

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

24 MARCH 2022

REPORT OF: DIRECTOR PROSPERITY AND DEVELOPMENT

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

Members are asked to determine the planning application outlined below:

APPLICATION NO: 21/0783/12 (BJW)
APPLICANT: Podgy Dwarf Productions Ltd
DEVELOPMENT: Listed Building Consent for conversion of Chapel to dwelling, art/film studio.
LOCATION: SILOA CHAPEL, GREEN STREET, GADLYS, ABERDARE
DATE REGISTERED: 04/06/2021
ELECTORAL DIVISION: Aberdare East

RECOMMENDATION: Approve, subject to positive referral to Cadw.

REASONS: The external works would be minor and while lacking in details could be adequately controlled by condition to ensure their acceptability.

The proposed use would bring an attractive and prominent listed building back into a productive use. The internal works, while more strident, could also be controlled by way of condition and the re-use of existing materials, fixtures and fittings would be broadly supported.

The establishment of the residential accommodation is wholly within the attached vestry/hall, which is less internally impressive than the main chapel. While details are lacking, this does give the opportunity to control more of this work by way of condition or additional subsequent Listed Building Consent (LBC) applications.

The works within the main hall would have the biggest impact with the removal of pews, organ set-fawr and pulpit. While the loss of these details would be regrettable, it is considered that their recording and re-use elsewhere in the property would be broadly acceptable and can be adequately controlled through conditions.

The works which are detailed are well-justified by the supporting Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) and the schedule of works would find a productive and sustainable use for this property that would allow its continued use for an alternative purpose and ensure its ongoing maintenance and repair.

While this is not an ideal position, with the number of similar chapel buildings struggling to find alternative uses, it is considered that this proposal represents an acceptable option. Any lack of detail can be controlled by condition as can the retention of memorial plaques, blue plaques and other important features.

Consequently, subject to the imposition of appropriately worded conditions, it is considered that the change of use, and the proposed works to facilitate the same, would be acceptable.

REASON APPLICATION REPORTED TO COMMITTEE

Three objections have been received.

APPLICATION DETAILS

Listed Building Consent (LBC) is sought for minor external works and more substantial internal works to facilitate the change of use from a chapel to a dwelling and an art/film studio at Siloa Chapel and its attached hall, Green Street, Gadlys, Aberdare.

Specifically, the proposed works would consist of the following:

External works

- Remove the roller shutter and enclosure from the vestry door and make good the resultant wall finishes; and
- Installation of CCTV cameras

The applicant states that the CCTV cameras will be modern, small, and relatively unobtrusive. They will be removable, and any small screw holes used to secure them can be rendered over. It is the aim to run the cabling through existing holes in the wall (i.e. the eaves/air bricks) where possible.

Internal works

- Removal of existing and installation of new internal stud walls to the kitchen area to allow this to be used in connection with the proposed art/film studio;
- Enlargement of the existing doorway between the two rooms in the vestry to accommodate a tri-fold internal door;
- Installation of a spiral stairs to allow access to the existing attic room;
- Installation of a shower within the existing bathroom;
- Remove the carpet from the vestry/living accommodation, to return to the original wooden flooring;
- Remove the modern acoustic panel ceiling from the vestry/living accommodation, to return to the original plaster ceiling;
- Installation of a temporary floor over the original wood floor of the chapel, out of plywood/hardboard;

- Remove the majority of the pews from the main church hall with some of them placed to the perimeter of the walls, to make the maximum use of the floor space. The remaining pews are to be repurposed as kitchen cabinets, wall paneling, and other furniture in the vestry/proposed living accommodation;
- Removal of the large “set fawr” pew that faces the pulpit from the main hall and its installation in to the living accommodation;
- Removal of the pulpit, including attached lamps and plaques, to be reassembled in the living accommodation to create a raised sitting/office area. To make it fit with the intact “set fawr”, the right hand stairs would be removed and the banister extended over the gap;
- The organ mechanism which is underneath the pulpit, will be left in situ and any gaps created by the removal of the pulpit boarded over with plywood, leaving a raised stage area.
- Re-use of the redundant cast iron heating pipes that formed the old heating system running throughout the chapel. With the pews removed, these will be a trip hazard, so they will be re-used in the living accommodation, as central heating pipes, and also to run modern pipework and cables through (as opposed to plastic channel).

The application is supported by a Heritage Impact Assessment as well as a basic schedule of the proposed alterations.

The Listed Building Consent (LBC) application is submitted in tandem with an application for full planning permission, reference no. 21/0784/10, due to the change of use of the property. This is also being considered within this agenda.

