

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

5 APRIL 2018

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, PLANNING

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

Members are asked to determine the planning application outlined below:

APPLICATION NO: 17/0555/22 (JAW)
APPLICANT: Morganstone Ltd
DEVELOPMENT: Demolition of 'Block F' (Former Woodworking Block).
(Additional reports/details received on the 11/10/17)
(Justification for Demolition Statement received 27/02/18)
LOCATION: BLOCK F (FORMER WOODWORKING BLOCK) AT
FORMER COED Y LAN COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL
SITE, LANPARK ROAD, PONTYPRIDD.
DATE REGISTERED: 18/05/2017
ELECTORAL DIVISION: Town (Pontypridd)
RECOMMENDATION: Approve

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REASONS:

It is accepted that demolition should always be the very last alternative and the loss of any curtilage listed building is always regrettable. Given the information presented, it is considered that demolition offers a better alternative than a further period of decay and dereliction where the building will only come to represent nothing other than an increasing danger to the public. It is therefore considered that the proposed development is acceptable in accordance with chapter 6 of Planning Policy Wales and Technical Advice Note 24.

REASON APPLICATION REPORTED TO COMMITTEE

- The application is not covered by determination powers delegated to the Service Director Planning, as more than three or more letters of objection have been received.

APPLICATION DETAILS

Listed Building Consent (although the building is not listed in its own right but is curtilage listed) is sought to demolish the former woodworking block ('Block F') on land within the curtilage of the former Coed Y Lan Lower Comprehensive School at Lanpark Road, Pontypridd.

Following demolition and site clearance the proposal is to sensitively landscape the area.

The application is accompanied by the following:

Design and Access Statement which includes the following appendices:

A - Listing Description

B - CoBRA Report dated June 2006

C - Structural Condition Report dated May 2017

D - Structural Appraisal Summary dated 16th May 2017

E - Assessment of Structural Repairs Required to Block F dated 19th April 2017

F - Principal Designer Report dated May 2017

Supplementary justification Statement June 2017 to be read alongside Design and Access Statement

Following a request for a structural survey undertaken by someone with Conservation Accreditation or with at least 10 years experience in this field additional supporting information has been received which includes:

- A letter of justification from the planning agent
- Bradley Associates Report dated 11th December 2015
- Bradley Associates Report dated 26th October 2016
- Bradley Associates Report dated 14th September 2017
- Detailed development Cost Schedule

Further to a request for further justification to be submitted a Demolition Justification Statement dated February 2018 has been received.

SITE APPRAISAL

The site is within the settlement boundary of Pontypridd outside of the Graigwen Conservation area and is unallocated. The building forms part of the former Comprehensive School, which was in use until July 2005.

The original school was built in 1893-4 by Arthur O Evans and opened in 1896. Three of the original buildings within the former Coed-y-Lan School complex are Grade II listed; these comprise the main school building, the rear science building and the original gymnasium. Listed as '*an early county school retaining considerable architectural character in a prominent position overlooking the town*'. The former wood working building (block F) appears to be one of the original school buildings built as part of the original school complex; however, it is not listed in its own right.

Externally the building is finished with coursed dressed stonework facing Tyfica Road with cheaper rubble stonework facing into the site. The building has yellow brick dressings and dressed stone cills and heads and timber framed windows used throughout, although a number of these windows are now missing. The slate roof covering has recently been replaced.

The wider school site is broadly linear in nature, with the majority of the buildings fronting onto and following the form of Tyfica/Lanpark Road. The application building

lies towards the eastern end of the site. The former caretaker's dwelling lies immediately to the west along Lanpark Road and a 3-4 storey flat development comprising two buildings has recently been completed to the rear (north).

