



PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

17 SEPTEMBER 2020

REPORT OF: DIRECTOR PROSPERITY AND DEVELOPMENT

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

Members are asked to determine the planning application outlined below:

APPLICATION NO: 20/0631/08 (BJW)
APPLICANT: RCT
DEVELOPMENT: Renewable energy scheme using a heat recovery system to provide heating to Fynnon Taf Primary School and the Pavilion
LOCATION: TAFFS WELLSRING HEAT NETWORK , CARDIFF, CF15 7PF
DATE REGISTERED: 15/07/2020
ELECTORAL DIVISION: Ffynon Taf

RECOMMENDATION: Approve

REASONS:

The proposed development would provide a renewable and sustainable heat source for the nearby school and pavilion which would reduce costs, carbon production and the reliance on expensive fossil fuels.

The works would be of minimal impact, with the majority of works being buried below ground and what is visible being of a modern, utilitarian and acceptable character and appearance.

The works would not have an adverse impact on either the building itself or the setting of the nearby listed wellhouse building, from which it would be physically distinct.

The proposal is therefore considered to be acceptable.

REASON THAT THE APPLICATION IS BEING REPORTED TO COMMITTEE

The application is being made by the Council for an upgrade to its own facilities and, as such, is within a category of development where the decision is not delegated to officers.

APPLICATION DETAILS

Full planning permission is sought to provide a heating network to replace the existing heating systems at the Pavilion and the Ffynnon Taf Primary School using the heat from the naturally occurring thermal spring at Taffs Well, Wellhouse. The new system will integrate with the existing school heating system but fully replace the electric heating system at the Pavilion building.

The engineering works proposed for the project are:

- Interceptor pipework and a pumping station in the river bank between the spring housing and discharge outlet at the river.
- Pipework in the river bank to transfer flows from the pumping station to heat exchangers located in a small GRP housing and return pipework to the river discharge system.
- Pipework from the 'secondary side' of the heat exchangers to the heat pumps located at the school and at the Pavilion.
- Electric power cabling from the school to the pumps in the pumping chamber and buried in trench with the pipework.
- A self-contained GRP housing at the school for the heat pumps and all associated pumps, pipes and control equipment required to provide heat for the existing school and new extension planned.
- Pipework from the heat exchangers to and from a heat pump and associated equipment at the Pavilion.

Other than the heat exchangers in a secure housing on the flood protection embankment all works at the river (pumping station, pipes and electric power cabling) will be buried. Upon completion the only signs of construction works will be the manhole cover providing access into the pumping station.

Within the heat exchangers some 10°C will be removed from the spring water which will then flow back to river through the existing river discharge outlet. There will be no contact between the spring water and heat pump water and no change will be made to the existing chemical composition of the spring.

At the school all heat pumps (3 no.) and associated equipment will be housed in a new GRP/plastic housing near the site of the new school extension; the existing plant room is unsuitable for the new heat pump equipment and new standby gas boilers. The exact size of the new building is not yet known and it will not be until the full designs and equipment selection / layout stage has been undertaken through the tender process, however the building will be no larger than 5m by 5m.

At the Pavilion the new heat pump and equipment will be housed within a store room and connected to new radiator and pipework; the existing heating system comprises eight electric radiators which are not suitable for connection to a heat pump system.

All pipes will be laid in trench and follow the route shown on the Pipe Route drawing included in the land ownership plan of the area.

On completion of the project the installation of the chamber and pipes will be covered, the ground restored and levelled with suitable top soil to conceal the installation. The pump chamber will be adjacent to the existing spring discharge water chambers and will have a suitable secured lid to provide maintenance access to the pumps.

Following Storm Dennis earlier this year it was identified that the pump control panel and primary heat exchangers will need to be located above the highest flood water levels in a suitable GRP cabinet. A suitable location was identified at a discreet location on top of the banking adjacent to the Thermal Spring building. It will be to the rear of the treeline in the corner of the boundary fence and will not be visible from the park. Access to the cabinet for maintenance and monitoring will be via the park's existing car park.

Additional documents submitted in support of the application are as follows:

- Design and Access Statement; and
- Business Plan

SITE APPRAISAL

The site consists of Ffynnon Taf Primary School, the Pavillion in Taffs Well Park and a pipe run between these buildings, down to the pathway and banking along the river Taff to its boundary with the Wellhouse within the park.

The majority of the works are the installation of pipes within the school yard, connecting lanes and the park area and river bank plateau, leading to the Wellhouse and Pavillion.

