



## **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:** 18/0204/10 (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)  
**LOCATION:** **THE DRAGON INN (FORMERLY THE BRIDGE INN) & NO. 1 SARON STREET, TREFOREST, PONTYPRIDD, CF37 1TF**  
**DATE REGISTERED:** 14/03/2018  
**ELECTORAL DIVISION:** Treforest

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**RECOMMENDATION:** Refuse

#### **REASONS:**

**Whilst the principle of residential development on the site may be appropriate, the current 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. As such, the proposal is contrary to the requirements of relevant policies of the Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan and National Policy.**

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#### **REASON APPLICATION REPORTED TO COMMITTEE**

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

#### **APPLICATION DETAILS**

Full planning permission 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.

In a supporting letter, the applicant has confirmed that;

*“The proposed building will be used exclusively for student accommodation. A full time specialist student letting management company will be appointed (probably one of Let Right, Glamorgan Student Lettings or Rocket Residential). The room will be advertised in all the usual student places including the Union and the housing lists and will be registered with the university accommodation department via StudentPad. The tenancy agreements will be for a 43 week period to coincide with the university academic year, with a summer retainer in order to guarantee the room for the next academic year.”*

In support of the fact that no car parking is proposed on the site, the applicant also comments that; *“The tenancy agreement will prohibit the occupants from registering or insuring a car at the address, and will prohibit the occupants from parking in the area. The letting agents will appraise applicants of this, and highlight the cycle storage and proximity of the train station.”*

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 conservation area consent 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

18/0287	The Dragon Inn & 1 Saron Street, Treforest, Pontypridd CF37 1TF	Conservation area consent 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:

### 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.

### 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.

### 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.

## **CONSULTATION**

Transportation Section – objections raised on the grounds that; in the absence of off-street parking provision, the proposed development would generate on-street parking demand to the detriment of highway safety and the free flow of traffic.

Public Health and Protection – no objections raised, condition suggested requiring the submission of a scheme for protecting the future occupiers of the development from noise from the adjacent Cardiff - Merthyr Railway Line.

Countryside, Landscape & Ecology –no objections raised, the application is accompanied by an appropriate bat survey. Conditions and informative note suggested.

Land Reclamation and Engineering – no objections raised.

Dwr Cymru – no objections raised, conditions suggested.

Network Rail – no response received to date.

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.

AW8 - provides the criteria for the protection and enhancement of the natural environment

SSA12 - seeks 20% affordable housing in schemes of 5 units or more, however developments for student accommodation are exempt from these obligations.

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.

Supplementary Planning Guidance: Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)

### National Guidance

Planning Policy Wales Chapter 3 (Making and Enforcing Planning Decisions), Chapter 4 (Planning for Sustainability), Chapter 6 (Conserving the Historic Environment), Chapter 8 (Transport) and Chapter 9 (Housing) 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 18: Transport;

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 proposes the demolition of The Dragon Inn (formerly The Bridge Inn) and 1 Saron Street in order to enable the erection of a 3 storey student accommodation block, comprising 5 flats. As such, the key considerations in the determination of the application are whether the proposed use is compatible with the sites location, along with the potential impacts of the resulting development upon both the character of the site and its wider conservation area setting. The potential impacts of the development upon the amenity of neighbouring occupiers and highway safety are further considerations.

### 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 a total of 13 bedrooms, providing student accommodation.

It is noted that following the publicity of the planning application concern has been raised by residents regarding the further introduction of student accommodation to,

what is largely at present, still a conventional residential terrace (Saron Street). Further reference is made to the negative impacts, in terms of social cohesion, that have resulted upon the local community by the rising numbers and concentration of houses in multiple occupation in Treforest.

Whilst these concerns are understood, it is important to make clear the distinctions, in terms of the planning classification, between purpose built student accommodation and houses in multiple occupation. Each of the aforementioned uses fall within different uses classes; with purpose built student accommodation being classified as a 'sui generis – student accommodation' and a house in multiple occupation (HMO) being classified as either Class C4 or 'sui generis–HMO'. Therefore, whilst it is acknowledged that there may be some similarities between the two development types, a proposal for sui generis purpose built student accommodation cannot be assessed strictly against the same criteria that is set out with the Council's *Supplementary Planning Guidance: Houses in Multiple Occupation*, which is intended to control Class C4 houses in multiple occupation and 'sui generis-HMO'.

