



PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

REPORT OF: DIRECTOR PROSPERITY AND DEVELOPMENT

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

Members are asked to determine the planning application outlined below:

APPLICATION NO: 20/0348/10 (GH)
APPLICANT: Mr A Chaletzos
DEVELOPMENT: Conversion of former Chapel & school room to 1 x one-bedroom flat and 4 x two-bedroom flats (reconsultation due to corrected address)
LOCATION: NODDFA CHAPEL, HIGH STREET, YNYSYBWL, PONTYPRIDD
DATE REGISTERED: 14/05/2020
ELECTORAL DIVISION: Ynysybwl

RECOMMENDATION: GRANT SUBJECT TO CONDITIONS:

REASONS:The former Chapel is considered to be a suitable structure for conversion to provide housing and would be compatible with adjoining land uses given that the site is surrounded by residential dwellings. Furthermore, in addition to its contribution to housing supply and its sustainable location, its beneficial re-use would prevent dereliction of an attractive and prominent building in the street scene.

REASON APPLICATION REPORTED TO COMMITTEE

Three letters of objection have been received from neighbouring residents and a request has been received from the local Member, Councillor Pickering, for the matter to come to Committee in order that Members can assess the potential impact the development would have upon highway safety and parking concerns in the vicinity.

APPLICATION DETAILS

Full planning consent is sought to convert the disused Baptist Chapel, Robert Street, Ynysybwl, for residential use.

It is proposed that the shells of both the main Chapel building and the attached Sunday School room would be retained to their current extent, and the main external changes therefore relate to the replacement of the fenestration with additional units, including roof lights, to the former school room. Most of the work to enable the development would take place internally.

The accommodation would comprise five self-contained flats, four of which would be in the Chapel. The existing first floor only comprises a former seating gallery for worshippers around the edge of the four walls with a central void for views to the religious services below. Consequently this would be replaced with a full width floor.

Within the school room, the height of the building would allow for a first floor to be created, containing two bedrooms and bathroom facilities, with living accommodation of kitchen/diner and lounge below.

Given the constrained nature of the property no off-street car parking is, or could be, provided; however some internal cycle storage is shown on the floor plans, whilst recycling and waste is proposed to be kept within the front courtyard.

In addition to the plans and elevation drawings submitted with the usual forms and details, the application is accompanied by a bat survey and planning statement.

SITE APPRAISAL

The application site consists of the former Noddfa Welsh Baptist Chapel which is located on the corner of High Street and Thompson Street, Ynysybwl.

The chapel occupies more or less the whole plot, with the exception of a small enclosed courtyard to the front and a separate access path to one side. External elevations comprise both natural stone and render, and incorporate large round-topped windows.

Within the rear south-western corner of the site there is an additional, attached building which was used as a Sunday School room. This can be accessed directly from a path to the side of the Chapel.

With the exception of some commercial and retail premises further to the east, the application property is surrounded and enclosed by Victorian terraced dwellings and their gardens; although an unadopted rear lane passes the western boundary.

PLANNING HISTORY

The most recent or relevant applications on record associated with this site are:

20/5014/41: Pre App Enquiry. Decision: 02/03/2020, raise no objections

PUBLICITY

The application has been advertised by direct notification to thirteen neighbouring properties and notices were erected on site. A second consultation with neighbours, including the replacement of site notices was undertaken with a correction to the address.

Representations have been received from four residents, the first of which sought clarity about the address of the Chapel. The three other items of correspondence raised objections in respect of the lack of on-street parking and harm to highway safety; and the potential for overlooking from the School Room conversion.

These matters are considered below.

CONSULTATION

Ynysybwl & Coed Y Cwm Community Council

Objects since parking is already a major problem and apartments would exacerbate this.

Public Health and Protection

No objections but recommend conditions in respect of construction noise, dust, waste, demolition and hours of operation. Whilst these comments are appreciated, it is considered that any disturbance associated with general construction works can be more efficiently controlled by other legislation. It is therefore considered the conditions suggested in this respect are not necessary and an appropriately worded informative note would be sufficient.

Western Power Distribution

A new connection or service diversion will require the consent of WPD

Transportation Section

No objection

Flood Risk Management

No objection

Dwr Cymru Welsh Water

A condition and informative note are recommended with regard to surface water and sewerage.

