

REFERENCE: P/24/22/FUL

APPLICANT: Porthcawl Town Council 16-18 Mary Street, Porthcawl, Bridgend, CF36 3YA

LOCATION: **Griffin Park Bowls Pavilion Griffin Park off Eastern Promenade Porthcawl CF36 5TS**

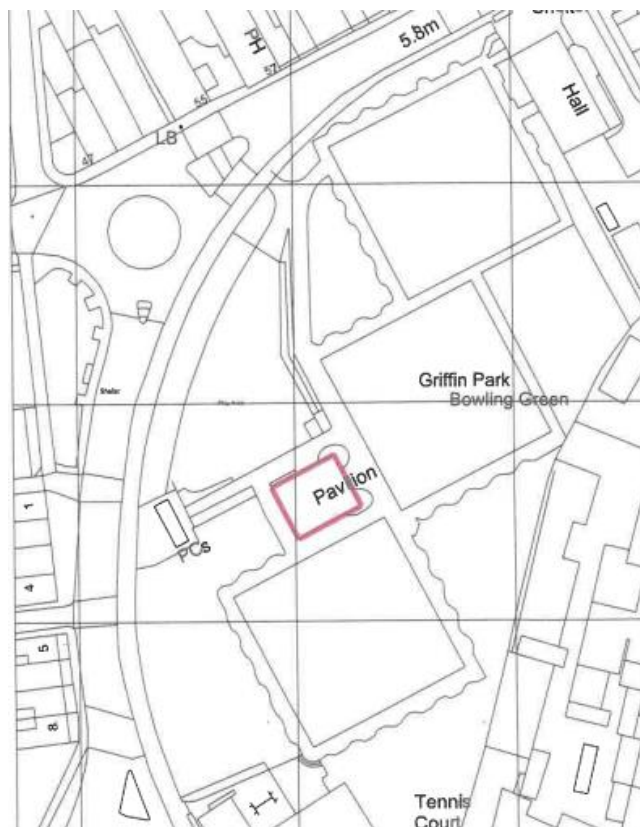
PROPOSAL: Change of use of first floor from storage area to Town Council office accommodation to accommodate 3 members of admin staff Monday to Friday

RECEIVED: 11 January 2024

APPLICATION/SITE DESCRIPTION

The proposed development seeks a change of use of the first floor of Griffin Park Bowls Pavilion, Porthcawl to office accommodation for use by Porthcawl Town Council. The existing storage space within the first floor/roof space of the building is to be converted to an office use to accommodate 3 members of administration staff of the Town Council between Monday and Friday.

Figure 1 – Site Location Plan



↑
North

Supporting information submitted with the planning Application highlights that Porthcawl Town Council are currently the lessees of Griffin Park Pavilion and Griffin Park Play Area/Bowls Green and are very keen to utilise the upstairs space in the Pavilion as an office for administrative staff.

Currently Porthcawl Town Council lease office space at 16 – 18 Mary Street and in July of this year, there is an opportunity to opt out of this lease.

Using part of the Bowls Pavilion as a Town Council Office would bring about the following

benefits (to the Town Council):

- In situ to monitor/oversee the activities of Griffin Park
- All members of the Town Council staff working together in one place as a team
- Be on site to assist all users of the Community Building known as Griffin Park Pavilion – to include Bowlers, Veterans and independent hirers of the building
- Be on site to assist play area users
- Significant cost savings that could be better used within the local community

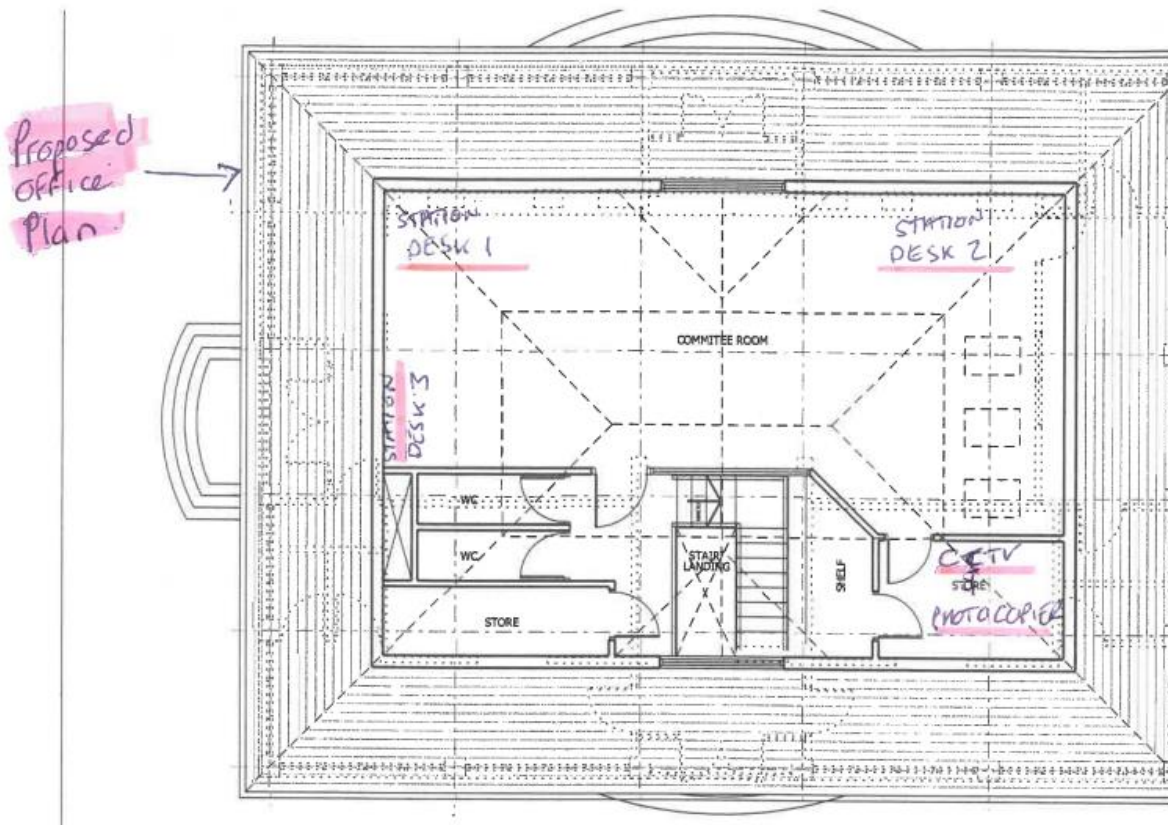
It has been recognised that the office space would be on the first floor of the building and this could limit access to some members of the public. Although the Applicant details that, like many other Town and Community Councils, an appointment system could be introduced to facilitate the Clerk and her staff meeting occasionally with members of the public when required on the ground floor of the building.

