



PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

11 MARCH 2021

REPORT OF: DIRECTOR PROSPERITY AND DEVELOPMENT

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

Members are asked to determine the planning application outlined below:

APPLICATION NO: 20/1243/10 (EL)
APPLICANT: CYL
DEVELOPMENT: Proposed conversion of attached barn to form 2 no. Air B&B (Bed and Breakfast) units of accommodation and associated alterations (Amended description 07/12/20).
LOCATION: **GWRANGON ISAF FARM, CWM ISAAC, RHIGOS, ABERDARE, CF44 9AX**
DATE REGISTERED: 30/11/2020
ELECTORAL DIVISION: Rhigos

RECOMMENDATION: Approve subject to conditions

REASONS: The proposal is in keeping with policies AW5 and AW9 of the Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan and National Policy in that, the existing barn is capable of conversion without major external alteration or reconstruction. Furthermore, it's re-use as bed and breakfast accommodation is in keeping with both local and national policy, which supports leisure and tourism uses in locations outside of settlement limits. The redevelopment of the barn would ensure the retention of a building which has some historic architectural merit, and the potential impacts upon residential amenity and highway safety are also considered acceptable.

REASON APPLICATION REPORTED TO COMMITTEE

Three or more letters of objection have been received.

APPLICATION DETAILS

Full planning permission is sought for the conversion of a barn, located within the curtilage of Gwrangon Farm, Cwm Isaac, Rhigos to form 2 no. Air Bed and Breakfast (B&B) units of accommodation.

The conversion would be undertaken largely within the fabric of the existing building, with no increase in either the footprint or height of the building being proposed. Existing openings would be retained and utilised with a number of additional openings being formed in the rear elevation to serve the rooms created. The existing barn, which is attached to the main dwelling, is linear in form, so would be divided in order to create two separate units of accommodation. The first unit would be a 1-bedroom open plan studio-style unit, the second would be a larger two-bedroom unit. Each unit would benefit from its own point of access from the yard/ car parking area to the front of the property, the units would also be connected to each other and the main dwelling by internal access doors.

The barn and existing dwelling (to be retained) are located within a curtilage of approximately 2500 square metres, with a parking area located to the north west of the buildings and large garden areas to the south and west.

A statement provided by the applicants provides information on the market which they intend the accommodation to appeal to:

“We live a vegan, yoga and healthy lifestyle and love the Welsh outdoors and this is what we are trying to promote to others who want to escape from the 9-5. We want to appeal to people that would like to come away for the weekend, visit all the amazing sites that Wales has to offer, such as Brecon Beacons National Park, Bike Park Wales, the water falls, the new zip word and perhaps practise some yoga and meditation. We have so much beauty and so many fantastic places that attract people to this area and we hope to provide a tranquil retreat style accommodation in the form of the old barn conversion. Making a comfortable open plan living area where couples, families and friends can relax and enjoy the local area, facilities and beauty spots that this area has to offer.”

The planning application is accompanied by;

- A brief statement which comments on the proposed market for the use.
- A building survey undertaken by D.J.Harrison Ltd.
This confirms that main buildings are structurally sound and there is no sign of structural movement.

SITE APPRAISAL

The application site is an agricultural barn and dwelling known as Gwrrangon Farm, Cwm Isaac, Rhigos. The buildings are located within a curtilage of approximately 2500 square metres, with a parking area located to the north west of the buildings and large garden areas to the south and west. The site is served by an access lane (Cwm Isaac) which connects with Heol-y-Graig to the east. The site occupies an edge of settlement position, opening onto open countryside to the west, however the property also forms part of the village of Rhigos. The site is separated from the nearest property (to the east) by the Nant Gwrrangon watercourse. Neighbouring properties in the vicinity of

the site (along Cwm Isaac) vary in their style and construction but are largely detached dwellings.

PLANNING HISTORY

There is no recent planning history recorded on the site.

PUBLICITY

The application was advertised by direct neighbour notification and site notices. Two letters of representations have been received.

