



PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

7 NOVEMBER 2019

REPORT OF: DIRECTOR PROSPERITY AND DEVELOPMENT

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

Members are asked to determine the planning application outlined below:

APPLICATION NO: 18/0088/12 (BJW)
APPLICANT: S F Foundation
DEVELOPMENT: Listed building consent for the proposed conversion of former Aberdare girls school into 38 residential units (1X2 bed hs, 6X1 bed, 15X2 bed and 4X3 bed) 3No. refuse store, car parking, outbuilding into 12 flats two storey dwelling (12X2 bed). Demolition of outbuilding No. 02,05/06, 08, 09, 10 & 11. Alterations - Single storey joint extension to No. 3.
LOCATION: **FORMER ABERDARE GIRLS SCHOOL, GADLYS ROAD, GADLYS, ABERDARE, CF44 8AE**
DATE REGISTERED: 27/06/2019
ELECTORAL DIVISION: Aberdare East

RECOMMENDATION: Approve, subject to favourable referral to Cadw.

REASON APPLICATION REPORTED TO COMMITTEE

The application is for Listed Building Consent and accompanies an application for planning permission for a proposal that is not covered by determination powers delegated to the Service Director for Prosperity and Development. Consequently, it is considered expedient to also report this application to Members of the Planning and Development Committee for consideration.

REASONS:

The proposed development presents an opportunity to bring this prominent listed building and its curtilage structures back into beneficial use thereby improving their appearance and that of the wider setting within which it sits. Furthermore, the proposed development offers the opportunity for a sustainable, productive, long-term use of the site and its attendant buildings as well as providing much needed social housing within the area.

The proposed development is considered would have a positive impact on the listed building and would ensure its survival in the long term with a design that reflects and respects its importance as a Listed Building.

APPLICATION DETAILS

Listed Building Consent is sought for the change of use and redevelopment of the former Aberdare Girls School, Gadlys Road, Aberdare to provide 31 residential units.

The scheme is part of two applications, one for planning consent (reference no. 18/0089/10) and this application for Listed Building Consent (LBC) presented on the same agenda for the consideration of Members.

Listed Building Consent is sought for the alterations to the main Listed former girls school and the pre-1948 buildings within the curtilage of the site that, by virtue of their age and location are considered to benefit from “curtilage listed status” and therefore also require LBC.

Consequently, the five, new-build two bedroom bungalows located within the northern area of the site does not require Listed Building Consent although their effect on the setting of the other buildings at the site do form part of the assessment of the proposals.

The application proposal has altered during the course of its assessment to its current form being presented to Members. The main alteration is the substitution of the development of the rear of the site from flats to five bungalows. Specifically, the amended proposal consists of the following elements:

- The main school building (Building No.1) would be retained and restored to provide 19 units, comprising of 3 x one-bedroom flats, 12 x two-bedroom flats and 4 x three-bedroom flats.
- The single storey former art block (Building No.7) would be converted into 2 x two-bedroom flats.
- Conversion of the two storey former science block (Building No.3) to provide 3 x one-bedroom and 1 x two-bedroom flats.
- The single storey detached cookery block (Building No.4) would become a two-bedroom bungalow, with its own small garden area.
- Five new-build two-bedroom bungalows located within the northern higher extent of the site.

Further to the residential development, the site contains several ancillary curtilage buildings, which would be retained or replaced:

- Building no.2 is a post-war prefabricated building located in the southern corner of the site, and has elevations of pebble-dash and a corrugated metal roof. This would be removed and the single storey

management office and refuse store B would be constructed in its place, but to a smaller footprint.