It is further detailed the Town Council opening times are between 9:30 am and 12 noon Monday to Friday. However, members of staff are contracted to work Monday to Friday between 08:30am and up to 5pm.

The submitted proposed floor plan (Figure 2 below) highlights that three workstations/ office desks would be introduced into the existing first floor storage space, following the removal of the equipment and a large snooker table that currently occupies the space.

A photocopier/CCTV area would also be introduced into the smaller existing storage room. No external works are proposed to the external fabric of the existing detached building as part of the development proposal.

Figure 2 – Proposed First Floor Layout



The Application site is located within the main settlement of Porthcawl as defined by Policy SF1 Settlement Hierarchy and Urban Management of the Bridgend Local Development Plan (BLDP), 2024. The site is also located in the Porthcawl Regeneration Growth Area as defined by Policy SP1 Regeneration and Sustainable Growth Strategy.

The Application site relates to the main Griffin Park Pavilion that is situated within the grounds of Griffin Park that comprises, amongst others, a large play park and bowling green(s). The detached, largely brick built, two-storey pavilion building sits towards the centre of the site with a pedestrian access point off Eastern Promenade (adjacent to the public toilet block). There is a further access point off New Road to the North of the site. The building is set away from the residential units and the commercial units along Eastern Promenade to the west.

Figure 3 – Photographs and Google street view of the Application site.



RELEVANT HISTORY

P/98/1010 - Fit Three Roller Shutter Doors - Granted 26/01/1999

PUBLICITY

The Application has been advertised on site.

Neighbours have been notified of the receipt of the Application.

The period allowed for response to consultations/publicity expired on 07 March 2024.

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Cllr. Norah Clarke and Cllr. Robert Smith - provided a joint objection against the planning Application. The objections raised are summarised as follows:

- The Town Clerk highlights this is a change of use of a storage area, although the first floor currently accommodates a large snooker table that would be difficult to accommodate elsewhere in Porthcawl so there is a loss of a leisure facility which the community can use. Since its opening between 1934/1935, Griffin Park has always been known for its leisure and recreational facilities.
- A public service should be easily accessible to the residents of Porthcawl as it is now in the town & not on the periphery of the town as proposed.
- Pedestrian/children safety/ Vehicular/Pedestrian conflict.
- Ease of access for the elderly and disabled for those living in areas of Porthcawl that have no public transport - Unreliable local bus service.
- Lack of parking/parking restrictions directly outside Griffin Park (i.e. no parking at any time which includes those with disabled badges).
- Users of the Pavilion have not been consulted on this application by Porthcawl Town Council i.e. Gents Bowls section, Ladies Bowls section, Porthcawl Veterans.
- The application states the building is used on a part time seasonal basis, although there are two Bowls Clubs (ladies and gentlemen) that meet separately and to state the clubs only meet on a seasonal basis is not strictly correct.

Cllr. Norah Clarke also requested that the Charity Commission be a consultee during the process as access to the pavilion will likely be by means of land that is covered by the Charity Commission and charity land is directly adjacent to the pavilion (The Charity Commission have been subsequently consulted on the planning Application although no observations to date have been provided on the planning Application).

Charity Commission – No comments received on the planning Application.

Corporate Landlord – No written comments received on the planning Application, although verbally advised a temporary consent is considered a reasonable approach to the determination of the Application in the first instance.

Parks Officer – No comments received on the planning Application.

Highways Officer – No objection subject to condition and a temporary consent being issued in the first instance.

Porthcawl Town Council – It is acknowledged Porthcawl Town Council is the applicant in this case.

REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED

Following the advertisement of the Application nineteen letters of objection have been received against the Application including representations from the Porthcawl Bowling Club and three Local Ward Members.

The objections and concerns raised are summarised as follows:

Loss of Leisure/Sports Building

This is the only publicly accessible sports building in Porthcawl and has been used by the bowling club for almost a hundred years.

