

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 submitted in June 2011

# Addroddiad Adolygu Dylunio Design Review Report

## Review Status: **Confidential**

Meeting date:	2nd March 2011
Issue Date:	25th March 2011
Scheme Location:	Llantrisant Talbot Green
Scheme Description:	Retail / mixed use
Planning Status:	Pre-application

## Part1: Presentation

This proposal was first reviewed in June 2010 and subsequently November 2010. In response to DCfW's Design Review report of 3rd November 2010, the design team stated that they had concluded that the main focus of town centre activity should be located on Cowbridge Road. The north/south route through the site therefore remains unchanged, and the 'market place' has been developed as an extension of a shared surface street with an integrated public transport hub planned to the west of the site, hopefully to link with a new rail station.

The intention is to provide a strong landscape treatment to most of the north, east and south perimeter. Some residential units will line part of the multi storey car park on the southern boulevard, and the impact of the large vehicular entrance off the A473 will be mitigated by a large screen and more landscaping. It was confirmed that the disused railway line to the north will become a pedestrian/cycle route in the interim, and that the road crossing which connects to the north west corner of the site will therefore be at grade.

The project team is working towards an outline planning application for the whole site and a detailed application for phase 1 (the supermarket). There has been a good level of engagement with the local planning authority which confirms the allocation of the site is due to be approved for adoption very soon, as part of the Local Development Plan (LDP). The local authority agrees that the town centre element of the project should be focussed on Cowbridge Road, and they are still working on details of the northern access.

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

The Panel welcomed the return of this project to Design Review and the serious consideration given by the project team to our previous comments. However, the points made in our earlier report still stand and we think major issues remain which urgently need to be resolved. In summary:

- This proposal should be assessed according to whether it is capable of delivering a new town centre, rather than a new retail park or shopping mall.
- More work needs to be undertaken by the planning authority to resolve how the proposed 'town centre' can be connected to other parts of the town, and how future development to the west will reinforce the centrality and accessibility of the centre. A new rail station would be a key part of this but does not seem to figure in the plans for the engineering of the junctions and access points to the north of the site. We recommend the development of an urban design framework to ensure that this project can properly connect with existing and proposed new development.
- Before any detailed design can proceed, strategic decisions need to be made on access points and pedestrian connections and crossings which are outside the red line. At present, the project could hardly be less connected in terms of pedestrian and cycle movements, and the proposals seem likely to deliver a project that is entirely car oriented.
- A simple diagram of links running through the site and connections with recent development, notably to the south and east, needs to be embedded in the proposal. There are wider problems of access to the town centre from the south which need to be resolved, particularly as adjacent residential development proceeds.
- While the outline designs presented show that the quantum of development and car parking can be accommodated on the site, the Panel does not have confidence that the building disposition, public realm proposals, and notions of distinct quarters will deliver a successful town centre, unless these connections and pedestrian desire lines are better resolved.
- Further effort should be made to engage positively with the school and the Education Department in order to resolve pedestrian access from the north and south, particularly on the eastern edge of the site (aligned with the frontages of the supermarket and the department store).
- To the extent that the first phase is not a financial enabler for further development, and demand for the projected units is likely to be strong, every effort should be made to ensure a continuous programme of development up to 2016.

## **Part 2: Discussion and Panel Response in Full**

The Panel repeated earlier concerns about the lack of connections between this development and the three communities – of Llantrisant, Talbot Green and Pontyclun – that it is intended to serve. While recognising the constraint of the A473, the team stated that there will be a travel plan which integrates private and public transport. Some pedestrian connections already exist, although they are in need of improvement, but the possibility of

developing new links from the south and south east has been made more difficult by ecological concerns.

The Panel welcomed the design team's aspiration to provide links to residential areas to the south. The management of adjoining woodland and ecological resources needs to be achieved in conjunction with the local population. Exclusion is not practical, achievable or desirable.