- Building no.10 is shown on the existing site plan and recorded as being a small prefabricated building close to the long ramp from Elm Grove. However it is no longer extant.
- Building 10A is a single storey stone building, with slate roof, adjacent to the western retaining wall. It would be retained and repurposed as an external store.
- Building no's 8, 9 and 11 are modern demountable, prefabricated or brick outbuildings and would be removed. In place of the two former buildings refuse stores A and C would be erected.
- Building no.5, at the higher northern part of the site is a post-war prefabricated structure located in the southern corner of the site, and has elevations of pebble-dash and a corrugated metal roof, similar to building no.2. This would be removed and the area used to construct the new build flats, with parking and playground.
- Building no.6 is shown adjacent to no.5. However, this was removed by 2016 and only the concrete slab remains

Notwithstanding the above, the external changes to the main building and others to be converted are minimal, compared to the scale of the site. Some examples of betterment include the removal of the ductwork, flues and plant to the rear elevation and the flat roofed kitchen to the rear of the more westerly wing on building no.1.

In addition there are two unauthorised doorways to building no.1 which would be restored to have windows of original appearance and proportion. There are other small examples of modification such as that to building no.3, where the single storey section to the southern side would be modestly enlarged to enable a habitable room of reasonable size.

The site layout plans presented with the application demonstrate that the curtilage of the site would be laid out for parking, circulation and amenity purposes. The Gadlys Road frontage would be retained with its mature vegetation, whilst other sections of land at the front and rear of the main building, including that towards the northern part of the site, would be left as open space or landscaped.

The application has been accompanied by a comprehensive range of plan and elevation drawings, and the following documents have been submitted in support:

- Design and Access Statement
- Pre-Application Consultation Report
- Ecological Assessment
- Heritage Statement and addendum
- Coal Mining Risk Assessment
- Structural Appraisal
- Tree Report

SITE APPRAISAL

The application site comprises the grounds and buildings of the former Gadlys Aberdare Girls Lower Comprehensive School. The school is a Grade II listed building, which opened in October 1907 and was listed in January 1991.

The listing notes its free Jacobethan style, with eastern influences to the dome, as well as dark coursed and bull-nosed local stone with red wilderness dressing including quoins, still bands, plinth band and gable parapets with conical finials; slate roof. It is recorded that the middle section is the tallest and is advanced including an octagonal tower with swept roof octagonal cupola crowned by iron weathervane.

The site is enclosed by a high stone wall, although parts of this have been repaired and replaced by blockwork. There are a number of gated pedestrian entrances around the site perimeter, with vehicular access from Depot Road. The curtilage includes a number of traditional and ancillary outbuildings of similar age and later construction.

The site as a whole is roughly rectangular in shape, and comprises an area of approximately 0.86 hectares. The majority of the grounds are relatively level, although there is a large stone wall retaining the higher ground to the north-eastern rear.

There are residential properties surrounding the site on Gadlys Road to the south-west, Elm Grove to the north-west and north-east and Depot Road to the south-east. With the exception of the latter, most of these dwellings are of Victorian or early 20th century origin.

The site is located within the settlement boundary. Other than for the listed building status, and intersection with an area of high risk to development from coal mining, there is an oak tree in the northern corner of the site subject to a Tree Preservation Order (TPO 146).

The Listing details of the site, record no. 10847, is included below:

Exterior

Below the road (set back behind playground). At the southern end of the Gadlys area of town. Site is bordered by high rubble revetment wall.

Opened 7th October 1907. Designed by Thomas Roderick, Architect of Aberdare and erected by Messrs Wills and Company, Ystrad. Cost £4,000. At the opening ceremony it was declared to be "the finest piece of architecture in Aberdare".

Free Jacobethan style with eastern influences to the dome; symmetrical school building, boys to left and girls to right - the two halves designed to be entirely self contained; as a result the composition lacks a main entrance.

