



DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

SITE: CYMRIC HOUSE, PORT TALBOT.

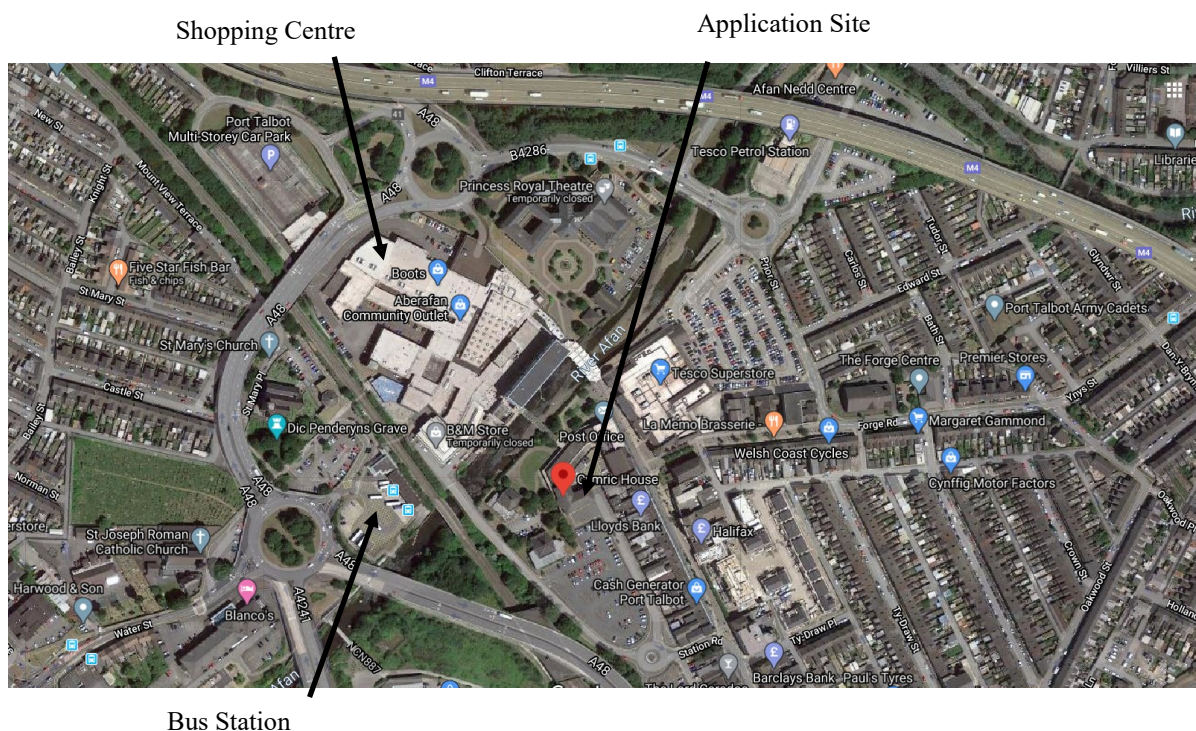
PROPOSAL: CHANGE OF USE OF CYMRIC
HOUSE FROM OFFICES (CLASS B1) TO 11
FLATS (CLASS C3).

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1.0 Background

- 1.1 Full planning permission is sought for the complete re-development and refurbishment of Cymric House, Port Talbot from offices to 11 flats comprising 6 two bedroom and 5 one bedroom units. The proposal seeks consent to completely refurbish the building and provide high quality affordable residential accommodation.
- 1.2 The proposal will involve minor external alterations facilitate the provision of secure cycle and refuse storage space. The existing building is a large 2 storey brick building which was formally offices however, the majority of the space is currently vacant due to a lack of demand for office space. The application site is situated within the Port Talbot Town Centre in a backland location away from the primary frontage.
- 1.3 The proposal seeks to utilise existing opening where possible. The re-development will bring a vacant building back into beneficial use and attract additional footfall to this backland located site.



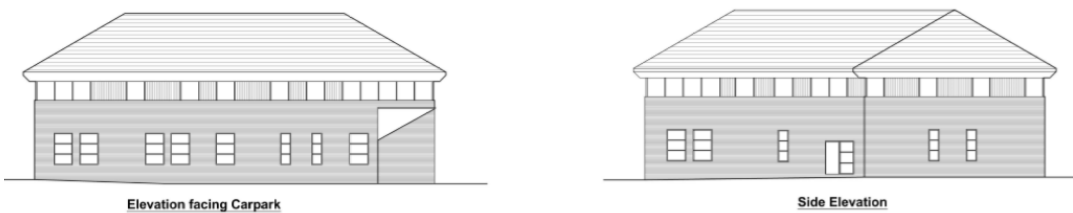
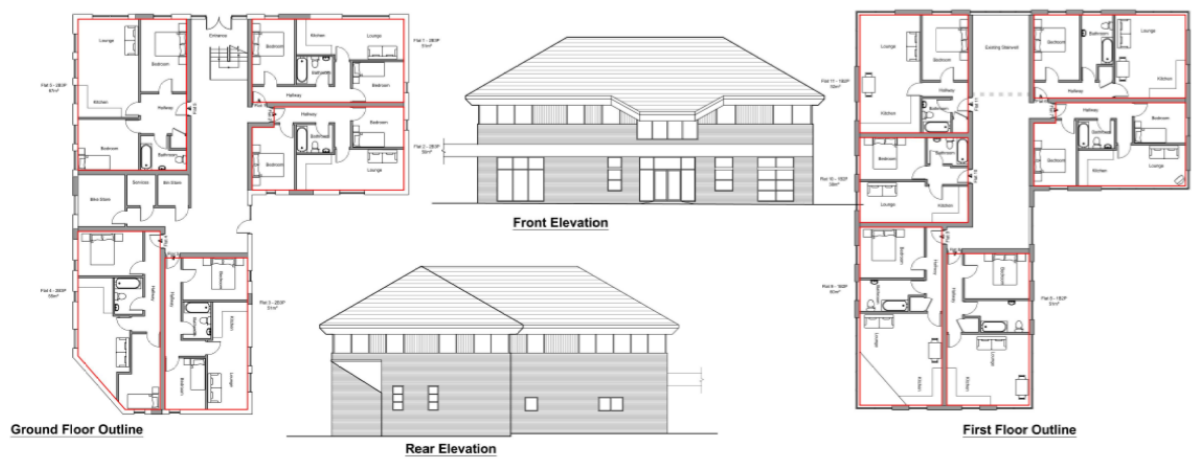
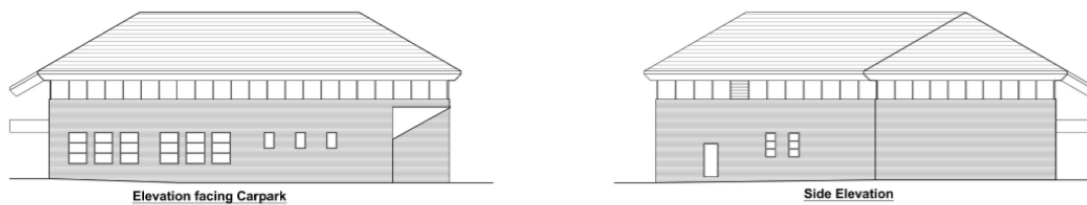
- 1.4 This part of Port Talbot Centre is in dire need of investment and whilst it was once a vibrant commercial centre it has become run down over the past few years. This development will involve the introduction of good quality affordable apartments in a highly sustainable location.
- 1.5 As previously discussed, the application site is situated in a backland location behind the primary shopping centre. The building is in need of refurbishment and is in a prime spot within the Town Centre within very close proximity to the primary shopping centre, employment opportunities, numerous public amenities and the main Port Talbot train and bus stations. The refurbishment of this building will result in it being brought into beneficial use which will enhance this location from a social,

economic and environmental perspective.

- 1.6 The proposal would introduce 5 x two bedroom flats and refuse and cycle storage at ground floor level and 1 x two bedroom flat and 5 x one bedroom flats at 1st floor level. A Housing Association is very interested in developing out the proposal and all flats will be constructed to DQR standards.
- 1.7 The existing offices have been marketed since September 2019 by Lambert Smith Hampton with no interested received in that 8 month period (See Appendix A).
- 1.8 The application site is in a prime location within Port Talbot Centre. The proposal seeks consent to regenerate this vacant building which is tired looking and in major need of re-development.
- 1.9 The design objectives of the proposal are as follows:
 - To provide additional quality residential accommodation which responds sensitively to the character and appearance of the existing building and surrounding street-scene.
 - To support and enhance the County's population by attracting additional residents to the Town Centre helping to sustain the vitality and viability of the Town Centre.
 - Development will help the wider economy of Neath Port Talbot.
 - To provide a safe and secure environment for residents through the introduction of residential units which will help natural surveillance and a market for both the night and day time economy.
 - Help the County to provide affordable residential accommodation for private rent.
 - To help sustain the commercial centre of the Town Centre through the provision of a mix commercial units which complement one another.
- 1.10 The application site is in a prominent Town Centre location within Port Talbot and the train station to the immediate south and the bus station to the west. This part of the Town is in major need of investment and it is hoped that this development will be a catalyst for further development along this primary corridor.
- 1.11 The proposal will result in the complete refurbishment of the existing building. The scheme will introduce much needed Town Centre residential accommodation. Whilst the scheme will result in no physical alterations, the proposal will result in some additional alterations to the pattern of fenestration.

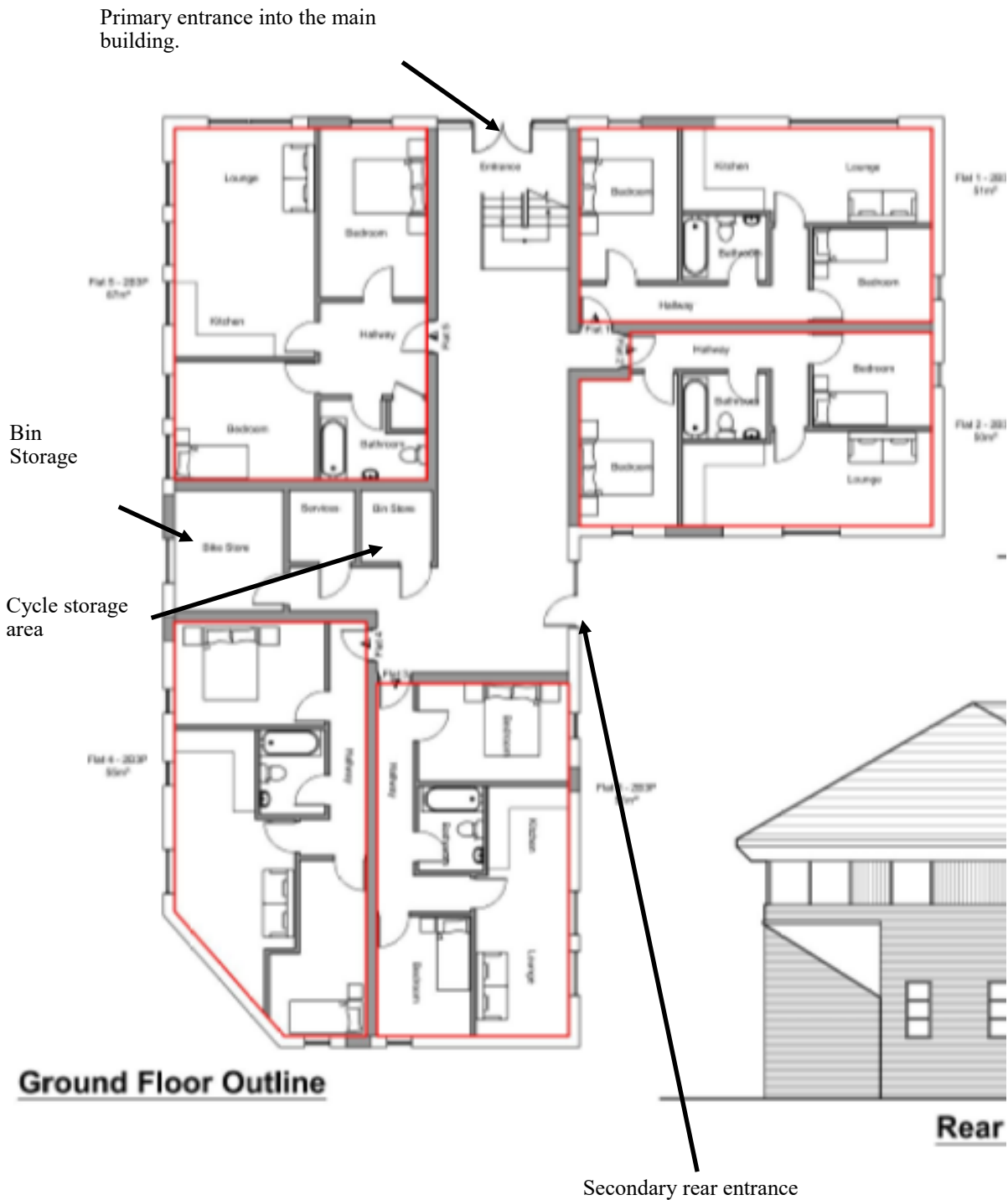
2.0 Proposal

2.1 The existing building is split over 2 floors and has large open plan office areas.



3.0 Access

- 3.1 Access to the flats will be provided via the existing main front entrance with a secondary entrance to the rear of the side of the property. A refuse area is provided within the building and cycle storage within the building.



- 3.2 All rooms will be fully compliant with Part M of Building Regulations and the Equality Act. There will be second access to the rear of the property for refuse collection and also an emergency exit to the rear. The proposal will provide good quality affordable residential accommodation within the Centre and will be geared towards low income occupiers who are not car reliant. Furthermore the proposed use would result in a significant reduction in intensification of use in light of the extant commercial use as an offices.

4.0 Constraints and Opportunities

- 4.1 The proposal provides an opportunity to sensitively convert a large prominent building within the Port Talbot Centre and provide much needed residential accommodation. The resultant development will help reintroduce residents back into this area which is in desperate need of regeneration. The proposal will breathe a new lease of life into a dilapidated building which is situated in the defined commercial retail core. The regeneration of areas such as this is a fundamental objective of both National and Local Plan Policies. There are sufficient commercial uses within walking distance which will benefit from the approval of this application. The building is sited within close proximity to the train station, retail core and provide the area with additional foot fall which will help sustain both the day and night economies within the locality.
- 4.2 There are numerous commercial uses within walking distance of the building which will benefit from the approval of this application. The building is sited within very close proximity to the central bus and train stations, the retail core and provide the area with additional foot fall during the day and night which will enhance the vitality and viability of the Centre.
- 4.3 In addition to this the proposal will help re-introduce much needed residents into Port Talbot Centre through the provision of good quality housing which will help promote developments within the area.

5.0 Context Analysis

Local Facilities: The development is situated within Port Talbot Centre which has numerous commercial premises along it. Furthermore the site is in the main retail central core and situated on one of the main bus routes through the Centre which has numerous local shops, national shopping chains, high street shops, public schools and public buildings. The site is within walking distance of the main Train and bus Stations, with good transport links to Neath, Swansea, Carmarthen, Llanelli, Cardiff, Bristol and beyond.

Physical, social and economic issues: The redevelopment will provide local people with much needed jobs during construction and furthermore will provide good quality residential accommodation which should help benefit the wider local community and wider County economy. The development will help create and support a 24 hr economy in the Town Centre which is both a national and local plan priority.

6.0 Policy Context

National Guidance

Planning Policy Wales 2018

6.1 The following policy/guidance documents prepared at the national (Welsh Government) level are of relevance to the determination of the application.

Placemaking

6.2 Paragraph 2.8 sets out the key drivers for placemaking, and states:

“Planning policies, proposals and decisions must seek to support the well - being of people and communities across Wales. This can be done through maximising their contribution to the achievement of the seven national well - being goals, by using the five Ways of Working, as required by the Well - being of Future Generations Act. This will include seeking to maximise the cultural, social, environmental and economic benefits, while considering potential impacts when assessing proposals and policies in line with the Act’s Sustainable Development Principle.”

6.3 Paragraph 1.14 sets out The Well-being of Future Generation’s Goals.



6.4 Paragraph 2.3 states:

“ The planning system should create Sustainable Places which are attractive, sociable, positive, secure, welcoming, healthy and friendly. Development proposals should bring people together and make us want to live, work and play in areas with an unmistakable sense of place and well - being creating prosperity for all.”

6.5 Paragraph 2.6 states:

“Sustainable placemaking is an inclusive process, involving all of those with a professional or personal interest in the built and natural environment, which focuses on developing plans, making decisions and delivering developments which contribute to the creation and enhancement of sustainable places.”

People and Places – National Sustainable Placemaking Outcomes

6.6 Paragraph 2.17 states:

“In responding to the key principles for the planning system, the creation of Sustainable Places and in recognition of the need to contribute to the wellbeing of future generations in Wales, planning policies and development proposals must seek to deliver development that address the National Sustainable Placemaking Outcomes.”

National sustainable placemaking outcomes

6.7 Figure 5 on page 21 outlines how PPW should be used to achieve sustainable places in a diagrammatic manner.



6.8 Paragraph 2.2 sets out how to assess the sustainable benefits of development:

Planning authorities should ensure that economic, social, cultural and environmental benefits are given equal consideration in the decision - making process, by following the five Ways of Working, to ensure a balanced assessment is carried out and to implement the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act and the Sustainable Development Principle. There may be occasions when one type of benefit of a development proposal or site allocation outweighs others, and in such cases robust evidence should be presented to support these decisions, whilst seeking to maximise contribution against the wellbeing goals. In assessing these benefits, key factors include:

- the numbers and types of long term jobs expected to be created or retained;
- whether and how far the development will help redress economic disadvantage or support regeneration priorities, for example by enhancing local employment opportunities or upgrading the environment;
- A consideration of the contribution to wider strategies , for example for the growth or regeneration of certain areas;
- the contribution this economic activity will have to wider policy goals, for example in the green growth sector; and
- how does the proposal support achievement of a more prosperous, low carbon, innovative and resource efficient Wales.

Social Considerations

- _who are the interested and affected people and communities;
- how does the proposal change a persons way of life, which can include:
- how people live, for example, how they get around and access services;
- how people work, for example, access to adequate employment;
- how people socialise, for example, access to recreation activities; and
- how people interact with one another on a daily basis.
- who will benefit and suffer any impacts of the proposal;
- what are the short and long - term consequences of the proposal on a community, including its composition, cohesion, character, how it functions and its sense of place; and
- how does the proposal support development of more cohesive communities.

Cultural Considerations

- how far the proposal supports the conditions that allow for the development and growth of the Welsh Language;
- whether or not the development protects areas and assets of cultural and historic significance;
- have the cultural links and their relationships with the tourism industry been appropriately maximised;
- if the proposal protects areas known for their cultural value in terms of music, literature, sport and the arts; and
- vibrant cultural experiences.

Environmental Considerations

- will important features of the natural, historic and built environment be protected and enhanced;
- are the environmental impacts of development on health and amenity limited to acceptable levels and the resilience of ecosystems improved;
- is environmental protection for people, natural and cultural resources , property and infrastructure maximised and environmental risks prevented or appropriately managed;
- will high standards of restoration, remediation, decommissioning and beneficial after uses be achieved;
- will the depletion of non-renewable resources be minimised, waste prevented and the efficient and most appropriate use of materials made and reuse and recycling promoted;
- will the causes and impacts of climate change be fully taken into account through location, design, build, operation, decommissioning and restoration; and
- does it support decarbonisation and our transition to a low carbon economy”

Good Design

Paragraph 2.27 states:

“Good design is fundamental to creating sustainable places where people want to live, work and socialise and enjoy. Design is not just about the architecture of a building but the relationship between all elements of the natural and built environment. To achieve sustainable development, design must go beyond aesthetics and include the social, environmental, cultural and economic aspects of the development, including its construction, operation and management, and the relationship with its surroundings.”

6.9 Paragraph 3.4 sets out the above in an illustrative / diagrammatic manner.

Figure 7: Objectives of Good Design



Promoting Healthier Places

6.10 Paragraph 3.21 states:

“Planning authorities have a role to play in the prevention of physical and mental illnesses caused, or exacerbated, by pollution, disconnection of people from social activities (which contributes to loneliness) as well as the promotion of travel patterns which facilitate active lifestyles. The planning system must consider the impacts of new development on existing communities and maximise health protection and wellbeing and safeguard amenity. This will include considering the provision of, and access to, community and health assets, such as community halls, libraries, doctor’s surgeries and hospitals. Health impacts should be minimised in all instances, and particularly where new development could have an adverse impact on health, amenity and wellbeing. In such circumstances, where health or amenity impacts cannot be overcome satisfactorily, development should be refused. ”

6.11 Paragraph 3.22 states:

“Planning authorities should develop and maintain places that support healthy, active lifestyles across all age and socio-economic groups, recognising that investment in walking and cycling infrastructure can be an effective preventative measure which reduces financial pressures on public services in the longer term. The way a development is laid out and arranged can influence people’s behaviours and decisions and can provide effective mitigation against air and noise pollution. Effective planning can provide calming, tranquil surroundings as well as stimulating and sensory environments, both of these make an important contribution to successful places .”

Housing

6.12 Paragraph 4.22 states:

“In respect of housing the planning system must:

Identify a supply of land to support the delivery of the housing requirement to meet the differing needs of communities across all tenures;

Enable provision of a range of well designed, energy efficient, good quality market and affordable housing that will contribute to the creation of sustainable places; and

Focus on the delivery of the identified housing requirement and supply.”

Affordable Housing

6.13 Paragraph 4.2.25 states:

“A community’s need for affordable housing is a material planning consideration which must be taken into account in formulating development plan policies and determining relevant planning applications. Affordable housing for the purposes of the land use planning system is housing where there are secure mechanisms in place to ensure that it is accessible to those who cannot afford market housing, both on first occupation and for subsequent occupiers.”

Active and Social Streets

6.14 Paragraph 4.1.21 states:

“The Welsh Government policy endorses Manual for Streets, and its companion guide Manual for Streets 2, and expects the design of new or enhanced streets to reflect its principles. Planning authorities must ensure the design of streets create high - quality places and should challenge development proposals with standardised, prescriptive, engineering - focussed, risk adverse street designs. Where required, design and access statements should demonstrate how the design of new or enhanced streets has taken into account the guidance in Manual for Streets.”

Public Transport

6.15 Paragraph 4.1.36 states:

“ Planning authorities must direct development to locations most accessible by public transport. They should ensure that development sites which are highly accessible by public transport are used for travel intensive uses, such as housing, jobs, shopping, leisure, and services reallocating their use if necessary. In rural areas, planning authorities should designate local service centres, or clusters of settlements where a sustainable functional linkage can be demonstrated, as the preferred locations for new development.”

Technical Advice Notes (TANs)

6.16 The relevant Technical Advice Notes of relevance to the determination of this application are;

TAN 12 - Design

6.17 Detailed guidance on the objectives of good design is set out within TAN 12. The objectives of good design are set out within the following categories:

Access

- Ensuring ease of access for all

Movement

- Promoting sustainable means of travel

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

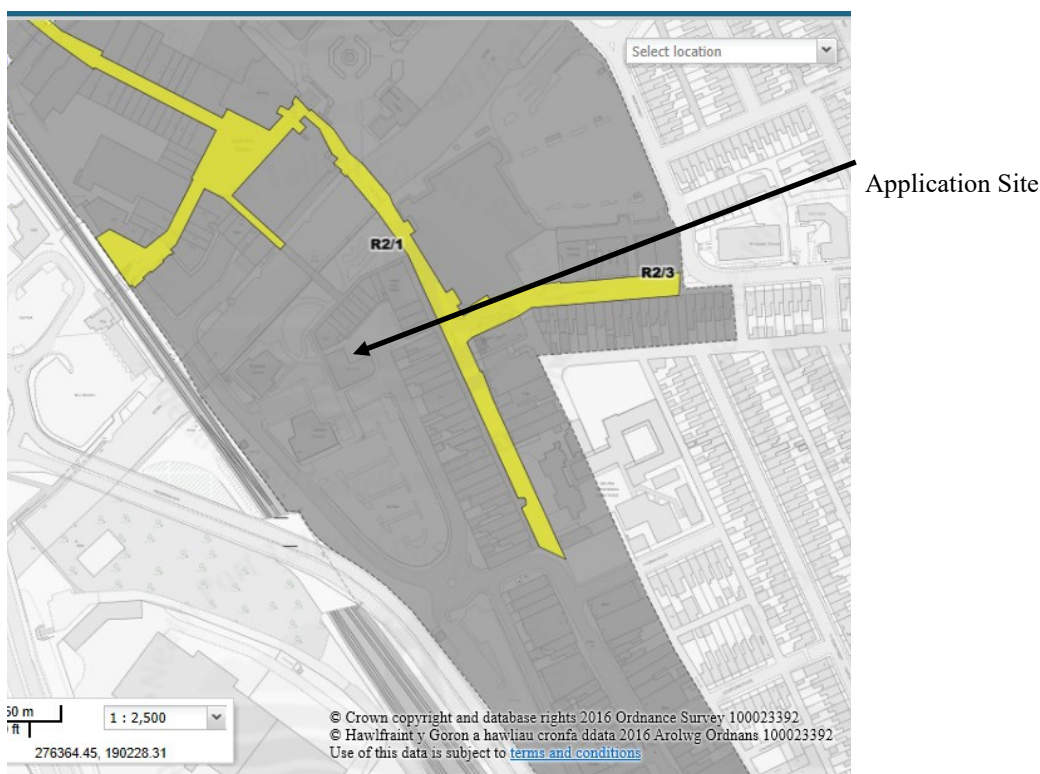
- Achieving efficient use and protection of natural resources
- Enhancing biodiversity
- Designing for change

6.18 TAN 12 advises that in areas of special character such as conservation areas the way in which new development is accommodated and change is managed may need a greater level of direction from the local planning authority. It is stated that “whilst meeting the objectives of good design should be the starting point, more detailed advice may be required to ensure preservation or enhancement of specific qualities and these should form part of the pre-application discussions.

6.19 It is also stated in Paragraph 5.6.2 that “within conservation areas, the objective of sustaining character is particularly important and context appraisals should reflect this” and “the general aspects of the “character” objective of good design should be pursued .”

Neath Port Talbot Local Development Plan

6.20 The Neath Port Talbot Local Development Plan is the most relevant document when considering planning applications within the County.



Policy SC1—Settlement Limits

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. Outside settlement limits, development will only be permitted under the following circumstances:

1. It constitutes a sustainable small scale employment use adjacent to a settlement limit; or
2. It constitutes live-work unit(s) immediately adjacent to a settlement limit in the Valleys Strategy Area only; or
3. It constitutes the small-scale expansion of an existing business or the suitable conversion of an existing building; or
4. It constitutes the appropriate replacement of an existing dwelling; or
5. It is an affordable housing exception site; or
6. It is an appropriate rural enterprise dwelling; or
7. It is an appropriate 'One Planet Development'; or
8. It is a sustainable tourism or farm diversification proposal that is suitable in a countryside location; or
9. It is associated with the provision of public utilities, infrastructure and waste management facilities that cannot reasonably be located elsewhere; or
10. It is associated with either agriculture, forestry, minerals or energy generation; or
11. It relates to the appropriate provision of accommodation for Gypsies / Travellers; or
12. It constitutes the provision of open space and small scale ancillary facilities adjoining the settlement limit.

Where development is permitted outside settlement limits, any new buildings must be located adjacent to existing buildings or settlements wherever possible and be of an appropriate scale and form.

Policy AH 1 Affordable Housing

All new housing developments, including conversions, on sites accommodating 3 or more units will be required to contribute to affordable housing provision. Affordable Housing Percentage Targets will be sought in the following spatial areas. Coastal Corridor:

- Neath - 25%
- Port Talbot - 25%
- Valleys: Pontardawe - 10%

The exact affordable housing contribution to be provided will depend on the circumstances of each proposal and the viability of the scheme. The provision of affordable housing will be implemented through the use of planning conditions, obligations and/or legal agreements between the Council, Developers and Registered Social Landlords.

Policy R 2—Proposals Within Retail Centres

1. Within the designated retail centres, uses that would enhance the vitality, viability and attractiveness of the centre, including uses in classes(16) A and D will be permitted where:
 - (a) The proposal integrates with and strengthens the layout, retail character and pedestrian flows of the centre; and
 - (b) Does not prejudice the effective use of upper floors; and
 - (c) Maintains a vibrant and attractive shopping street frontage.
2. Proposals for the redevelopment or conversion within a retail centre of retail, commercial, leisure or community premises to ground floor uses not complying with point 1 of this policy will only be permitted where:
 - (a) It is demonstrated that the existing use is no longer viable or appropriate in the location; and
 - (b) The proposal would not result in the loss of a supermarket, shop, café or public house which is important in terms of providing facilities to serve the community; Or:
 - (c) The proposal would result in the redevelopment of derelict, unsightly, underused and vacant land / premises for alternative uses which would have significant social, community or regeneration benefits.
3. Within the designated Primary Shopping Streets in Neath and Port Talbot town centres, ground floor uses other than Class A1 (Shops) will only be permitted where:
 - (a) The proposal falls within Class A2 (Financial and Professional Services) or Class A3 (Food and Drink); and
 - (b) The proposal does not result in the overdominance of any non-A1 use; and
 - (c) The proposal on its own and/or in combination with other proposals and commitments does not lead to:
 - (i) A material adverse effect on the retail function of the Primary Shopping Streets; or
 - (ii) A material reduction in the number and distribution of shop premises within the retail frontage that it will occupy and within the Primary Shopping Streets as a whole.

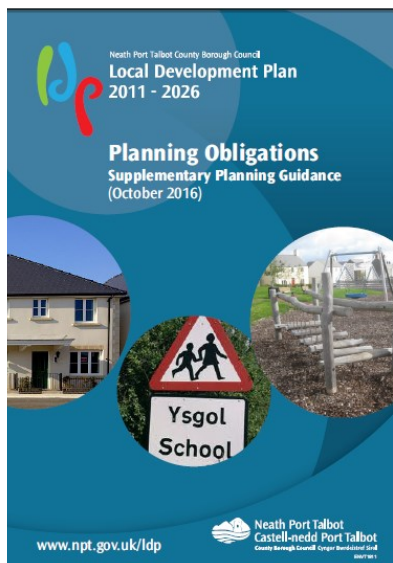
4. Within the district and local retail centres, proposals that would result in the over dominance of one use to the detriment of the vitality, viability and attractiveness of the retail centre will be resisted.

Policy TR 2 Design and Access of New Development

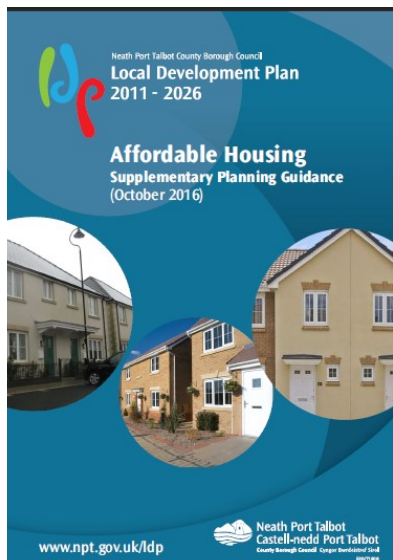
Development proposals will only be permitted where all of the following criteria, where relevant, are satisfied:

1. The development does not compromise the safe, effective and efficient use of the highway network and does not have an adverse impact on highway safety or create unacceptable levels of traffic generation;
2. Appropriate levels of parking and cycling facilities are provided and the access arrangements for the site allow for the safe manoeuvring of any service vehicles associated with the planned use;
3. The development is accessible by a range of travel means, including public transport and safe cycle and pedestrian routes;
4. Transport Assessments and Travel Plans are provided for developments that are likely to create significant traffic generation.

Relevant Supplementary Planning Guidance documents:



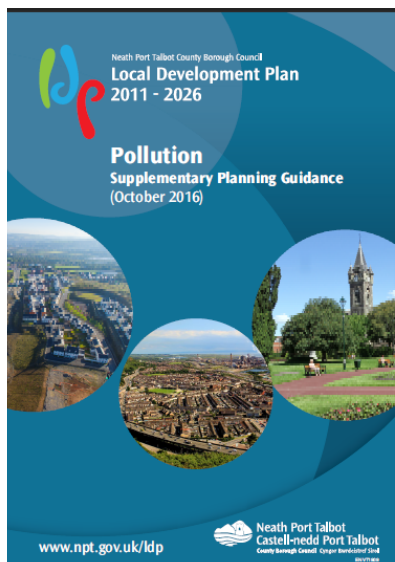
Planning Obligations



Affordable Housing



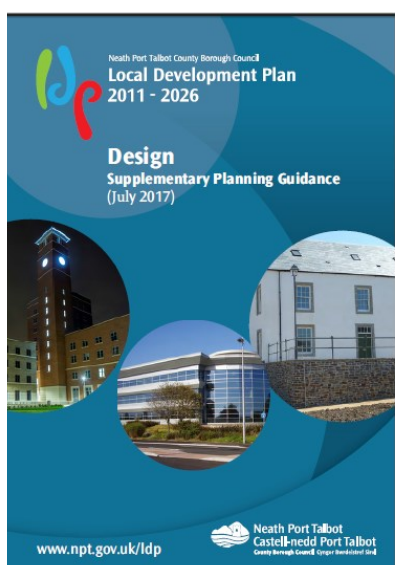
Open Space and Greenspace Provision



Pollution



Parking Standards



Design

7.0 Involvement

7.1 Community/neighbour engagement: To date no neighbour or community engagement has taken place.

8.0 Response to the objectives of good design

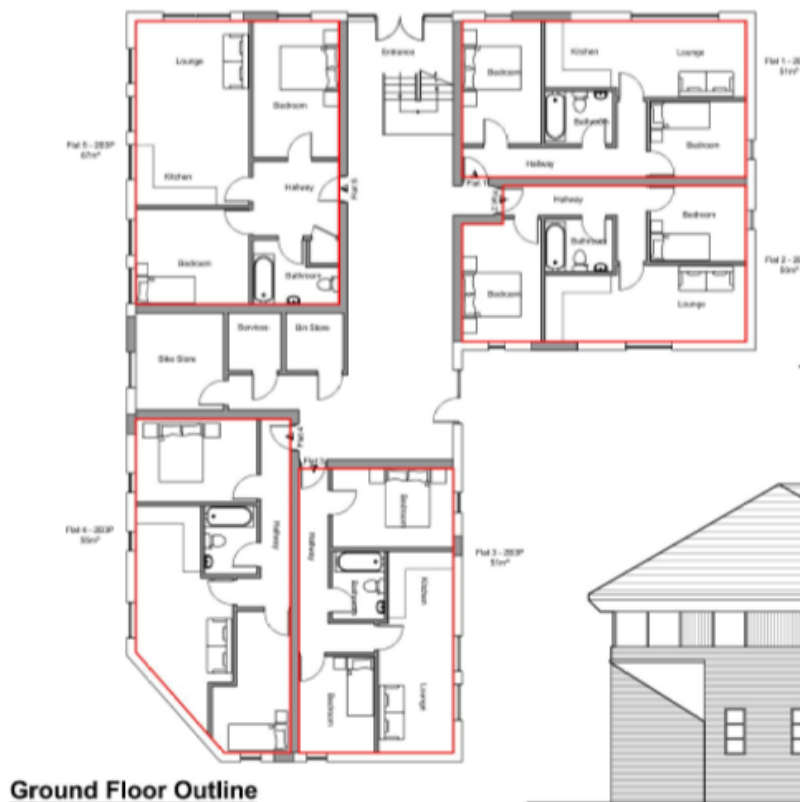
Access: Access will be provided via the existing main central entrance for the offices at ground floor level and a secondary entrance will also be provided to the rear of the property. Refuse and cycle storage is provided within the building and it is easily accessible. The building will benefit from mains operated smoke detectors with battery backup and all switches and sockets etc will be installed at a height between 450mm and 1200mm above finished floor level. In addition to this, the development will provide sprinkler systems throughout.

The site is served by excellent public transport via the rail and bus. Given the sites central location the future residents will not be car reliant.

Character:

Amount of Development: The proposal will involve the complete refurbishment of the building and the change of use of the building from offices to residential use and create 11 apartments. The apartments will comprise 5 one bedroom units and 6 two bedroom units. The ground floor will provide a shared cycle and refuse storage areas.

Layout: The ground floor will provide cycle and refuse storage, 6x2 bed flat and 5x1 bedroom flats.





First Floor Outline

The first floor will be accessed via the main central stair core towards the front of the property. The floor will accommodate 5x1 bedroom units and 1x2 bedroom unit.

Scale:

The proposal has been carefully designed to ensure the development complements the internal layout of the building. With this in mind the conversion has utilised existing openings where possible and as such the building will retain its character and design integrity.

Appearance: The existing building is a typical example of a concrete frame brick façade building, the type of which sprung up throughout the UK in the 1980's. Whilst the existing building is of no particular architectural merit, the building has a simple symmetrical design form of architecture. The proposal involves the complete refurbishment of the external facades of the property.

Landscaping: The scheme will involve minimal opportunity for landscaping.

9.0 Community Safety

- 9.1 The redevelopment of the building to residential accommodation will reinvigorate a vacant building and bring it back into beneficial use. The new residential use will help improve natural surveillance which will undoubtedly improve the residential amenities of the area.

10.0 Environment Sustainability

- 10.1 Where possible the materials used in the conversion will be locally sourced. The conversion has tried and maximise natural light into the bedrooms throughout the day, thus reducing the need for lighting.
- 10.2 The building will have an efficient boiler plant and ventilation. Materials will be sourced from sustainable managed forests where possible and where possible low CO2 emission concrete will be used along with recycled material.

11.0 Movement

- 11.1 The building is situated within close proximity to local amenities and regular bus routes to the town centre and as such increasing the potential to cycle, walk and use public transport safely, whilst simultaneously reducing the reliance on the car.

12.0 Conclusion

- 12.1 The development will introduce a residential development and provide much needed investment into a run down part of the Port Talbot. The scale, design and massing of the proposal is considered in keeping with the character and appearance of the area. The site will be accessible to all and the building will have recognisable and legible entrances and exists. The site has excellent public transport links reducing the reliance on the private car thus improving sustainability.
- 12.2 The development will help improve and ensure the long term vitality and viability of Neath Port Talbot Centre whilst attracting money into the local economy. Local workers and suppliers will be used during construction and future residents will be well placed to use surrounding businesses, thus improving both the immediate and long term economy of the County.