The first letter, has been signed by 5 residents on Cwm Isaac and is summarised as follows;

Concerns are expressed with regard to the use of the access road leading to the site. Cwm Isaac is served by a narrow lane that is already in need of repair due to a large number surface cracks and pot holes.

Concern is expressed that if permission is approved then this will result in additional traffic using the road, which in turn may cause further damage to the road.

The development would also increase congestion along the route as the access is a no through road.

It also commented that the speed of traffic using the road is of issue.

The second letter is from a neighbouring resident who expresses concern that the windows which would serve the bedrooms of the B&B accommodation would affect their privacy. They suggest that these could be fitted with obscure glaze to address the issue.

CONSULTATION

Transportation Section – no objections raised, condition limiting use and occupancy suggested.

Countryside & Ecology – no objections raised. Given the fact that the roof has recently been renewed and internal spaces are in use any bat and barn owl roost potential is negligible.

Structural Engineer – no objections raised, it would be possible to convert the barn without requiring significant external structural works.

Land Reclamation & Drainage - no objections raised.

Dwr Cymru - no objections raised.

Public Health & Protection – no objections raised, informative notes recommended.

Glamorgan Gwent Archaeological Trust – no objections raised.

The Coal Authority – no objections raised, informative note recommended.

POLICY CONTEXT

Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan

Indicates that the site lies but directly adjacent to the defined settlement boundary, west of Cwm Isaac in Rhigos. The application is further situated within a coal mineral safeguarding area (AW 14.4), with no other designations affecting the site.

AW2 promotes development in sustainable locations.

AW 5 sets out criteria for new development in relation to amenity and accessibility.

AW6 sets out the criteria for new development in terms of design and place-making.

AW 8 provides a criteria for the protection and enhancement of the natural environment.

AW9 provides a criteria for the alteration, renovation or conversion of existing buildings outside the defined settlement boundaries

NSA 12 sets out the criteria for development within and adjacent to settlement boundaries.

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.

Planning Policy Wales Edition 11 (PPW) was issued on 24th February 2021 in conjunction with Future Wales: The National Plan 2040 (FW2040). PPW incorporates the objectives of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act into town and country planning and sets out Welsh Government's (WG) policy on planning issues relevant to the determination of all planning applications. FW2040 sets out the National Development Framework for Wales (NDF), WGs current position on planning policy at regional and national level.

It is considered that the proposed development is consistent with the key principles and requirements for placemaking set out in PPW; and is also consistent with the Well-

being of Future Generations (Wales) Act's sustainable development principles through its contribution towards the Welsh Ministers' well-being objectives of driving sustainable development and building healthier communities and better environments.

It is also considered the proposed development is compliant with the NDF, with the following policies being relevant to the development proposed:

- Policy 4 – Rural Communities – LDP
- Policy 5 – Supporting the Rural Economy – LDP

SE Wales Policies

- Policy 35 – Valley Regional Park – SDP/LDP/Economy/Environment/Tourism

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

Full planning permission is sought for the conversion of a former agricultural building to form two residential units at Gwrrangon Farm, Rhigos. The resulting units would be occupied as Air B & B units, being managed by the residents of Gwrrangon Farm.

The key considerations in determining this application are the compatibility of the proposed use, in relation to existing land uses, the potential impact of the conversion upon the character and appearance of both the original building and the immediate setting; and the potential impact upon the amenity and privacy of the occupiers of adjacent properties. The impact of the proposed conversion upon highway safety is a further consideration.

Principle of development

It is noted that the application site is located outside but immediately adjoining the defined settlement boundary of Cwm Isaac, Rhigos.

Whilst it is accepted that in general planning policy aims primarily to restrict development in countryside locations, it is noted that in certain instances the alteration, conversion and re-use of rural buildings may be acceptable in policy terms, subject to compliance with a series of criteria. Policy AW9 of the Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan sets out the criteria, which must be met when considering such

proposals. Planning policy requires that such development proposals will only be supported where:

- The existing building is structurally sound, or is capable of being made so without substantial alteration or reconstruction.
- In the case of residential use, it can be demonstrated that there are no viable alternative uses to secure the retention of the building and that the building is of architectural / historical merit.

