

A HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

in support of a

LISTED BUILDING APPLICATION

for

THE REFURBISHMENT, ALTERATION & EXTENSION

of

THE YMCA, MERTHYR TYDFIL

on behalf of:

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council

August 2020

Issue Date	Revision	by	Comments

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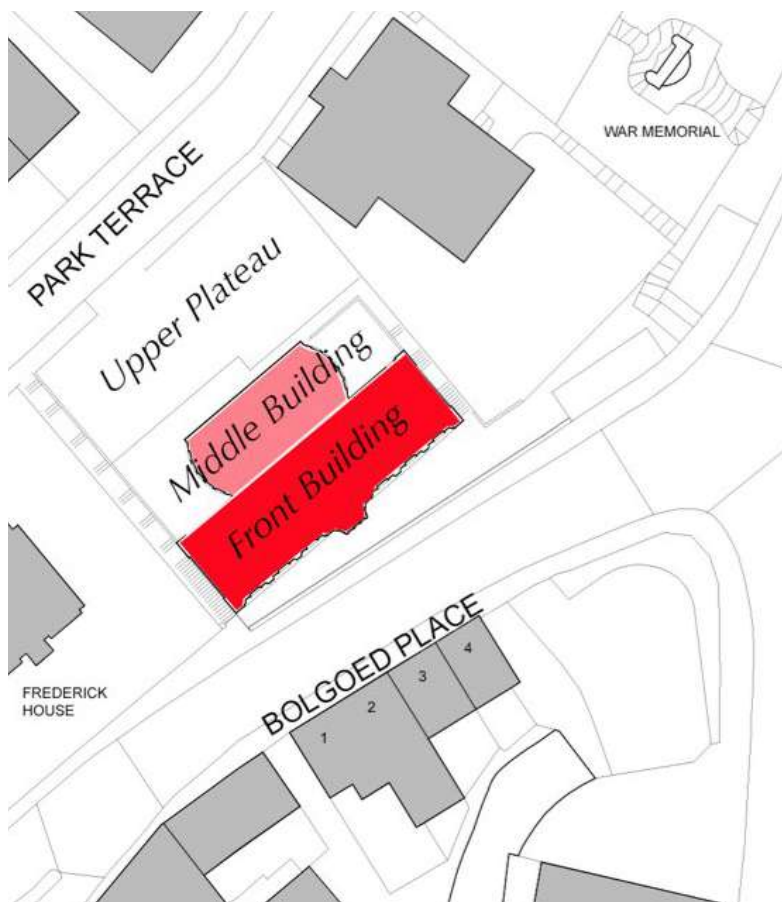
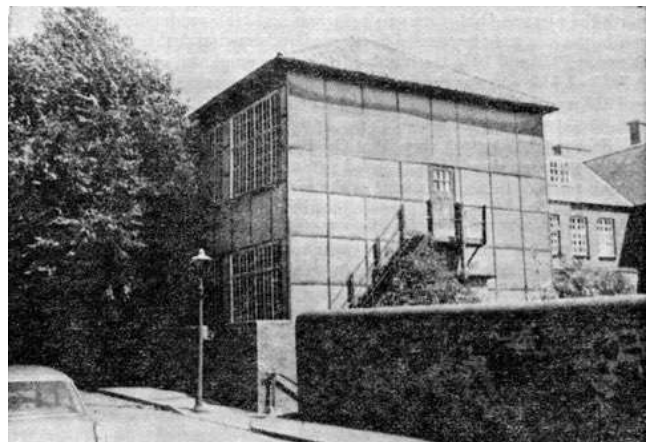
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Above left: An early view of the YMCA, with The Promenade in the foreground.

