



PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

25 FEBRUARY 2021

REPORT OF: DIRECTOR PROSPERITY AND DEVELOPMENT

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

Members are asked to determine the planning application outlined below:

APPLICATION NO: 20/1298/08 (BJW)
APPLICANT: Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC
DEVELOPMENT: Internal remodelling of the existing swimming pool and changing rooms area to create a new child care facility. Externally new powder coated metal ramps will be installed to existing entrances to improve access and the cill height of two windows will be reinstated to their original level.
LOCATION: DOLAU JUNIOR AND INFANTS SCHOOL, BRIDGEND ROAD, LLANHARAN, PONTYCLUN, CF72 9RP
DATE REGISTERED: 19/11/2020
ELECTORAL DIVISION: Brynna

RECOMMENDATION: Approve, subject to favourable referral of associated Listed Building Consent (LBC) application to Welsh Government Planning Division.

REASONS: The proposal would provide additional, dual-language, early years childcare facilities in an area of acknowledged need.

The works would be within an existing internal area of the school buildings and, as such, would ensure that this currently disused area of the school would be maintained to the same standard as the rest of the school and would also not reduce the existing external learning space at the site or detract from the setting of the Listed Building.

The external works that are proposed, the removable installation of two steel access ramps to facilitate improved access, would be sympathetic, reversible and consistent with the special historic and architectural importance of the Listed Building and would have no adverse impact on its special significance. Additionally, the works would have no adverse impact on the amenity of neighbouring properties, the visual amenity of the area, highway safety considerations or on statutory protected species.

Consequently, the application is considered to represent an acceptable scheme with reversible elements that is acceptable.

REASON APPLICATION 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-making powers are not delegated to officers.

APPLICATION DETAILS

Full planning consent is sought for the internal conversion of an area within Dolau Primary and Infants School to a childcare facility. The area currently houses an infrequently used swimming pool, its associated plant and changing rooms. The application would provide 40 no., dual language, early years childcare spaces within the locality.

Specifically, the application proposes the following:

- The removal of the existing pool enclosure and the making good of the floor;
- The creation of an open-plan play area including a sink/base unit enclosure;
- The removal of existing 1920's and 1970's partitions to the male and female changing areas, W.C. and boiler room;
- The installation of new internal partitions to create a nappy change area, children's W.C., kitchen and store, staff W.C. and cloakroom.
- Installation of a steel access ramp to the existing northern access point of the school. The access ramp would measure 10m in length by 1.5m in width and would have a maximum platform height of 500mm, a rail height of 1.5m and a gradient of 1:20; and
- Installation of a steel access ramp to the existing eastern access point of the school. The access ramp would measure 5m in length by 1.5m in width and would have a maximum platform height of 500mm, a rail height of 1.5m and a gradient of 1:15.

The application is accompanied by an associated application for Listed Building Consent (LBC) – reference no. 20/1253/12, which is also being considered at this meeting.

The planning application also includes the following additional details in support of the application:

- Design and Access Statement (DAS)
- Access Statement
- Preliminary Roost Assessment Report by Wildwood Ecology – dated 04/01/2021
- A supplementary letter from Wildwood Ecology in respect of works to the roof void at the site – dated 04/02/2021

SITE APPRAISAL

The application property is a large detached school building sited on the southern side of the A473, Bridgend Road and is on the edge of the village of Bryncae about 1km from Llanharan.

The school was designed by D Pugh Jones, County Architect, built by Williams and Davies of Caerphilly and opened in 1928 as Dolau Council School. It has a courtyard plan which is characteristic of schools designed by Pugh Jones of this period. The building was designated Grade II Listed status on 14th November 2000 for its architectural interest as a finely composed Georgian-style school dating from the inter-war period, which clearly expressed the segregation favoured in education during the period. There are no other Listed Buildings or Scheduled Monuments within the vicinity of the school.

In 2009 a new 8 no. classroom teaching block was opened adjacent to the original school building and linked via a covered walkway. The main entrance for Dolau Primary is now via this new block.

The Listing for the building, reference no. 24369, contains the following details:

Location

In its own grounds on the south side of the A473 Llanharan to Bridgend Road, approximately 1.1km south-west of Llanharan village.

History

Opened in 1928 as Dolau Council School, by D Pugh Jones, county architect, and Williams & Davies of Caerphilly, contractors. The courtyard plan is characteristic of schools designed by Pugh Jones during this period, other examples being Tonyrefail Grammar School of 1931-3 and St Ilan Higher Elementary School, Caerphilly, of 1911-13.

