

Design and Access Statement

Scheme Name:	The Welsh Dragon
Applicant:	The Frank Wingett Cancer Appeal
Agent:	TACP LLP
Date:	5 July 2010
Site details	
Location:	Land at Chirk Park adjacent to A5/Green Lane, Chirk, Wrexham
Description:	Proposed Dragon Tower and Cultural Centre
Existing Use:	Undeveloped site, previously prepared for Development



Relevant Planning Guidelines

This Design and Access Statement has been prepared in line with Wrexham Council's documents as follows:

Wrexham Unitary Development Plan.

Design and Access Statement Planning Information Sheet.

Local Planning Guidance Note 06 'Access to and from Buildings'.

Local Planning Guidance Note 15 'Cycling'.

Local Planning Guidance Note 16 'Parking Standards'.

Local Planning Guidance Note 17 'Trees and development'.

Local Planning Guidance Note 23 'Development of Sites with Contamination'.

Local Planning Guidance Note 24 'Designing out crime'.

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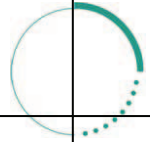
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Introduction

The site is located to the east of Chirk, adjacent to A483/A5 and Green Lane. The site is on the most easterly ridge of the Welsh hills overlooking the plains of Cheshire and Shropshire to the east. The location is of historic and geographic significance; the site is on the route of the A5 road which runs from London's Marble Arch to Holyhead on Anglesey with ferry links to Ireland. This is one of the oldest roads in Britain and has served as a major route for centuries. Importantly, the site is near the point where the A5 leaves England and turns west into Wales adjacent to Offas Dyke.

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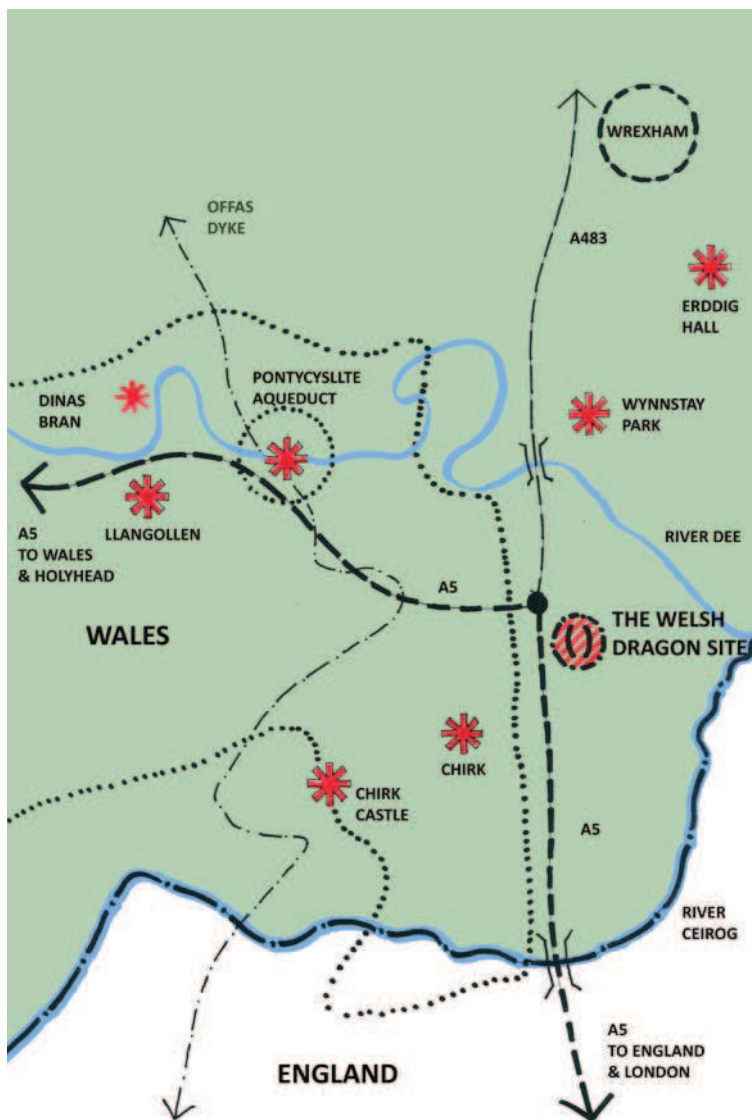
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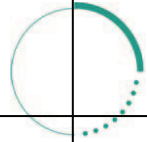
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Location / Context