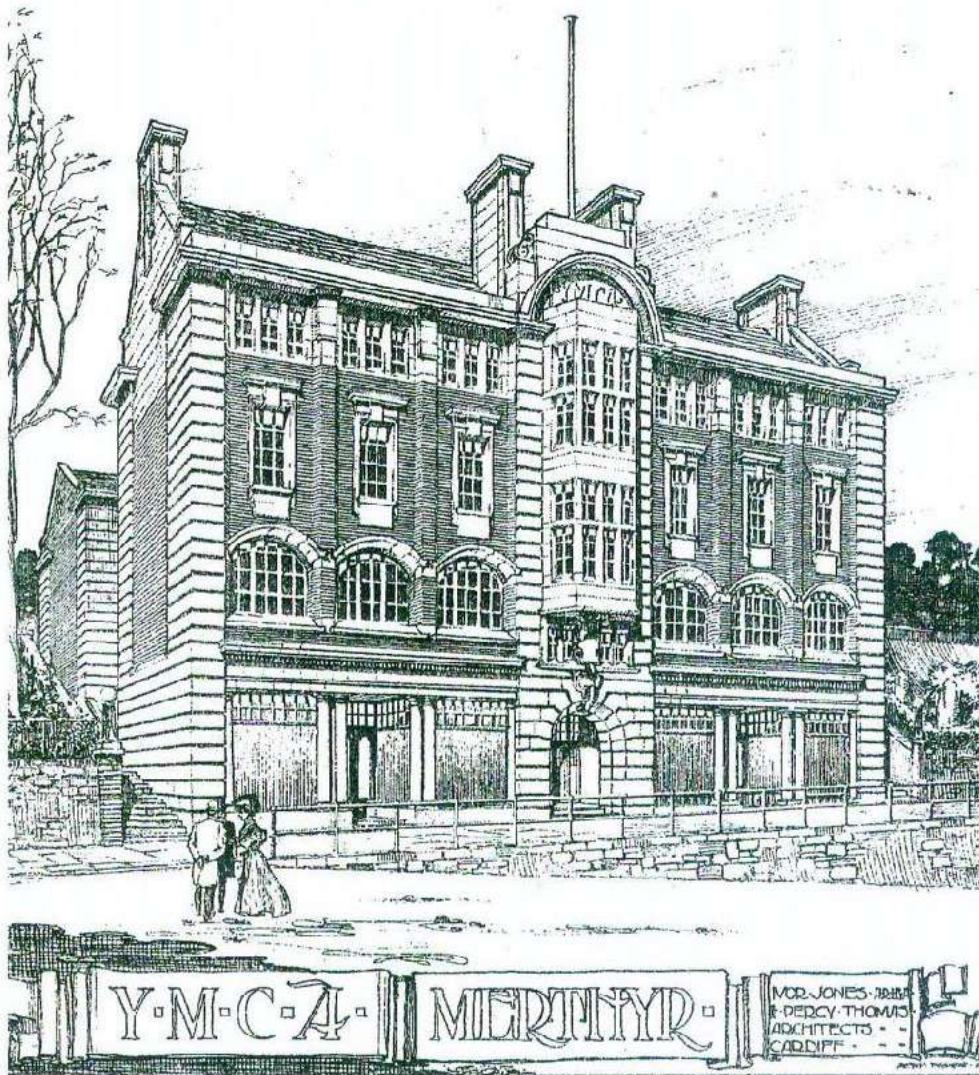
Above and below: Photographs illustrating the originally constructed arrangement. A much simpler building than originally intended was constructed on the Upper Plateau, though recently been demolished.



Left: A diagram illustrating the arrangement of the YMCA's component parts

1.0 INTRODUCTION & OBJECTIVES

- 1.1 This Assessment refers to, supports and supplements an application for listed building consent for the *“Refurbishment, alteration and extension of the YMCA Building, including the provision of ecological mitigation”*. A previous similar scheme for the building was granted listed building consent in January 2017 (P/16/0123), namely: Conversion of building to offices with associated internal and external renovation works. Demolition of existing walls/structures on the north-east elevation at ground floor level and the erection of a new extension with a new pedestrian access and bridged walkway. Construction of a new roof with dormer windows and roof lights.
- 1.2 This differences between this application and that previously approved are summarised as:
1. Existing walls/structures on the north-east elevation at ground level: To now be retained and converted to provide required ecological mitigation measures.
 2. New roof with dormer windows and roof-lights: Simplify the construction of this entirely new roof, to reduce the cost of the works generally.
 3. In conjunction with these alterations, ‘like-for-like’ general repair of the existing building’s historic fabric will also be completed.
- 1.3 The full postal address is: The YMCA Building, Pontmorlais West, Merthyr Tydfil, CF47 8UT.



Above: The winning competition entry submitted by Ivor Jones and Percy Thomas. Note the ornament intended at high level within the side gables of the Front Building.



Various views of the buildings current exterior, following completion of the 'emergency' works. Prior demolition of a building constructed on the upper plateau has left the Middle Building's unsightly north elevation in full view, though 'Jones & Thomas' original design for this area was never completed.

2.0 SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

- 2.1 The building was originally constructed in 1911 by the YMCA movement to provide a place for young men to congregate for recreation and personal improvement; 2 independent shops and a Cafe were also provided on the ground floor. The building was bought by Merthyr Corporation in 1934, whereupon it was used as offices. This use continued in later years, the building subsequently passing into private ownership and whereupon it progressively fell into disrepair; a serious fire in 2003 resulted in it being at serious risk of collapse. The Cambrian Heritage Regeneration Trust (CHRT) purchased the building in 2014 from Mr. G. Walters.
- 2.2 The building was designed by one of Wales' most eminent architects, Sir Percy Thomas, and is grade 2 listed. It is located in a prominent position overlooking the town below, and within the Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council's Town Centre Conservation Area.
- 2.3 The site is a regular parcel of land of some 0.09 hectares that slopes steeply up from southeast to northwest. The YMCA is set into this slope and bounded by:
 1. Northeast: The Masonic Hall, a brickwork retaining and boundary wall located between.
 2. Southeast: A wide pavement known historically as 'The Promenade' and which is retained above the adopted A 4102 below.
 3. Southwest: A narrow adopted and steeply stepped pavement, a brickwork boundary wall located between.
 4. Northwest: The adopted Park Terrace with pavement between, and within which are several semi-mature trees.
- 2.4 When completed the building originally comprised 3 distinct elements:
 1. Front (Main) Building: Part of the original design, the extant terracotta and facing brickwork walls providing the YMCA with its main character. Its roof, top floor and central pediment are now missing, further walls also having to be removed to enable its repair.
 2. Middle Building: Part of the original design, this face brickwork building is a much plainer 'link' originally intended to connect adjoining Front and Rear Buildings. The roof finishes, structure and the top third of the northwest wall are now missing, further walls also having to be removed to enable its repair.
 3. Rear Building: A later and much poorer quality building located on an 'upper plateau', its floor being at first floor level of the Front Building to accommodate the sloping site. This building has been demolished, a cleared and hard-cored informal 'car park' remaining.
- 2.5 The buildings style is difficult to attribute: The Conservation Statement considers it to be both contemporary in its Art Nouveau-inspired lettering and ornament yet almost looking forward to Art Deco in the angularity of its oriel and top floor windows, the influences of C R Mackintosh and H H Richardson also being evident. Newman in the Buildings of Wales describes it as "confident Edwardian Baroque".



3 **Heritage Values:** The original roof structure has been entirely removed, a temporary roof being provided some 10 years ago. The majority of the elevations remain as originally constructed, though are in poor and rapidly deteriorating condition. None of the original external timber joinery remains, the metal casements within the central Oriel window within the front facade also being later replacements. Very little of the interior also remains, save some glimpses of its previous ornament within the main staircase. Various decorative mouldings salvaged from the previous 'emergency' repairs have been retained and stored internally.

3.1 **Evidential Value:** This derives from those elements of an historic asset that can provide evidence about past human activity, including its physical remains or historic fabric.

The existing walls/structures remain pretty much as originally constructed, though in need of urgent repair. Whilst the walls and floors are in relatively good condition, the roof, windows, doors and internal finishes are all missing.

The N elevation was never originally intended to be seen, a rear 'Theatre' Building, being planned for the Upper Plateau. This was never built, a 'prefab' Gymnasium subsequently being constructed in lieu. The poor quality materials and seemingly random openings (given the demolition of the Gymnasium) within the current N elevation reflecting its status.

The buildings evidential value is consequently considered to be minimal.

3.2 **Historical Value:** This is the combination of the illustrative or associative values of an historic asset which connect past people, events and aspects of life with the present.

The existing external walls remain and are largely unaltered. Significant repair of these walls is required however and which will necessitate significant and piecemeal dismantling of the existing fabric. The main structural walls and floors still remain internally, the original plan-form of the building consequently being evident. The floors however are in poor condition, again requiring significant removal of existing fabric to repair them. With the exception of the main staircase, little of the original internal finishes remain.

The buildings historical value is consequently considered to be medium, primarily for its exterior.

3.3 **Aesthetic Value:** This derives from the way in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from an historic asset. This might include the form of an historic asset, its external appearance and how it lies within its setting. It can be the result of conscious design, or it might be a seemingly fortuitous outcome of the way in which an historic asset has evolved and been used over time or it may be a combination of both.

With the exception of the missing roof, the majority of the original building survives virtually unaltered, notwithstanding significant repair of the fabric being required. It is also prominently located and makes a major contribution to the surrounding Conservation Area.

The buildings aesthetic value is consequently considered to be medium.

3.4 **Communal Value:** This derives from the meanings that an historic asset has for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory. Communal value might be commemorative or symbolic.

Although the roof is missing, the majority of the original building survives virtually unaltered, notwithstanding significant repair of the fabric being required. It is also

Left: Various images of the buildings interior before completion of the recent 'emergency' works (top and middle), the new temporary roof installed during these works pictured bottom left. Note that little of the interior remains, though the disassembled terracotta components of the original front pediment are stored within the ground floor Cafe (bottom right and right).

prominently located and makes a major contribution to the surrounding Conservation Area.

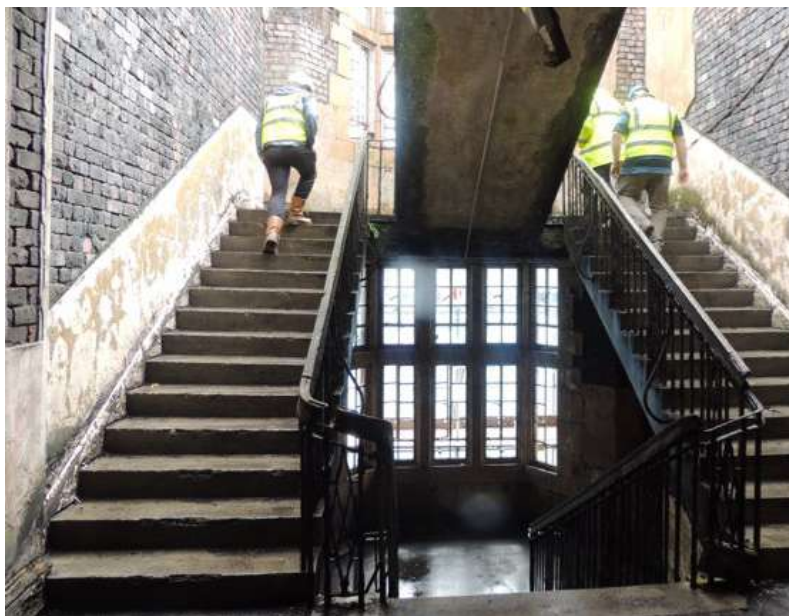
The buildings communal value is consequently considered to be medium-high, especially its main front elevation.

Below and below right: The central 'imperial staircase' and associated landings prior to the temporary roof recently being added over. This originally provided vertical access from the ground floor main entrance to the 2nd floor.

Bottom left: An original folding screen within the ground floor, the only example of the internal joinery to still remain.

Below right: Original decorative wall tiles and terrazzo floor remain in the ground floor lobby of the central staircase.

All will be repaired and restored within the current application.



4.0 DESIGN ANALYSIS

4.1 Overall Vision :The proposals have been designed in line with national guidance on good design as set out within TAN 12 (2014). The vision is to provide a high quality, sensitive yet contemporary conversion that provides this redundant and 'at-risk' building with a beneficial new use. Simultaneous alterations will facilitate 'access-for-all' to and within the building generally, the character of the surrounding Conservation Area being enhanced in the process. The main components of the proposal amount to:

- The 'like-for-like' repair of the extant historic building;
- The conversion and extension of the building to enable it to accommodate a new beneficial use and in a manner that accords with current fire and access legislation. A new lift and stair to the reinstated top floor are consequently proposed, this ensuring 'access-for-all' is provided throughout;
- Formalising the existing rear car park upon the upper plateau and including a new dedicated entrance from Park Terrace;
- Converting a range of existing 'below-ground' buildings to provide required ecological mitigation.

4.2 The vision for these proposals is also informed and guided by:

1. The Conservation Statement produced by Holland Heritage and which highlights the significance and special character of YMCA.

2. SPAB principles, particularly:

- **Repair not restoration:** *"Although no building can withstand decay, neglect and depredation entirely, neither can aesthetic judgement nor archaeological proof justify the reproduction of worn or missing parts".*
- **Complement not parody:** *"New work should express modern needs in a modern language. These are the only terms in which new can relate to old in a way which is positive and responsive at the same time. If an addition proves essential, it should not be made to out-do or out-last the original".*
- **Essential work:** *"The only work that is unquestionably necessary (whether it be repair, renewal or addition) is that essential to a building's survival".*
- **Fit new to old:** *"When repairs are made, new material should always be fitted to the old and not the old adapted to accept the new. In this way, more ancient fabric will survive".*
- **Respect for age:** *"Bulging, bowing, sagging and leaning are signs of age that deserve respect. Good repair will not officiously iron them out, smarten them or hide the imperfections. Age can confer a beauty of its own. These are qualities to care for, not blemishes to be eradicated".*

3. Conservation being defined as the *"process of maintaining and managing change to a heritage asset in a way that sustains, and where appropriate, enhances its significance"*. Conservation of our historic places does not therefore mean preventing all change, preserving a place as if frozen in time. Nor is conservation about restoring a place to how it appeared at one period in time. Implicit in the term conservation is an acceptance of appropriate change, these reflecting society's changing requirements for buildings or places over the years.

4 Pedestrian access to the building was originally provided from:

- The Promenade via entrances located centrally within the central Lobby and adjoining side Wings. The easternmost entrance has a level threshold, the other entrances being accessed via steps due to the sloping pavement outside.
- The rear car park, direct to the original Lounge at first floor level via a (now missing) bridge.

Part M of the Building Regulations confirms the building owners legal requirement to make reasonable provision for people to gain access to and use the building and its facilities. Accordingly the existing pedestrian approach to the YMCA is adjusted as follows:

1. The buildings main entrance is provided in the front elevation via the existing eastern doorway and level threshold. Double doors with automatic opening and closing are provided within the existing opening. This entrance accesses an entrance lobby, a lift within it connecting with all the other floors.
2. The existing access from the 'upper plateau' into the original Lounge replaced with a new access, this enabling:
 - the new route to arrive immediately adjacent to the new lift, and
 - the grandeur of the original first floor Lounge, the grandest room within the building, to be reinstated and as a single room.



- 5 In addition to being in accord with Part M of the Building Regulations, movement within the buildings interior has also to comply with Part B ~ 'means of escape'. Utilising the main stair as the principal escape route mitigates the potential negative affect upon the existing listed building of providing an additional stair, whilst also maximising the available net lettable area. This approach however also requires:
 1. Fire lobbies to be provided between this principal escape route and all adjacent lettable areas.
 2. An additional 'means-of-escape' direct to the outside to be provided at 1st floor level, this being connected to the main stair via a direct and 'protected' route.
 3. The size, going and rise of the new stair required to access the new top floor being in accord with current regulations, it being located so as all parts of this floor are within 18m of its protected lobby, and it being connected to the main stair via a direct and 'protected' route.

- 6 Vertical circulation throughout the building is consequently proposed via:
 1. The Principal Escape Route: This staircase is the central and finest feature of the buildings interior, the Conservation Statement confirming it as highly significant and with low capacity for change. The proposals therefore retain it as the main means of vertical circulation and escape throughout the building and suitably protected by 'fire lobbies' at each floor. This route is extended to the new 3rd floor via a new stair and which:
 - a) is positioned in the location of the original 'domestic' stair to the Caretakers flat (all now missing), this location enabling it to meet the requirements of Part L of the Building Regulations.
 - b) references the main stair in arrangement, though subservient in scale and detail, its open nature simultaneously and similarly being used to passively ventilate the building as a whole.
 - c) meets Part M of the Building Regulations requirement for an 'ambulant' stair.
 2. A Lift: Various locations for a lift were considered within a previous Options Appraisal, in order of primacy this being determined by:
 - a) The external appearance of the building, the Conservation Statement confirming:
 - the exterior as more significant than the internal fabric.
 - The side and rear elevations are less significant than the front.
 - b) Maintaining the legibility of the existing internal floor layouts, the Conservation Statement confirming their significance as one of the few surviving internal features.

The existing entrance to the YMCA from The Promenade, pictured right.

- c) Ensuring all potential individual offices are accessible from the lift and via level circulation routes.
- d) Legibility of its location for visitors to the building, ideally adjacent to potential Reception areas.
- e) Net lettable area within the building is maximised.

In response to these constraints, the lift is therefore positioned:

- within the building rather than in an external extension.
- to the rear in response to the relative significance and capacity for change of the buildings different components.
- within an original circulation route generally, to minimise its impact upon the original and existing floor plans and fabric.
- adjacent to the proposed Reception area.

Such a location however necessitates the lift projecting above the surrounding new roof, this also being a modern element.

- 7 From these vertical circulation routes, horizontal circulation is via existing corridors to the lettable areas, toilets and showers. The building will therefore be used much as it was originally, the legibility and layout of the original building being virtually unchanged, the Conservation Statement confirming this as one of the buildings most significant historic features.
- 8 In conclusion the proposals enable the building to fully comply with current 'Movement & Access' and 'Fire Escape' legislation. Fully accessible toilets are provided to all floors, further unisex toilets and showers provided at both Mezzanine and 3rd floor levels and all in an entirely non-discriminatory manner. A C21st building is thereby provided, notwithstanding its listed nature and with little impact upon either its historic fabric or setting.

4.3 Character and Context

4.3.1 Exterior

- 1 The YMCA is a unique building at contrast with the character of the surrounding Conservation Area generally. Its character is determined primarily by the terracotta incorporated within the front facade, the scale of the building dominating the town below. The Conservation Statement confirms it as the most significant element in a group of Edwardian buildings that are an especially important part of the townscape of this part of Merthyr Tydfil
- 2 In terms of the site itself:
 1. The adjacent buildings are set-back behind the Front Building. This further emphasises the prominence of the front elevation which, notwithstanding its poor state of repair, remains as originally constructed with the exception of the missing roof, central pediment and the majority of the windows and doors. The Conservation Statement confirms this elevation as highly significant and with low capacity for change;
 2. Both side elevations of the Front Building are similarly prominent, they remaining as originally constructed with the exception of the missing chimneys. The Conservation Statement confirms these elevations as significant, with low and moderate capacity for change respectively. The side elevations to the Middle Building are less visible, especially from the west, both also being in a poor condition: the roof, parts the walls and all windows are missing. The Conservation Statement confirms these elevations as moderately significant, with moderate capacity for change;
 3. Only the top half of the Front Building rear elevation is visible generally, due to the topography of the sloping site. This remains largely as originally constructed, though the roof, top of the wall and all windows are missing. The Conservation Statement confirms this elevation as moderately significant, with moderate capacity for change;
 4. The majority of the Middle Building rear elevation is visible from Park Terrace to the rear, above the upper plateau. However this elevation:
 - was never intended to be seen, it being hidden by an intended Rear Building;

- has been faced in an entirely inappropriate and incongruous sand:cement render, the junctions with the adjoining side elevations being particularly unsympathetic in appearance;
 - has been significantly altered over the years, parts of the wall also being unstable.
5. The Upper Plateau provides the main approach to the building from Park Terrace at the rear, being an informal car park screened by semi-mature trees. The Conservation Statement confirms this area is of low significant and with high capacity for change.
- 3 The 'Quality of Place' of this part of the Conservation Area is consequently far less distinctive than the remainder and further diluted by the loss of historic finishes and details within the public realm generally. To promote a successful relationship between the public and private space, whilst simultaneously enhancing the character of the Conservation Area and ensuring equality of access for all, the proposed design is based upon:
1. Materials within the new extension being the same as historically used, though treated in a more contemporary style;
 2. Landscaping the 'upper plateau' around a delineated car park, the existing trees along Park Terrace being retained;
 3. Providing a new bridge linking the rear car park with the main internal circulation routes.

4.3.2 Interior

- 1 The character of the YMCA's interior is provided by the generous and tall spaces, the large windows located within the front elevation flooding the interior with light (top right). With regard to finishes, these have mostly been removed with those that remain being in very poor condition. The Conservation Statement highlights the particular significance of:
1. The first floor Lounge: intended as the climax of the route through the building prior to entering the proposed (though never built) Function Room, its importance is illustrated by:
 - the structural 'gymnastics' used to form the cantilevered oriel windows, upstand beams also being incorporated above so as to maintain the rooms defined ceiling plan notwithstanding the walls over.
 - its relative ornateness, remnants of the original decorative mouldings and columns now being loosely stored on the floor.
 2. The main staircase: the grandest space in the building and within which elements of the original decorative tiling and painting scheme still remain (bottom right).
- 2 The Conservation Statement also highlights the context of the interior, it being a dedicated solution to the requirements of the YMCA movement generally in the early C20th. This significance is evident within the layout of each floor, the original plan and function of each space still being legible.

4.3.3 Scale & Massing

- 1 The scale of the YMCA provides its distinctive quality, it dominating this part of the Conservation Area in spite of it being set into its sloping site. Any alterations required to enable the building to accommodate a new use should respect these characteristics, their scale and mass accordingly being deferential to the original building:
1. **The Lift:** Required to enable the building to comply with Part M of the Building Regulations, its location is determined by the relative significance of various elements (see para 4.26.2). The Conservation Statement confirms this position is of moderate significance and capacity for change. Its overall mass and consequent projection above the proposed general roof line is therefore unavoidable, due to the internal headroom required to facilitate its installation and regular maintenance.
 2. **The 'Rifle Range':** The missing roof and top floor will be replaced in exactly the same location as the original. To maximise internal lettable floor space however, flat roofed dormer windows are proposed to the rear, its height being determined by the need to

provide appropriate headroom within. The Conservation Statement confirms this location as being of moderate significance and capacity for change.

3. **The Rear Lobby:** Required to enable the building to comply with Part M of the Building Regulations, its size is as small as possible whilst enabling circulation for wheelchair users. Its apparent scale is minimised by recessing it into the sloping site and utilising a flat roof over.
4. **The Middle Building:** Alterations are limited to:
 1. Incorporating dormer windows within the recreated roof, these matching the scale and massing of similar windows previously provided in this area.
 2. Enhancing the north elevation, via the reordering of the existing windows and the addition of new cladding.

4.3.5 External Appearance

- 1 The extent of terracotta incorporated within the front and side elevations of the Front Building, these being the most visible, defines the appearance of the YMCA. This use of terracotta clearly diminishes from front to rear, brick predominantly being used in lieu. The render to the northwest (rear) elevation is a modern addition. The intention generally is to sympathetically repair the original building accordingly, 'respecting its age' and 'fitting new to old' in the process and thereby retaining as much of the original historic fabric as possible.
- 2 To ensure its survival, the YMCA unquestionably requires additional essential work beyond repair and/or renewal to enable it to accommodate an appropriate new use i.e. alteration and addition. In accord with SPAB principles, these new works should also complement not parody the original: *"New work should express modern needs in a modern language. These are the only terms in which new can relate to old in a way which is positive and responsive at the same time"*.
 1. **The Lift:** Clearly a modern 'need' and located in a position with medium capacity for change. It is consequently clearly expressed as a modern element within this current C21st phase in the buildings history.
 2. **The 'Rifle Range':** The existing roof is entirely missing, the new roof being finished in slate in deference to its prominence and significance. The new dormer windows proposed to the rear are clearly contemporary in appearance, simultaneously maximising the potential lettable area within.

Right: Images of the YMCA in 1990 and illustrating the front pediment, chimneys and dormer windows, all now missing. The proposals include the reinstatement of these missing historic features, this enhancing and preserving the buildings special architectural character.



3. **The Rear Lobby:** A simple flat roof hovering above double glazed walls upon a solid facing brick plinth, the transparency of this minimalist pavilion again lucidly contrasting with the solidity of the existing building alongside. It will minimally impact upon:
1. the original fabric of the listed building, the majority of the adjacent oriel window having recently been demolished. Silicone 'butt-jointed' glass is proposed at the junction between the existing and the new, the new landing within being 'set-back' to highlight the cantilevered nature of the existing oriel window.
 2. the appearance of the original building in general and the curved bay in particular, due to its small size and predominantly transparent nature.
 3. the adjacent public steps, the walls being 'set-back' from this thoroughfare.

The bridge linking this Lobby with the adjacent car park is:

- positioned as far from the YMCA as possible, this simultaneously enabling it to provide a secure boundary against the adjacent footpath, and
- is physically and visually lightweight, this similarly reducing its effect upon the adjacent footpath.

The required balustrades are infilled with terracotta. Low-maintenance soft landscaping is introduced to the reinstated roof of the existing outbuildings beneath, a visual continuation of the sloping ground beneath.

4. **The Middle Building:** The Conservation Statement confirms the low significance and high capacity for change of this building generally, the following alterations being proposed:
1. Roof: The existing roof is entirely missing, its new replacement being finished with slate so as to match the Front Building. Dormer windows will be reinstated, a new glazed roof light also introduced to enable natural light to penetrate the heart of the building beneath, directly over the new stair.
 2. Northwest (rear) Elevation: This is currently a visual jumble of elements and materials due to the failure to complete the building in accord with the original design, together with subsequent piecemeal repair. This entire elevation is therefore reordered and using higher-quality materials, the whole elevation being enhanced in the process.

- 3 The extant fabric will generally therefore be conserved to the highest standards, only small alterations to the buildings external appearance being proposed. These alterations are all in areas the Conservation Statement confirms as having the capacity to accommodate such



Above: The location of the 'penthouse' dormer proposed within the recreated 'Rifle Range', the original historic fabric being entirely missing. Note also the condition of the original curved oriel windows, new steel 'props' being introduced to provide required support beneath.

Right: The location of the proposed bat mitigation, within a re-roofed range of existing outbuildings. The Conservation Statement confirms this area as low significance with medium~high capacity for change.



change, the limited palette of contemporary materials suggested for these new extensions similarly reflecting the YMCA's new, modern function.

4.3.6 Internal Appearance

1 The Conservation Statement confirms the main internal items of significance are:

1. the buildings layout and proportions generally, and
2. in terms of individual rooms, the Ground Floor, the main staircase, and the original 1st floor Lounge.

It also confirms the Front building as being more significant than the Middle, the latter also having higher capacity for change generally. It should also be noted that all internal finishes throughout the building are also either missing or require wholesale replacement.



The existing rear elevation of the Middle Building.

2 Consequently:

1. New uses are adapted to fit within the existing Front Building and not vice versa, modern extensions only being added where this doesn't affect the integrity of the extant interior e.g. the modern 'Rifle Range' created by restoring the mass of the original building.
2. The original layout of the building is fundamentally therefore retained, the majority of alterations being located within the Middle Building and carefully planned to retain the majority of the original windows e.g.:
 - The Mezzanine level is altered to accommodate the majority of the required new toilets and showers, all in unisex facilities to avoid any potential discrimination.
 - A new stair, additional toilets and showers are added at 2nd and 3rd floors, where the original fabric has already been lost or compromised by required repair.

3 Providing a lift is clearly the greatest compromise necessary to enable the YMCA to accommodate the proposed new use, this also having to be located to serve all floors and be immediately obvious when entering the building. A discrete location within an existing stairwell is considered the most appropriate, this enabling the legibility of the buildings original layout to be primarily retained.

4 In conclusion those internal areas that are of any significance will be conserved and/or repaired. New uses are tailored to suit the existing building and not vice versa, the original layout thereby remaining legible, all new walls being finished in modern materials. A subtle difference between the new and the old is thereby being created which, together with the exposed service aesthetic, again compliments and enhances the character of the original building.



Left: Examples of contemporary use of terracotta cladding, both in an historic setting. Terracotta is used as a rain screen cladding in such situations and enabling a high level of insulation to be introduced behind.



Left: When designing the YMCA, the Conservation Statement highlights that 'Jones & Thomas' were clearly influenced by the many artistic movements that were emerging at the beginning of the C20th, including Art Deco. This period has consequently similarly influenced the appearance of the proposed C21st extensions, fundamentally solid roofs 'hovering' over glass walls beneath.

5.0 SUMMARY & CONCLUSIONS

5.1 The YMCA has a distinctive architectural style and which is at odds with the historic character of Pontmorlais generally. Designed to accommodate a bespoke use and which is no longer required, the building has been empty for some considerable time and resulting in a significant loss of original historic fabric. In addition to judicious repair and to ensure a sustainable long-term future, this early C20th building has therefore to be significantly altered to accommodate a suitable new use.

5.2 Policies BW1 and BW4 of the LDP support the principles of the beneficial use proposed: a sensitive redevelopment of an otherwise derelict building that will simultaneously improve the attractiveness of the town centre and conservation area. Consequently the proposals also comply with AS19 and BW6 of the LDP.

5.3 The roof of the building is completely missing, including the terracotta central pediment, both side gables and all chimney's. The Conservation Statement confirms the capacity for change of these roofs as moderate, primarily due to their prominence. They are therefore proposed to be reinstated to their original profile and (slate) finish, the missing pediment, gables and chimneys also being reinstated. The following alterations are proposed within this reinstatement:

1. Conservation-style footlights introduced within the main front roof slopes.
2. Dormer windows introduced to the rear roof slopes to maximise the useable space within. A traditional appearance is proposed where these can be seen from the front, a more contemporary approach adopted for those seen primarily from the rear and where there is deemed to be greater capacity for change. This new rear dormer includes the required lift shaft, this similarly clearly expressed as a modern element within the overall architectural composition.
3. Roof lights introduced within the ridge of the Middle Building, this being the least prominent, and enabling the buildings energy use to be reduced.

5.4 In addition to reinstating the joinery generally, including the introduction of double-glazing, alterations to the elevations can be generally summarised as:

FRONT BUILDING:

- Sides: The introduction of 'slit' windows to light the ends of the 3rd floor offices, in the position of similar intended decoration.
- Rear: A small and primarily glass extension linked to the rear car park by a new bridge, and required to enable the existing 'imperial' stair to be utilised as the only 'means-of-escape' within the building. Its impact is mitigated through its small scale and transparency, the adjacent historic fabric also having been partly demolished, it also being located in an area considered to have medium-high capacity for change. The bridge is positioned adjacent to the property boundary and of lightweight, transparent appearance, both minimising its impact upon the listed building. Its level is determined by the sites existing contours.

REAR BUILDING:

- Rear: Conversion of an existing range of outbuildings to provide the required ecological mitigation. Reordering and refinishing of the rearmost gable elevation.

5.5 The internal rearrangement of the building has been informed by the need to:

- ensure the legibility of the original plan remains.
- minimally affect existing structural features such as arches, walls, ceilings, oriel windows, window openings and the central staircase.

This has been achieved by sympathetically locating all alterations either within areas that are entirely new, or where the existing building is considered to have high capacity for change. Constructed with modern techniques and finishes, these alterations will therefore clearly be seen as a different phase in the buildings development and supplemented by revealing the new services and the contemporary fit-out.

5.6 The above alterations ensure access into the building is enabled for all, in conjunction



The adopted philosophy for this latest phase in the YMCA's history is that 'new work should express modern needs in a modern language'. The new services required to enable the YMCA to become a fully C21st building will be used to most evidently demonstrate this philosophy internally.

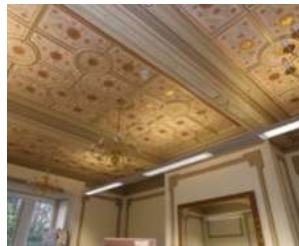
In a typical commercial office (top left), services are distributed horizontally via voids below the floor slab and hidden by suspended ceilings. This approach however is entirely inappropriate for the YMCA, due to its negative impact upon the buildings historic character. Also, all the original floor finishes have either already been removed or need to be, due to their condition. Consequently it is proposed that they be replaced with a new raised floor void above the slab (top right), this enabling:

- 1. primary horizontal service routes to be hidden, and*
- 2. extant ceilings and walls to simply be repaired, where required.*

Vertical distribution of services is similarly discrete, within new continuous risers introduced from Mezzanine to 3rd floor levels.

A great deal more of the buildings original finishes remain within the 'imperial stair', though in very poor condition, this also being a much more ornate space. The intent is to conserve all where possible, they being repaired on a 'like-for-like' basis where not, all services being hidden with the new light fittings that respect the original historic character.

This approach retains the buildings intrinsic qualities, these simultaneously being enhanced through the contrast offered by the clearly contemporary services and fit-out.



with the provision of dedicated disabled parking in the rear car park. The 'upper plateau' is reordered to improve its quality generally and includes car parking, cycle storage and retention of the existing trees to Park Terrace. New planting is limited to the small and sloping areas to the rear and sides of the site, the proposed species enhancing its biodiversity whilst being low-maintenance.

- 5.7 'Access for all' within the building is provided by:
- The addition of a new handrail to the 'imperial' stair, its existing rise and going according with current 'ambulant stair' standards.
 - The new stair accessing the new 3rd floor being designed to similarly accord with 'ambulant stair' standards.
 - A new lift located to be clearly visible from both the proposed Reception and the new Rear Lobby, positioned within an original (missing) stair void. Whilst this location will impact upon the external appearance of the rear of the building, it is considered to be the least damaging location.
- 5.8 The grade 2 listed YMCA's extant original fabric is therefore retained and repaired and, where accurate evidence of the original appearance survives, reinstated. The building clearly requires a beneficial new use to ensure its long-term future however, the YMCA movement's bespoke design necessarily having to be altered accordingly. The significance of the asset is articulated within the Conservation Statement, this informing the proposed alterations and which consequently avoid detracting from the buildings historic significance and special character. In terms of appearance these alterations use the same materials as the existing, albeit in a more contemporary style ~ *"new work expressing modern needs in a modern language"*. Providing such a sympathetic but lucid contrast between 'the old and the new' is well recognised as a method of enhancing the original fabric.
- 5.9 The proposals have followed a process of identifying where change to this heritage asset can be made in a way that sustains and, where appropriate, enhances its significance. These changes will be completed without affecting the amenity of existing residents, potential harm to existing ecology also being mitigated. This is in accord with current planning legislation within the UK, this explicitly encouraging the appropriate enhancement of heritage assets and not merely the limitation of damage. As a result, the YMCA will not therefore be 'frozen in time' or restored to how it appeared at one period in its history, but rather reflect the changes required to enable it to fulfil societies requirements of it in the early C21st.