PLANNING HISTORY

Relevant and recent

- 17/0286 Non-material amendment to planning reference 15/0711/10 to Includes alterations to block C2 and Block F - (former woodworking block). Alterations to Block F to accommodate an additional unit to first floor (from one 2-bed flat to two 1-bed flats) with no external alterations. New entrance to ground floor flat by filling in existing doorway to side elevation (stonework to match) and existing window to street elevation to be enlarged (vertically) to accommodate new access door – Approved 13/04/17
- 17/0104 Non-Material Amendment to Block F (former woodworking block) to accommodate 4 no. 1 bedroom units (redesign of first floor from 1 2-bed unit to 2 1-bed units) – Withdrawn 22/02/17
- 15/0751 Proposed demolition of former gymnasium block and erection of 18 Class C3 units, change of use of former woodworking block to provide 3 Class C3 units, car parking, landscape and associated works – Granted listed building consent 21/12/15
- 15/0711 Proposed demolition of former gymnasium block and erection of 18 Class C3 units, change of use of former woodworking block to provide 3 Class C3 units, car parking, landscape and associated works – Approved 12/05/16

PUBLICITY

The application has been advertised by means of a press notice, site notices and neighbour notification letters.

Six letters have been received (two from same objector) the comments of which are summarised as follows:

- Concern received in response to the initial consultation which advises as a local resident and consulting engineer concerned that there is no clear explanation for the reason to demolish the building in the information provided and no details of options explored with costs against each summary. There are many methods available to repair the building and more than one option should have been explored.
- Raise an objection to the demolition of the building as it is part of the architectural heritage of the area and has visual and stylistic merit. The building lies in a prominent position, clearly on view from the public highway

being very much part of the look and feel of the whole site and surrounding area.

- The building has stood for the past hundred years and withstood the current site developments and the brickwork appears to be in very good condition. Therefore have to question the statement that the building is in danger of imminent collapse and structurally unsound.
- If demolished, properties in Lanpark Road would be in direct line of sight from the newly developed block of flats, encroaching on privacy and there would be a visual gap where the building currently stands, ruining the look from the street.
- Bats have been seen coming and going from this building.
- Purchaser should not have bought the property if no intention of restoring it and if they do not wish to spend the money the building should be put back on the market for sale.

Petition signed by 18 residents of Lanpark Road who object to the demolition of building 'F' on the following grounds:

- The former woodworking block is curtilage listed built at the same time, of the same materials, and has the same character and prominent position as the rest of the listed site and is of significant importance in maintaining the character of the area and the listed site.
- The building provides screening from the modern development behind it, which is not in keeping with the surrounding area and listed buildings. The removal would bring further prominence to this modern development resulting in the destruction of the character of the local area and the listed site.
- The building currently screens the rear of properties in Lanpark Road from the modern development behind it, which has front facing balconies and picture windows along its length resulting in an invasion of privacy to rear gardens and back of properties.
- Concern it would have a detrimental effect on the value of properties in Lanpark Road.
- A belief that the character of the area and privacy of residents in Lanpark Road is best served by the conversion of the building into housing as previously approved.

Petition with 133 signatories (including the 18 residents who signed the above petition, other residents of Lanpark Road and residents of Tyfica Road. Also some signatories from outside Pontypridd). Object to the proposed demolition as it will have an adverse impact on the character of the local area. Block F currently provides screening from the modern development behind it, which is not in keeping with the surrounding area and listed buildings.

Additionally Members are advised that a 130 signature petition opposing the proposed development circulated on-line has been submitted in opposition to the current application. The majority of signatures can reasonably be described as living

within the area though some are from other areas of the County Borough (including Church Village, Treherbert Mountain Ash and Maerdy) as well as some from the wider area of South Wales (including Cardiff, Newport and Chepstow). There are also signatures from people further afield including Darlington, Cheltenham, Kuala Lumpur and Atlanta.

Councillor Fychan – Following the original consultation comments as a local member wish to raise concern about the proposal to demolish the former woodworking block (F). Fifteen residents have been in touch and many more have signed petitions which propose to save this historic building. Very much hope that due consideration will be given to the objections, as the proposal to demolish:

- Significantly alters the general appearance of the area and also the redevelopment as initially visualized and proposed.
- Adversely impacts on residents directly opposite the site, impacting on their privacy.
- Adversely impacts the history and heritage and general architecture of the area.
- Goes against Cadw's advice, that demolition of a listed building can only take place in exceptional circumstances.

Pontypridd Town Council – Response to original consultation request that the application be deferred until an independent report on the demolition of such a listed building has been obtained as is appropriate and fair in all circumstances. Clearly a report that is prepared on the instruction of the applicant is not objective.

Consultation

Council's Structural Engineer – the safer option is to demolish completely or to reduce to a safe lower level (ground floor cill height).

