



Pontrhydyfen Junior School Conversion

Planning Statement

September 2020

Introduction

This planning statement is to support a new planning application to convert the existing Pontrhydyfen Junior School building into two residential dwellings.

This statement reviews the status of the application site including the local context, the proposed development and how the proposals fall in line with the current NPT Local Development Plan (LDP) and associated planning policies.

Site Context

The application site is within the small settlement village of Oakwood as defined within the LDP. Oakwood is located very close to the village of Pontrhydyfen and is approximately 4 miles from the town of Port Talbot. Oakwood has excellent existing links to Port Talbot via the A4107 and to the town of Neath via the B4286 and B4287.

The application site comprises of the former Pontrhydyfen Junior School buildings and playground areas. The former school canteen and gym buildings across School Road do not form part of this planning application and are now under the ownership of others.

The small village of Oakwood overlooks another small village in the valley, Pontrhydyfen. In terms of existing architecture within the area, there is a mix of older 18th Century terraced housing and more modern detached and semi-detached dwellings. The existing junior school buildings form part of a group of buildings with prominent scale such as former church and chapel buildings. Access to the existing buildings, both pedestrian and vehicular, is via School Street; this is where the principal elevations front.

Relevant Planning History

P2017/0491 – Full planning approval to convert the existing school buildings into 6nr residential dwellings (note these include the buildings opposite this application site) and 2nr new residential dwellings within the school grounds.

LDP Overarching Policies

SC1 – Settlement Limits

The application site is located within SC1 Settlement Limits, namely the village of Oakwood, as defined by the NPT LDP.

Policy SC1 states that ‘Development within settlement limits that is proportionate in scale and form to the role and function of the settlement as set out in the Settlement Hierarchy will be acceptable in principle.’

The proposed development remains proportionate in scale and form to the role and function of the settlement. The proposed development is a sustainable development which makes efficient use of the existing brownfield site where otherwise the existing school buildings would be left to further deteriorate into disrepair.

SC2 – Protection of Community Facilities

The application site already has planning consent for change of use to residential dwellings; P2017/0491.

The school was closed in August 2015 due to dwindling pupil numbers and was purchased for residential development in 2016. The fact that residential development has been approved already evidences that the Local Authority don’t believe the buildings are suitable for community use development and that there are sufficient exiting community buildings for the local residents.

LDP Topic Based Policies

SP7 – Housing Requirement

Under Policy SP7 a growth strategy to deliver 8,760 between 2011-2026 is set out. In the 2017/2018 review and monitoring of these targets SP7 is highlighted for further research and investigation. In 2017/2018 housing delivery fell short of target by 477 units; delivering 148 units compared to the 625 units targeted for the year. Whilst these totals are made up of high-volume Policy H1 sites, the delivery of smaller private residential development is an important contribution towards these targets; particularly with the growth in popularity and accessibility to self-build funding. Whilst the proposal is for 2 units, this will contribute positively towards the targets set out in SP7.

TR2 – Design & Access of New Development

Development on the proposed site will not compromise the safe, effective and efficient use of the existing highway network. The proposed development will have no adverse effect nor increase in traffic generation to the existing infrastructure. Compared to when the school was open and operating, the traffic generation will be significantly less.

It is proposed that a new vehicle access is created off of Oak Avenue to the new driveway of House 2. The new access benefits from excellent visibility both ways and does not compromise the safe use of the existing street. The proposals allow House 2 to be accessed and egressed in forward gear rather than having to reverse out onto an existing street. A new access in this location has been approved previously.

The proposals also create a new vehicle access to House 1 off of School Road. School Road is a dead-end street with no through traffic. For this reason, traffic movement down this street is very low and the proposed new access will not adversely impact on the safe use of the street.

Each proposed dwelling will have at least 3 off road parking spaces accessed and egressed via the new accesses.

The local area is very popular with cyclists with sufficient infrastructure to move between existing communities safely via bi-cycle. The proposals do not impact on this in any way.

BE1 – Design

Local Context & Character

The village of Oakwood is elevated from its surroundings enjoying excellent views down in the valley and small village of Pontrhydyfen. The area contains a mix of buildings in terms of type and size. Rows of terraced houses occupy the majority of the village, typical of the South Wales Valleys, and there are also more modern detached and semi-detached properties. The area also includes former church and chapel buildings which add character and interest. Predominantly the building materials consist of dark red and brown brickwork, local red sandstone and slate roof coverings on the older buildings in the village.

The existing Junior School consists of two original volumes joined by a later constructed single storey flat roofed building. The original buildings have red sandstone external walls and the roofs are covered with a dark slate tile. The newer volume consists buff face brickwork and a dark GRP/felt flat roof.

Proposed Design

The proposed design takes cognisance of the existing architectural features in terms of both materials and geometry. To enable the construction of new upper floors within House 1 it is necessary to lift the existing eaves levels of the existing building and to construct a new roof structure to suit. The new roof proposals maintain the feature gable ends of the principal elevation (fronting School Road) and add an additional gable feature to create an attractive symmetrical frontage. These alterations have been carefully considered to ensure the proposals retain the overall feel and aesthetic of the existing building. The alterations have no negative impact on the surround area and do not cause any overlooking issues.

The proposals for House 2 change very little of the existing external architecture. The new proposed single storey extension to the rear has been carefully considered to ensure it compliments the existing building and is proportionate in scale and volume.

The proposed design ensures safe and level access to both proposed dwellings.





Summary

The proposed development has been designed to naturally fit in with the surrounding area through the use of features and elevation treatments common to the locality and the existing buildings.

The relevant LDP Policies have been reviewed and considered, and it is believed that the proposed development is compliant with these policies and would constitute suitable and sought-after infill development at this vacant brownfield site.