The site is currently undeveloped, having been associated with coal mining since the 1600's. Known locally as Black Park, mining expanded in the 1800's when the site included a large open cast area and about 5 shafts. Mining ceased in 1949, however the site remained active as ventilation support for other local mine workings. Eventually all activity associated with coal mining was stopped in the 1980's at which time the site was cleared and mitigation works commenced. The mining history at the site remains prominent for local communities whose relatives worked and sadly, for some, died at the mine.



Site- Upper Terrace Area

In the wider local context the site sits between the Rivers Dee and Ceirog which at different locations form the border between Wales and England. The local area is home to a number of internationally important sites including the World Heritage site at Trevor which includes the Pontycyllte Aqueduct and Llangollen itself which hosts the International Musical Eisteddfod. At a National level the important sites in the local area include Chirk Castle, Castle Dinas Bran, the Shropshire Union Canal, Offa's Dyke and the Offa's Dyke Path, Erddig Hall to name but a few.

The site has been partially developed over recent years with infrastructure works for future site development being completed in around 1998. These works included road access, primary site roads, and mains services connections including electricity and drainage systems.

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Accessibility

The project has been developed in line with BS 8300:2009 and Building Regulations Approved Document M: 2004 as primary references to satisfy accessibility requirements.

The project is a new visitor attraction comprising of a viewing tower with dragon sculpture and two storey Cultural Centre. The following salient points have been incorporated within the design to ensure ease for access for all:-

- Accessible parking adjacent to the Cultural Center and within the main car park.
- Accessible coach and bus facilities adjacent to the Cultural Center and within the main car park.
- Pavements and pathways between primary facilities will be level (less than gradients of 1 in 20) and of suitable surface for wheelchair users. All requirements for ramps at this stage have been designed out.
- Doors will be of sufficient size to afford access and comply with regulations and main doors will have automatic opening.
- Public stairs are proposed to ambulant standards
- Compliant lifts are provided both within the Tower and Cultural Centre enabling access to all areas.
- Accessible toilets are provided adjacent to general toilets at both floors within the Cultural Centre.
- Hearing loops are to be provided to reception and key areas.
- Colour contrast to all areas in line with regulations.
- Hand railing will be provided at appropriate locations
- Signage will be provided to aid the visually impaired.

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Environmental Sustainability

The project is being developed to be as sustainable as possible. The project is subject to two separate BREEAM assessments one covers the Tower the other the Cultural Centre. The BREEAM Pre Assessments are provided within the planning submission documents. These are BREEAM Bespoke assessments which achieve the standard required by planning guidelines of Very Good. It is anticipated that the project overall will far exceed the benchmark 'Very Good' standard on completion.

The project offers a number of unique opportunities to address and enhance Environmental Sustainability, these have been considered holistically to ensure that landscape, drainage, lighting, heating and cooling systems can be integrated to provide connected benefit; a good example being the use of drainage system and associated landscaping to provide habitat.

Sustainable issues particularly energy use are addressed in a series of sections within the application documents however an overview includes:-

the use of Low carbon naturally tempered air system to control the environment within the tower, ground source heat pumps serving the cultural centre,

low energy lights both internally and externally,

Lodge building must be designed to receive photovoltaic cells,

SUDs drainage system with swales and pond which also enhances local habitat,

recycling of waste from both the buildings and landscape including composting, for re-use in the facility.

and construction stage and in use waste management systems to be applied.

Please refer to the Energy Statement, Assessment of Lighting Pollution, Drainage Strategy Report and the Phase 1 Ecological Appraisal and Landscape proposals

Transport is clearly a significant environmental issue and has been addressed in the Environmental Statement and Transport Assessment for this project. In summary, facilities to reduce reliance on private cars have been incorporated, including coach and local bus facilities, pedestrian and cycle facilities, and linkage with existing public transport systems. Please refer to the Environmental Statement and Transport Assessment for more detail.