Exterior

A single-storey brick school in neo-Georgian style, composed of wings enclosing a square inner yard, in which are a school hall and an additional classroom. The classrooms form the wings around the courtyard and are under hipped roofs, the boys originally occupying the west wing, girls the east wing and infants the south wing. They are linked by lower service rooms such as cloak rooms, toilets, staff rooms and vestibules. The roofs are slate with projecting billeted eaves and brick stacks over the service rooms. The main angles have stressed quoins. Horned small-pane sash windows are used throughout, although the classrooms have tall windows with openings lights above the sashes.

The main entrance is on the north side, which has a symmetrical front with a central, recessed 3-bay porch with round arches, above which is an inscription band in reconstituted stone and a stepped parapet with the Glamorgan Coat of Arms. The main doorway has a moulded architrave with inscription 'Deffro Mae'n dydd' and double panelled doors with raised fields. On its right side is a segmental sash, on its left side a similar segmental-headed vent with louvres to ventilate the boiler room. The entrance is flanked by 4-bay classrooms. On the left side the sills of 2 no. of the

windows are raised, while the upper parts of the windows are infilled with boarding. The entrance front retains original cast iron rainwater goods with heads dated 1927.

On the west front the classroom of the north wing has a 2-bay return. To its right is a lower entrance link which has a pedimented doorway, the plain entablature of which bears inscriptions recording architect and contractor, and 'Bechgyn'. The doorway is flanked by a sash window to the left and 3 no. small sash windows to the right. Further right is a projecting single-bay office with pedimented gable, beyond which is a 16-bay classroom wing. Set back beyond this is a lower 3-bay link with a double-panelled door on the left side and sash windows to the staff room on the right. This has a 1-bay return under a hipped roof to the south front, balanced by a single hipped bay, housing the cloak room, projecting on the right side between the recessed 12-bay infants' wing. The cloak room has a single bay set back further right and a single-bay return to the east front, to the right of which is a doorway over which is the inscription 'Babanod'. The east front has a 16-bay classroom, to the right of which is a projecting single-bay office with pedimented gable, then a 3-bay link with central pedimented doorway with 'Merched' in the entablature, flanked by a sash window to the left and 2 no. small windows to the right. The single-bay return of the classroom facing north has a single altered window and an added stack rising from the eaves.

Within the yard the east and west wings had open-fronted canopies on cast iron piers that continued around the south wing, but these have been enclosed to form corridors. On the east side the piers have been retained but the openings are infilled. On the west side the piers have been replaced by a modern brick wall. The classroom on the south side is offset from the original canopy by a short entrance vestibule, and has a hipped roof. It has 2 no. windows in the east wall, while the west wall has a window to the right and a door replaced in its original opening to the left. The main hall projecting from the north wing also has a hipped roof. On its east side are 2 no. tall windows breaking through the eaves line, and to the left replaced double doors beneath a tall segmental overlight. On the west side are 2 no. similar tall windows and a segmental-headed sash window to the right. A lower projection is built against the south wall. In the north-east corner of the yard is an extension of the toilet block.

Interior

The interior has a glazed tile dado throughout. Facing the yard each classroom retains half-lit doors and 2 no. sash windows, while above all the openings are hinged small-paned lights above the level of the canopies to the yard. The east and west wings each have 4 no. classrooms, while the south wing has a single and a double classroom, of which the latter has a movable half-glazed partition. In the north wing is a corridor giving access to the other wings and into the main hall through 2 no. double half-lit doors. The hall has a boarded ceiling with trusses exposed to collar-beam

Listed

Listed for its architectural interest as a finely composed Georgian-style school dating from the inter-war period, which clearly expresses the segregation favoured in education during the period.

PLANNING HISTORY

20/1253	Dolau Junior and Primary School, Bridgend Road, Llanharan, Pontyclun, CF72 9RP	Internal re-modelling of the existing swimming pool and changing rooms area to create a new child care facility. Externally new powder coated metal ramps will be installed to existing entrances to improve access and the cill height of two windows will be reinstated to their original level. (Application for Listed Building Consent)	Not yet decided
09/0138	As above	Biomass boiler flue to plant room	GTD 26/03/09
07/1817	As above	New classroom block and main hall with associated facilities.	GTD 29/11/07
06/1509	As above	Erection of mobile classroom	GTD 14/09/06

PUBLICITY

The application has been advertised by neighbour notification letters, site notices and a press notice. One response has been received, the main points of which are summarised below:

- The proposal will increase traffic demand within the area for both staff and parents to the detriment of neighbouring residents.
- The village does not have the infrastructure necessary to accommodate all of the development that is being allowed to happen here.

CONSULTATION

Transportation Section – The proposed development results in no changes to the existing means of access to the existing arrangement of Llanharan Road and circulation within the site. As such, the proposal gives no undue cause for concern regarding access, circulation or parking. In light of this assessment, no highway objection is raised or any condition(s) suggested.

Flood Risk Management (Drainage) – no objection. The applicant should be made aware of the requirements for surface water drainage for new developments to comply with mandatory National Standards for Sustainable Drainage systems which will be demonstrated through the application of Sustainable Drainage Approval to the Sustainable Drainage Approval Body (SAB) prior to the commencement of works.

Public Health and Protection Division – no objection, subject to a condition to restrict the hours of operation during the construction phase of the development, and standard informative notes.

Dwr Cymru Welsh Water (DCWW) – no objection.

Countryside, Landscape and Ecology – following the submission of the Preliminary Roost Assessment report by Wildwood Ecology (04/01/2021) and their subsequent letter of the 04/02/21 confirming the scope of works within the roof void of the building

– now no works to the roof space and tool box talk from contractors re: the bat roost, it is considered that the proposal will not require an European Protected Species (EPS) Licence. As such the application can proceed, subject to conditions to ensure that the measures included in the Wildwood letter 4/02/21 and all recommendations in their EPA report are provided.

Education and Lifelong Learning – no response received.

Llanharan Community Council – no response received.

POLICY CONTEXT

Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan

The application site is within the settlement boundary of Brynna and is a Grade II Listed Building.

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

Policy AW2 - advises that development proposals on non-allocated sites will only be supported in sustainable locations.

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 - development proposals which impact on sites of architectural/or historic merit and sites of archaeological importance will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that the proposal would preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the site.

LDP Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG): The Historic Built Environment (March 2011)

National Guidance

In the determination of planning applications regard should also be given to the requirements of national planning policy which are not duplicated in the Local Development Plan, particularly where national planning policy provides a more up to date and comprehensive policy on certain topics.

Planning Policy Wales Edition 10 (PPW) sets out the Welsh Government's (WG) current position on planning policy. The document incorporates the objectives of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act into town and country planning and sets out the WG's policy on planning issues relevant to the determination of planning applications.

It is considered that the proposed development is consistent with the key principles and requirements for placemaking set out in PPW; and is also consistent with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act's sustainable development principles through

its contribution towards the Welsh Ministers' well-being objectives of driving sustainable development and building healthier communities and better environments.

Other relevant national policy guidance consulted:

Welsh Office Circular 61/96 (98)

Welsh Office Circular 1/98

PPW Technical Advice Note (TAN) 12 – Design (2016)

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

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 development.

The application proposes internal and external alterations, specifically the access ramps, that would be unattached and reversible. These alterations would provide an additional childcare facility within the school.

It is considered that this is an area of acknowledged demand for such facilities and that the proposal is the best option of those that have been considered at the site.

The current proposal would re-purpose an underused area of the school, the pool is uneconomic to operate and is therefore infrequently used, and would provide a valuable facility to the immediate locality.

The increased use of this part of the school would ensure that it would be maintained to the same standard as the rest of the school.

The external ramps would not be attached to the main school building and, as such, would provide a contemporary, reversible and acceptable solution to accessibility issues at the site.

Consequently, it is considered that the principle of the proposed scheme is acceptable.

Impact on amenities of neighbouring properties

The proposed works consist of internal and minor external alterations to the existing premises that are wholly within the curtilage of its existing yard areas. Due to the arrangement of the premises, which by its very nature has a generous curtilage, and

the nature of the external works that are proposed, it is not considered the works would adversely affect the properties within the wider area.

Consequently, it is considered that the proposal would not have a detrimental impact on neighbouring properties and is acceptable in this respect.

It is however acknowledged that there has been an objection to the proposal in respect of the impact on parking within the surrounding area. This element will be addressed later in the report when highway safety considerations are evaluated.

Character and appearance of the area

The proposed works are mainly internal and the main external works are of a relatively minor nature, are contained entirely within the existing curtilage of the wider school and would have a minimal effect on the wider visual amenity of the area.

The external works, while contemporary, are also unattached to the host building, a Listed Building, are entirely reversible and are considered to be of a utilitarian and sympathetic character and appearance.

The internal works consist of the removal of the existing pool enclosure and the forming of an open plan play area with associated ancillary facilities. These works would necessitate the removal of several partitions serving the changing rooms and plant facilities for the indoor pool.

