



DESIGN NOTE

260501_07

For:

Trinity, Wesley Place,

Merthyr Tydfil, CF48 4RS

Introduction

Studio CB Architects have prepared this document to support and accompany the planning application for the above address.

The application seeks a change of use to the ground floor footprint only; from an artist's studio (*Use Class B1*) to a 2-bedroom flat (*Use Class C3: dwelling houses, flats, apartments etc*).

The applicant has sought pre planning advice prior to the submission of this application. The pre planning advice reference is PA/26/0007: CHANGE OF USE TO A 2 BEDROOM FLAT AT TRINITY HALL, WESLEY PLACE, MERTHYR VALE, MERTHYR TYDFIL, CF48 4RS.

The application package submitted via the Planning Portal comprises of the following documents/plans:

Documents/Plans Prepared by Studio CB:

- 26051_01 Site Location Plan
- 26051_02 Block Plan
- 26051_03 Existing Floor Plans
- 26051_04 Proposed Ground Floor Plan
- 26051_05 Elevations
- 26051_06 Section A – A
- 26051_07 Design Note (This document)

Note:

This design note includes proposals for biodiversity net gains associated with the scheme and a flood consequence assessment that is proportional to the application site proposals.

Site Description and Background

The application site sits central to the village of Merthyr Vale, located in the narrow, steep-sided Taff Vale (Taff Valley) in the South Wales Valleys, just south of Aberfan. The village rests along the floor of the valley, bordered by the River Taff to the West.

The application building is a two-storey detached structure across a considerable external level change parallel to Wesley Place, adjacent to the junction of A4054. Originally, the site was a chapel hall associated with the neighbouring Trinity Presbyterian Chapel. The chapel itself was demolished in the late 20th century and replaced by a multi-use external games area. The chapel hall later became an artist's studio to the ground floor, with associated accommodation to the lower ground level as part of planning application no. P/20/0171, approved in September 2020. A subsequent application was submitted and approved in March 2023 (P/23/0029) to convert the accommodation associated with the artist's studio into a self-contained holiday let.

The area around the application site comprises of hard standing in the form of highways and pedestrian footways. Except for the wider surrounding valley, there is little in the way of extensive or intensive green infrastructure in the immediate vicinity of the application site.



Planning Proposal

The changes proposed are to the ground floor internal footprint only. No additions or alterations have been proposed to the external envelope of the building or the external works around the property. The changes will result in the internal layout transforming from an open plan artist's studio with supporting ancillary rooms into a 2-bedroom flat and associated accommodation.

Policy Context

Planning Policy Wales (PPW) (12th Edition – February 2024) is the principal document which sets out the land use policy context of the Welsh Government. Its primary objective is to ensure that the planning system itself contributes towards the delivery of sustainable development whilst improving the social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being of Wales, as required by the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 and other pertinent legislation.

In the adopted Merthyr Tydfil Local Development Plan (2016 – 2031, Adopted January 2020), the site is located within the settlement limits as identified via Policy SW4 where proposals will be permitted, subject to compliance with pertinent Local and National Policies and other material planning considerations.

The following LDP policies are therefore considered pertinent in the determination of this planning application:

· Policy SW13, which serves to protect community facilities from being lost. This policy states that "Development proposals that would result in a loss of an existing community facility will only be permitted where:-

- alternative provision of at least equivalent value to the local community can be provided nearby, or
- it can be demonstrated that existing provision is inappropriate or surplus to the needs of the community and is no longer required, or
- it can be demonstrated there is no longer a viable community use for the facility".

Prior to the current owner (the applicant) taking ownership of Trinity chapel hall, the application site was a private rental used as an art studio, predominantly for individual use with infrequent community art classes. The viability to keep the property as an art studio, or similar, was not sustainable due to the lack

of local interest to maintain and use it as a local asset, hence the sale at auction. An argument could be made that the popularity of Trinity Chapel Hall has waned considerably since the demolition of its parent building, Trinity Presbyterian Chapel, which was demolished in the late 20th century.

The ground floor footprint has a gross internal floor area of 87m² with approx. 65m² of occupiable area. Working on the basis of 2m² per person for a building fulfilling assembly usage, this equates 32 occupants with access to only one WC. In accordance with BS 6465, table 8: Assembly buildings where WC use is not concentrated in intervals, there should be a min. of 3 no. WCs (1 of which being accessible), 1 no. urinal and 2 no. wash hand basins as a minimum. The current layout is not, and has never been, suitable for community use from a sanitary provision perspective.

The loss of the application site as a potential community facility does not come at the detriment of Merthyr Vale due to other more substantial and purposeful community facilities being available in nearby adjacent villages such as Halo Aberfan Community Leisure Centre (0.9 miles from application site) and The Willows Centre Troedyrhiw (2.1 miles from application centre).

Area and Residential Amenity.

The proposals do not involve any external works or additions to the property and therefore the conversion of the property will not impact on the character and appearance of the property and the surrounding environment.

Although the change of use will alter the occupancy usage i.e. community use to residential use, there will be no negative impact on the neighbouring properties or residential amenity, due to the locality being predominantly residential in nature.

Parking, Highways Safety, Public Transport & Active Travel

The application site has close proximity to unrestricted on-street parking along Wesley Place and the nearby Cardiff Road A4054.

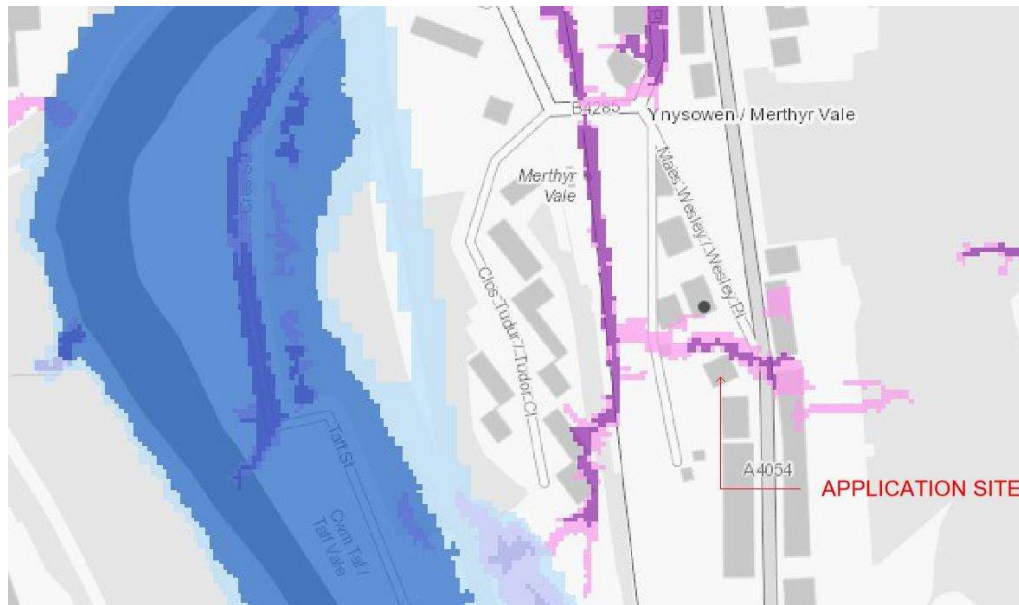
Merthyr Vale Train Station is within 0.4m of the application site.

Bus routes 78 and 79 pass through Merthyr Vale between Merthyr Tydfil and Pontypridd and Merthyr Tydfil and Bedlinog, respectively.

Secure cycle parking provision will be provided to the front of the property, noted on drawing 260501_04 Proposed Ground Floor Plan.

Flooding

The site is immediately adjacent to surface water and small watercourses flood zones 2 and 3, as illustrated by the pink/ purple extents within the extract below, taken from Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Maps.



Whilst the application site is isolated to the building itself, and is strictly not within the flood zones, the applicant recognises that the immediate vicinity surrounding the site (not under ownership of the applicant) is predominantly made of impervious surfaces like asphalt and brushed concrete, which exacerbates localised surface water flooding due to rainfall being unable to be conveyed naturally to ground. Rainwater run-off from the roof of the property, whilst negligible in the overall surface water volumes, will naturally contribute to this flooding effect. Therefore, the hard surfacing associated with the building (the roof) that currently directs its rainfall to local drainage systems will be adapted with sustainable urban drainage system features at the foot of the each rainwater downpipe in the form of SUDs planters. The SUDs planter will collect rainwater run-off from the roof, permeate through the growing medium, before being attenuated by clean stone and slowly released into the surface water system outside of peak rainfall. See cross sectional image below. These SUDs features are indicated on drawing 26051_05 Elevations.



The risk and consequences of flooding on the development is negligible due to the ground floor level being elevated above external ground level on three sides. The building apron at ground floor entry level

is directly off Wesley Place, which has a generous positive falls parallel to the property. When Wesley Place experiences surface water drainage flooding, the surface water direction of travel will be away from the property's door threshold. Furthermore, the building frontage has a level difference between internal finished floor level and external ground level of 75mm at door threshold with a noticeable cross fall carrying surface water into a nearby gulley at the lowest datum.

Green Infrastructure & Ecology

The immediate vicinity around the application site consists mainly of hard standing in the form of asphalt, concrete surfacing and extensive concrete retaining structures facilitating the external ground level changes. Due to the urban setting of the application site i.e. being adjacent to the main A'road passing through Merthyr Vale, and factoring in the constrained plot across multiple storeys and of varying flat ownership; new green infrastructure in the form of new planting is not practical. Therefore, in order to encourage interaction with nearby ecology, the installation of 3 no. swift boxes is proposed to the north facing gable end elevation, position approx. 7m above external ground level, as seen on drawing 26051_05 Elevations.

Furthermore, the SUDs planters will also provide green infrastructure to the property with plants adapted to temporary flooding (e.g., *Iris versicolor* (Blue Flag Iris), *Lobelia cardinalis* (Cardinal Flower), and marsh grasses) and by extension welcome ecology in the form local pollinators such as bees, hoverflies and butterflies and also seed-eating birds and insectivores are attracted to the tall, standing stems of grasses left over winter.

Conclusion

This application seeks consent for the change of use of the ground floor of the property from an art studio to a residential flat.

As demonstrated in the above appraisal, there is no conflict with planning policies.

The primary feedback from the pre planning advice application focused mainly on the loss of a community building, flood risk and surface water management, and biodiversity enhancement.

Loss of a community building:

Usage as a community facility has diminished over the decades with little to no interest to keep it as a community asset. There are other more vibrant community centres offering greater services in nearby villages.

Flood Risk and Surface Water Management:

SUDs planters will be installed at the base of each rainwater downpipe (2 no. total)

Biodiversity Enhancement:

3 No. swift boxes will be installed on the north facing gable end elevation. SUDs planters will also provide green infrastructure that will attract additional ecology.