

## PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

07 NOVEMBER 2024

### REPORT OF: DIRECTOR PROSPERITY AND DEVELOPMENT

#### PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

Members are asked to determine the planning application outlined below:

**APPLICATION NO:** 24/0793/FUL (GD)  
**APPLICANT:** Mr Douglas Haig  
**DEVELOPMENT:** Change of use from A2 (financial and professional) to use classes A2, A3, B1 at basement and ground floor and apart-hotel on 1st, 2nd and 3rd floor to form 9no. units along with renovation works, minor external alterations, including 1no. new glazed panel and removal of external staircase..  
**LOCATION:** HSBC, 92A Taff Street, Pontypridd, CF37 4SR  
**DATE REGISTERED:** 5 August 2024  
**ELECTORAL DIVISION:** Pontypridd Town

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**RECOMMENDATION:** Approve

**REASONS:** The principle of the proposed development is compliant with key planning policy requirements at the local and national level and is otherwise acceptable in terms of relevant material planning considerations. Moreover, the proposals also offer the opportunity to bring an unused building which is starting to show signs of decay back into beneficial use at the heart of the town centre bringing with it a positive impact on the vitality and viability of the town centre.

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#### REASON APPLICATION REPORTED TO COMMITTEE

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

#### APPLICATION DETAILS

This application seeks full planning permission for the conversion of the former HSBC Bank in Taff Street Pontypridd to any potential A2 or A3 use or alternatively a B1 type use in its basement and ground floor along with the conversion of floors 1 to 3 to 9no.residential units comprising 5no one-bedroom units and 4 no. studio flat units.

Externally the proposals involve very little change to the fabric of the building other than the removal of an external staircase from the rear of the building and the creation of a new aluminium glazed entrance and side screens on the ground floor side elevation of

the property. The proposals otherwise make use of the buildings existing windows and doors.

Internally the building would experience the following changes.

- Basement – rationalisation of internal walls and layout to provide toilet facilities.
- Ground floor – rationalisation of internal walls to provide the creation of back of house facilities along with a discreet entrance and reception area for the residential accommodation.

Members should note that whilst the description of development for this element of the proposed development proposes flexibility in the type of uses to be made available there is no specific designation within any use category.

- First floor – internal reconfiguration to provide 1 no. one bedroom flat and 2 no. studios
- Second floor – internal reconfiguration to provide 2 no. one bedroom flats and 1 no. studio
- Third floor – internal reconfiguration to provide 2 no. one bedroom flats and 1 no. studio

An existing internal stairwell on the enclosed northern side of the building will be retained albeit in a reconfigured formation.

## **SITE APPRAISAL**

Originally built as the Butchers Arms Hotel, the application site is comprised entirely within the building that was until recently the HSBC bank towards the southern end of Taff Street opposite the junction with Mill Street and immediately north of the unnamed lane access to Ynysangharad War Memorial Park. The building itself is a substantial four storey building occupying a corner plot, though it benefits from a distinctive front façade, it is not a listed building, but does contribute positively to the Pontypridd Town Centre Conservation Area.

## **PLANNING HISTORY**

Prior to becoming a bank, this building functioned as a public house. The site has an extensive planning history associated with its banking function mainly concerning advertisement rebranding and incremental improvements to the property such as the introduction of ATM's. The following are only the most recent application.

16/0219	HSBC Taff Street, Pontypridd	Replacement of existing external ATM to create efficient wheelchair access &	Approved	21 <sup>st</sup> April 2016
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16/0223	HSBC, Taff Street, Pontypridd	replacement of surrounding glazing. Replacement of the existing external signage to comply with current brand standards.	Approved	21 <sup>st</sup> April 2016
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## **PUBLICITY**

The application has been advertised by means of site notice press notice and neighbour notification and no observations or objections have been received.

## **CONSULTATION**

Highways – raise no objections and suggest no conditions

Flood Risk Management – Raise no objections to the proposed development and identify the presence of a culverted watercourse to the south of the application property, they advise that any works that might affect the culvert will also require the benefit of ordinary watercourse consent.

Public Health & Protection – raise no objections subject to conditions

Natural Resources Wales – raise no objections to the proposal but offer advice in respect of flood risk, the prevention of pollution and the disposal of waste.

Dwr Cymru Welsh Water – raise no objection and suggest a condition preventing any increase in surface water drainage requirements from draining to the public sewer

Western Power Distribution – raise no objections

Wales & West Utilities – there is no gas infrastructure in the vicinity of the site

South Wales Fire & Rescue Service – raise no objections and offer their standard advice requiring adequate water supplies for firefighting purposes and appropriate access for firefighting appliances.

Countryside – raise no objections and suggest that a bat informative note be attached to any consent that might be issued.

Heneb – as archaeological advisors to your Members, we have no objections to the positive determination of this application. The archaeological record is not definitive and unknown features may be disturbed during the course of the work in this event Heneb should be contacted.

Housing Strategy – no objections

## **POLICY CONTEXT**

### **Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan**

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 4<sup>th</sup> 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 4<sup>th</sup> 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 24<sup>th</sup> September 2020. Subsequently, Members are advised that the existing Plan remains the development plan for consideration when determining this planning application.

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

**Policy CS5** - sets an expectation for the provision of affordable housing.

**Policy AW1** – sets a target for the provision of new housing including amongst other things, through the conversion of suitable existing buildings.

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

**Policy SSA1** – offers support for proposals that reinforce the role of Pontypridd as a principal town.

**Policy SSA12** – advocates the provision of 20% affordable housing.

**Policy SSA17** – promotes retail development and improvements within principal towns in the southern strategy area

### **Supplementary Planning Guidance**

The Historic Built Environment

Design in Town Centres

Affordable Housing

Access Circulation and Parking

Shopfront Design

Development of Flats

### **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 24<sup>th</sup> 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), WG's 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 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 3 – Supporting Urban Growth – Council land/Placemaking/developers/regeneration/sustainable communities'/exemplar developments.
- Policy 33 – National Growth Areas Cardiff Newport & the Valleys – SDP/LDP/large schemes. Other relevant policy guidance consulted:

PPW Technical Advice Note 2: Planning and Affordable Housing;

PPW Technical Advice Note 4: Retailing and Town Centres;

PPW Technical Advice Note 11: Noise;

PPW Technical Advice Note 12: Design;

PPW Technical Advice Note 18: Transport;

PPW Technical Advice Note 23: Economic Development  
Manual for Streets

## **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:**

In this instance, the application relates to a property that lies within defined settlement limits and is located within the retail centre of Pontypridd and the Town Centre Conservation Area. As such, the key determinants in the case are considered to be the principle of the proposed development, the impact of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area, the impacts on amenity, access and highway safety and flooding. These issues are addressed in turn below

### **Principle of the proposed development**

The nature and location of the proposed development is such that it is affected by a number of layers of planning policy that relate principally to retailing, town centre vitality and conservation. In this particular case, the proposed arrangements are such that they satisfy the requirements of planning policy. An active street front retailing/business presence is retained in a prominent and important part of Taff Street, which will also make use of the basement of the property. The building will be renovated in an acceptable manner with only minor alterations to the side and rear elevations offering an overall improvement to the building in a manner that respects its position within the town centre conservation area. The introduction of apart-hotel units on to the upper floors will strengthen the round the clock presence within the town centre adding to its vibrancy and vitality. The result of the proposed changes in planning policy terms is that key areas are satisfied by the current proposals.

### **Impact on the character and appearance of the area**

The application property is a substantial and visually prominent building located on the eastern side of Taff Street opposite its junction with Mill Street and immediately adjacent to one of the access points to Ynysangharad War Memorial Park. The building sits within the town centre conservation area and is now vacant following the closure of the local HSBC bank that formerly occupied the building.

The submitted plans illustrate that the works to take place do so within the building itself or as renovation to the building envelope – the obvious exception being the creation of the new access for the residential accommodation. Alterations to the Taff Street frontage are minimal and in most cases amount to little more than repairs.

There is little doubt that since the building was last used it presents a negative impression of the wider area. The current proposals take a balanced restorative approach towards bringing the building back up to a standard that reflects the aspirations of Pontypridd as a retail centre and respects the conservation area in the manner that reflects the traditional character and appearance of the building and wider locality.

Consequently, the proposed development is considered to make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the locality and are considered compliant with the requirements of Local Development Plan policies AW5, AW6 and SSA 1 insofar as they relate to this issue.

### **Impact on residential amenity and privacy**

As specified earlier the proposal relates to the refurbishment of the property with the Taff Street level remaining in commercial use with apart-hotel flats created on the three floors above. The site is located within the shopping centre of Pontypridd and upper floors to adjacent buildings on Taff Street have already been successfully converted and occupied for residential purposes. The potential consequence of allowing such an arrangement is that habitable rooms could have facing windows at a distance of as little as 11 metres apart. However, this is considered acceptable on the basis that this is a town centre where in practice lower levels of privacy for residential units should be expected and in some cases have been established. In any event, the distances involved are similar to the arrangements in many of the residential streets around the town centre. Elsewhere full use is made of existing windows none of which facilitates a level of overlooking that would generate any concern with suitable distances established at the front and side and the rear overlooking the park beyond the river.

In light of the fact that the current proposal does not involve the building of any new extensions it is considered that there would be no additional impact beyond that which currently exists in the issues of overshadowing or loss of light.

Given the above, the proposals are considered satisfactory in the context of their impact on any residential property around the application site and therefore compliant with the requirements of Local Development Plan policies AW5 and AW6 insofar as they relate to this issue

### **Access and highway safety**

#### Location

The property is served off Taff Street that is located within the sustainable location of Pontypridd Town Centre that provides good public transport links, local amenities and public car parks.

Taff Street is a pedestrianised road with restricted vehicular access Mon – Sat 11am – 3pm.

#### Access

The existing provides pedestrian access via Taff Street with a secondary staff access to the side of the property.

The applicant proposes primary means of access to the ground floor commercial unit via the existing means of access off Taff Street with access to the proposed hotel use to the side of the property.

The unnamed road to the side of the property has double yellow lines and a narrow footway and provides vehicular access to rear service area and the former Marks and Spencer's service area and is utilised as a shared surface link to Ynysangharad Park. Therefore, the lane is considered to provide satisfactory means of pedestrian access to the hotel element of the development acceptable.

### Parking

The existing use has a parking requirement of 1 space per 25-35m<sup>2</sup> in accordance with SPG: Access, Circulation & Parking Requirements (March 2011) within parking zone 1. Therefore, the existing has a total requirement of 29 spaces with none provided.

The proposed change of use to the ground floor and basement is proposed to change to A2, A3, B1 which have a parking requirement as follows within parking zone 1:

Use Classes	Operational	Non-operational
A2	NA	1 space per 25-35m <sup>2</sup>
A3	In Zones 1 & 2 applicants will need to demonstrate that servicing can be accommodated without unduly affecting highway safety and the free flow of traffic.	Nil
B1	NA	1 space per 25-35m <sup>2</sup>

In light of the above requirements the proposed ground floor and basement would have a maximum requirement of 8 spaces.

The proposed first, second and third floors change of use to a hotel within parking zones 1 and 2 must demonstrate that servicing can be accommodated without unduly affecting highway safety and the free flow of traffic.

Taking into consideration that the proposed will considerably reduce the parking requirement of the property, the applicant proposes secure cycle storage as part of the proposed hotel use promoting sustainable modes of transport and given the sustainable location of the proposed with good public transport links, local amenities and public car parks within the established town centre the absence of parking is considered acceptable. Servicing of the retail and hotel accommodation will need to be undertaken outside the restricted period for vehicles in a similar manner to other town centre retail units and hotels, therefore, the proposal is considered acceptable



## **Flooding**

The application is not accompanied by a Flood Consequences Assessment.

The application property occupies a site approximately 10m west of the River Taff. The property lies within zones C1 of the Natural Resources Wales flood advice maps.

Natural resources Wales advise that the site benefits from flood defences and that access/egress to the property could be affected if the defences are overtopped. However, given that only the upper floors would form residential accommodation, and with no increase in the overall footprint of the building it would be considered unreasonable to withhold consent on this basis.

In light of the above, the proposal is considered to comply with policies AW2 and AW10 of the Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan insofar as they relate to the issue of flooding.

### **Other Issues:**

The following other material considerations have been taken into account in considering the application, though were not the key determining factors in reaching the recommendation.

Public Health & Protection have suggested a series of conditions relating to hours of operation and dust and noise controls. These matters are more readily addressed under other legislation rather than the application of planning conditions and are not included in the list of recommended conditions below. They note that the proposals if allowed would have potential for food preparation and advise that details of extraction systems and any associated noise reports should be the subject of further consideration. This is an issue that can be dealt with by an advisory note on any planning permission that might be issued.

Issues relating to site drainage and in particular the culverted watercourse referenced by Flood Risk Management should be the subject of an advisory note added to any planning permission that might be granted. The condition suggested by Dwr Cymru Welsh Water is not necessary as there can be no increase in roof or impermeable surface area associated with the development.

### **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 liable for a charge under the CIL Regulations 2010 (as amended) however, the CIL rate for this type of development as set out in the Charging Schedule is £nil and therefore no CIL is payable.

### **Conclusion**

The application is considered to comply with the relevant policies of the Local Development Plan in respect of the type of development proposed. Moreover, the proposals are considered acceptable in terms of all other relevant material planning considerations. The application offers the opportunity to refurbish and bring back into use a substantial building at a key location in the middle of Pontypridd, Adjacent to the access to the park and a positive recommendation is made.

### **RECOMMENDATION: Approve**

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

Reason: To comply with Section 92 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

- 2 Building operations shall not be commenced until samples of any new external finish material 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.