

Conversion of chapel into 6 flats with associated refurbishment works, demolition of rear vestry annexe and creation of dedicated car parking area.

Brynhyfryd Chapel, Thomas Street, Treharris
Design & Access Statement | July 2025

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This statement has been prepared to support our Client's revised proposals for the 'Conversion of chapel into 6 flats with associated refurbishment works, demolition of rear vestry annexe and creation of dedicated car parking area' at Brynhfryd Chapel, Thomas Street, Treharris.
- 1.2 This statement explains the concept and principles of the development in relation to accessibility, character, community safety, environmental sustainability, movement and assesses the proposal against the relevant Planning Policy framework.
- 1.3 The statement demonstrates the proposal accords with relevant National and Local Planning Policy and other material planning policy considerations.



2. Site & Surroundings

- 2.1 The application site comprises the former Brynhyfryd Baptist Chapel located within the predominantly residential area of Treharris along with a parcel of land to the south.



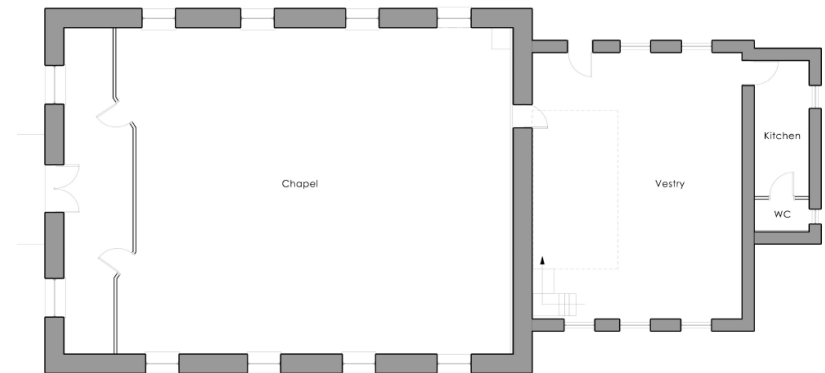
- 2.2 The property, constructed in 1880 – 1881 fronts the main road, Thomas Street, and is set back from the adjacent pavement by a small forecourt and stepped entrance. Thomas Street rises from south to north, with the southern parcel of land set on lower, level ground. The chapel closed in the early 2000's.



- 2.3 To the north and east of the chapel the site is bound by adjoining residential properties, with a strip of vacant land along the southern boundary of the site. Beyond the strip of land, is a small parcel of land also included within the application site, which is accessed independently of the Chapel directly from Thomas Street and sits opposite the former Royal Hotel.
- 2.4 The Application site lies within the Treharris Conservation Area and is recognised as a building of local importance but is not listed or afforded any statutory protection.



The interior of Brynhyfryd Chapel in its hey-day. Photo courtesy of <https://www.treharrisdistrict.co.uk>



- 2.5 The former chapel is of a classical design, with a vestry and kitchen / WC annex positioned to the rear of the main chapel hall. Stairs to either side of the front door lead to the gallery seating area.

- 2.6 Whilst the surrounding area is predominantly residential in nature, there are several commercial units within the vicinity of the site, located primarily along Perrott Street to the north of the site.

- 2.7 In November 2022, Planning permission (Reference P/22/0326) was granted for the conversion of the chapel into 8 no flats with associated refurbishment works, demolition of rear vestry annexe and creation of dedicated car parking area.
- 2.8 On review of the approved plans, it was evident the proposal did not meet WDQR or lifetime homes standards.
- 2.9 As the existing chapel is a designated building of local importance within the Treharris Conservation Area, the main design changes related to the internal layout of the building.
- 2.10 The site is not within a flood risk zone, or at risk from coastal, river or surface water flooding.



3. Planning Policy Context

National Planning Policy

- 3.1 PPW and the National Development Framework (published as **Future Wales – the National Plan 2040**) set out how the planning system at a national, regional and local level can assist in delivering these requirements through Strategic Development Plans (SDPs) and Local Development Plans (LDPs).
- 3.2 **Planning Policy Wales (PPW Edition 12) February 2024** sets out the land use planning policies of the Welsh Assembly Government. It is supplemented by a series of Technical Advice Notes. Procedural advice is given in circulars and policy clarification letters.
- 3.3 Section 3 states ‘Good design is fundamental to creating sustainable places where people want to live, work and socialise. Design is not just about the architecture of a building but the relationship between all elements of the natural and built environment and between people and places. Meeting the objectives of good design should be the aim of all those involved in the development process and applied to all development proposals, at all scales.’
- 3.4 With regard to environmental sustainability, PPW states ‘Good design promotes environmental sustainability and contributes to the achievement of the well-being goals. Developments should seek to maximise energy efficiency and the efficient use of other resources (including land), maximise sustainable movement, minimise the use of non-renewable resources, encourage decarbonisation and prevent the generation of waste and pollution.’ Wherever possible, PPW encourages the use of brownfield sites in preference to greenfield sites where it is suitable for development
- 3.5 Section 4 states ‘*The planning system should enable people to access jobs and services through shorter, more efficient and sustainable journeys, by walking, cycling and public transport. The Welsh Government is committed to reducing reliance on the private car and supporting a modal shift to walking, cycling and public transport. The planning system has a key role to play in reducing the need to travel and supporting sustainable transport, by facilitating developments which:*
- *are sited in the right locations, where they can be easily accessed by sustainable modes of travel and without the need for a car;*
 - *are designed in a way which integrates them with existing land uses and neighbourhoods; and*
 - *make it possible for all short journeys within and beyond the development to be easily made by walking and cycling.*
- 3.6 The Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2023, Section 160 (1), imposes a duty on Council’s with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area, where *special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.*
- 3.7 Planning Policy Wales Technical Advice Note 12: Design, sets out the Welsh Assembly Government’s detailed advice on how to achieve good design in all development at every scale throughout Wales.
- 3.8 The guidance sets out the Assembly’s objectives for good design, namely:
- Access – ensuring ease of access for all.
 - Character – sustaining or enhancing local character. Promoting legible development. Promoting a successful relationship between public and private space. Promoting quality, choice and variety. Promoting innovative design.
 - Community safety – ensuring attractive, safe public spaces. Security through natural surveillance.
 - Environmental sustainability – achieving efficient use and protection of natural resources. Enhancing biodiversity. Designing for change.
 - Movement – promoting sustainable means of travel.
- 3.9 TAN 18 - Transport and TAN 22 –Sustainable buildings are considered relevant to the site.
- #### Local Planning Policy
- 3.10 The current Development Plan for the site is the Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council Replacement Local Development Plan (LDP) 2016-2031.
- 3.11 Policies relevant to the application proposal include:

Policy SW1 – Provision of New Homes
 Policy SW2 – Provision of Affordable Housing
 Policy SW3 – Sustainably Distributing New Homes
 Policy SW4 – Settlement boundaries
 Policy SW9 – Planning Obligations
 Policy SW10 – Protecting and Improving Open Spaces
 Policy SW11 – Sustainable design and Placemaking
 Policy SW12 – Improving the Transport Network
 Policy SW13 – Protecting and Improving Local Community Facilities
 Policy CW1 - Historic Environment
 Policy EnW1 – Nature Conservation and Ecosystem Resilience
 Policy EnW4 – Environmental Protection

P/07/0169	Conversion of Chapel to dwelling (including alterations to building)	Granted	18.05.2007
P/04/0193	Change of use to single residential unit	Granted	16.06.2004

Supplementary Planning Guidance

- 3.12 Supplementary Planning Guidance adopted by the City Council which supplement Development Plan policies are also ‘material considerations’ to the determination of planning applications.
- 3.13 Relevant guidance in respect of this proposal is provided by SPG Note 1: Affordable Housing (March 2012), SPG Note 2: Planning Obligations (March 2012) and SPG Note 4: Sustainable Design (July 2013).

Planning History

P/25/0092	Variation of condition 2 of planning permission P/22/0326 to allow a variation in the approved boundary delineation of the site	Granted	09.06.2025
P/22/0326	Conversion of chapel into 8 flats with associated refurbishment works, demolition of rear vestry annexe and creation of dedicated car parking area.	Granted	21.11.2023
P/11/0189	Conversion of former Chapel to accommodate 6 apartments, including the demolition of the rear vestry annexe and other associated external works.	Refused	31.10.2012



4. Proposal

- 4.1 In November 2022, Planning permission (Reference P/22/0326) was granted for the conversion of the chapel into 8no flats with associated refurbishment works, demolition of rear vestry annexe and creation of dedicated car parking area.
- 4.2 On review of the approved plans, it was evident the proposal did not meet WDQR or lifetime homes standards.
- 4.3 This application seeks to address the issues raised in respect of the previously approved scheme.
- 4.4 The proposal will deliver 6 affordable dwellings. The density mix addresses the need as identified by the Council's Housing Team. The development will include both 3 person 2 bed flats (2no.) and 2 person 1 bed flats (4no).
- 4.5 The flats have been designed to meet WDQR and the HA's specification using readily sourced materials and local supply chains to ensure future maintenance of the homes is sustainable and cost efficient.
- 4.6 In common with the previously approved scheme for the site, the rear vestry and kitchen / WC annexe will be demolished and the chapel subdivided and converted to provide 3 new residential units to both the ground and first floors.
- 4.7 Minor changes to the rear elevation of the building will ensure natural daylight is provided to the rear 2 bed units.
- 4.8 The new entrance lobby will provide staircase access to the upper floor and lobby entrance to each of the ground floor units. Accommodation across the upper floor will replicate the ground floor layout.
- 4.9 Two 1bed units are proposed (50.5m² and 52.4m²) to the front of the building, each comprising an open plan kitchen / living / dining room, a double bedroom, bathroom and store. Across the rear of the building a 2 bed unit (66m²) will similarly comprise an open plan kitchen / living / dining room, 2 double bedrooms, bathroom and store.



- 4.10 Externally, the rear curtilage will provide dedicated and secure bin and cycle storage facilities and communal amenity space which will be levelled to ensure access to all. Parking for 12 vehicles will be provided to the south of the site on the parcel of land adjacent to the former Royal Hotel.
- 4.11 The Council have previously accepted that the site is located within a sustainable location, and the proposal will have no adverse impact on the highway safety of the area in accord with Policy SW11(5) of the LDP.
- 4.12 The design approach adopted by the Applicants is 'to provide a barrier free environment for all'.
- 4.13 Access will be interpreted to include access into and within buildings and the curtilage of the application site.

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| <p>4.14 Due to the topography change from the highway to the front entrance of the building, the scheme includes amendments to the access steps to Ambulant Disable Steps which comply with Part M.</p> <p>4.15 The site is within a sustainable location and is easily accessed by foot, cycle and bus.</p> <p>4.16 The site is served by regular public transport links, inclusive of main bus route through Perrott Street. Sustainable modes of travel will be encouraged for future residents.</p> <p>4.17 The Treharris Conservation Character Area Appraisal refers to Brynhyfryd Chapel as a prominent building within the conservation area and while it continues to remain undeveloped it has a negative impact and is visually harmful to the character and appearance of the conservation area.</p> <p>4.18 The external features to the front and side of the existing chapel would remain largely unchanged with blocked up windows reopened and proposed changes to the rear elevation sympathetic to the existing building and its position within the Conservation Area.</p> <p>4.19 The Council have previously indicated that the conversion and alterations to the chapel would present an opportunity to improve the quality of the building and its contribution to the character of the area and the historic environment, in accord with Policies SW11(1 & 2) and CW1 of the LDP.</p> <p>4.20 It is the aim of the development to achieve Secure by Design Gold Award. The proposal would bring back an otherwise abandoned building back into beneficial use, maintaining and regenerating a landmark building within a designated conservation area.</p> <p>4.21 The position of the site within an established residential area and the existing established boundaries ensures the safety of the dwelling and will deter casual crimes. The main entrances to the building are well positioned within defined secure defensible spaces and lit to ensure a strong sense of personal safety.</p> <p>4.22 The established nature of the area creates a sense of community and 'ownership' discouraging anti-social behaviour.</p> | <p>4.23 The scheme makes efficient use of the site whilst maintaining the privacy of adjacent neighbours.</p> <p>4.24 The proposal maximises natural lighting through the initial design choices further lowering the environmental impact of the scheme.</p> <p>4.25 In accord with the previous approval the application includes proposals ecological gain for bats and birds, including accessible ridge tiles for crevice dwelling species and swift nesting boxes on the buildings south and east elevations. Additionally, the application proposes new planting areas within the parking area.</p> |
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5. Conclusion

- 5.1 This application site is ideally located within the settlement boundary, in a sustainable location and utilises an existing building to create an attractive and high quality sustainable
- 5.2 The proposed conversion of the chapel would help bring an otherwise abandoned building back into beneficial use ensuring the long term future of the building and enhancing the character and appearance of the conservation area in which it is located.
- 5.3 The proposal will deliver 6 affordable dwellings and have been designed to meet WDQR and the Housing Associations specification.
- 5.4 As this statement confirmed all standard Development Control criteria set out in the Adopted Local Development Plan polices and Supplementary Planning Guidance can be achieved.
- 5.5 Accordingly, the application proposal is considered to adhere to National and Local Planning Policy and guidelines and doesn't adversely affect highway safety or residential amenity as to warrant a refusal.



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