

**Report Title:** Care Home, Linlithgow  
**Issue Date:** 20<sup>th</sup> December 2007  
**Client/Developer:** AJ Builders  
**Lead Designer:** Ross Woods Architects  
**Local Authority:** West Lothian Council  
**Location:** Linlithgow  
**Planning Ref:** 0727/ARM/07  
**Details:** Proposals for a 90 bed care home on a sensitive 'historic landscape' site in close proximity to the 'B' listed Bonnytoun House and Linlithgow Palace



Architecture+DesignScotland  
Ailtearachd is Dealbhadh na h-Alba

## INTRODUCTION

This report relates to a reserved matters planning application for a 90 bed care home presented at an A+DS Design Review meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> December 2007 in Edinburgh.

The project was presented by representatives of Ross Woods Architects and Contract & Projects Ltd.

The meeting was also attended by representatives of West Lothian Council and Historic Scotland.

## A+DS VIEWS

### 1 General comments

1.1 We thank the project team for presenting their designs to A+DS. We acknowledge that an outline consent is in place and recognise the challenge that all those involved face in securing a development that is appropriate and respectful to this unique setting. However, we do not feel that the current designs are of a sufficient quality for the site and there are a number of issues that need to be addressed.

### 2 Location

2.1 We have a number of concerns regarding the location of this development. These relate to the sensitivity of the site, the distance from the public transport network, the limited option for road access, and the size of the building proposed in relation to the adjacent listed building and to the size of its own defined site. However, we acknowledge that outline consent has been granted and that the current proposal will require to be assessed by the planning authority within this context.

### 3 Context and site analysis

3.1 The site is unusually sensitive, in terms of its location within a historic landscape and its proximity to the 'B' listed Bonnytoun House and Linlithgow Palace. The design approach should acknowledge this. However, there is no demonstration of a contextual analysis to reinforce the building proposition. Had this been undertaken in depth it may have revealed a better location for the building in this setting and potentially a much more appropriate approach to the overall proposals. An in depth analysis of the estate is required to inform the design approach and give a better understanding of the building's relationship to its immediate surroundings and wider landscape.

3.2 The siting of the building and treatment of its curtilage needs to be sensitively handled to respond to the context of a designed landscape, with a landscape proposal appropriate for the

concept and typology adopted. At present only the need for security and some amenity for residents appear to have been addressed in the landscape designs.

#### **4 Building typology**

4.1 The principle of adopting the typology of a large country house as the model for the new development may be an appropriate solution in respect of the landscape setting. However, the designs, whilst alluding to a house with a stable block, are disproportionate in accommodation and out of scale. If this direction is pursued, it should be with an understanding of the typologies involved. Dressing up the façade in a traditional style does not in itself overcome the inherent potential contradictions between the adopted 'model' and the building program. As proposed there is no correlation between the building typology and the building plans, resulting in a design that is architecturally dishonest.

#### **5 Quality of internal spaces and entrance**

5.1 We question the quality of the internal spaces that are being formed, and whether they would provide a sufficiently pleasant environment for our frail and elderly population. Position and aspect of the lounges and bedrooms should be reconsidered to exploit views into the landscape, optimise natural daylight, and to enhance the day-to-day lives of the residents.

5.2 The location of the main entrance should be reconsidered to improve the sense of arrival and create a better experience for visitors approaching and entering the building. The position of the driveway itself is not well considered.

#### **6 Building programme**

6.1 Although we have been informed by the applicant that the designs meet the criteria set by the Care Commission it would appear that the standards themselves, and the operational costs of running a care home, are driving the layout, giving rise to a particular building form. We accept that standards must be adhered to, in order to provide proper supervision and care for the residents. However, we feel that a more inventive approach could be taken, and if necessary the criteria questioned and challenged, so that a more successful design could be achieved.

### **CONCLUSION**

We thank the project team for presenting their designs to A+DS. We have a number of concerns with the current application. There is no evidence of a contextual analysis and we do not feel that the designs offer a satisfactory response to their sensitive context. The quality of care provision for the users is fundamental to the scheme and the designs should reflect this. We feel that the building fails to exploit the inherent qualities of its unique setting to create a pleasant and welcoming environment for the residents and visitors. A higher quality of building is sought and the scheme requires reappraisal.

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