Site- Lower Terrace Area

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Character

The site is located in an attractive and varied landscape which bridges the border between Wales and England. The landscape changes from the hills to the west and flat planes to the east providing long views deep into the border counties. The site is located between the River Dee and River Ceriog which cut through wide valleys. These rivers converge around the eastern edge of the site and have sculpted the land into a terrace which projects into the planes to the east. This outcrop is accessed via two large road bridges serving the A5 to the south and A483 to the north. These high crossings provide dramatic approaches to the site, which engenders the sense of arrival. Equally this 'natural fortress' like setting creates the impression of protection, a place of safety. The site is a lair for the Welsh Dragon from which the dragon can watch over the English border lands below, ever protective of the Welsh people.



Approach from south along A5

The proposal includes 4 primary elements:-

- The Dragon Sculpture and it's Tower
- The Landscape setting and public grounds
- The Cultural Centre
- The access route and parking area.

The proposal responds to this dramatic landscape and is respectful in response. The car and coach parking is located on the lower terrace of the site which provides natural screening. The existing trees to the perimeter of the site are maintained to ensure the site retains its mature landscape appearance. Further tree planting is provided within the car park to define and shelter pedestrian routes. Reinforced grass surfacing is proposed to the overspill car park area to further soften the appearance of this area.

The existing tree belt between the car park and the main site area is also retained, this provides natural screening of the approach to the public grounds. A network of paths and pedestrian routes is proposed through these trees, enhanced with further planting and maintenance,

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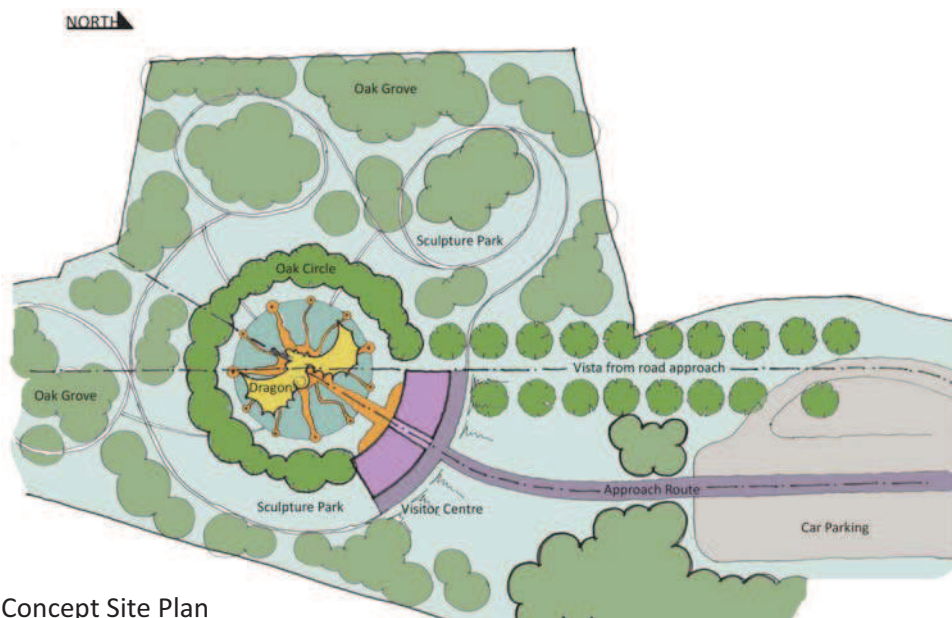
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which provides a mature and natural approach to the Cultural Centre and promotes the sense of arrival.

The landscape design is critical to the project, providing a setting for the Welsh Dragon sculpture, creating a public space with walks, artworks, event spaces etc, and providing an engaging and bio-diverse environment. The landscape design approach provides a variety of areas, the central area around the tower is defined by a circle of oak trees which, when mature later this century, will form an oak grove extending up to the height of the viewing floor of the tower. The tower height has been designed with this in mind, distant views of the Welsh Dragon will give the appearance of the Dragon rising above the tree tops. Within the oak circle a further circle of standing stones will be set within an open space with a network of radial paths. The stones themselves and paths between them represent and relate directly to the Mabinogion tales and Welsh mythology.