SITE APPRAISAL

The application site relates to a disused Chapel building with an attached vestry located on Green Street in the historic town of Aberdare.

The site is accessed directly onto Green Street, close to the main route through the town to and from adjacent settlements. The property is within the settlement boundary, is within the Aberdare Town Conservation Area and both the main Chapel - Siloa, and the attached hall are Grade II Listed Buildings (Cadw reference nos. 10850 and 10851 respectively).

The surrounding area is characterised by ecclesiastical and civic scale buildings including several within the immediate area which are also listed.

The application property itself is a substantial building (approximately 232 sq.m, excluding the upper gallery) with an attached vestry building (approximately 95 sq.m) which is within a constrained wider site curtilage of some 614 sq.m and extends to the north and the west of the building.

The Listing(s) for the building(s) contains the following details:

Cadw Listed Building refs: 10850 and 10851 (both Grade II)

Location

Near the western end of the street, facing north.

History

Built in 1844; rebuilt in 1855; historically one of the foremost congregational chapels in Wales.

Exterior

Simple classical 3-bay gabled front; rendered with end pilaster strips, stringcourse to middle and cornice giving light pediment treatment. Oval date plaque to gable. Slate roof and wide boarded eaves. Round arched headed windows with keystones and fluted architraves. Horned sashes with marginal glazing bars. Similar style round arched headed entrance to centre; double panelled doors with 5-pane semi-circular fanlight. 4-bay side elevations with camber headed sashes in square openings. Stepped down at the rear and with a steeper roof is the chapel hall with small pane sashes to the sides. Cement render rear gable facing the river with tiny octagonal chimney stack. Round arched and boarded gable window with flanking circular 4-pane windows; 4 pane sashes below; projecting stones on the south west corner suggests that some further structure formerly abutted here.

Forecourt has rubble piers with freestone caps swept up into ball finials at the gated entrance; the gates have 'Capel Siloa' to lock bar; the pier has commemorative tablet. Iron railings; some uprights are barley twist.

Interior

Galleried interior with herringbone boarded ceiling with roses; end bays had different ornament (now removed to front end). Raked gallery with panelled and bracketed front carried on cast iron columns. Simple classical 'set fawr' with quatrefoil punched newels capped by ball finials. Pitch pine furnishings; seats approximately 900.

Attached vestry/hall with ceiling ventilators and central rose.

Listed

Group value.

PLANNING HISTORY

21/0784	Siloa Chapel, Green Street, Gadlys, Aberdare	Change of use from Chapel to dwelling, art/film studio	Not yet determined
20/5088	As above	Pre-application enquiry for the conversion of existing Chapel into an Art/Film Studio and a single residential unit within the attached hall/vestry	Raise no objection 30/02/2021

PUBLICITY

The application has been advertised by neighbour notification letters, site notices and a press notice. Three responses have been received, the main points of which are detailed below:

1. Concerns are raised that obvious or significant changes to the exterior of the Chapel would damage and detract from the current integrity and uniquely attractive character of the existing complex of buildings and should be avoided at all costs.
2. In terms of the chapel's interior, my main concern is that certain internal features be safeguarded - either in situ or elsewhere by the intervention of the Local Authority with that end in view. These include the memorial plaques mounted on the chapel's interior ground-floor walls (several of which have value in terms of the history of Aberdare) and - most especially - the memorial window situated in the wall that separates the chapel vestibule from its ground-floor interior.
3. Concerns over the blue plaque on the front of the property mounted there in 2015 to mark the 150th anniversary of establishing the Welsh settlement in Patagonia in 1865: an episode in which the Cynon Valley - and 'Siloa' chapel - played a very significant role.

This plaque was paid for and erected using funds raised by the local Welsh community newspaper - Clochdar from among its readership, and with the generous support of the committee of the Cynon Valley Historical Society (CVHS). The plaque was - and remains - the property of the 'Clochdar' committee. At no time was its ownership sought by or granted to officers or members of 'Siloa' chapel - either at the time or subsequently. Those officers and members simply consented (willingly) to its being mounted on the chapel facade as a matter of public interest. That was the limit of their involvement. It follows, therefore, that in recently selling the chapel building on behalf of the remaining congregation at 'Siloa', the Union of Welsh Independent Churches did not sell the plaque as a part of that transaction as it was not theirs to sell.

The committee of 'Clochdar' retained - and retains still - ownership of the plaque. Given that its continued ownership is acknowledged by the chapel's recent purchaser, the committee would be content, in the public interest, that the plaque remain in situ on the chapel facade. However, if our continued ownership is not agreed, or if there is any proposal to remove, sell or otherwise dispose of the plaque in any way without our explicit prior consent, the committee of 'Clochdar' will seek its removal and remounting elsewhere in Aberdare town-centre: to safeguard the committee's previous financial expenditure and the public interest the plaque was first intended to serve.

4. The wooden pulpit, the organ, the ceiling rose and pillars should remain in situ.
5. Likewise the beautiful stained glass memorial window dedicate to those who fell in WW1 located between the chapel vestibule and interior ground-floor: this is a quality work of art; perhaps the British Legion or similar body can be encouraged to play a part in saving it?
6. The clean classicism of the chapel exterior should definitely be guarded and guaranteed as unsympathetic change(s) in this direction would hugely affect the visual integrity of an attractive streetscape in the vicinity of the Central Library.
7. The blue plaque about Rev Abraham Matthews on the exterior of the church should remain in situ.

CONSULTATION

Consultation was undertaken with the Joint Committee of the National Amenity Societies who forward on case work to the following National Amenity Societies:

The Georgian Group; The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings; Royal Commission for Ancient and Historic Monuments in Wales; The Victorian Society; Ancient Monuments Society (AMS); The Twentieth Century Society and The Council for British Archaeology Wales/Cymru – no responses have been received.

POLICY CONTEXT

Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan

The application site is within the settlement boundary of Aberdare, within the Aberdare Town Conservation Area and are a group of two Grade II Listed Buildings.

Members will be aware that the current LDP's lifespan was 2011 to 2021 and that it has been reviewed and is in the process of being replaced. The Planning (Wales) Act 2015 introduced provisions specifying the period to which a plan has effect and providing that it shall cease to be the LDP at the end of the specified period. These provisions were commenced on 4th January 2016 but do not have retrospective effect. Therefore, the provisions do not apply to LDPs adopted prior to this date and plans adopted before 4th January 2016 will remain the LPD for determining planning

applications until replaced by a further LDP. This was clarified in guidance published by the Minister on 24th September 2020. Subsequently, Members are advised that the existing Plan remains the development plan for consideration when determining this planning application.

Policy CS1 – sets out criteria for achieving strong sustainable communities including: promoting residential and commercial development in locations which support and reinforce the role of principal towns and settlements.

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 11) (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. Future Wales: The National Plan 2040 (FW2040) sets out guidance for development at both regional and national level within Wales, with the thrust and general context also aimed at sustainable development.

It is considered that the proposed development is consistent with the key principles and requirements for placemaking set out in PPW; and is 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.

Given the relatively minor scale of the proposed development and its relationship with only the immediate surrounding area, there are limitations to the extent such a scheme can have in promoting planning objectives at a national scale. As such, whilst the

scheme aligns with the overarching sustainable development aims of FW2040, it is not considered the policies set out in the document are specifically relevant to this application.

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 16(2) Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 states that
Main Issues:

Acceptability of the proposed development on the special architectural and historic merit of the Listed Building

The principle consideration in the determination of an application for Listed Building Consent (LBC) is whether or not the impact of the works are acceptable in terms of the special architectural and historic merit of the Listed Building.

In terms of the external alterations, these are both considered to be minor and broadly acceptable. The removal of the unsightly roller shutter over the vestry door would certainly be an improvement on the current arrangement and subject to an acceptable scheme for the making good of any damage caused by its removal, would be considered acceptable.

The installation of CCTV cameras is lacking in detail but could be adequately addressed through an appropriately worded condition. CCTV cameras have over recent years become smaller and less intrusive in terms of their dimensions and overall visual appearance. Consequently, subject to the submission of and agreement of suitable details, secured by condition, it is also considered that this element is acceptable.

In terms of the internal alterations, the proposal to convert the chapel and its attached vestry into a dwelling and an art/film studio would fundamentally change the use, purpose and functioning capacity of this property. It is often difficult to repurpose churches and chapels, particularly when the attendant structures are also listed.

In this regard it is considered that the trapping and features of the main chapel do not easily and readily lend themselves to alternative uses due to their very nature. Even community uses would struggle to make use of the rigidly arranged pews and formal pulpit/organ arrangement present in the majority of such buildings. Recent successful schemes within the locality have primarily seen such properties converted for

residential use where the vast majority of these features have been recorded before their eventual removal.

The proposed scheme would retain the main hall and gallery areas, albeit with a more open aspect due to the removal of the majority of the pews, set fawr, pulpit and organ arrangement. While these changes are fairly strident, it is considered that the form, purpose and arrangement of the previous use would still be able to be clearly discerned. Additionally, it is proposed to use the set fawr and pulpit within the living accommodation and, subject to acceptable details, this would retain the features within the property in support of the alternative use.

The internal alterations to the vestry are less onerous as this part of the building has been modernised to some extent and it features less ornamentation than the main chapel hall. The removal and installation of new stud walls are minor, acceptable and reversible alterations. Similarly, the installation of a new kitchen would facilitate the residential use while also being a reversible element of the scheme.

The reuse of materials and features from the main chapel building would be broadly supported as it would retain these features (the pulpit and set fawr are specifically mentioned and included within the proposed floor plan) within the setting of the building. They would be able to be viewed within their immediate setting, albeit for an alternative use.

The opening up of the partitions and the access to the loft area are also considered to be sympathetic and reversible additions that, subject to acceptable details, would be acceptable in terms of the wider scheme and the change of use of the property.

Finally, the removal of the contemporary acoustic ceiling panels would allow the original plaster ceiling and its ornamentation to be visible and displayed. This is considered to be a positive aspect of the wider scheme. It is acknowledged that the current suspended ceiling is attached to the original ceiling and that some repair will be required with no details submitted, but it is considered an appropriate fix could be implemented, the details of which can be secured by condition.

In terms of the comments raised by respondents to the application, the following comments are offered:

1. There are no significant changes proposed as part of the current planning application or this application for Listed Building Consent (LBC). The minor external changes that are specifically detailed – the removal of the roller shutter to the vestry door, is considered to be acceptable and would improve visual appearance and character of the property. The undetailed addition proposing the installation of CCTV cameras can be secured by condition.
2. By the nature of the proposed alternative use the internal details of the chapel will obviously change. The main changes would be to the main hall and gallery. The re-purposing and reuse of some of these features is, subject to acceptable

details, considered to be a strength of this scheme. The individual items that the respondent refers to would be unaffected by the current proposals and a scheme of protection of these items (particularly the memorial plaques) can be included.

3. Similarly, no mention is made of the externally mounted blue plaque. Any discussion over the ownership and future of the blue plaque is a private matter and would not be material to the determination of this application.
4. While the remains of the organ, the ceiling rose and pillar would remain in situ, the proposal seeks consent to reuse the pulpit, among other items, within the living accommodation. It is considered that, subject to acceptable details, this would be an acceptable compromise position.
5. There is no mention of works to the stain glass window. It is shown as remaining in situ and there is no reason to suspect that there is any intention to remove it.

Conclusion

It is considered that the Heritage Impact Statement has provided a good knowledge of the special historical and architectural importance for which the building has been listed. The scheme, although quite radical, is less so than many other alternative uses that the building could be put to, particularly a full residential conversion. The retention of the large open space and gallery within the main hall area would allow the original purpose of the building to be appreciated despite the alternative use.

Consequently, subject to conditions to secure the recording of the building in its original state, prior to conversion and the details for the conversion that have not been included within the submission, it is considered that the application is acceptable in terms of its effect on the special architectural and historic merit of the Listed Building.

The proposal would therefore be acceptable in terms of the impact on the special architectural and historic merit of the Listed Building.

RECOMMENDATION: Approve, subject to positive 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)

- Site location and block plan, Title. No. WA936253
- Ground floor plan (proposed) Drwg. No3
- First floor plan (proposed), Drwg. No4

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.

3. No works to which this consent relates shall commence until an appropriate programme of historic building recording and analysis has been secured and implemented in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: As the building is of architectural and cultural significance the specified records are required to mitigate impact.

4. Notwithstanding the approved details, no works to which this consent relates shall commence until a scheme, including a method statement, for the removal for the existing roller shutter and the making good of the external walls of the vestry, has been submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The works shall be carried out in accordance with the agreed details thereafter.

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. Notwithstanding the approved details, no works to which this consent relates shall commence until a scheme, including a method statement and technical details, for the installation of CCTV cameras, has been submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The works shall be carried out in accordance with the agreed details thereafter.

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.

6. Prior to the development hereby approved commencing, a scheme for the protection in situ of all memorial plaques, the memorial stained glass window and external blue plaque shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The agreed scheme shall be implemented prior to any works commencing and protection measures retained in perpetuity.

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.

7. Notwithstanding the details on the approved plans, no works to which this consent relates shall commence until the design and details of the following have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority:

- Relocation of the set fawr and pulpit within the living accommodation;
- New spiral staircase to the attic area;
- New tri-fold doors details;
- New protective flooring within the main chapel hall;
- Details, numbers and location of retained pews; and
- Details of re-used and repurposed timber pews, panelling and metal pipework.

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.

8. 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.