Furthermore, it is important to note that national planning policy supports tourism development that is well-located and well-designed, in particular, it supports proposals that utilise previously developed or disused land. There is no requirement in PPW 10 for tourism proposals to be located within the defined settlement boundary however there is a need to demonstrate compliance with the national place-making agenda. In this case, despite being outside of settlement limits, the site is considered to be in a reasonably sustainable location, being read as part of the settlement of Cwm Isaac and being located relatively close to key local services and facilities. In addition to this, there are a number of public rights of way and active travel routes in the vicinity of the site, which helps to reduce car dependence by providing safe environments for walking and cycling. In support of their submission the applicants have provided a short statement outlining their proposals. They have indicated they intend to market the accommodation to those looking to enjoy an outdoors, healthy lifestyle, appealing to those looking to visit local sites such as Brecon Beacons, Bike Park Wales, the new zip word and other outdoor pursuits, thereby taking advantage of their edge of settlement position. Overall, having regard to the requirements of national planning policy, it is considered that the principle of the conversion of an existing rural building for the tourism/leisure use proposed is acceptable, subject to the scheme's compliance with the specific requirements of policy AW9, in addition to assessing any potential amenity and highway safety impacts. These matters will be considered in the following sections of the report.

Character, Appearance and Structural Condition

The building itself is has the appearance of a traditional stone barn, which is attached to the north side elevation of the main farmhouse. The barn is linear in plan, measuring 17.0 metres in length. Whilst the farmhouse has clearly been modernised, the traditional exposed stone work of the barn has been retained. From an internal inspection it is apparent that the roof structure of the barn has been renewed in recent years, along with the slate tiled roof. Access to the barn is gained via doors located in the west elevation, which open onto a large parking area that serves the property. Internally an original stone wall divides the barn into two, it is proposed that the conversion retain and utilise this as the division between the two B & B units. In order to assist in the assessment of the submission, the applicants have provided a building survey, which confirms that main buildings are structurally sound and there is no sign of structural movement. Based on this, along with a visual assessment of the barn,

the Council's Structural Engineer has confirmed that they are satisfied that the conversion works could be carried out without significant external structural works.

It is acknowledged that as part of the conversion a series of additional openings are proposed, in order to provide natural light to the newly created accommodation. It is accepted that these would clearly be visible changes to the existing envelope of the building; however, on balance it is not considered that they would be harmful to the general appearance of the barn. No increase in either the footprint of the barn or the height/shape of its roof structure is proposed, as such its scale and proportions will remain unchanged by the conversion. Nevertheless, should Members be minded to approve planning permission, a condition is suggested which would require the submission of final details of elements such as windows, doors and rainwater goods, to ensure they are sympathetic to the style of the building.

Overall, it is considered that the proposed conversion works are acceptable and would not result in harm to either the appearance of the original building or its wider semi-rural setting.

Alternative Re-Use and Amenity Impacts

In the case of national and local planning policy, the first and favoured option when considering the re-use of rural buildings is business use. In this case, whilst the proposed conversion is to a residential use, the residential units would be occupied and operated as a business, that being an Air B & B. Policy AW9 seeks to support tourism uses, and in their accompanying statement, the applicant has indicated that their aim is to attract visitors looking to visit and explore local outdoor attractions, based primarily around, cycling and walking. In this regard, it is considered that the scheme is compliant with planning policy requirements.

It is noted that the most notable change in the self-catering tourist sector in recent years has been the rise of online market places acting as brokers for 'hosts', largely comprising private property owners, enabling them to advertise spare rooms, outbuildings or entire properties as available for short term or occasional lets. The most well know name to date in this evolving market is Airbnb. The opening up of this accommodation resource offers travelers an alternative to established hotel, bed and breakfast and holiday let businesses, which can be fully booked and expensive in popular visitor destinations.

