

Townscape Heritage Initiative Scheme

ferguson mann architects

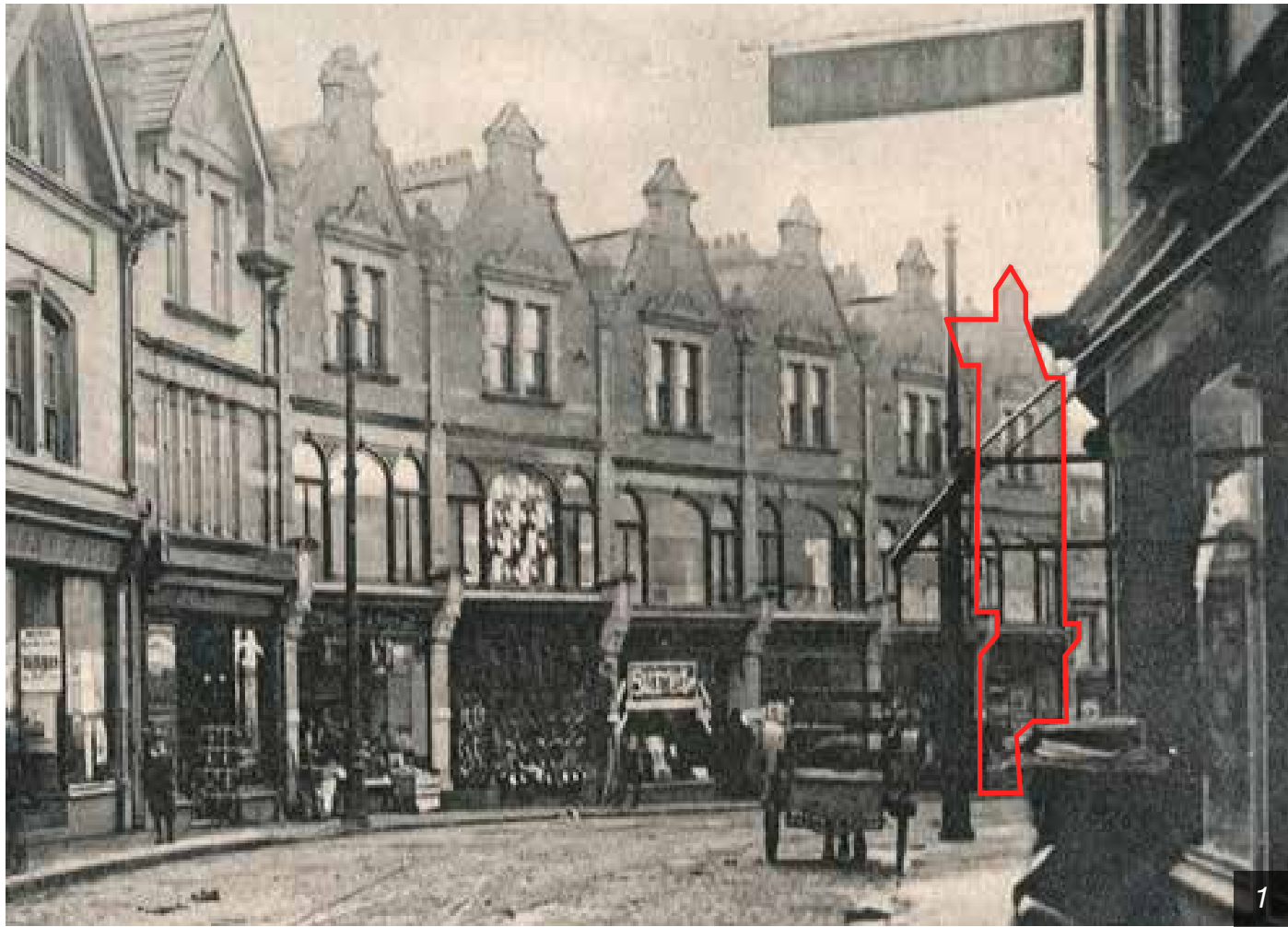
Design & Access Statement

(incl Heritage Impact Assessment)

1 Morlais Buildings, Pontmorlais, Merthyr Tydfil

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Client
Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council

Architect
Ferguson Mann Architects, Bristol

01 introduction

1 Morlais Buildings lies within the Pontmorlais area at the northern end of the Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre Conservation Area. The character area of Pontmorlais described in the Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre Conservation Appraisal (June 2009) is concentrated around the Pontmorlais High Street which is a continuation of what is now the more commercial end of the High Street to the south.

The whole of the town centre area was developed during the late 18th and early 19th century as a result of rapid industrial development and population growth. The Pontmorlais area played an important strategic role in the expanding areas of Merthyr, situated as it was between the industrial hubs of Penydarren and Dowlais with the town centre to the south.

The importance of the area during these growth years is reflected in the rich variety of architectural styles that developed during the late 18th, 19th and into the early 20th century, all representative of the significant investment made in the area during this period.

The various uses accommodated in the buildings: commercial, civic, social and spiritual also reflect the vibrancy of the area during this era.

The decline of the iron and steel industries has inevitably impacted on employment opportunities and hence investment in the area. This, together with inappropriate 20th century development and changes in the way consumers use the high street have further contributed to the slow erosion of the fabric of the Pontmorlais area.

However, a substantial variety of buildings do still survive within the Pontmorlais area and although a number of buildings are run down through lack of investment and beneficial use or have suffered from inappropriate alterations over time, the character of the area is still evident and is an important asset for Merthyr Tydfil.



1. Historical view (date unknown c. 1930s?) - 1 Morlais Buildings outlined in red

2 & 3. Google satellite view - site outlined in red

1 Morlais Buildings, High Street, Merthyr Tydfil

02 townscape heritage initiative & the brief

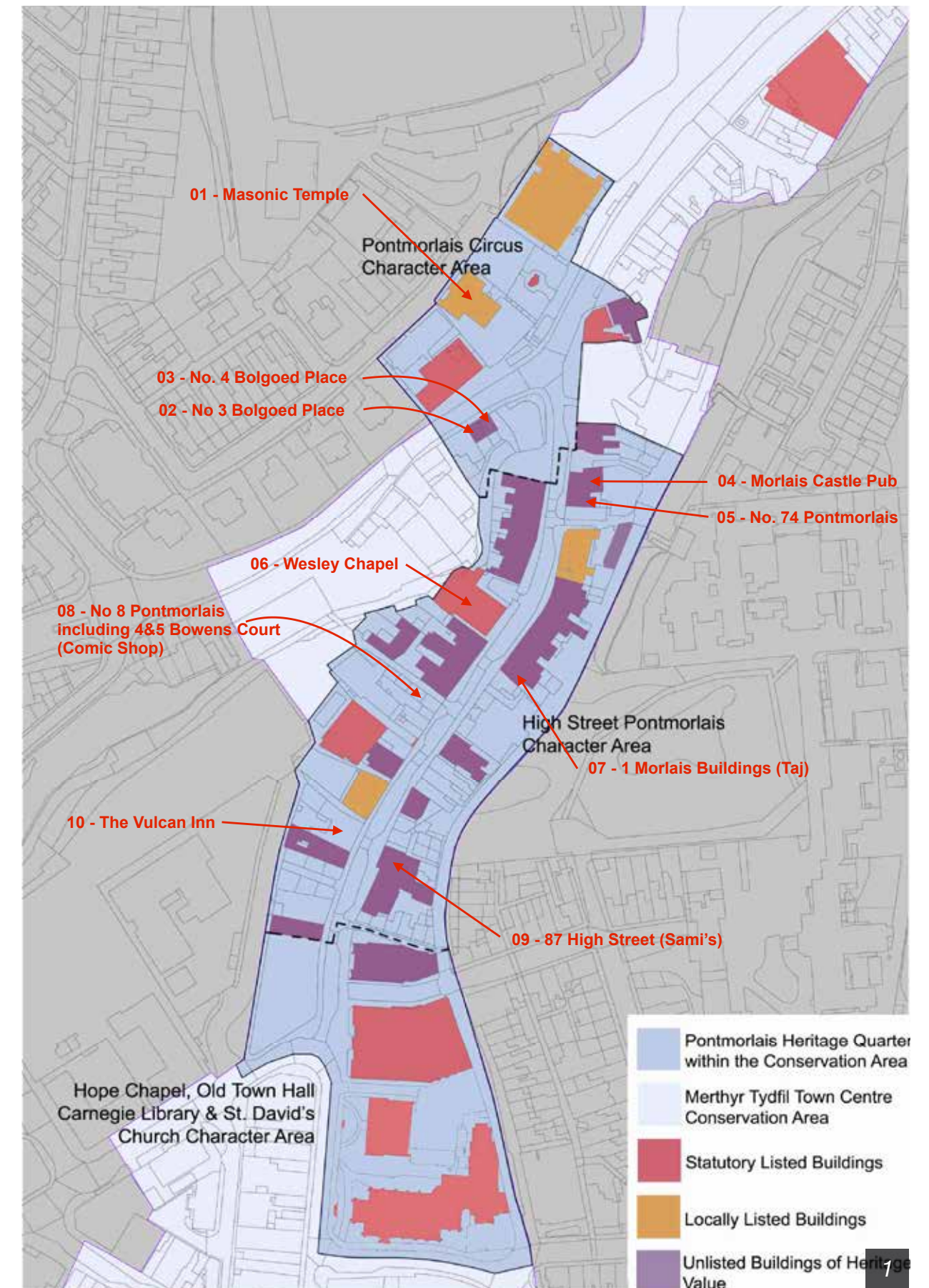
The current proposals have been developed as part of the Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) for the Pontmorlais area. The Heritage Lottery Fund Initiative in partnership with CADW and the local authority is aimed at regenerating run-down historic conservation areas through historic building repair. The programme is specifically designed to address problems in areas of particular social and economic need to improve the quality of the environment for all who live, work or visit there; to restore the appearance of the historic town and to encourage regeneration.

A recent Townscape Initiative Scheme has seen the regeneration of a number of properties within the Pontmorlais High Street Area which has already had a positive impact on the surroundings.

Focusing on the repair and reinstatement of historic fabric, eligible works typically include reinstatement of traditional shopfronts, timber sash windows, natural slate roof coverings, decorative ridge tiles, chimneys and rainwater goods, although the scope of works varies from property to property.

The objectives of the THI Scheme are consistent with the recommended strategies for improvement as set out in the Pontmorlais Conservation Area Management Plan (Insalls Report 2011) and with the relevant policies of the Merthyr Tydfil Local Development Plan (2006-2031) in particular strategic objective 11 – *to ensure the continued protection and enhancement of the natural, cultural, built and historic environment*

1. Key buildings in Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre Conservation Area (north) as identified in the Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre Conservation Area Character Appraisal (2009)



1 Morlais Buildings has been identified as a key historic building within the conservation area. Although not listed, the building, as part of the terrace of 1-6 Morlais Buildings has been identified as having heritage value within the Town Centre Conservation Area Character Appraisal (June 2009). The building is considered to contribute to the environmental and cultural heritage of the Borough and through the current THI scheme the council is seeking to preserve and enhance these historic buildings.

The building is located at the south end of the Morlais Buildings terrace at the north end of the

High Street, within Character Area 3.

1-6 Morlais Buildings are 3 storey buildings with very distinctive frontages with baroque style gables forming a very strong presence at this end of the High Street.

Historic photographs and surviving physical features evidence the fact that the buildings were built as a terrace with identical architectural features including:

- Distinctive brick 'dutch' style brick gables with limestone dressings
- Pedimented double sash decorative window with limestone dressings at second floor

- Full height arched headed tripartite timber window/ glazed screen at first floor with fixed central light and opening casements each side with egg & dart moulded stone cornice above.
- Decorative horizontal stone banding at each storey with full height stone pilasters with carved head detail with carved stone ball finial and capping
- Stone surround to shopfront with fluted pilasters and very ornate carved projecting consoles each side of the shopfront.

03 site & context

1. View of the shop front from the High Street

2. The rear view of the building from Tramroadside North



1 Morlais Buildings, High Street, Merthyr Tydfil



04

condition of existing building

1 Morlais Buildings is part of a terrace as described above. 3 Morlais has already been restored as part of an earlier TH scheme.

A number of original features still exist although often in a poor state of repair. Other historic features have been lost but the overall building form is intact.

The building is currently unused but was previously in use as a restaurant at ground floor with residential use above. The stonework on the street elevation has been painted white and the brickwork painted red. There is an existing slate roof with clay ridge tiles and decorative stone mouldings and copings to the gable which have been painted.

The building features original stonework surrounds and cills around the upper floor sash windows

which have also been painted.

On the first floor the original stone overpanel has been removed/covered with a boarded overpanel. A modern timber screen with two opening casements and solid panels within arched openings mimics the pre-existing historic arrangement..

The original shopfront fascia & shop front has been removed and replaced with external security shutters and casing. There is a shop window with stall risers clad with uPVC and a timber boarded fascia panel above. The shop door is set back from the street with a tiled step up. There are original stone pilasters on a brick plinth with outlets for historic rainwater goods which have been painted.

The flank elevation is rendered in waht appears to be ahrd cement render. Historic photos show two

brick chimneys which have been demolished on this elevation.

The rear elevation is accessed from Tramroadside North which is at a higher level to the High Street. A patio leads to the first floor and an external staircase leads down to the ground floor.

There are no hstoric photos of the rear of the premises but there are likely to have been numerous alterations over time to accommodate new uses and facilities. it is considered likely that the original window openings have been adapted and previosuly existing timber windows (possibly sash) have been replaced with the existing timber casements.

The building generally has uPVC half round section gutters, hoppers and round downpipes.



1



2



3

1. External roller shutters with uPVC clad stall risers and timber boarded fascia panel.

2. Painted stone pilasters with stone detailing.

3. Timber screen to first floor.

4. Sash window with painted stone surround and details and painted brickwork.

5. Concrete render on South-West elevation and uPVC rainwater goods.

6. Decorative stone mouldings and slate roof beyond.



4



5



6

The current proposal is to reinstate the historic features of the buildings and to remove the inappropriate alterations that are deemed to be harmful. The proposed alterations are based on existing details as well as historic photographs.

- Repairs to roofing including leadwork to rear of gable to front elevation.
- Reinstall 2 no. chimney stacks and pots. New lead flashings for stacks.
- Repair and redecorate render to flank elevation.
- Remove masonry paint finishes from all stone features.
- All stone cills to be repaired.
- Repair second floor sash window including repairs to central mullion.
- New hardwood timber screen with thin double glazed units to first floor to match historic details.
- Reinstall stone fascia panel to first floor.
- All security shutters removed and moved internally.
- Install new hardwood shopfront with thin double glazed units.
- New timber fascia and cornice on the shopfront surround.
- Shopfront pilasters be repaired and redecorated. Any missing stone features to be reinstated. Any new to match existing. Repair brick plinth blocks.
- uPVC rainwater goods to be replaced with cast iron/rerouted as noted on the drawings
- Remove/relocate satellite dish on flank elevation to rear.
- Replace existing windows and doors with new hardwood framed doors and casements with double glazed units to rear elevation.



05 proposed alterations & repairs

1. Brick plinth and stone pilaster to be repaired and rainwater goods to be rerouted internally as per original detail

2. Stonework to be repaired and missing features to be reinstated/paint removed

3. Paint to be stripped from brick and stonework.

4. Remove existing shopfront and external shutters and install new hardwood shopfront with glazing.

06 heritage impact

Whilst changes to buildings often reflect the way a building is used over time and can have significance in their own right, the alterations that have been carried out at 1 Morlais Buildings are considered to have a detrimental impact on the aesthetic and historic value of the buildings.

The proposed works will remove the inappropriate and unsightly features such as the external security shutters, uPVC stall risers and new windows. Any paint will be stripped from the stone and brickwork to reveal its natural colour (subject to trial investigations to establish viability and condition of substrates).

The existing render to the flank elevation will be repaired and redecorated.

The existing roof will be repaired and new windows to the ground and first floors will be replaced with traditional hardwood screens with thin double glazed units and timber doors.

Any existing aesthetic details will be repaired or matched to existing and the restoration of chimney stacks will reinstate the design and proportions of the original building and as such will improve the appearance of the building.

These changes will contribute to the aesthetic quality of the street and the pontmorlais heritage quarter as a whole. The works will bolster the future of the buildings, helping the owners to maintain their buildings.



1

1 Morlais Buildings, High Street, Merthyr Tydfil

07 access

The proposals will not affect access to the building.

The proposed alterations will have no impact on existing movement to and from the site and surrounding areas.

1. Photograph showing the street-scape circa 1930s?

2. Cues of shopfront and window profiles taken from evidence in historical images - photograph believed to be no. 3 Morlais Buildings.



2

08

reference material

Reference material

Merthyr Tydfil Local Development Plan 2006-20121 (MTDBC)

Merthyr Tydfil – Understanding Urban Character (CADW)

Pontmorlais Heritage Quarter – Conservation Area Management Plan (Donald Insalls 2011)

Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre Conservation Areas Character Appraisal (MTDBC 2009)

Heritage Impact Assessments in Wales (CADW May 2017)

Design & Access Statements in Wales (CADW April 2017)

Alan George online archive

Francis Frith online archive

(Special thanks to Gareth Rogers at MTDBC for providing various maps and photographs from their records.)

