

# Addroddiad Adolygu Dylunio Design Review Report

## **DATGANIADAU O DDIDDORDEB**

Mae gofyn i aelodau o'r Panel, arsyllwyr a phartïon perthnasol eraill ddatgan unrhyw ddiddordebau 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	23 May 2011
Dyddiad cyhoeddi/issue date	31 May 2011
Leoliad y cynllun/scheme location	Monmouthshire County Hall
Disgrifiad y cynllun/scheme description	Local Authority Offices
Statws cynllunio/planning status	Outline approval received

Datganiadau o ddiddordeb/declaration of interests:

David Harvey declared that he is currently working with Phil Morgan of Just Mammals, it was agreed that everyone was comfortable with him participating in the review.

### **Cyflwyniad/Presentation**

- 1.1 The local authority (LA) outlined their requirements, which are driving the brief including the need to combine the civic demands of a significant building with the practical aspects of creating a working environment and public office. In particular they wish to take a low key approach and avoid perceptions of a grandiose statement while wider economic difficulties prevail.
- 1.2 The scheme is intended to provide new office accommodation for Monmouthshire County Council and replace the existing shared accommodation arrangement with Torfaen County Borough Council, in Cwmbran which is no longer suitable.
- 1.3 Situated on the existing Coleg Gwent campus in Usk, the project has been granted outline planning approval. The LA are now consulting via Design Review in order to discharge the conditions of the outline, and the scheme is being

treated as confidential at this Review. The budget currently available for development of the site is £5.9m. The design team have been appointed through the LA framework contractor Willmott Dixon.

- 1.4 The site is relatively flat and currently jointly owned by Coleg Gwent and Monmouthshire County Council. The proposal is to demolish four existing blocks with the remaining buildings being utilised by Coleg Gwent who will share the campus. The development will provide open plan accommodation in a two storey building or 2500m<sup>2</sup> for 200 employees to hot-desk, along with a small debating chamber and cellular offices for 43 council members and support staff. Much of the space will be naturally ventilated.
- 1.5 An acoustic survey has been undertaken to analyse the ability to open windows as the site is adjacent to the A472. The landscape setting of the campus will on the whole remain undisturbed although some trees, adjacent to the vehicular entrance and close to some of the blocks, may require removal or appropriate tree surgery to the their crowns. The detail of these elements is still under consideration.
- 1.6 This is a significant site for bats, necessitating the retention of some of the existing blocks and this has influenced the roof design for the on the new building, with pitches provided to encourage opportunities for bat roosts.
- 1.7 The outline planning application illustrated staff car parking with separate disabled/accessible/visitor parking on different sides of the building to encourage the use of different entrances. Following design development the preferred approach is to locate parking in one area so that people can approach the building from one direction via a tree lined plaza. There are also pedestrian rights of way through the site to the River Usk.
- 1.8 The design team is aiming to achieve BREEAM Very Good for the scheme with 15% of the necessary energy to come from renewable sources, whilst aiming to provide as much passive environmental control as possible. The scheme will include biomass boilers, solar hot water generation and photovoltaics. The design team investigated the use of wind energy, but this was considered detrimental to the ecological success of the site.
- 1.9 The remaining existing buildings on the site will not be renovated with this proposal and some are under the ownership of Coleg Gwent.
- 1.10 The design team has chosen to adopt a contemporary approach to the design whilst complimenting the existing buildings. Treatment of the elevations is still evolving; the team envisages a mix of pitched and flat roof components and the potential remains for green roofs on flat roof areas.