The Bowls Pavilion is used by the Porthcawl Veterans Hub and offers a vital service to many veterans and their families – there would be nowhere for the veterans to meet if the Town Council use the building (impinging BCBC policy and possibly infringe the military covenant).

This is the only sports building in Porthcawl used by the elderly which helps with mental health issues.

The building is used throughout the year by Porthcawl ladies bowls club. Bowls are played a number of times a week from the venue, various bowling clubs also visit to play in competitions. This pavilion needs to be kept open.

The use should be for leisure and social purposes not business.

The bowls Pavilion was built as a sports facility, the first floor used as a snooker facility and by visiting teams as a change facility for bowls.

It is wrong to utilise what is a community building for Town Council business.

Alternative suitable premises for the bowling clubs and veteran's hub must be found if the use is permitted.

Opposed to any form of 'public space' being used for council purposes.

Placing the Council Offices in this building will be negative for the community and against what the intended use of the land was for.

In the application it states that the first floor is a storeroom, this only came about when Porthcawl Town Council (PTC) employed a facilities manager, who forcefully deemed that it was now his office (he has since left, leaving the facility as a junk room) with the billiard table used as a large shelf. This area needs reinstating as a sports facility.

Porthcawl Town Council has already changed the Bowls Pavilion into a Community Centre, to be used as public venue for Childrens birthday parties and other community functions. This now brings problems of safeguarding.

The Welsh Bowling Association has advised that due to Safeguarding issues at other clubs, all member clubs should not allow children and vulnerable adults into the club houses without a safeguarding officer in attendance.

Porthcawl Town Council have not considered the impact on the recreation and health benefits of an open access bowls pavilion.

Porthcawl is officially designated as the oldest community in the country which should be foremost in considering service to the community.

Griffin Park was gifted to the people of Porthcawl for leisure purposes not the convenience

of the Local Authority.

The upstairs currently houses a full-size snooker table gifted to the town by the YMCA and was previously in regular use, this would need to find a new home. The table is over 100 years old and weighs two tons.

Parking/Highway Issues

There is no parking nearby and allowing cars into Griffin Park would put children and the elderly at risk.

No parking facilities/provision for users of the pavilion.

No parking facilities for either disabled or able body residents nearby with double yellow lines with two yellow lines on curb in the area.

Already limited restricted parking in the area for residents especially New Road.

No opportunity to use a blue badge if you have one.

Restricted parking in front of the commercial units nearby.

Pedestrian crossing at main gate entrance with no drop off point.

Visitors would park in front of the Griffin Park Toilet Block and by doing this would cause serious highway safety issues.

BCBC employees currently take up numerous parking spaces on New Road, those based at the depot behind Griffin Park Community Centre. Staff working in the Residential home and Supported Housing also park on New Road already making it difficult for residents to park.

Five takeaways and the night-time economy mean that there is constant parking on double yellow lines and zig zag lines even on the pedestrian crossings. There will be no parking for any evening meetings in the Pavilion.

Insufficient access

Without internal modification the site would be inaccessible to the disabled.

This building is not Disability Discrimination Act 1995, now Diversity and Inclusivity, compliant.

The pavilion is not DDA compliant, and has inadequate lighting, making access dangerous.

The Town Councils intention to book appointments for disabled people, goes against the diversity act, disabled people want to be treated the same as able bodied people, a level platform not differently which would highlight their disability. Porthcawl Town Council is being discriminatory.

Issues with compliance with The Equality Diversity and Inclusivity Act 2010 and the Equality Diversity and Inclusivity Strategy 2020 to 2024.

The suggestion that residents unable to access the first floor of the building would have to telephone for an appointment first is unacceptable.

If a disabled resident was to attend the ground floor for an appointment this would then displace people from the community building.

Town Council offices should be accessible to all.

Griffin Park is not central

The location is not central and this would deter residents from turning up at meetings as there is no parking and no public transport from either Rest Bay or Nottage. The current Council office at Mary Street, Porthcawl is central and on a public transport route and has ample parking at the rear.

The site is too far from the town centre, deterring residents from attending.

There are no passing busses to the site.

Risk of conflict between users

There is the risk of conflict between bowlers and anyone coming into the Council office as the amount of people using the pavilion will increase.

The pavilion is used during the Elvis event as a triage station, more recently been used as a warm hub for the elderly and homeless. During covid the pavilion was used as the covid 19 hub for the group to arrange collection of prescriptions for the elderly, also used by the veterans who arranged to collect and deliver shopping to elderly and residents who had tested positive for covid. It is also used by the CPR group, in the training of the use of resuscitation equipment. If the Change of use goes ahead this will have a detrimental impact on all the groups, residents and visitors using the Pavilion.

If it is granted, concerns that in the future the whole building will be taken over. Griffin Park should be used wholly for sport and leisure, not offices of any sort. Having spoken to the town clerk today, fears have been allayed to some extent, but promises have been broken in the past.

No cost savings

There would be negligible savings, as the current office is a serviced office which includes all utility bills.

If this was about saving money as per the clerks letter with the submission then committee and subcommittee meetings can be held virtually.

Porthcawl Town Council have already commissioned plans to alter the whole of the ground floor at a cost of £200,000plus, that the residents are unaware of. This will negate any potential savings that Porthcawl Town Council have said they will make.

