

PRESS RELEASE BY BETTWS NEWYDD OPPOSITION GROUP.

Summary:

Bettws Newydd Decision delayed until June.

Despite the planners trying to push the decision through this month without time for public consultation, reason finally prevailed, but only after formal complaints were made by the Bettws Newydd Opposition Group and others. Modified proposals are now on the table including landscaping plans that will only partially screen the building. The Officers seem to have caved-in to pressure from the developer, and failed to insist on any changes to the glazing despite the wishes of the April planning committee. At the May planning meeting, the Solicitor for the Authority, Mr. David Prescott spoke about the "huge public engagement" and advised that the National Park must be careful to show complete transparency in judging Bettws Newydd. Our initial impression of the proposals is that they will not bring the development into line with planning policies, and that the application ought therefore to be rejected. But the Officers are recommending approval because they argue that the development is already no more visually intrusive than the original building and enhances the landscape.

The photograph here (which you are welcome to use) illustrates how wrong they are:

<http://parrog.org.uk/gallery/images/23%20View%20from%20coast%20path%20near%20Cwm%20Jan%202009.jpg>

Copies of the Landscaping proposals are available from the BNOG web site at

<http://erwwen.com/parrog/index.htm#plans>

(if necessary page down to find the links).

In more detail :

There was a minor victory for the Bettws Newydd Opposition Group (BNOG) at last Wednesday's National Park Development Management Committee (DMC) meeting when the decision on the application was deferred for another month. The Group was amongst several people who had submitted complaints about a lack of time to comment on proposals and their not being allowed to address the Committee. The Solicitor for the Authority, Mr. David Prescott spoke about the "*huge public engagement*" and advised that the National Park must be careful to show complete transparency in judging Bettws Newydd.

At the April meeting, the Committee had decided that they needed to approve new proposals both for screening the Development, by landscaping, and for improved glazing to address concerns about light pollution and glare, *before* granting planning permission.

BNOG has looked at these proposals (in the short time it was given) and there is no justification for approving them. For a start, the idea is not to change the glazing at all, just to explain it with incomprehensible sheets of technical data! If the Committee approves that, they will be letting

us all down very badly. The landscaping scheme does not screen the building so as to make it “no more visually intrusive than the original dwelling”, and acceptable within views of the Parrog Conservation Area, particularly from the Coastal Path and into Historic Newport Town Conservation Area (as can be seen from this photograph) .

Neither will it do so even in 20 years time (as the drawings try to show) and in our opinion this mistake cannot be patched up, by such sticking plaster techniques, so as to comply with the planning policies, which the rest of us have always had to heed, and consent must be refused.

However, the Officers continue to argue that Bettws Newydd is no more visually intrusive than Jimmy's house, even without trees around it! (Look at the picture gallery at <http://parrog.org.uk/> to see if you agree with them!) You can't help but think of the weavers in the story of the Emperor's suit of clothes when you read their reasoned justification for saying this. And now that they realise that tree planting can't screen this development sufficiently in a reasonable time, they claim it "*was never the intention that the landscaping would screen the new house completely, rather that it would give it a landscape setting in which it could sit*"

Officers are also arguing that the 2006 approved plans "*are a close resemblance to what is now built*". This only goes to show how little they ever studied them in 2006, let alone in the 3 years since!

The approved building was :

1. about 10m further away from the entrance and footpaths than what is now there,
2. 180 degrees out of orientation, with the huge glazed wall shown facing south not north as it does now,
3. shown with the north east corner (which is the most conspicuous from the beach), 3.5 metres lower than now built,
4. not shown with an area of lower ground floor space, now added, which itself is the size of Jimmy's original house (or a 2 bedroom /4 person Housing Association house in Newport).

Furthermore a lot of trees and other vegetation have been removed and the wetland destroyed and culverting, and other works, means that it will be impossible to restore. Even so, Officers claim that the "*extant planning permission... could (technically) still be built* "!

BNOG hopes that lots of people who care about Newport will come to the next Development Committee meeting on 17th June to show the strength of feeling about all of this and encourage the Park Committee to make the right decision.

From the Bettws Newydd Oposition Group.

Full details at <http://parrog.org.uk/about.htm>
