

Statws/Status:

Cyhoeddus / Public

DESIGN
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DYLUNIO
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Adroddiad Adolygu Dylunio: Design Review Report:	29 March 2007
Dyddiad Cyfarfod / Cyflwyno'r Deunydd: Meeting Date / Material Submitted:	14 March 2007
Lleoliad/Location:	Penarth Heights
Disgrifiad o'r Cynllun Scheme Description:	Residential
Cleient/Asiant: Client/Agent:	Vale of Glamorgan Council [Mark White]
Developer/Datblygwr:	Crest Nicholson [Paul Talbot]
Pensaer/Architect:	Edward Cullinan Architects [Colin Rice] Nicholas Pearson Associates [Nicholas Pearson]
Awdurdod Cynllunio: Planning Authority:	Vale of Glamorgan Council [Rob Thomas, Jane Crofts]
Statws Cynllunio: Planning Status:	Detailed application submitted March 07
Y Panel Adolygu Dylunio/ Design Review Panel: John Punter (cadeirydd/chair) Cindy Harris (swyddog/officer) Charlie Deng (swyddog/officer) Carole-Anne Davies CEO, DCFW	Douglas Hogg Ashley Bateson Phil Roberts
Lead Panellist:	John Punter

Cyflwyniad/Presentation

Proposals for this site at Penarth Heights have been presented to DCFW twice before - in November 2004, when we commented on the tender bids, and in July 2005 after Crest Nicholson had been appointed. With this application just submitted, the total dwelling numbers have been reduced to 377, with 20% affordable units pepper potted through the site. There is a greater mix of housing types, sizes and tenures with more emphasis on family housing. The urban grain is similar to the original proposal with a proposed density of 54 du/ha. The 'Home Zone' approach on the side streets has led to an ongoing discussion with the Highways Department to achieve consensus on a number of issues. There is now a clearer hierarchy of streets, with 'garden streets' running at right angles to the Ridgeway. These are 'Home Zones' with a mix of diagonal car parking and small courtyards, and each space is designated. The Ridgeway itself has been narrowed to 16 metres with shared surfaces, public squares and parking courts to calm traffic. Each intersection on the Ridgeway is defined by four storey apartment buildings with three storey townhouses between. Parallel car parking is provided on the Ridgeway.

To the north Ridgeway Crescent has been terminated two thirds of the way along its length creating a cul-de-sac, and continuing as a footpath across the parkland. Hard standing and garage access is now from the rear, where a car parking court has been created between two apartment buildings.

The number of apartment blocks on Arcot Green has been reduced to one of four storeys, and the two storey mews blocks between the two crescents have street level garages with flats above. The two storey terraced houses to the north are articulated with projecting bays and recessed porches, while those facing south are executed as a plain curved terrace with monopitch roof units either side of the footpath. The villa-style houses on Woodlands Road have gables at the front. A 'colour strategy' has been adopted to reinforce a sense of place.

Changes to the proposed edge and boundary treatment have resulted in 1.2m high railings [1.8m high in rear gardens] instead of a 2m high fence on Arcot Green. Existing walkways are retained and enhanced and lit with low light bollards. Open spaces such as Plassey Square have been simply and minimally landscaped in response to community consultation. The Arcot Triangle too has been simplified and connections strengthened. Management guidelines have been produced for the amenity space to the north, including a programme to eradicate Japanese knotweed.

The parking ratio is 150% and an integral public art strategy will be adopted. An EcoHomes rating of Very Good will be achieved. Sustainable forms of construction have been explored and green roofs are being considered for the buildings below Arcot Green. The existing community centre will be relocated - possibly to St Pauls church hall on Arcot Street which is in need of renovating.

The Local Authority raised the following key issues of concern to them:

- The reconciliation of planning issues with highways issues, in order to support the 'Home Zone' approach.
- A wish to see a larger scale of development on top of the ridge to the north and overlooking the marina to provide a strong skyline.
- A wish to keep the mews courts and crescents low rise, with views from existing properties protected.

Ymateb y Panel/Panel's Response

The Panel congratulated the project team on the excellent design statement and presentation materials. We commented that this might well be the best scheme that DCFW has seen of this type and scale.

With regard to our previous comments, we were informed that the parking ratio had been increased to provide a better match with the new mix of dwellings and this was a market based decision. Highways officers had sought a parking ratio of 200%.

The Panel expressed in principle support for on-street parking, but questioned how well it was integrated with the landscaping and the protection of private space. The design team acknowledged that this was a compromise solution and that the degree of permeability was not ideal, with large cul-de-sacs rather than through routes. The segregation of adoptable areas proved a further constraint.