The Victorian Society – while we have reviewed and taken on board the additional information supplied by both the applicant, it remains unclear as to whether these views are supplied with the benefit of listed building experience. Specifically, the applicant still does not appear to have sought the advice of a conservation-accredited structural engineer, which, in our experience, can lead to a very different assessment of a building's structural condition. We would therefore urge the Council to ensure that it is satisfied with the structural assessment of Block F prior to making its final decision.

Georgian Group – the buildings in question date from the 1890's and therefore fall outside of our remit. In this instance we defer to the Victorian Society.

The Twentieth Century Society - no representation received.

The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings – no representation received.

Royal Commission for Ancient and Historical Monuments for Wales – if granted requires a condition for copies of plans and photographic record of the building is deposited before alteration by the applicant in the Royal Commission's archive.

Ancient Monument Society – no representation received.

Council for British Archaeology Wales/Cymru - no representation received.

Wales and West Utilities – provides information with regard to the location of their apparatus in proximity to the application site and safe working practices to be adopted when working in close proximity to it.

POLICY CONTEXT

Planning Policy Wales

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 following chapters set out the Welsh Government's policy (Edition 9, November 2016) on planning issues relevant to the determination of the application:

Chapter 6 Conserving the Historic Environment

Para. 6.5.14 advises occasionally, applications will be made for the demolition of a listed building. These must be fully justified and scrutinised before any decision is taken. The demolition of any listed building should be considered as exceptional and require the strongest justification.

Para. 6.5.17 In all applications for alteration or demolition local planning authorities should consider, whether to make the archaeological recording, analysis and publication of features that would be destroyed, obscured or temporarily revealed by the works a condition of listed building or planning consent. This archaeological programme should be proportionate to the scale of the works being undertaken.

Other relevant policy guidance consulted:

Technical Advice Note 24: The Historic Environment (May 2017)

Para. 5.10 advises the controls that apply to a listed building also apply to any objects or structures fixed to the building or that are within its curtilage.

Para. 5.13 advises when determining a listed building consent application, the local planning authority should consider the following issues:

- The importance and grade of the building and its intrinsic architectural or historic interest.
- The physical features of the building which justify its listing and contribute to its significance, (for example its form and layout, materials, construction and detail) including any features of importance such as the interior, which may have come to light after the building's inclusion on the list.
- The contribution of curtilage and setting to the significance of the building, as well as its contribution to its local scene.

- The impact of the proposed works on the significance of the building.
- The extent to which the proposed works would bring substantial community benefits for example, by contributing to the area's economy or the enhancement of its local environment.

Para. 5.15 advises an application for the demolition of a listed building should be made in exceptional circumstances and only as an option of last resort. Consent for demolition should not be given simply because redevelopment is economically more attractive than the repair and re-use of a historic building. The following factors need to be considered:

- The condition of the building, the cost of repair and maintenance in relation to its importance and the value derived from its continued use. Where a building has been deliberately neglected, less weight will be given to these costs.
- The efforts made to keep the building in use or to secure a new use, including the offer of the unrestricted freehold of the building for sale at a fair market price that reflects its condition and situation.
- The merits of the alternative proposals for the site, including whether the replacement buildings would meet the objectives of good design and whether or not there are substantial benefits for the community that would outweigh the loss resulting from demolition.

Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan

Policy AW7 protection and enhancement of the built environment and states "development proposals which impact upon sites of architectural and/or historic merit and sites of architectural importance will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that the proposal would preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the site".

However, para. 6.5.10 of PPW advises that there is no statutory requirement to have regard to the provisions of the development plan when considering applications for listed building consent.

REASONS FOR REACHING THE RECOMMENDATION

The application is in accordance with the aforementioned local and national policy and national guidance and is therefore considered to be acceptable in terms of Listed Building Consent.

The principle consideration in the determination of this Listed Building Consent (LBC) application is whether or not the impact of the proposed demolition is acceptable in terms of the special architectural and historic interest of the building, which is curtilage listed.

Impact on Listed Buildings and their setting

Although the building the subject of this application is not individually listed, it is curtilage listed.

Guidance published by the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) contained within Technical Advice Note 24: The Historic Environment (May 2017) expect authorities to address the following considerations in determining applications where the proposed works would result in the total or substantial demolition of the listed building.

