

NB. This report was confidential when it was seen at pre-application stage and relates only to the version seen at that stage. It has been made public since the planning application was consented in May 2012

Addroddiad Adolygu Dylunio Design Review Report

DATGANIADAU O DDIDDORDEB

Mae gofyn i aelodau o'r panel, arsyllwyr a phartion perthnasol eraill ddatgan unrhyw ddi-ddordebau sydd ganddynt **ymlaen llaw** mewn perthynas â'r eitemau Panel Adolygu Dylunio Bydd unrhyw ddatganiadau o'r fath yn cael eu cofnodi yma ac yng nghofnodion canolog Comisiwn Dylunio Cymru.

DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Panel members, observers and other relevant parties are required to declare ***in advance*** any interests they may have in relation to the Design Review Agenda items. Any such declarations are recorded here and in DCfW's central records.

Statws adolygu/Review status

Cyfrinachol/Confidential

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|--|-------------------------------------|
| Dyddiad cyfarfod/meeting date | July 27th 2011 |
| Dyddiad cyhoeddi/issue date | August 9th 2011 |
| Lleoliad y cynllun/scheme location | Air Products site, Acrefair |
| Disgrifiad y cynllun/scheme description | Mixed use masterplan |
| Statws cynllunio/planning status | Cyn gwneud cais/ pre-application |
| Datganiadau o ddi-ddordeb/declaration of interests | None |

Adran 1/part 1

Cyflwyniad/Presentation

This 11 hectare site is allocated for mixed use development in the Wrexham CBC LDP, which indicates that a planning brief will be produced to guide development on the site. This brief will be prepared by the local planning authority but is unlikely to be ready before an outline planning application is submitted in Sept/Oct 2011.

The proposal is for a residential led development, of around 200 units and a mix of commercial uses, predominantly local-need retail. The 'Emerging Masterplan' document contains contextual information and site analysis, and seeks to establish design parameters covering layout, public realm, built form and landscape.

The social club building on the northern parcel will be gifted to the club members. The surrounding green space will remain in the ownership of Air Products and be retained as public open space and playing fields.

Crynodeb o'r prif bwyntiau a gododd o'r drafodaeth, i'w darllen ochr yn ochr ag Adran 2 yr adroddiad hwn.

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

The Panel was pleased to see this proposal at an early stage, and we welcomed the aspirations of the client to return some benefit to the community. However, the masterplan diagram fails to establish convincing design principles and is an unsatisfactory basis from which to develop further options. In summary:

- We welcome the preparation of a development brief for the site, but this should precede any planning application.
- While much information is provided on nearby towns of Chirk, Ruabon and Llangollen, there is little analysis of the area immediately surrounding the site.
- Connections across the site and linkages to surrounding communities should be maximized, and this should be the design driver for the whole scheme.
- Historical routes and features should be celebrated and integrated with the pedestrian network, and new desire lines anticipated.
- A second major entrance would help to prevent congestion and avoid an insular 'cul-de-sac' development. We urged the team to explore possibilities for a second entrance on the western boundary.
- Wider site sections are necessary to assess the change of level at different points along the site boundary.
- We are not convinced by the road and block layout, or the compatibility of public squares with road junctions.
- We urged the team to commit to environmental standards higher than the current statutory minimum.
- We think that an outline planning application based on the current level of information would be premature.
- A detailed layout plan should be developed (in preference to a masterplan) to test design principles and to help shape block sizes and layouts.

Adran 2/part 2

**Trafodaeth ac Ymateb y Panel yn Llawn
Discussion and panel response in full**

The Panel thought that this development should work to challenge the isolated nature of the site, which made sense in its former use as a factory, but was not appropriate for a 21st century residential community. The proposal offers the opportunity to tie existing settlements back together, and establish physical connections across the site based on desire lines.

These pedestrian and cycle links could incorporate historical and archaeological features, such as the kilns from the iron ore works and the old railway line and tramways. The design team claimed that the site layout reflected the 'historic palimpsest' of earlier uses, but the Panel found little evidence of this. These

historical features and references could be the driver for the whole scheme, providing the 'big idea' which would add value and achieve something more distinctive than the normal housebuilder layout.