Concept Site Plan

In the wider landscape, the formality of the central circle gives way to a more informal approach, with pathways meandering through copses of trees and open space with diverse planting. Welsh artworks and sculptures will be set within this landscape, to be viewed and enjoyed by the Visitors from the network of paths.

The drainage system for the site has provided opportunities to further enhance the landscape with the introduction of swales and a small pond. These will provide drainage of the site and buildings whilst providing areas of wetland and shallow open water to further enrich the sites bio-diversity.

The Welsh Dragon sculpture is the main feature within the site. The main approach into the site forms a vista with the sculpture and tower as its focus. The sculpture is formed in bronze, a material associated with prominent artworks, bronze has natural weathering properties which will 'mature' the sculpture over time. The Dragon will overlook the parkland, casting shadows,

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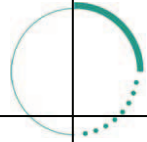
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which move around the site through the day to create an ever changing feel for the surroundings.

The Dragon tower is oval in plan, a form selected to control the tower's visual width in elevation. The mass of the tower is reduced further with the use of glazing which breaks the structural walls and provides views through to the sky beyond. The glazing also provides glimpses into the tower. Views of the internal stairs and lifts will bring the tower to life with movement and activity visible within. The structural walls of the tower are formed in concrete, this will be coloured and treated to provide a soft, natural appearance, whilst ensuring the tower appears appropriate robust for the task of supporting the magnificent sculpture above.

The tower has 4 main levels, the entrance level at ground floor which provides lobbies and wall space for artworks and interpretation. This area forms the base plinth to the tower which creates the second level namely, the open terrace on its roof. The tower provides a series of viewing landings on the two double helix staircases. The stairs and lifts arrive at the enclosed viewing level. This forms the capital to the tower and creates an internal space to enjoy the views. One of the staircases and both lifts provide access to a further level which provides an external viewing terrace directly below the dragon's talons.



Artists Development Sketch

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The Cultural Centre is two storey's high and curved in plan to form part of the oak grove enclosure around the tower. The building form is horizontal to contrast directly with the vertical tower and forms the 'gateway' into the parkland area. The views of the Cultural Centre on approach from the car park is screened by landscaped earth mounds to conceal the building generally and draw attention to the tower and dragon beyond. The mounds also screen the disabled parking area and controlled vehicle approach to the centre.

The pathway approach leads to the main entrance which is formed with articulated stone buttress walls. The glazed entrance doors provide views to the oak grove beyond. The approach elevation is simple in form and material palette, using stone, glazing, rainscreen cladding and a zone of louvers designed to strengthen the horizontal building form.

The side elevations are of similar stone buttress walls which provide solid ends to the building.

The main elevation facing the tower is glazed, providing views from inside into the landscape towards the dragon. This wall of glazing is contained within the stone buttress walls to each end of the building. The glazing will be enhanced with vertical sun louvers to reduce glare and solar gain.

The roof is curved in form providing a 'clean' appearance free from ridge flashings and fixings. The surface treatment will be metal seam panels, providing detail and shadow to the roof surface. The eaves flashings and rain water goods will match the roof finish ensuring a simple and coordinated appearance.

A small 'Lodge' building is proposed at the entrance to the main parkland area. This will provide a location for management of vehicles and the public, as well as a base for maintenance activities at the site. This building is single storey and proposed to be simple and discrete. The external materials are timber cladding with small windows and timber doors. The lodge also screens a small recycling and waste area; and an external store for landscape maintenance and composing activities.



The Dragon Experience

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The Vision behind the Development

The Welsh Dragon was conceived by art dealer, Simon Wingett over five years ago. The vision was driven initially by his desire to broaden the fundraising potential of the Frank Wingett Cancer Appeal (his late father's charity) across all of Wales, thereby enabling it to secure the provision of much needed and often neglected cancer care right across the Principality.

Simon's profession requires him to travel the length and breadth of Great Britain. During his travels, Simon recognised the pride in the Welsh nation which is frequently demonstrated by the display of the National Emblem 'the Welsh flag' (Y Ddraig Goch). Harnessing such a powerful cultural identity into a three dimensional art form that could be used to symbolize the family charity became Simon's goal.

Simon consulted with numerous sculptors regarding his proposals and these discussions culminated in a partnership with Stephen Winterburn, Stephen himself already an internationally renowned animal sculptor. Steve's extensive talents and his ability to breathe life into bronze material made him the ideal person to turn Simon's vision into reality.



Stephen Winterburn working on the Dragon maquette

The Welsh Dragon development will encapsulate the Welsh national pride and will be a destination that all Welsh people will want to visit. The uniqueness and magnificence of the Welsh Dragon will also ensure broad appeal across the UK and beyond.

The Cultural Centre will be the venue of choice in North Wales and will rival all of Wales with its ability to attract the best of Welsh art and culture, whether in fine art or performance art. The Cultural Centre will be on everyone's list of top visitor experiences.

The sculpture park will create an engaging parkland landscape as the setting for bringing major public artwork to the people. The buildings sit within this landscape supporting the charitable activities and welfare of the visitors; whilst providing opportunities to engage and enlighten members of the public to the fabulously diverse aspects of Welsh culture, art and history. The facility will also provide a gateway and information centre where the public will be encouraged to search out other attractions further into Wales beyond.

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Site Selection

Simon Wingett always intended to site the Dragon in North Wales, near to the home of the Frank Wingett Cancer Appeal, which had inspired it.

As the Dragon Project began to take shape a potential site on the A483 was offered to Simon. It had a magnificent aspect, wonderful visibility from many miles around and a circle of oak trees that seemed 'meant to be' in terms of the representation of the Mabinogion stories. The site had several issues to resolve in terms of infrastructure and accessibility but was to a large part an ideal location for the early vision.

The constraints to that site (a few miles up the road towards Wrexham) were the lack of nearby infrastructure and accessibility to the public. Having woken the dragon the true potential of the project had also begun to dawn and so Simon approached the County Borough Council for their opinion on other potential locations. The Black Park colliery site was suggested to Simon as it occupied a similar road corridor location, with better infrastructure and much better public accessibility.

It would be wrong to suggest that other sites were subsequently assessed because once we began to examine the Black Park site and its history, accessibility and setting, it was obvious that this was meant to be; the Dragon's home. The Dragon was destined to awaken from this site. The site selection may appear to some as opportunistic and initially that is what it was but as all the pieces began to fit together it became very obvious that this was the perfect location.

The Black Park site is the ancient gateway to Wales, very close to where the current A5 from London crosses the border into Wales. This was also the Roman road into Wales, and would have been the main route to Anglesey or Ynys Mon, which is thought to have been the sacred island of the Druids, who yielded their influence throughout the island of Britain and with the British Kings and Princes. It was also the main route to the heart of the ancient kingdom of Gwynedd, which the Romans needed to pacify.

The site is as strategic today as it was in ancient and Roman times. It is still the principal route into Wales from the Midlands of England, and it sits at the junction of the A5 and the A483, the main north-south trunk road in Wales. Wales could be seen as a linear country on a north-south axis, with several routes in from England as well as by sea. Its borders with England are amorphous, and no single route could today be seen as the principal access point. The M4 motorway gives access to South Wales whilst the A55 highway gives access to the North Wales coast. Neither of those two locations can claim historical lineage as gateways to Wales, and to choose either of these locations, in the South or in the North, for a gateway icon would be contested by the other. The A5 highway is the only logical and historic gateway to Wales.

The location at Chirk Park sits at a point where England and Wales meet, at the cusp of North Wales (Y Gogledd), and Mid Wales (Y Canolbarth). It sits on a route which has across the centuries attracted travellers and Princes, great engineers (Telford), and conquerors. It was and is the historic route to Ireland as well as to Wales.

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Project Evolution – Why a Dragon?

To solicit and inspire a strong response there needs to be a powerful and recognisable symbol. A symbol that, once woken, will mobilise and inspire the Welsh people into action. The Dragon was the obvious choice to Simon, it is recognisable and accepted by young and old as a symbol of Wales and the country's history and culture, but is as much alive in the hearts of the Welsh people today as ever it was.

The Red Dragon (Y Ddraig Goch) is the most potent symbol of Wales and is recognised throughout the UK and beyond. Its origins and symbolism delve deep into the history and mythology of the country and are intertwined with myths and legends which are known throughout much of the modern world.