East Central is classed as a deprived area and by allowing a change of use to the Pavilion would only increase the Deprivation Values of the Area. This is a well-used facility in the summer months by visitors and residents alike.

It is difficult to see the saving of £18,000 against the cost of conversion.

Consideration of alternative sites and future/alternative use

There are many serviced offices for rent in Porthcawl which would save the Council far more money than by using Griffin Park Pavilion.

Why can't the Council negotiate having a Council Chamber and offices in the Grand Pavilion, which is due for refurbishment.

A future Council may decide not to continue with using Griffin Park as a council office and the change of use would stay in situ.

Surely during the Summer Holidays especially it could be used as a venue for some free youth activities. There is nowhere for teenagers to go why not give them a safe space.

With further plans for downstairs, it is the beginning of the end for the Bowls club.

Lack of consultation.

No public consultation with residents or the Charities Commission who own the largest part of Griffin Park.

Have the Trustees of Griffin Park and the residents of Porthcawl been fully consulted.

Difficulties reading the site notice given its small size.

Other matters

Porthcawl Town Council Have Leased this building from BCBC for 5 years, they are now only 18 months into the lease. Within 6 months of signing the lease confidential meetings were being held to discuss changing the use of the building both at Ground Floor and First Floor, plans were drawn up. There was no discussion with the users of the Pavilion, just decisions made. There are elements of predetermination of the usage even before the lease was signed. So much for working with the community, consultation or collaborative working.

The first floor of the building is small and inadequate to meet the needs of the Town Council.

The building is situated in the middle of a play park where children run around. Where does this fit with child protection when strangers will be frequenting the building.

COMMENTS ON REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED

It is acknowledged that a number of objection letters have been received against the proposal and the material issues raised by the Application submission are fully addressed and considered in the Appraisal Section of this report.

Each of the material concerns raised require careful consideration in this case, although the following observations are provided in respect of each of the main issues raised (and expanded upon in the Appraisal Section of this report).

Loss of Leisure/Sports Building

The Application proposal seeks permission for the change of use only of the existing first floor element of the building, the remaining, larger ground floor element would be retained for its existing use.

The Application submission details the first floor of the building, whilst mainly occupied by a full size snooker table, is currently used for general storage purposes rather than specific leisure uses. Whilst the Application does detail that the Applicant intends to set up an appointment system for individuals that would not be able to access the first floor, this is unlikely to prejudice or significantly alter the existing, main use of the ground floor of the pavilion building' particularly given the relatively restricted hours of operation that the proposed use would be open to visiting members of the public and the restricted scale of the use.

Whilst a proposal to alter the main, ground floor use of the building away from a leisure use would unlikely be supported by the Local Planning Authority, a proposal for a small-scale office use of the nature detailed, primarily over the first floor of the building is generally supported in this case.

Nevertheless, and to fully consider the compatibility and appropriateness of the use within such an established leisure/sports building, a temporary consent is being recommended in this case. A temporary consent would fully allow the complete assessment of the scheme once in use and identify any issues that do arise to be carefully considered, particularly when considering the compatibility and appropriateness of the use within a recognised pavilion/leisure facility, albeit the proposal ultimately represents the conversion of only the existing first floor of the building.

Parking/Highway Issues

The planning Application does require careful consideration of the Highway safety matters the proposal raises, although when taking a balanced approach to the assessment of the merits of this scheme, and on the basis a temporary consent is first considered in this instance, the proposal does not raise such adverse highway safety concerns to warrant the refusal of the planning Application in this regard.

Following consultation with the Council's Highways Officer, it is noted that the planning Application lacks supporting information regarding highway and pedestrian safety, and the potential increase in people visiting the proposed facility. It is therefore unclear how many members of the public would attend the proposed use or where they would park.

It is noted the Town Council's mitigation does include a form of booking system for certain visitors to the site which may or may not work depending on the level of visitors to the site. However, as the Highway Authority have very little data to support a refusal of the Application, it has been suggested that an 18 months temporary consent be considered in the first instance. This is deemed an acceptable way forward which would allow the Highway Authority to gather data and evidence of the impact of the development and its effect on highway safety and traffic generation in and around the Application site.

On the basis of the above, on an initial temporary basis, the scheme is considered acceptable from a Highways perspective.

Insufficient access

Comments and concern regarding the accessibility of the first floor of the building to visiting members of the public and staff members are fully acknowledged in this instance and do require careful consideration. However, it is not considered uncommon for office uses to occupy first floor spaces with similar stair access. This is the existing situation within the building, rather than a completely new development, with the Applicant also detailing measures for an appointment system should any visiting members of the public be unable to access the first floor of the building. The use is relatively restricted in its opening times to the public (detailed between 09:30am and 12.00 on weekday mornings) and during those periods the building is unlikely to be heavily used by the sporting organisations or other bodies utilising the ground floor of the building. Whilst again acknowledging the need for development proposals to promote connections within and outside sites to ensure efficient and equality of access for all (Policy SP3 of the Bridgend Local Development Plan), subject to appropriate management where necessary by the Applicant this, on balance, is not considered a reason to refuse the planning Application in this case.

However, again recommending a temporary consent for the use would further illustrate or

highlight any issues with the accessibility of the site, should they arise, over the duration of the consent which could then be duly considered and reviewed towards the end of the initial temporary period.