While loss of internal detail is always regrettable, it is not considered that the plan form of the rooms is particularly significant to the special architectural or historic character of the building in this area and therefore its loss would be considered to be an acceptable element of the re-purposing of the rooms in this area.

The impact on the Listed Building is considered in the associated LBC application, which is also considered to be acceptable.

Highway safety considerations

The application has been subject to consultations with the Council's Transportation Section who have raised no objection to the application on highway safety grounds.

In coming to this view the Transportation Section stated that the proposed development results in no changes to the existing means of access to the current arrangement of Llanharan Road and circulation within the site. As such, the proposal gives no undue cause for concern regarding access and circulation.

Additionally, the proposal results in no alterations to existing off-street parking arrangements at the school. The submitted information is inconclusive as to whether additional staff would be required, subsequently resulting in increased parking demand. Nevertheless, the A473 Bridgend Road is subject to extensive Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO's) limiting on-street parking to areas that have no undue adverse impact on highway safety and the free flow of traffic. Furthermore, there is scope for additional parking to be provided within the school grounds should the need

arise. On this basis, the proposal is, on balance, considered acceptable regarding off-street parking provision.

Therefore, whilst one respondent has raised concerns of the impact on the existing levels of parking within the area, particularly at peak demand times, it is considered that the existing levels of on-site parking and the TRO's within the area would provide sufficient capacity and mitigate any effects in this regard.

Consequently, it is considered that the proposal is acceptable in this respect.

Other issues

Ecology

The applicant has provided additional ecological evaluations that were requested by the Council's Ecologist due to the nature and age of the host building and the potential for works to affect statutory protected species.

The Preliminary Roost Assessment report initially concluded that, subject to the scope of works to the roof void, further surveys may be required to assess the impact of the development on an identified bat roost.

Consequently, on clarification of the scope of the works, which would not affect the roof void, Wildwood Ecology have confirmed that the works would not require an EPS licence and that the impact could be mitigated in line with their initial assessment and subsequent letter, suggesting a toolbox talk to contractors by Wildwood Ecology regarding working practices in the vicinity of the bat roost.

The Council's Ecologist concurs with this approach and recommends that subject to securing the recommendations of the assessment and the toolbox talk with contractors by condition, that the application would be able to proceed.

Drainage

The comments of the Flood Risk Management (Drainage) Section are acknowledged. The role of SuDS is now administered by the Council's FRM team and applications to address this issue are outside of the general planning process.

Consequently, it is considered that the applicant can be advised of their responsibilities by way of an informative note.

General

The comments of the Public Health and Protection Division in respect of a condition to restrict the hours of operation during construction are acknowledged, however, it is considered that this issue can be better addressed through other legislative controls open to the Council.

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 proposed scheme would provide additional, early-years provision in an area of acknowledged need and expanding development to the benefit of the wider community.

The proposal would allow the re-purposing of an underused part of the building to the benefit of its maintenance, and character and appearance. The works are well justified by the supporting information and would have a positive effect on the Listed Building.

The proposal is also considered to be acceptable in terms of its impact on neighbouring properties, the visual amenity of the area, highway safety considerations and, subject to conditions, ecology.

Consequently, the proposal is considered acceptable.

RECOMMENDATION: Approve, subject to favourable referral of associated Listed Building Consent (LBC) application to Welsh Government Planning Division.

RECOMMENDATION: Grant

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

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

2. The development hereby approved shall be carried out in accordance with the approved plan(s) no(s):
 - Site Location Plan, dated 04/11/2020
 - Proposed Plan, Childcare facility, Drawing No. 5135-3603-V1-GF-B-20:20:40-008-S2-P01
 - Demolition Plan, Drawing No. 5135-3603-V1-GF-B-20:20:40-007-S2-P01
 - Proposed North Elevation, Drawing No. 5135-3603-V1-GF-B-20:20:40-004-S2-P01
 - Proposed East Elevation, Drawing No. 5135-3603-V1-GF-B-20:20:40-005-S2-P01

and documents received by the Local Planning Authority on 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. Building operations shall not be commenced until samples of the materials proposed to be used have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and all materials used shall conform to the sample(s) so approved.

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

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.

5. The recommendations of the submitted Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment by Wildwood Ecology, document ref. WWE20370, dated 04/01/2021 and the subsequent letter from Wildwood Ecology, dated 04/02/2021 shall be undertaken at the relevant stages of development that would provide the most ecological value to the project. A plan for the delivery of these recommendations shall be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority prior to any works commencing on site, and the recommendations provided to the contractors in accordance with the agreed details.

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