estates
[Nigel Davies]
Blaenau Gwent Local Health
Board [Joanne Absalom]
WAG [Hamish Munro]

Pensaer/Architect: Capita Percy Thomas
[Chris Jones]

Cynllunio/Consultants: Davis Langdon
[SimonWilliams]

Awdurdod Cynllunio: Blaenau Gwent CBC
Planning Authority: [Richard Crook]

Statws Cynllunio: Pre-planning
Planning Status:

Y Panel Adolygu Dylunio/Design Review Panel:
John Punter (cadeirydd/chair) Kieren Morgan
Cindy Harris (swyddog/officer) Phil Roberts

**Elfed Roberts
Ed Colgan**

Paul Vanner

Lead Panellist: Kieren Morgan

Sylwedyddion/Observers:

Charlie Deng Design Review Assistant

Angela Williams, Architecture and Design, Scotland

Cyflwyniad/Presentation

This proposal is a key element of the reorganisation of health services in Blaenau Gwent, which currently has poor facilities. The level of services is being rebalanced, with an expansion of primary care and less reliance on large general hospitals. Specialist and critical care service will form the smallest part of the new delivery system, with community hospitals and local general hospitals [of which this proposal is an example] providing an intermediate level between specialist and primary care. The strategic case for this development was approved in 2000 and the Outline Business Case completed in April 2005, along with the agreement on the preferred site. The supply chain partner will be appointed in July 2006 and work on site will begin by the end of 2007 with completion in 2009. At this stage, the project team wishes to test the site's potential and constraints, and the design principles.

There is good community ownership of this scheme which emphasises patient independence and rehabilitation in a domestic environment. The current proposal is the product of an inclusive design process incorporating a shared vision, and responds well to its site and context. The site itself is on the west side of the former Corus site, adjacent to the A 4046 and opposite traditional Valleys terraced housing that marks the southern end of Ebbw Vale. The site slopes east down into the valley and there are good views south towards the former Garden festival site and across the valley. The building form cuts into the landscape in the same way as the lines of terraced housing on the valley sides, and makes use of the slope to provide easy access to the buildings on three levels. The clinical functions are housed in a long north south block nearly parallel to the main road on the higher level of the site, and this block is bisected length-wise by a narrow linear garden. The ward functions are located on the lower level, and these are arranged in sharp, angled wings that are connected to form a complex quadrangle, while also taking advantage of a landscaped setting and views to the east and south.

The main entrance to the site is from the north east, leading to the main hospital entrance and drop off point on the north side of the building. A secondary entrance from the south leads to the mental health unit. There is room on site for future expansion of up to 40 per cent, to include an additional mental health wing and an extension of the main hospital.

The local council now owns the site and has started reclamation works. The Corus Site masterplan is being revised in the light of a reduced land-take requirement by the learning campus and a different site for the hospital from the one originally envisaged. The masterplan's requirement for high quality urban design and sustainable development remains unchanged, but the emerging masterplan being developed by new masterplanners shows a finer grain of mixed use. It is anticipated that an outline planning application, along

with design guides and codes, will be submitted in January 2007. These documents are currently at the discussion stage.

Ymateb y Panel/Panel's Response

The Panel appreciated the explanation of the background and context of this proposal. We were told that the key advantages of this site over the other options were the quality of the therapeutic environment offered, and the flexibility and functionality of the space available. In addition this site permitted a more favourable timescale, costs and ground conditions, and would be an important part of the regeneration strategy within the Borough. Future expansion was found to be feasible on this site without detriment to the landscape. There are still boundary issues to be resolved, particularly with regard to the hard building edge sought in the masterplan, but the team are confident that both aspirations can be met in the eventual design.

The Panel was informed that a green transport plan is being prepared, and the intention is to have a bus route running through the site, as well as adequate car parking for patients and visitors.

The Panel queried whether the main entrance was in the right place, given that the first entrance visitors would encounter is the one to the mental health unit, combined with the service entrance. In any event, we thought it was not desirable to combine access to the mental health unit with the service entrance, as this would inevitably lead to confusion and conflict.

The Panel acknowledged that the topography of the site gives a strong rationale for the development of linear blocks, but we were concerned that this means long travel distances internally. We thought that the relationships between different departments and wards were inconvenient and inefficient, and needed re-examination. Ideally, wards would not be used as through routes to other wards. The Panel recognised the challenge posed by the requirement for 100 per cent single rooms, all with natural daylight. We were reassured that the schedule of accommodation does include adequate provision for both engineering and planning contingency.

The Panel appreciated the aspirations which informed this proposal, the slender forms of the blocks, the exploitation of the slope and views, the visual and physical access to greenery and landscape were all helping to create a healing environment and a sense of place. If this layout works well as an appropriate configuration through the development of the design, the Panel felt it may go some way towards compensating for the long internal distances involved.

However, the relationship of this design to the urban context of Ebbw Vale, and its proposed extension through the masterplan, is less clear. As the first development to take place on this major regeneration site, we thought that greater urban design constraints should be given to the design team, and that this should lead to a more creative and sustainable solution. The relationship of the site with the main road to the west needs to be carefully considered, and the integration of the hospital into the existing and future pattern of Ebbw Vale should be a priority. Although the client wants this building to have a Borough-wide identity, it is still important to establish good local connections with the expanding town. We would like to see the masterplanners match the development of their proposals to the timescale of this project, to the mutual benefit of both.

The Panel would like to see a commitment to using the available sustainable design and construction toolkits, in particular NEAT and AEDET, and the setting of appropriate benchmarks. We applauded the commitment to high standards of environmental performance and urged that these considerations should be translated into the appointment of the supply chain partner. The longer term benefits of energy efficiency and low-carbon solutions need to be factored in at this stage. The project team confirmed that life cycle costing is being used in the evaluation and that the Carbon Trust are acting as advisers. The tendering process will be based on a quality-only assessment. In addition, site specific solutions are being looked at for heating, cooling and generation, including using the existing basements on the site as heat sinks and stores.

Crynodeb/Summary

The Panel was pleased to see these proposals, especially at this important 'crossroads' stage. We applaud the aspiration to create a therapeutic healing environment, and we think that the design and layout relates well to the site topography and uses it to good advantage. The Panel considers this proposal to be an acceptable response to the site and the brief, with some minor revisions. In particular:

- We are concerned about the length of walking distances as proposed, and the unresolved conflict between the linearity of the blocks and the difficulty in circulation.
- We are not convinced about the location of the main entrance, and think that the current hierarchy of entrances is confused. Entrance points to the site and the building should be user-friendly and legible.
- We are concerned that the building does not respond at all to the new spine road, the main entrance is set too far from the street, and the car park prejudices any urban relationship with development to the north.
- We support the efforts to make the site as accessible as possible by public transport, and the creation of a green transport plan.
- We applaud the commitment to sustainability and renewable energy. The delivery of specific low-carbon measures, such as a CHP district heating system, needs to be ensured and protected from value engineering by exploiting cost savings in the long term.
- We are encouraged by the prospect of a quality-based tender process and would like to see a requirement for an 'Excellent' NEAT rating built into the tender documents.
- On a cautionary note, we would urge that the design should continue to respond to key parameters in the masterplan, and that the masterplan development process should be adjusted so that it runs in tandem with this project.

We would appreciate the opportunity to review this project again as it approaches the planning application stage.

Diwedd/End

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