1,2 and 3 storeys stepping down to either end. Dark, coursed and bull-nosed

local stone with 'Red Wilderness' dressings including quoins, sill bands, plinth band and gable parapets with conical finials; slate roofs. The middle section is the tallest and is advanced including an octagonal tower with swept roof octagonal cupola crowned by iron weathervane. Blind roundel to front face; date plaque with rounded top below. Camber headed horned sash windows with voussoirs and keystones, 2-windows to the front on both floors. Lean-tos at either side with kneelers and side doors. The middle section is flanked by 3-bay blocks, the centres of which are set back; 3 Jacobethan type gables to each side, the central gables (to the Boys and Girls Halls) being taller. 3 blind arched openings to the upper parts of these gables; the halls have tall 3-light windows with labels and flanking circular windows; small pane glazing. 2 camber headed windows to flanking gables with horned 12-pane sashes; the inner of these gables have the boys and girls cambered doors with small pane tympani. The lines of these gables are continued downwards by set-back lean-tos.

Twin gables to the ends with similar detail and glazing. Gables also to the taller hall ranges which have split thermal windows. U-shaped yard to centre rear. Internally the main halls are bordered by classrooms with glazed sides so that the headmaster and headmistress could watch classes in progress. The outside windows are set high so that the children cannot look out. Classroom interiors have canted boarded ceilings with circular ventilators.

PLANNING HISTORY

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

- 18/0089/10:** Conversion of the main school building and three outbuildings to provide 26 affordable dwellings, comprising 25 flats & 1 house; construction of 5 two-bedroom market bungalows; additional vehicular access from Depot Road; car parking and cycle stands; refuse stores; site management office and demolition of other redundant ancillary buildings (description amended to reflect revised plans, substituting new-build flats with bungalows, received on 11th October 2019), currently undetermined.
- 17/5047/41:** Pre application advice enquiry for conversion of former Aberdare Girls School to 30 residential units (1x2 bed h5, 18x1 bed, 7x2 bed & 4x3 bed). 3 no. refuse store, car parking, outbulding to 12 flats two storey dwelling (12x2 bed). Demolition of building no. 02, 05/06, 08, 09, 10 & 11. Alterations - single storey joint extension to no. 3. Decision: 19/07/2017, Permission Required.
- 11/0109/08:** Demolish an existing single storey, timber-framed classroom building and replace with a prefabricated portable classroom building for a temporary period of 3 years. Repair works to boundary wall. Decision: 20/04/2011, Granted.

PUBLICITY

This has included site notices and the direct notification of properties surrounding the site, site notices and a press notice. Nine responses have been received. Most of the points that have been raised are planning matters that have been addressed in the planning report presented later within the agenda (reference no 18/0089/10). Support is offered for the general principle of the re-development of the Listed Building(s) at the site subject to acceptable levels of car parking provision and a sympathetic conversion being undertaken.

CONSULTATION

The following groups were consulted and have offered no comments: The Royal Commission for Ancient and Historical Monuments in Wales; The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings; The Twentieth Century Society; The Council for British Archaeology Wales/Cymru; The Georgian Group; The Victorian Society and The Ancient Monuments Society (AMS).

POLICY CONTEXT

The site is within the settlement boundary and is unallocated.

Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan

The application site lies within the settlement boundary for Aberdare. The main school building itself is a Grade II Listed Building.

Policy CS1 - in the northern strategy area the emphasis will be on promoting residential and commercial development in locations which support and reinforce the Principal Towns and Key Settlements. The policy also promotes the re-use of underused buildings, seeks to protect the cultural identity of the area by protecting the historic built heritage, and provide high quality affordable accommodation that promotes diversity in the residential market.

Policy CS4 and CS5 - the policies identify that land is required to meet the housing requirements of 14,385 new dwellings in sustainable locations over the plan period. Of these, 1,770 should be affordable units, as set out in Policy CS5.

Policy AW 1 - sets provisions for the creation of new housing throughout Rhondda Cynon Taf between 2006 –2021.

Policy AW 2 - supports development proposals in sustainable locations including sites within the defined settlement boundary.

Policy AW4 - details the criteria for planning obligations that may be sought, including the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).

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 AW7 – refers to the protection and enhancement of the built environment. This policy states that development which impacts upon sites of architectural and historic merit will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that the proposal would preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the site.

