

Statws/Status:

**Cyfrinachol / Confidential
at the time of review**



****This report applies to the scheme seen at the time of review****

Adroddiad Adolygu Dylunio: Design Review Report:	22 February 2008
Dyddiad Cyfarfod / Meeting Date:	13 February 2008
Lleoliad/Location:	Cwrt y Gollen, Crickhowell
Disgrifiad o'r Cynllun Scheme Description:	Residential / Mixed use
Cleient/Asiant: Client/Agent:	RE Phillips + Partners [Ross Murray] Brecon Beacons National Park [Edgar Jones]
Developer/Datblygwr:	Crickhowell Estates
Architect / Pensaer:	LDA Design [Frazer Osment]
Awdurdod Cynllunio: Planning Authority:	Brecon Beacons National Park
Statws Cynllunio: Planning Status:	Pre-application
Y Panel Adolygu Dylunio/ Design Review Panel: Alan Francis (cadeirydd/chair) Cindy Harris (swyddog/officer) Charlie Deng (swyddog/officer) Ewan Jones	Steve Smith Ann-Marie Smale Ed Colgan Phil Roberts
Lead Panellist:	Ann-Marie Smale

Sylwedyddion/Observers:

**Joanne Smith [SRD, Planning]
Tom Woolley, [N Ireland MAG]
Rhiannon Griffiths [UWE]**

Cyflwyniad/Presentation

This former MOD site is now owned by the developer, Crickhowell Estates, and is allocated for mixed use development in the BBNP UDP, with the requirement for a development brief to be prepared. A steering group was formed to progress this and an extensive public consultation process has informed the vision document. LDA has been commissioned to draw up the framework for an exemplary development in the brief.

The illustrative layout shows a new residential development of 200 dwellings, divided into developable blocks, to the south east of the site and a courtyard type employment development to the north west. A green 'wedge' in between will be left as open parkland and the whole development will be well screened from the adjacent A40 main road. A tree survey has been done; most existing trees will be protected and maintained, while allowing for future growth. In response to the site, views out, solar access, linkages and the constraints of the flood plain have all been design drivers.

A community building will front the development on the main road, beside one of the two access roads. The existing church, museum, cricket pavilion and gymnasium will be retained. There will be a minimum of 20% affordable housing and 10% of the dwellings will be built to 'lifetime homes' standards. Sheltered accommodation for the elderly may be included in the north west 'commercial' segment.

Ymateb y Panel/Panel's Response

The Panel requested clarification on the proposed density. In the UDP this was projected as likely to be 30-50 du/ha, whereas this proposal shows around 28 du/ha. We were informed that feedback from the community and the Local Planning Authority favoured a lower density.

The Commission's main concern with this proposal was the urban nature of the site layout, in what is unquestionably a rural site. We thought that the strongly gridded layout should be broken up with a more obvious hierarchy of streets, and this should be made explicit by the arrangement of buildings and street widths. We would like to see more variety in the grouping of buildings and more random clusters of buildings. The edge treatment also needs

greater variety and a more gradual transition between buildings, gardens, semi-managed land, and wild land. A more ragged edge to the development would help tie it into the site and context and we welcome the inclusion of allotments.

The Panel was concerned that there should be a continuity and consistency of architectural language throughout the development, and thought that using different developers and designers might mitigate against that. We thought that the size of the scheme was more appropriate for a single development team. In our opinion the development would benefit from being made tighter and more compact. This would help reduce infrastructure costs and leave the potential option of developing the remainder of the designated site in the future subject to easing of the LPA's density restrictions, should subsequent planning reviews support additional housing on the site.

The Panel questioned the retention of the blocks on the northern edge of site, for conversion into apartments, in terms of whether they were of an appropriate scale, and whether this might result in too many units of this type. The developer stated that he was confident of the demand for apartments in the area. While the Panel would support the reuse of demolition materials, we thought that the re-use of buildings needed to be justified in terms of function and compatibility. We felt strongly that any sheltered accommodation for the elderly should be included in the new village, not located in the employment quarter.

With regard to the proposed 'character areas', the Panel doubted that these were meaningful. The proposed 'village centre', arranged round the church and the village green, has none of the other attributes that might be expected, such as a pub or shops, although we were informed that live/work uses would be included. The Panel noted that it was not certain that the church would remain as a church, which called into question its retention as a key building. The 'village centre' appeared to be offset from the nearest convergence of routes and hence unlikely to benefit from people passing through it. We accepted that a development of this size was not able to sustain the multiple uses associated with a traditional village high street, and concluded that the use of character names was therefore misleading. Similarly the concept of a 'solar quarter' implied [incorrectly in our view] that this was the best or only area where solar orientation could be exploited.

The Panel considered that principles of sustainability should guide the whole development and should reflect the aspiration of the Welsh Assembly Government for all new buildings to be zero carbon by 2011. We were informed that BBNP was committed to sustainable development, and that the team anticipated delivering an energy efficient, low carbon development through the use of design codes. Nevertheless we thought that these principles, together with environmental performance targets, should be emphasised more in the development brief, and advised that any design code would need to be part of a legal framework. We thought that the scheme

might be appropriate for a district heating network and were pleased that the Severn Wye Energy Agency had already advised on this. We noted that sustainable drainage would be an important element to mitigate the proximity of the flood plain.

The Panel was informed that a transport plan would be submitted with the planning application, and the team is exploring the possibility of a bus route through the site. The Panel urged that the potential for a pedestrian link east across the river to the village of Glangrwyney should be explored. The pedestrian link north west to Crickhowell also needs to be shown on plans. We advised that the proposed parking arrangements should be reconsidered, in view of the recommendations contained in Manual for Streets and the need to embrace a proportion of on-street car parking.

The Panel would like the team to pay special regard to street and footway lighting and to avoid tall lighting standards on the open road across the site and the green open space.

Crynodeb/Summary

The Panel welcomed the opportunity to review this proposal and appreciates the huge potential of such a development in this beautiful location. We support the design objectives and the vision statement, but we think that the site layout which has been developed is an unacceptable response to the brief and the site. In our view the process would benefit from a fresh approach which addresses the following:

- The development should reflect its rural location, with a more informal arrangement of buildings, a stronger street hierarchy and a softer edge treatment. There is an opportunity for greater recognition of the existing trees, and using these plus new planting to inform and structure the layout of roads and dwellings.
- The fundamental requirements for the scheme should be set out in the development brief, rather than left to design codes to implement
- We question the argument for lower density, and we think the layout should be more compact, leaving development potential for the future
- The reuse of the existing blocks to the north should be re-evaluated in terms of their compatibility with the new built form and the optimum mix of accommodation
- We doubt the desirability of using different developers and architects on a scheme of this size
- We think the character area designations are misleading and unhelpful
- There is insufficient commitment shown to achieving sustainable development and a low carbon community. This needs to be made more explicit, and a holistic strategy adopted which specifies minimum standards and targets

- The inevitability of on-street parking should be accepted and designed in to the street layout
- Any retirement accommodation should be integrated into the residential component.

Diwedd/End

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