

DELEGATED REPORT

Application No:	P/24/0241
Site Address:	Bethel Chapel John Street Treharris CF46 5PS
Development:	Retention of conversion of former chapel to provide residential flats
Case Officer:	Kate Glover
Site Visit:	31st October 2024
Application Expiry Date:	5th February 2025
Consultation reply date expired:	21st November 2024

APPLICATION SITE

This application relates to the former Bethel Chapel located within the Treharris Conservation Area. Following the grant of planning permission (P/16/0340) works to convert the building to residential accommodation have progressed and the works are nearing completion.

The former chapel is of a modest design with rendered elevations and a slate pitched roof and the building originally incorporated timber framed windows, and the frontage included large timber doors. The frontage retains a number of stone plaques which are located on either side of the main entrance and dwarf wall constructed with large, dressed stones topped with metal railings and a metal gate. To the rear (west) of the building is a parking area, which is accessed via John Street to the south, and where the building sits close to the boundary with John Street is a pennant stone wall.

The site is within the settlement boundary, as defined in the Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council Replacement Local Development Plan 2016-2031, within Treharris Conservation Area and the former Bethel Chapel is a Locally Listed Building. The building has a prominent frontage onto Perrot Street and has a group value with other imposing buildings, such as Tabernacle Chapel (a grade II Listed Building) opposite, as well as a number of smaller commercial properties. To the north and east of the site are adjoining residential properties.

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

Full planning permission is sought for the conversion of the chapel to accommodate 5 residential units comprising 3 No. two bedroom flats and 2 No. three bedroom flats. This would require various internal alterations including the installation of a new first floor and

second floor level, which would enable one of the flats to be provided within the roof space.

The full planning history of the site is provided below. Of note is the previously referenced permission (P/16/0340) which consented the conversion of the building to provide 6 residential units and under which development has commenced, although with a number of conditions to be discharged.

The exterior of the building has been renovated and repaired, and the external elevations are rendered and finished in a white colour, the slate roof has been raised and new wooden windows and door installed. A ground floor window that appears to have been installed as part of permission P/16/0340 has been removed and new door has been inserted in its place. Conservation style roof lights have been utilised to provide natural light at the second-floor level. The roller shutter door on the eastern elevation has been removed and a panel door with glazed area around the door frame has been provided for the main entrance, which also serves the ground floor flat located at the front of the building. Additionally, the rear vestry annexe has been demolished to create a new car parking area with 5 parking spaces which are provided for the proposed 5 flats. Following the removal of the vestry, the rear (western) elevation has been made good with the external elevation being rendered to match the rest of the building, a new entrance door has been installed to provide access to the rear ground floor flat and also a new window has been installed to serve one of the flats bedrooms. In addition to these changes to the rear elevation, a new pitched roof porch finished with render to match the elevations and a slate roof, has been erected to provide access to the first and second floor flats. The side (northern) elevation's fenestration has been the subject of change through the blocking up of a number of the windows and the remaining windows glazed with obscure glass.

Conservation style solar panels have been installed on the south elevation. There are 52 panels in total with each measuring 1.2m by 1.0m and the panels are no more than 40mm thick. The solar panels have been installed using the GSE in-roof system and are positioned between the velux roof lights.

Two air source heat pumps have been installed in the rear car parking area, The air source heat pumps are located to the rear of the building either side of the rear access door and measure 1.3m wide, 1.7m high and 0.6m deep.

The proposed car parking area has a block paviour surface and air-source heat pumps have been installed.

The building has been identified as a bat roost for pipistrelle bats, the previous works have taken place under licence, details of which have been submitted in support of the application. Bat mitigation and enhancement and have been incorporated into the building and include use of bitumen felt throughout the roof with bat access which has been created on all elevations of the building beneath the walls and fascia/soffit. In addition to this further biodiversity enhancement comprising of two sparrow nest boxes will be installed on the rear elevation.

PLANNING HISTORY

P/24/0040 Proposed Solar Panels on south facing roofline and air source heat pump
GRANTED on 15.05.2024

- P/16/0340 Conversion of former chapel to six residential units, demolition of rear vestry and creation of car parking area
GRANTED on 17.02.2017
- P/07/0273 Retention of extraction flue located within roof of building.
GRANTED on 05.07.2007
- P/06/0375 Conversion of part of ground floor to parking/garage and conversion of first floor to flat.
GRANTED on 09.09.2006
- P/06/0044 Change of use to a children's day nursery.
GRANTED on 21.03.2006
- P/01/0184 Change of use from Chapel to cabinet maker's workshop and store.
GRANTED on 29.06.2001
- P/00/0003 Demolition of vestry to form amenity space/car parking area and conversion of premises to residential use
GRANTED on 10.05.2000
- P/99/0394 Re-development for residential purposes.
REFUSED permission on 10.05.2000

CONSULTATION

Planning Policy Officer:	No objection
Head of Engineering and Highways:	No objection
Planning Ecology Officer:	No objection
Dwr Cymru/Welsh Water:	No objection
Environmental Health Manager:	No objection
Bedlinog and Trelewis Community Council:	No objection
Natural Resources Wales:	No objection
South Wales Fire and Rescue Service:	No objection

PUBLICITY

In accordance with the Town & Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Wales) Order 2012, letters were sent to neighbouring properties and 3 site notices were displayed within the vicinity of the site.

No representations were received as a result of this publicity exercise.

POLICY CONTEXT

National Development Framework

Future Wales: the National Plan 2040 (February 2021) (Future Wales) sets out a strategy for addressing key national priorities through the planning system, including sustaining and developing a vibrant economy, achieving decarbonisation and climate-resilience, developing strong ecosystems and improving the health and well-being of our communities.

National Planning Policies

Planning Policy Wales (Edition 12, February 2024) (PPW12).
Technical Advice Note 24: The Historic Environment (May 2017)

Local Planning Policies

The following policies of the Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council Replacement Local Development Plan 2016-2031 (LDP) are relevant to the determination of this application:

- SW4 Settlement Boundaries
- SW3 Sustainably Distributing New Homes
- SW9 Planning Obligations
- SW11 Sustainable Design and Placemaking
- Policy EcW3: Retail Hierarchy - Supporting Retailing Provision
- Policy EcW5: Town and Local Centre Development
- EnW1 Nature Conservation and Ecosystem Resilience
- EnW2 Internationally and Nationally Protected Sites and Species
- EnW3 Regionally Important Geological Sites, Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation, Local Nature Reserves and Priority Habitats and Species
- CW1: The Historic Environment

In addition, the application will be determined having regard to the advice contained within the following Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) Notes:

- Note 1, Affordable Housing
- Note 2, Planning Obligations
- Note 4, Sustainable Design
- Note 5, Nature and Development

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Principal of Development

The application site is located within the settlement limits and the Secondary Growth Area as defined by the LDP, where the majority of new development is supported in principle by policy SW4. It is acknowledged that planning permission has been granted previously (P/16/0340) for the conversion of the building to provide 6 flats. As such, the continued use of the building for residential purposes is acceptable in principle.

Character, Design and Heritage

Works to improve the appearance of the building have been carried out to the exterior of the building, with the elevations being repaired and repainted and the roof being repaired. Due to the poor condition of the original windows and doors, these have been replaced with wooden framed casement windows and wooden doors, all of which have been painted white. It is considered that the external alterations do not detract from the general appearance of the building and its contribution to the character and quality of the Treharris Conservation Area.

The solar panels are required to reduce energy use of the converted building. Although the solar panels would project above the roof slope by approximately 0.04 metres, the projection is minimal and would be almost unnoticeable when viewed from the streetscene by passersby. Indeed, the solar panels do not cause any significant harm to the appearance of the building.

The air source heat pumps are located to the rear of the building and are discreetly located, and their impact is reduced as they are seen in the context of the rear parking area, fenestration and porch.

As such, the converted building and the external materials used, including the solar panels and air source heat pumps do not significantly harm the appearance of the property or adversely affect the character of the street scene or wider conservation area. The development would therefore comply with LDP Policies CW1 and SW11.

Residential Amenities

The properties that would have the greatest potential for impact caused by the development are those situated to the north of the site. The building runs alongside the rear garden boundaries and incorporates a number of windows in the northern elevation. The use of the building for residential purposes has the potential to increase the degree of overlooking into those garden areas. To address this concern, the plans indicate that the windows on the northern elevation would be installed with obscured glazing. As such this approach will adequately overcome the potential loss of privacy to neighbouring occupiers.

Five rooflights have been inserted into the north side of the building's roof and will provide light into the rooms of the second floor flat. It is noted that the rooflights are positioned approximately 1.8m above floor level and due to their height above floor level, the occupants of nearby properties would not be subject to significant levels of overlooking or loss of privacy.

The proposed conversion of the former chapel would not result in adverse impacts on the amenities of those neighbouring occupiers. In this regard it is noted that no objections were received as a result of the publicity exercise. Therefore, the proposal complies with LDP Policy SW11.

Highway Safety and Parking

The building is served by a car park created as part of works associated with the previous permission (P/16/0340). This application seeks to retain the carpark which provides 5 spaces so that a parking space is provided for each of the flats and thus ensure that the conversion has a minimal impact on the adjoining highways.

The Head of Engineering and Highways (HEH) is generally satisfied with the parking provision that is proposed and requests that the proposal incorporates a cycle stand within the site. However, it is noted that the proposed flats contain sufficient space to house bicycles and an external cycle stand would not be necessary in this instance.

Accordingly, the proposal meets with the requirements of LDP Policy SW11.

Ecology

During the processing of the previous permission (P/16/0340) the building was identified as a day roost for common pipistrelles. As noted above, the works to convert the building have already taken place and the works were carried out under a European Protected Species (EPS) Licence issued by Natural Resources Wales (NRW). Submitted in support to this current application are NRW approved documents which comprise of the EPS Licence and Method Statement, and Report of Action Taken Under License.

NRW have not objected to the proposal and no objections have been received from the Planning Ecologist.

As noted in chapter 6 of Planning Policy Wales (edition 12), applications should be supported by Green Infrastructure Statements (GIS). Matters of impact on an EPS, necessary mitigation and enhancements required for the species have been addressed via NRW. It is noted that the site comprises of a building and hardstanding, there is no other ecology or supporting habitat on the development site. As such, a GIS would not be deemed a reasonable requirement in this instance. Notwithstanding this, ecological enhancement in the form of sparrow boxes have been proposed and can be controlled by condition, thus providing additional habitats in the local area, and therefore further contribute to the wider green infrastructure objectives.

As such, the proposal meets with the requirements of LDP Policy EnW1.

Planning Obligations

The requirement for an affordable housing contribution or any other appropriate planning obligations has been assessed by the Planning Policy Officer using the Three Dragons Toolkit. In this instance no such planning obligations have been sought as this would likely render the development financially unviable. Therefore, the proposal complies with LDP Policy SW9.

CONCLUSION

The duty to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, under section 3 of the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 ("the WBFG Act") has been taken into consideration when determining this application. In reaching the following recommendation, the ways of working set out at section 5 of the WBFG Act have been considered and thus the proposal is in accordance with the sustainable development principle through its contribution towards one or more of the Welsh Ministers well-being objectives set out as required by section 8 of the WBFG Act.

It is considered that the proposed development is acceptable in this location and would not adversely impact upon the character or appearance of the conservation area, residential amenity, highway safety or ecology. Having regard to the policy context above, the proposal is acceptable and the following recommendation is made:

RECOMMENDATION: BE APPROVED subject to the following **CONDITIONS:**

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

Drawing Title: Cross Section IR Slate Universal Kit, Received on 23 January 2025.

Drawing Title: Proposed Elevations, Drawing No: 24-112 P06 Rev A, Received on 23 January 2025.

Drawing Title: Proposed Site, Drawing No: 24-112 P07 Rev B, Received on 11 December 2024.

Drawing Title: Proposed Plans, Drawing No: 24-112 P05, Received on 17 October 2024.

Reason -To ensure compliance with the approved plans and clearly define the scope of the permission.

2. The windows on the northern elevation of the building shall all be permanently fitted with obscured glazing.

Reason - In the interest of residential amenity and to accord with Policy SW11 of the Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council Replacement Local Development Plan.

3. **Prior to the occupation of the flats hereby approved** two sparrow nest boxes shall be provided in accordance with approved plan Proposed Elevations, Drawing No: 24-112 P06 Rev A. The sparrow nest boxes shall be maintained as such in perpetuity.

Reason - In the interest of biodiversity in accordance with the requirements of Planning Policy Wales 12, The Environment Wales Act and Policy EnW4 of the Merthyr Tydfil Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council Replacement Local Development Plan.

INFORMATIVES

1. The developer's attention is drawn to the advice of Dwr Cymru/Welsh Water received on the 6 November 2024, which is available for inspection on the Council website.
2. Warning: The building has been identified as a roost for a European protected species (EPS). This planning permission does not provide consent to undertake any future internal or external works that require an EPS licence.

It is an offence to deliberately capture, kill or disturb EPS or to recklessly damage or destroy their breeding sites or resting places. If found guilty of any offences, you could be sent to prison for up to 6 months and/or receive an unlimited fine. To undertake any works within the law, you can obtain further information on the need for a licence from Natural Resources Wales on 0300 065 3000 or at <https://naturalresources.wales/conservation-biodiversity-and-wildlife/european-protected-species/?lang=en>

RECOMMENDATION ENDORSED

DATE: 03.02.2025



Director of Neighbourhood Services