PLANNING HISTORY

19/1307	Ffynnon Taf Primary School, Cardiff Road, Taffs Well, CF15 7PR	The construction of two temporary classroom blocks and yard.	GTD	13/02/2020
16/1142	As above	It is proposed to install a temporary double classroom demountable building onto the playing field adjacent to the playground.	GTD	29/11/16
11/1358	As above	Conversion and extension of a storage building to a classroom with 2 toilets and store room.	GTD	17/01/12

PUBLICITY

This has included site notices and the direct notification of properties surrounding the site. No comments have been received.

CONSULTATION

Flood Risk Management (Drainage) – no response received within the consultation period. Members will be updated orally at the meeting should comments be received.

Public Health and Protection Division – no objection, subject to conditions in relation to a restriction of the hours of operation during construction and standard informative notes.

Natural Resources Wales (NRW) – no objection, subject to standard advice in relation to flooding.

Dwr Cymru Welsh Water (DCWW) – no objection.

Taffs Well Community Council - no response received within the consultation period. Members will be updated orally at the meeting should comments be received.

POLICY CONTEXT

Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan

Policy CS2 - sets out criteria for achieving sustainable growth including, promoting and enhancing transport infrastructure services.

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 AW10 - development proposals must overcome any harm to public health, the environment or local amenity as a result of flooding.

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. The document aims to incorporate the objectives of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act into Town and Country Planning.

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

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

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)

Planning Policy Wales Technical Advice Note 12 Design

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

REASONS FOR REACHING THE RECOMMENDATION

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that, if regard is to be had to the development plan for the purposes of any determination to be made under the Planning Acts, the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Furthermore, applications that are not in accordance with relevant policies in the plan should not be allowed, unless material considerations justify the grant of planning permission.

Main issues:

Principle of the proposed development

The principle of the proposed development, the substitution and improvement of the heating system for the school and pavilion with a renewable and sustainable alternative is considered to be entirely acceptable.

The proposed system would utilise an existing heat source and provide all of the heating required for the school and pavilion. The business case indicates that the investment would be paid back within 15 years of its installation with other savings possible, such as decommissioning of the existing boiler, dependent on results.

The project would be one of a kind and would also provide useful data for other heat recovery projects, such as mine-water recovery schemes, as well as being a useful teaching resource within the wider locality.

Consequently, it is considered that the principle of the development is acceptable.

Impact on neighbouring residential properties

The site would be largely contained within the existing school yard, adjacent park, river back and their connecting lanes.

Although there would inevitably be some disruption during the construction period of the development, this would cease when the installation is complete. The physical works are restricted to underground pipes and two GRP kiosks that would be located within the school yard and on the river bank and would not, therefore adversely affect any neighbouring properties.

It is also acknowledged that there have been no responses to the consultation exercise for the application. Consequently, it is considered that the proposal is acceptable in this regard.

Visual amenity of the area

As detailed above, the entirety of the pipework installed would be fitted “in trench” and then buried below ground. The heat recovery system would also be unobtrusively located below ground with the only above ground installations being two GRP control kiosks located within the existing school yard and the river bank respectively.

The works are considered to be of an appropriate scale and utilitarian and contemporary appearance that it is considered would be in keeping with the area. The majority of the works would be below ground and would quickly blend into the existing infrastructure while the kiosks would be located within areas within which they would not be obtrusive or visually dominant.

It is acknowledged that the kiosk on the river bank would be fairly close to the Listed Wellhouse. However, the kiosk would be located above the site on the existing bund and would not therefore adversely affect the setting of this important Listed structure.

Therefore, having regard to the above, the development is considered to be acceptable in this respect.

Other issues

The comments of the Public Health and Protection Division are acknowledged, however it is considered that due to the distance to the closest neighbouring residential property that a condition to restrict the hours of operation would be unnecessary.

Additionally, this issue can be more effectively dealt with by other legislative controls available to the Council.

Natural Resources Wales (NRW) have also been consulted and have raised no objection to the application subject to the provision of advice regarding potential flooding due to the close proximity of the River Taf. This issue has already been addressed by the proposal which has acknowledged the recent flood events leading to the position of the GRP kiosk on the river bank above the extreme flood outline.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Liability

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

The application is for development of a kind that is not CIL liable under the CIL Regulations 2010 (as amended).

Conclusion

The application is considered to represent a flagship project that could lead the way for similar community-based energy projects within the borough. The project is well researched, has a sound financial basis and has tangible benefits for the future of the School and the wider community use of the existing Pavilion.

Having regard to the above, it is recommended that the application be approved.

RECOMMENDATION: Grant

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

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

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

- Location Plan
- Heat Network Schematic, Drawing No. TW1, Revision B
- Heat Network – Proposed Pipe Route, Drawing No. TW2, Revision B
- External Heat Exchanger Plant Room, Drawing No. TW3, Revision B
- Primary Heat Exchanger Location, Drawing No. TW4, Revision B

and documents received by the Local Planning Authority 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.