With the aim of establishing better connections to the surrounding neighbourhoods, the Panel explored the possibility of additional access points and alternative boundary treatments. We were informed that the strip of land on the northwestern boundary alongside Llangollen Road was in the ownership of the local authority highways department, and that the significant change in levels would make any new access along the north west and south west boundary very difficult. In the absence of any section drawings or large scale countour plan, the Panel found it difficult to judge the viability of a new entrance along the western section of the site, which could provide direct links to the communities of Trevor and Cefn Mawr. We understood that an existing pedestrian access point to the south west could not be widened to accommodate vehicle access.

The Panel sought more details on the nature of the straight spine road, referred to as a 'green avenue'. The design team envisaged a lane running through green spaces, but without any detail on the street width, surface treatment, landscape or parking arrangements, it was difficult to assess how this would work. In particular, the public squares located at every junction were not convincing. While we welcomed the application of principles advocated in Manual for Streets and the beginnings of a street hierarchy, more detailed information and design guidance will be needed to carry this forward in a convincing way. We were encouraged to learn that the development brief will probably include a design code.

While the proposed density is still unresolved, we were told that the area of highest density housing might be up to 45 dph, and this would inevitably raise issues of public realm and parking. We thought that there may be benefit in moving the high density area to the southern or western boundary to create a more continuous street edge, rather than being hidden in the middle of the site.

The optimum location for the retail area depends largely on the kind of retail envisaged. A small parade of shops might be better incorporated within the scheme, for example to enclose a public square. The current arrangement suggests a 'big box' retail outlet, surrounded by parking and divorced from this development.

The material presented contained no information on environmental performance and we were told that the statutory minimum of Code 3 and BREEAM Very Good, would be met. The Panel urged the team and the local authority to be more ambitious in setting higher targets at an early stage. The targets should reflect the changes likely to be introduced following the devolution of the Building Regulations to Wales in 2012. An early commitment to incorporate site-wide issues into the design, such as drainage, energy strategy and building orientation, will enable sustainability measures to be included in a cost-effective way.

The Panel noted that the design parameters plan appeared to indicate the removal of a significant section of woodland on the easternmost part of the site. This would

need to be well justified by an arboricultural survey which identified significant or protected trees. We were informed that a site survey has been done, wildlife habitats identified and no pollution or contamination found.

Mae Panel Adolygu Dylunio Comisiwn Dylunio Cymru a'r staff yn croesawu rhagor o ymgynghoriad, a bydd yn hapus i ddarparu rhagor o adborth am yr adroddiad yma a/neu lle bo'n briodol, dderbyn cyflwyniadau pellach. Diolch am ymgynghori â'r Comisiwn a chadwch mewn cysylltiad â ni os gwelwch yn dda ynglŷn â hynt eich prosiect. A fyddech gystal â'n hysbysu o ddatblygiad eich prosiect. Diolch yn fawr am ymgynghori â'r Comisiwn.

The Design Commission for Wales Design Review Panel welcomes further consultation and we will be happy to provide further feedback on this report and/or where appropriate, to receive further presentations. Please keep us informed of the progress of your project. Thank you for consulting the Commission.

***Mae copi iath Gymraeg o'r adroddiad hwn ar gael ar ofyn.
A Welsh language copy of this report is available upon request.***

Atodiad 1/appendix 1 Mynychwyr/attendees

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| Asiant/Client/Datblygwr Agent/Client/Developer | Air Products Ltd |
| Pensaer/Dylunydd Trefol Architectural/Urban Designer | Escape Urbanists (Roger Lomas, Bob Phillips) |
| Ymgynghorwyr/Consultants | BNP Paribas (Justin Cove) |
| Trydydd Parti/Third Party | n/a |
| Awdurdod Cynllunio/Planning Authority | Wrexham CBC (Nicola Corbishley, Kevin Hughes) |
| Y Panel Adolygu Dylunio/ Design Review Panel Cadeirydd/Chair Swydog/Officer Prif Banelydd/Lead Panellist | Alan Francis Cindy Harris Jonathan Adams Roger Ayton Phil Roberts Ben Sibert |
| Sylwedyddion/Observers | Alex Berry (CPlan student) |