On a related point, it is noted that many of the letters of representation received comment that they believe there is no need for more student accommodation in the Treforest area. They believe this point is supported by the fact that the University do not have any future plans to build accommodation blocks and many students now reside in Cardiff and commute to the Treforest campus. Whilst these points are accepted, it must be noted that it is not the role of the planning system to assess market forces and how strong the demand is likely to be for the intended development. It must be noted however that recent developments, also for purpose built student accommodation, both in Treforest (Park Pride) and in Pontypridd (Llwyncastan) were submitted and constructed by private developers and it is understood, now complete, are fully let. Nevertheless, in the case of the current scheme, market demand does not form a material planning consideration, which would carry weight in the determination of the current planning application.

Overall, having regard to the above, most notably the planning history of the site, it is considered that the principle of residential use as purpose built student accommodation on the site is acceptable. However, further consideration will need to be given to the impacts of the development, in visual terms, amenity terms and highway safety. These matters are assessed in the following sections of the report.

### Character and Appearance

As detailed above the application seeks to demolish the Dragon Inn (former Bridge Inn) and adjoining residential property on Saron Street in order to construct new purpose built student accommodation. The resulting development would consist of a prominent building occupying a corner position on the junction of Bridge Street and Saron Street. The proposed building would occupy almost the entire plot, extending up to the line of the footway on its north and west boundaries, to the embankment to the railway line on its east and neighbouring residential terrace to the south.

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.

### Residential amenity

As noted above, the site is located within a predominantly residential area; in this respect consideration must be given to the potential impacts upon the privacy and amenity of existing neighbouring residents.

As noted above, the scheme proposes the demolition of the existing buildings on the site and their replacement with a purpose built student accommodation block. It is accepted that consideration has been given to the configuration of the fenestration, with the majority of windows serving habitable rooms being located to the east and west elevation, in an attempt to limit the potential for overlooking and avoid a loss of privacy to neighbouring occupiers.

Some concern was initially expressed with regard to the scale of the building and the potential consequential impacts of this upon the occupiers of properties closest to the site, notably those that adjoin the site to the south. However, following discussions with the agent, a modification to the scheme was made with a view to addressing this issue. The amendment involved setting back the upper (second) floor of the building from its southern boundary. Whilst the set back is not significant at 0.5 metre, the application is accompanied by a set of drawings which illustrate the reduction in visibility from the neighbouring dwelling (number 4) which would occur as a result of this change.

These drawings illustrate that the combination of the proximity of the dwelling and the presence of an existing two storey flat roof extension to the rear of this property, means that very little of the new building would actually be visible from the garden of number 4 Saron Street. Whilst it is acknowledged that the visibility of the upper floor would increase as you move south along Saron Street, in turn its potential impact would reduce as the separation distances increase. It is also important to note that being positioned at the northern end of Saron Street, the development would not result in a loss of natural light to neighbouring positioned dwellings to the south.

As such, overall, it is not considered that the proposal would result in an undue loss of privacy or amenity to neighbouring occupiers and therefore accords with policy AW5 of the Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan.

### Highway Safety

With regard to the potential impact upon highway safety, following consultation with the Council's Transportation Section, it is noted that an objection has been raised to the proposal.

Their observations comment that the proposed development is located at the junction between Bridge Street and Saron Street, Treforest. Bridge Street has a carriageway width of 6.0m, a 1.2m wide footway on its development side and a 1.2m wide footway opposite. The 6.0m wide carriageway incorporates a 2.0m wide parking bay on the development side of Bridge Street limited to 2 hour with no return within 4 hours between 8am – 6pm, additionally, there is an exception to the limited waiting for resident permit holders. Bridge Street is one-way and exits via Old Park Terrace onto New Park Terrace.

Saron Street has a carriageway width of 4.0m and a 1.2m wide footway on the opposite side to the development. There is no continuous footway on the development side of Saron Street. The 4.0m carriageway incorporates a 2.0m wide parking bay on the opposite side to the development. As for Bridge Street, the parking bay is limited to 2 hours with no return within 4 hours between 8am – 6pm with an exemption for permit holders. Saron Street is a cul-de- sac with no turning facility.

### Parking

The proposed development will result in a bespoke student accommodation block comprising of 25 beds in total. In accordance with the Council's adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance: Access, Circulation and Parking Requirements (March 2011), bespoke student accommodation has a requirement of 1 space per 25 beds for servicing, wardens and drop-off areas and 1 space per 10 beds for students and visitors. This equates to a requirement of 4 spaces for the proposed development.

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.

It is acknowledged that the previously approved application for the conversion of the public house to student accommodation did not make any provision for off-street parking within the scheme. However, that scheme (app.no.16/1181) sought to convert the existing building, as such there was no scope within the curtilage of the site to make any off-street parking provision. Furthermore, that scheme was also at a far smaller scale, proposing a total of 13 beds, arranged within 4 flats. In the case of the current scheme, the Council's Transportation Section comment that given the existing buildings on the site are to be demolished to enable comprehensive re-development, consideration should be given to incorporating a degree of off-street parking provision within the proposals.

It is noted that in an attempt to compensate for the lack of car parking provision on site the applicants have indicated a willingness to restrict car ownership amongst future tenants of the development. They comment that *"the tenancy agreement will prohibit the occupants from registering or insuring a car at the address, and will prohibit the occupants from parking in the area."* Whilst in taking this approach, the applicants clearly acknowledge the parking pressures which exist, having considered

this in greater detail, some concern is expressed with regard to how successful this approach is likely to be in relieving pressure for on street car parking. Such a restriction would not prevent students from registering a vehicle at their non-term time home address and questions are raised with regard to who and how an agreement that restricts parking within a given radius of the site would be enforced.

In addition to the above, the Council's Transportation Section express some concern in relation to the potential impact of the development during its construction phase, should planning permission be granted. The proposed building almost entirely fills the footprint of the site, as a consequence, no space would be available for a site office and welfare facilities, or the storage of materials and off-street parking for site operatives. The configuration of the local highway network itself would present difficulties with regard to deliveries to the site by Heavy Goods Vehicles. This point is highlighted by the presence informative signage on the approach to Saron Street advising that it is unsuitable for heavy goods vehicles. Nevertheless, they conclude by stating that on balance, these construction impacts could be limited by imposition of a suitably worded planning condition.

However, notwithstanding the fact that it may be possible to limit construction impacts, concerns remain with regard to the overall impact of the development on highway safety. As such, the comments of the Transportation Section conclude by 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.

## **OTHER ISSUES:**

### Ecology

Consultation with the Council's Ecologist has confirmed that given the size of the building and its proximity to the river, it is of a type that may have the potential to support bats. As such, the application is accompanied by an appropriate ecological survey, which assesses the presence of bats. Having assessed the report, the Council's Ecologist has confirmed that the emergence survey found no bats using the building. It is noted that the report includes a recommendation that an 'on-call' ecologist arrangement is put in place as a precaution if bats are found during works and that lighting which forms part of the development should be minimised to reduce adverse impacts on commuting and foraging bats. However, these matters could be controlled through the use of suitably worded conditions. As such, with regard to ecological impacts, it is considered that the scheme accords with the requirements of policy AW8 of the Local Development Plan.

### Affordable Housing

It is acknowledged that under the provisions of policy SSA12, 20% affordable housing contribution should be sought on schemes which propose 5 or more units of residential accommodation. However Supplementary Planning Guidance: Planning Obligations identifies that a number of exemptions apply for certain types of residential development. One such exemption is the provision of student

accommodation. Therefore, as this scheme proposes a purpose built student accommodation block, no affordable housing contribution is applicable in this case.

### Community Infrastructure Levy

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

As the development proposes purpose built student accommodation that would be classified as sui generis, 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

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, 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. The proposed development would be contrary to Policies AW5 and AW6 of the Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan and Planning Policy Wales, in that, in the absence of off-street parking provision, the proposed development would generate on-street parking demand to the detriment of highway safety and the free flow of traffic.