**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.**

- 2.1 The Panel welcomed the simple, clarity of the presentation and acknowledged that whilst the site is an attractive rural campus it is also a challenging project. The Panel was encouraged to have a multi-disciplinary team at the review.
- 2.2 Overall the Panel considered that the scheme presented some minor issues to be resolved:
- How the new building sits, directly adjacent and in relation to the retained buildings, needs further exploration. A physical model would be helpful in exploring the relationship of the built form and massing of the proposals.
  - The Panel thought the basic logical and clear building diagram was compromised by the proposed three-dimensional form and detailing, and could be simplified. Such simplification could also result in cost savings and the resolution of some problematic detailing, which could be required in some areas, of the existing proposal.
  - The glazing areas in some offices and the foyer atrium should be reviewed to ensure they do not contribute to overheating.
  - The future requirements of the site/scheme need to be considered to ensure the facility is flexible and adaptable, so as to accommodate future requirements. .
  - Greater attention is required to the relationship of scale and certain room functions
  - More detailed thought should be given to the use of the Registry Office in terms of its function and the importance of a sense of arrival/procession/photographic setting etc.
  - The maintenance and management of the landscape and external works for the campus as a whole need further consideration together with the impact of construction work.

### **Adran 2/part 2                      Trafodaeth ac Ymateb y Panel yn Llawn** **Discussion and Panel response in full**

- 3.1 The Panel questioned the site of the proposal as the council offices are some distance from Usk town centre. The LA explained that they had identified four potential sites and this, whilst not ideal, provided the best solution for their needs.
- 3.2 The Panel highlighted the importance of ensuring that the building has a sense of civic purpose and presence, balanced against the need for it to be approachable, encouraging public access. This also needs to balance the more low key corporate style and civic requirements, and it was recognised that the LA specifically asked for the building to be less prominent to respond to the current economic circumstances.
- 3.3 With regard to architectural form the proposal is for a modest building and the Panel questioned whether enough consideration had been given to how the architectural language might reflect the image of Monmouthshire County Council and promote local Welsh democracy.

- 3.4 The Panel were not persuaded that the roof design necessitated pitches meeting flat roofs, or by the position of protruding bays. Overall this response would benefit from a less complicated approach that would also be more cost effective. The proposals include large areas of glazing on the southwest side where smaller rooms were located and this could prove problematic in terms of overheating. The presenting team explained that ARUP are investigating issues around potential solar gain and this would be assessed in detail.
- 3.5 The Panel commented that the central plaza area is very subtle and that this approach overlooks the opportunity to create a strong sense of place.
- 3.6 The documentation did not provide any views of the proposed new buildings alongside those that would be retained and the Panel felt that this, along with a model of the proposed site, would usefully inform the design.
- 3.7 The Panel asked about the interface of the site with Coleg Gwent and enquired as to the strategy for managing the site jointly, especially in terms of providing suitable landscape management and ground maintenance. The Panel urged that these discussions take place now to secure the longevity of the landscape and the setting of the campus.
- 3.8 The Panel raised the issue of a clear signage strategy to aid orientation as there were currently two points of arrival by vehicle, one by bus and potentially one by foot with no public footpath adjacent to the A472. It should be clear to members of the public where the entrances to Coleg Gwent or the council offices are.
- 3.9 Whilst the site does not provide much space for future expansion, the Panel asked whether there was a possibility to refurbish existing buildings to allow for future flexibility or adaptability if this became necessary.
- 3.10 Access to the site was discussed at length with the Panel enquiring about transport links and how visitors and staff will access the building from the existing bus stops. The possibility of moving bus stops within the site if demand warranted it, was raised although this is not being proposed at this stage.

**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

Monmouthshire County Council  
Mike Long

Pensaer/Dylunydd Trefol  
Architectural/Urban Designer

Powell Dobson – Jeff Tucker  
Willmott Dixon – Sarah Williams

Ymgynghorwyr/Consultants

ARUP – Gareth Knight  
Soltys Brewster – Simon Brewster  
Just Mammals – Phil Morgan

Trydydd Parti/Third Party

Awdurdod Cynllunio/Planning Authority

Monmouthshire County Council

Y Panel Adolygu Dylunio/Design Review Panel  
Cadeirydd/Chair  
Prif Banelydd/Lead Panellist

Wendy Richards  
Jonathan Hines  
Simon Carne  
David Harvey  
Chris Jones  
Sue Jones  
Gayna Jones - Commissioner

Sylwedyddion/Observers