

Justifications for conversion – Summary of Benefits vs Loss to the community

The original high street store is no longer commercially viable as a convenience store as, the shop floor space and layout is not suitable for a modern retailer and cannot accommodate the necessities for a Nisa or Premier franchise as the building cannot support the requirements for chilled and frozen goods to be eligible for a successful franchise. If trading as independent, without being joined to a buying group, the site will have to sell Frozen foods, Chilled Foods and a general grocer with non-foods to be financially viable and the layout and space available will no longer be suitable for such use as past use. Due to the prevalence of a larger retail unit 160meters away with approved SPG off street parking, the previous trading businesses were no longer financially viable and closed.

Further to this, the larger Nisa franchise store being of CK Supermarkets has a larger car park 160 meters away from the building and has a reduced the shop floor size due to decline in retail sales to 360m2 compared to its previous 630m2 pre-covid due to losses and alternative non-food products on ecommerce that are no longer financially viable at the site. The retail area was reduced and now houses an independent privately owned café (70m2), a new warehouse area 30m2 for storage and 2 rentable retail outlets (37m2 & 47m2, still empty and no interest from the community) attached to the floor in order to make the store more profitable and viable for the retailer CK Supermarkets to stay in the area. The increase in rentable units in the large store reduces the likelihood of any successful non-food or alternative operation being successful out of the CK Multi tenanted building.

Within 15 meters of the CK multi tenanted supermarket there is a Premier alternative that has a floor size of approximately 120m2 that stocks alternative food based products that are contested (RPI no market dominance) with a retail price setting competition between them and makes no scope for an alternative 160 meters away as it will be not financially viable and will cause issues with traffic from the building with a busy light retail store being in constant use. The existing access to the site will not be suitable to receive large deliveries and would result in obstructing the highway with HGV.

Within 535m of the proposed development there is another retail franchise store that caters to the existing competition with CK Nisa and Premier. This premises has an approximate retail area of 266m2 and houses the same choices of Frozen foods, Chilled Foods, general grocer and non-foods and there is no niche market available to make it a successful venture.

General goods stores are on the decline on the high street as eCommerce post pandemic cannot be financially viable as Amazon still leads with a 37.8% Share of the retail eCommerce market and there is not enough foot fall within the area to compete. Further to this, to mitigate the owners of the said property run a branch called “Rapid Direct Savings” trading on the Amazon platform and uses a distributed warehouse space across the UK with an average usage size above the CK Store in m2. The size and the layout of the location of the building is unsuitable to undertake returns to receive delivery and process returns without obstructing the highway with heavy goods vehicles. With the building being so close to the highway and limited space to overtake a parked HGV on the A474, it will highly likely create a traffic bottleneck as the HGV will have to park on the road side to make deliveries. This is also a risk for pedestrians attempting to cross the road during this time.

Other considered possible uses

Antiques stores have been on the decline and there are no longer any interests in becoming a financially viable store and successful.

Previous use as a charity shop was not financially viable and the last one failed in 2018

Second hand goods store was not financially viable, and the previous business failed.

Use as a Private Shop (Licenced) is not viable due to eCommerce.

Veterinary practice, lucrative prospect however, building is not suitable for the new requirement of Xray scanners and ventilation required under new legislation and guidance.

Hairdressers, there was a previous business that operated 96 meters away and closed in 2022 due to lack of interest in the local community and now runs as a mobile unit. There is an existing male barber shop 106 meters away that has low interest and uptake and there will be no viable option to justify another in close proximity.

Other light retail units are available and more suited 300 meters away clustered in Graig road that would present a more commercially viable variety options as they are a mix of consumer choice however, these businesses are catered to hot food and other non-food are empty

Justification for conversion to a Sui Generis

The local authority has published data being the consultation draft budget proposals 2024-25, this indicates that the number of homelessness and temporary housing has increased from 313 in 2019-20 to 832 in 2023-24. Further to this, it does not contain data for people looking for alternative housing and affordable housing. There are undocumented demand of persons looking to downsize that are elderly and looking for smaller ground floor accessible housing close to the community. This information was sourced from the local lettings agent and has sent the request for alterations to free up other housing stock.

There is a shortage of housing stock in the Neath Port Talbot area that is felt with the wider community. Statistical data was pulled from Zoopla & On the market, clearly demonstrating a shortage of housing stock in the month of December 2023. To summarise there is chronic shortage of affordable housing from that is inflating the market for renting and with the cheapest recorded being £700pcm, see below tables for calculations based on available property:

Properties for Rent in Port Talbot by Price	
Rent under £250 pcm	0
£250 to £500 pcm rent	0
£500 to £1,000 pcm rent	12
£1,000 to £2,000 pcm rent	1
£2,000 to £5,000 pcm rent	1
Rent over £5,000 pcm	0

Property Rents in Port Talbot by Number of Bedrooms			
	No. of properties	Average rent	Median rent
One bedroom	1	£1,083 pcm	£1,083 pcm
Two bedroom	3	£732 pcm	£700 pcm
Three bedroom	9	£1,022 pcm	£825 pcm
Four bedroom	1	£850 pcm	£850 pcm
Five bedroom	0	N/A	N/A
Above 5	0	N/A	N/A

Property Rents in Port Talbot by Type			
	No. of properties	Average rent	Median rent
Room	0	N/A	N/A
Flat	3	£1,494 pcm	£1,083 pcm
House	11	£804 pcm	£795 pcm

Comparison of performance in the South Wales area

Summary of Properties for Rent in South Wales	
Total properties for rent in South Wales	1,958
Properties for rent in South Wales listed in December 23	295
Average* property rents in South Wales	£1,207 pcm

Properties for Rent in South Wales by Price	
Rent under £250 pcm	8
£250 to £500 pcm rent	94
£500 to £1,000 pcm rent	953
£1,000 to £2,000 pcm rent	712
£2,000 to £5,000 pcm rent	180
Rent over £5,000 pcm	11

Property Rents in Port Talbot by Number of Bedrooms		
	No. of properties	Average rent
One bedroom	339	£969 pcm
Two bedroom	595	£1,098 pcm
Three bedroom	488	£1,199 pcm
Four bedroom	164	£1,680 pcm
Five bedroom	73	£2,024 pcm

Property Rents in South Wales by Type		
	No. of properties	Average rent
Room	121	£824 pcm
Flat	714	£1,230 pcm
House	996	£1,258 pcm

Benefits of converting to an HMO

New Property by Type in GCG		
	No. of properties	Average rent
Room	8	£425
Flat	0	
House	0	

Besides from a **benefit in affordable housing**, it will benefit from off street parking with EV charging facility, bike storage. This is in line with the local development plan and will promote a healthy lifestyle change as the building is in the centre of the community and settlement lines with good transport links at the heart of the community.

By converting this legacy retail property, it will enhance the quality of life for local residents who can afford and **to live in a secure site with off street parking with affordable housing** and enjoy a better quality of life by being able to stay within the community. From consultation with the community in the Welsh impact assessment attached to the proposed development, there was evidence to prove that in this area where there is a **higher use of the Welsh language** and due to the **shortage of stock, Welsh speaking people must move out of the area and the catchment areas of the Welsh schools** in the area. Policy WL1 Development in Language sensitive Areas and SP22 Welsh language should allow the development of existing buildings to **allow local Welsh speaking people to remain local** in the community and this proposed development **will benefit the Welsh language** for generations to come by **enhancing the sense of community and promote equality**.

Having considered the facts of the above, there will be **no loss to the community as the current demand for affordable housing outweighs the arguments for keeping another legacy retail unit** without it being converted into hot food to be successful. That being said, there is a hot food outlet being of the former Cresci's Cafe (within 69m) now a fried chicken shop and a bakery that is of questionable use under its current permitted classification (within 93m) and will make any hot food venture unsuccessful.

Following consultation with the local community, the local community have stated heavy opposition to the building being used as another charity store and agree that returning it housing would be a better option than the alternative. Perspective plans have been shown to local residence and a positive response has been received with regards **to keeping the building external fascia as original as possible using traditional materials. The existing Victorian shop front will be fully restored to match the rare surviving example of early Victorian shop fronts. This in line with the removal of the recent concrete render, repointing and lime washing and the restoration of the sash windows and traditional Welsh slate roof will restore the beauty and character of the building for generations to come.**

Also taking into account concerns raised by the local community is the Vermin in the area due to unused foul drainage, as soon as the development is back in use, there will be a **reduction in vermin** as stated by Welsh Water and a non-return valve to the existing drainage will enhance the infrastructure and prevent vermin.

Other local benefits to the community, general building materials can be sourced local from small building merchants in the area, this local spend in materials **would benefit local companies and suppliers**. The development will inject money back into the local community and contractors will be encouraged to buy local in the induction briefing. An additional allowance will be added to the costs of materials as they will be more expensive locally rather than through existing procurement channels.

The development will give local young workers or **inexperienced workers an opportunity to work locally and learn from experts** in the field of sustainable development and works that identify previous bad practices of concrete over kiln-dried bricks and damp caused by structures unable to breathe and rising damp. This will give Insite into **best practices to prevent damp and condensation**

that effects lots of properties in the area and will provide them with knowledge and skills to use elsewhere.

The development will be designed to use the latest technology available on the market with sustainable power generated by PV Solar Power that could **reduce the carbon footprint of the site and be sustainable**. This will be integrated into the fabric of the building and will increase the thermal efficiency of the building. The ecology of the area will be enhanced with a green living wall at the site of the building and will capture varied carbon* from the roadside and will **improve air quality and reduce noise and pollution**. This will enhance not only local species and the ecology of the area, it will raise awareness of the importance of the ecology to the area and the benefits will be advertised locally and will inspire others to do the same.

This will not only will benefit the local community, but it will also enhance the local ecology and biodiversity in the area by, **introducing natural systems** to combat and offset CO2 emissions and toxins (co-carcinogens) from vehicles from the A474. The proposal set out in the biodiversity enhancement plan attached to the proposed development, set recommendations will enhance the developments ecology and biodiversity in line with local policy EN6, SP15 and the technical advice note 5 (Nature conservation and planning 2009). This recommendation will enhance the ecological networks and green infrastructure in the area and will encourage others to do the same. The benefits of recommended enhancements to the biodiversity and the **resilience of the ecosystems** and protected species habitats. This will create a local environment for local species and **promote pollination by a nature-based approach** in line with the national planning policy 9 (Resilient Ecological Networks and green infrastructure).

The report stated the benefits and presence of the green living wall will create clean oxygen in an urban environment as plants are scarce within and out of the development area, as green walls improve the air quality as the busy road generates a by-product of toxins being proven co-carcinogens from vehicle engines passing on the A474, **this natural solution** will filter the toxins in the air and convert the carbon dioxide to oxygen. **This proposed green infrastructure will improve the air quality as the plants will capture toxins, gases and aerosols and particle matter**. This also includes dust particles, improving air around the development and the busy road as just 1m² of a living wall extracts 2.3kg of CO₂ per annum from the air and produces 1.7kg of oxygen, while studies have shown that plants and microbes found in their soil **absorb harmful VOC's and convert them into compounds which plants feed on**. This aligns with the benefits of Policy SP1 climate change, SP2 Health, SP21 built environment and historic heritage, N7 important natural features.

On balance with the rest of the development, the intuitive design and use of PV array (Solar panels) to maximise the use of sustainable energy has the **potential to zero out the buildings emissions and carbon footprint** and enhance the local commitments to climate change in with Policy SP1 climate change, BE1 Design, EN7 important natural features SP3 Sustainable communities.

The implantation of this green living wall will be visible from the roadside and has the potential to inspire others to enhance their properties and **raise awareness of natural solutions to improve air quality, enhance ecology measures and enhance the beauty of the area**.

We believe that this project aligns with the objectives outlined in Local Development Plan Policy BE2, and that it will have a positive and lasting impact on the community and its cultural identity. Furthermore, it will enhance the building visually from the roadside and enhance the quality of housing options. On balance, the benefits the re-development outweigh any of the negatives that planning policy provides and it's in the community interest of the local Welsh people to have the

building restored back to its former glory and inspire others to improve the standard of their buildings. The 11th edition of Planning Policy Wales states this in Paras 3.3 to 3.17 (Good Design Making Better Spaces), this design will provide affordable housing options with secure parking that would enhance the quality of life for people who are disadvantaged.

The benefit for conversion for affordable housing in an area with chronic shortage, outweighs all other matters and an exemption should be given to allow this (A1) to be converted to an (Sui Generis) 9 Bed HMO for the benefit of the community to enjoy until such time there is a surplus and a viable commercial use of the building.