Policy AW8 - the policy states that distinctive landscape features, such as trees, are important for biodiversity, consequently they will be protected in line with this policy.

Policy AW10 – requires development proposals to have an acceptable impact on health and safety and local amenity in respect of issues such as pollution control and flooding.

Policy NSA1 - supports residential and commercial developments within the defined town centre of Aberdare.

Policy NSA10 - sets the density level for the NSA at 30dph unless a lower density level is needed to protect the character of the site, protect the amenity of existing/future residents or the development still makes adequate use of the site.

Policy NSA11 - requires 10% affordable housing on sites of 10 units of more.

Policy NSA12 - provides for housing within the defined settlement boundaries, where it can be demonstrated that:

- the proposed development does not adversely affect the highway network and is accessible to local services by sustainable modes of transport;
- the development does not adversely affect the provision of car parking in the surrounding area; and
- the development does not adversely affect the provision of open space.

Policy NSA13 - allows for the rehabilitation/conversion of large buildings for residential purposes within the Northern Strategy Area, where it can be demonstrated that:

- the building is located within the settlement boundary;
- the building is of historic or architectural importance or is prominent and makes a valuable contribution to the townscape of the settlement; or
- There is no economically viable alternative use for the building.

National Guidance

In the determination of planning applications regard should also be given to the requirements of National Planning Policy that 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 & 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 3 (good design and better places, promoting healthier places, sustainable management of natural resources)

Chapter 4 (moving within and between places, transport, living in a place, housing)

Chapter 6 (distinctive and natural places)

Planning Policy Wales Technical Advice Note 12 Design.

Sets out the objectives of good design and aims to encourage good design in all aspects of development.

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

Provides guidance on how the planning system should consider the historic environment during development plan preparation and decision making on planning and listed building applications.

The above chapters and Technical Advice notes set out the Welsh Government's policy on planning issues relevant to the determination of this planning application.

REASONS FOR REACHING THE RECOMMENDATION

Section 16(2) Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states that in considering whether to grant Listed Building Consent for any works the Local Planning Authority or the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

Main Issue:

Acceptability of the proposed development on the special architectural and historic merit of the building.

The application proposes conversion works to the main Listed Building, the school, at the site as well as to several ancillary school buildings, which by virtue of their age, design and association with the main school building, are

considered to be “curtilage” listed and also relevant to the consent for Listed Building Consent (LBC).

Additionally, works are also proposed to remove several other ancillary buildings that by their age and construction are not considered to benefit from “curtilage” listed status and an enabling development to the rear of the site that is assessed only insofar as it affects the setting of the listed structures within the wider site.

Consequently, it is considered prudent to address the works proposed to each building and their impact on the significance on the special architectural and historic merit of the site.

Building 1 – main school building

The main school building was the former boys and girls school, with separate entrances and a symmetrical layout for both boys and girls.

The school façade and design features are described in the listing as “Jacobethan” an amalgam of Jacobean and Elizabethan influences revived around the turn of the century when the building dates from.

The building is an imposing structure of a civic scale consisting of a mostly single storey but also including two and three storey elements (specifically the towers).

The current layout allows an appreciation of the school through its internal spaces that would be compromised through its conversion to residential accommodation. However, the property does not have an alternative use that would require the retention of the spaces as they are currently arranged so an alternative use, in this case residential, is considered viable. In order to retain an appreciation of the use of the property as a school a condition for the recording of the property to an agreed architectural standard could be imposed.

External alterations are kept to a minimum with the reinstating of a window on the former “boys” side and the removal of a contemporary extension within the rear of the property being the main external alterations. It is considered that these alterations would be acceptable and would retain and improve the architectural importance of the building. The removal of an unsympathetic extension would allow the original building to be viewed in its original form while the reintroduction of the window in the front façade would restore the symmetry of the elevation and would also remove an unsightly modern addition.

Internally, the scheme retains the majority of existing partitions within the building. The modern partitions that are proposed to create smaller divisions within the properties are considered to be acceptable as they would be reversible.

