

Access and Design Statement

**(Former Senior Citizens Centre) Bryn Siriol,
Margam Street, Cymmer, Port Talbot SA13 3ED**



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E-mail from Dean Nicholas, Principal Estates Manager,
Neath Port Talbot CBC to Nicola Lake (Planning) dated
4 July 2019

Appendix A

1 History and ownership

Bryn Siriol is located in Cymmer, a small rural town in the South of Wales in the Afan Valley. It is currently owned by Neath Port Talbot CBC ("NPT"), however, NPT is unable to confirm when precisely the community centre was formally declared surplus to requirements and closed (2015/16 approximately). However, a copy of an e-mail from Dean Nicholas, Principal Estates Manager at NPT, to your Nicola Lake dated 4 July 2019 is annexed detailing the background of this property. I am advised by Mollie Goatson of NPT Estates Department that this was previously deemed sufficient for change of use purposes.

2 Current condition

As previously mentioned, Bryn Siriol is owned by NPT and, accordingly, the current condition of the property is within the knowledge of the Estates Department. Some photographs of the inside of the building are attached, however, these are not particularly good quality due to the building being dark (as many of the windows are boarded up). All services to the property have fallen into significant disrepair. The pitched roof has cracked and missing tiles which has leaked causing water penetration and ingress which, in turn, has resulted in the partial collapse of the ceiling in the main hall. There are broken and boarded windows throughout the property. The water ingress has resulted in significant damp and mould throughout. The lower level garden is extremely overgrown.

3 Policy considerations of conversion into a residential property

Viability as a senior citizens centre

It is argued here that the property is no longer viable as a senior citizens centre. This can be evidenced by the fact that NPT felt it had no option but to close and subsequently place it on the market for sale (see attached e-mail Appendix A).

If residential permission were not to be granted the building would continue to deteriorate.

Within the settlement limit/area

Bryn Siriol is located in Margam Street, Cymmer which is within the settlement limit/area and is, therefore, in accordance with policy SC1 where there is a presumption to grant planning permission.

Welsh Government's principles and local housing targets

The Welsh Government's planning framework identified sustainability as a key driver and principle for planning decisions. This desire to protect and conserve the unique features of this beautiful area need to be balanced against the projected economic and growth scenario of new jobs and additional new residential units. Finding locations for the new housing is a difficult task and use of brownfield sites or conversions ought to be preferable to building in the countryside. The need to protect 'The Green Wedge' results in less available land for new homes and conversion of redundant premises must be favourable to them falling into disrepair and not being used.

Sustainability

The Valleys have long had a tradition of strong cultural heritage and community identity and the closing of the senior citizens centre by NPT was an unfortunate blow for the village.

My proposal to convert the property into residential accommodation would result in the permanent loss of the senior citizens centre. Careful consideration must be given to whether the benefit of bringing a neglected building into residential ownership but losing its current planning status is preferable to that same building falling further into significant disrepair. I would strongly argue that, bearing in mind NPT's closure of the community centre, the evidence suggests that granting conversion into residential is the best option to preserve this beautiful building for the local community and its future generations.

Small Local Centre

The Local Development Plan identifies Cymmer as a "Small Local Centre". A small local centre needs to have at least one shop and/or other community facilities. Cymmer has a number of shops in the locality. In Cymmer there is:

1. A local chemist
2. A newsagent and general store
3. A florist
4. A builder's merchant

5. A haberdashery
6. A chip shop
7. A swimming pool
8. A library
9. A fire station
10. Public house
11. Extensive cycle tracks

Cymmer, therefore, does have the requisite number and type of alternative commercial premises, community facilities and transport links required under the sustainability principle and in accordance with its classification as a small local centre. Therefore, granting permission for conversion to residential would not remove the last building of its type from the village and would not result in any detriment to the village or their needs, other than those already suffered due to the closure of the senior citizen's centre. It is argued that Bryn Siriol falling into disrepair in such a prominent location is more of a detriment to the area than if it was a well maintained and loved and lived in property.

Preservation

My intention is to turn the property into a residential home whilst preserving, repairing, reusing and maintaining as many existing features as possible, including the very impressive clock tower.

Amenities and facilities

I have spoken to a few local residents who have said they would love to see the property occupied again. Nobody has said that they do not think it should be residential. It is a standalone detached building in a predominantly residential area. It is in a prominent location making its current condition most unfortunate.

In terms of the immediate amenities available at Bryn Siriol, the demise of the property includes a lower level surrounding, significantly overgrown, garden area. It would be hoped to create a lovely vegetable/fruit garden here.

Parking

In Margam Street, on the opposite side of the road to Bryn Siriol, there is a small defined parking area on the roadway which would be utilised for parking. It is argued that, if the property were to continue to have its current use, the likelihood is that it would result in significantly more car parking requirements. The local parking would not only need to cater for short term visitors of the premises but would also require all day parking for staff. This additional burden

would be far greater than granting residential planning permission for one dwelling which is likely to only result in one vehicle, if any.

Conversion to residential dwelling

The building, whilst neglected, appears to be structurally sound. The stone walls of the building are substantial and the building is one of the strongest in the area. Although some of the original tiles need repair and/or replacing, the roof timbers appear to be strong and it is believed Bryn Siriol will be standing proud for many years to come. Although needing remedial work, it is envisaged that conversion into a residential unit would not be difficult or onerous and would have the benefit of saving the building and bringing it back into occupation. It is located in a residential area where there is adequate parking nearby, good transport links and other shops and community facilities available.

It is believed there are no other viable uses for the property - see e-mail at Appendix A.

Bryn Siriol is included in the Schedule of Buildings of Local Importance (Policy BE2), being marked as of architectural interest, having historical/cultural association, group/settlement character value and an old/rare local building. Bryn Siriol is well known in the village due to its prominent location and distinctive clock tower. An elderly resident advised it used to be the local Rent Office many years previously. The building has fallen into significant disrepair including broken/vandalised windows. It is not beneficial to Cymmer for this beautiful building to have become so neglected and it is hoped that it can be brought back to its former glory. It is my view that my plans to convert the building into a residential dwelling will conserve the architecturally significant features and enhance the building and the area.

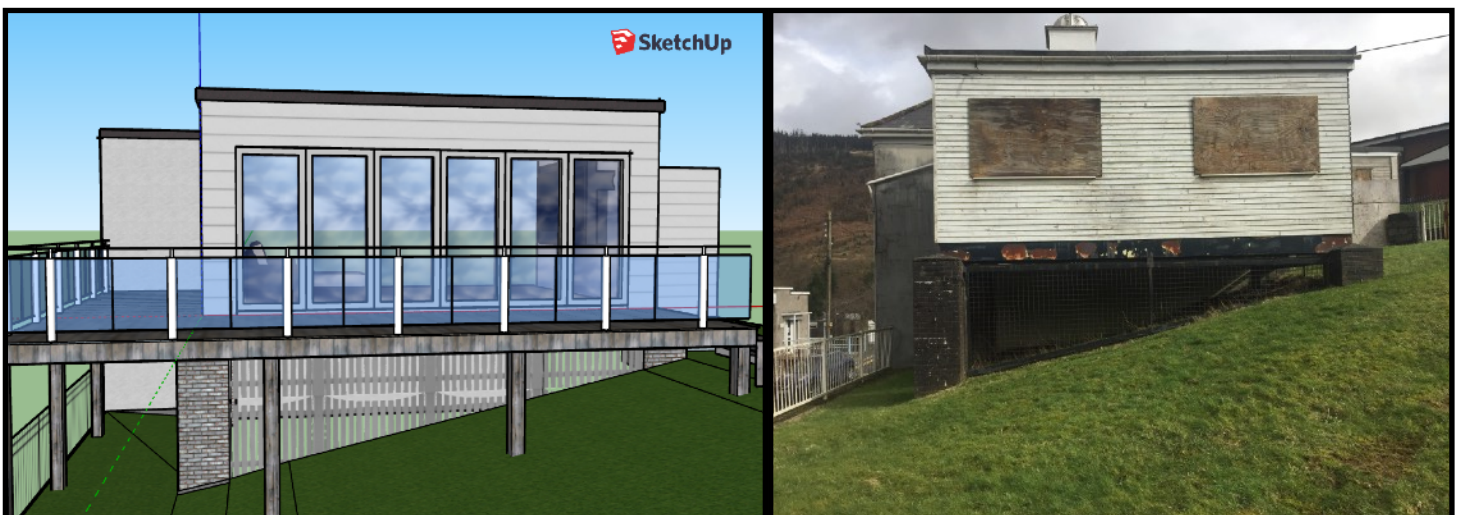
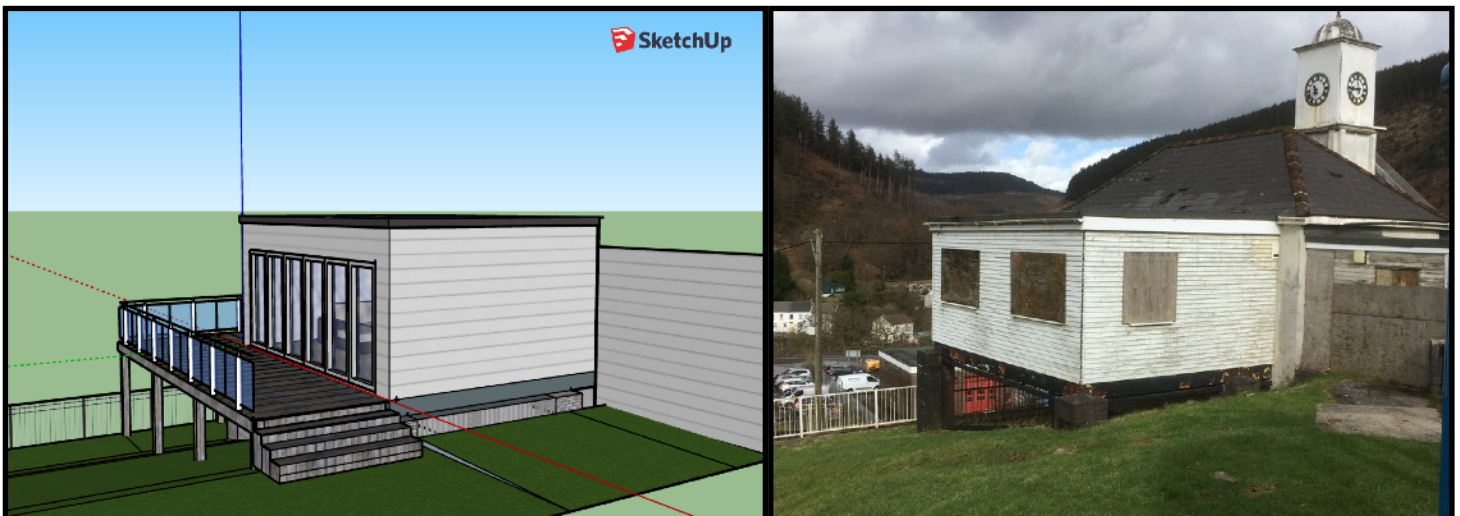
I do not intend to extend the building with the exception of an external decked terrace surrounding the existing West extension.

4 Design

Bryn Siriol would make a lovely and interesting residential property. There is adequate space for the property to have three bedrooms, two on the ground floor (previously two offices) and one on the first floor. The two existing toilets on the ground floor would become the family bathroom. The main hall would remain open-plan, to include a kitchen area and living/dining area (see attached floor plans). The original staircase would also be sympathetically restored.

The requirements of a residential building are very different to that of a day centre. To further help the transformation I would like to build a raised terrace, attached to the existing West extension of the property. The addition of bi-fold doors will allow the light and views of the local area to become part of the living room and kitchen, creating a harmonious connection to the countryside.

The new decked terrace will incorporate a timber frame which will support composite deck boards. The existing West extension is built on a steel ring beam supported by brick piers. Two 400mm centre ladder frames will be bolted to the existing steel beams over which the composite deck board will be laid. These frames will in turn be supported on the perimeter by wooden posts secured to the ground by metal/concrete post anchors. The deck perimeter will have a glass and stainless steel balustrade. Below is an impression of what I would like to achieve.





5 Summary

Bryn Siriol is a historic building of architectural significance and a local landmark. The building has regrettably fallen into disrepair and is now in danger of further deterioration and loss of some of the architectural features. The property is currently in the ownership of NPT and, as such, the Estates Department is fully aware of the current poor condition of the property. It has been indicated by NPT that it is difficult to see how any community group could take on the building.

This Access and Design Statement argues that conversion to residential would protect and enhance both the building and the surrounding area. It is believed that granting conversion would be consistent with all relevant local and national policies including:

- National targets to increase the number of residential units
- National and local policies regarding sustainability
- It is within the designated Settlement area/limit where there is a presumption of development

The Access and Design statement demonstrates that conversion is sustainable and that the area has the benefit of other premises, transport links and community facilities required of its designation as a small local centre. In

addition, this document identifies suitable parking for the property to avoid any additional parking burden on neighbouring streets, which would, in any case, be less than if the building was used for community purposes.

My husband and I are in the process of purchasing Bryn Siriol from NPT and hope to complete the purchase in the near future. We love this building and would sincerely wish to have the opportunity to convert it into a fantastic home to live in. We have already sold our previous home and are keen to make a start as soon as possible.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should further assistance be needed.

APPENDIX A

From: Dean WJ. Nicholas
Sent: 04 July 2019 13:07
To: Nicola Lake
Subject: Former Brynsiriol Home for the Aged

Hi Nicola,

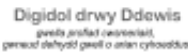
Further our conversation yesterday, I have looked through the file but unfortunately it is incomplete and I am unable to confirm when the community centre was formally declared surplus to requirements and closed. However, there is Board Report from the 17th January 2014 that gave approval for the property to be leased to NSA. Therefore, it would have been declared surplus by least 2013 but I believe that it could have been quite a bit earlier than this.

As discussed, there was a lease agreement with NSA from 12th March 2015 until the 8th March 2018. During this time the building was never re-opened and remained empty.

As a Council, a decision was made to close the Community Centre and email correspondence on file appears to confirm that there was a lack of use of the facility within the community. As a property section, we have tried to lease the building to a third party community group (NSA) with a view to it be re-opened for a community use, which also failed. Therefore, we feel that we have exhausted all avenues for retaining the building for community use. Also, the building is now in such a poor condition that it is difficult to see how any community group could take on the building and make it a feasible proposition.

Regards,

Dean

  			
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Dean Nicholas MRICS RICS Registered Valuer			
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 Os hoffech ddefnyddio'r Gymraeg wrth ddelio â'r Cyngor os gwelwch yn dda cliciwch [yma](#)