Parallel parking is provided on the Ridgeway as highways officers would not allow parking at right angles to the road. A one-way traffic system through the home zone area has resulted from the Highways Authority's injunction against cross-overs at junctions. This follows advice contained in DB32 which is about to become redundant and the Panel was not convinced that this injunction was necessary, given the launch of the Manual for Streets effective from 31 March 2007. We advised against an over-engineered solution with lots of signage and preferred the design team's more subtle approach of slowing traffic with changes in street surfaces, furniture and trees, which should convey the necessary messages and encourage eye contact between driver and pedestrians.

The Panel noted the circuitous nature of the routes around the allotments and asked the design team to look at solutions which would improve the permeability in this area, possibly re-introducing the link between Woodlands Road and Royal Close, and providing a direct footpath link between Plassey Square and Woodlands Road. We thought the relationship between the crescent and the linear housing appeared awkward in plan especially on the western side and that this transition needed to be better managed.

The Panel was concerned about the dominance of ‘up-and-over’ garage doors at street level in the Woodlands Road villas. We were told that large first floor windows had been introduced to compensate for the lack of animation at street level. Further west on Woodlands Road, we were told that the blank walls at the end of the housing blocks were necessary to negotiate the changes of level, but would be landscaped. The Panel acknowledged that the change in levels effectively precluded rear access.

The Panel considered that the issue of the skyline and views from the Marina had been very well handled.

The team claimed that the scheme has a strong social sustainability element, with 20% affordable housing, based on shared equity and renting, and developed with United Welsh Housing Association. Some of the units are earmarked for the rehousing of existing tenants. The distribution of affordable housing will be in clusters of no more than 10 units and two bungalows are included to increase the variety of housing type. The Panel considered that a relocated and improved community building will be an important social facility and a good way of retaining the church.

The Panel noted that the provisional EcoHomes rating was borderline Very Good, and we questioned whether this was sufficiently ambitious. We were disappointed to see the inclusion of individual gas boilers as we thought that this scheme had enough critical mass to justify a district heating scheme, which could include CHP. We urged the design team to re-examine the potential for more efficient energy supply systems. The developer stated that improving the EcoHomes rating to Excellent was unlikely to be viable, even though the Panel advised that this was due to be required for all public housing in the near future, and that statutory requirements for sustainable housing are being continuously improved.

We were informed that modern methods of construction [MMC] might be used and these would improve the environmental performance. The Panel urged the team to establish and support local supply chains and to use a timber frame system in the construction. We thought that using u-PVC doors and windows would be highly detrimental to the perceived quality of the buildings and to any aspiration towards sustainable construction.

Cycling provision will be improved to meet BRE criteria, and will be provided on street where possible. The Panel was reassured to hear that an allocation approach will be used to govern the home zone car parking.

An approach to sustainable drainage has been developed in conjunction with the Environment Agency. Balancing ponds have been removed and all surface water now drains down into the marina.

The Panel acknowledged the local authority’s Public Art Strategy and SPG which had informed the developer’s own and the commitment to a percent for art investment strategy, as recommended in the SPG. The appointment of a specialist consultant already in place was also welcomed. We urged the

team to look at ways of engaging professional artists with the relevant status, experience and track record to work in support of the environmental strategy and with associated technologies, thereby adding value. This approach needs to be incorporated into the design at an early stage, ideally pre-application, and so is now urgent, particularly the role of the “choreographic role” of the proposed lead artist. Thought should be given to using creative projects to enhance community engagement strategies linked to the community centre and potential use of the Church, as well as enhancing the allotments as a focus for community activity. The Panel asked that where “signature works” might be used, great care is taken to ensure a sophisticated approach. The proposed public art panel should be carefully managed by the appointed consultants, as should local relationships with Public Art Wales and the Arts Council of Wales.

Crynodeb/Summary

The Panel expressed positive support for this proposal and congratulated the design team on the excellence of their presentation. In many ways this is a very high quality scheme and one that has the potential to be an exemplar in terms of urban design. It is therefore particularly unfortunate that the sustainability strategy lacks the necessary ambition and commitment to deliver genuine low carbon development.

Our comments and recommendations are summarised thus:

- We strongly support the imaginative ‘Home Zone’ approach to the design and layout of streets and parking spaces. The landscaping strategy, allocation of parking spaces and minimal signage all reinforce this exemplary design approach.
- We would like to see improved permeability and the reconnection of Woodlands Road at its eastern end, as well as a direct footpath from Plassey Square to Woodlands Road.
- We support the distribution of the affordable housing, which we are pleased to see includes a social rented element, and the relocation of the community centre and the renovation of the church.
- It is vitally important for the overall success of this project that there should be a commitment to achieving EcoHomes Excellent. The potential for a district heating scheme should be re-evaluated. The use of locally sourced materials should be maximised and timber frame construction systems explored. U-PVC doors and windows should be avoided in favour of timber or composite timber/aluminium.
- The public art strategy is promising but needs to be integrated into the design development as soon as possible.
- We endorse the strategy of restricting the colours used in different zones and will watch this aspect of the development with interest.

Diwedd/End

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