

Consultation Details

Consultee: Peter Thomas
Case Officer: Gareth Davies
Application No: P/26/0108
Application Type: Planning Permission
Site Address: Brynhyfryd Chapel Thomas Street Treharris CF46 5AA
Description of Works: Change of use of land to form off-street carpark, private amenity space and cycle storage for Brynhyfryd Chapel and dedicated off street parking for No.3 Perrott Place, and retention of vacant parcel of land to the south as ancillary parking.

Heritage Considerations

☐	Listed Buildings	☐	Scheduled Monuments
☒	Conservation Areas	☐	Historic Parks and Gardens
☐	Historic Landscapes	☐	Other

Recommendation(s)

☒	No objection	☐	Notes for applicant
☐	Object (Holding objection)	☐	Request for further information
☐	Object and recommend refusal	☒	Recommend conditions

Relevant Legislation and Policy Context

This consultation response has been prepared in the context of the duties placed upon the local planning authority by the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 ("TCPA 1990) and the Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2023 ("HEWA 2023).

Section 314A(1) of the TCPA 1990

"In considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the Welsh Ministers or a local planning authority in Wales must have special regard to the desirability of preserving—

- (a) the listed building,
- (b) the setting of the building, or
- (c) any features of special architectural or historic interest the building possesses."

Section 160(1) of the HEWA 2023

"In exercising a planning function in relation to a building or other land in a conservation area, a person must have special regard to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area."

Note - this is the starting point for assessment of all applications relating to listed buildings and conservation areas

The above raises two primary questions:

1. Would the development affect the historic asset or its setting (and, if so, in what way and to what extent)? and,
2. Would the identified effect preserve (or enhance) the historic asset, in the context of the statutory duty to have special regard to the desirability of preserving it?

The Barnwell Manor Wind Energy Ltd Court of Appeal judgment in 2014 contains important findings which have direct implications for casework where a listed building or its setting is affected or where it involves a building or other land in a conservation area. It held that despite the slight difference in wording, the nature of the duty in relation to listed buildings and conservation areas is the same and that a decision-maker, having found harm to a heritage asset, must give that harm “considerable importance and weight”.

Your report should expressly acknowledge the need, if harm has been found, to give considerable weight to the presumption that preservation is desirable and demonstrate that this has been done. Otherwise, it would not reflect the duty under s314A TCPA 1990 or s161 HEWA 2023. How that balance will be performed will depend on the factors in the case, but it will always be important to recognise the special status which s314A TCPA 1990 or s161 HEWA 2023 confers upon the relevant relationship with heritage assets and conservation areas.

National Policy

National policy is provided in Planning Policy Wales (PPW) Edition 12, which sets out a presumption in favour of the conservation of the historic environment (Chapter 6). This is supplemented by Technical Advice Note 24: The Historic Environment (TAN 24), which requires that any harm to a listed building must be convincingly justified and that alterations must be the minimum necessary and avoid adverse impact on special interest (paras 5.11–5.15).

Relevant guidance from Cadw, including Conservation Principles and Managing Change to Listed Buildings, has been used to inform this assessment where appropriate.

Site and Context

The application relates to Brynhyfryd Chapel, Treharris and associated parcels of land within the Treharris Conservation Area. The chapel occupies a prominent position on the eastern side of Thomas Street and forms part of the planned late nineteenth-century townscape that characterises the Conservation Area. The site comprises the former chapel building, a strip of land to the east of the chapel and a separate parcel of land located immediately south of the garage/workshop building fronting Thomas Street.

Brynhyfryd Chapel is identified within the Treharris Conservation Area Appraisal as a building of historic interest contributing to the significance of the area. The appraisal identifies Brynhyfryd Chapel as part of the "cluster of historic buildings of interest" which underpin the Conservation Area's special architectural and historic interest.

Constructed in 1880–1881, the chapel displays a robust classical form executed in the local vernacular palette of rock-faced sandstone. Although not statutorily listed, it is recognised as a

locally important historic asset. The surrounding area comprises tightly arranged late nineteenth-century terraced housing constructed in local sandstone, reflecting the planned character of Treharris as a model industrial settlement.

The chapel occupies a visually prominent position and contributes positively to the streetscape through its scale, materiality and institutional character. The site is therefore considered to make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

Summary of Proposal

Planning permission is sought for:

- the change of use of land to provide off-street parking serving the approved residential conversion of Brynhyfryd Chapel;
- provision of private amenity space and cycle storage associated with the six approved flats;
- dedicated off-street parking for No. 3 Perrott Place; and
- retention of the vacant parcel of land to the south as ancillary parking.

The proposal does not involve demolition of historic fabric, alterations to the principal chapel building or the erection of new buildings. The development comprises hard and soft landscaping works associated with residential use.

Planning permission has previously been granted for conversion of the chapel to six flats under reference P/25/0204 and those works have commenced.

Character Analysis

Layout and Grain

The Conservation Area Appraisal identifies Treharris as a planned industrial settlement distinguished by its rigid street grid and deliberate town planning. The settlement pattern comprises narrow streets, tightly arranged terraces and prominent civic and religious buildings positioned as landmarks. Brynhyfryd Chapel forms part of this hierarchy of building types, introducing variety and civic presence within an otherwise domestic grain.

The proposed parking areas utilise existing open areas around the chapel and an established separate parcel of land. The proposals do not alter the historic street pattern or subdivision of the settlement.

Scale and Massing

The chapel remains the dominant built form on the site owing to its substantial footprint, height and institutional scale. The proposed works comprise surface treatments only and introduce no additional built mass. The visual prominence and legibility of the chapel will therefore be retained.

Materials and Architectural Detailing

The appraisal identifies the near-universal use of local rock-faced "snecked" sandstone with painted brick dressings as a defining characteristic of Treharris.

As no alterations are proposed to the chapel itself, its architectural detailing and material character remain unaffected.

The submitted block plan indicates conventional surfaced parking areas and landscape treatment. However, detailed specifications for surfacing materials and boundary treatments have not been provided.

Views, Landmarks and Setting

The Conservation Area derives significance from views of prominent civic and religious buildings within the planned townscape.

Brynhyfryd Chapel contributes to local identity and acts as a landmark along Thomas Street. The proposals preserve views of the principal elevation and do not obstruct established spatial relationships between the chapel and surrounding development. The retention of open areas around the chapel continues to allow appreciation of its form and setting.

Assessment of Impact

Character and Appearance of the Conservation Area

The proposal would result in a change in the appearance and use of land associated with the chapel through the provision of parking, amenity space and ancillary facilities linked to the approved residential conversion. Whilst the introduction of domestic features and parked vehicles represents a departure from the site's former institutional use, these interventions are directly associated with securing the continued occupation and viable reuse of this locally important heritage asset.

Importantly:

- the proposal would remove the existing garage/workshop building, which is of no particular architectural or historic interest and does not make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area;
- no demolition of buildings that positively contribute to the significance of the Conservation Area is proposed;
- the chapel would remain the visually dominant element within the site; and
- the planned urban form and established townscape pattern of Treharris would remain intact.

Whilst the introduction of parked vehicles inevitably has some urbanising effect, parking already forms part of the wider streetscape of Thomas Street and the proposal consolidates parking within defined areas rather than dispersing it throughout the Conservation Area. Furthermore,

the removal of the utilitarian garage/workshop building would open up views around the chapel and reduce the presence of a structure that currently detracts from the setting of this locally important building.

The impact on character and appearance is considered to be neutral to slightly positive, particularly insofar as it supports the continued occupation and maintenance of the chapel.

Key Views and Spatial Relationships

Key views towards the chapel from Thomas Street would be preserved. The proposals retain the existing forecourt relationship between the chapel and the highway and do not encroach upon the principal frontage.

The separate southern parcel already reads as ancillary open land rather than an integral component of the chapel's architectural setting. Its continued use for parking would not materially alter wider townscape relationships.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The proposed works have been assessed in relation to their impact on the special architectural or historic interest of the listed building. In accordance with Technical Advice Note 24 and Planning Policy Wales, there is a presumption in favour of preserving listed buildings and their features of special interest.

Brynhyfryd Chapel is a positive contributor to the significance of the Treharris Conservation Area and forms part of the planned ensemble of civic and religious buildings identified within the Conservation Area Appraisal.

The proposed parking, amenity and cycle storage arrangements are ancillary to the approved residential conversion and would enable the long-term occupation and maintenance of the building. Although the introduction of parking has some visual implications, these are limited in extent and do not undermine the qualities that contribute to the area's significance.

No historic fabric would be affected and the spatial qualities of the Conservation Area would be preserved.

The proposal preserves the character and appearance of the Treharris Conservation Area and raises no heritage objection.

Conditions

External Surfacing Materials

Prior to commencement of the parking and amenity works, details and samples of all hard surfacing materials shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved details shall thereafter be implemented in full.

Boundary Treatments

Details of all new walls, railings, fences and means of enclosure shall be submitted to and approved in writing prior to installation.

Landscaping Scheme

A detailed landscaping scheme, including planting specifications, implementation programme and replacement provisions, shall be submitted to and approved in writing.

Cycle Storage

Full details of the design, materials and siting of the proposed cycle storage shall be submitted to and approved in writing prior to installation.

Parking Layout

The parking areas shall be laid out in accordance with the approved plans and retained thereafter solely for the approved purposes.