The creation of a mezzanine floor has been well handled throughout and would create additional living accommodation, making the scheme more financially viable, while having little discernible impact on the external character and appearance of the property.

Consequently, it is considered that the proposed conversion of the main school building would be, subject to conditions, acceptable.

Building 3 – Ancillary School building (science block)

This building, located directly to the north of the main school building, is a two storey teaching/store which, due to its age, design and association with the school is considered to be a “curtilage” listed building.

The proposed alterations would be relatively minor with the removal of an external metal stairs; the substitution of a first floor door with a window and the small increase in the width of the single storey range to accommodate a bedroom and bathroom with an amended glazing arrangement.

The alterations would retain the character and appearance of the building, while removing an unsightly external metal stairs. The external alterations are considered to be sympathetic to the original building and the arrangement and relationship between this building and the main school building would be maintained.

Consequently, it is considered that the proposed works to building 3 would be acceptable.

Building 4 – Ancillary School building (cooking block)

This building is located to the north of the main school building and to the east of building 3 and is a single storey teaching building which, due to its age, design and association with the school is considered to be a “curtilage” listed building.

This building would be converted to a single, two-bedroom bungalow. The conversion would be carried out through internal works and the outward character and appearance would remain completely unaltered.

Consequently, it is considered that the proposal would have no impact on the character and appearance of this curtilage listed building or on the wider setting of the main Listed Building or other ancillary buildings within the site.

Building 7 – Ancillary School building (art block)

This building is located to the north of the main school building and to the west of building 3 (which is attached to the eastern corner of the building) and is a single storey teaching building which, due to its age, design and association with the school is considered to be a “curtilage” listed building.

This building is proposed to be converted to two flats. Again the works would be carried out through internal conversion with the only external alteration being the removal of a roof-light for a wholly tiled roof on the side elevation.

It is considered that this very minor external work along with the internal conversion would have a minimal impact on the character and appearance of the parent building itself, its relationship with surrounding properties and the main listed school at the site.

Building 10A – Store

This building is located to the south west of the main school building, at the corner of the site immediately adjacent to Elm Grove. The structure is a single storey ancillary building which, due to its age, design and association with the school is considered to be a “curtilage” listed building.

It is proposed to retain the building in situ, with no external or internal alterations and repurpose it as an external store for residents.

Due to the proposed treatment of the building, it is considered that its appearance and character would remain unchanged and its use would be suitable and acceptable in terms of the operation of the wider site.

Other works – demolition of later, prefabricated structures

Several other, later ancillary school buildings, present at the site would be removed from the site as part of the overall scheme. This would be to accommodate access, parking, refuse stores and the enabling development at the north of the site which will be addressed later in this report.

The buildings: Nos. 2, 5, 6, 8, 9 and 10 were a mixture of poor quality, modern construction, demountable and pre-fabricated buildings, added to the site at a later period. The buildings are not reflective of the character or appearance of the main listed school building or its ancillary curtilage listed structures.

It is considered that the removal of these buildings would have a positive effect on the general character of the wider site and would serve to reinforce the special architectural and historic importance of the remaining buildings at the site. Consequently, this element of the proposal is considered to be acceptable.

Other works – New buildings

Three new refuse store buildings are proposed in the north-east, south-east and north-west corners of the main school site (the other, south-west corner, containing building 10A which is proposed to be re-purposed as an external store).

The refuse store buildings would all be modest, single-storey buildings of a utilitarian design and appearance that would have an acceptable character and appearance within the immediate area and the wider setting of the site.

A management office is also proposed in the southern corner of the site. This building is a modest, contemporary, single-storey structure with a clean and modern finish. The building is located in the corner of the site and is well screened from views into the site. The building is modest in scale and would sit aside from the main school building as a modern addition that is ancillary to the new purpose of the site.

