



EAST BOUNDARY WALL & ASSOCIATED LANDSCAPING

THE YMCA BUILDING, MERTHYR TYDFIL

Pontmorlais West • Merthyr Tydfil • CF47 8UU

October 2022

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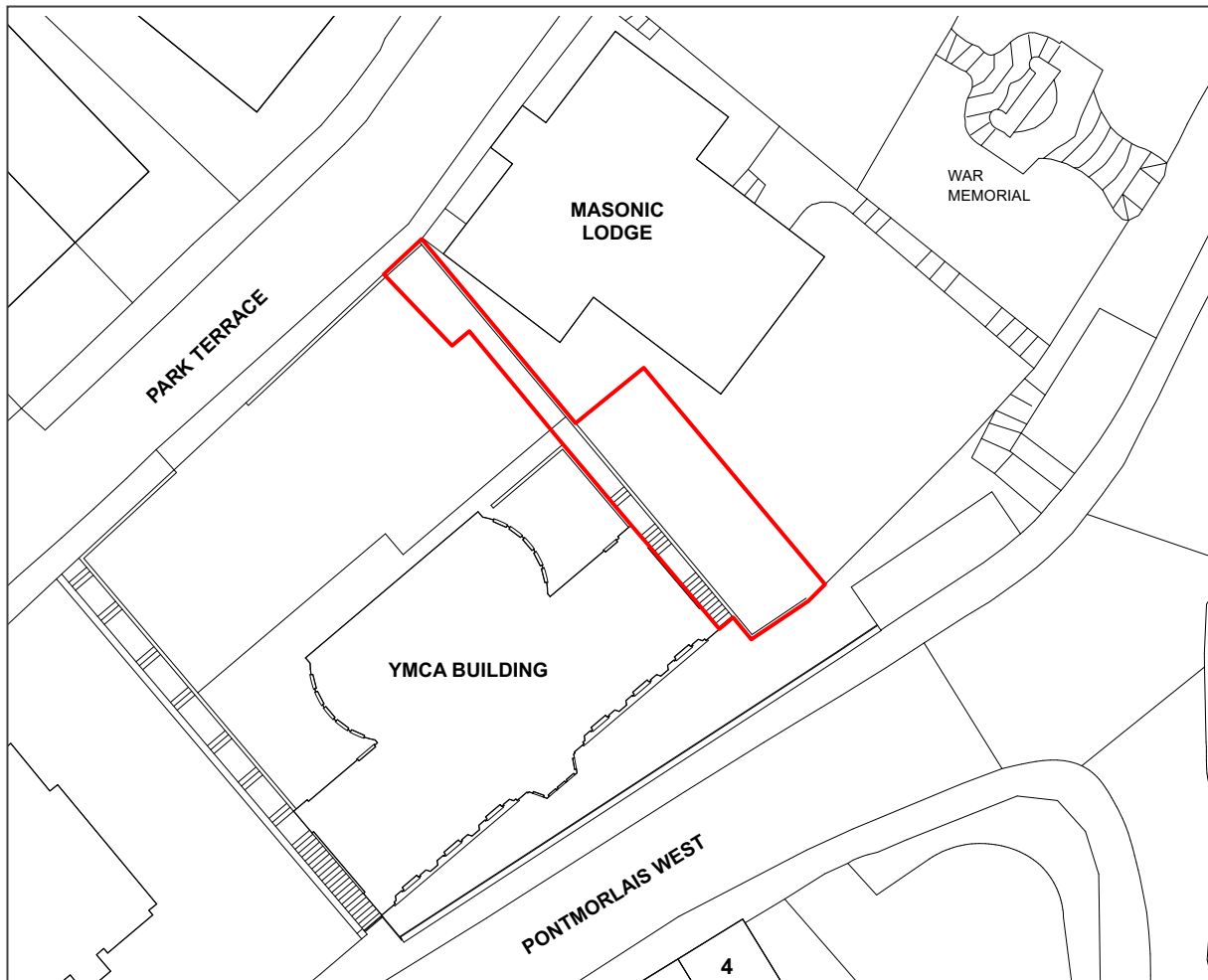
Front Cover: The main facade of the Former YMCA Building in the early 20th Century.

Listed Building Consent for the conversion, alteration and extension of this property was received in August 2021 (Cadw ref. qA1473836). During the construction works, the dangerous condition of the boundary (and retaining) wall to the east of the property was discovered: the wall had been constructed in various phases and with no foundation. To enable adjacent essential construction works to continue, the wall was therefore demolished. This document has been produced to accompany an application for Listed Building Consent for retrospective permission to demolish and replace this wall, including alterations to the adjacent contours and landscaping.



Above: Historic views of the YMCA and adjacent Masonic Lodge, this application incorporating alteration of the soft-landscaped area between them.

Below: Location Plan (not to scale), the site being highlighted in red.



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Above: The gap between the YMCA and the east retaining wall, following removal of the rubbish that covered it. This removal confirmed:

- *An earlier path, including stairs with large stone nosings/goings (partially visible in the above).*
- *The retaining wall had simply been built immediately on top of this earlier landscaping, with no foundation.*

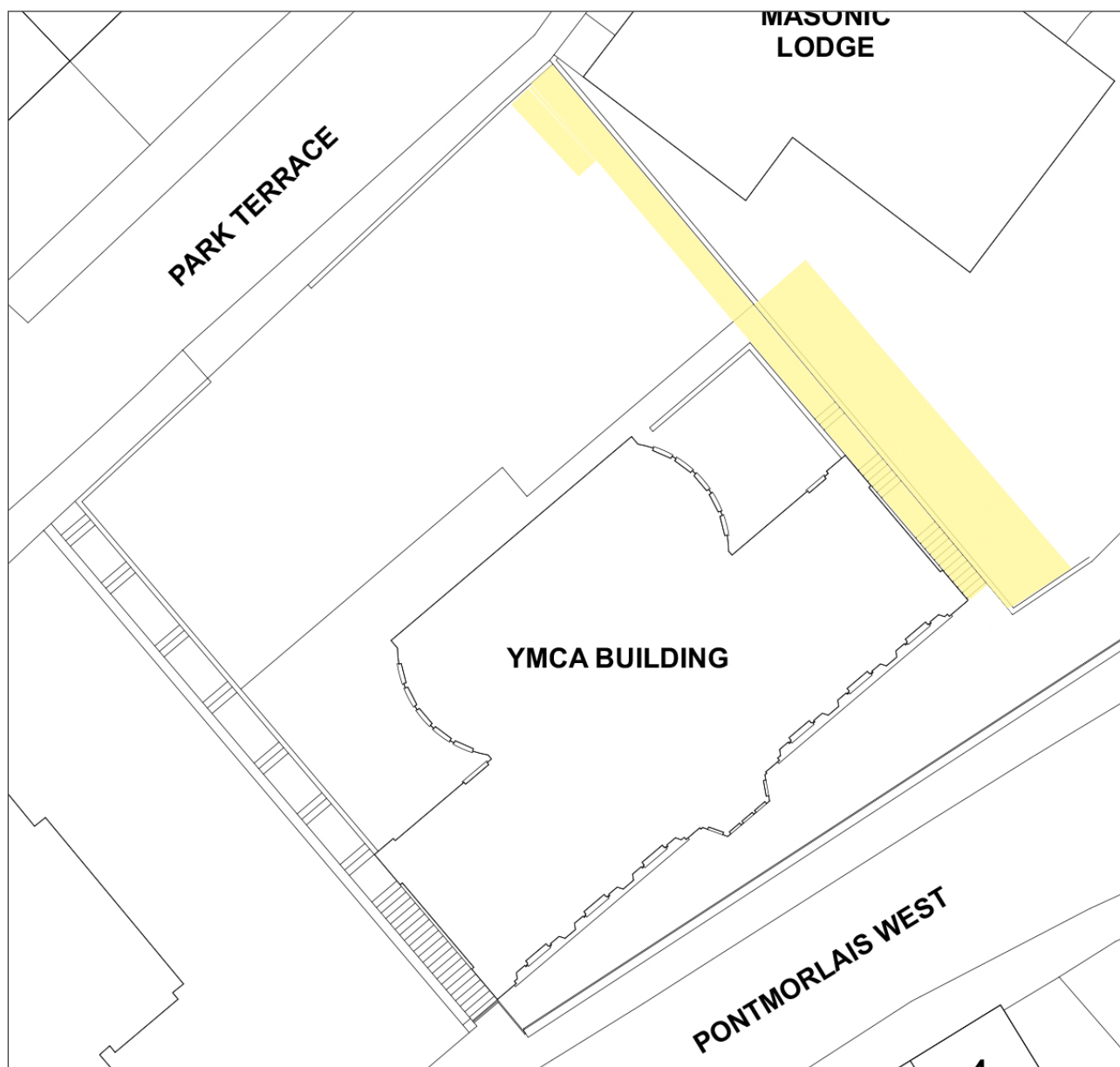
Due to the pressure imposed by the retained soil and its inadequate construction, this wall was leaning towards the YMCA and with a prominent crack within it.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

1. **Ownership:** The application site falls within 2 ownerships:
 1. The YMCA and adjacent path is owned by Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council.
 2. The grounds incorporated within the proposals are owned by the Masonic Lodge.
2. **Listing:** Grade II (YMCA). No listing information available for the Masonic Lodge site.
3. **Description:** The site is an irregular parcel of land of some 165 sq/m. and divided by an existing brickwork boundary wall. The site slopes gradually down from north to south, the boundary wall retaining the Masonic Lodge site some 3.5m above the floor level of the YMCA. The site is bounded to the:
 1. North: By a combination of the YMCA's car park and the Masonic Lodge.
 2. East: By a combination of the Masonic Lodge and its landscape.
 3. South: By a combination of the:
 1. YMCA: a modern path between the boundary wall and the YMCA.
 2. Masonic Lodge: a boundary wall retaining the grounds some 1m above the adjacent footpath.
 4. West: By a combination of the YMCA, a recently created bat-roost and landscaping.

1.2 OBJECTIVES

1. This application has several simultaneous objectives:
 1. To replace the existing boundary wall with two new retaining walls ("upper" and "lower") with a landscaped gap between.
 2. To re-contour the Masonic Lodge landscape, to reduce the amount of retaining walls required.
 3. To re-landscape the site generally, to foster and encourage ecological use (given the adjacent new bat roost).
 4. To provide a dedicated Cycle Store, the existing Cycle Store converted to provide a dedicated Bin Store (For the YMCA).

**Key:**

-  *Highly Significant: elements that contribute to the property's historical character and cultural significance. They should remain unaltered in principle without good justification for alteration.*
-  *Significant: elements which should be preserved as far as possible, although some minor alterations may be possible.*
-  *Some Significance: elements which afford the opportunity for some alteration.*
-  *Lesser Significance: elements that can be considered for potential alteration.*
-  *Negative Significance: elements that detract from the presentation of the building, and therefore should be removed.*

HERITAGE VALUES: Holland Heritage's current Statement of Significance summarises the stated core values of the YMCA, a grade 2 listed building:

- 2.1 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.
1. The southern section of the existing boundary wall has necessarily already been removed, due to its unstable condition. Its evidential value has consequently already been lost.
 2. The northern section of the existing boundary wall is being retained and repaired. Its evidential value is consequently unaffected.
 3. The existing landscape (both within the YMCA and the Masonic Lodge) has either already been altered or is predominantly overgrown. Its evidential value is consequently already compromised.
- 2.2 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.
1. The southern section of the existing boundary wall has necessarily already been removed, due to its unstable condition. Its historical value has consequently already been lost.
 2. The northern section of the existing boundary wall is being retained and repaired. Its historic value is consequently unaffected.
 3. The existing landscape (both within the YMCA and the Masonic Lodge) has either already been altered or is predominantly overgrown. Its historic value is consequently already compromised.
- 2.3 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.
1. The southern section of the existing boundary wall has necessarily already been removed, due to its unstable condition. Being rebuilt to match the existing however, its aesthetic value is being retained.
 2. The northern section of the existing boundary wall is being retained and repaired. Its aesthetic value is consequently unaffected.
 3. The existing landscape (both within the YMCA and the Masonic Lodge) has either already been altered or is predominantly overgrown. Its historic value is consequently already compromised.

Left: An assessment of the significance of the site. Note that, though the grounds of the Masonic Lodge are outside the boundary of the listed building, they contribute to its setting.

2.4 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.

1. The proposals are required to ensure the beneficial re-use of the adjacent YMCA building.
The communal value of the listed building will consequently be maintained by the proposals.

- 3.1 The southern section of the existing boundary wall: The removal of this section of the boundary wall, due to its instability, was essential to enable the beneficial new use of the adjacent redundant listed building. The related negative impact upon existing evidential and historic heritage values was consequently unavoidable. This new wall:
1. Will match the existing, the adjacent ground being restored to its original contours.
 2. Requires a new balustrade to its top (to prevent people falling from height). This is proposed in a style and materials to match that bounding the adjacent listed memorial.
- The aesthetic and communal value of this part of the site are consequently considered to be enhanced.
- 3.2 The northern section of this wall is being retained, a short new adjacent section introduced alongside to stabilise it. The impact upon existing evidential, historical values is consequently considered to be minimal.
- 3.3 These major alterations are proposed within the middle section of the site (adjacent to the new bat roost), this being re-contoured generally. Little of the original landscaping remains, the setting of both the YMCA and Masonic Lodge thereby compromised. New landscaping is proposed within the re-contoured area, this simultaneously enhancing the setting of both buildings and existing ecology.
- The aesthetic and communal value of this part of the site are consequently considered to be enhanced.



Above: Photographs indicating the extent of excavation required, with the Masonic Lodge visible in the background, to provide a safe environment for the construction of the replacement retaining wall.

Summary & Conclusions

- 4.1 The southern section of the existing boundary wall has necessarily already been removed, due to its unstable condition. The negative impact upon the YMCA's heritage values is therefore unavoidable. This is offset however by the enhanced aesthetic value, via the wall being rebuilt in brickwork to match the existing together with the addition of new hand railing and feature terracotta.
- 4.2 The northern section of the existing boundary wall is being retained and repaired, and stabilised by a new section of walling (to match the existing) being rebuilt adjacent to it. Any impact upon the YMCA's heritage values is therefore minimal.
- 4.3 The heritage values of the middle section of the site are minimal; the original layout and landscaping is long-lost and with the consequent negative effect upon the setting of both buildings. The proposed re-contouring minimally impacts upon this situation. In contrast, the proposed landscaping will simultaneously enhance the setting of both buildings and existing ecology. The heritage values of this part of the site are therefore considered to be enhanced.

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