Countryside, Landscape and Ecology - Ecologist

The bat report was a thorough building investigation, with good access. For justified reasoning it concludes a negligible bat roost potential, with no need for further work. An informative note should be appended to any decision notice.

POLICY CONTEXT

Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan

The application site lies within the settlement boundary for Ynysybwl, but is not allocated for any specific purpose.

Policy AW1 - acknowledges that the supply of new housing may be met, in part, by the conversion of suitable structures.

Policy AW2 - supports development in sustainable locations.

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

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

Policy AW8 - development proposals that may affect protected and priority species will be required to demonstrate measures for protection, management, mitigation and/or compensation.

Policy AW10 - development proposals must not cause harm to health or local amenity.

Policy CS1 – promotes the re-use of under used and previously developed land and buildings.

Policy NSA12 - housing development will be supported in principle within and adjacent to settlement boundaries.

Policy NSA13 - supports the rehabilitation/conversion of large buildings.

Supplementary Planning Guidance:

- Design and Place Making
- Access, Circulation & Parking Requirements
- Development of Flats

National Guidance

In the determination of planning applications, regard should also be given to the requirements of National Planning Policy which are not duplicated in the Local Development Plan, particularly where National Planning Policy provides a more up to date and comprehensive policy on certain topics.

The Welsh Government published Planning Policy Wales 10 on 5th December 2018, and the document aims to incorporate the objectives of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act into Town and Country Planning.

It is considered that this proposal meets the seven wellbeing of future generations goals inasmuch as they relate to the proposed development and that the site has been brought forward in a manner consistent with the five ways of working.

It is considered that the proposed development is consistent with the key principles and requirements for placemaking as set down in Chapter 2 People and Places: Achieving Well-being Through Placemaking, of PPW10 and is also consistent with the following inasmuch as they relate to the development:

Chapter 1 (Managing New Development)

Chapter 2 (Maximising Well-Being and Sustainable Places through Placemaking)

Chapter 4 (Active and Social Places)

Other policy guidance considered:

PPW Technical Advice Note 12 – Design

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:

Principle of the proposed development

The application relates to the conversion of the former Noddfa Chapel, which is located on High Street towards the centre of Ynysybwl.

The change to a residential use would be supported by Policy CS1 which recognises the benefit of bringing back redundant buildings into use and supports the provision of a diversity of high quality accommodation.

Similarly, Policy NSA13 notes that the Northern Strategy Area contains many important and prominent buildings that add to the character of an area, thus proposals for disused structures are supported for residential purposes as they can also contribute towards the process of regeneration, where sustainably located.

In this case the Chapel has not been used for its intended purpose since 2016, although its location close to local shops, services and public transport links would therefore constitute a sustainable location, as defined by Policy AW2.

Furthermore, given that the immediate surrounding development consists largely of other dwellings, residential use of the chapel would, in theory, be compatible with those established land uses, and with the aims of Policy AW10.

Notwithstanding that the proposed development is subject to consideration against the criteria further below, the application is considered to be acceptable in principle.

Impact on the character and appearance of the area

The revisions to the appearance of the main Chapel building are minor and to a large extent, comprising replacement front door and obscure glazing to the first floor of one side, would not be noticeable.

Conversely, the alterations to the school room building fenestration would be more significant, where all existing ground floor windows would be replaced and reduced in height and an additional window inserted in each gable end; as well as five roof lights across the two planes.

Nonetheless, the school room is tucked away at the rear of the site and screened by the Chapel and adjacent houses, so in reality these changes would have no impact on the street scene.

Lastly, it is acknowledged that any scheme which proposes to bring back a prominent building to beneficial use, together with the associated restorative works, are bound to make a positive contribution to the public realm and character and appearance of the surrounding area.

Impact on neighbouring occupiers

The conversion of the Chapel, being surrounded by other residential properties, would be a sympathetic and compatible use of the building. Furthermore since the physical relationship between them would be unchanged, there would be no increase in any shading or exacerbation of detriment to the outlook of existing neighbouring residents.

As noted by one of the neighbour representations, there is a concern about the potential for intrusive views from the proposed first floor window where the gable end of the school room is parallel with the garden boundary of no. 4 Thompson Street. This is acknowledged and the same concern applies equally to nos. 22 and 24 High Street, although no objections were received from those neighbours.

