

# 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**

Dyddiad cyfarfod/meeting date  
Dyddiad cyhoeddi/issue date  
Lleoliad y cynllun/scheme location  
Disgrifiad y cynllun/scheme description  
Statws cynllunio/planning status

24th August 2011  
6th September 2011  
Aberdare Hospital site  
Preswyl/residential  
Cyn gwneud cais/  
pre-application

### **Datganiadau o ddi-ddordeb/declaration of interests:**

Mark Hallett declared that he has commissioned Barton Willmore in the past.  
Steve Smith used to work for RCT until 4 years ago, and was involved in the early stages of this scheme.  
Wendy Richards is working with RCT on formulating Development Briefs for non-strategic sites.

### **Adran 1/part 1**

### **Cyflwyniad/Presentation**

The provision of a new hospital in Mountain Ash, due for completion by the end of this year, has released the site of the Aberdare hospital for residential development. This site is allocated in the LDP for 500-600 units. An adjacent site across the river to the south west is allocated for commercial development. The Cwm Taf Health Board intend to submit an outline application with masterplan towards the end of this year. Their aim is to attract developers in order to realise the best market value for the site. Parsons Brinkerhoff have been contracted to carry out the

Environmental Assessment and Barton Willmore have been sub contracted to produce the masterplan.

The site is within easy walking distance of the town centre and all major facilities. There are significant mature trees on the site, some of which are protected by TPOs. The Afon Cynon to the south west forms the basis of a linear SINC which widens to include the former parkland to the north west of the hospital building. All existing buildings on site will be demolished.

The masterplanners are questioning the required density as indicated in the LDP, and are seeking an independent view. They calculate that there is just over 9 hectares of developable land, which with some adjustments has recently been increased to 10.7 ha. Recent site investigation has indicated the presence of extensive mineworkings under the site and this may further affect the developable area.

The Local Authority are generally supportive and keen to see proposals come forward for this site, while accepting that nothing is fixed in stone.

**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 recognised that this is an ambitious scheme on a difficult site, albeit one with good connections to a thriving Valleys town. We appreciate the tensions that exist between realising best market value, delivering housing numbers, and achieving the best possible design solutions, and we think that major issues remain to be resolved. In summary:

- More thorough, contextual information needs to be provided, showing more detail of this site and a wider view of its immediate surroundings. A demonstration of an understanding of local distinctiveness is required.
- Any proposal for this site should be demonstrably site-responsive, and should begin with a site analysis informed by the EIA and a landscape strategy which are both overdue.
- Indicative densities should be viewed flexibly at this stage, especially in view of the significant site constraints. However, we think the figure of 500-600 units quoted in the LDP is both unachievable and undesirable.
- The parkland area to the north should benefit from a more bespoke treatment with much lower densities and higher design quality.
- Linkages to the town centre should be reinforced and made attractive to pedestrians.
- A procedure for reviewing the masterplan, on a bi-annual basis or similar, should be agreed as part of the planning application

- The LPA should consider establishing a design code or some other mechanism to control the quality of the development, and as a guide to future reserved matters applications.
- In light of current RCT council policies and the strategic site status, the local authority should investigate the feasibility of setting CO<sub>2</sub> reduction targets greater than the statutory minimum.
- Historical references such as the remnants of the walled garden should be retained and enhanced in the landscape.
- The next steps leading to the submission of an outline application should concentrate on the preparation of a full masterplan including EIA, TIA, public realm and sustainability strategies.

## **Adran 2/part 2**

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

The Panel requested an update on the recent site investigations. Some areas of the site have been identified as being at high risk from collapse or undermining, and it is likely that comprehensive grouting and enhanced foundation solutions will be necessary over the majority of the site. These findings are still being assessed but will inevitably affect the overall viability of the scheme, as well as the timing and disposal programme. Once the impact of this has been digested, work will proceed on preparing an outline planning application with masterplan.

The Panel thought that the numbers-based approach to determining the quantum of development – taking the area of the site and multiplying that by the density – is not appropriate for this site and many others in the Valleys. We were convinced that 600 units was not viable or desirable and, once the topography, TPOs and grouting issues were taken into account, the achievable numbers are likely to be much fewer.

