

Date: 6th August 2024
Our Ref: PS/FG/24.189

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NPT Planning
The Quays
Brunel Way
Port Talbot
SA11 2GG

Dear Sir or Madam,

Town and County Planning Act 1990 (As Amended)
Proposed change of use of a first and second floor office (Use Class: B1) to a 7 bedroom house of multiple occupation (Use Class: Sui Generis)
43 Neath Road, Briton Ferry, SA11 2DX
Planning application reference: PP-13210796

Asbri Planning is appointed as planning agent to A J Wilson Property Limited to submit a full planning application to Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council in relation to the above site. Proposals comprise the change of use of first and second floor office space (B1) use class to a 7 bedroom house of multiple occupation under the Sui Generis use class. The ground floor will remain as the current retail use.

Submission

In line with the Council's planning application procedures, the following information accompanies this submission:

Document/drawing (reference where applicable)	Prepared by
Planning Application Form	Asbri Planning
Covering Letter	Asbri Planning
Green Infrastructure Statement	Asbri Planning
Bat and Bird Enhancements	Ecological Services Wales
Heritage Impact Statement (0526_HIS.01)	Lloyd Britton Architect Ltd
Site location plan (0526_P01)	Lloyd Britton Architect Ltd
Existing and Proposed Floor Plans (0526_P02)	Lloyd Britton Architect Ltd
Existing Elevations (0526_P03)	Lloyd Britton Architect Ltd
Proposed Elevations (0526_P04)	Lloyd Britton Architect Ltd

The planning application fee to the sum of £460 will be paid under separate cover.

Site Description

The site is located on a corner plot between Neath Road and Villiers Street in the south of Briton Ferry. The existing property comprises a part two part three-storey detached building along with a small yard to the rear of the property. The land along Neath Road has a flat topography, while a gentle slope exists along Villiers Street. The property lies at the top of this slope on Villiers Street.

The A48 is located approximately 200m to the south of the site and access to the M4 can be found via junction 42 from the west. The Briton Ferry District Centre as designated in the LDP lies immediately to the north of the site and extends north along the A474 for approximately 425m. The District Centre contains a number of local facilities such as a library, a chemist, public houses, convenience stores, hair dressers and barbers, and fast-food eateries. The site is centred on the following grid coordinates E:274118, N:194006.



Figure 1: Site Location (Source: Google Maps)

The closest Welsh Medium Primary School (Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Tyle'r Ynn) is located approximately 1.8km to the north of the site, while the nearest English Medium Primary School (Ysgol Carreg Hir) is situated approximately 1.5km north of the site. With regards to secondary schools, both Ysgol Bae Baglan and Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Dur are located approximately 3km to the south of the site in Baglan.

The nearest bus shelters, which provide both seating and wheelchair access facilities, are located along Neath Road approximately 100m north and south of the site. These stops provide services to Margam, Neath, Swansea and Port Talbot via services 87, 202 and the X5 Cymru Clipper. Briton Ferry railway station lies approximately 1km north of the site and access to the station can be found along Ynysmaerdy Road. Here, passengers can access destinations further afield including Swansea to the west and Cardiff to the east.

A review of NRW's Development Advice Map (DAM) shows that the site lies within Flood Zone A, meaning the site is considered to be little or no risk of fluvial or coastal or tidal flooding. Furthermore, NRW's Flood Map for Planning,

which provides the latest NRW flood mapping data, shows that the site does not lie within an area susceptible of flooding from surface water and small watercourses. Figures 2 and 3 highlight this below.

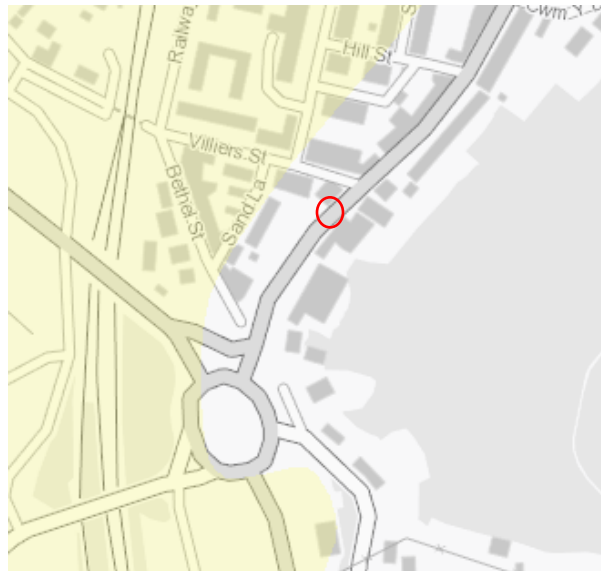


Figure 2: Natural Resources Wales Development Advice Map for 43 Neath Road, Briton Ferry

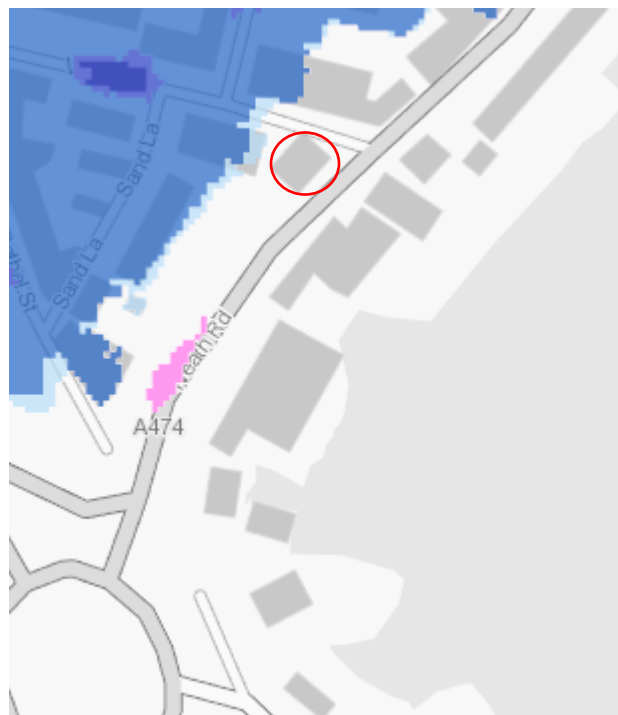


Figure 3: Natural Resources Wales Flood Map for Planning for 43 Neath Road, Briton Ferry

A review of Cadw mapping shows that no listed buildings are located within the site boundary, however three Grade II listed buildings are located opposite the site along Neath Road. Figure 4 shows the location of the listed buildings in relation to the site. The red circle denotes the site location while the blue dots denote the location of the listed buildings. As there are no changes proposed for the exterior of the property fronting Neath Road or Villiers Street, the proposals will not have any additional impact on the setting of the listed buildings.



Figure 4: Location of Grade II listed buildings in relation to the site location

The building on site is however acknowledged as the following in the authority's Schedule of Buildings of Local Importance supplementary guidance:

- A building of architectural interest;
- A building that has cultural and historical associations; and
- Has a group / settlement character value.

Further information regarding this is provided in Appendix A.

The adopted Neath Port Talbot LDP shows the site is located within the settlement boundary (outlined in yellow), but is outside any conservation areas, air quality management areas, SINC's or other such designations.



Figure 5: Site location in relation to the settlement boundary located within Neath Port Talbot Council's LDP

Planning History

The site possesses the following recent planning history

Application Reference:	Description:	Decision
P1998/1039	Fascia and projecting signs	Approved 16/10/1998
P2000/1257	Change of ground floor to kitchen retail premises, retention of office space on upper floors (no alteration to interior layout)	Approved 08/12/2000

Pre-Application Discussions

This planning application was subject to pre-application discussions (Ref: Q2022/0188) with Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council in 2022. These discussions were used as opportunities to gain feedback on two very similar proposals:

Proposed change of use of first and second floor office (B1) to a 6 bedroom house of multiple occupancy (C4) or apartments (C3).

A pre-application meeting was held on-site with the design team and the case officer, Jessica King, on the 26th October 2022. The following comments were raised in the case officer's formal pre-application response:

Design and visual impact

- The works would be retained within the building and are not considered to have an impact upon the exterior of the building.

- Bin storage, cycle storage and clothes drying facilities should be indicated on a block plan in support of any future planning application.
- A Heritage Impact Assessment is recommended to accompany any future planning application due to the local importance of the building.

Impact on neighbouring properties

- The proposal is not considered to unacceptably harm the residential amenity of the neighbouring properties.

Parking

- As the site is within close proximity to the town centre, local facilities, public transport provision and cycle routes, the proposals are deemed acceptable in terms of parking.
- Recommend that a Transport Assessment is prepared to support any future planning application at the site.

Biodiversity

- Due to the age of the building, a bat survey is recommended.
- Biodiversity enhancements are required in support of any future planning application.

In light of the comments raised, the following amendments have been made to the proposals:

- A Heritage Impact Assessment has been prepared and accompanies this planning application.
- Whilst a Transport Assessment (TA) was recommended, Asbri Planning queried this with the case officer on the 11th November 2022 given the small-scale nature of the proposals. Asbri Planning also noted in their correspondence with the case officer that Technical Advice Note (TAN) 18, which relates to Transport, states that TAs are vital for *"developments that are likely to result in significant trip generation"*. This will not be the case in respect of the abovementioned proposals, and the case officer confirmed on the 11th November 2022 that a section in the accompanying planning letter would be sufficient to address transportation.
- As no work is proposed within the loft-space of the building, a bat survey has not been prepared in support of this planning application.

Proposals

The proposal comprises the change of use from first and second floor offices to a 7.no bedroom House of Multiple Occupation. No external alterations on the prominent Neath Road and Villiers Street elevations are proposed as part of the development. The only external change is the reinstatement of a second floor window on the south west elevation and the insertion of 1no. bat and 1no. bird boxes, also on the rear elevations. The retail use at ground floor remains, which retains the active frontage of the property on the ground floor. The proposals comprise external upper and lower courtyards and an under-croft area at lower ground/ground floor level available for cycle parking, refuse storage, rotary dryer and outdoor amenity space.

The first floor of the HMO comprises 4no. double bedrooms with accompanying ensembles whilst the second floor will include 3no. double bedrooms with accompanying ensembles.

The proposed HMO will satisfy the space and amenity requirements for 6 to 10 people as set out in the Council's HMO Space and Amenity Standards. All the bedrooms exceed the minimum requirements for one person (6.50m² to 8.36m²), and one and a half people (8.36m² to 10.22m² i.e., an adult with a child aged between one and 10). Bedrooms 1, 2, 5, 6 and 7 also accommodate sufficient space for two people (10.22m² to 14.86m²). The ancillary accommodation satisfies Neath Port Talbot Council's Space and Amenity Standards for 6 to 10 people and so does the washing and WC provision.

Planning Policy

National Planning Policy

Future Wales: The National Plan 2040

Future Wales: The National Plan 2040 adopted in February 2021 establishes a national framework setting the direction for development in Wales to 2040.

Policy 1 (Where Wales Will Grow) identifies National Growth Areas and states:

"The Welsh Government supports sustainable growth in all parts of Wales. In three National Growth Areas there will be growth in employment and housing opportunities and investment in infrastructure. The National Growth Areas are:

- Cardiff, Newport and the Valleys
- **Swansea Bay and Llanelli**
- Wrexham and Deeside"

Policy 28 (National Growth Area – Swansea and Llanelli) notes that:

"Swansea Bay and Llanelli will be the main focus for growth and investment in the South West region. Strategic and Local Development Plans should recognise the National Growth Area as the focus for strategic economic and housing growth; essential services and facilities; advanced manufacturing; transport and digital infrastructure.

Planning Policy Wales

Planning Policy Wales (PPW) – Edition 12 (February 2024) is the principal document which sets out the land use policy context of the Welsh Government. Its primary objective is to ensure that the planning system itself contributes towards the delivery of sustainable development whilst improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, as required by the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 and other pertinent legislation. Paragraph 3.3 states that

"Good design is fundamental to creating sustainable places where people want to live, work and socialise. Design is not just about the architecture of a building but the relationship between all elements of the natural and built environment and between people and places."

Paragraph 4.2.2. is in relation to the planning system's role in housing and states that *"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 the related land supply."*

Technical Advice Notes

Planning Policy Wales is supplemented by various Technical Advice Notes (TANs), which provide more in-depth guidance on specific issues. In this instance, guidance contained in the following is relevant:

Technical Advice Note 5 (2009): Nature Conservation and Planning

TAN 5 provides advice about how the land use planning system should contribute to protecting and enhancing biodiversity and geological conservation. It seeks to demonstrate how local planning authorities, developers and key stakeholders in conservation can work together to deliver more sustainable development that does not result in losses from the natural heritage but instead takes every opportunity to enhance it.

Technical Advice Note 12 (2016): Design

In defining the notion of design, paragraph 2.1 states that it can help in articulating our nation and culture whilst helping in sustaining a positive image of Wales.

Paragraph 2.5 states that **'good design is not inevitable'**, and in order to achieve it, it must embrace sustainability, architecture, place making, public realm, landscape, and infrastructure.

Technical Advice Note 18 (2007): Transport

TAN 18 provides advice and guidance on all travel modes. The following paragraphs are of particular importance for this site as they cover aspects regarding, parking (4.1), maximum parking standards (4.7) and residential car parking (4.15):

Paragraph 4.1 – *"The availability and price of car parking are key elements in managing car use and a major influence on the choice of means of transport. **Car parking can take up large amounts of space in developments**, which decreases density and therefore can represent an inefficient use of land. It can also generate considerable additional trips if located in an area without public transport. Poor design and layout of car parking can also make it more difficult to provide effective, walking, cycling and public transport links."*

Paragraph 4.15 – *"**Some car free housing development may be appropriate in locations with good walking, cycling and public transport links** and in areas where parking is controlled. On-site cycle and parking provision for those with disabilities will be required if such on-street parking cannot be provided. Planning obligations will have a role to play in ensuring residents do not own cars in such developments."*

Technical Advice Note 24 (2017): The Historic Environment

The purpose of this TAN is to provide guidance on how the planning system considers the historic environment during development plan preparation and decision making on planning and Listed Building (LBC) applications. Section 5 provides guidance for Listed Buildings designations and consents and confirms that *"Listed buildings are nationally important assets which represent a unique source of information about the past and make a valuable contribution to the quality and character of Welsh landscapes and townscapes"*.

Neath Port Talbot Local Development Plan (to 2026)

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that planning application decisions should be made in accordance with the authority's adopted development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In this instance, the statutory development plan for the pre-application site is provided in the Neath Port Talbot Local Development Plan (2011 - 2026).

A review of the LDP proposals map reveals that the site lies within the settlement boundary for Neath Port Talbot, as such, is in an area where development is normally permitted and is not subject to any specific allocations or constraints.

The following policies contained within the LDP are considered to be of most relevance to this planning application:

Policy Reference	Relating to
<i>Overarching Policies</i>	
SP1	Climate Change
SP3	Sustainable Communities
SC1	Settlement Limits
SP4	Infrastructure
SP5	Development in the Coastal Corridor Strategy Area
<i>Topic Based Policies</i>	
SP7	Housing Requirement
<i>Environment and Resources</i>	
SP15	Biodiversity and Geodiversity
SP16	Environmental Protection
<i>Culture and Heritage</i>	
SP21	Built Environment and Historic Heritage
BE2	Buildings of Local Importance

Policy SC1, which pertains to the settlement limits outlines the following:

"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."

Policy SP21 relates to the built environment and historic heritage and states:

"The built environment and historic heritage will, where appropriate, be conserved and enhanced through the following measures:

1. *Encouraging high quality design standards in all development proposals;*
2. *Protecting arterial gateways from intrusive and inappropriate development;*
3. *Safeguarding features of historic and cultural importance;*
4. *The identification of the following designated sites to enable their protection and where appropriate enhancement:*
 - a. *Landscapes of Historic Interest;*
 - b. *Historic Parks and Gardens;*
 - c. *Conservation Areas;*
 - d. *Scheduled Ancient Monuments; and*
 - e. *Listed Buildings and their curtilage."*

Supplementary Planning Guidance

In addition to the aforementioned LDP policies, the following Supplementary Planning Guidance documents are also considered relevant to this planning application:

- Guidance Note 1 – SPG: Planning Obligations (2016)
- Guidance Note 2 – SPG: The Historic Environment (2019)

- Guidance Note 3 – SPG: Schedule of Buildings of Local Importance (2019)
- Guidance Note 4 – SPG: Design (2017)
- Guidance Note 5 – SPG: Parking Standards (2017)

Planning Appraisal

This section aims to identify the main issues relevant to the consideration of the certificate and assess the scheme against the relevant planning policy framework. These matters are considered to be as follows:

- The **principle of development** in terms of land use planning policy and sustainable development;
- The impact of the development on the **character and appearance** of the surrounding area;
- The impact of the development on **residential amenity**;
- Impact of the development in terms of **highways and access**; and
- **Other material considerations.**

Principle of development

The site is situated within the settlement boundary of Briton Ferry, as such, is located in an area where development is normally permitted in accordance with Policy SC1 (Settlement Limits) of the adopted LDP. The ground floor, which is not part of this planning application, currently operates under A1 use as a kitchen shop, whilst the first and second floors are of B1 use class. Notwithstanding, the upper floors are currently under occupied therefore the proposals to change the use of the upper floors of 43 Neath Road to the Sui Generis use class would ensure more efficient use of existing facilities (i.e., the building itself) by providing a 7 bedroom HMO. Notwithstanding, the office accommodation is dated and not fit for purpose for modern usage.

Further to the above, it is clear that a number of the prevailing land uses within the immediate surrounding area is residential in nature, which demonstrates the appropriateness of the change of use proposals. The retail use of the ground floor will remain, which ensures that the building retains its active frontage at ground floor level, thus ensuring that LDP Policy SP11 (Employment Growth) is adhered to.

In light of the above, it is considered that the principle of development is acceptable, and adheres to LDP Policies SC1 (Settlement Limits), SP1 (Climate Change), SP11 (Employment Growth) and paragraph 5.4.13 of PPW 12, which states that *'Planning authorities should aim to...*

- *promote the re-use of previously developed, vacant and underused land; [and]*
- *control and manage the release of unwanted employment sites to other uses...'*

Character and appearance of the surrounding area

As aforementioned, the proposals only relate to internal changes to the first and second floors of 43 Neath Road (with the exception of reinstating a second floor window on the south west (rear) elevation and the addition of 1no. bat and 1no. bird boxes on the south east and south west elevations) to facilitate the change of use of the upper sections of the property from B1 to a 7 bedroom HMO (Sui Generis use class). No external alterations are proposed on the principal elevations of most architectural interest fronting Neath Road and Villiers Street, which demonstrates that the proposals will have no additional impact on the character and appearance of the surrounding area than currently exists. This is particularly important given the building is acknowledged as a building of architectural interest; a building that has cultural and historical associations; and has a group / settlement character value in the authority's Schedule of Buildings of Local Importance supplementary guidance, and also due to its proximity to three listed buildings (Cadw references: 23302, 23297, and 23309).

Further to the above, the application site is situated within the Coastal Corridor Strategy Area, and criterion 1 of LDP Policy SP5 states that new residential development is favoured along the coastal corridor. This demonstrates the need for additional residential development within Briton Ferry, where the application site is located.

Notwithstanding the fact that the building is not listed, as the building is locally listed the application is accompanied by a Heritage Impact Statement prepared by Lloyd Britton Architects, a qualified Conservation Architect, despite the fact that it is not a validation requirement for the application.

It concludes that the public facades fronting onto Neath Road and Villiers Street will remain unaffected by the proposed development with the exception of minor alterations to reinstate the bottom sash of a second-floor window. This will not adversely impact the exterior of the principal elevations or diminish the building's significance as a Building of Local Importance.

Furthermore, the reinstatement of a previously blocked-up window opening at the second-floor internal courtyard elevation will similarly not adversely impact the exterior of the building as it reinstates an original window opening, which will be hidden from the public realm.

In light of the above, it is considered that the proposals will have a negligible impact on the character and appearance of the surrounding area, and adheres to LDP Policies SP5 (Development in the Coastal Corridor Strategy Area), SP21 (Built Environment and Historic Heritage) and BE2 (Buildings of Local Importance).

Residential Amenity

Given that no external alterations are proposed, with the exception of the reinstatement of an existing second floor window and bat and bird boxes, the proposed use of the site will not lead to any detrimental impacts to nearby properties in terms of overlooking or massing. Consequently, the proposals adhere to LDP Policy BE1 (Design) and PPW 12.

Ecology

As the proposals relate to internal modifications only, and no works are proposed to the roof space of the property, a bat survey is not required to be submitted to support this planning application. Notwithstanding, following the publication of PPW 12 in February 2024, all planning applications must be supported by a Green Infrastructure Statement that is commensurate with the scale of the development. This is to ensure that biodiversity enhancements are provided as part of all new development, and the importance of this is also reiterated within TAN 5 (Nature Conservation and Planning).

In light of the above, a Bat and Bird Enhancement Report has been prepared by Ecological Services Wales and accompanies this submission. The report states that Schwegler 1no. FQ Bat Box and a Vivara Pro WoodStone Swift Box shall be placed at the southern and northern elevations of the property respectively. This is considered to be appropriate to the scale of development given that no trees, hedgerows or vegetation will be removed as part of the proposals.

As such, it is considered that the proposed development adheres to the requirements outlined in Chapter 6 of PPW 12 and TAN 5.

Highways and Access

The scheme proposes to change the use of the upper two floors of 43 Neath Road to facilitate a 7-bed HMO. Given the highly sustainable location of the site, no car parking is proposed. The site is located along both Neath Road and

Villiers Street therefore it is located adjacent to the Briton Ferry District Centre which comprises a number of services and facilities such as: a library; a chemist; public houses; convenience stores; hair dressers and barbers; and fast-food eateries. The proximity of the site to such facilities reduces the need to travel.

Furthermore, bus services are provided within 100m of the site along Neath Road and provide services to Margam, Neath, Swansea and Port Talbot, while rail services, which are located 1km to the north of the site at Briton Ferry Railway Station, provide direct services further afield such as Swansea and Cardiff. As such, this further reduces the demand for a private vehicle.

Seven cycle parking spaces will be provided in the under-croft or lower/upper courtyard area and there are Active Travel links from the site running to the railway station.

In light of the above, the cycle and vehicle provision is considered to be acceptable and in accordance with paragraph 4.15 of TAN 18 (Transport), and LDP Policy SP20 (Transport Network).

Conclusion

The proposal comprises the change of use of a first and second floor office (Use Class: B1) to a 7 bedroom house of multiple occupation (Use Class: Sui Generis). The only external alterations are the reinstatement of a second-floor window on the rear elevation and 1no. bat and 1no. bird boxes as per PPW guidance. The ground floor retail use will remain thereby retaining an active frontage. The principle of residential use is acceptable given the number of residential properties in close proximity. The proposed bringing of the property back into full occupation provides an overall positive effect on the amenity and character of the local community by:

- Providing new housing to the local area;
- Offering the currently underused building a new socio-economic lease of life and helping to secure the longer-term future of this heritage asset;
- Enabling natural surveillance around a currently underused property; and
- Not visually impacting on the external appearance of the building's frontages or character due to the limited external alterations.

I look forward to hearing details of the case officer. If you have any queries in the meantime, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Yours sincerely,



Ffion Goodland
Planner

Appendix A:

Briton Ferry East

Ward:	Settlement:	Building Name:	
Briton Ferry East	Briton Ferry	Former bank buildings	
Ref: BFE001	Validation Stage I	Stage II	Grid Reference: E274127 N194008
Address: 43 Neath Road			

Site Location Plan



A photograph of a three-story Victorian-style corner building with a bay window, identified as the 'Nitcham's' shop. The building is made of light-colored stone or brick with dark window frames. A red car is parked on the street to the left, and yellow flowers are in the foreground.

Architectural Interest	X	Historic Interest		Historical / Cultural Association	X	Group / settlement character Value	X	Old or Rare Local Buildings	
Justification for Consideration: Well preserved building of character that forms a noticeable feature in the streetscape and provides evidence of Briton Ferry's past commercial importance. Group value with former bank (Listed Building) and Post Office (BFE018) on opposite side of Neath Road.									
Notes:									