

PROJECT:	2,4,6 Windsor Road and the land to the rear, Neath SA11 1DA	
SUBJECT:	Design and Access Statement	
DATE:	August 2024	
REV:	-	

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

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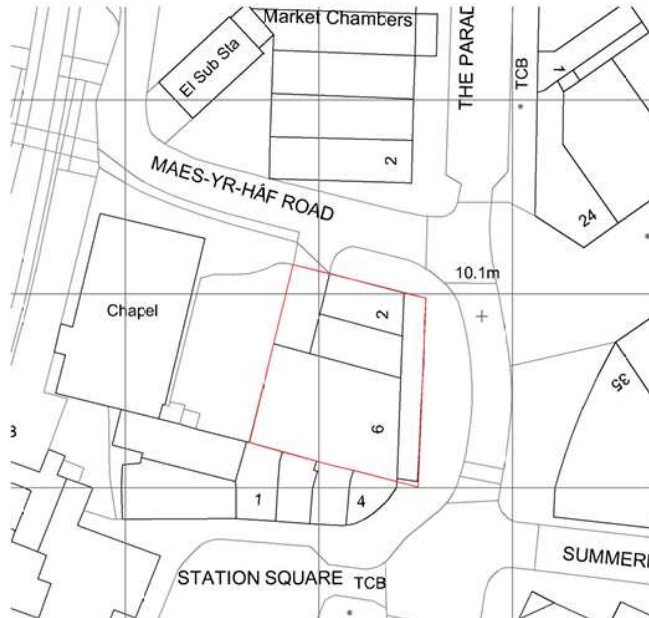
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

This Design Access Statement provides an overview of redevelopment proposals submitted in this planning application.

Permission is sought for a one storey upward extension to the existing building to provide 3 new dwellings (2x 2b/3p and 1x3b/4p), and the redesign of the rear outdoor area.

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION, SITE LOCATION & CONTEXT



Nineteenth-century Ordnance Survey map data show the application site to have formerly been part of the burial ground at the side of the non-conformist independent chapel rebuilt in 1864 by its congregation in classical style designed after (but not attributed to) Welsh chapel specialist architect and minister Thomas Thomas.

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Neath Town Centre Conservation Area is generally characterised by its traditional town centre built environment and includes the scheduled monument remains of the medieval twelfth-century Neath Castle and the listed nineteenth-century General Market. The closest Conservation Area heritage asset to the site is a NatWest bank built in 1924 by the National Providential Bank in free classical style designed by London-based architects Palmer & Holden.

The application site is located on the eastern part of Windsor Road in Neath Town Centre, close to Neath Train and Bus Stations. The site is prominently located to visitors on arrival into the town. This is a highly sustainable location, well served by local shops, facilities, and services.

The existing building is a typical post-war modernist development. It is L shaped and two-storey with commercial frontage along Windsor Road and rear outdoor area along Maes-Yr-Hâf Road used for service access. The internal general arrangement of the building comprises three shops at Nos. 2, 4 and 6. Each shop is two storeys.

There is a listed chapel to the rear of the site to the north (11801 Soar Maes-yr-haf Congregational Chapel and forecourt railings), and a number of listed bank buildings within the Conservation Area on the opposite side of Windsor Road to the south (11787 Nat West Bank; 11825 Midland Bank; 11826 Lloyds Bank).

The majority of the surrounding buildings are between two and three storeys, with a few higher three and four storey buildings mostly along Windsor Road.

The front elevation of the existing building on site is well visible from the Green Street which functions as a local High Street and amenity area.

The site is of limited ecological value. It is effectively 'landlocked' by existing roads and pavements and is not connected to any wider green or blue infrastructure. The nearest small green area is a small graveyard area featuring a lawn. It is located between the application site and the listed Chapel to the north. The nearest green public amenity areas are Victoria Gardens, River Neath Riverbank, and Gnoll Country Park. They are all within 6- 30 minutes walking distance.

The site lies within flood zones 2 and 3.



Front of the site

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Rear of the site as existing

3.0 PRE-APPLICATION PROCESS

The project was a subject of two pre-application enquiries ref. Q2023/0172 27th dated October 2023 and ref. Q2023/0248 dated 11th April 2024.

The key case officer's comments from the follow up Pre-App. Ref.: Q2023/0248 are noted below along with a brief description of how we propose to address them:

Case Officer on page 2: *...the introduction of new residential accommodation within Neath Town Centre, particularly to upper floors where this does not lead to the loss of any ground floor commercial and/or retail development, is supported in principle, subject to other development management considerations.* MM: The currently enclosed proposal provides a new and up to day residential use within a very sustainable town centre location.

Case Officer on page 2: *The existing building would benefit from new investment and the proposed upwards extension offers an opportunity to modernise and transform the visual appearance to create a more positive streetscape.* MM: We agree with this view. The enclosed proposal improves and upgrades the appearance of the existing building; and its outdoor area to the rear. The building's frontage will be also substantially transformed and improved which should help the retained commercial uses on the ground floor frontage and new residential uses on the upper levels by making them more attractive as a destination to explore.

Case Officer on page 2: *The main consideration affecting any height increase is the relationship with a number of existing listed buildings – there is a listed chapel to the rear and a number of listed bank buildings within the Conservation Area on the opposite side of the road. It is essential that any height increase does not 'compete' with these listed buildings or adversely affect their setting. In this regard, the design amendments currently shown are considered to be a significant improvement on the previous submission and the proposed height appears to be acceptable having regard to the site's context and surrounding developments.* MM: We have reduced the proposed extension from initial two storeys to one. The proposed building is three storeys high which will fit well within its immediate surroundings of similar heights.

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Case Officer on pages 2 and 3: *However, concern is still expressed over some of the elevation treatment – particularly the extent of horizontal and ‘square’ windows - and consideration should be given to windows/openings with a more vertical emphasis and features that draw inspiration from the listed buildings opposite but with a modern interpretation.* MM: The enclosed proposal addresses this by redesigning the existing first floor windows on the front elevation. The proposed new window design is very modern and transformative to the building, and takes cues from the detailing of the key surrounding historical buildings.

Case Officer on page 3: *A good design offers potential for positive place-making in this key location within the town centre. The scheme affords an opportunity to improve the boundary treatment/relationship with the listed chapel and railings which should form part of the design/justification for the development. In this regard, the design improvements shown to the proposed cycle/bin storage area are welcomed and must meet secure by design standards given the propensity for anti-social behaviour to occur within this part of Neath Town Centre.* MM: We agree. The frontage of the site with its active commercial frontage already acts as a local destination. However, the existing frontage above ground floor level, the other elevations and the outdoor area to the rear present further potential for positive make-over and place-making. This application proposal aims to achieve this by upgrading building exterior, plus redesigning and activating the outside area to the rear as a new secure and well maintained residential and commercial point of entry. The rear entrance area will feature an eye-catching colourful canopy with planting element and new landscaping where practically possible.

Case Officer on page 3: *The proposed residential accommodation standards are too small/cramped and do not conform to the requirements of Welsh Government’s ‘Beautiful Homes and Spaces’ so will need to be revised.* MM: We note that the flats as initially proposed complied with the nationally prescribed DCLG Technical Housing Space Standards. However, the revised scheme now also complies with Welsh Government’s ‘Beautiful Homes and Spaces’ standard.

Case Officer on page 3: *A minimum of 25% of the units must be provided as affordable housing units. Further liaison with the Council’s Housing Strategy Team is recommended.* MM: The Applicant tried to contact the Housing Strategy Team with no reply to date. We will liaise with the Housing Team in further stages of the project.

Case Officer on page 3: *The provision of some on-site amenity space is welcome however further consideration should be given to design features that maximise positive place-making objectives and contribute to residents’ wellbeing and biodiversity net gain (BNG), e.g. new green roof/terrace....PPW 12 now requires submission of a Green Infrastructure Statement (GIS)...the quality of the built environment should be enhanced by integrating green infrastructure into development through appropriate site selection and use of creative design.* MM: A new landscaping scheme to contribute to residents’ wellbeing and BNG is being enclosed as a part of this proposal. GIS in support of the proposal is also being submitted.

Case Officer on page 3: *Consideration must be given to an acoustically appropriate design and layout, given the potential for noise disturbance in this location. This means you will need to ensure that solutions to address noise and/or air quality issues from nearby pre-existing infrastructure, businesses or venues are identified and implemented.*

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MM: The acoustic survey will be carried out by a specialist acoustic consultant in further stages of the project. The acoustic consultant's recommendations will be thoroughly implemented.

4.0 HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF THE PROPOSAL

Relevant Planning Policies

The Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2016; Policy SP21 Built Environment and Historic Heritage; The Historic Environment SPG (April 2019)

Local policy recommends that new developments in Neath Town Centre context should aim to enhance its through high quality vitality, viability and attractiveness. The existing historic environment needs to be enhanced and safeguarded design in all development proposals. Enhancing and protecting Listed Buildings and their curtilage will be key.

Local Context

The site is within the setting of three following Listed Buildings and adjacent to Neath Town Centre Conservation Area to the east.

Grade 2 listed Soar Maes-yr-haf Congregational Chapel and forecourt railings: *1864 Independent Chapel on the site of an earlier chapel of 1769. Three bay classical front. Squared, coursed rubble, ashlar dressings. Vermiculated rusticated quoins. Moderately pitched slate roof, hipped to rear. Open timber pediment, plain returned entablature to outer bays, lettering to frieze INDEPENDENT CHAPEL. Centre bay recessed below depressed rusticated arch resting on entablature of outer bays. Inset stone tablet reads MAES-YR-HAF, BUILT 1769, REBUILT 1864. Stepped tripartite gallery window. Centre light broader, moulded arches, plain pilasters on brackets, sill band. Round arched doorway, rusticated architrave, double doors, framed panels. Tall round arched 2 light windows to outer bays, rusticated architraves. Five window side elevations. Moulded timber eaves cornice. Tall round arched 2 light windows in stepped window schoolroom at rear. Rusticated architrave to ground floor window, similar detail to doorway at right. Raised recesses, stressed keystones. Impost and sill bands, plinth. Similar fenestration to 2 storeys, 2 railed forecourt to front. Burial ground adjoins to E. Good ironwork railings. Barley twist principal rods, stone base. Tall stone gate piers tooled caps, contemporary iron double gates. Interior: Galleried interior.*

Grade 2 listed Midland Bank Group: Late C19/early C20 classical bank: *Three storey 5 bay ashlar front. Triangular pediment over advanced 3 centre bays, modillion cornice. Egg and dart moulding to top of plain frieze; moulded architrave. Blocking courses. Four Ionic columns with torus moulded bases rise from first floor sill level. Similar detail to pilasters on outer bay. Moulded shouldered architraves to second floor windows. Aprons drop to pediments over pulvinated friezes with side scrolls to first floor windows. Symmetrically disposed triangular and segmental pediments, moulded architraves. Sash windows, 6 small panes to upper sash only. Plain entablature over channelled ground floor. Modern fascia sign. Advanced round arched doorways to outer bays, console keystones. Plain fanlights, panelled double doors. Round arched windows to centre bays, stressed keystones, modern glazing, moulded sills. Two windows partly blocked for modern cash dispensers. Modernised interior.*

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Grade 2 listed Lloyds Bank: C1920? Bank in free classical style. Three bay, 2 storey and attic. White ashlar. Steeply pitched green slate roof, hips to corners. Copper anthemion ridge crests. Copper ridge and hip cladding. Plain eaves cornice. Two timber dormers set into roof. Pediments over moulded architraves. Two light casement windows, rectangular lead comes. Lead roofs, lead cheeks with embossed rose motifs. First floor windows set into recesses, moulded architraves. Iron framed 12 small paned windows, centre 6 panes form opening casements. Deep entablature to ground floor. Modillion cornice, triglyphs with guttae to frieze. Modern fascia to centre. Doric pilasters to corner of outer bays. Twenty-four pane iron framed windows with opening lights, keystone moulded architraves, aprons drop to plinth. Apron to right hand bay pierced for cash dispenser. Inner pilasters bear bronze plaques. Deeply recessed entrance bay up steps from street. Flanking Doric columns on bases, panelled frieze and soffit to recess. Central doorway, label on consoles, pulvinated frieze, moulded architraves. Rectangular fanlight with interlaced loop ironwork. Panelled double doors. Narrow flanking windows, plain reveals, sidebars and laticed ironwork glazing bars. Single dormer to side elevation, 3, first floor window lack architraves. Moulded architrave to central doorway on ground floor. Flanking windows, moulded architraves, similar glazing to front to window on right. Blind window on left carries relief with cartouche over bronze lettering. Night safe cuts through sill. Rectangular banking hall, channelled piers, moulded capitals. Guilloche band with inset flowers to walls. Coffered ceiling with modillion cornices, dentils, egg and dart moulding. Modern cornices etc. Reasons for Listing: Group value with Midland Bank adjoining.

Neath Town Centre Conservation Area: Features of importance include the traditional commercial centre with some small shop units, the general market, public buildings, the Castle, St. Thomas' church, Victoria Gardens and other architectural features and structures.

UNDERSTANDING OF THE SIGNIFICANCE OF LOCAL HERITAGE ASSETS

The listed buildings and the conservation area to the south are in close proximity to the application site. It is therefore very important that any future proposal will not adversely affect the setting of these assets. The proposed building should have a complementary appearance and a matching massing not to compete with the listed assets or affect their specific settings. The key setting areas in this instance include the streetscape along Windsor Road and Maers – Yr-Haf Road and the burial ground between the listed chapel and the application site.

It was also recommended to us through the pre-application process that the exterior design of any new proposal should aim to improve the appearance of the existing building particularly along its Windsor Road elevation. We were advised to add more vertical emphasis to it and draw inspiration from the listed bank buildings opposite but with a modern interpretation.

IMPACT OF THE PROPOSALS

To avoid overbearing relationships with the settings, the proposed upward extension is set back to maintain the 'shoulder height' of the host building, and the proposed overall height would be below a notional line drawn between the uppermost parts of the listed buildings, being the top of the bank parapet and the ridge of the chapel roof.

To improve the relationship with the listed buildings, proposed new windows have a broadly classical, vertical emphasis. Proposed materials also reinforce heritage sensitivity, with off-white

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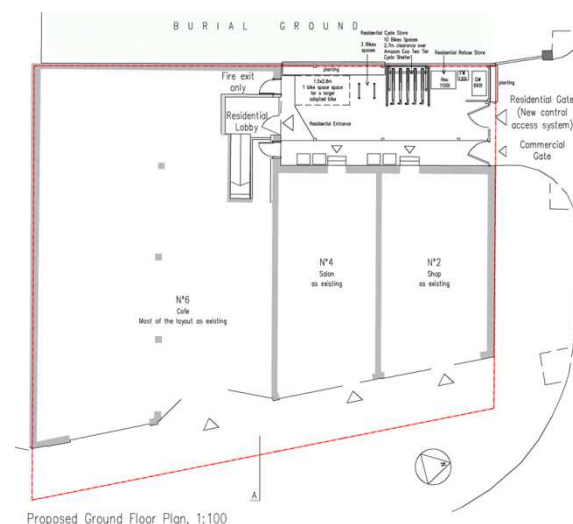
colour render to ground and first floors to accord - like the refurbished exterior of Market Chambers next door - with the prevailing colour of upper storeys in this part of town, and a darker, reddish brown colour render to the proposed top floor to help further diminish its prominence.

The redesigned rear exterior entrance area will also complement the curtilage (burial grounds) of the grade Chapel to 2 listed the north.

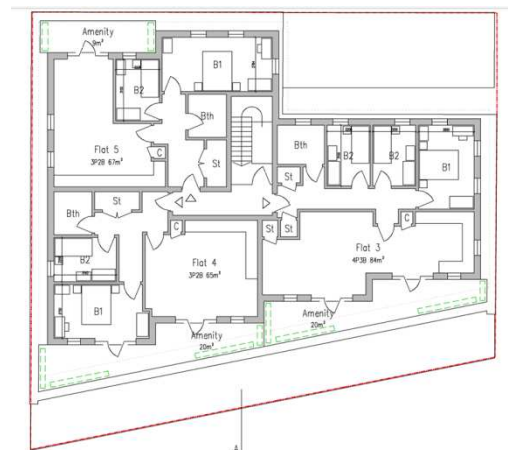
We concluded that the proposal as shown would fit well within the historic setting of that part of the town centre. It would not compete or dominate.

5.0 THE DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

THE LAYOUT



Proposed Ground Floor Plan, 1:100



Proposed New Second Floor Plan, 1:100

The proposal is located on the ground floor and a new second floor level introduced on top of the existing building.

The changes proposed on the ground floor level relate to the rear of the building only. This is an outdoor rear area to which will be re-planned and divided between commercial and residential uses. A new separate residential entrance will be created off Maes-yr-hâf Road. It will be designated for the proposed development on the second floor and the recently approved two flats on the existing first floor. It will include a new secure roofed refuse and cycle storage and planting. A separate outside commercial area will provide access to the existing shop doors to the rear.

Both outdoor areas will be accessed via new security gates positioned on the site boundary along Maes-Yr-Hâf Road. The new security gates will be fitted with audio-visual access control system and have full CCTV coverage. This is to prevent risk of crime, anti-social behaviour and trespass on the application site.

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TOP FLOOR LAYOUT

The proposal also involves a creation of a new second floor level on top of the building to provide three new 3 residential dwellings accessed via the extended existing residential access staircase.

All three flats will have dual aspect. They will feature open plan kitchen/dining/living room areas, well sized single and double bedrooms, airing cupboards, storage cupboards and family size bathrooms.

The proposed flats will provide acceptable living environment, in terms of internal space. They have been designed to meet the quality requirements set out within the WDQR 2021 – Welsh Development Quality Requirements 2021 – Creating Beautiful Homes and Places. This is illustrated in the Schedule of Accommodation below:

	NO OF BEDROOMS	NO OF PEOPLE	INTERNAL AREA (M2)	INTERNAL STORAGE AREA (M2)	AIRING CUPBOARDS (M2)	SECURE CYCLE PARKING SPACES	CAR PARKING SPACES
FLAT 3	3	4	84	2	1	3	0
FLAT 4	2	3	65	1.36	1	2	0
FLAT 5	2	3	67	1.8	1	2	0

ACCESS

The entrance to the residential element on site will be located off Maes-yr-hâf Road. New dwellings will be accessed via a shared internal staircase located to the rear of the building, and accessed from a new residential outside area. All points of entry will have level thresholds and compliant door widths.

MASSING

The building massing has been amended following our pre-application enquiries, and therefore, only one new storey is being proposed which will match the typical heights and massing within the surroundings of this site.

To avoid overbearing relationships with the settings of a fine example of British town centre architecture at the front and a fine example of a particularly Welsh built vernacular to the rear, the proposed upward extension is set back to maintain the 'shoulder height' of the host building, and the proposed overall height would be below a notional line drawn between the uppermost parts of the listed buildings, being the top of the bank parapet and the ridge of the chapel roof.

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CAR AND CYCLE PARKING

The proposal does not provide any on-site car parking which is reasonable given this highly sustainable town centre location. However, ample secure cycle parking/storage is provided within the new outside residential area to the rear. This area will be made secure by installation of security gates, door entry systems and CCTV coverage to prevent a risk of crime and/or anti-social behaviour incidences.

ELEVATIONS & MATERIALS



Front Elevation as proposed



Rear Elevation as proposed

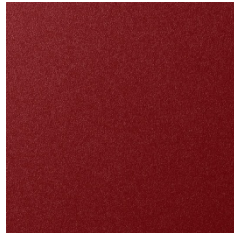
To improve the relationship with the listed buildings through architectural commonality, proposed new windows have a broadly classical, vertical emphasis and principal first floor windows have additional window box and bas-relief surround features. Proposed materials also reinforce heritage sensitivity, with off-white colour render to ground and first floors to accord - like the refurbished exterior of Market Chambers next door - with the prevailing colour of upper storeys in this part of town, and a darker, reddish brown colour render to the proposed top floor to help further diminish its prominence while also cohering with the colour of the extensive brick parapet of the host building's post-war peer at The Parade/Green Street over the road. Dark grey windows and doors and glass balustrades would complete the building's sensitive 'contemporary' makeover.

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The proposed external appearance includes the following new features:



Off white render finish over existing walls



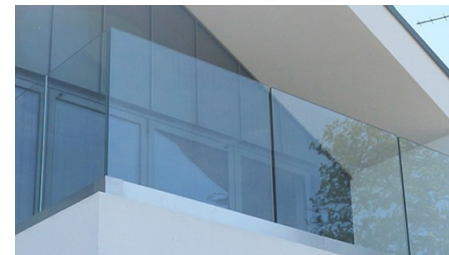
Darker red render finish to the top floor extension



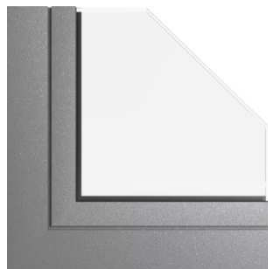
Window boxes and planters to terraces, all in dark grey



White soffit boards to roof overhangs



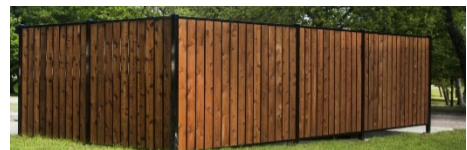
Frameless glass balustrades to top terraces



New UPVC windows



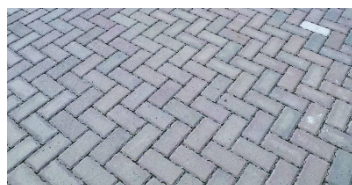
Green roof areas to the rear canopy



Refuse and cycle stores wall treatment



Colourful metal sheets to the rear canopy



Permeable paving to rear outdoor area



New gates to the rear of the site

DAYLIGHT

The internal layouts of the new flats have all primary habitable rooms (i.e. bedrooms, kitchens, living rooms) with windows providing a good degree of natural daylight.

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REFUSE STORAGE AND COLLECTION

Communal residential refuse area is located to the rear of the site in a new secure enclosure near the entrance gate.

Each residential unit will be allocated with 120 l storage capacity for general waste and 140l for mixed dry recycling, and 25l for food waste within the communal refuse store downstairs. The refuse containers inside the flats will be integrated within kitchen units and have three compartments for recyclables, kitchen waste, general waste. The waste from the proposed flats will be packed in watertight bags and boxes and moved to the communal residential refuse store on the ground floor level outside the building. The refuse from the proposed flats will be collected on designated collection days. Please see Council's website for current details re refuse storage and collection.

SUSTAINABLE CONSTRUCTION & DESIGN

The proposed scheme will utilize the existing building structure and involve a deep refurbishment of the building to ensure its compliance with current and future housing building standards. The project will retain the building structure and its embodied carbon, and significant internal energy efficiency upgrades to the existing will allow us to cut operational carbon emissions related to heating, cooling, air-conditioning, lighting, ventilation and general power usage. The new upward extension will also extend the lifespan of the building and therefore help to avoid the embodied carbon which would be needed to replace an old building with a new one.

An Energy Plan will be developed in accordance with the 'Be Lean, Be Clean and Be Green' philosophy in terms of energy conservation and use. That is: 1. 'Be Lean'-striking the right balance between reducing energy loss through the building fabric and gains produced by systems within the building; 2. 'Be Clean'- ensuring that energy is efficiently used by employing building systems that use energy efficiently; and 3. 'Be Green'- using appropriate renewable sources of energy.

The use of PV panels to aid the sustainability of the development can be considered.

The new dwellings will achieve a water consumption rate of not more than 105 litres, per person, per day.

The flats will be cross ventilated thanks to their dual aspect.

The site will provide much needed biodiversity enhancement and will become a local a wildlife pocket through the use of: new green roof areas, extensive greenery featuring mainly native species to the terraces and the entrance area to rear will, good quality bat and bird boxes.

The location is well served by public transport and this will have big day to day impact on the sustainability of the development as a whole.

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6.0 CONCLUSION

The proposal will provide a new, high-quality and robust residential offer in harmony with its surroundings. The project will be in a very accessible and sustainable location with easy access to local facilities and public transport. The proposal has minimal impact on adjacent occupiers and has no impact on their amenity. The dwellings will be also sustainable in its construction and operation.

We therefore respectfully request Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council support this planning application.

Ends