

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

21 NOVEMBER 2024

REPORT OF: DIRECTOR PROSPERITY AND DEVELOPMENT

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

Members are asked to determine the planning application outlined below:

APPLICATION NO: 24/1055/FUL (MF)
APPLICANT: RCTCBC
DEVELOPMENT: Three storey enclosure to prop existing building and to host services at adjacent development..
LOCATION: 97 Taff Street Pontypridd CF37 4SL
DATE REGISTERED: 23 October 2024
ELECTORAL DIVISION: Pontypridd Town

RECOMMENDATION: Approve, subject to conditions.

REASONS: The structure will inevitably form a visible feature in the immediate street scene. However, it is essential for the integrity of the building it will support and would be finished of appropriate external materials that will ensure it is not overly prominent when read in the wider context of the overall redevelopment scheme. The proposed finishes will also ensure the structure is not detrimental to the special character and appearance of the Conversation Area.

It is also noted that the proposal forms a key element of the wider, strategic redevelopment aspirations at this site, a scheme that could not be brought forward without this proposed development.

REASON APPLICATION REPORTED TO COMMITTEE

The application has been submitted by the Council and the site is under Council ownership.

APPLICATION DETAILS

Demolition of the former Marks and Spencer and Dorothy Perkins buildings (nos. 97 – 102 Taff Street) resulted in the previously internal southern side elevation wall of the adjacent 96 Taff Street being left external and without any lateral support. The Applicant has detailed that without the buttressing effect of the previous buildings, no. 96 requires external propping to ensure its stability going forward.

No. 96 is currently being propped by a temporary, steel frame structure pending the final design of a permanent feature. This application seeks full planning permission for that permanent propping solution.

The proposed development would comprise of a new three-storey, steel truss structure with a depth of 1.5m from the side elevation of no. 96, extending to a height equal to the eaves height of no. 96. The supporting structure would be clad with a rendered cement board to improve its aesthetics, and to form an enclosure that would be used to house the services required at the wider redevelopment plot (97 – 102 Taff Street). The application notes that this enclosure would not be accessible to the public or frequently used by people, only being used periodically for utility / maintenance purposes.

The wider redevelopment plot forms part of a strategic programme of projects currently being developed by the Council, that seeks to establish a new 'Southern Gateway' to the town centre, as identified within the Pontypridd Placemaking Plan. It is detailed that this proposal forms a key aspect of the wider development aspirations, without which the wider public realm works at the remaining area of the site cannot be brought forward.

SITE APPRAISAL

The application site forms a small element of the wider, former Marks and Spencer and Dorothy Perkins plot along Taff Street, Pontypridd – the southern element of that plot, directly adjacent to no. 96.

All buildings on site have recently been demolished in preparation for redevelopment, to form a public open space and a thoroughfare to Ynysangharad War Memorial Park nearby.

The surrounding area forms Pontypridd town centre which is primarily comprised of a variety of commercial and public service uses. There are however residential flats at the upper floors of several nearby buildings.

PLANNING HISTORY

There is a long history of planning applications at the site which mainly relate to various developments at the former commercial uses over the years. As such, only the planning history considered relevant to this proposal is set out below.

22/1473/20 – Demolition of former Marks and Spencer and Dorothy Perkins buildings to basement slab level and making good of remaining surfaces for future development (Conservation Area Consent).

Decision – Granted, 17/05/23.

PUBLICITY

The application has been advertised by means of direct neighbour consultation, site and press notice. No representations have been received.

CONSULTATION

Structural Engineer – No objection.

POLICY CONTEXT

Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Development Plan

The current LDP's lifespan was 2011 to 2021. 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 04 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 04 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 September 2020. Subsequently, the existing Plan remains the development plan for consideration when determining this planning application.

The application site is located inside of the settlement boundary for Pontypridd, the Town Centre and Retail Centre boundaries of the town, and also the Pontypridd Town Centre Conservation Area.

Policy CS2 – sets out criteria for development in the Southern Strategy Area.

Policy AW2 – supports development in sustainable locations which includes sites that are within the defined settlement boundaries, are accessible by a range of sustainable transport modes, have good access to key services and facilities, and would not unacceptably conflict with surrounding uses.

Policy AW5 – sets out criteria for new development in relation to amenity and accessibility.

Policy AW6 – requires development to involve a high standard of design and to make a positive contribution to placemaking, including landscaping.

Policy AW7 – identifies that proposals which impact upon sites of architectural or historic merit will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that the proposal would preserve or enhance the character of the area.

Policy AW10 – does not permit proposals where they would cause or result in a risk of unacceptable harm to health and/or local amenity.

Policy SSA1 – identifies the criteria for assessment of development within the defined Town Centre of Pontypridd.

Policy SSA16 – identifies the retail hierarchy for the Southern Strategy Area with Pontypridd being classed as a Principle Town Centre.

Policy SSA17 – states that new and improved retail facilities and other appropriate uses will be permitted in Pontypridd Town Centre subject to certain criteria.

Supplementary Planning Guidance

- Design and Placemaking
- The Historic Built Environment
- Design in Town Centres

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 12) (PPW) was issued on 07 February 2024. It incorporates the objectives of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act into town and country planning and sets out the Welsh Government's (WG) current policy position on planning issues relevant to the determination of all planning applications. Future Wales: The National Plan 2040 (FW2040) sets out the National Development Framework for Wales (NDF), WGs current position on planning policy at regional and national level, although it should form the basis of all decisions. The thrust and general context of each of the policy documents are aimed at sustainable development.

It is considered 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
- Policy 2 – Shaping Urban Growth and Regeneration – Strategic Placemaking
- Policy 33 – National Growth Areas – Cardiff, Newport and the Valleys

Other relevant national policy guidance consulted:

- PPW Technical Advice Note 4: Retail and Commercial Development
- PPW Technical Advice Note 12: Design
- PPW Technical Advice Note 23: Economic Development

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.

Principle of the Proposed Development

The application seeks full planning permission for the erection of a propping support structure. The proposed structure is required to ensure the integrity of the building to which it will relate; and will also form a key element of the wider, strategic redevelopment aspirations at this site, a redevelopment scheme that would enhance and compliment the town centre and would provide a beneficial facility for visitors to the town.

The development is therefore considered compliant with the relevant planning policy and acceptable, in principle, subject to compliance with the relevant material considerations set out below.

Visual Impact

Sited along the town's main high street, the three-story structure will inevitably form a visible feature in the immediate locality. However, it would be commensurate to the function it would perform and would be finished in appropriate external materials that will ensure any potential visual impact is minimised.

It is also considered the finishes will ensure the structure is not overly prominent in its context, will relate well to the surrounding buildings, and will be sensitive to the special character of the Conservation Area.

It is also noted that the proposed, enclosed structure would replace the existing, exposed steel frame structure that is currently on-site, greatly improving the present visual amenity of the site.

There are consequently no concerns with the scheme in visual terms.

Residential Amenity

Several buildings within the town centre accommodate residential flats at upper floor level, but none in the immediate vicinity of this proposed development. It is consequently considered the proposed support structure would have no impact upon residents of the town in physical terms; and given the very nature of the development which will effectively form a side elevation of a commercial building, there would be no impact in terms of general amenity standards either.

Structural Integrity

The Council's Structural Engineers commented that the proposed development appears to be of a design and scale that would ensure the structural integrity of the host building.

Community Infrastructure Levy Liability

The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) was introduced in Rhondda Cynon Taf from 31 December 2014.

The application is for development of a kind that is not CIL liable under the CIL Regulations 2010 (as amended).

Conclusion

The proposed works are required to ensure the integrity of the building to which they will relate. Furthermore, they would allow the wider redevelopment of the site to progress which would in turn enhance and compliment the town centre, providing a beneficial facility for all visitors to the town.

It is accepted the structure will form a visible feature in the immediate street scene, but it is not considered the feature would be overly prominent when read in the wider context of the overall redevelopment scheme, or detrimental to the special character and appearance of the Conversation Area.

The application is therefore considered to comply with the relevant policies of the Local Development Plan and is recommended for approval, subject to the conditions detailed below.

RECOMMENDATION: Approve, subject to conditions below.

- 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 ref:

- Service Block Location Plan - 16274-DB3-B01-XX-DR-A-90010 Rev. P01
- Service Block Block Plan - 16274-DB3-B01-XX-DR-A-90011 Rev. P01
- Service Block Proposed Block Plan - 16274-DB3-B01-00-DR-A-90012 Rev. P01
- Service Block Existing Elevations - 16274-DB3-B01-XX-DR-A-20901 Rev. P01
- Service Block Ground Floor Plan - 16274-DB3-B01-DR-A-20102 Rev. P01
- Service Block Proposed Elevations - 16274-DB3-B01-XX-DR-A-20701 Rev. P01

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.