It is noted that in this case the applicant has applied for the business to be able to operate as an Air B and B (sui generis) rather than a purely conventional B and B (C1). In planning terms, it is considered that the main difference between the two types of accommodation, appears to be the potential transient nature of the occupation, where Air B and B accommodation may be let for shorter periods. It is acknowledged that frequent changes in occupation may in turn have the potential to impact upon the amenity of permanent neighbouring occupiers. However, it is considered that such impacts are likely to be greater in more densely populated urban areas. In the case

of the current scheme, the site occupies an edge of settlement position, which is more sparsely populated, with the barn being separated from the closest neighbouring dwelling by a watercourse and an overall distance of approximately 18.0 metres. It is also worthwhile noting that the applicants would be permanently resident on the site as their dwelling directly adjoins the barn. As such, they would be on hand to manage the use and control any impacts resulting from resident guests and operation of the business.

As outlined above, in the publicity section of the report, the closest neighbouring resident expressed some concern with regard to the potential for the newly created bedroom windows in the eastern elevation to adversely affect their privacy. The neighbouring dwelling in question occupies an elevated position and a separation distance of approximately 18 metres exists between the two; nevertheless, in order to mitigate any potential impacts or reduce any perception of overlooking, the applicants have agreed to fit these windows with obscure glazing. The plans have been updated to reflect this amendment. Therefore, it is not considered that the proposed conversion would result in an adverse impact upon the levels of privacy currently enjoyed by neighbouring residents.

Overall, it is considered that the proposal is compliant with both local and national planning policy, in that it represents the re-use of an existing rural building for a tourism use. Furthermore, given the location and design of the conversion, it is considered that the use could operate without unduly compromising either the levels of privacy or amenity enjoyed by neighbouring residents.

Highway Safety

In order to aid in the assessment of the proposal upon highway safety, consultation has been undertaken with the Council's Transportation Section. Their response identifies that the site is served off Cwm Isaac, which has a carriageway width of 5.2m – narrowing to 3.0m. There is no official turning area at present along Cwm Isaac which means that service and delivery vehicles have to cross a private access bridge, with no confirmed vehicle loading, to access the site of the proposal and the existing dwelling. There is some concern with regard to the use of the sub-standard access bridge, which is in private ownership.

The Transportation Section consider that the proposed increase in traffic along the access lane (Cwm Isaac) resulting from the proposal is not likely to be significant, with the accommodation most likely being seasonal, attracting most guest stays during 'holiday periods'. Furthermore, it is not envisaged that the operation of the B & B would, in itself, generate traffic such as large delivery vehicles. It is also noted that there is sufficient space within the large 'yard' that serves the site, for vehicles to turn, thereby allowing vehicles to enter and leave the site in forward gear.

In terms of access on foot, it is acknowledged that there is footway provision for only part of the length of Cwm Isaac, which would mean that occupants of the units would,

in part, be forced to walk in the carriageway. Whilst this would be to the detriment of safety of all highway users, taking into account the limited traffic generated off Cwm Isaac, with the application site being the last dwelling served off the lane, on-balance this arrangement is considered acceptable in this instance.

In terms of parking, the proposed 1 & 2-bedroom B & B units would require up-to a maximum of 2 off-street car parking spaces to be provided per unit, in accordance with the Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance: Access, Circulation & Parking 2011. Whilst the application is not accompanied by a formal car parking layout plan, it is clear there is space within the yard to accommodate the required off-street car parking for the existing dwelling and proposed 2 no. B & B units.

It is acknowledged that a number of residents of Cwm Isaac have expressed some concern with regard to the current condition of the lane and the fact that it is already in need of repair, suffering from surface cracks and potholes. This point is noted, however this in itself would not form a reason for the refusal of the application and the highways section have confirmed that as Cwm Isaac is a public highway, the matter can be raised with the Council's Highways Depot Team who will assess the surfacing material and consider the need for any repairs.

