



PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

19 JULY 2018

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, PLANNING

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

Members are asked to determine the planning application outlined below:

APPLICATION NO: 18/0287/20 (EL)
APPLICANT: Mr Andrew Smith
DEVELOPMENT: Demolition of The Dragon Inn (Formerly The Bridge Inn) and No. 1 Saron Street, and erection of 3 storey student accommodation block (sui generis) comprising 5 flats. (Amended Plans Received 19th June 2018) - Conservation Area Consent for Demolition.
LOCATION: **THE DRAGON INN & 1 SARON STREET, TREFOREST, PONTYPRIDD, CF37 1TF**
DATE REGISTERED: 14/03/2018
ELECTORAL DIVISION: Treforest

RECOMMENDATION: Refuse

REASONS:

Whilst the principle of residential development on the site may be appropriate, the current planning proposal is unacceptable as in absence of off-street parking provision, the development would generate increased on-street parking demand to the detriment of highway safety and free-flow of traffic. Therefore, in the absence of an appropriate alternative scheme it is considered that the demolition of the existing buildings in the conservation area is not justified. As such, the proposal is contrary to the requirements of relevant policies of the Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan and National Policy.

REASON APPLICATION REPORTED TO COMMITTEE

The proposal is not covered by determination powers delegated to Service Director Planning;

APPLICATION DETAILS

Conservation area consent is sought for the demolition of The Dragon Inn (formerly The Bridge Inn) and 1 Saron Street and erection of a purpose built student accommodation block, comprising 5 flats.

The site occupies a corner position on the junction of Saron Street and Bridge Street. The proposed building would occupy almost the entire plot, with a broadly rectangular footprint. The building would extend to a maximum of 22.0 metres in length and 12.5 metres in width.

The building is essentially formed by two blocks; the western extent of the building is formed by a two storey block that occupies a position of the corner of Bridge Street and Saron Street. A larger, three storey block would sit behind this, adjacent to the boundary with the railway embankment. The building would have a flat roof design, with the two storey block extending to 5.7 metres in height and the three storey block extending to 8.7 metres in height.

The main entrance lobby for the building would be located on the elevation fronting Saron Street. At ground floor level, the design incorporates a cycle store and bin store. This would also be accessed from Saron Street.

The building itself is contemporary in its design, with the primary material proposed for the elevations being a dark grey composite cladding, with cut-aways and window reveals being framed in a contrasting colour. A uniform pattern of fenestration appears on the east and west elevations to serve the residential accommodation. Further openings are proposed with a vertical emphasis to the north elevation to serve the circulation spaces and communal kitchen areas. The two storey elevation, fronting Bridge Street would be finished in a contrasting stone cladding.

Accommodation would be arranged over three levels, with 5 flats providing a total of 25 bedrooms. Each flat would benefit from a communal kitchen and each bedroom would benefit from an en-suite bathroom. No off-street parking is proposed as part of the development.

The application is accompanied by a Design and Access Statement and Heritage Impact Assessment which states that the applicant's vision is *"to provide a distinctive landmark structure which sits on this important corner junction and provides the sort of more dominant urban insertion which the large chapel at the other end of Saron Street provides."*

An application for full planning permission has also been submitted and appears elsewhere on this agenda.

Site Appraisal

The application site is made up of the former Bridge Inn Public House and number 1 Saron Street. As such, the site forms a corner plot on the junction of Bridge Street and Saron Street, which extends to approximately 335 square metres. The site lies in the Old Park Terrace Conservation Area of Treforest. This is a small conservation area separated from Castle Square Conservation Area by the railway line. This area contains notable examples of C19th architecture and townscape illustrating the local social history. The Bridge Inn is a two storey property, which although currently vacant is known to have been depicted as a public house since the First Edition Ordnance Survey map in 1875. The main building fronts Bridge Street, with an annexe to the rear. Directly adjoining the building is number 1 Saron Street, a two

storey residential dwelling. A small gap in the terrace separates number 1 from the remainder of the terrace dwellings on Saron Street. Saron Street is a narrow residential street, characterised by relatively small two storey dwellings. At the southern end of the street, is Saron Chapel, a prominent historic building, which gives its name to the street. Saron Street is quiet no-through road to traffic and on-street parking restrictions are in place in the vicinity of the site. To the east the site is bounded by the railway line.

Planning History

18/0204	The Dragon Inn & 1 Saron Street, Treforest, Pontypridd CF37 1TF	Full planning permission for demolition of The Dragon Inn (formerly The Bridge Inn) and 1 Saron Street and erection of 3 storey student accommodation block, comprising 6 flats.	Not yet determined	
16/1181	The Bridge Inn, Bridge Street, Treforest	Conversion, extension and change of use from Public House (A3) to 4 no. student flats with amenity / service area to rear.	Granted with conditions	22/08/17

PUBLICITY

The application was advertised by direct neighbour notification, site notices and press notice. 22 letters of representation have been received in response to the full application and conservation area consent application (a number being from the same authors), along with a letter of objection from Pontypridd Town Council. These are summarised as follows:

Visual Impacts

Concerns are expressed with regard to the appearance of the building.

Residents state they believe the building would be an 'eyesore'

It is commented that the site is in a conservation area and this too should be taken into account.

It is commented that the visual impact of the development is too strong and that it would be out of scale, overbearing and ugly.

The proposal would be overdevelopment and the refurbishment of the existing would be a better approach.

The scheme does not take account of the topology of Saron Street and Bridge Street, which are both very old narrow streets.

Concern is expressed that in placing the access to the building onto Saron Street, this will place further pressure on this narrow Victorian Street.

One resident explains that they are not opposed to the redevelopment of the site but feel that the current proposal does not 'fit' the area.

Parking and Highway Safety

Concerns are expressed with regard to the parking problems which already exist in the vicinity of the site. It is commented that the proposed development would make this situation worse.

Concerns are expressed that the construction period would also be extremely disruptive to residents both in terms of access to their homes and noise and disturbance.

It is commented that planning permission has previously been approved for the conversion of Saron Chapel to residential flats and this should also be taken into account.

It is noted that there are only 7 car parking spaces (on-street) on Saron Street for 20 houses. They state there is no more room to accommodate further vehicles.

Amenity Impacts

Residents (on Saron Street) express concern that the development would result in a loss of light to theirs and other neighbouring properties in the street.

Other

It is questioned whether there is a 'need' for more student accommodation in the area, as many existing student rental properties appear to be vacant.

Another resident who explains that they work in the accommodation office of the University of South Wales states that changes in the structure of the University, its campuses and the way that courses are delivered has resulted in fewer students studying at the Treforest campus. This combined with the costs of tuition fees and students choosing to live at home and study has, in their opinion, resulted in a significant fall in demand for student accommodation in the area.

Concern is expressed that the development of further student accommodation would further erode the community of Treforest.

It is suggested that existing buildings should be rejuvenated and not rebuilt.

It is claimed that there are inaccuracies in the supporting information. It is commented that supporting statement claims the building was '*probably a pair of houses....which were converted to a pub in the 1960's*', however the 1919 Ordnance Survey map clearly shows the site as a public house.

A letter from Treforest Resident's Association states that Treforest was once a vibrant and viable community, with good quality well maintained housing for families and a strong social and community structure. However, they claim that Treforest has been destroyed by the uncontrolled expansion of Houses in Multiple Occupation used mainly for student accommodation. Concern is expressed that the current scheme would further exacerbate the problems that residents experience.

CONSULTATION

Glamorgan Gwent Archaeological Trust – comments received. GGAT state that it is their opinion that the building, as a Public House, is of historic importance by virtue of its history and cultural significance within the community. If consent for demolition is granted, in order to preserve this structure by record GGAT strongly recommends that a building survey is made prior to work commencing.

Royal Commission on the Ancient Historical Monuments of Wales – comments received. From the information provided, it seems that The Dragon Inn makes a contribution to the C19th character of the conservation area. If consent for

demolition is granted, it is reasonable to require as a condition of consent that a photographic record is made of the buildings before demolition for deposit in the public archive of the Royal Commission (the National Monuments record for Wales).

Ancient Monument Society - no response or comments received.

The Twentieth Century Society - no response or comments received.

Council for British Archaeology Wales/Cymru - no response or comments received.

The Georgian Group – no response or comments received.

The Victorian Society - no response or comments received.

The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings – no response or comments received.

Policy Context

Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan

The site is within settlement boundaries and within the Old Park Terrace Conservation Area.

AW2 - advises that development proposals on non-allocated sites will only be supported in sustainable locations.

AW5 - sets out criteria for new development in relation to amenity and accessibility.

AW6 - requires development to involve a high quality design and to make a positive contribution to place making, including landscaping.