Our main concern was the lack of an urban design framework for the Llantrisant area as a whole, which established linkages not only with the nearby residential communities but also with existing retail facilities, so that the mix of uses in the area work together and complement each other. We fully accepted and emphasised that this was the responsibility of the local authority rather than this developer.

This spatial framework should identify uses, scale and public realm before considering site layout and architectural treatment. There is an inherent conflict between the requirements and characteristics of large foodstores and out-of-town shopping centres on the one hand, and smaller scale, more intimate, locally integrated, mixed-use town centres on the other. At the moment this scheme will not function as a town centre unless there is a greater commitment to establishing the necessary pedestrian linkages. If this proposal is to be more than an edge-of-town retail park, it is vital to address issues beyond the site boundary.

For example, the proposed junction on the A473 with Cowbridge Road is an anti-urban form which could prejudice the ambition for a new town centre further down Cowbridge Road. If the policy ambition is to be delivered, the local authority should recognise that the A473 is no longer a bypass, but a road passing through a town centre which should be treated accordingly. The crossing of the road and connections with areas to the north should be as seamless as possible, and should certainly be at grade and unimpeded by major traffic controls. This is especially important as uses along Cowbridge Road, even with this development, will be one-sided for the foreseeable future. The new town centre therefore risks becoming isolated without strong links to the north and south. Furthermore, consideration should be given to any changes within the three existing communities which may be needed to make the new town centre work.

The expectation that the food store will not trade for 24 hours reinforces the Panel's concern that a 'town centre' function founded on a narrow retail offer will not fulfill either the expectations of the local authority or the reasonable aspirations of the local community.

The importance of the phasing programme and its impact on the site in the short to medium term, was recognised. To some extent the supermarket will be a financial enabler but other elements will also need to be commercially viable in themselves. The developer has noted an encouraging demand for the smaller retail units. It was confirmed that the Planning Inspector required a phasing plan which envisages the completion of comparison retail units by 2016. While the town centre element could possibly be brought forward, it was agreed that completion by 2016 would not be an undue delay. However, the Panel would like to see a more continuous process of development, and the possibility of only partial development of the site over a long time period was acknowledged as a risk. Providing a mix of uses within each phase would be critical.

The Panel was concerned at the failure to integrate the school with this development and improve links with the wider community. We understood that contact had been made with the school authority and they had insisted on the need to maintain the secure barrier around the site. A new drop off point will be provided on the southern boulevard, together with a new pedestrian crossing connecting with a north/south route through the site and hopefully linking to a new crossing over the A473. The Panel considered that this minimal provision fell short of the desired degree of integration and urged the team and the local authority to renew their efforts to engage the school in constructive dialogue.

The Panel questioned the high level of parking provision but accepted that this could be a generator of footfall in the absence of effective pedestrian links into the surrounding neighbourhoods. We thought that the use of a CCTV security system was an admission of failure to create a safe, usable urban space.

**The Design Commission for Wales Design Review Panel and staff welcome further consultation and will be happy to provide further feedback on this report and/or where appropriate, to receive further presentations. Thank you for consulting the Commission and please keep in touch with us about the progress of your project.**

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

## **Appendix 1: Attendees**

Asiant/Client/Datblygwr:  
Agent/Client/Developer

Valad Developments  
WAG (Mike Cuddy)  
Morrison Wells (David Wells)

Pensaer/Architect:

Holder Mathias Architects  
(Peter Mathias, Terry Morley)

Awdurdod Cynllunio/  
Planning Authority

Rhondda Cynon Taff CBC  
(Jim Bailey, Robert Chiat, Simon Gale)

Y Panel Adlygu Dylunio:  
Design Review Panel:  
John Punter [Chair]  
Cindy Harris [Officer]  
Carole-Anne Davies

Jonathan Adams  
Andrew Linfoot  
Richard Keogh  
Ewan Jones  
Roger Ayton

Lead Panellist:

Richard Keogh

Sylwedyddion/Observers:

Geraint Talfan Davies  
(Institute of Welsh Affairs)