

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

08 June 2023

REPORT OF: DIRECTOR PROSPERITY AND DEVELOPMENT

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

Members are asked to determine the planning application outlined below:

APPLICATION NO: 23/0251/12 (KL)
APPLICANT: Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council
DEVELOPMENT: Conservation and repair of the building, including refurbishment of the Auditorium, remodelling of the Entrance Foyer, Bar and Mezzanine, installation of new passenger lifts, WCs, Dressing Rooms, Changing Place and associated improvements to back of house areas (Listed Building Consent)
LOCATION: MUNICIPAL BUILDING, GELLIWASTAD ROAD, PONTYPRIDD, CF37 2DP
DATE REGISTERED: 10/03/2023
ELECTORAL DIVISION: Pontypridd Town

RECOMMENDATION: Approve, subject to conditions and subject to a favourable referral to Cadw.

REASONS: The works would be sympathetic and consistent with the special historic and architectural importance of the Listed Building and would have no adverse impact on its special significance.

REASON APPLICATION REPORTED TO COMMITTEE

- The application has been submitted by, or on behalf of the Council or involving land owned by the Council, where the Council's interest is of more than a minor nature.

APPLICATION DETAILS

Listed Building Consent is sought for the conservation and repair of the Grade II Listed Municipal Building which is located on Gelliwastad Road, Pontypridd.

The works would include:

- The remodelling of the entrance foyer to reinstate the historic entrance beneath the central tower. It would lead into a new, open and more generous foyer which would provide access into the bar, auditorium, a passenger lift and WCs.

- The provision of male and female WCs and an accessible WC at ground floor level.
- The provision of a 10-person passenger lift from the central foyer to the upper floor.
- The provision of a bar area in the former Sunday School with access off the central foyer. The space would be remodelled to sensitively unpick unsympathetic interventions and to reveal the original Gothic heritage, providing a flexible ground floor open plan space with a first-floor mezzanine above, which would be pulled back from the external walls to reveal the Gothic tracery windows. Two new openings would be created in the front elevation of the building which would 'open up' the bar area to the adjacent footway. The openings would be parallel with the existing Gothic tracery windows above.
- The refurbishment of the auditorium to remove all of the linings and suspended ceilings incorporated in the 1970s to reveal the original historic volume and Gothic features of the former Chapel. The space would provide for a flexible multi-purpose hall and performance space.
- The provision of a new fixed gallery at the rear of the auditorium, providing a permanent technical position for flexible event operation, fixed seating to increase overall capacity and dedicated wheelchair audience spaces and companion seats.
- The refurbishment of the existing 1980s rear extension in order to improve lighting, circulation and accessibility. The cill-levels of the windows within the rear elevation would be dropped (second floor) to increase natural light into the reconfigured offices and dressing rooms whilst new window openings would be created at ground and first floor. A new platform lift would also be provided to improve accessibility to all levels.
- The replacement of the existing windows to the east (front) and north (side) elevations with historically appropriate hardwood framed single-glazed window units (original leaded panes above arch springs to remain).
- The removal of the existing snow gates to the eastern and northern roof slopes. These would be replaced with slimline snow rails which are more discrete and which would return the eaves level of the building to its historic appearance.
- The removal and replacement of loading bay doors to the eastern elevation with an insulated panel and a digital screen.
- The infilling of the existing backstage door in the southern elevation with masonry.
- The creation of a new backstage door opening in the southern elevation (further along than the current opening).
- The replacement of hard cement render with lime-based render.
- The alteration of the existing access to the backstage area for deliveries, including landscaping and the replacement of existing fencing.
- The removal of wall fabric between the piers to create new openings between the auditorium and the 1980s extension. This would enable the provision of a moveable bar.
- The removal of modern partitions and installation of new walls in the former Sunday School to create a bar, kitchen and the ground floor WCs.

- The reconfiguration of the top stair flight and first floor landing to create access onto the newly created balcony.
- The removal of the suspended ceiling in the main hall and the installation of new service ducts to the length of the roof space.
- The installation of flush fitting solar panels to western roof pitch (main roof structure).
- The replacement of roof level plant.
- The replacement of a flat roof (below the plant) with a single ply membrane.
- The provision of a new bin storage area at the rear of the building.

In addition to the standard forms and plans, the application is accompanied by the following supporting documents:

- Design and Access Statement;
- Heritage Statement;
- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal;
- Transport Report;
- Noise Impact Assessment;
- Acoustic Design Report (Stage 3);
- Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment.

This application also relates to a separate application for full planning permission, ref. 23/0250/10, which appears elsewhere on this agenda.