It is considered that, due to its location, modest scale and obviously contemporary design, the building would not have an adverse impact on the special architectural and historical interest of the main school building or the general setting of the wider site.

Finally, the northern section of the site proposes 5 new-build bungalows with ancillary parking and cycle storage. This part of the wider scheme has been subject to change, with the original houses and then flats substituted with the current proposal for bungalows.

The site of the bungalows is at the northern part of the site, at a higher level than the rest of the site. It is an area that, while within the wider curtilage of the site, was not characterised by any ancillary buildings that could be considered “curtilage listed.” Indeed this part of the site has previously been considered to be separate from the main school grounds as reflected in the submitted Heritage Impact Assessment.

Consequently, due to the change in levels and the contemporary nature of existing buildings within the northern area, it is considered that this part of the site has always had less importance, in terms of historical importance but also in terms of the wider character of the site.

The re-development of this part of the site is classed within the planning application as “enabling development” as it adds to the viability of the overall scheme. This is not a consideration to the Listed Building Consent where Heritage Deficit, or the inevitable greater cost of re-development due to the need to sympathetically repair and restore historic buildings, should not be considered an obstacle in the assessment of a proposal.

In this regard, it is considered that due to the location of this element within the overall site, its previous character and appearance and its generally lesser importance in architectural and historical significance on the wider site that the current proposal would have an acceptable impact.

Conclusion

The proposal consists of the comprehensive re-development of the main school building; the conversion of ancillary “curtilage” listed buildings; the removal of unsympathetic, later curtilage structures; the erection of new

ancillary buildings to support the use of the site for residential purposes and an enabling development to the north of the site.

It is considered that the works to the main school building and the curtilage listed structures are well justified through the submitted Heritage Impact Assessment. The works retain and repair the majority of important external features and original, historic partitions while introducing reversible internal alterations to allow the conversion of existing structures.

The external works that are proposed either re-introduce the historic form, enabling a better understanding of the building or are of a very minor nature. In either case they are visually acceptable and maintain or enhance the special architectural and historic importance of the site.

The loss of poor quality curtilage buildings are to the benefit of the setting of the site as a whole and there is no issue with the removal of these buildings from the site.

New buildings are of a utilitarian scale and design and are located where they would have the least impact on the setting of the more importance historic building within the site.

The enabling development is considered to be within the wider curtilage of the school but is distinct from the main site due to its location and the nature of the buildings thereon. The re-development of this part of the site reinforces this separation with the creation of a contemporary development of bungalows with their own access off Depot Road. It is considered that this element of the proposal has no adverse impact on the historical significance or setting of the wider historical site and is therefore acceptable.

RECOMMENDATION: Approve, subject to positive determination of the associated Listed Building Consent (LBC) and favourable referral to Cadw.

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. The development hereby approved shall be carried out in accordance with the approved plan(s) no(s):

- 061.17/01 Rev M
- 061.17/02 Rev M
- 061.17/01B1 Rev M
- 064.17/RS Rev A
- 065.17/05 Rev A
- 065.17/04 Rev A
- 065.17/14

- 061.17/05 Rev A
- 061.17/06
- 061.17/08
- 061/17/10
- 061.17/13
- 064.17/05
- 064.17/06
- 064.17/07
- 064.17/08
- 064.17/04
- 064.17/05
- 064.17/06
- 065.17/06
- 061.17/M
- 061.17/M1

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. Notwithstanding the details on the approved plans before work starts, the design and details of the following shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning:

- rainwater goods;
- soffits and fascias;
- window repairs;
- boundary treatments;
- boundary wall repairs;
- stone and brick repair; and
- internal partitions fixings

The works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure that the appearance of the proposed works will be in keeping with the special architectural and historic character of the listed building; in accordance with Policy AW7 of the Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan.

4. All disturbed fabric shall be made good to match the existing building.

Reason: To ensure that the appearance of the proposed works will be in keeping with the special architectural and historic character of the listed building in accordance with Policy AW7 of the Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan.