

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 December 2011.

Addroddiad Adolygu Dylunio Design Review Report

Review Status: **Public**

Meeting date:	24th March 2011
Issue Date:	12th April 2011
Scheme Location:	Llandwrog, Caernarfon
Scheme Description:	Residential
Planning Status:	Pre-application

Part1: Presentation

There is a consented scheme for a dwelling on this site (granted against officer recommendation), but the current applicants wish to develop a solution more appropriate for this village in a Conservation Area, and one which is suitable for a young family. The site adjoins the churchyard of the Grade II listed church, but the ground level is 1.5m below that of the churchyard. A key design decision was made to retain and rebuild the existing stone shed which is built into the boundary wall and which will be connected to the new house via a glazed link.

A strong design is proposed in the form of a steeply pitched A-frame roof, whose pitch and form reflects the many surrounding gabled roofs of the village, including the church and the nearby school. The roof line is broken on the south elevation to accommodate the main entrance, with a stone wall and vertical glazing. A fully glazed gable facing east gives views of a charming rural lane. Vernacular details, such as the three paned windows, have been repeated and the dominant roof will be of Penrhyn slate with flush verges.

The floor plans have been kept deliberately simple and the client is keen to build a flexible and adaptable space which can change to suit the needs of the growing family. Two parking spaces have replaced former plans for a garage, and there is a requirement for a full turning space on site.

In response to our previous comments in a letter dated 26th January 2011, more photomontages have been produced, including views from the lane and the churchyard. Local authority officers have been in discussion with the applicants, and have some reservations with regard to the overall impact of the revised scheme on the Conservation Area and the setting of nearby listed buildings.

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

The Panel was pleased to receive a full presentation of this proposal following our comments in January 2011, made without the benefit of a full Design Review. We applaud the high degree of cooperation, ambition and commitment shown by the client and the architect. However, we think major revisions are necessary in order to arrive at an acceptable proposal. In summary:

- A full contextual analysis should be carried out, both to illustrate the impact of the proposal on the locality, and to explain and justify the design decisions made.
- We think the decision to reference the roof form of the church is too bold given the sensitivity of the surrounding area, and is not appropriate in terms of the village hierarchy.
- The strong built form resulting from the A-frame construction is driving aspects of the design which do not function well, in particular the internal layout and the relationship between house and private rear garden.
- Reducing the roof pitch and raising the eaves height to just above door head level, as has already been done on the south elevation, would result in a more appropriate form without increasing the overall height of the building.
- We are not convinced by the decision to retain the existing shed. The current proposal for a glazed link forms an awkward connection and is not well resolved.
- In view of the client's ambition for a higher environmental rating, we encouraged a commitment to Code for Sustainable Homes (CSH) Level 4 in the planning documents, and a full integration of sustainability considerations with the design development.

Part 2: Discussion and Panel Response in Full

The Panel appreciated the sensitivity of this site given the proximity of the listed church, and the distinctive traditional architecture of the Conservation Area. We were also impressed by the commitment of both architect and client to achieve a high quality building which responds to its context.

However, we were disappointed at the lack of a full contextual analysis showing topography and landscape, defined views into and out of the site, and microclimatic features such as sunpath and wind effects. The planning application should include such documentation showing a logical lineage of design decisions referenced back to the site and its context. The reasons for key decisions, such as the strong A-frame, need to be explicit and well justified. In view of the client's stated desire for an adaptable building, the Panel noted that this is not a form which easily allows for future adaptation or expansion.

The Panel considered that the design decision to reference the formal buildings in the locality (such as the church), rather than other domestic buildings, is mistaken. It is important in this conservation setting to observe a hierarchy of form, and such an obvious reference to the church appears to give this building an undue importance. This is after all a

single dwelling, and the very literal interpretation of how best to respect the church building leads to a built form which is too bold for its function. In addition, we think that the proposed form and its location on the site prejudices the relation between the house interior and the external spaces, especially the garden.

The dominant roof form impinges on the functionality and 'liveability' of the internal layout, reducing the floor area at first floor level and restricting the ceiling height at ground floor level. Although the Panel accepted that the client had thought carefully about the use and distribution of internal spaces, nevertheless we think the built form is creating compromises which are more characteristic of a refurbishment scheme with its inbuilt constraints, rather than a new build proposal. A visual link with and easy access to the garden is a fundamental principle for any new housing and should be a starting point for design of the built form.

The Panel suggested that the dominant roof form should be revised and consideration should be given to raising the eaves line to door/window head height, resulting in a shallower pitch. Although we were informed that the proposed roof pitch is the same as the church roof, the roof of this domestic building is occupied and a more appropriate form is therefore necessary. The first floor plate could be extended by punching through the roof to create an extended dormer.

The Panel questioned the decision to retain the existing outbuilding on site and attach it to the new building. This leads to an awkward physical connection which does disservice to both old and new buildings. We noted that the consented scheme allows for its demolition. If the shed is to be retained, we think it should be treated as a separate structure.

The Panel was pleased to see that a CSH assessment had taken place, but disappointed to note that only the minimum level of Code 3 had been achieved to date. The client is keen to achieve Code Level 4 however, and we urged that a commitment to this should be included in the Design and Access statement. If sustainability measures are integrated into the design development from an early stage, it is possible to achieve a low carbon, resource efficient building that is also cost effective.

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

Lois Prys

Pensaer/Architect:

Insall Architects (Elinor Gray-Williams)

Consultants:	n/a
AwdurdodCynllunio/ Planning Authority	Gwynedd Council (Gwawr Hughes, Cara Owen)
Y Panel Adlygu Dylunio: Design Review Panel: Wendy Richards [Chair] Cindy Harris [Officer]	Elfed Roberts Toby Adam Chris Jones
Lead Panellist:	Elfed Roberts
Sylwedyddion/Observers:	Officers and members from Wrexham CBC and Flintshire CC