

Design and Access Statement

Change of use of the former Options Cards & Gifts Merthyr Tydfil

REVISION A 27.03.2025



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INTRODUCTION

This design statement is in support of the Full Planning Application, for Mr Robert Price, at 28 Victoria St, Merthyr Tydfil CF47 8BW

The new application seeks permission for the provision of two self contained flats, the flats are a long term let which is will appeal to a small family.

This Statement is set out in accordance with guidance from Tan 12 and DCFW document “Design and access statements in Wales: Why, What and How”.

This document accompanies the full planning application and is intended to set out aspirations and demonstrate the approach to subsequent detail design of the development. It should be viewed as a ‘living’ working document.

PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT National Planning Policy

The Wales Spatial Plan People, Places, Futures sets a strategic framework to guide future development and policy interventions. It integrates the spatial aspects of National strategies for social inclusion and economic development, health, transport and environment, translating the Assembly Government's sustainable development duty into practice.

Planning Policy Wales (PPW Edition 8) January 2016 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.

Chapter 4 – Planning for Sustainability, Chapter 6 – The Historic Environment, Chapter 8 – Transport, Chapter 9 – Housing, are of specific relevance to the development of the site.

Chapter 4 states, “Good design should promote the efficient use of resources, including land. It should seek to maximise energy efficiency and the efficient use of other resources, minimise the use of non-renewable resources and minimise the generation of waste and pollution. Mixed use development (of both built and open space) emphasising flexibility and adaptability, can provide particular design opportunities, adding interest and vitality to living and working environments. Good design is essential to ensure that areas, particularly those where higher density development takes place, offer high environmental quality, including open and green spaces Landscape considerations are an integral part of the design process and can make a positive contribution to environmental protection and improvement, for example to biodiversity, climate protection, air quality and the protection of water resources. The visual appearance of proposed development, its scale and its relationship to its surroundings and context are material planning considerations. Local planning authorities should reject poor building and contextual designs. However, they should not attempt to impose a particular architectural taste or style arbitrarily and should avoid inhibiting opportunities for innovative design solutions”.

“Local planning authorities should assess the extent to which their development plan settlement strategies and new development are consistent with minimising the need to travel and increasing accessibility by modes other than the private car. Wherever possible, developments should be located at major public transport nodes or interchanges”.

“Previously developed (or brownfield) land should, wherever possible, be used in preference to greenfield sites. Many previously developed sites in built-up areas may be considered suitable for development because their re-use will promote sustainability objectives”.

Chapter 6 states “Local planning authorities and other public bodies have an important role in protecting and conserving the historic environment while helping it accommodate and remain responsive to present-day needs. Historic assets can make an important contribution to sustainable development objectives”

With regard to listed building and conservation areas, PPW states “Development plans should where appropriate include locally specific policies for the conservation of the built environment, including the protection or enhancement of listed buildings and conservation areas.”

Chapter 8 states “Local authorities should promote public transport as a means to achieve environmental objectives, to assist in relieving congestion and to encourage social inclusion.

Chapter 9 states “The Assembly Government’s vision for housing is for everyone in Wales to have the opportunity to live in good quality, affordable housing, to be able to choose where they live and to decide whether buying or renting is best for them and their families. The objectives are to provide:

homes that are in good condition, in safe neighbourhoods and sustainable communities; and

greater choice for people over the type of housing and the location they live in, recognising the needs of all”.

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.

The guidance sets out the Assembly’s objectives for good design, namely

TAN 18

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

- Transport and TAN 22 –Sustainable buildings are considered relevant to the site.

Local Policy:

It is considered that the Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council Local Development Plan (LDP) and policies set out within are relevant to this application. The proposed is affected by the following policy and statements set out in the LDP: The site is located within the primary growth area and settlement area, BW1 and BW4. New development in such areas is generally supported under the policies, therefore the principle of development is considered to be acceptable.

Policy BW5: Natural heritage

The site has a real low quality of landscape, it must be noted that the development looks to add and enhance the rear views from the train station.

Policy BW6: Townscape and built heritage

The site is located in the towns conservation area and will be required to:

- i) be designed to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area, having regard to the conservation area appraisal where appropriate.*
- ii) avoid the removal of existing historic features, including traditional shopfronts and joinery.*
- iii) use materials which are traditional, or appropriate to their context.*
- iv) complement or reflect the architectural qualities of nearby buildings which make a positive contribution to the character of the area.*
- v) pay special attention to the settings of buildings which contribute to the character of the area.*
- vi) avoid adverse impact on any significant views, within, towards and outwards from the conservation area*

Policy BW7: Sustainable design and place making

The proposals address best practice in design incorporating local character, sustainable design whilst delivering a practical and economically sustainable development for an empty building on the high street.

Policy BW12: Development proposals and transport

The building has great links to site by foot, bike and bus.

TAN15 states that the industrial use should be located on previously developed land, it is worth noting that this land has been used in the past and is not a greenfield site. A FCA is submitted as part of this application. It is worth noting that the residential part of the scheme is outside of the flood zone.

The proposals are in an area affected by flooding. It is considered that the uses proposed are non-critical and may be justified in this location. Development levels are designed to minimize flood risk and a 'dry' escape route from the development to a safe level has been incorporated should extreme flooding occur. It is considered the development poses no increased risk of flooding elsewhere. Drainage details accompany the application.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT / CONSULTATION

The location is key to this property, it has amazing transport links whether its local travel by taxi or further afield by using the bus or train service which are both in walking distance.

All on-street parking is regulated; all public off-street car parking is charged for. We've discussed the project with the Highways department, who in turn confirmed that parking was not needed due to its location in the town centre.

SITE & SURROUNDINGS

The application site is located to the north-western side of the main High Street, a former card and gift shop is on the ground floor and the top floor which is being converted is a small café which was no longer in business.

The northern section of the street is divorced from the main 1960's Town Centre but the High street is in close geographic proximity to other parts of the Town Centre, the existing scheme of traffic management has served to separate the street from its geographic context, exacerbating the post war decline of the once vibrant commercial activities within the street frontage properties, disrupting the natural movements of both pedestrian and vehicular traffic.

The surrounding area is a mix of residential and commercial / office uses. Properties are predominantly large 3 storey originally commercial buildings. The application site is within a highly sustainable location, within walking distance of local and national retail facilities, entertainment centres, restaurants and supermarkets.

Constraints and Opportunities

A full assessment of the physical characteristics of the site and its context in relation to surrounding development was undertaken to identify opportunities and constraints presented by the site.

The key opportunities/constraints the site presented were considered to be:

The need to maintain external elements of this attractive and important architectural feature.

The need to protect existing architectural form and detailing to the interior of the listed building, minimise any changes to the fabric.

The need to maintain neighbours' amenity.

The need to create suitably sized and attractive accommodation capable of accommodating a range of people

Ease of access to public transport and local facilities

Ease of access to local highway and footpath networks.

PROPOSAL

As the application drawings illustrate, the proposal is to change the cafe to a flat and add another floor to the café area and extend out to gain another two nice size flats, there is

the proposal envisages the proposed change of use, rear extension and conversion of the existing property to form 13no. flats, 8 self service accommodation units and 2 A3 units.

A full assessment of the physical characteristics of the site and its context in relation to surrounding development was undertaken to identify opportunities and constraints presented by the site.

The assessment identified the following 'constraints' and 'opportunities'

Main building

The main building element of the property appears generally in good structural condition.

Internally, again the building appears generally in good condition.

For the most part, the original doors, frames, architrave and skirtings have been retained, this will remain throughout the proposal.

Building curtilage

The curtilage of the building is limited to an irregularly shaped rear courtyard area.

The pedestrian access from the high street, affords access to and from to the flats.

In an effort to find a long term viable use of the listed building the only viable long term use for the building was considered to be conversion to self contained residential accommodation, with a steady stream of turnover from the 8 self service accommodation units.

The key factors determining the design process were:

The need to maintain external elements of this important architectural feature.

The need to protect any remaining existing architectural form and detailing to the interior of the listed building, minimise any changes to the fabric.

The need to maintain neighbours' amenity.

The need to create suitably sized and attractive accommodation capable of accommodating a range of people.

In developing the application proposals, careful consideration was given to maintaining the character and appearance of the building.

The proposals seek to maintain the external fabric and form of the front elevation of the building without alteration and the change of use, rear 3rd floor extensions and conversion of the property to form more self contained studios and 1 bed apartments set over three floors, with bin storage facilities at ground floor level. Modern internal separating walls will be removed to enable the redevelopment of the building.

Access into the building will be via the existing pedestrian access from the high street, leading to a central staircase allowing access to all proposed units. Communal refuse storage facilities will be positioned at ground floor level adjacent to the rear entrance to the road behind.

At ground floor level, the accommodation will remain commercial.

All the self contained apartments and a studio apartment. will consist of an open plan kitchen / dining / living room, bedroom and bathroom. All proposed units will have direct access to private courtyard amenity area to the rear of the property.

Access / Movement

The design approach adopted by the applicant is 'to provide a barrier free environment for all' within the limits of the form of the existing building.

Access will be interpreted to include access into and within buildings and the curtilage of the application site.

The position of the site on High Street presents no potential problems for pedestrian and car borne visitors to the rear.

The site is within easy walking distance from the train station providing regular links to Cardiff, London and the South of England. Regular bus routes are accessible.

This statement is intended to provide a broad indication of design philosophy in respect of the scheme at planning stage which will be augmented and amended as the detailed design progress to Building Regulation approval stage in accord with the requirements of Part 'M' of the 1990 Building Act.

Character

Original openings and features to the building are retained and where necessary refurbished.

Community Safety

The scheme has been designed within the confines of the existing building, with habitable windows positioned to afford natural surveillance of the building entrances.

The established nature of the area creates a sense of community and ‘ownership’ discouraging anti-social behaviour.

The existing gates will be refurbished, so all front doors will be behind a gated community.

Perimeter wall

The proposed development will be defined by existing site boundaries.

Lighting

The site will be lit to BS5489 and be positioned to ensure an even spread of light over the pedestrian accesses.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

The scheme was developed in response to a detailed assessment of the character and appearance of the site and surrounding area, as set out in this statement.

The scheme makes efficient use of the site whilst maintaining the privacy of adjacent neighbours. This site is located in a highly sustainable location with good access to local and city centre based facilities by foot and regular public transport.

The application site is within easy distance of extensive local and town Centre retail, commercial and recreation facilities, and established recreation facilities.

Local public transport is readily accessible, with bus routes to and from the town Centre.

The scheme will explore the viability and where appropriate, seek to encompass renewable energy technologies and design, such as:

Design

Passive design in particular ‘natural ventilation’, ‘natural daylighting and ‘orientation’

Whilst detailed assessment of potential renewable energy technologies will be undertaken prior to the commencement of work on site, it is recognised that certain technologies may impact on the external appearance of the buildings.

Solar panels are considered to be most likely alternative technology which might prove to be a viable and practical energy source to be incorporated in this development.

Fabric

Encourage the use of materials with lower environmental impact over their life cycle.

Encourage the specification of responsible and where practical locally sourced materials for the basic building and finishing elements including re-use of materials, recycled materials, legally sourced timber and supply chain (ems).

High levels of insulation exceeding current Building Regulation standards

Services: Mechanical/Heating

Heat recovery systems

Thermally efficient boilers

Services: Electrical

Solar water heating and photovoltaics electricity generation

Low energy lighting fixtures

Energy metering

Dual flush WC to reduce water consumption

Waste

Adequate provision for domestic waste and recycling

Alternative energy sources

Low or zero carbon energy sources

CONSERVATION PLANNERS COMMENTS ADDED AS REVISION A

CONCLUSION

The proposed scheme will take maximum advantage of the site's position within this established mixed commercial and residential area to create an attractive and high quality sustainable development within the confines of the existing listed building.

The proposal is considered to both conserve the front of the building so it matches the existing shops in the area, but we rear of the property we wanted to make us of the lovely new area that the council have provided for people to sit and relax and make use of, it's a great communal area and we wanted to make use of this.

Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) – News Release 2006/0024
www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1002882&PressNoticeID=2170

DCLG (2006) Circular 01/2006: Guidance on Changes to the Development Control System, London www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1500620

Home Office/Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) (2003) Safer Places- the Planning System and Crime Prevention
www.communities.gov.uk/pub/724/SaferplacestheplanningsystemandcrimepreventionPDF3168Kb_id1144724.pdf

ODPM (2005) Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development, London www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1143804

The Town and Country Planning (GPDO) (Amendment) (Wales) Order 2009, No1024: Design and Access Statements: Wales

The Town and Country Planning (GPDO) (Amendment) (Wales) Order 2008, No2336: General Development Procedure

TAN 12: Design (2009) – Appendix 1: Guidance on the design and access statement

TAN 22: Planning for Sustainable Buildings – DRAFT (2009)

Heritage Impact Assessment in Wales 2017

Technical Advice Note 24: The Historic Environment

Technical Advice Note 12: Design

Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2016

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

Planning Policy Wales, (Edition 6, November 2016)

The Local Development Plan (LDP) for Merthyr Tydfil

CADW, Conservation Principles for the Sustainable Management of the historic environment on Wales (2011)

Welsh Office Circular 61/96: Planning and the Historic Environment: Historic Buildings and Conservation Areas

Welsh Office Circular 1/98: Planning and the Historic Environment: Directions by the Secretary of State for Wales