

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

7 JULY 2022

REPORT OF: DIRECTOR PROSPERITY AND DEVELOPMENT

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

Members are asked to determine the planning application outlined below:

APPLICATION NO: 21/1479/20 (KL)
APPLICANT: Cartrefi Limited
DEVELOPMENT: Conservation area request - change of use from office to 26no. student flats including part demolition of the existing building (amended description and amended plan rec. 20/01/22).
LOCATION: THE OLD COURTHOUSE, COURT HOUSE STREET, GRAIG, PONTYPRIDD, CF37 1LJ
DATE REGISTERED: 20/01/2022
ELECTORAL DIVISION: Graig

RECOMMENDATION: Approve

REASONS: The proposal is considered to preserve the character and appearance of the Pontypridd Conservation Area, in accordance with the requirements of Policy AW7 of the Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan.

REASON APPLICATION REPORTED TO COMMITTEE

- The proposal is not covered by determination powers delegated to the Director of Prosperity & Development

APPLICATION DETAILS

Conservation Area Consent is sought for the conversion of the Old Courthouse in Court House Street, Pontypridd to 20 no. self-contained residential student flats (Sui Generis).

The application has been submitted following the approval of planning application ref. 20/0120 and the approval of the relating application for Conservation Area Consent ref. 20/0118. which granted permission for the conversion of the building to 20 no. units, which also included partial demolition. It is understood that conversion works have already commenced under the approved consent however, during the early stages of the development, the applicant considered that less of the building needed

to be demolished than originally thought and that additional units could be incorporated into the scheme.

As with the previous consent, the proposal includes partial demolition of the original building however, this would be limited to the most central part of the building and a small single storey toilet block on the north-western (side) elevation. The main structure, including the front elevation, would be retained. The main entrance to the building would be via an existing doorway to the right-hand side of the front elevation. This would open into a communal hallway which would provide direct access to 3 units and to a communal open-air courtyard which would provide access to all other units in blocks A, C and D, as well as the first-floor units in block B (total of 19 units). A secondary access to the left-hand side of the principal elevation would replace an existing window and would provide access to the ground floor of block B only (4 units).

As indicated above, the proposed accommodation would be arranged in 4 blocks which would be arranged around a newly created outdoor courtyard. A number of internal alterations would be required to facilitate the units which would include the demolition of some internal walls and the creation of new ones. The accommodation would be arranged as follows:

- **Block A** would form the main part of the front of the building facing onto Courthouse Street. It would consist of 10 units which would be arranged over 3 floors (4 units at ground floor, 4 units at first floor and 2 units at second floor). The principal elevation would largely remain unchanged however, new openings would be provided within each of the 4 existing leaded windows. Due to the partial demolition of the central part of the building, a newly created rear elevation would be created in this section which would be finished with smooth render. A total of 5 pitched roof dormers would be inserted in the existing roof slope (3 at first floor and 2 at second floor), as well 2 roof lights (second floor only).
- **Block B** would form the north-western section of the building and would consist of 6 units which would be arranged over 2 floors (4 units at ground floor, accessed through the secondary entrance, and 2 units at first floor, accessed through block A). A small internal section would be demolished to provide an external courtyard and the external walkway from Block A to the two first floor units. Whereas the previous consent included the demolition of a small projection to the front elevation, this is now proposed to be retained and it is understood that this would provide an additional storage area.
- **Block C** would form the rear of the building. It would consist of 6 units which would be arranged over 2 floors (4 units at ground floor and 2 units at first floor). All of these units would be accessed via various access points off the newly created communal courtyard. Due to the demolition of the single storey toilet block at the north-western (side) elevation, a small section would need to be blocked up. An existing window in the south-eastern elevation would also need to be blocked up to facilitate a bathroom in one ground floor unit.

- **Block D** would form the south-eastern section of the building and would consist of 4 units (2 at ground floor which would be accessed off the main communal entrance, and 2 at first floor which would be accessed via an external walkway off block C). A doorway within the south-eastern elevation would be blocked up however, a new opening would be created further along to provide access to the bin storage area to the side and the communal amenity area to the rear.

Each unit would vary between 15.8sqm and 36.9sqm however they would each contain a living area (to include a bed, study area and a small kitchen) and an en-suite shower room.

A total of 7 no. off-street car parking spaces would be provided to the front of the building whilst a bin storage area would be provided to the south-eastern side (accessed via an existing 3.5m high steel security gate and fence adjacent to the main entrance). A communal laundry room would also be provided at ground floor between blocks B and C, with access off the main courtyard area.

It should be noted that works have commenced under the previously approved consent (Ref. 20/0120) and therefore the works will largely be retrospective. Due to these works largely being internal or in areas which cannot be viewed from the street, it is not clear how much of the works have already been carried out.

The application is accompanied by the following:

- **Heritage and Design Appraisal** – indicates that the proposal would preserve and utilise as much of the existing building as practically possible. However, it is noted that the building layout is deep and leaves several central areas without windows or natural lighting and the demolition works have been proposed to give a workable residential layout. It states that existing natural roof slate covering are to be preserved and made good with slates and ridge tiles salvaged from the demolished buildings. The existing external stone walls to areas not affected by demolition works will be made good where altered, or otherwise disturbed, using salvaged stonework laid in lime mortar to match the existing. New openings in existing stone walls will contain salvaged dressed stone lintels, cills and quoins where practical. The exposed walls facing the newly created courtyards would have a rendered finish as it is considered unlikely that the stonework revealed would be of sufficient quality to warrant pointing. Existing windows will be retained and made good where possible or replaced with like for like colour coated aluminium window frames where required. All other features such as facias and rainwater pipes etc will also be retained where possible.

- **Design and Access Statement.** – provides a site appraisal and outlines the works proposed (as detailed above). It discusses access to the proposed units, the character of the building, community safety/security and Environmental Sustainability.

This application is connected to another planning application (ref. 21/1478) for full planning permission, which appears elsewhere on this agenda.

SITE APPRAISAL

The application site relates to a broadly rectangular shaped parcel of land that is located on the north-eastern side of Court House Street, Pontypridd. It measures approximately 1154m² and appears to be relatively flat in profile.

The site is currently occupied by a large detached building that occupies the most central part of the plot. A linear row of off-street car parking spaces are provided to the front of the building whilst an area of established trees appear to occupy the rear of the plot. It is understood that the building was last in use as Council offices.

The surrounding area is characterised by a mix of uses with some residential and commercial uses located in the immediate vicinity. The site is bound by the former registry office (currently or most recently used as offices) to the north-west and the Masonic Hall to the south-east. The grounds of Dewi Sant Hospital are located immediately opposite the site to the south-west whilst Pontypridd Train Station is located approximately 11 metres to the north-east.

It should be noted that the former registry office to the north-west is a Grade II Listed Building. The application property however, whilst holding some architectural merit, is not Listed. The site is located within the Pontypridd Conservation Area and the Pontypridd Character Area.

PLANNING HISTORY

21/1479	The Old Courthouse Pontypridd	Courthouse, Street,	Conservation Area Consent – change of use of officers to 26 no. student flats including part demolition of the existing building	Pending
21/0772	The Old Courthouse Pontypridd	Courthouse, Street,	Discharge of conditions 6 (landscaping) & 7 (materials) of planning permission 20/0120).	Granted 09/08/21
20/1364	The Old Courthouse Pontypridd	Courthouse, Street,	Discharge of condition 10 (biodiversity enhancement) of 20/0120	Granted 27/01/21
20/0120	The Old Courthouse Pontypridd	Courthouse, Street,	Change of use of building from council offices to 20 no. self-contained residential student flats	Granted 28/10/20

(Sui Generis), including demolition of part of existing building, construction of new block and associated works (Bat Survey and Nesting Bird Survey rec. 15/07/20) (Noise Report rec. 05/08/20) (Amended Plan rec. 0/09/20).