AW7 – states that development proposals which impact upon sites of architectural or historic merit will only be permitted where the proposal would preserve or enhance the appearance of the site.

SSA13 - provides the criteria for development within settlement limits.

Supplementary Planning Guidance

Supplementary Planning Guidance: The Historic Built Environment
Supplementary Planning Guidance: Development of Flats – Conversions and New Build.

National Guidance

Planning Policy Wales Chapter 3 (Making and Enforcing Planning Decisions), Chapter 4 (Planning for Sustainability) and Chapter 6 (Conserving the Historic Environment) set out the Welsh Government's policy on planning issues relevant to the determination of the application.

PPW Technical Advice Note 12: Design;
PPW Technical Advice Note 24: The Historic Environment.

REASONS FOR REACHING THE RECOMMENDATION

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that, if regard is to be had to the development plan for the purposes of any determination to be made under the Planning Acts, the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Furthermore, applications that are not in accordance with relevant policies in the plan should not be allowed, unless material considerations justify the grant of planning permission.

Main Issues

The current application seeks conservation area consent for the demolition of The Dragon Inn (formerly The Bridge Inn) and 1 Saron Street in order to enable the erection of a purpose built student accommodation block, comprising 5 flats. As such, the key considerations in the determination of the application are the impacts resulting from the loss of these buildings and the resulting effects of the redevelopment of the site, upon the character of the site and its wider conservation area setting.

Principle of development

The application site is located within settlement limits, with the site occupying a central position on an established street close to a range of amenities and transport links. Planning policy AW1 sets out the requirements for new housing development and the methods by which the provision of new housing will be met. Furthermore, policy AW2 promotes development sustainable locations such as this. Consideration must also be given to the planning history of the site. This reveals that in 2017 planning permission was approved for the conversion of the existing public house to form 4 no. flats, with 13 bedrooms, providing student accommodation.

Having regard to the above, it is considered that the principle of residential use on the site is acceptable. However, as noted above, the earlier approval on the site, proposed the retention of the original (front) part of the public house, with only limited modifications to its external appearance. Therefore, the impacts resulting from this scheme upon the character and appearance of the streetscene and conservation area were relatively limited.

Visual Impacts

The current application proposes the complete demolition of the former public house and adjoining dwelling. In order to aid in the assessment of the application consultation has been undertaken with a number of historical societies. Responses from Glamorgan Gwent Archaeological Trust and the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales, provides some history of the building and site. Their responses confirm that The Dragon Inn which was formerly called

The Bridge Inn, has been depicted as a Public House since the First Edition Ordnance Survey map (1875). It is also shown as a Public House on the Second to Fourth Editions (1990 to 1943), in which the footprint of the building appears to have remained relatively unchanged. It is noted that the public house is situated next to the Taff Vale Railway which opened in the 1840s, mainly to provide an efficient means whereby products in the iron industry in Merthyr Tydfil could be transported to the coast. The main line ran from Merthyr to Cardiff, with a branch into the Rhondda and additional extensions were provided in the Rhondda in 1846 and 1849 to serve the growing trade in coal. To the south of the above application area at the opposing end of the residential block is Saron Methodist Chapel, which gives its name to the street. Whilst the Heritage Impact Assessment comments that the building is in a poor state of repair and has been extensively modernised, the primary elevation fronting Bridge Street appears to be in reasonable condition and remains largely unaltered from its original form. As such, it is considered that the Dragon Inn makes a contribution to the C19th character of the conservation area. In light of this, it is considered that demolition of the building should only be supported, if a suitable alternative development for the site can be secured.

The application is accompanied by a Design and Access Statement and Heritage Impact Assessment which states that the applicant's vision is *"to provide a distinctive landmark structure which sits on this important corner junction and provides the sort of more dominant urban insertion which the large chapel at the other end of Saron Street provides."* In support of the scheme, they also comment that *"the prominent site and its importance within the immediate framework of streets lends itself to a larger building than the one that currently occupies the site."*

Some concern was expressed with regard to the scale of the building initially proposed; however, following discussions with the agent, a series of revisions have been made to the design and scale of the proposal.

The most significant change involves dividing the building, visually, into two parts. As set out in the description of development, the larger three storey block would be located toward the east of the site, adjacent to the railway embankment, with the smaller two storey block occupying the western extent of the site, on the corner of Saron Street and Bridge Street. This visual division of the building has gone some way to reduce its mass and bulk, when viewed from Saron Street. Street scene montages which accompany the application also illustrate that the height of the lower two storey block would be comparable to that of the existing terrace properties which front the street. Furthermore, the introduction of a traditional stone finish to the north elevation which fronts Bridge Street, assists in adding interest to the elevation and reflecting a material that is traditional to the area.

Both policy AW7 and *Supplementary Planning Guidance: The Historic Built Environment* set out a range of criteria which must be taken into account when assessing applications for development in conservation areas. The guidance states that proposals in and adjacent to conservation areas should avoid harming the character and appearance of those areas and should, where possible positively enhance them.

In terms of the settlement pattern, it is noted that the existing buildings (former Bridge Inn and neighbouring dwelling) occupy almost the full extent of the plot, with frontages on both Saron Street and Bridge Street. A similar approach has been taken in the case of the current scheme, whereby the building turns the corner of these two streets, with both elevations having active frontages. Some hierarchy in scale has also been created by reducing the height and scale of the block that fronts Saron Street.

However, as noted above, the scheme still involves the construction of a three block. In support of their design rationale, the agent's Design and Access Statement comments that whilst the proposal is a large new building, they believe that it would be balanced by Saron Chapel, which is a prominent building located at the opposite, southern end of the street. It is acknowledged that the three storey part of scheme would result in the formation of a new and prominent feature in the immediate area. Its visual impact would be limited slightly by the fact that its narrowest side elevation would front Bridge Street, with the longest elevation addressing the railway embankment where views are more limited. Nevertheless, it is accepted that this aspect of the scheme would still form a prominent feature, from certain vantage points.

Overall, the proposal would result in the formation of a prominent building, on a corner plot, close to a number of well used routes. However, regard must be given to the amendments made to scheme to reduce its scale and visual prominence, notably the reduction in scale to two storeys fronting Saron Street. Whilst some concern remains with regard to the appearance of the three storey eastern elevation, given that this elevation adjoins the line of the railway embankment, rather than directly addressing the highway, on balance, it is not considered the resulting harm would be so great as to warrant the refusal of the application.

Highway Safety Impacts.

Matters relating to highway safety are outlined in full in the associated planning application report 18/0204/10, which appears elsewhere on this agenda. However, in summary, the comments of the Council's Transportation Section express concern with regard to the potential impacts of the current scheme.

In accordance with the Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance: Access, Circulation and Parking Requirements (March 2011), the proposal would generate a parking requirement of 4 spaces. In the case of the current scheme, there are no parking spaces provided to serve the proposed development, as such it is considered that the proposal would result in the creation of on-street parking demand to the detriment of highway safety and the free flow of traffic. This gives major cause for concern particularly when considering the sub-standard nature of the local highway network and its inability to provide sufficient levels of on-street parking. Whilst wider issues are covered in greater detail in report for application 18/0204/10, the comments of the Transportation Section conclude by raising an objection to the scheme, stating that overall, the proposed development is considered unacceptable due to the generation on-street parking demand, with no provision for off-street parking. As such, the development is considered to be contrary to the requirements of policy AW5 of the Local Development Plan.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, whilst the principle of residential development on this site is considered acceptable, concerns remain with regard to the resulting impact of the current scheme upon highway safety. The site is located in an area where on street parking demand is high and provision is limited, therefore in the absence of any off-street parking facilities as part of the scheme, the proposal would only exacerbate this situation and as such, presents highway safety concerns. As such, the associated application for planning permission (18/0204/10) concludes with a recommendation to Committee to refuse planning permission.

Whilst it is acknowledged that this application for conservation area consent for demolition represents a separate submission, the two submissions are clearly linked. Concern is raised that if consent for demolition is approved without an appropriate scheme for the redevelopment of the site having been secured, then the existing buildings, which have some historic value and make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area, would be lost without appropriate justification. Furthermore, a vacant site in this location would arguably be harmful to the character and setting of the conservation area. It is for these reasons that it is considered that the application fails to accord with the requirements of planning policy and is therefore, recommended for refusal for the reason specified below.

RECOMMENDATION: REFUSE DUE TO THE FOLLOWING:

1. In the absence of an acceptable scheme for the redevelopment of the site, the demolition of the existing buildings (Former Bridge Inn and no.1 Saron Street) would result in the loss of buildings with historic value without appropriate justification. In turn it is considered that the resulting vacant site would be harmful to the character and setting of the conservation area. As such, the proposal conflicts with policies AW5, AW6 and AW7 of the Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan and Planning Policy Wales.