A crude red dragon design was adopted by Prince Llywelyn of Gwynedd in the 7th Century and taken into battle by Welsh hero Prince Owain Glyndwr in conflicts with the invading English. In later history, at the Battle of Bosworth, Welsh-born King Henry VII (Henry Tudor, crowned 1485) unfurled the red dragon, which he in turn had adopted as his own emblem. As such, the red dragon has always represented the Welsh nation.

As popular today as ever, the dragon has one of its sources in the Arthurian legends which constitute a body of literature spanning the centuries through the dark ages to the medieval period and have been the source of inspiration for a vast body of European literature.

The oldest recorded use of the Dragon as a symbol of Wales is found in the *Historium Brittonum*, written around 820 AD, and it is said to have been the battle standard of King Arthur and other ancient Celtic leaders. In the *Historium*, Nennius tells the story of Merlin and the myth of the Red Dragon defeating the White Dragon, the origin of the Arthurian myth, and of Arthur as the heroic saviour of the Britons, (who became the modern Welsh). Arthur's father is said to be Uther Pendragon, and Pendragon means head dragon. With the *Mabinogion* as its source – itself one of the oldest works of European literature – the character of Merlin is the subject of one of the latest fantasy dramas of the BBC, and is currently high in the TV ratings.

Waking the Dragon will draw on much of this mythology, and will tap into the continuing interest in all things Arthurian, and by extension Welsh. Waking the Dragon can help Wales reclaim Arthurian mythology for the Welsh – who are its original source – and the attraction will become a cultural icon for Wales and for the Welsh. This can only be good for the area which is destined to become its home, and that area sits within the boundaries of the current Wrexham County Borough where the old Roman road, now the A5 trunk road, enters Wales.

Several of the 'so-called' tiger economies of South East Asia hold the dragon as an important national and mythological symbol. These countries include China, South Korea, and Taiwan as well as traditional economic powerhouses like Japan. Dragons also have an important place in Indian culture and mythology. The religious significance of the Dragon symbol in these countries should not be underestimated. It is often associated with good fortune and strength.

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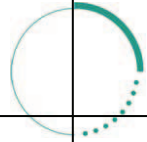
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Building on the Dragon as a symbol for Wales will become a powerful tool for encouraging investment from the newly emerging economies for which the Dragon is a powerful cultural symbol. An area which claims this symbol as its own will be seen to have a clear advantage when inward investment decisions are taken.

China and India are enormous countries. China alone has now overtaken Japan as the second largest economy in the world, and it is thought that the country will surpass the United States as the biggest economy within the next 10 – 15 years. China and India combined represent well over 80% of the emerging BRICs (Brazil, Russia, India and China), economies. With the Dragon as a powerful common cultural and national symbol linking Wales to these economies, and with an iconic Dragon tower located within Wrexham County Borough, the area will be well placed to receive the investment which these countries will be looking to make.



Dragon Development Sculpture

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Project Evolution – Choice of Dragon

Simon wanted to wake the dormant passion within the dragon on the Welsh flag and to mobilise the passion of the Welsh people. To deliver on its potential to inspire, the dragon must rise up and issue a call to arms, challenging and inspiring the Welsh People and the people of the world. The dragon up on its hind legs in this powerful fighting stance does this magnificently.

The Dragon must be an imposing landmark, a visible beacon that announces to the world that the dragon is awake. It cannot hide in a valley or be screened by trees and man made landscape as this will lessen its impact and the purpose for its existence.

The dragon is 65m to its head and sits upon a modern tower. The tower allows all that visit the dragon to get close to it, out in the open air, so that they can admire the grandeur and exquisite detailing and feel for themselves the power and the scale. The dragon will be the fourth tallest sculpture in the world. No other work of art in the world will raise money for charity in this way.