20/0118	The Old Courthouse, Pontypridd	Courthouse, Street,	Conservation Area	Granted
			Consent: Change of use of building from council offices to 20 no. self-contained residential student flats (Sui Generis), including demolition of part of existing building, construction of new block and associated works (Bat Survey and Nesting Bird Survey rec. 15/07/20) (Noise Report rec. 05/08/20) (Amended Plan rec. 0/09/20).	28/10/20

PUBLICITY

The application has been advertised by means of direct neighbour notification as well as through the erection of site notices in the vicinity of the site and through the publication of a press notice in a local newspaper. This exercise was repeated when amended plans were received showing a reduction in the number of units from the initial proposal of no. 27 to the current no. 26.

A total of 2 letters of objection were received from local residents whilst a further 2 letters of objection were received from the Local Member, Councillor Jayne Brencher, and from Pontypridd Town Council. The objections are summarised as follows:

Traffic and Parking

- There are already parking issues in the area due to the close proximity to town, the train station and the hospital.
- It would be an issue with 20 no. flats so adding 6 more would make parking impossible.

- At present there is no parking with contractors and residents parking dangerously on surrounding roads, endangering other motorists and pedestrians.
- It is indicated that a collision has already occurred outside the property due to reckless parking.
- It is also indicated that children have narrowly avoided being hit by a vehicle unable to see because of abandoned cars and cars parking dangerously on the road.
- More residences will add to the already chaotic streets and there will be no provision for parking.
- It will not be long before there is a more serious collision, perhaps even a fatality.
- This development is in the immediate vicinity of Dewi Sant Hospital which is not only used for outpatients but also for a large GP practice which caters to patients from all over the town council area of Pontypridd. The facilities at this location have been increased in recent times adding to traffic and parking issues.
- Parking at the site is already inadequate and patients face increasing difficulties in parking which forces many into surrounding roads to avoid missing appointments.
- The proposal will exacerbate an already serious situation and will put patients' health and the quality of local residents' amenities at risk of being compromised.
- Concern is raised with regards to the extreme and growing parking issues in the area due to the expansion of Dewi Sant Health Park, the proximity of the town centre and railway station and also the proximity to the Coroners Court and Masonic Lodge.

Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

- It is requested that Members of the Planning and Development Committee consider its duty to ensure that we have a Healthier Wales; a country in which "people's physical and mental wellbeing is maximised".
- It is considered that the development, because of the potential mental distress caused, runs counter to this duty.

The objections have been considered in the full application (ref. 21/1471).

CONSULTATION

Listed Building Officer – The application site is located adjacent to a Listed Building however, it is not considered that the proposed conversion and associated works would affect the setting of the Listed Building.

Glamorgan Gwent Archaeological Trust – No objection, however, the building is considered to be of historical importance by virtue of its history and cultural significance within the area and a condition is therefore considered that archaeological

mitigation is required in order to preserve the Old Courthouse by record. As such, a condition is recommended to ensure that a building survey is carried out prior to demolition and works commencing.

No other responses had been received at the time of writing this report.

POLICY CONTEXT

Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan

The application site is located inside the defined settlement boundary and is within the Pontypridd Town Conservation Area and the Pontypridd Character area. The following policies are considered to be relevant to the application:

Policy AW7 – states that developments which impact upon sites of architectural and/or historical merit will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that the proposal would preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the site.

Supplementary Planning Guidance

Design and Placemaking
The Historic Built Environment

Members will be aware that the current LDP's lifespan was 2011 to 2021 and that it is in the process of being reviewed. 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.

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) was issued on 24th February 2021 in conjunction with Future Wales: The National Plan 2040 (FW2040). PPW incorporates the objectives of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act into town and country planning and sets out Welsh Government's (WG) policy on planning issues

relevant to the determination of all planning applications. FW2040 sets out the National Development Framework for Wales (NDF), WGs current position on planning policy at regional and national level.

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.

It is also considered the proposed development is compliant with the NDF, with the following policies being relevant to the development proposed:

- Policy 1 – Where Wales will grow – Employment/Housing/Infrastructure
- Policy 2 – Shaping Urban Growth – Sustainability/Placemaking
- Policy 6 - Town Centre First – commercial/retail/education/health/public services
- Policy 9 – Resilient Ecological Networks – green infrastructure/ecology

SE Wales Policies

- Policy 33 – National Growth Areas Cardiff Newport & the Valleys – SDP/LDP/large schemes.

Other relevant policy guidance consulted:
PPW Technical Advice Note 12: Design;

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:

This application seeks conservation area consent for the partial demolition of the Old Courthouse in order to provide student accommodation consisting of 26 no. flats. As such, the key considerations in the determination of this application are the impacts resulting from the loss of the parts of the building to be demolished and the resulting effects of the conversion and associated works upon the character of the site and its wider conservation area setting.

Impact on the character and appearance of the area

Both Policy AW7 and Supplementary Planning Guidance: The Historic Built Environment set out a range of criteria which must be taken into account when assessing application for development in conservation areas. The guidance states that proposals in and adjacent to conservation areas should avoid harming the character and appearance of those areas and should, where possible, positively enhance them. Furthermore, Planning Policy Wales states that developments should seek to protect, conserve, promote and enhance the historic environment as a resource for the general well-being of present and future generations. It states that the individual historic assets are protected and preserved.

The application proposes the part demolition of the existing building with these works primarily taking place towards the centre of the site. The appearance of the front elevation would remain relatively unchanged however, a window that sits behind the existing single storey projection would be replaced with a door and new opening lights would be inserted into the existing lead windows to provide ventilation to the units in block A. A stainless steel and glass canopy would also be installed above the main entrance. The original features that are considered to be of some architectural merit would be retained and it is not considered that the alterations outlined above would detract from this.

The proposal has been assessed by Glamorgan Gwent Archaeological Trust who have indicated that the building is recorded by the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales. The building contains the date 1863 over the south elevation entrance and the original footprint of the building can be seen on the First and Second Edition Ordinance Survey maps (dated 1875 and 1900). The Third OS map (dated 1919) shows an extension to the building to the north. GGAT are of the opinion that the site is of historic importance by virtue of the building's history and cultural significance within the area and, consequently, due to the proposed change of use and partial demolition of the building, it is considered that archaeological mitigation will be required in order to preserve the Old Courthouse by record. As such, a condition is recommended in this regard. This condition was also recommended and added to the previous consent.

As mentioned previously in this report, works have largely been ongoing at the site however, it is noted that the condition added to the previous consent (ref. 20/0118) has not been discharged. This was brought to the attention of the applicant who subsequently provided a number of photographs of some internal offices which were provided during the sale of the property (prior to any works taking place). GGAT has provided further comments on the photographs, stating that they appear to show modern alterations but concern is raised in that they are very limited in terms of what they depict. It is advised that they are not a substitute for a Level 2 building recording but no further advice is provided in this regard. It is agreed that it is no longer possible

to carry out the works required by the recommended condition and it is therefore not considered necessary to add the condition to this consent.

Taking the above into consideration, the works would be carried out in a sympathetic manner with the attractive features of the front elevation being retained. It is noted that materials obtained through the demolition of the central parts of the building would be retained and re-used where possible and the materials proposed in areas that undergo alterations (i.e. windows and doors etc.) are considered to compliment the overall finish of the existing building and are therefore acceptable. Furthermore, the proposal would ensure the re-use of the existing building, which is currently vacant, and it would therefore prevent it from falling into disrepair. As such, the proposal would preserve the character of the site and the wider conservation area and the application would therefore comply with Policy AW7 of the Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan and SPG: The Historic Built Environment.

Whilst objections have been received in relation to the application, these predominantly relate to the full application (ref. 21/1478) and have been fully considered in the report for that application, which appears elsewhere on this agenda. It is therefore not considered necessary to reiterate the points made in this report.

Conclusion

To conclude, the impact of the proposed demolition and conversion works are considered to be acceptable in terms of the impact they would have on the character and appearance of the site and the wider conservation area. The development would therefore comply with Policy AW7 of the Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan and the SPG: The Historic Built Environment.

RECOMMENDATION: Approve