- The condition of the building and the cost of repairing and maintaining it in relation to its importance and the value derived from its continued use
- The efforts made to keep the building in use or to secure a new use, including the offer of the unrestricted freehold of the building for sale at a fair market price that reflects its condition and situation.
- The merits of the alternative proposals for the site, including whether the replacement buildings would meet the objectives of good design and whether or not there are substantial benefits for the community that would outweigh the loss resulting from demolition.

Given its curtilage listing these considerations are still relevant:

Three of the original buildings within the curtilage of the site are Grade II listed, which comprise the main school building, the rear science block and gymnasium. The CADW listing identifies that the buildings were listed “as an early County school retaining considerable architectural character in a prominent position overlooking the town”.

Block F the subject of this application appears to be one of the original school buildings and although not considered worthy of listing in its own right it is considered that it added to the historic and architectural landscape of its location. However, a number of developments have taken place within the site including the modernisation of the former caretaker’s house to the west of block F and the recent completion of a modern 3 to 4 storey high development to the rear, which forms the backdrop to Block F. As a consequence it is contended that block F is no longer viewed in context with the listed buildings but its context is in relation to more modern development that has taken place at the eastern side of the site.

The CADW listing description identifies that the buildings were listed “as an early County School retaining considerable architectural character in a prominent position overlooking the town”. It is considered that Block F being located on a lower part of the site and viewed against a backdrop of a more recently constructed 3 to 4 storey modern development does little if anything to contribute to the overall impression of imposing school buildings within the skyline.

Block F has been vacant since July 2005 and has been subject to extensive deterioration in that time. It is evident that a structural survey was prepared for the previous owners of the site in November 2015 (not part of any planning submission) which set out the findings and recommendations with regards to the condition of the building. However, a follow up report dated October 2016 (not part of any planning submission) was prepared when it was noted that “the work undertaken was generally of poor quality and much of it should be revisited”. As a result of the concerns outlined in the report a comprehensive structural survey of the building was undertaken, which identified block F is subject to “numerous significant structural

defects” and is “seriously weakened”. The report goes on to identify that the building ‘has deteriorated to such an extent that not only is the remedial work previously recommended in the November 2015 report no longer feasible, but the external wall on Lanpark Road is now at imminent danger if collapse’.

At this point the Council requested that a further report be produced by a person with either conservation accreditation or with at least 10 years experience in this field. A further report was therefore commissioned from Bradley Associates dated September 2017, who state have ‘over 30 years experience working with listed buildings’. The report concludes that the building in its current state is vulnerable to collapse and large sections of the external rear wall are unrestrained with a sizable portion of stonework missing. The decayed timber within the wall fabric is still in place which is weakening the overall structure. It is common for these types of buildings not to have any foundation and the external walls are extremely porous. Prior to any remedial work, it is paramount that an extensive scheme of temporary work designed by specialist subcontractors should be implemented to ensure the building is safe and the workforce is protected from any falling masonry’.

The Council’s Structural Engineer has advised that the safer option is to demolish completely or to reduce to a safe lower level (ground floor cill height). The Council’s Structural Engineer has also considered emergency action under Section 78 of the Building Act 1984; however, does not consider this would be justified as the elevation adjacent to the public footway has been restrained by an internal bracing system, preventing a collapse. However, the Structural Engineer will continue to monitor the condition of this elevation and re-visit this assessment should there be any significant deterioration.

As part of a Demolition Justification statement dated February 2018 a number of options to retain the building have been explored, these include:

- Do nothing – ‘the health and risks associated with the potential collapse of the building are such that this is not a feasible option.’
- Minimal intervention – would involve basic work required to ensure that the public safety risks associated with the potential collapse of the building are minimised. This approach would offer the benefit of the retention of the building in the short-term. However, would give rise to significant on-going cost liability accumulating over time and without more intervention works, the building would continue to deteriorate.
- Permanent shoring up – would involve works and costs to make the building secure, safe and watertight on a long-term basis. This approach would secure the retention of the building on a more permanent basis, however, would prove extremely cost intensive.
- Sale of building to a third party developer for open market residential use or commercial office use – the cost risks are such that no private developer is likely to take on such a liability.
- Conversion to affordable housing – this approach would retain the building, would reinstate the building’s aesthetics and would secure its long term future; however, the cost is not a viable option for the applicant.
- Demolish and reinstate the site with landscaping – this is the option being put forward.