In order to resolve this issue a condition, requiring the first floor school room windows and those to the ground floor of the north facing elevation to be obscure glazed, are proposed. A similar condition is proposed to apply to the first floor windows of the east facing Chapel elevation.

In all other respects, subject to the suggested conditions, it is considered that the development would not be harmful to the privacy and amenity of neighbouring residents.

Highways

Access to the proposed five flats would be gained from two points directly on High Street which fronts the site. This is considered acceptable for safe access.

To comply with the requirements of the Council's supplementary planning guidance in respect of off-street parking the established chapel use would need 1 commercial vehicle space and 1 car space per 10m² of floor space. Based on the existing gross floor area of 360m² a maximum of 36 spaces would be required, with none provided.

Conversely for the proposed residential use the SPG states that 1 and 2 bedroom apartments have a maximum requirement of 2 spaces each, plus 1 space per 5 apartments for visitors.

This means that the proposed development, which would consist of 1 x one-bed and 4 x two-bed apartments, would have a total requirement of 11 spaces (10 for residents and 1 for visitors). There is no scope to provide off-street parking, which gives cause for concern.

However, the applicant has incorporated secure cycle storage within the floor plans of the development which would be acceptable and go some way towards both mitigating the impact of the proposal and promote sustainable modes of travel.

In light of the above there is some concern that the proposal does not provide for any off-street car parking, however, the Transportation Section has taken into account the parking requirement for the previous and proposed use of the building and considers that, on balance, the proposal is acceptable.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Liability

The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) was introduced in Rhondda Cynon Taf from 31 December 2014.

The application is for development of a kind that is liable for a charge under the CIL Regulations 2010 as amended, however the application site lies within Zone 1 of Rhondda Cynon Taf's Residential Charging Zones, where a nil charge is applicable and therefore no CIL would be payable.

Conclusion

The proposed chapel conversion would have a positive impact on the local street scene and any consent could be conditioned to ensure the residential amenity of the surrounding neighbouring properties would not be unduly harmed.

The neighbour and Community Council objections relating to parking and highway constraints are acknowledged, since limited on-street parking combined with the high levels of demand can be extremely frustrating. This frustration also applies to other communities where the layout and/or density of traditional Victorian streets cannot cope with current high levels of vehicle ownership.

Nevertheless, the fall-back position of the D1 use class, within which places of worship fall, should be considered. As noted by the Transportation Section, the Council's SPG suggests that the size of the Chapel would warrant the provision of 36 spaces.

Although many of the former congregation may have walked to services, the same might not apply to other D1 uses which would not require planning consent. Some examples of this include crèches, day nurseries, community halls and training centres.

It is considered that the possible alternative outcomes of long-term disuse, the risk of dereliction, and the potential for less compatible development proposals for this constrained site would not be preferable. Therefore noting that the proposal would comply with LDP Policies CS1, NSA13 and AW1 in particular, the recommendation is that planning permission should be granted.

RECOMMENDATION: Grant

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of five years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with Sections 91 and 93 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

2. The development hereby approved shall be carried out in accordance with the approved drawing numbers 05, 06, 07 and 08, and documents received by the Local Planning Authority on 14th April 2020, unless otherwise to be approved and superseded by details required by any other condition attached to this consent.

Reason: To ensure compliance with the approved plans and documents and to clearly define the scope of the permission.

3. Prior to beneficial occupation of the first unit the first floor windows within the eastern side of the main Chapel building shall be non-opening and fitted with obscure glazing to an industry standard of privacy level three or above. The windows shall be retained as such in perpetuity.

Reason: In the interests of the privacy and amenity of neighbouring residents in accordance with Policy AW5 of the Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan.

4. Prior to beneficial occupation of the first unit and except for those within the ground floor of the south facing gable end, all other windows within both gable

ends of the former school room building, shall be fitted with obscure glazing to an industry standard of privacy level three or above. The windows shall be retained as such in perpetuity.

In addition, any part of a window to be obscure glazed, that is less than 1.7m above the floor of the room in which it is installed, shall be non-opening. The windows shall be permanently retained in that condition thereafter.

Reason: In the interests of the privacy and amenity of neighbouring residents in accordance with Policy AW5 of the Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan.