

**Afan Masonic Temple,
Port Talbot
Heritage Statement**

Client: PORT TALBOT MASONIC BUILDING
MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

AB Heritage Project No: 61425

Date: 12/03/2021

Afan Masonic Temple, Port Talbot

Heritage Statement

Client	Port Talbot Masonic Building Management Committee
Project Number	61425
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

AB Heritage Limited has been commissioned by the Port Talbot Masonic Building Management Committee to produce a Heritage Statement covering proposed works at the Afan Masonic Temple, 8 Forge Road, Port Talbot, SA13 1US.

The proposed development seeks to construct a wheelchair accessible ramp with associated railings, and wheelchair accessible door.

The historic development of the Afan Masonic Temple has revealed the building to have been built in an important period of growth in this area of Port Talbot, with its association with the Talbot family and the renowned steelworks.

The report found that the following heritage assets had the potential to be affected by the proposed development:

- Afan Masonic Temple - Grade II Listed
- Tabernacle Chapel - Grade II Listed
- Bethany Chapel - Grade II Listed

All of which were found to be buildings of High Significance.

The assessment concluded that there would be Negligible Degree of Direct Impact to the historic fabric of the Afan Masonic Temple. The assessment found that there would be a Negligible Degree of Indirect Impact to the setting of the Grade II Listed Tabernacle Chapel, and Grade II Listed Bethany Chapel. Associated public benefits in the form of improved disabled and general access to the Afan Masonic Temple mean that the proposals can be considered to conform to Policy BE 1 of the Neath Port Talbot Local Plan.

No further heritage works are recommended.

The final decision on further heritage works is the preserve of the Local Planning Authority.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Background

- 1.1.1 AB Heritage Limited has been commissioned by the Port Talbot Masonic Building Management Committee to produce a Heritage Statement covering proposed works at the Afan Masonic Temple, 8 Forge Road, Port Talbot, SA13 1US. It was requested as part of a forthcoming planning application.
- 1.1.2 This report includes a description of the baseline conditions, from an examination of readily available sources on the history of the site, identifying any known and potential heritage receptors subject to potential impact.

1.2 Site Location & Description

- 1.2.1 The proposed development site is the Afan Masonic Temple, 8 Forge Road, Port Talbot, SA13 1US and centred on National Grid Reference SS 7666 9010. The Masonic Hall is a two-storey building which fronts onto the pedestrianised section of Forge Road, in the town centre of Port Talbot.



Photo 1. The Afan Masonic Temple

1.3 Overview of Proposed Development

- 1.3.1 The proposed development is for the construction of a ramp with associated railings, and wheelchair accessible door.

1.4 Planning Background & Consultation

- 1.4.1 On the 26th of February 2021, Leanne Tindle (Assistant Heritage Consultant, AB Heritage) contacted the Neath Port Talbot Planning Team via telephone to discuss the scope of the report. Mr Russel Borthwick (Planning Officer, Neath Port Talbot Council) requested that the report should be detailed in proportion to the proposed developed scheme and due to the small-scale nature of the proposals, the ordering of a Historic Environment Record dataset would not be required.

1.5 Project Qualifiers

- 1.5.1 This report has been prepared under instruction and solely for the use of the Port Talbot Masonic Building Management Committee, and any associated parties they elect to share this information with.
- 1.5.2 The Covid-19 global pandemic of 2020/2021 led the Welsh Government to impose restrictions on social distancing and the lockdown of non-essential businesses and services. At the time of the compilation of this report these restrictions were still in place, meaning that Public Record Offices and Archives were closed for public consultation.
- 1.5.3 Measurements and distances in this report are approximations only and should not be used for detailed design purposes.
- 1.5.4 All work undertaken is based upon the professional knowledge of AB Heritage and relevant standards, technology, and legislation at the time of writing. Changes in these areas may occur in the future, causing changes to the conclusions, recommendations or advice given. AB Heritage is not responsible for advising any parties on the implications of such changes.
- 1.5.5 This report utilises information obtained from third party sources. AB Heritage takes no responsibility for the accuracy of such information.
- 1.5.6 Where recommendations are provided these need to be approved by the Local Planning Authority and do not themselves comprise mitigation of impacts.

2. AIMS & METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims of Report

- 2.1.1 Early assessment of the implications of proposed development on the heritage resource is key to informing reasonable planning decisions. Paragraph 6.1.8 and 6.1.9 of Planning Policy Wales (2021) states that:

'The protection, conservation and enhancement of historic assets is most effective when it is considered at the earliest stage of plan preparation or when designing proposals new proposals' and 'Any decisions made through the planning system must fully consider the impact on the historic environment and on the significance and heritage values of individual historic assets and their contribution to the character of place'

- 2.1.2 This assessment therefore has the following objectives:

- To provide sufficient evidence on the heritage of the site and any potential impacts on such a resource, to inform the Local Planning Authority's decision-making process in relation to the current planning application; and
- To develop appropriate recommendations / mitigation responses, where necessary, to assist the work of the planning team.

2.2 Methodology

Study Area

- 2.2.1 Based on an understanding of the surrounding area of the proposal site, gleaned from a site visit, and the nature of heritage assets which had the potential to be affected by the proposed development, the study area is contained to those present on Forge Road, and Station Road.

Standards & Guidance Used

- 2.2.2 The assessment has been carried out in line with the following guidance:

- *Conservation Principles for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment in Wales* (Cadw, 2011);
- *Heritage Impact Assessment in Wales* (Cadw, 2017);
- *Managing Change to Listed Buildings in Wales* (Cadw, 2017);
- *Managing Conservation Areas in Wales* (Cadw, 2017);
- *Managing Historic Character in Wales* (Cadw 2017);
- *Setting of Historic Assets in Wales* (Cadw, 2017);
- Standard and guidance for historic environment desk-based assessment (ClfA, 2017);

Selection and Assessment of Sources

- 2.2.3 In line with para 3.3.6 and Annex 1 of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' Standard and Guidance for Historic Environment Desk Based Assessment, this report considers appropriate sources of information and a rationale behind their use. These have been detailed in Table 1:

Table 1: Examination of Appropriate Sources

SOURCE	TYPE OF EVIDENCE	CONSULTED	COMMENT
Historic Environment Record	The primary source of information concerning the current state of archaeological, heritage and architectural knowledge in this area. Contains published and unpublished archaeological and historical sources, including any previous investigations undertaken within the study area.	N/A	It was not considered pertinent to this report to order a Historic Environment Record dataset due to the small scale of the proposed development and the paucity of potentially affected heritage assets in the surrounding area. This was agreed with Russel Borthwick (Planning Officer, Neath Port Talbot Council)
Consult Neath Port Talbot Conservation Officer	Early discussion with the Local Planning Authority Planning Archaeologist and / or Conservation Officer is key to understanding the significance of an area and creating a tailored approach most appropriate to assessment of a site.	26/02/2021	On 26 th February 2021, Leanne Tindle contacted the Neath Port Talbot Council via telephone in order to discuss the scope of the report. In response, Mr Russel Borthwick (Planning Officer, Neath Port Talbot Council) noted that the report should be detailed in proportion to the proposal plans.
Site Walkover	This task allows for development of a greater understanding of the on-site heritage resource, or any historic issues of the site, including information the general condition and setting of the area of proposed development and the site in which it stands.	01/03/2021	A site visit was conducted on the 1 st of March 2021 by Leanne Tindle (Assistant Heritage Consultant, AB Heritage)
COFLEIN	For projects in Wales this database contains a list of all archaeology designations and heritage records.	25/02/2021	
National Historic Assets of Wales (CADW)	Cadw provides a database and online interactive map which contains the details of Heritage Assets including Listed Buildings in Wales.	25/02/2021	The Cadw interactive map was used to identify Listed Buildings within the surrounding area of the proposal site and to consult the details of those.
The National Library of Wales	Readily accessible information on the site's history from readily available historic documentary sources, maps and photographs.	N/A	The National Library of Wales and the West Glamorgan Archives were closed at the time of writing due to the ongoing Covid-19 Pandemic.
The West Glamorgan Archives			
Archaeology Data Service	The ADS is a digital repository for heritage records that supports the long-term digital preservation of such data to support future research, learning and teaching.	25/02/2021	The Archaeology Data Service was accessed in order to understand previous works in the surrounding area and what information they could divulge concerning the historical development of Port Talbot but none were found.

SOURCE	TYPE OF EVIDENCE	CONSULTED	COMMENT
Local Historic Societies	Using the British Association for Local History (https://www.balh.org.uk/) list of local societies, checks were made with relevant organisations where there was a specific and obvious benefit to consulting local expertise on the history of the proposed development site.	26/02/2021	Port Talbot Historical Society holds a photographic archive of the town but contained nothing pertinent to this report.

Assessment of Receptors Significance

- 2.2.4 Assessment of the heritage significance of a receptor is judged upon various factors, including any existing designation, plus information on any relevant architectural, archaeological, or historical factors. Considering these criteria, each identified feature is assigned a level of significance in accordance with a five-point scale (Table 2, below).

Table 2: Assessing the Significance of a Receptor

SCALE OF ASSET SIGNIFICANCE	
VERY HIGH	Sites of exceptional interest that reflect the highest qualities of evidential, historic, aesthetic or communal value. These can include Scheduled Monuments, Grade I and Grade II* Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas containing very important buildings, or undesignated structures / landscapes with exceptional coherence, time depth, or other critical factors.
HIGH	Grade II Listed Buildings and other designated or undesignated heritage assets of special interest, or assets of a reasonably defined historic extent and significance. Examples may include areas containing buildings that contribute significantly to its historic character.
MEDIUM	Buildings / Structures / Landscapes with coherent historic merit or value, reflected in sites such as 'locally designated' buildings or 'non-designated heritage assets', albeit ones with clear survival of key elements, historic interests and/or context associations.
LOW	Heritage assets with very little or no surviving heritage interest. Examples include structures of almost no architectural / historic merit, buildings of an intrusive character or relatively modern / common landscape features such as quarries, drains and ponds etc.
UNKNOWN	Insufficient information exists to assess the importance of a feature (e.g. unidentified features on aerial photographs).

- 2.2.5 The significance of known assets is typically determined by reference to existing designations. **Where a receptor's interest or value covers a range of the above possibilities or, for previously unidentified features, where no designation has yet been assigned, the significance of a receptor is based on professional judgement.** For example, while all nationally registered, Listed Buildings can range in scale and importance from a single milestone to the site of St Paul's Cathedral. For this reason, adjustments are made on a case-by-case basis.

Impact Assessment Criteria

- 2.2.6 The degree of impact upon the heritage resource is determined by identifying the level of effect from the proposed development upon the baseline conditions of the site and the cultural heritage resource identified. The criteria for assessing the level of impact are set out in Table 3 (below).
- 2.2.7 It is not always possible to confirm the degree of impact. However, where possible a professional judgement as to the scale of such impacts is applied to enable the subsequent 'Magnitude of Effects' to be established (Table 4). It should be noted that an impact level of

'uncertain' is included for those situations where it is simply not appropriate to make such a judgement at this stage of works.

Table 3: Criteria for Determining Degree of Impact

IMPACT LEVEL	DEFINITION
HIGH	Changes to most or all of the key heritage baseline elements that leads to total or almost complete alteration of a features physical structure, or almost comprehensive variation to other aspects such as noise, access, or visual amenity of the asset.
MEDIUM	Changes to many key materials / historic elements, such that the baseline resource is clearly modified. This includes considerable change to the heritage asset / historic landscape, noticeable differences in noise or sound quality, and considerable changes to use or access changes to key historic landscape elements.
LOW	Detectable impacts which alter the baseline condition of a heritage receptor to a slight degree – e.g. a small proportion of the surviving heritage resource is altered; slight alterations to the structure, or limited changes to aspects such as noise levels, use or access that results in limited changes to historic character.
NEGLIGIBLE	Barely distinguishable change from baseline conditions, where there would be very little appreciable effect on a known site, possibly because of distance from the development, method of construction or landscape or ecological planting, that are thought to have no long-term effect on the historic value of a resource.
UNKNOWN	Extent / nature of the asset is uncertain or magnitude of change can't be ascertained.

- 2.2.8 The overall Magnitude of Effects from the proposed development upon the resource is determined by correlating the significance of a heritage asset against the degree of impact it may be subject to. Table 4 highlights the criteria for assessing the overall Magnitude of Effects. Where effects are moderate or above these are classified as Substantial Harm, terms of NPPF.

Table 4: Magnitude of Effects

SIGNIFICANCE	MAGNITUDE OF IMPACT			
	HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW	NEGLIGIBLE
VERY HIGH	Severe	Major	Mod	Minor
HIGH	Major	Mod	Minor	Minor / Not Sig.
MEDIUM	Mod	Minor	Minor / Not Sig.	Not Sig.
LOW	Minor	Minor / Not Sig.	Not Sig.	Nt.

Mod = Moderate; Not Sig. = Not Significant; Nt. = Neutral

3. PLANNING & LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

3.1 Heritage Legislation

- 3.1.1 Current legislation, in the form of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979, provides for the legal protection of important and well-preserved archaeological sites and monuments through their addition to a list, or 'schedule' of archaeological monuments.
- 3.1.2 Likewise, structures are afforded legal protection in the form of their addition to 'lists' of buildings of special architectural or historical interest, under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act, 1990. This legislation also allows for the creation and protection of Conservation Areas by local planning authorities to protect areas and groupings of historical significance.
- 3.1.3 The categories of assets with some form of legal protection have been extended in recent years, and now include Registered Parks and Gardens, and Historic Battlefields. While designation as a UNESCO World Heritage Site is not a statutory designation under Welsh planning law, such a designation is regarded as a material consideration in planning decisions.
- 3.1.4 Legislation to protect cultural heritage in Wales is provided by the Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2016, which is intended to:
- Give more effective protection to listed buildings and Scheduled Monuments;
 - Improve the sustainable management of the historic environment; and
 - Introduce greater transparency and accountability into decisions taken on the historic environment.

3.2 National Planning Policy 2021

- 3.2.1 Planning Policy Wales (PPW) sets out government policy on the historic environment, which is considered to comprise 'all the surviving physical elements of previous human activity' (Paragraph 6.1.1).
- 3.2.2 Paragraph 6.1.6 outlines the Welsh Government's specific objectives for the historic environment. Objectives with relevance to this study comprise:
- Safeguard the character of historic buildings and manage change so that their special architectural and historic interest is preserved; and
- 3.2.3 Paragraph 6.1.7 states 'It is important that the planning system looks to protect, conserve and enhance the significance of historic assets. This will include consideration of the setting of an historic asset which might extend beyond its curtilage. Any change that impacts on an historic asset or its setting should be managed in a sensitive and sustainable way.'
- 3.2.4 Paragraph 6.1.9 describes how 'Any decisions made through the planning system must fully consider the impact on the historic environment and on the significance and heritage values of individual historic assets and their contribution to the character of place.'
- 3.2.5

Technical Advice Note 24: The Historic Environment (2017)

- 3.2.6 Technical Advice Note (TAN) 24 was produced in 2017 and is intended to be used in conjunction with PPW to provide guidance on how the planning system considers the historic environment during development plan preparation and decision making on planning applications.

3.3 Local Planning Policy

Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council – Local Development Plan (2011-2026)

Policy SP 21 – Built Environment and Historic Heritage

- 3.3.1 The built environment and historic heritage will, where appropriate, be conserved and enhanced through the following measures:
- Encouraging high quality design standards in all development proposals
 - Safeguarding features of historic and cultural importance
 - The identification of the following designated sites to enable their protection and where appropriate enhancement:
 - i. Landscapes of Historic Interest;
 - ii. Historic Parks and Gardens;
 - iii. Conservation Areas;
 - iv. Scheduled Ancient Monuments; and
 - v. Listed Buildings and their curtilage

Policy BE 1 – Design

- 3.3.2 All development proposals will be expected to demonstrate high quality design which fully takes into account the natural, historic and built environmental context and contributes to the creation of attractive, sustainable places. Proposals will only be permitted where all of the following criteria, where relevant, are satisfied:
- It complements and enhances the character and appearance of the site, building or area in terms of siting, appearance, scale, height, massing and elevation treatment;
 - The layout and design of the development achieves inclusive design by ensuring barrier free environments, allowing access by all and making full provision for people with disabilities.

Policy BE 2 – Buildings of Local Importance

- 3.3.3 Development proposals that would affect buildings that are of local historic, architectural, or cultural importance will only be permitted where:
- They conserve and where appropriate enhance the building and its setting; or

- It is demonstrated that the development could not reasonably be accommodated without affecting or replacing the building and the reasons for the development outweigh the heritage importance of the site.

4. HERITAGE REVIEW OF THE SITE

4.1 Historic Development of the Site & Surrounding Area

- 4.1.1 The proposed development site is situated within Port Talbot, on the east side of the River Afan, in the historic county of Glamorgan. The area of Port Talbot has evidence of human activity stretching back to the Neolithic period with the existence of a number of Prehistoric sites in the area. However, for the purposes of this report, this section will focus on the Post-Medieval to Modern periods when the area of Port Talbot developed.
- 4.1.2 The port from which the area gets its name, was constructed in 1839 by the Aberavon Harbour Company and was later transferred to a new company in 1894 under the Port Talbot Railway and Dock Company and used as an outlet for coal coming from the western central valleys (The Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust, 2017). The famous Talbot family of whom the port gets its name, owned a great deal of Glamorganshire, invested in the first port, and was a major shareholder in the aforementioned Port Talbot Railway and Dock Company (National Library of Wales, 2021).
- 4.1.3 On the First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1884, the proposal site is situated within a garden plot, on the north side of an unnamed road (Plate 1).



Plate 1. Six-Inch OS Map of 1884 (National Library of Scotland)

- 4.1.4 There are gardens to the east and west of the site, and undeveloped land to the north and fields to the south. The proposal site is located on the east side of the River Afan which is mainly undeveloped with the exception of factories to the north east and railway lines to the south west. The bulk of the development can be seen on the west side of the River Afan in an area known as Aberafan.

- 4.1.5 By 1900, the proposal site was still situated in an undeveloped plot of land on the north side of Grugos Terrace (now Forge Road). The surrounding area had developed significantly since the map of 1884 (Plate 1) with Aberavon Station and railway lines shown to the north and west; rows of terrace houses are shown to the south and undeveloped land shown to the east (Plate 2). The area to the south east of the proposal site is shown as being under development with the laying out of streets and terraced housing, note Mansel Street is marked but not built up.



Plate 2. Six-Inch OS Map of 1900 (National Library of Scotland)

- 4.1.6 The Bethany Chapel (Grade II Listed) can be seen to the south west of the proposal site on Plate 2. This chapel is noted in its listing entry for being a focus for development in this part of town from the late 19th century onwards (Cadw Listing Entry Ref: 23252).
- 4.1.7 At the beginning of the 20th century, there began an interest in steel production in the area of Port Talbot which resulted in the Port Talbot Steelworks established in 1901/2 by the Port Talbot Iron and Steel company, and Emily Charlotte Talbot (Parry, 2011). The Steelworks however failed within a year of beginning manufacture but were reopened in 1906 by the newly formed Port Talbot Steel Company. This industry would have been a strong impetus for the relocation of working age men from the surrounding villages, into Port Talbot seeing employment. This would in turn drive the development of the town.
- 4.1.8 The Afan Masonic Temple was built in 1909 by Morgan Cox, a Master of the Lodge between 1902 and 1917. The construction was funded by Emily Charlotte Talbot, the sister of Theodore Talbot who started the first Masonic Lodge in 1861 at the Walnut Tree Hotel in Aberafan (Cadw Listing Entry Ref: 23249). The Afan Masonic Temple can be seen on the OS map of 1917 (Plate 3).

- 4.1.9 The Tabernacle Chapel (Grade II Listed) is shown to the east of the proposal site on Plate 3, separated by a road which runs north from Forge Road. The Tabernacle Chapel was also built in 1909 on land donated by Emily Charlotte Talbot (Cadw Listing Entry Ref: 23251). The Agnes Church lies to the east of the Temple and chapel, located in a large plot on the north side of Forge Road (Plate 3).



Plate 3. 25-Inch OS Map of 1917 (National Library of Scotland)

- 4.1.10 On Plate 3, above, we can see that the area surrounding the site had been developed further since 1900, with the introduction of more terraced housing to the north and south east of the proposal site. This increase was likely due to steel production in Port Talbot during this period with the Port Talbot Steelworks among the largest of Britain's steelmakers in 1913 and played a vital part in the First World War, employing 1,700 people in 1918 (Parry, 2011).
- 4.1.11 Following World War Two, the steel industry in Port Talbot continued to be a major employer. Following an increase in production during both wars, by 1961, the steelworks in Port Talbot employed c. 20,000 people. This level of employment would have had significant economic benefits to the town.
- 4.1.12 Plate 4 shows the proposal site and the surrounding area in 1952. There is a large building situated to the immediate west of the proposal site and the surrounding area remains unchanged since Plate 3.

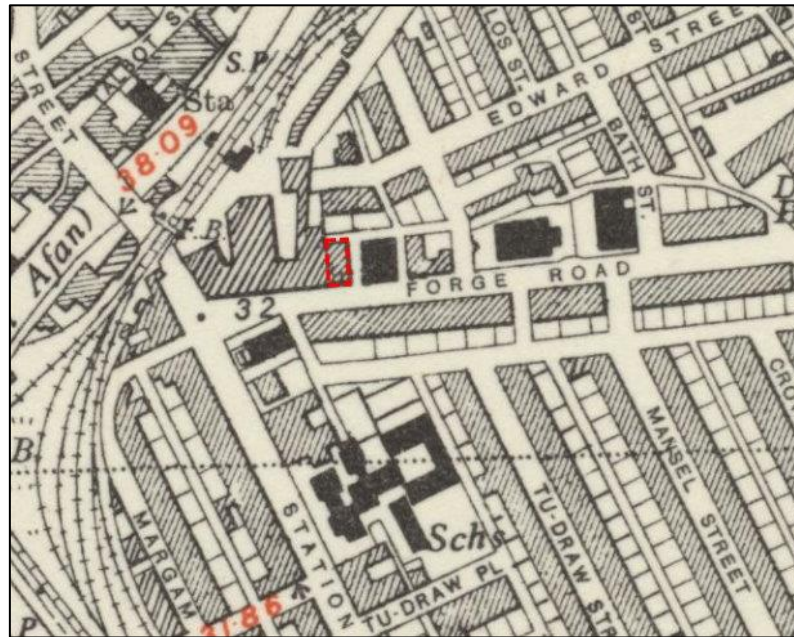


Plate 4. Six-Inch OS Map of 1952 (National Library of Scotland)

- 4.1.13 According to its listing entry, there were a number of unsympathetic extensions added to infill the lane which separates the Afan Masonic Temple and the Tabernacle Chapel in the late 20th century (Cadw Listing Entry Ref: 23249). According to maps available at www.old-maps.co.uk, these extensions are post 1980.
- 4.1.14 The Temple and the extensions as well as the Tabernacle Chapel and the immediate surroundings are shown on Plate 5 below.



Plate 5. Aerial Shot of the Proposed Development Site (Google Earth, 2021)

4.2 Current Site Condition

- 4.2.1 A site visit was conducted by Leanne Tindle (Assistant Heritage Consultant, AB Heritage) on the 1st of March 2021. The purpose of the site visit was to gain an understanding of the condition and setting of the Grade II Listed Afan Masonic Temple and its relationship with other heritage assets in the surrounding area.
- 4.2.2 The Temple is two-storeys high and three bays wide, designed in a classical style with a path and side entrance to the immediate west, and a series of late 20th century extensions to the immediate east (Photo 2). The main point of access into the building is through the single-storey flat roofed extension fronting but slightly set back from Forge Road next to the main building. Secondary access is currently on the west elevation and accessed by a gated alley. This entrance is cold and dark, being overshadowed by the wall of the adjacent shopping centre.
- 4.2.3 The principal elevation of the temple (Photo 2) fronts onto Forge Road and is constructed in red brick and dressed stone. There are rusticated pilasters and quoins on the ground floor, oculus windows and keystones separated by Ionic pilasters on the second floor, and the gable end is topped with a large pediment containing the inscription 'Afan Masonic Temple' featured on scrolls. The west elevation similarly features oculus and sash windows with red brick dressings (Photo 2).



Photo 2. The Principal and Partial West Elevation

- 4.2.4 Much of the east elevation of the temple is obscured by unsympathetic late 20th century additions, including the single-storey flat roofed attachment which is now the main entrance into the temple (Photo 3). The proposed ramp and new door will be located on the south elevation of the flat roof extension shown on Photo 3 below.



Photo 3. The Late 20th Century Extensions to the East Elevation

- 4.2.5 The north elevation features a double gable end, the largest gable with red-brick window dressings and quoins is contemporary with the main building, and the gable to the east is part of the late 20th century additions. There is an additional single-storey toilet block attached to the north west corner (Photo 4).



Photo 4. The Rear Elevation of the Proposed Development Site

- 4.2.6 There are three heritage assets in the immediate surrounding area including the Grade II Listed Tabernacle Chapel c. 25m east of the proposal site, the Grade II Listed Bethany Chapel located c. 35m south west of the site and the locally listed St. Agnes Church located c. 75m to the east. The Tabernacle Chapel to the east of the Temple, is of a similar size and dominance in the surrounding townscape albeit slightly larger than the temple (Photo 5).



Photo 5. View of Tabernacle Chapel and the Proposal Site on Forge Road

- 4.2.7 The Grade II Bethany Chapel is located on the junction between Station Road and the pedestrianised section of Forge Road. From a position outside the site on Forge Road, there is a clear line of sight to the Bethany Chapel to the south west.
- 4.2.8 The Locally Listed St. Agnes Chapel to the east, does not feature in any views from the site because of location and intervening development. It will therefore not be considered as part of the later assessment in this report.

5. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

5.1 Focus of Study

- 5.1.1 In accordance with Cadw guidance *Conservation Principles for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment in Wales* (2011), Heritage Assets derive their significance from a family of four heritage values. These are **Evidential Value**, **Historical Value**, **Aesthetic Value** and **Communal Value**. **Setting** is also a factor that influences the significance of a Heritage Asset. This report will assess those factors relevant to the overall understanding of the importance of the feature under consideration.
- 5.1.2 Based on the site visit, historic research, and consultation, this report will focus on providing an understanding of the potential impacts to the following Heritage Assets and/or their settings:
- Afan Masonic Temple - Grade II Listed
 - Tabernacle Chapel - Grade II Listed
 - Bethany Chapel - Grade II Listed

5.2 Grade II Listed Afan Masonic Temple

Description & General Condition

- 5.2.1 The early 20th century Afan Masonic Temple is a well-used meeting place for Freemasons within Port Talbot and is a prominent presence on the north side of the pedestrianised section of Forge Road. The building is designed in a classical style, constructed of red brick and dressed stone. There are several late 20th century extensions attached at the east which have no architectural sympathy with the host building. One of these extensions is the main entrance hall of the building.
- 5.2.2 The Temple is in a good state of repair and retains its original exterior architectural features on the principal building. The whole is somewhat diminished by the poor 20th century extensions.

Assessment of Heritage Interest

Aesthetic Value

- 5.2.3 The aesthetic value of the Afan Masonic Temple is derived from its surviving original design and architectural features. The exterior of the Afan Masonic Temple maintains its original classical design with a prominent gable end fronting onto Forge Road, a common feature of buildings in the surrounding area including the Tabernacle Chapel and the Bethany Chapel. The south elevation which fronts onto Forge Road is highly decorated with rusticated and Ionic pilasters, oculus windows, keystones and topped with a large pediment featuring Masonic symbolism.
- 5.2.4 Although the interior was not accessed during the site visit, the listing description states that the hall retains the original design contemporary with its construction and is a rare example of an unaltered Masonic Temple in Wales.

- 5.2.5 The aesthetic value of the building is adversely impacted by the associated 20th century extensions adjoining its east elevation and the overshadowing of a shopping centre to the west. These later unsympathetic additions to the immediate setting of the temple affect the way in which the building is appreciated as a standalone structure, designed to be seen primarily from its south elevation but from views west along Forge Road, and east from Station Road.

Historical Value

- 5.2.6 There is a degree of associative historical value which contributes to the overall significance of the building, involving its association with the Talbot family who began the first masonic lodge in Port Talbot in 1861, and funded the construction of the Afan Masonic Temple.

Communal Value

- 5.2.7 The Afan Masonic Temple holds community value as a building which is dedicated to bringing members of the community together and for being the focus of charitable community endeavours. This building has held this value for generations since it was established.

Setting

- 5.2.8 The Afan Masonic Temple is located within the busy, urban town centre of Port Talbot. The area is currently characterised by terraced houses, boarded up shops and low-rise modern shopping centres.
- 5.2.9 The original setting of the temple has been altered over time, but it retains a prominent position within the townscape of Port Talbot. Elements of the original setting survive in the large chapels to the east and south west, and the rows of terraced houses set back from the main routeways of Forge Road and Station Road, albeit some now converted to shops. These surviving elements of the Temple's original setting and its central location contribute slightly to its heritage significance.

Overview of Significance

- 5.2.10 The heritage significance of the Afan Masonic Temple is rooted in its aesthetic, historical and communal values which make it significant to the Masonic movement in Wales and to the community who continue to use it. The building is considered by Cadw as a rare example of its type in Wales, this is reflected in its Grade II Listed Building status (Cadw Listing Entry Ref: 23249). In line with Table 2, the Temple is deemed to be a heritage asset of High Significance i.e. 'A Grade II Listed Building of special interest, [with] a reasonably defined historic extent and significance'.

5.3 Grade II Listed Tabernacle Chapel

Description & General Condition

- 5.3.1 The Tabernacle Welsh Congregational Chapel constructed in 1909, is located on the north side of the pedestrianised section of Forge Road and designed in a Gothic style (Photo 5).

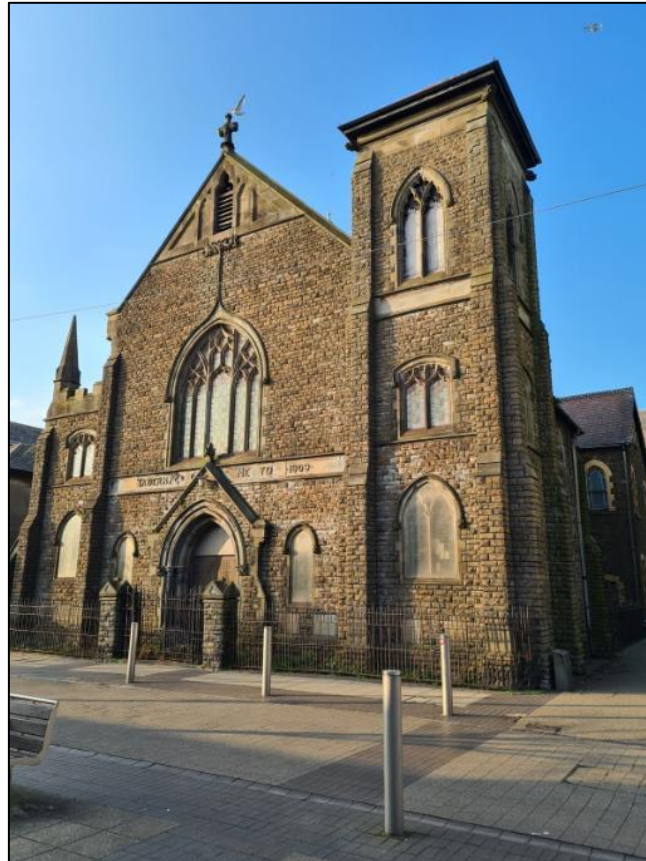


Photo 6. Tabernacle Chapel

- 5.3.2 The chapel is a large two-storey building situated in a large plot and slightly set back from the road with a narrow forecourt enclosed by iron railings. The building is in a visible state of disrepair with eroding masonry and faulty windows, likely due to neglect.

Assessment of Heritage Interest

Aesthetic Value

- 5.3.3 The aesthetic value of the Tabernacle Chapel is rooted in its Gothic design which is mostly demonstrated on the principal south elevation. This elevation displays a tall, narrow gable front with a large, shallow hooded central doorway and a large Perpendicular-style window above (Photo 5). The windows throughout the principal elevation are traceried featuring hoodmoulds with pointed arches above. According to the Listing entry, the principal elevation of the building was designed to appear church-like at the request of Emily Charlotte Talbot who donated the land on which it stands (Cadw Listing Entry Ref: 23251).
- 5.3.4 The other elevations feature sash windows with yellow-brick dressings, a common feature in the area featuring in the east, west and north elevations of the nearby Afan Masonic Temple.

- 5.3.5 The aesthetic value of the Chapel is slightly diminished by the addition of a set of late 20th century unsympathetic extensions to the west of the chapel, filling the former roadway which separated it from the Afan Masonic Temple on the west. These unsympathetic additions to the west obscure the ability to view the building as a standalone Chapel as it was likely designed to be.

Historical Value

- 5.3.6 The historical value primarily concerns the chapel's association with Emily Charlotte Talbot who donated the plot of land on which the chapel was built. Emily Talbot and other members of the Talbot family have supported the construction of other religious establishments in the area including the Afan Masonic Temple and Bethany Chapel.
- 5.3.7 The chapel also holds illustrative historical value rooted in its place in the local development of Port Talbot during the early 20th century. The area began to rapidly increase in size and population due to the opening of the steelworks which employed a large portion of the workforce in Port Talbot. The opening of the chapel illustrates the growing need for places of worship in this area of Port Talbot, precipitated by the increase in population.

Communal Value

- 5.3.8 The communal value of the Tabernacle Chapel is its use as a Welsh Congregational place of worship which served the local community from the early 20th century onwards.

Setting

- 5.3.9 The setting of the Chapel is characterised as a busy, urban town centre with boarded-up shops, terraced houses and modern shopping centres. The setting of the chapel has been altered over time with the introduction of modern, converted shops and modern extensions. The chapel however still retains its original, prominent position in the streetscape, with other surviving elements of its original setting including the presence of the Afan Masonic Chapel, St. Agnes Church and Bethany Chapel in the surrounding area. The surviving elements of its original setting add to its heritage significance.

Overview of Significance

- 5.3.10 Tabernacle Chapel retains aesthetic, historical, and communal value particularly as part of the early 20th century development of the area. In line with Table 2, the chapel is deemed to be a heritage asset of High Significance i.e. 'A Grade II Listed Building of special interest, or assets of a reasonably defined historic extent and significance'.

5.4 Grade II Listed Bethany Chapel

Description & General Condition

- 5.4.1 Bethany Presbyterian Chapel is a late 19th century building positioned in a prominent position on the junction between Station Road and the pedestrianised section of Forge Road. The building is a large two-storey chapel with basement and is in a visible state of disrepair, likely due to its lack of use.



Photo 7. The Bethany Chapel

Assessment of Heritage Interest

Historical Value

- 5.4.2 The heritage significance of Bethany Chapel is rooted in its associative and illustrative historical value due to its late 19th century development as a focal point from which this area of Port Talbot developed. The associative historical value of the chapel is rooted in its association with Christopher Rice Mansel Talbot who leased the plot of land on which the chapel was built. During this period Christopher Talbot owned a great deal of land in Glamorganshire and is partially responsible for the increased growth of the area from the late 19th century onwards.

Aesthetic Value

- 5.4.3 The aesthetic value of Bethany Chapel is derived from its original surviving classical design as a large and prominent structure surrounded by a forecourt and set back from Station Road.

The stone-built chapel retains original architectural features including Romanesque window surrounds, sandstone dressings and is enclosed with original cast iron railings with fleur-de-lis finials.

Communal Value

- 5.4.4 The communal value of Bethany Presbyterian Chapel is rooted in its continued use from the late 19th century until the late 20th century, serving the Reformed Protestant community of Port Talbot.

Setting

- 5.4.5 The setting of Bethany Chapel has largely remained unchanged with the exception of the addition of modern shopping centres to the surrounding area. The chapel still retains a prominent position on the junction between Forge Road and Station Road. In this respect, the setting of the chapel adds to the heritage significance of the building.

Overview of Significance

- 5.4.6 The significance of the Bethany Chapel is rooted in it being a focal point of development in this area of Port Talbot from the 19th century onwards. It also retains an associative historical value with the Talbot family and its aesthetic value is derived from its surviving original design. Given these heritage values, in line with Table 2, Bethany Chapel is deemed to be a heritage asset of High Significance, i.e. 'A grade II Listed Building of special interest, or assets of a reasonably defined historic extent and significance'.

5.5 Summary of Heritage Significance

- 5.5.1 Overall, this report has concluded that the following items, which will be taken forward to impact assessment have the following levels of overall heritage significance:

Table 5: Summary of Level of Significance

AB No	Feature	Designation	Significance
	Afan Masonic Temple	Grade II Listed Building	High
	Tabernacle Chapel	Grade II Listed Building	High
	Bethany Chapel	Grade II Listed Building	High

6. IMPACT ASSESSMENT

6.1 Mitigation by Design

- 6.1.1 The proposed ramp and railings have been designed to incorporate a colour palette of red brick which is present on all elevations of the Afan Masonic Temple, in order to blend in with the existing structure. The ramp has been designed to sit flush with the front of the historic building (Figure 2).

6.2 Details of Proposed Development

- 6.2.1 The proposed development is for the construction of a disabled access ramp with railings, and a new wheelchair accessible door to replace the existing (Figure 2). The proposals will improve disabled access to the building so that everyone attending the temple will be able to use the same access point.

6.3 Predicted Impact of Proposed Development

- 6.3.1 The proposed development associated with the Afan Masonic Temple will require a new ramp to be built up in front of the existing 20th century entrance building adjacent to the historic building of the Afan Masonic Temple. The existing door will be replaced with a new wheelchair accessible door in the same place. The ramp will require safety rails which will be affixed to the south east corner of the historic building, and to the 20th century entrance building. The fabric of the 20th century entrance is not considered to retain any heritage value and therefore there will be no direct heritage impacts to it.
- 6.3.2 There will be indirect impacts to the setting of the heritage assets identified in the Statement of Significance above.

Direct Impacts

Afan Masonic Temple

- 6.3.3 The predicted direct impact of this development is judged to have an Adverse Negligible Degree of Impact to the historic fabric of the Afan Masonic Temple i.e., *'Barely distinguishable change from baseline conditions, where there would be very little appreciable effect on a known site, because of the method of construction that is thought to have no long-term effect on the historic value of the resource'*. This is due to the small scale and careful design of the proposed development.
- 6.3.4 In line with Table 4, this degree of impact would result in a Minor / Not Significant Magnitude of Effect to the significance of the historic Listed Building.
- 6.3.5 There is deemed to be a direct beneficial impact to the Afan Masonic Temple in that the current entrance will benefit from a new wheelchair accessible door and ramp which will improve the overall look of the entrance. There is an associated benefit to the currently unideal access arrangements for wheelchair users at the west passage.

Indirect Impacts

Afan Masonic Temple

- 6.3.6 The indirect impacts of the proposed development to the Afan Masonic Temple would concern a small addition into the setting of the building. However as has been described above, the proposed ramp and railings have been designed to be small in scale and with a colour palette aimed at blending into the existing building. The location of the proposed ramp and railings in particular, are located in front of the existing 20th century entrance hall.
- 6.3.7 Therefore, due to the design of the proposed development and what is deemed a beneficial impact to the accessibility of the Afan Masonic Temple, in line with Table 2 the Degree of Impact is judged to be an Adverse Negligible Impact to the setting of the Historic Building i.e. *'Barely distinguishable change from baseline conditions, where there would be very little appreciable effect on a known site, because of the method of construction that is thought to have no long-term effect on the historic value of the resource'*. In line with Table 4, would equate to a Minor / Not Significant Magnitude of Effects on the heritage importance and values of the Listed Building.

Tabernacle Chapel

- 6.3.8 The proposed development would potentially have an indirect impact to the Chapel in that there would be a very minor addition to its setting. However, due to the small-scale of the proposed development there will be very little visibility from the chapel and little appreciable effect to the setting of the heritage asset.
- 6.3.9 Taking the above into account, in line with Table 3, this would result in an Adverse Negligible Degree of Impact. i.e. *'A barely distinguishable change from baseline conditions, where there would be very little appreciable effect on a known site and are thought to have no long-term effect on the historic value of a resource'*. In line with Table 4, this degree of impact would result in a Minor / Not Significant Magnitude of Effect to the significance of the heritage asset.

Bethany Chapel

- 6.3.10 The potential impacts of the proposed development to Bethany Chapel would be indirect only and would concern a very minor addition to the setting. However, although the development would potentially be slightly visible from Bethany Chapel, the small-scale nature of the development and its design and colour palette choice would blend into the existing structure of the Afan Masonic Temple. Therefore, drawing no attention away from the Bethany chapel and instead blending into the existing setting.
- 6.3.11 It is therefore judged that in line with Table 2, the proposed development would have an Adverse Negligible Degree of Impact to the setting of the heritage asset, i.e. *'A barely distinguishable change from baseline conditions, where there would be very little appreciable effect on a known site and are thought to have no long-term effect on the historic value of a resource'*.
- 6.3.12 In line with Table 4, this would constitute a Minor / Non-Significant Magnitude of Effect.

6.4 Summary

- 6.4.1 The proposed development has been found to have an Adverse Negligible Degree of Direct Impact to the historic fabric of the Afan Masonic Temple which in turn would result in a Minor / Non-Significant Magnitude of Effect to the significance of the building. The assessment found there to be a Low Beneficial Degree of Indirect Impact to the Temple due to improved disabled access to the building.
- 6.4.2 The assessment also concluded that there would be a Negligible Degree of Indirect Impact to the Grade II Listed Tabernacle Chapel and the Grade II Listed Bethany Chapel, by small scale development in their setting, which in turn would result in a Minor / Not Significant Magnitude of Effect to the significance of the heritage assets. This is due to the small-scale nature of the development, and its barely perceptible presence with the settings.
- 6.4.3 By introducing improved disabled and general access, the proposals would provide public benefits. Therefore the proposals fulfil Policy BE 1 of the Neath Port Talbot Local Plan which details that the design of proposed development should '*achieve inclusive design by ensuring barrier free environments, allowing access by all and making full provision for people with disabilities*'.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS & CONCLUSIONS

7.1 Outline Recommendations

- 7.1.1 No further heritage related work is recommended for this application.
- 7.1.2 The final decision on further heritage works is the preserve of the Local Planning Authority.

7.2 Conclusion

- 7.2.1 AB Heritage Limited has been commissioned by the Port Talbot Masonic Building Management Committee to produce a Heritage Statement covering proposed works at the Afan Masonic Temple, 8 Forge Road, Port Talbot, SA13 1US.
- 7.2.2 The proposed development seeks to construct a wheelchair accessible ramp with associated railings, and wheelchair accessible door.
- 7.2.3 The historic development of the Afan Masonic Temple has revealed the building to have been built in an important period of growth in this area of Port Talbot, with its association with the Talbot family and the renowned steelworks.
- 7.2.4 The report found that the following heritage assets had the potential to be affected by the proposed development:
 - Afan Masonic Temple - Grade II Listed
 - Tabernacle Chapel - Grade II Listed
 - Bethany Chapel - Grade II Listed
- 7.2.5 All of which were found to be buildings of High Significance.
- 7.2.6 The assessment concluded that there would be Negligible Degree of Direct Impact to the historic fabric of the Afan Masonic Temple. The assessment found that there would be a Negligible Degree of Indirect Impact to the setting of the Grade II Listed Tabernacle Chapel, and Grade II Listed Bethany Chapel. Associated public benefits in the form of improved disabled and general access to the Afan Masonic Temple mean that the proposals can be considered to conform to Policy BE 1 of the Neath Port Talbot Local Plan.
- 7.2.7 No further heritage works are recommended.
- 7.2.8 The final decision on further heritage works is the preserve of the Local Planning Authority.

8. REFERENCES

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Correspondence

- Leanne Tindle (Assistant Heritage Consultant, AB Heritage) contacted Mr Russel Borthwick (Planning Officer, Neath Port Talbot Council) via telephone on the 26th February 2021.



Figure 2

CONNOLLY ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN			
Project	Port Talbot Afan Lodge		Drawn By: TC
	Draw Title	Proposed Ramp Design	Checked By: TC
Date	11/09/19	Scale	1 : 50
Job No	193057	Eng No	A101
		Revision	



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