Linking to its Surroundings

The setting of the dragon, at the centre of the Mabinogion Tree ringed by oak trees and standing stones which represent the characters of the Mabinogion stories continues and builds upon Welsh culture and is a crucial part of the Dragon Story and an important part of the overall concept and vision. There is a fabulous synchronicity here with the story of Historium Brittonum which sees the red dragon rising up to fight the white dragon

The Dragon responds to its wider setting, the nearby World Heritage Site and a number of significant registered parks and gardens not by hiding itself from them but by standing proudly and telling its story. Its impact on these historic assets is indirect but nevertheless significant. To many of these historic assets the Dragon will be only partly visible on the horizon but by understanding the reason and rationale for the dragon, what it is about and how it came to be, we believe that the dragon will enhance the visitor experience to these assets and will be recognised as a complimentary modern feature and a very welcome addition. Visitors to these assets will be able to add a visit to the dragon to their itinerary and we believe that they will be delighted to do so.

The dragon tower and sculpture is a 21st Century response to its setting, in much the same way that the iconic Pontcysyllte Aqueduct was more than 200 years before. The Aqueduct has been described as a daringly creative application of new ideas combined with supreme skills in the handling of materials. Similarly, the Dragon is a unique development that will combine the best of modern construction techniques with traditional foundry skills, to create an iconic landmark structure that will be one of our future historic assets.

The Llangollen Canal is a spectacular example of civil engineering which brought considerable income to the area in the past through improved transport links for the coal mining industry and currently attracts up to 200,000 visitors each year. The Dragon will also provide a financial incentive for the area by attracting millions of pounds of investment through tourism and visitor attractions.

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Community Safety

The project is being considered under Secure By Design; a formal submission has been lodged and the response document is awaited. The finding and recommendations will be considered and implemented as far as practical.

The safety of both staff and visitors to the site and security of their possessions are of utmost importance. Similarly the wellbeing of communities and individuals neighbouring the site is of equal importance. When considering Community Safety the following matters have been considered and addressed to date:-

- The main access route will be secured with night gates to prevent unauthorised use.
- The site will be fenced in key locations.
- Vehicle routes and pavements are clearly defined and segregated where possible.
- Safe pathways with road crossings are provided through the car park.
- Car park areas and external public spaces will benefit from lighting and signage.
- The site is manned throughout public opening times to provide assistance and support if required.
- Emergency access is provided to the Cultural Centre and adjacent to the Tower to ensure the emergency services can attend without restriction should a matter arise.
- The site, although extensively landscaped, will provide natural security. For example the main car park is designed to be on the existing lower terrace to minimize visual impact externally, however the car park itself is designed to be open with clear views across and around.
- The site has a Lodge building which provides a base for security, and management of traffic/visitors.
- First aid and muster points will be provided and their locations clearly defined in case of emergency.
- The landscape and perimeter fencing will be designed to minimize noise pollution/disturbance. This applies to noise leaving the site, particularly noise within the car park and noise entering the site namely traffic noise from the A5 road.

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Environmental
Consultants

Landscape
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Planners

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Project Managers

Quantity Surveyors

Movement to, from and within the development.

As a public destination, movement to and from the site is of particular importance and a Transport Assessment has been prepared and include within this submission. An overview of transport facilities is as follows:-

- The site is located with excellent links to both public and private transport, including :-
 - Train- Stations at Chirk and Ruabon,
 - Bus and coach- Bus and coach stop provided, public bus links being considered, 4 coach parking spaces and 2 further coach drop off spaces,
 - Private cars- 221 spaces provided on site including primary and overspill spaces, excluding disabled spaces,
 - Disability cars- 32 spaces provided on site including accessible spaces next to Cultural Centre,
 - Motor cycles- 4 parking spaces provided.
 - Taxis- space for taxis drop off provided next to Cultural Centre,
 - Cycle parking- 18 covered, secure cycle spaces provided next to Cultural Centre,
 - Pedestrian- local pathway network enters the site and is continued to the Cultural Centre entrance. Pedestrian links with local public footpaths via Green Lane.



Site Approach Road

Access to the site is via a single road which is in place. This is accessed from the main roundabout serving the A5/A483. This site road will be extended to serve the main car park and access to the cultural centre. It is proposed that most vehicle traffic will be directed to the main car park which has facilities for cars, motor bikes and coaches. A route up to the Cultural Centre will be available on site for disabled person vehicles, coach/bus drop off, emergency vehicles and deliveries.

Within the site a network of informal pathways will link the Tower, Cultural Centre and primary external features.

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