Overall, it is acknowledged that there is some concern with regard to the sub-standard nature of Cwm Isaac, which lacks segregated footway facilities and width for safe two-way vehicular movement for part of its length, and is also served by a private bridge with no official weight restriction imposed. However, taking into account the limited additional traffic that is likely to be generated by the proposal and the fact that there is sufficient space within the site to provide car parking and turning in connection with the development, on-balance the proposal is considered acceptable in highway safety terms and therefore in compliance with policy AW5 of the Local Development Plan.

OTHER ISSUES

The following other material considerations have been taken into account in considering the application, though were not the key determining factors in reaching the recommendation.

Ecology

As set out above, consideration must be given to the potential impact of the development upon protected species, most notably bats.

Having assessed the scheme, the Council's Ecologist has concluded that given the fact that the roof has recently been renewed and internal spaces are currently in use as a workshop and storage area, any bat and barn owl roost potential is negligible. As such, no formal survey work is required in this case.

Their observations note however that there may be potential to incorporate biodiversity enhancement measures in the scheme. This could be achieved by incorporating within the conversion, either bat roost provision (in the form of bat bricks, or bat tiles) or barn owl provision (integral barn owl box in the building eaves). As such, should members be minded to grant planning permission a condition to this effect is suggested.

Overall, it is considered that the scheme is acceptable in terms of its potential ecological impacts and therefore accords with policy AW8 of the Local Development Plan.

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 CIL rate for this type of development as set out in the Charging Schedule is £nil and therefore no CIL is payable.

Conclusion

Having taken account of all the issues outlined above, the application proposal is considered acceptable.

The proposal represents an opportunity to retain and bring back into use a vacant rural building that has architectural merit. The proposed tourism use as Air Bed and Breakfast accommodation is considered appropriate and in compliance with the aims of local and national planning policy. It is also noted that the barn is capable of conversion without the need for major alteration or re-construction, with the resulting design of the conversion being sympathetic to the original style of the building and in character with the semi-rural appearance of its setting. The potential impacts upon both the amenity and privacy of neighbouring residents and highway safety are also considered acceptable. Therefore, the proposal is recommended for approval, subject to the conditions specified below.

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 plan(s) no(s)

- Site Location Plan 1:1250
- Drawing no. Gwrangon 01 – Existing plans and elevations
- Drawing no. Gwrangon 04B – Existing & Proposed Plans, Elevations & Sections.

and documents received by the Local Planning Authority on 05/11/20 and 19/01/21 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. In accordance with Drawing no. Gwrangon 04B – Existing & Proposed Plans, Elevations & Sections, the windows located in the east (rear elevation) of the barn conversion shall be fitted with obscure glazing, prior to the building being brought into beneficial use. The development shall be retained as such thereafter, unless agreed otherwise in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To safeguard the privacy of neighbouring residents in accordance with Policy AW5 of the Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan.

4. The development shall be occupied as holiday accommodation only and no unit shall be occupied by an individual, family or group as their sole or main place of residence, or for a period exceeding two months in any calendar year.

Reason: To define and limit the extent of the permission and to protect the residential amenity of those closest to the site in accordance with Policies AW5 and AW10 of the Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan.

5. Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 (or any order revoking and re-enacting of that Order) no other use (other than the Air Bed and Breakfast use hereby permitted) shall be operated from the site without the prior express permission of the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To define and limit the extent of the permission and to protect the residential amenity of those closest to the site in accordance with Policies AW5 and AW10 of the Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan.

6. Prior to commencement of development details of the proposed windows, doors, rainwater goods and finishes to external elevations of the development shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. All materials used shall conform to the details so approved, unless agreed otherwise in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that the external appearance of the proposed development will be in keeping with the character of the area and adjoining buildings in the interests of visual amenity in accordance with Policies AW5 and AW6 of the Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan.

7. Prior to the commencement of development, details for the provision of a bat and/or barn owl box shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be completed in accordance with the approved details prior to development being brought into use and maintained as such thereafter, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interest nature conservation in accordance with Policies AW5 and AW8 of the Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan