

REFERENCE: P/20/266/CAC

APPLICANT: Taylor Wimpey UK Ltd c/o LRM Planning, 22 Cathedral Road, Cardiff, CF11 9LJ

LOCATION: Land at the former St Johns School Newton Porthcawl CF36 5SJ

PROPOSAL: Conservation Area Consent for the demolition of the existing school buildings within Newton Conservation Area

RECEIVED: 2 April 2020

APPLICATION/SITE DESCRIPTION

The corresponding application (P/20/263/FUL refers) which seeks full planning permission for the demolition of the existing buildings and the construction of 57 dwellings, including 8 affordable apartments and an off-site contribution, landscaping, public open space, SUDS and associated works at St Johns School, Newton, Porthcawl, is also to be considered as part of this Development Control Committee agenda.

Under separate legislation, an application has been submitted which seeks Conservation Area Consent for the demolition of the existing school buildings on the site which are located within Newton Conservation Area. Following detailed discussions with the developer and the Council's Conservation Officers, amended plans were received on 9 November 2020 which proposed the demolition of the existing school buildings on the site and the replacement/relocation of the existing Rectory building. The application is accompanied by an updated Heritage Impact Assessment and a structural inspection report for the building.

The proposed works include the demolition of the existing old school buildings located on the site which comprise a number of two storey rendered buildings and portacabin style buildings with particular reference to the large two storey, double bayed window building known as the Rectory which is currently located at the existing pedestrian entrance of the site.



Fig. 1 - Photograph of Existing Rectory Building

The proposal comprises the demolition of these buildings and the relocation and replacement of the existing Rectory building. The proposed Rectory building will be placed further forward than its current position within the site and will be located at the entrance to the site. The proposed building is to be replaced by a building of an identical design to the current Rectory building and will be occupied by a 4 bedroom detached dwelling.



Fig. 8 – Proposed Elevations and Floor Plans of the Replacement Rectory House Type

The application site extends to approximately 2.5ha and comprises the former St John’s School. The site is situated centrally within the village of Newton with the coastal town of Porthcawl located directly to the west of the application site. The site currently comprises of a number of vacant buildings and playing fields that were formerly occupied by St John’s School. The site is located within the Newton Conservation Area and has vehicular access off Church Street with pedestrian access from Birch Walk. A Public Right of Way runs along the southern boundary of the site. The site is currently covered by a number of protected trees and is surrounded by a number of detached and semi-detached residential dwellings with St Clare’s School located to the north of the site.

RELEVANT HISTORY

P/97/568/FUL – Renewal of increase height of old boundary wall fence and gate
Approved (with conditions) – 15/07/1997.

PUBLICITY

The application was advertised on site.

Neighbours have been notified of the receipt of the application.

The period allowed for response to consultations/publicity was extended and expired on 28 May 2020. Amended plans were received and a re-consultation was undertaken which expired on 23 November 2020.

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Porthcawl Town Council – advise that there is a footpath linking the driveway from Plot 1 to the main east west footpath across the site but there is not one from Plot 53 to the main footpath, this is highly likely to become a preference route for anyone in Plots 47 to 57, can a footpath be added there. Bat mitigation strategy to follow sections 5.44 and 5.45 of the Ecological appraisal report with Planning pre-start conditions to ensure that bat boxes are sited on mature trees within the site prior to demolition of existing buildings. Is it possible for more of the properties to the south of the site to exit the development via Church Street rather than Birch Walk, bearing in mind the fact that Church Street formed the main entrance for the school when it was open.

Glamorgan Gwent Archaeological Trust (GGAT) – No objection subject to conditions.

REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED

Councillor Kenneth J Watts (Local Ward Member) - I have no objection to the demolition of the Rectory as it has little historical interest and has insignificant architectural impact on the Conservation Area. To retain some features i.e. the front elevation and refurbish the

remaining building is clearly not a viable alternative.

A number of objections have been received which relate mainly to the proposed access and the impact of the increased in traffic on Danygraig Avenue and Birch Walk as a result of the development which is being proposed under Planning application reference P/20/263/FUL.

Porthcawl Civic Trust Society object to the proposed development and loss of the former rectory building as if approved the proposed development will permanently destroy the character and setting of the church and historic assets of the surrounding area and will make a nonsense of the Conservation Area.

Four letters of objection have been received from residents with regard to the proposed works to the existing school buildings with particular reference to the former Rectory building as follows:-

39 Birch Walk, Porthcawl – Loss of the existing Rectory building will have a negative impact on the character and appearance of the Newton Conservation Area.

6 Cypress Gardens, Porthcawl - As the building lay in the Newton Conservation Area and proposed development in the new LDP has been rejected, this building should not be demolished.

16 Castleland Street, Barry – objects to the loss of the Edwardian Villa (Rectory) building and calls for its retention and preservation and redevelopment by using the remaining shell to create a great living space.

18-22 Denmark Mansions, London – objects to the loss of the existing Rectory building as it should be preserved to save the heritage of the site.

The objections are addressed in the Appraisal section of the report.

APPRAISAL

The application is referred to Committee to consider the objections raised.

The application is assessed against Policy SP5 of the Local Development Plan (LDP) which requires development to conserve, preserve or enhance the built and historic environment of the County Borough and its setting and in particular, will only permit development proposals where it is demonstrated that they will not have a significant adverse impact on the identified heritage assets such as Listed Buildings and their settings. The Policy is supplemented by Policy ENV8 of the LDP, which states that development which respects and utilise the heritage assets and which preserve, conserve and enhance the local distinctness of the County Borough will be permitted. Development which would materially harm heritage assets and features will not be permitted.

The former Rectory Building has been vacant since 2014 and has fallen into disrepair over the years. In June 2020, a fire broke out inside the building which result in considerable damage to the roof of the building. As a result of this, an updated Heritage Impact Assessment and a structural survey were submitted to the Local Planning Authority for further consideration and assessment.

Section 6.6 of the submitted Heritage Impact Assessment states that consideration has also been given to the contribution which the former school buildings within the site make to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and concludes:

Thorough investigation demonstrates that only one building ('The Rectory') possesses any heritage significance or makes any contribution to the character or appearance of this designated historic asset. This building, which dates from the early 20th Century is of little architectural merit and is in poor condition. It has also been significantly altered and extended over time and is not listed. However, it is assessed as being of only low or local significance and also as making no greater than a limited contribution to the character and appearance of the Newton Conservation Area.

In assessing this application it is considered that the former Rectory building possesses evidential, aesthetic and community value as it has played a significant role in the history of the area, firstly as a Rectory but also forming part of the educational provision in the area as a boys school jointly with the St Clare's school on the adjacent site. Despite being vacant for a considerable number of years, the recent fire and its deteriorating condition, the building of traditional character retains significant historic merit and qualities which make a positive contribution to the special quality of the area despite its poor condition.

There is a general presumption in favour of retaining buildings which make a positive contribution to the character or appearance of a Conservation Area. TAN 24 states that proposals to demolish such buildings should be assessed against the same broad criteria as proposal to demolish Listed Buildings:

1. The condition of the building, the cost of repair and maintenance in relation to its importance and the value derived from its continued use.

The original structural report submitted to support this application failed to provide any evidence of the building being structurally unsound. The condition report submitted subsequent to the fire damage in June 2020 stated that the damage to the building is substantial but the masonry façade and internal floors remain intact. The report states *whilst a refurbishment type rebuild is possible, it is unlikely to make economic sense due to how little of the existing building will remain.* An updated assessment submitted on 9 November 2020 states *the loss of roof and ceilings and partial first floor and general weakening has left the masonry in a precarious state.* Loss of restraint from the roof has weakened the masonry panels and resulted in a loss of structural integrity and reduced structural stability which has been augmented by subsequent water damage to the building. The applicant has provided updated costs of repairing the building to bring back into use as a 5 bedroom dwelling and conversion into apartments and there is a considerable conservation deficit to be covered to take this approach.