Other legislation and guidance would also more appropriately address such concerns with the accessibility of the first floor of the building (such as the Equality Act 2010 and Building Regulations) - with the onus of responsibility and duty of care on the service provider/Applicant and, ultimately, they would need to provide a reasonable alternative method of making the service in question available to all members of the public should the building not be fully accessible to all.

Griffin Park is not central

It is fully acknowledged the Application site is not situated within the defined retail and commercial centre of Porthcawl with the existing Town Council Office being situated on Mary Street.

However, as detailed the Application site is situated within the settlement boundary and it is further noted the boundaries of the defined retail, commercial and service centre of Porthcawl Town Centre (Policy SP12 of the Bridgend Local Development Plan) does extend to the commercial buildings along Eastern Promenade to the immediate west of the site. Therefore, the Application site is not considered so remote or within such an unsustainable location to warrant the refusal of such a small-scale, change of use to office proposal (particularly on a temporary basis initially).

The Application site is not considered so remote to detrimentally impact users of the facility or warrant a refusal of the Application on such grounds.

Risk of conflict between users

The compatibility of a small office use on the first floor of the building with restricted hours of operation, is considered acceptable and appropriate for the building and unlikely to seriously erode or undermine the key leisure use of the building. The proposed use would also bring about the benefit of a more continued presence within the building from a Town Council perspective.

Again however, recommending a temporary consent to effectively trial the compatibility of the use with the key, primary leisure/sporting use of the building is considered necessary in this instance, to fully ensure there is no conflict between users and no detrimental impact on the primary use of the building in this case.

No cost savings

Whilst the financial situation of the Town Council and cost implications surrounding such a proposal do aid an understanding of the process and reasoning for such a submission, such issues are not material planning matters or justified refusal reasons for such a scheme.

The Planning Application must be judged on its own planning merits.

Consideration of alternative sites and future/alternative use

The Application currently being considered by the Local Planning Authority is for the change of use of the first floor from a storage area to Town Council office accommodation to accommodate 3 members of administration staff from Monday to Fridays within the existing Griffin Park Bowls Pavilion.

Any differing proposals or alternative uses would likely need planning permission and would be subject to a separate planning application, which would then need to be considered and judged on its own planning merits at that stage.

The Local Planning Authority and Members of the Development Control Committee must consider the current proposal on its own planning merits.

Lack of consultation

The Planning Application has been duly advertised in accordance with the requirements of the relevant legislation and guidance with direct neighbour letters and a site notice being issued in this case. The advertisement of the scheme has generated numerous objections and concerns from a number of differing residents of Porthcawl who are objecting to the planning Application.

The Application is not considered a 'major' development proposal in line with the legislation definition of such development and therefore the Application is not subject to the requirement for the developer/Applicant to undertake a pre-application consultation (PAC process).

As detailed, representations against the scheme have been received from the Bowling clubs and Porthcawl Veterans who currently use the building.

Other matters

The planning Application submitted must be considered on its own planning merits with due regard to the provisions of the adopted Bridgend Local Development Plan, 2024, and all material considerations associated with this case. On balance, when carefully considering the merits of this case and subject to a temporary period to further assess and consider the full implications and issues of this proposal over that period, it is considered the scheme can be recommended for approval.

POLICY CONTEXT

Local Policies

The Development Plan for the area comprises of the Bridgend Local Development Plan 2018 – 2033, which was formally adopted by the Council in March 2024 and within which the following policies and supplementary Planning Guidance are of relevance:

- Policy SF1 - Settlement Hierarchy and Urban Management
- Policy SP1 - Regeneration and Sustainable Growth Strategy
- Policy SP3 - Good Design and Sustainable Place Making
- Policy SP4 - Mitigating the Impact of Climate Change
- Policy SP5 - Sustainable Transport and Accessibility
- Policy PLA11 - Parking Standards
- Policy PLA12 - Active Travel
- Policy SP8 - Health and Well-being
- Policy SP9 - Social and Community Infrastructure
- POLICY SP12 – Retail, Commercial and Service Centres

- Policy COM9 - Protection of Social and Community Facilities
- Policy SP15 – Sustainable waste Management
- Policy ENT15 Waste movement in new development
- Policy SP17 - Conservation and Enhancement of the Natural Environment
- Policy DNP6 - Biodiversity, Ecological Networks, Habitats and Species
- Policy DNP8 - Green Infrastructure
- Policy DNP9 - Natural Resource Protection and Public Health

Supplementary Planning Guidance

- SPG02 – Householder Development
- SPG17 – Parking Standards
- SPG19 – Biodiversity and Development: A Green Infrastructure Approach

National Planning Policy and Guidance

National planning guidance in the form of Planning Policy Wales (Edition 12, Feb. 2024) (**PPW**) and Future Wales – the National Plan 2040 (Feb. 2021) are of relevance to the determination of this Application.

Paragraph 1.30 of PPW confirms that... *‘Development management is the positive and proactive approach to shaping, considering, determining and delivering development proposals through the process of deciding planning applications.’*

“All development decisions...should seek to contribute towards the making of sustainable places and improved well-being.” (Paragraph 2.2 of PPW refers) Para 2.3 states *“The planning system should create sustainable places which are attractive, sociable, accessible, active, secure, welcoming, healthy and friendly. Development proposals should create the conditions to bring people together, making them want to live, work and play in areas with a sense of place and well-being, creating prosperity for all.”*

At Para 2.7, it states “Placemaking in development decisions happens at all levels and involves considerations at a global scale, including climate change, down to the very local level, such as considering the amenity impact on neighbouring properties and people.”

PPW states at paragraphs 2.22 and 2.23 that the Planning system should *“ensure that a post-Covid world has people’s well-being at its heart and that Planners play a pivotal role...in shaping our society for the future, prioritising placemaking, decarbonisation and well-being.”*

Technical Advice Notes:

The Welsh Government has provided additional guidance in the form of Technical Advice Notes, the following are relevant to this proposal:

Planning Policy Wales TAN 5: Nature Conservation and Planning
 Planning Policy Wales TAN 12: Design
 Planning Policy Wales TAN 18: Transport

Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 imposes a duty on public bodies to carry out sustainable development in accordance with sustainable development principles to act in a manner which seeks to ensure that the needs of the present are met without comprising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Section 5).

The well-being goals identified in the Act are:

- A prosperous Wales
- A resilient Wales
- A healthier Wales
- A more equal Wales
- A Wales of cohesive communities
- A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language
- A globally responsible Wales

The duty has been considered in the assessment of this Application. It is considered that there would be no significant or unacceptable impacts upon the achievement of well-being goals/objectives as a result of the proposed development.

The Socio Economic Duty

The Socio Economic Duty (under Part 1, Section 1 of the Equality Act 2010), which came in to force on 31 March, 2021, has the overall aim of delivering better outcomes for those who experience socio-economic disadvantage and, whilst this is not a strategic decision, the duty has been considered in the assessment of this Application.

APPRAISAL

This application is referred to the Development Control Committee for determination due to the number of objections received following the advertisement of the application.

The Application seeks permission for the change of use of the first floor of the Porthcawl Bowls Pavilion to an office facility for use by Porthcawl Town Council.

The main issues to consider in this Application are the principle and compatibility of the development, the impact on neighbouring residential amenity, the impact on the character and appearance of the existing building and wider locality, and the highway safety implications of the scheme, including the accessibility of the building. Biodiversity matters are also a further consideration in this case.

Principle of the Development

The Application site is located within the main settlement of Porthcawl as defined by Policy SF1 Settlement Hierarchy and Urban Management of the Bridgend Local Development Plan (BLDP) adopted in March, 2024.

The site is also located in the Porthcawl Regeneration Growth Area as defined by Policy SP1 Regeneration and Sustainable Growth Strategy. The site is allocated as a Strategic Allocation to deliver 1,100 homes, including 30% affordable housing under Policy COM1 – SP2(1) Porthcawl Waterfront. The proposal relates to Griffin Park Bowls Pavilion which is an existing community facility and would not prejudice the future development of the Strategic Allocation.

Policy COM9: Protection of Social and Community Facilities of the BLDP states that proposals which would adversely affect or result in the loss of existing or proposed social

and community facilities will not be permitted unless justified on one of the following grounds:

- 1) A sustainable, easily accessible alternative location is available and a facility of equivalent community benefit is provided by the developer on the site or off site within the community; or
- 2) Where it can be demonstrated that the existing facility is no longer required for the current use, or any other social and community uses, or there is already an excess of such provision in the area.

The proposed development seeks the change of use of the first floor of the existing pavilion from a storage area to office accommodation for the Town Council. The proposed use would be limited in nature comprising of three desks to accommodate three members of administrative staff. The main leisure use of the pavilion relates to the ground floor which is currently utilised as a changing facility, club room, kitchen and gallery which would remain largely unaffected. As such, the proposal to accommodate an office on the first floor of the nature described, is unlikely to negatively impact the running of the existing social/community facility.

Nevertheless, and to fully ensure the compatibility of the use with the existing leisure use, and ensure the principal, important leisure/sporting use is not undermined or adversely impacted in any way in this case, a temporary consent is initially being recommended in this instance. Such a temporary use, controlled by means of a planning condition, would fully allow the compatibility of the uses to be fully assessed over a duration of 18 months and ensure the primary use of the building remains unaffected by the new office use.

On the basis a temporary consent is issued in this instance, to fully safeguard the long-term leisure/sporting use of the building, and ensure a full assessment of the compatibility of the office use with the existing established leisure/sporting use is carefully understood and demonstrated over a test period in effect, the planning Application does not raise an in principle objection.

As detailed, representations and concerns have been raised about the general location and accessibility of the site although the building is not considered so remote or unsustainable in location terms to warrant the refusal of such an Application. Whilst the Application site is not situated within the defined retail and commercial/service centre of Porthcawl, the site is situated within the settlement boundary and effectively directly opposite the boundaries of the defined retail and commercial/service centre of Porthcawl Town Centre that extends to include the commercial units to the immediate west of the Application site, along Eastern Promenade. As such, the Application site is not considered so isolated or unsustainable to warrant the refusal of such a small-scale office proposal of the nature detailed.

Neighbouring Residential Amenity Impact

Planning Policy Wales (Edition 12, February 2024) states at paragraph 2.7 that *“placemaking in development decisions happens at all levels and involves considerations at a global scale, including climate change, down to the very local level, such as considering the amenity impact on neighbouring properties and people”*.

Criterion (k) of Policy SP3 of the Local Development Plan (2024), seeks to ensure that ensure that the viability and amenity of neighbouring uses and their users/occupiers will not be adversely affected by new development proposals.

The Application building is relatively offset and screened from the nearest residential properties, given the detached nature of the pavilion building and surrounding park and bowling greens that buffer the site from the nearest neighbouring units. With no external alteration works being proposed and given the offset from the nearest neighbouring units, coupled with the relatively small scale and nature of the office use, the scheme raises no serious loss of neighbouring amenity issues in this case.

As such, the scheme accords with the general requirements of Policy SP3 of the Bridgend Local Development Plan (2024) in terms of neighbouring amenity impact.

Impact on the character and appearance of the existing building and wider locality

Policy SP3 of the adopted Bridgend Local Development Plan (LDP), highlights all development should contribute to creating high quality, attractive, sustainable places by, amongst others:

- Demonstrating alignment with the principles of Good Design
- Have a design of the highest quality possible, whilst respecting and enhancing local distinctiveness and landscape character;
- Be appropriate to its local context in terms of size, scale, height, massing, elevational treatment, materials and detailing, layout, form, mix and density;

The Application site comprises a two-storey, detached, pavilion style building set within the grounds of Griffin Park, Porthcawl. It is considered that the conversion of part of the existing building, with no external works being detailed or proposed as part of the scheme, would not harmfully or significantly erode the character or appearance of the existing building or the area as a whole.

The essential leisure/sporting use of the building would effectively remain across the ground floor of the pavilion building with the office use being proposed within the existing storage area at first floor level/roof space of the building.

The visual appearance of the building will not change as a result of the proposal and, as such, the scheme accords with the general requirements of Policy SP3 of the Bridgend Local Development Plan (2024) in terms of visual amenity impact.

Highway Safety and accessibility of the site

As earlier detailed, the Application has generated a number of objections from local residents in respect of highway safety and the Council's Highway Officer has been consulted on and has considered the planning Application submission.

Whilst the planning Application does require careful consideration of the Highway safety matters the proposal raises, when taking a balanced approach to the assessment of the merits of this scheme, and on the basis a temporary consent is first considered in this instance, the proposal does not raise such adverse highway safety concerns to warrant the refusal of the planning Application in this regard.

The Council's Highways Officer advises that the planning Application lacks supporting information regarding highway and pedestrian safety and in terms of the potential increase in people visiting the proposed facility. It is therefore unclear how many members of the public would attend the proposed use or where they would park.

It is noted the Town Council's mitigation does include a form of booking system for certain visitors to the site which may or may not work depending on the level of visitors to the site.

However, as the Highway Authority have very little data to support a refusal of the Application, it has been suggested that an 18 month temporary consent be considered in the first instance. This is deemed an acceptable way forward which would allow the Highway Authority to gather data and evidence of the impact of the development and its effect on highway safety and traffic generation in and around the Application site.

Notwithstanding the above, the Highway Authority is aware of instances of vehicles trying to access Griffin Park via the vehicular access gates from New Road, which raises considerable highway and pedestrian safety concerns especially so close to the children's play park. It is considered this proposal would increase potential instances of people visiting the site and trying to park within Griffin Park. Therefore, to resolve this concern a condition is suggested for a removable/collapsible bollard which shall be locked during the Town Council office hours, to be located within the vehicular access gate off New Road. This would be required to be agreed and installed before the building commences use as the Town Council offices.

On the basis of the above, on an initial temporary basis and subject to the above condition, the scheme is considered acceptable from a Highway Safety perspective.

Comments and concerns, as earlier highlighted, have also been raised regarding the accessibility of the building to visiting members of the public and staff members, which are fully acknowledged in this instance and do require careful consideration. However, this is the existing situation within the building, rather than a completely new development, with the Applicant also detailing measures of an appointment system should any visiting members of the public be unable to access the first floor of the building.

The proposed use is relatively restricted in its opening times to the public (detailed between 09:30 and 12.00 in the morning), and during those periods the building is unlikely to be heavily used by the sporting organisations or other bodies utilising the ground floor of the building. Whilst acknowledging the need for development proposals to promote accessibility to all, on balance, the Application is generally considered acceptable in this respect.

However, recommending a temporary consent for the use would further highlight any issues with the accessibility of the site, should they arise, over the duration of the consent which could then be duly considered and reviewed towards the end of the initial temporary period. Other legislation and guidance would also more appropriately address such concerns with the accessibility of the building - with the onus of responsibility and duty of care being on the service provider/Applicant and, ultimately, they would need to provide a reasonable alternative method of making the service in question available to all members of the public should the building not be fully accessible to all.

Biodiversity and other matters

In assessing a planning application, the Local Planning Authority must seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity in the exercise of functions in relation to Wales, and in so doing promote the resilience of ecosystems, so far as consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, under the Environment (Wales) Act 2016.

Planning Policy Wales 12 (PPW12) states in Section 6.4.4: *“It is important that biodiversity and resilience considerations are taken into account at an early stage in both development plan preparation and when proposing or considering development proposals.”* It further goes on to state that *“All reasonable steps must be taken to maintain and enhance biodiversity and promote the resilience of ecosystems and these should be balanced with the wider economic and social needs of business and local communities. Where adverse effects on the environment cannot be avoided or mitigated, it will be necessary to refuse planning permission.”*

Technical Advice Note 5: Nature Conservation and Planning states that: *“Biodiversity, conservation and enhancement is an integral part of planning for sustainable development. The planning system has an important part to play in nature conservation. The use and development of land can pose threats to the conservation of natural features and wildlife.”*

Policy SP3 of the adopted Local Development Plan (2024) requires development to Safeguard and enhance biodiversity and integrated multi-functional green infrastructure networks.

Policy DNP6 states *“All development proposals must provide a net benefit for biodiversity and improved ecosystem resilience, as demonstrated through planning application submissions. Features and elements of biodiversity or green infrastructure value should be retained on site, and enhanced or created where ever possible, by adopting best practice site design and green infrastructure principles. Development proposals must maintain, protect and enhance biodiversity and ecological networks / services. Particular importance must be given to maintaining and enhancing the connectivity of ecological networks which enable the dispersal and functioning of protected and priority species”*

Policy DNP7 states *“development that would adversely affect trees woodlands and hedgerows of public amenity or natural/cultural heritage value or provide important ecosystem will not be permitted”*. Policy DNP8 requires new development proposals to integrate, protect and maintain existing green infrastructure assets and to enhance the extent, quality, connectivity and multi functionality of the green infrastructure network.

Whilst acknowledging this is a small scale, change of use Application to part of the existing building, to fully ensure the development meets the requirements of local and national planning policy that *states all development should maintain and enhance biodiversity*, a condition is recommended to ensure an appropriate bird box is introduced at the site in this case.

On balance the proposed development is considered to be compliant with Policy SP3 DNP6, DNP7 and DNP8 of the Local Development Plan (2024) and is therefore acceptable in terms of Biodiversity.

An application for the conversion of part of an existing, established building also raises no adverse land drainage concerns.

CONCLUSION

This Application requires careful consideration of each of the material planning matters raised by the case, and on balance it is concluded the scheme, on a temporary basis, can be recommended for approval and is considered acceptable in planning terms.

The development, initially on a temporary basis and subject to the imposition of conditions, on balance, complies with Council policy and guidelines and is considered acceptable in principle, does not adversely affect the character of the area, prejudice highway safety,

privacy or visual amenities nor so significantly harm neighbours' amenities, as to warrant refusal on those grounds. The scheme also raises no adverse biodiversity or land drainage concerns.

The concerns raised by a number of residents of Porthcawl are fully acknowledged in this case, however, on balance, this is considered a scheme that can be supported on an initial temporary basis, to fully enable the compatibility of the office use with the existing established leisure/community use to be demonstrated. On a temporary basis the planning Application is therefore recommended for approval.

RECOMMENDATION

(R11) That permission be GRANTED, on a temporary basis, subject to the following conditions:-

1. The office use hereby permitted shall be ceased and the first floor of the building restored to its former condition and use on or before 18 months of the date the office use is first implemented.

Reason: To enable the Local Planning Authority to assess the impact of the general compatibility and appropriateness of the use, and to assess the impact on highway safety and the accessibility of the site, and to enable the matter to be reviewed at the end of the period of the temporary consent.

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

Site Location Plan - Received 11/01/2024

Proposed Office Plan (Layout) - Received 11/01/2024

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

3. The use hereby permitted shall be used for office purposes as specified in the application details (use by Porthcawl Town Council only) and for no other purpose including any other purpose in Class B1 of the Schedule to the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987, or in any provision equivalent to that Class in any statutory instrument revoking and re-enacting that Order.

Reason: To ensure that the Local Planning Authority retains effective control over the use of the site in the interests of general amenity.

4. The use hereby permitted shall only be open during the following times:-

Monday to Friday 08:30 - 17:00hrs

Not at all on Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holidays

Reason: In the interests of general amenity and safeguarding the primary, leisure/sporting use of the building.

5. The use hereby permitted shall not commence until a single lockable bollard is installed within the vehicular access gate off New Road in accordance with a scheme that has first been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The bollard shall be retained in accordance with the agreed scheme for the duration of the use.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety.

6. Within 1 month of commencement of the beneficial use of the development hereby permitted, an artificial nesting site for birds shall be erected at the site to one of the following specifications and retained thereafter (for the duration of the use);

Nest Box Specifications for House Sparrow Terrace:

- Wooden (or woodcrete) nest box with 3 sub-divisions to support 3 nesting pairs to be placed under the eaves of buildings.
- Entrance holes: 32mm diameter
- Dimensions: H310 x W370 x D185mm

or

Swift Nest Box Specification:

- Wide box with small slit shaped entrance hole -must be placed under or close to roofs.
- Dimensions: H150 x W340 x D150mm

Reason: In the interests of biodiversity and to provide a net benefit to biodiversity in accordance with Policy 9 of Future Wales, Planning Policy Wales (Edition 12, February 2024) and Policies SP17, DNP6 and DNP9 of the Bridgend Local Development Plan 2018 - 2033.

* THE FOLLOWING IS AN ADVISORY NOTE NOT A CONDITION

This application is recommended for approval because the development, initially on a temporary basis and subject to the imposition of conditions, on balance, complies with Council policy and guidelines and is considered acceptable in principle and does not adversely affect the character of the area, prejudice highway safety, privacy or visual amenities, nor so significantly harm neighbours' amenities, as to warrant refusal on those grounds. The scheme also raises no adverse biodiversity or land drainage concerns.

JANINE NIGHTINGALE
CORPORATE DIRECTOR COMMUNITIES

Background Papers

None