The Panel stated that lower densities could actually deliver better value, and even medium densities of 30-35 dph would imply some terraced housing or apartments. The LPA representative noted that a proposal for a much lower density than that suggested in the LDP might not comply with policy and would need to be very well justified.

Development on the northern part of the site would involve a significant loss of high quality parkland – a relatively unique landscape in the industrial valleys. As such, a standard housebuilder solution may not be appropriate in this area, unless it was of low density, sensitively integrated with the landscape, and well controlled by means of a design code or similar mechanism linked to planning conditions.

The most important consideration is that the design should be site-responsive. As a precedent for new residential development in this area and for other strategic sites, we suggested that the team seek out international examples of good practice, while developing local distinctiveness. The EIA should be a key driver in the design development and needs to be done urgently. We understood that this work had

been put on hold pending the resolution of other issues. However, the Panel thought that the ecological findings of the EIA should inform decisions on densities and location of buildings, and not be treated as an afterthought.

Historical features such as the remnants of the walled garden should be preserved and incorporated in the landscape treatment.

Improving and enhancing links to the town centre should be a priority. The Panel understood that the river and change in levels to the south west meant that the existing vehicular access was the only viable option, but we urged the team to make this as pedestrian friendly as possible and factor in provision at an early stage. The possibility of a second access from Moss Row to the north east and the incorporation of a bus link, is under consideration.

The next steps in the design process should include the preparation of a full masterplan with EIA, TIA, public realm strategy, sustainability analysis including orientation, energy supply assessment, and possible design code. All drawings should include a North point and the site analysis should show a sunpath diagram. Site sections are important and should be included. A three-dimensional physical model of the site and proposed built form would be informative. There should be an agreed mechanism for reviewing the masterplan at different stages of the development.

It will be important for the local authority to determine what parameters need to be set at the outline application stage. These will include access, densities, and routes through the site, but could also include a design code or other mechanism to indicate and protect the desired quality. This could be done in a way which was flexible and non-prescriptive about house types, but provided guidance on issues such as materials and massing. The main purpose would be to manage expectations and offer some certainty for developers, while giving the LPA the right tools to resist poor quality development. Whilst the Panel appreciated the Health Board's aspirations to dispose of the site for the maximum return and therefore their wish not to unduly prescribe design control, we considered the site to be so important that some prescription was inevitable and necessary

The Panel understood that a Renewable Energy Assessment (REA) should have been produced as part of the supporting documentation for the LDP. Although REAs will differ by local authority, there is an expectation that the LPA would have made an assessment of low and zero carbon energy resources within its jurisdiction, with a view to developing appropriate renewable energy policies.

Key to achieving significant CO<sub>2</sub> savings, and suggested within current Welsh Government practice guidance documents, is the setting of enhanced CO<sub>2</sub> reduction targets for strategic sites. In the light of this and existing RCT policy, we would expect to see, as a minimum, a thorough assessment of the LZC potential of the site and, where feasible, CO<sub>2</sub> emission reductions greater than the statutory minimum to be secured by the LPA. Dependent upon final densities, this might

include infrastructural links with the new commercial site to the south west and / or other solutions (including off-site offset).

**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**

Asiant/Client/Datblygwr Agent/Client/Developer	Cwm Taf LHB
Pensaer/Dylunydd Trefol Architectural/Urban Designer	Barton Willmore (Martin Douglas)
Ymgynghorwyr/Consultants	Louis Chicot Associates (Louis Chicot) NHS Wales SSP (Elgan Jones)
Trydydd Parti/Third Party	n/a
Awdurdod Cynllunio/Planning Authority	Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC (Simon Gale, Gareth Davies, Robert Chiat, Phil Ratcliffe)
Y Panel Adolygu Dylunio/ Design Review Panel Cadeirydd/Chair Swydog/Officer Prif Banelydd/Lead Panellist	Alan Francis Cindy Harris Mark Hallett Simon Carne Simon Hartley Steve Smith

Sylwedyddion/Observers

Wendy Richards (DCfW)