Consultation with the Council's Structural Engineer has confirmed that the applicant's assessment of the condition of the building is realistic and the conclusion is that to make the property useable will entail a number of works including:

- Propping the external walls;
- Removing the roof and all internal timber elements affected by the fire and rain saturation;
- Removing internal wall finishes that are also likely be affected by the fire;
- Repairing internal and external walls affected by the fire, expansion due to the heat tends to cause cracking to the walls and any such cracks must to be repaired;
- Lintels throughout the property may have to be replaced as many are likely to be timber lintels;
- New windows and doors together with a new roof with slated finish will have to be installed and the building allowed to dry out;
- The internal floors, doors and stairs can then be re-fitted and new plaster finishes applied to the internal surfaces of the walls;
- The propping to the external walls can then be removed;
- Another factor that has to be considered is the thermal efficiency of the building.

The renovation would be considered a major renovation by Building Control and as such the renovated building would have to meet up to date Building Control requirements. This will mean increasing the insulation in the roof, having thermally efficient windows and most likely requiring additional insulation, either internally or externally, on the external walls. If the insulation is external this will alter the external appearance of the property; and,

- New gas, electric and water services will be required throughout.

It can be seen that the amount of work required to bring the building back into use would be extensive. In addition, the above scale of work is likely to prove cost prohibitive. The scale of the work also means the majority of the original building would be lost with only the walls remaining. It is therefore considered that the report submitted by the developer does not overstate the cost and problems they face in bringing the building back into use. In summary, it is considered that before the fire there was more justification for retaining the building but after the fire the extent of the damage is so extensive that little of the original building remains and to bring the building back into use is likely to prove to be cost prohibitive.

2. The efforts made to keep the building in use or secure a new use, including the offer of the unrestricted freehold of the building for sale at a fair market price that reflects its condition and situation

The Council's Conservation Officers have now considered and assessed the various reports on the building and state that prior to the fire, the condition report states that it would not be viable to retain the former property as the cost of its renovation would exceed the value of the renovated property. This may well have been the case but as the building was substantially intact, a case for retaining the structure could be made. Following the fire however, as stated in the second condition report, much of the interior of the building has been lost and then since the loss of the roof in the fire, the interior of the building will be getting saturated by rain. This would include walls as well as the remaining timber elements such as floors, lintels and inserts in the walls. The internal saturation is likely to cause extensive damage particularly in the cold weather when the water in the fabric of the building will freeze and expand and cause further damage. The extent of the fire damage coupled with the damage caused by the saturation by rain water will increase the costs of renovation making the renovation even less cost effective.

Also, the efforts to keep the building in use or to secure a new use including the offer of the unrestricted freehold of the building for sale at a fair market price that reflects the condition and situation. The building has been vacant for a considerable number of years however, no evidence has been submitted by the applicant or the current owners on efforts to keep the building in use or it being offered for sale separately on the open market. No information has been submitted on how the building has been maintained or secured during the period it has been vacant. Nevertheless, the applicant has stated that there is a need to demolish the building in order to realise an acceptable access road into the site that meets highway safety requirements and therefore, the offer of the Rectory building on the market would prevent the ability to implement this access.

3. The merits of alternative proposals for the site, including whether the replacement buildings would meet the objectives of good design and whether or not there are substantial benefits for the community that would outweigh the loss resulting from demolition.

The proposal for a replacement "Rectory" House type which reflects the architectural features of the original building albeit in an adjusted location to accommodate a satisfactory access road into the site, creates a landmark building at the proposed entrance gateway similar to that that would be provided by the retention of the original Rectory building . This attractive gateway which the replacement building forms part of,

includes an area of public space, enhancement of the public realm and the use of appropriate materials and architectural details on the dwellings facing onto the gateway. This will create an attractive focal point on entering the site which has been developed through further discussions with the applicant in light of Officer emphasis on the need to incorporate Planning Policy Wales' place-making principles and to ensure the site reflects the unique identity and distinctiveness of the area. The replacement Rectory dwelling type as part of an entrance feature to the site along with the proposed improvements in design of the gateway and the uplifted design quality of the site as a whole is considered on balance, to offset the impact caused by the proposed demolition of the original Rectory building and the loss of historic fabric.

Accordingly, the proposed works are considered acceptable and accord with Policy SP5 and ENV8 of the Bridgend Local Development Plan and the advice contained in Planning Policy Wales (Edition 10, December 2018) and Technical Advice Note 24: Historic Environment.

The site has been identified by Glamorgan Gwent Archaeological Trust as having an archaeological restraint. There have been several archaeological reports on the proposal, including desk-based assessments by Archaeology Wales (Report no. 1783, dated April 2019) and EDP (Report no. edp5078_r006). Dan-y-Graig Roman Villa (a Scheduled Monument) is located to the north of the proposal and it is likely that the site is located within the associated agricultural land. Clevis House, first mentioned in 1543, is located immediately to the west of the application site and St John's Church which was extant by c.1200 and may have been a pre-Norman foundation to the south west. It is likely early settlement extending to the south would have been lost to encroaching sand in the 13th and 14th centuries before being reclaimed in the 19th century. The Rectory was constructed between 1912 and 1913 for Reverend Holmes-Morgan and formed the base for St Johns School which was first established in 1923. The previous construction activities are likely to have had an adverse effect on any below ground archaeological features or structures in the vicinity but there remains the potential to encounter archaeologically significant remains during the course of the proposed development.

As noted in the archaeological assessments, such a general archaeological potential is not likely to be adequately addressed by a pre-determination evaluation. Accordingly, it is recommended that a condition is imposed upon any consent granted to require a written scheme of investigation for a programme of archaeological work to be submitted to the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of development and on this basis, the Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust considers that the application is acceptable from an archaeological perspective.

CONCLUSION

Conservation Area Consent is recommended because it is considered that the amended proposals for the site submitted on 9 November 2020 are acceptable having regard to national and local Planning policies that seek to ensure that the special character and appearance of the Conservation Area is not adversely affected by development. Overall, the proposed changes to the site will seek to improve its contribution to the Newton Conservation Area in accordance with Policy SP5 and ENV8 of the Bridgend Local Development Plan and the advice contained in Planning Policy Wales (Edition 10, December 2018) and Technical Advice Note 24: Historic Environment.

RECOMMENDATION

(R13) That Conservation Area Consent be GRANTED subject to the following condition(s):-

1. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans

and documents:

Site Location Plan received on the 2nd April 2020;
Structural Inspection Report (Updated) prepared by PHG Consulting Engineers received on 30 October 2020;
and the following amended plans and drawings received on the 9 November 2020:
Site Layout Plan - edp5078_d005-AF
Site Layout Plan (Colour) - edp5078_d024-K
House Type Plans & Elevations - Rectory - edp5078_d049-C
Design & Access Statement prepared by EDP - November 2020
Heritage Impact Assessment - edp5078_r004e

Reason: To avoid doubt and confusion as to the nature and extent of the approved development.

2. No development shall take place until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has secured agreement for a written scheme of historic environment mitigation which has been submitted by the applicant and approved by the local planning authority. Thereafter, the programme of work will be fully carried out in accordance with the requirements and standards of the written scheme.

Reason: To identify and record any features of archaeological interest discovered during the works, in order to mitigate the impact of the works on the archaeological resource.

* THE FOLLOWING IS AN ADVISORY NOTE NOT A CONDITION *

The applicant must deposit a record of the Rectory Building with Bridgend County Borough Council/Royal Commission prior to the demolition of the original Rectory building.

JONATHAN PARSONS
GROUP MANAGER PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

Background Papers

None