For the above reasons it is considered that the cost and extent of works required to repair the building is disproportionate when compared to the value derived from its continued use.

It should be noted that the economic viability of carrying out works to a curtilage listed building is known as “heritage deficit” as the works tend to be undertaken by specialists and as demonstrated in this case are often costly. However, it must be noted that to retain the building for any future use would require extensive re-building, which the Council's Structural Engineer has advised would require taking the building down to at least ground floor level questioning what historic value would remain in the remodelled building.

It is considered that the demolition of Block F and the landscaping of this area would provide some breathing space for the existing residential properties around the site and it is not considered that there is any justification in requiring a replacement building at this location. It is considered that the boundary wall surrounding the site provides some context for the site curtilage and a condition of permission is required to provide a scheme for the landscaping of the site, including details of natural stone boundary treatment to match the existing.

The concerns raised that the building is used by bats is noted. The Council's Ecologist has advised that following a site visit it is noted that although the building has a new roof, the windows are open gaps, there is no loft space and the ivy in which a day time pipistrelle bat roost was recorded in a 2011 survey has been removed. As such it is considered that bat roost potential is now very low. A condition is therefore suggested to require the submission of a controlled mitigation statement to be put in place should any bat issues occur.

In terms of nesting birds a method statement condition is required that requires if demolition is to take place between March 1st and August 31st there will be a pre-check for nesting birds with appropriate working methods if nesting birds are found.

Concerns raised by local residents such as concern regarding loss of privacy and overlooking to the rear of dwellings in Lanpark Road are acknowledged, however, such considerations are not material to the demolition of a curtilage listed building. However, it should be noted that due to the distance, angles and levels involved it is not considered that there would be an impact to these dwellings that would cause any concern.

Having regard to the above, whilst it is accepted that demolition should always be the very last alternative and the loss of any curtilage listed building is always regrettable. Given the information presented, it is considered that demolition offers a better alternative than a further period of decay and dereliction where the building will only come to represent nothing other than an increasing danger to the public. It is therefore considered that the proposed development is acceptable and accords with Chapter 6 of Planning Policy Wales and Technical Advice Note 24.

RECOMMENDATION: GRANT SUBJECT TO THE BELOW CONDITIONS:

1. The development hereby granted consent shall be begun not later than the expiration of five years beginning with the date of this consent.

Reason: To comply with Section 18 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Area) Act 1990.

2. No demolition shall commence until a comprehensive scheme of landscaping has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Development shall be fully implemented in accordance with the approved scheme.

Reason: To ensure that the new development will be visually attractive in the interests of amenity in accordance with Policies AW5 and AW6 of the Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan.

3. All planting, seeding or turfing in the approved details of landscaping shall be carried out in the first planting and seeding season following the occupation of the building(s) or completion of the development, whichever is the sooner, and any trees or plants which within a period of five years from the completion of the development die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of similar size and species, unless the Local Planning Authority gives written consent to any variation.

Reason: To ensure that the new development will be visually attractive in the interests of amenity in accordance with Policies AW5 and AW6 of the Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan.

4. No development shall take place until there has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority a plan indicating the position, height and design of the stone boundary wall that shall match the existing boundary wall that forms the curtilage of the site. The stone boundary wall shall be completed in accordance with a timetable agreed in writing with the local planning authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure that the boundary wall will be in keeping with the existing boundary wall that forms the curtilage of the site in the interests of amenity in accordance with Policies AW5 and AW6 of the Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan.

5. A method statement in the event that bats are encountered, including measures to ensure bats are conserved during the demolition, a schedule of works; details of any replacement roosting provisions shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the demolition commencing. The method statement for bats shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To afford protection to bats in accordance with policy AW8 of the

Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan.

6. Should demolition take place between March 1st and 31st August no development shall commence until a method statement is received that sets out how a pre-check for nesting birds will take place with appropriate working methods if nesting birds are found. Demolition shall take place in accordance with the approved method statement.

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

7. No demolition shall take place until copies of plans and/or a photographic record of the building is deposited by the applicant in the Royal Commission's archive.

Reason: To retain a record of the building to accord with para. 6.5.17, Chapter 6 of Planning Policy Wales.