SITE APPRAISAL

The application site relates to a Grade II Listed Building which is situated in the town centre of Pontypridd. The building, which is known as the Muni Arts Centre, is located on the western side of Gelliwastad Road with Chapel Street to the northern elevation. The western boundary of the site is characterised by a high retaining wall with Pontypridd Goods Yard Car Park, the Bowls Centre and the railway line being sited beyond. The southern edge of the site lies adjacent to a single-track lane which forms the exit from the car park to the rear onto Gelliwastad Road.

The building was constructed in 1895 and functioned as the town's Wesleyan Chapel and an associated Sunday School for many decades. It later became a Municipal Hall and was converted to an arts centre in the 1980s. The building was Listed in 2001 for the architectural interest of its Gothic exterior and for its contribution to the impressive range of buildings on Gelliwastad Road, including the adjacent Municipal Buildings and St. Catherine's Church.

The immediate surrounding area is predominantly commercial in character however, it is noted that there are a number of residential uses in the wider vicinity, including student accommodation and flats above ground floor businesses on Gelliwastad Road and residential properties, which are located approximately 45m away to the south-

west (Gelliwastad Court) and approximately 100m away on the opposite side of the train line to the north-west (Tyfica Crescent/Tyfica Road/Lanpark Road).

PLANNING HISTORY

The following planning applications are on record for this property:

23/0250	Municipal Gelliwastad Pontypridd	Building, Road,	Conservation and repair of the building, including refurbishment of the auditorium, remodelling of the entrance foyer, bar and mezzanine, installation of new passenger lifts, WCs, dressing rooms, changing place and associated improvements to back of house areas	Pending
10/0239	Municipal Gelliwastad Pontypridd	Building, Road,	Stone cleaning and repairs	Granted 21/06/10
03/2090	Municipal Gelliwastad Pontypridd	Building, Road,	Installation of two pole mounted ISM antenna (LBC)	Unknown 08/03/04
03/2087	Municipal Gelliwastad Pontypridd	Building, Road,	Installation of two pole mounted ISM antenna	Granted 15/03/04
03/0040	Municipal Gelliwastad Pontypridd	Building, Road,	Proposed development of existing garden area and the provision of a mosaic mural to former window end	Refused 04/04/03
02/0211	Municipal Gelliwastad Pontypridd	Building, Road,	Refurbishment of footlights bar to include ventilation, lighting, ceiling and redecoration	Permission Not Required 08/05/02
97/2683	Municipal Gelliwastad Pontypridd	Building, Road,	Fascia sign	Granted 17/11/97
933/0657	Municipal Gelliwastad Pontypridd	Building, Road,	Main external sign	Granted 26/10/93

PUBLICITY

The application has been advertised by means of direct neighbour notification, through the erection of a number of site notices in the vicinity of the site and through the publishing of a press notice in a local newspaper. No letters of objection or representation have been received.

CONSULTATION

The following consultation responses have been received:

Joint Committee of the National Amenity Societies:

Historic Buildings and Places

No objection. Much of the work proposed will remove and reorganise later additions and installations, mainly from the 1980s conversion to an arts centre. Overall, this proposal will better reveal the historic features within the building.

Theatres Trust: No objection. It is considered that by enabling the Muni's return to active use and supporting its ongoing sustainability, this will support the asset's ongoing conservation. The proposed interventions are sensitive to the historic significance of the building and they would generate substantial public benefits through making the venue more inclusive and enhancing the cultural and social well-being of local people.

POLICY CONTEXT

Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan

The application site is located within the defined settlement boundary for Pontypridd. The building has also been identified as a Grade II Listed Building which is set within the Pontypridd (Taff) Conservation Area. The following policies are considered to be relevant in the determination of this application:

Policy CS2 (Development in the South): sets out criteria for achieving sustainable growth including, promoting and enhancing transport infrastructure services.

Policy AW2 (Sustainable Locations): advises that development proposals on non-allocated sites will only be supported in sustainable locations.

Policy AW5 (New Development): sets out criteria for new development in relation to amenity and accessibility.

Policy AW6 (Design and Placemaking): requires development to involve a high quality design and to make a positive contribution to placemaking, including landscaping.

Policy AW7 (Protection and Enhancement of the Built Environment): advises that proposals 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.

Members will be aware that the current LDP's lifespan was 2011 to 2021, 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 LDP 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.

Supplementary Planning Guidance

The Historic Built Environment

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

Other relevant national policy guidance consulted:

PPW Technical Advice Note 12: Design

PPW Technical Advice Note 24: The Historic Environment

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 Issues:

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

The application is well detailed and benefits from undergoing RIBA level 1, 2 and 3. It is also understood that extensive pre-application consultation has been undertaken with stakeholders and Cadw prior to this application being submitted. This has resulted in a thorough understanding of the building and the works previously undertaken at the site and an evaluation of the options has resulted in the formulation of a truly bespoke solution based on that analysis.

It is considered that the option appraisal has been very competently applied and the resultant scheme would make a significant contribution to the history and architectural quality of the building. The works proposed would reverse some of the less appropriate works undertaken previously at the site and would allow greater understanding and appreciation of the interior features and spaces. The works would offer a vibrant and productive use of the premises from an operator with a proven track record of delivering quality facilities, to the benefit of the town, the wider community of RCT and visitors to the region.

The modern, contemporary additions, particularly the proposed solar panels would be both distinct and reversible and whilst they are not ideal, their impact is mitigated by their position on the rear of the building and also the net benefit they would provide in terms of efficiency and the 'future-proofing' of the project. On balance, the proposed installation of solar panels at the property is considered acceptable however, it is considered necessary to impose a planning condition for the submission of a detailed method statement for their installation and removal.

Consequently, it is considered that the proposal would have a positive and restorative impact on the special historical and architectural qualities of the Listed Building and

would provide valuable regeneration of a key building within the town and wider community, to its cultural and financial benefit.

Conclusion

The application seeks to make a number of internal and external improvements to a Listed Building which are considered to have a positive and restorative impact on the special historical and architectural qualities of the building. Overall, the proposed works are considered in keeping with the character of the existing building and the proposed alterations are therefore acceptable.

RECOMMENDATION: Approve, subject to conditions and subject to a favourable referral to Cadw

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 plans and other documents received on 6th March 2023 unless otherwise to be approved and superseded by details required by any other condition attached to this consent:

- Drawing No. MUNI-PUR-00-XX-DR-A-1000: Site Location Plan
- Drawing No. MUNI-PUR-00-XX-DR-A-1001: Site Sections
- Drawing No. MUNI-PUR-00-RF-DR-A-1013: Existing Plan with Fabric Repairs – Level RF
- Drawing No. MUNI-PUR-00-00-DR-A-1050: Proposed Site Plan
- Drawing No. MUNI-PUR-00-00-DR-A-1300: Demolition Plan – Level Ground Floor
- Drawing No. MUNI-PUR-00-01-DR-A-1301: Demolition Plan – Level 01
- Drawing No. MUNI-PUR-00-02-DR-A-1302: Demolition Plan – Level 02
- Drawing No. MUNI-PUR-00-RF-DR-A-1303: Demolition Plan – Level RF
- Drawing No. MUNI-PUR-00-XX-DR-A-1320: Demolition Elevation – North
- Drawing No. MUNI-PUR-00-XX-DR-A-1321: Demolition Elevation – East
- Drawing No. MUNI-PUR-00-XX-DR-A-1322: Demolition Elevation – South
- Drawing No. MUNI-PUR-00-XX-DR-A-1323: Demolition Elevation – West
- Drawing No. MUNI-PUR-00-00-DR-A-2010: GA Plan – Level GF
- Drawing No. MUNI-PUR-00-01-DR-A-2011: GA Plan – Level 01
- Drawing No. MUNI-PUR-00-02-DR-A-2012: GA Plan – Level 02
- Drawing No. MUNI-PUR-00-RF-DR-A-2013: GA Plan – Level RF
- Drawing No. MUNI-PUR-00-XX-DR-A-2100: Proposed Elevation - North

- Drawing No. MUNI-PUR-00-XX-DR-A-2101: Proposed Elevation – East
- Drawing No. MUNI-PUR-00-XX-DR-A-2102: Proposed Elevations – South
- Drawing No. MUNI-PUR-00-XX-DR-A-2103: Proposed Elevations – West
- Drawing No. MUNI-PUR-00-XX-DR-A-2200: Proposed Section – 1
- Drawing No. MUNI-PUR-00-XX-DR-A-2201: Proposed Section – 2
- Drawing No. MUNI-PUR-00-XX-DR-A-2202: Proposed Section – 3
- Drawing No. MUNI-PUR-00-XX-DR-A-2220: Detail Section Through Auditorium
- Drawing No. MUNI-PUR-00-XX-DR-A-2221: Detail Section Through Bar East Elevation
- Drawing No. MUNI-PUR-00-XX-DR-A-5010: Auditorium Roof Build-Up Details
- Drawing No. 2417-QODA-00-00-DR-E-0501 PO3: Electrical Services Lighting Ground Floor
- Drawing No. 01.0500 P2: Proposed Drainage Layout

Reason: To ensure compliance with the approved plans and documents and to clearly define the scope of the permission.

3. Prior to commencement of development, a detailed method statement for the installation and removal of the solar panels hereby approved shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure that there would be no adverse impact upon the Listed Building in accordance with Policy AW7 of the Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan.