

Heritage Impact Assessment/Statement of Significance and partial justification for the works now proposed at Cefn Celfi house, Rhos, Cilybebyll, Neath Port Talbot. (Revision Two)

Applicant: Mrs. Victoria Hopkins. Cefn Celfi, Rhos/Cilybebyll, Neath Port Talbot.

1.0 Introduction

This Heritage Impact Assessment/Statement of Significance (HIA/SS) has been produced following identification of unauthorised works that had been in progress at the aforementioned premises and the potential threat of enforcement arising under the Planning and Listed Building Act and associated Regulations. Following consultation with officers of the local authority and Cadw (including the LABC inspectors), this assessment and statement of significance and justification has been produced as part of a Town Planning and Listed Building application to regularise the work where appropriate, consolidate the structure in a conservation manner and make further interventions where this can be justified and the heritage significance retained or enhanced..

It is fully accepted by the resident applicants that the essential repairs that they were planning before procedural matters escalated, need to be mitigated and that some additional enhancements are necessary to reinstate where relevant the character of the listed building. Following detailed discussions knowledge of the formal application system has grown; entailing research, relevant knowledge and development of the proposals to rectify the current anomalies and make an appropriate submission for this much modified structure.

We understand that whilst the applicant did not acquire the house until late in 2022, extended family have owned land associated for approximately 20 years, but with ownership of the house resting elsewhere. The house was purchased when it became available for sale and is on a separate legal title to other land parcels nearby. It is today the home of Mrs Hopkins, her young family and is owned by her and her husband together with some but not all of the immediate neighbouring buildings. The agricultural land associated, remains in separate ownership and Land Registry Title documents reflect this.

This HIA/SS must be read in conjunction with the Annotated Photographic Plates that show the building and its much modified and failing structure, presenting mitigating factors for the need for appropriate interventions and regularisation.

1.1 Research

In producing this heritage report the applicant and their agent, Trevor J Francis as Historic Building Consultant have researched widely, reviewing publications, digital depositories, local and national archives as well as studying the building fabric and the various interventions that have arisen over the centuries.

Cefn Celfi is well documented in a local history publication produced by Mr. Brian M. Lodwick, a respected local historian in May 2020. At that time, the applicant's husband was acknowledged for his help with providing information to Mr Lodwick for the publication. Further research has since been undertaken at the Royal Commission Library at Aberystwyth as well as Coflein, Cadw, Archwilio and various other on-line databases. The support of many, is gratefully accepted.

Investigation of the building fabric and its evolution is further accentuated by the opportunity that has arisen (albeit initially viewed as unfortunate) to review its fabric and the numerous interventions that have occurred over) due to the unauthorised works made by the applicant in 2022/3. The Cefn Celfi (Lodwick, 2020) booklet focused upon many aspects but did not have the benefit of the knowledge, understanding and interpretation that has become evident, since the underlying fabric has been exposed.

Equally, it did not provide a report on the physical condition of the structure, fabric services and finishes, focussing upon perceived history, published documents of RCAHM(W), local historical sources, as well as items that are perhaps speculative verbal history including some that might be deemed folklore.

Fully acknowledging that Cefn Celfi is an interesting, but modest house retaining some historical typology and vernacular features (it remains only one of many within Wales, and is certainly far from one of the best examples). It has previously been documented with various entries made in Royal Commission publications that include: The Glamorgan Inventory and Peter Smith's: 'Houses of the Welsh Countryside.' as well as the handwritten notes and rough sketch drawings of the Royal Commission, at the time of their inspection visits in the 1950's and 60's.

This like many rural vernacular houses is currently threatened by challenges brought about by age-related deterioration, decay mechanisms, topographic location and very severe exposure to driving wind and rain that over the past 12 years has taken a very severe toll on many traditionally detailed buildings in south-west Wales and is believed to be climate change induced. Its construction, materials and structure, being greatly impacted by changing weather, and inappropriate earlier interventions made by others to its structure and fabric; in both the twentieth and earlier centuries as the building evolved.

From past experience, many rural vernacular buildings can, once work commences, suddenly unravel unless very carefully managed by experienced practitioners; whilst, left untouched, they will commonly fall into quiet disrepair and abandonment. Yet, once maintenance and

repair work is undertaken, their true condition quickly becomes evident. This is often very different from today's building performance expectations.

In the hands of those with limited knowledge of listed building legislation and historic repair techniques, matters can quickly become misconstrued. Over the past fifteen months the applicants awareness has increased enormously of traditional and heritage buildings.

It must be accepted by all associated with the heritage world and historic building sector, that almost all building work was initially undertaken by artisan craftspeople's/builders and in the case of vernacular structures, rural peasants. Ultimately, most repair work to a building causes stages of disruption that have to be worked through before viable and sustainable repair operations can be successfully completed.

During the evolution of this study and the now suggested proposals, understanding of the challenges facing this building, and the passion for its restoration has increased significantly by the applicants who acknowledge their error in not consulting with the authorities, but who are keen to do 'right by the building' even though very significant investment is required.

1.2 Background and Context

Cefn Celfi is an upland former house situated in Rhos Nr. Pontardawe, Neath and which formed part of the Cilybebyll estate, historically.

Within neighbouring fields, lie two large stones that are themselves deemed to be Scheduled Ancient Monuments. These are not actually on the land of Cefn Celfi, but on the land of another former farm and are not impacted in anyway but the proposals. A third stone although referred to within documents was we gather lost in Victorian times. Lodwick's research and RCAHM(W) verifies this.

No harm or damage has occurred to any of these stones by the recent works undertaken to the house (is a considerable distance from the Scheduled Monuments) and no works are proposed or necessary to the monuments. The 'Stones' are actually situated on another farm, whose title although within the Hopkins family today, was an entirely separate holding in the past.

Land associated with Cefn Celfi was mined in the past with two collieries operating nearby during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries under the names of (i) Primrose colliery and (ii) Cefn Celfi colliery. These former mining operations do not appear to have had any bearing on the structural performance of the house building or immediately surrounding land. Cracking and settlement evident within the walls and roof surfaces of the house is due to the shallow rubble footings, and stiff clay that underlies this waterlogged, upland site as well as numerous ill-conceived interventions that have combined with the inevitable decay of building fabric and structural elements and components, over centuries.

The house (the basis of this study) is believed to be of seventeenth-century origin, as is indicated by the engraved date carved into the oak fireplace lintel. The building is described in field survey notes and reports of the Royal Commission (who investigated the site at various times in the 1950's and 60's) and by Cadw who first listed the building Grade II, in 1971 but revised this description in 2003. Both organisations and their expert inspectors acknowledge that the house building was by these times, *'much altered'*.

Very significant intervention works were undertaken by a previous owner, circa 1972/73 and whilst the concept had no doubt honest intentions, one might respectfully suggest (that when viewed against currently applied conservation standards) some of the extreme measures then implemented, appear misconstrued and inappropriate. Ownership of the adjacent land has not been directly associated with the house for in excess of thirty years.

Building conservation principles, stakeholder requirements, understanding and philosophical judgements have evolved enormously during recent decades; and what would have been considered highly appropriate in the 1970's may be deemed an anathema, today. That said, Cefn Celfi is unlikely to have remained standing if previous occupiers had not undertaken some of the short-lived works, they had.

This Heritage Impact assessment and statement of significance has been produced independently, by Trevor J Francis, a Chartered Building Surveyor and Historic Building consultant with more than 40 years of experience of work to traditional and listed buildings. In producing this Report, Trevor has sought to be as objective as possible; and whilst not condoning some of the work that occurred recently, can see quite clearly from a building pathological investigation of its construction and structure, that the repair methodology undertaken by the applicant, would not be deemed to be unusual for a layperson or even a farmer/general contractor without specialist heritage training, when considering repairing a traditional building, whether listed or not.

I understand that the applicant acquired the house in 2022 and commenced remedial works in 2023 without firstly obtaining listed building consent. Initially, I gather that the work commenced, was conceived to be a minor repair but when a section of loose cracking and modern wall plaster was removed, a section of the inner face of the stone rubble-walling collapsed at first floor level. The applicant's family concerned about the safety of the young children resident, undertook further investigations which are catalogued in the associated annotated photographs (Appendix A) and support the partial reasoning and justification for the works undertaken.

The works then in progress, were subsequently deferred, as a result of local authority officer visits in the late autumn of 2023. Since then, the applicants have ceased work and undertaken considerable further research into the history of the building.

They acknowledge areas where some initially chosen solutions (with the benefit of hindsight) might have not necessarily been the best. They were pragmatic and not wholly unrealistic

given the building was in an atrocious condition internally, despite at first, appearing visually to a lay person to be in a fair state of decoration.

Mrs Hopkin's and immediate family purchased the dwelling (without any form of professional survey) and were unaware of its true condition. We can see from photographic images taken by the applicants family prior to TJJ's initial introduction to the building in the autumn of 2023 (and which arose following council planning enforcement and building control officer's first visits), that the floor coverings were saturated and that mould and dampness was identified and spreading throughout the property.

Rising and penetrating dampness remains evident within walls that include clay-based mortars, but which have had cement renders and gypsum plaster added widely over the past 120 plus years.

The applicant has a young growing family that would be seriously impacted by the unfit state of the building's condition as was found existing in 2022. Increasing health related concerns regarding damp related moisture and mould have been flagged widely with regards to UK housing conditions, with what has become known as 'Aawab's Law' being widely mooted by Environmental Health Officers and government Ministers at Westminster and Cardiff.

Cefn Celfi is a clear example of the serious health issues and risks that badly detailed housing provides. Welsh Government housing legislation acknowledges the threat, yet the solution is far from simple, especially in a much-altered vernacular, listed building, if it is to be conserved and sustained for viable ongoing use in the twenty first century and beyond. Appropriate repair and sensitive conservation updating will allow it to continue to function, but the need for the extension to accommodate modern demands is essential.

Existing plans and proposals for the building, are now as shown on the drawings that explain and illustrate the application. These should be read with (Appendix A) the annotated photographic plates that accompany and form an integrated part of this Statement. The Design proposals are as shown on the proposed drawings and Design Statement made later. These have undergone a series of iterations that have evolved to meet necessary criteria and which seek to create a viable sustainable use for the best features of the listed structure whilst balancing the need for safe and appropriate living accommodation for the family. Evolving design sketch schemes have been produced (See Appendix B) that illustrate how a range of proposal evolved before leading to the currently proposed Planning and LBC application

1.3 Objectives

The applicant's intent is to:

- (i) Regularise recent contraventions.
- (ii) Repair, and conserve the historic building as far as is practicable and affordable.

- (iii) Enhance the building generally to comply with Building Regulation, Fire Safety Standards where these are deemed appropriate as well as satisfy the Housing Health and Safety risk-based rating system.
- (iv) Alleviating works to the immediate curtilage to reduce surface water run off thereby improving living conditions.
- (v) Provide enhanced living accommodation for this young farming family within a sympathetically designed extension to the left-side side of the property. This will entail, reconstruction on the former site of a later built, but long collapsed cow byre, with necessary accommodation added to accommodate modern living standards and the needs of this growing family.
- (vi) Revise the layout of the interior and the extension whilst attempting to pay cognisance to the vernacular form, reinstating and conserving the best features of more significant features such as the Hall and spiral stone stairwell.

Regarding architectural and building conservation:

Welsh Government and Cadw state: *‘Conservation is about the careful management of change; hence it is necessary to understand the implications of any proposed changes. Understanding the historic asset and its significance is fundamental to sound decision-making. Once significance is established, the potential impact of any changes proposed can be evaluated and adapted where necessary to arrive at an appropriate solution.’*

This is the intention with the proposals now submitted.

The Conference in Architectural Conservation (COTAC, 2021), a leading architectural body who have done much to develop conservation thinking and education within the UK and the concept of significance via the ‘Edinburgh Group’ are actively supported by the national heritage bodies across the four UK nations. They follow ICOMOS Charters and principles in their work. In COTAC Insight 1-Unit 4. p.7; leading practitioners (Bridgwood, J. and Maxwell, I (2021) articulate that: *‘Architectural Conservation is not about resisting change but more about finding appropriate uses for what might otherwise be a redundant building. Change of use from original to an alternative, needs to address whether or not the new use is appropriate, can be accommodated by or is sympathetic to why and how the building was built and what its original use was.’*

The purpose of this Heritage Impact Assessment/Statement of Significance (HIA/SS) follows this principle, and seeks to better inform all parties thereto, and in particular the applicant, designers and decision makers, such that they can make appropriately informed decisions.

A Heritage Impact Assessment/Statement of Significance is a structured process to ensure that the significance of the historic asset is considered when developing and designing proposals for change. It should play a key part in the design process, and test whether the proposals for change are appropriate by assessing impact on the significance of the asset. It helps ensure that changes minimise harm and maximise benefits. The results of the heritage

impact assessment are summarised within this heritage impact statement. This will give all parties the information they need to understand and reason the proposals, weighing risks and benefits.

This is the intent at Cefn Celfi.

1.4 Proposals

This specific Heritage Impact Assessment/Statement of Significance (together with its directly associated annotated photographic plates, comments on condition (Appendix A) must be read as a single integrated entity with the full LBC/planning application submission, structural and architectural drawings produced. These have evolved following a series of design iterations over the past fourteen months, since the applicant met with officers and following detailed analysis of the challenges posed.

The proposals are that the existing lime-washed (largely rubble stone) façade will have maintenance repairs made and that the front elevation will be reinstated to something appropriate to that initially found by the RCAHM(W) when first visiting this site in the 1950's. It seeks to reflect the appearance of the building as it would have appeared in the 19th century, but with new accommodation added on the footplate of the now almost lost former cow byre. Following guidance of planning/development officials, and with appropriate conservation factors being implemented, the suggestion is that a proposed extension necessary to ensure that reasonable living accommodation can be attained, appropriate for modern family living at Cefn Celfi. The design concept is that it, will have a rebuilt wing set adjacent that broadly follows the footprint of the former Victorian byre, which was itself a later addition but which is today virtually lost, with a modern link between.

Design concepts for the addition have received considerable thought and input from a range of parties. Two earlier sketch scheme designs suggested were based on a partial reconstruction of the cow byre in a traditional house manner but were discounted due to being philosophically, a pastiche. Parts of these Drafts can be viewed in Appendix B of this Report.

To ensure an honest intervention that is fully readable, it is being proposed that there is a glazed link with zinc sheet roof between the old and new fabric creating front and rear elevation facades that ensure the extension has a secondary subservient prominence albeit the existing slate roof coverings, rubble-stone walling and vernacular fenestration details will be retained/introduced to both structures.

Further irreversible damage will not arise and enhancement and appropriate repair of the interior fabric engendering function use, is by the proposals enabled.

This Heritage Impact Assessment/Statement of Significance and Justification (HIA/SS) has been produced to support application for LBC/Planning Consent.

Repair and conservation of this Grade II listed building will need to take a considered, phased approach with traditional repair, conservation and upgrading of the asset essential to allow its use to continue as well as safeguard the health and well-being of the occupiers.

Construction and the broad condition of the building is as shown and documented in the associated existing drawings and Appendix A ('Annotated Photographic Plates' etc.) that are to be read as part of this HIA/SS document.

Conservation is (as stated earlier) about the considered and careful management of change. (Welsh Government, PPW) and Cadw agree, stating: '*Conservation is about managing change*'.

TJF Comment: 'We must accept that buildings are operational facilities that need a purpose and functional use; they have to evolve to meet changing societal and economic demands. They are not museum artefacts that can be retained in aspic; thus, it is how changing needs and expectations are sensitively and effectively accommodated, which is key. Obsolescence in its many facets has a profound impact upon how buildings can be cared for; whilst ensuring redundancy and loss are mitigated. Conservation is only sustainable as a philosophy if an occupier/custodian or guardian has appropriate resources and viable use and demand exist.'

As a listed building, although reasons for retention are slightly different and enhanced (as discussed later) built heritage has to meet modern lifestyle expectations if sustainable use is to be retained and legislative requirements, related to operational use and Building Act requirements (where applicable) are met.

2.0 Understanding the significance of the Historic Asset

2.1. Location and Context

Cefn Celfi is a small upland former house situated a few hundred metres from the A474 Neath Road, that links the towns of Neath and Pontardawe. Land associated with this and neighbouring small farms were at one time utilised for coal mining during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. A fuller explanation of the location is provided in Lodwick (2020). of Cefn Celfi. Today, the general area is mainly upland farming (grazing) and residential; this, since coal mining and industrial applications have been lost.

The application site is limited to the house and immediate curtilage associated with the farmyard and not the wider landscape or other farm buildings.

It must be appreciated that this is a location that is very severely exposed to driving wind and rain that really tests building fabric. The increasing impact of climate change-induced weather events and particularly long periods of profound rainfall with very high relative humidity, (often lasting for more than 8-9 months of the year) is taking an enormous toll on modest vernacular buildings, with the result that building weathering details, materials and workmanship have to be robust, if decay mechanisms are not to compound.

2.2 Extrapolated from the CADW Report for Listed Buildings.

Building Reference Number 11193. Grade II.

Date of Designation: 22/05/1972. **Date of Amendment:** 16/12/2003.

Name of Property: Cefn Celfi
Address

Location

Unitary Authority: Neath Port Talbot

Community: Cilybebyll. **Town:** Swansea. **Locality:** Rhos. **Easting:** 274517;

Northing: 203006.

Location

Some 600m E of the centre of Rhos reached by a track off the A474 opposite Primrose Lane.

Description

Broad Class: Domestic.

History

Much altered mid C17 minor gentry house with surviving interior features, the exterior remodelled 1951, and since listing in 1972. The core of the house is a hall with deep fireplace and corner winding stair entered from later porch, with narrow outer room to left. Added rear wing possibly C18. Cefn Celfi was built on Plas Cilybebyll land in the C17 by David ap John whose brother Griffith ap John married the heiress of Cilybebyll. In 1972 there were 2 small gables, and sash windows with intact glazing bars.

Exterior

House, whitewashed rubble stone with slate roofs and small brick right end stack. Two storeys, three-window range. Wholly remodelled externally with C20 triple casement

windows. Hall front wall to right is stepped slightly forward with triple casement each floor and shallow gable over upper window. To centre is entry in lean-to porch of rubble stone, triple casement above. To left is triple casement each floor. Right end wall has one upper window and a half-round bread-oven projection. **Left end wall has wall-pier to right of demolished attached byre, triple casement each floor.** Rear has casement pair to right and large wing to left with square rubble stone roof-slope chimney, triple casement each floor on end wall and front wall added C20 rendered lean-to, covering centre door of main house. Windowless rubble rear wall.

Interior

Interior not inspected, **said to retain features noted in 1972.** Ground floor hall with chamfered beam, run-out stops and reeded square joists, large fireplace with chamfered timber lintel and bread oven. Winding stone staircase entered via diagonally-set **Tudor-arched doorway in corner to left of fireplace.** Upper floor and roof had been renewed before 1972.

Reason for designation

Included despite exterior rebuilding for the surviving C17 ground floor hall.

TJF Observations and Response: the building's List Description acknowledges that the building is a much-altered small local yeomany house. I have highlighted in yellow and (Appendix A -the annotated photographic plates, images that indicate revisions undertaken by previous owners between the buildings original listing in the 1970's and the date of the amendment of this List Description in December 2023). We presume the 1970's alterations that despoiled the façade were themselves granted consent by the authorities at that time.

Subsequent interventions made by the present owner (Mrs. Victoria Hopkins), that are part of this application to regularise, have helped to reveal numerous interventions that occurred to these premises, both, in the past fifty years and also, those that arose over many centuries.

2.3 Coflein (Online database of RCAHM(W)).

NPRN18273. Map Reference SN70SW. Grid Reference SN7452003007
Unitary (Local) Authority Neath Port Talbot. Old County: Glamorgan
Community: Cilybebyll
Type Of Site: HOUSE
Period: Post Medieval

Description

Cefn Celfi is a **much-altered** mid-seventeenth-century minor gentry house with surviving interior features, the exterior of the house was remodelled in 1951, and again in 1972. The

core of the house is a hall with deep fireplace and corner winding stair entered from later porch, with narrow outer room to left. The added rear wing is possibly eighteenth-century. Cefn Celfi was built on Plas Cilybebyll land in the seventeenth-century by David ap John whose brother Griffith ap John married the heiress of Cilybebyll.

RCAHMW 2008.

2.4 Scheduled Ancient Monuments

Coordinates:

Latitude: 51.7124 / 51°42'44"N; Longitude: -3.8225 / 3°49'21"W. OS Eastings: 274178; OS Northings: 203088. OS Grid: SN741030. Mapcode National: GBR H2.3779. Mapcode Global: VH4JZ.P7J4

Entry Name: Standing Stones 300m W of Cefncelfi

Scheduled Date:

Source: Cadw

Source ID: 147

Cadw Legacy ID: GM342

Schedule Class: Religious, Ritual and Funerary

Category: Standing stone

Period: Prehistoric

County: Neath Port Talbot (Castell-nedd Port Talbot)

Community: Cilybebyll

Built-Up Area: Pontardawe

Traditional County: Glamorgan

Response for Cefn Celfi: These stones are untouched and not impacted in any way by the works to the house. They are approximately 300 metres distant, within agricultural fields that are part of the land holding of a separate small farm and Title.

3.0 Policy Context.

3.1.1 National Planning Context

The Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2023 and its suite of supporting secondary legislation came into full effect on 4 November 2024. This, the first consolidated legislation in the Welsh Government's initial five-year programme to improve the accessibility of Welsh law. This historic piece of legislation provides fully bilingual, orderly and accessible law for the effective protection and management of our unique historic environment so that it can continue to contribute to the well-being of Wales and its people.

With the full commencement of the Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2023, the Act provides the legislative framework for the management and protection of the Welsh historic environment for decades. As a consequence the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 and the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 — no longer apply in Wales. The new legislation will make it easier for everyone to find, understand and apply the law, but it will make no changes to the current management and protection of the Welsh historic environment.

Planning Policy Wales, Edition 12 – Updated February 2024; outlines the criteria and aims to establish a system setting out how for the benefit of all people, Welsh Government (WG) proposes to exercise these functions to promote sustainable development.

WG is required to make a contribution to International, and UK targets for greenhouse gas emission reduction. The Climate Change Act 2008 providing the statutory framework for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in the UK. At the core of the Act is a requirement for the UK to reduce net UK greenhouse gas emissions and CO2 emissions.

The planning system plays an important role in tackling climate change and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

The Human Rights Act which came into force in October 2000 incorporated provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) into UK law and enables the UK Courts to enforce these rights. The general purpose of the ECHR is to protect human rights and fundamental freedoms and to maintain and promote the ideals and values of a democratic society. It sets out the basic rights of every individual together with the limitations placed on these rights to protect the rights of others and of the wider community. The Human Rights Act makes it unlawful for a public authority to act incompatibly with these ECHR rights except where, as a result of primary legislation, it could not have acted differently. The Human Rights Act has implications for the planning system.

This Statement has been prepared taking cognizance of Welsh Government's Planning Policy Wales, and in particular - Chapter 6, Distinctive and Natural Places - The Historic Environment and Biodiversity and Ecological Networks. This scheme is about repairing and sustainably conserving the Historic Environment.

3.1.2 Primary Legislation

Primary legislation related to land-use planning includes:

- The Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2023
- Planning (Wales) Act 2015,
- Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015,

3.1.3 European Union

Although the UK has exited The European Union (EU), their guidance currently remains active in part, as a contextual backdrop for planning policy and the preparation of development plans, as it was previously the basis of much UK legislation and implemented via:

- EU legislation (a range of Directives and Regulations, along with judgements of the European Courts).
- The EU Sustainable Development Strategy adopted in 2006 and the 6th Environment Action Programme 2002-2012.
- The European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) 14 and current EU territorial cohesion agenda¹⁵; and EU funding regimes, some of which the UK is still committed to post ‘Brexit’.

3.1.4 Context for Planning in Wales

Planning Policy Wales (PPW) Edition 12, February 2024; sets out the land use planning policies of the Welsh Government, supplemented by a series of Technical Advice Notes (TANs). Procedural advice is given in best practice planning guidance and in this aspect, Heritage Impact Assessment in Wales and Managing Change to Listed Buildings in Wales.

The primary objective of PPW is to ensure that the planning system contributes towards the delivery of sustainable development and improves the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, as required by the Planning (Wales) Act 2015, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and other key legislation and resultant duties such as the Socio-economic Duty.

The Wales Spatial Plan People, Places, Futures sets a strategic framework to guide future development and policy interventions. It integrates the spatial aspects of national strategies for social inclusion and economic development, health, transport and environment, translating Welsh Government’s sustainable development duty into practice. PPW, and the TAN’s/circulars represent best practice guidance.

National planning policy and the Wales Spatial Plan should be taken into account in the preparation of development plans. They may be material to decisions on individual planning applications and will be taken into account by the Welsh Ministers and Planning Inspectors in the determination of called-in planning applications and appeals.

Every local planning authority in Wales must prepare a Local Development Plan (LDP) for its area. The LDP is the development plan for each county or county borough council superseding the Unitary Development Plan (UDP).

HIA/SS Comment: The proposed scheme as formulated aims to satisfy such criteria.

National planning policy argues in Planning Policy Wales 2024, that: “Recognising the strengths of urban communities, which are home to the majority of the population of Wales.

HIA/SS Comment for Cefn Celfi House: The scheme as formulated acknowledges and fully supports this.

The Assembly Government’s priorities for urban areas are, through integrated approaches, to: secure environmentally-sound and socially inclusive regeneration in those urban areas which require it, so that they become more desirable places in which to live and work; and foster sustainable change, in particular making it possible to live with less noise, congestion and traffic pollution, improving the quality of life.

HIA/SS Comment for Cefn Celfi House: The scheme as formulated acknowledges and seeks to satisfy such criteria, repairing and partially extending the building in a sensitive and traditional manner. This at a time at a time that many Listed Buildings are challenged by the many faceted aspects of obsolescence and the need to retain occupiers, both within NPTCBC, Wales and across the UK, as a consequence of Brexit, the global Covid pandemic, economic challenges, legislation and changing live/work/leisure approaches.

Development can help to arrest the decline in community facilities and deliver environmentally sound modernisation, re-use or replacement of urban infrastructure.”

HIA/SS Comment for Cefn Celfi House: This is supported. The proposals are by a local individual delivering good quality residential accommodation and facilities using local staff and contractors.

The Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 places a duty on public bodies (including Welsh Ministers) that they must carry out sustainable development. In carrying out this duty, actions which public bodies must take include setting and publishing objectives ('well-being objectives') that are designed to maximise contribution to achieving each of the well-being goals; and taking all reasonable steps (when exercising its functions) to meet those objectives. The Act puts in place seven well-being goals to help ensure that public bodies are working towards the same vision of a sustainable Wales. In relation to landscape and seascape matters, the most relevant well-being goal is the achievement of 'a resilient Wales', which would include the need to conserve and enhance statutorily designated areas, the countryside, and the undeveloped coast and the conservation of biodiversity, habitats and landscapes.

HIA/SS Comment for Cefn Celfi House: This is fully supported.

3.1.5 Cadw’s Conservation Principles (2011)

Guidance that specifically relates to the conservation of historic buildings in Wales is founded upon established conservation principles, that developed from the ICOMOS Charters and BS 7913.

Trevor J. Francis, MSc, MRICS, MCIOB, MCABE, Dip. Architectural Conservation (Bristol). **CIOB Certified Conservation Specialist (Building Surveying Practitioner). RICS Registered Valuer. Chartered Building Surveyor, Chartered Builder and Historic Building Consultant.**

Cadw's six principles for the sustainable management of the historic environment in Wales are:

1. Historic assets will be managed to sustain their values.

HIA/SS Comment for Cefn Celfi House: This is the intention of the application which is one of repair and reinstatement. Interventions made will be honest, and fully reversible. The applicants are keen to invest and reinstate the building in a manner such that it is retained as a historic asset.

2. Understanding the significance of historic assets is vital.

HIA/SS Comment for Cefn Celfi House: This Heritage Impact statement and review of significance reinforces the comments and opinions of both Cadw and RCAHM(W). The most appropriate remediation is one that facilitates the care, conservation and reinstatement of existing features where practicable, using traditional methods (where suitable) and details, reinstatement that is reversible and robust. In the years to come, challenges of climate change will only increase and the building has to be prepared and detailed to facilitate this without significant erosion or loss.

3. The historic environment is a shared resource.

HIA/SS Comment for Cefn Celfi House: Response: To quote William Morris and the SPAB: 'We are only custodians for those that come later'. The proposed repair works will help to sustain the building for the benefit of future generations' retaining character and significance where relevant. The building façade to the front, and sides will remain fully visible and readable. Photographs and illustrations made before, during and after, of the repaired interior will be available as part of the Planning/LBC procedure; can be conditioned; and can also be added to support archive material stores and depositories that exist within the community such as RCAHM(W) and GGAT if they seek this, now or in the future.

4. Everyone will be able to participate in sustaining the historic environment.

HIA/SS Comment for Cefn Celfi House: Accepted. The building will remain visible and better cared for. Parts of the Building could be visited by agreement. The opportunity for local crafts persons to be involved in the building's care and repair will only add further to the training and development of the skill base available locally.

5. Decisions about change must be reasonable, transparent and consistent.

HIA/SS Comment for Cefn Celfi House: Response: The scheme submitted, attains this criteria, repairing the existing internal fabric whilst the best of the external features will remain readable and honest.

6. Documenting and learning from decisions is essential.

HIA/SS Comment for Cefn Celfi House Response: The scheme will record and document the works proposed, adding to wider knowledge of this building and its evolution.

Cadw's four heritage values:

1. *Evidential value: The building's form, fabric and detailing record many changes made in past times.*

HIA/SS Comment for Cefn Celfi House: - agreed.

2. *Historical value: HIA/SS Comment for Cefn Celfi House: - agreed, to be retained, and repaired. No significant adaptations or irreversible modifications are proposed*
3. *Aesthetic value: HIA/SS Comment for Cefn Celfi House: Agreed, enhanced and preserved.*
4. *Communal value: HIA/SS Comment for Cefn Celfi House: Agreed. An interest sector will be addressed by this proposal.*

3.2. Local Planning Policies:

3.2.1 Local Authority context -

Whilst producing a Heritage Impact Assessment/Statement (HIA/SS) it is standard practice to consider the County Council's LDP.

The current Local Development Plan was adopted on by the Council on the 28th of February 2019. Under the provisions of the Planning (Wales) Act, Neath Port Talbot LDP forms the statutory development plan for the Council. Together with the national plan, it will be used as the primary material consideration to inform decisions on planning applications and development proposals.

The LDP sets out land use policies and proposals to control development in the county borough.

HIA/SS Comment for Cefn Celfi House: The proposed scheme as formulated aims to satisfy such criteria.

Key Policies:

5.5 Culture and Heritage P. 84.

5.5.1 Strategic Policy SP21 Built Environment and Historic Heritage P. 84

5.5.8 Policy BE1 Design P. 85

Cefn Celfi response: The scheme as submitted meets these criteria.

Further LDP Policies met:

Supplementary Planning Guidance reinforcing the LDP and applicable in this context is broadly incorporated in the following documents:

BE1 Design SPG: Design Published: July 2017

BE2 Buildings of Local Importance. SPG: The Historic Environment.

Although listed the broad principles of :

SPG: Schedule of Buildings of Local Importance Published: April 2019 will have some cognisance.

Cefn Celfi Summary Response: The scheme as submitted, supports the principles and helps meet these needs. The setting of the Listed Building is not lost or negatively impacted but enhanced and assured.

Conservation Areas

The boundaries of *conservation areas* within the County are shown on the Constraints and Issues Map, however, the building is not within a conservation area.

Response: Agreed. No change or impact.

Historic Parks and Gardens

The register of historic parks and gardens in Wales identifies parks and gardens and their settings which make an important contribution to the character of the country and which are deemed important to preserve or enhance

Response: Agreed, but not applicable.

2.6.18 The register of historic landscapes in Wales should be taken into account in considering the implications of developments, which meet the criteria for *Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)*.

Response: Not Applicable.

Historic Environment Records

Archaeological Sensitive Areas

2.6.22. GGAT identified *Archaeologically Sensitive Areas (ASA)* within the County and these are shown on the Constraints and Issues Map.

Response: Agreed, but in this instance, it is not applicable, the house and yard have been worked in recent times. The land associated with the Scheduled Monuments is hundred of metres distance, owned under a separate title and no impact on the stones, will arise.

2.6.23 *Listed buildings* are determined based on their importance to the nation, either for their architecture or built quality, or for their historic associations. However, there are a large number of other buildings and undesignated heritage assets which, whilst not of sufficient quality or importance to be listed, make a significant local contribution.

Response: Agreed. This is the thrust of this HIA/SS. The building has had numerous alterations, repairs and adaptations. The submission seeks to protect the best features and bring robustness, viable use and design clarity to the ensemble.

3.4 Ecology and the natural environment

Response: The proposals are internal. There is no impact upon Ecology but the proposed scheme as formulated will satisfy such criteria, with all advice and guidance being considered and incremental ecological enhancements made with regards to the historic, natural and ecological environments.

Accessibility

Response: The building is potentially accessible for pedestrians, cyclists, motor-cyclists, car, bus, and main-line rail termini within Neath Port Talbot and for travelling further afield via the M4, A48 and A465 as well as lesser highways towards the Swansea, Gwendraeth valley villages and Powys. As a private dwelling Cefn Celfi is not normally open to the public.

It is against these contexts, that it is requested that the scheme is considered and supported.

4.0 Overview of the existing house, its building structure, fabric and condition with proposals for repair and reuse.

This, is assimilated by viewing photographic records provided by the applicant of the works immediately prior and during the work undertaken in the spring and summer of 2023 and subsequent images taken by the conservation accredited surveyor in the late autumn of 2023 when he first became aware of the situation. Note: The request for Trevor J Francis to inspect, followed the visit of the local authority building inspector and NPTCBC enforcement officer of the planning section of the council, the previous day.

4.1.1 Roof

The roof was we suspect re-slatted circa 1971/2. Natural Welsh slates are fitted; however, these undulate considerably as the relatively modern lightweight and undersized sawn softwood timbers beneath, have deflected over a period. The fitting and gauging of the slate covering is of widely varying quality, displaying inconsistency and ineffective details; whilst other areas require repairs and replacements. Both the roof slating and structure are in a variable state and ideally need replacing, possibly salvaging the best of the existing, albeit they are likely to have already been refixed at least twice and the condition of them will only become apparent when stripped. As a consequence provision is made for new Canadian Glendene slates to colour and geologically match, if found necessary

The sarking felt underlay utilised at the time of stripping and slate renewal in the 1970's was a bituminous-based felt with pre-bonded glass-fibre insulation quilt. This product was quite popular in the late sixties/early seventies but has since been proven to degrade at the eaves and verge rapidly, attract mould and provides very limited thermal performance characteristics that fail to satisfy today's expectations. Building Regulations and building/British standards have increased dramatically since the early 1970's with regards to thermal performance and vapour diffusion. Stripping and recovering of the roof using natural slates, either good quality second-hand Welsh slates or Canadian Glendale slates is recommended with a vapour-permeable roof underlay incorporated. The slating needs to extend slightly further at edge abutments to attempt to provide a degree of weatherproofing to the irregular rubble-stone walling. The existing verge detailing currently relies on proprietary modern PVC capping details, presumably added by an earlier owner. Drips and overhangs are wholly inadequate, resulting in the exterior walls becoming soaked externally by rainwater run-off and the core being saturated. This will be enhanced by appropriately detailed stained timber fascia and barge details.

The roof covering and structure are undulating in their plane and surprisingly shallow pitched for a traditional historic building. Removing the ceiling at first floor reveals the structure has clearly been modified in past decades but that this predate the 1970's re-slating. The roof is lightweight with sawn softwood sections utilised that are undersized. Deflection has arisen in

the roof plane due to the excessive span of the timber purlins, and the spacing of the modern raised collar-type truss bays which are excessive. Trusses are formed using under-sized lightweight softwood timber sections that are clearly modifications added presumably in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century. They have machine-made bolted connections. Spread has arisen.

The roof structure affords no historic precedent or significance. As part of the proposals being submitted, it is planned that it will be replaced with a new engineer designed structure using 'A' frame principal rafter trusses, purlins and rafters of raised collar tie form, as part of a cut-timber roof structure. Oak timbers will be utilised where exposed and possibly treated softwood (possibly) where concealed by ceiling finishes. The warm roof design will be insulated to, or as close to current Building Regulation Standards for thermal provision that can be achieved without loss of detail.

4.1.2 Fascia and barge-board details

The timber sections fitted presumably 1972 had all been replaced prior to 2022 (possibly circa, 2010) with PVC fascia and bargeboard details being fitted. These are of no historical value whatsoever and are highly inappropriate. They have failed to afford any degree of protection to exterior walling that undulates and is misaligned in many areas, due to long-term structural movement. Undersized roof timbers causing spread at wall-plate level compound this. Stain coated, preservative treated timber will be used when replacing.

4.1.3 Exterior walls

These are today, as shown on the annotated photographic slides. Walls, primarily built of locally sourced Blue Pennant sandstone laid as rubble stonework with numerous field stones and boulders utilised. Various earth, lime and cement mortars have been used over centuries. The building has been much remodelled, and this can clearly be seen by the various rip-joints present in the masonry (Please see Appendix A). We suspect the projecting front gable on the right side was been added after the seventeenth century and the exterior walls and roof structure were all raised in the past. Window apertures which would have been fitted in the seventeenth century with narrow mullion/transom windows were no doubt improved in the mid-seventeenth century or later by the addition of double-hung vertical sliding sashes set in window openings modified to increase daylighting within the premises, which are impossibly dark in areas. The 1970's three sash horizontal configuration evident on the front elevation gable is a total nonsense, with no historic precedence.

No significant foundation exists, only large boulders positioned at various points which help create a footing. In some areas, the clay subsoil is now apparent at the reduced level and some local precautionary underpinning is necessary. The footing, being set on a stiff, waterlogged clay subsoil. Walls are bedded using a variety of different mortars including clay-based mortar, hot lime mortar mixes, cement and sand (both recent and others of considerable age). The walls internally are much altered. Now that the modern sand and cement render and skim gypsum plaster finishes has been removed, one can discern clearly

just how many significant interventions have occurred at this property over centuries, with brick faced veneer skins and cracks that were concealed by the previous hard render fitted.

It is apparent from closely studying the photographs of the recently undertaken exposure works and structural repairs made (some are included and commented in Appendix A), that the walling was in an extremely poor state of repair with significant structural cracking evident in early 2023 (prior to the unauthorised recent interventions). These had simply been rendered over with cement mortar in the 1970's remodelling. Various gaps existed with some having been infilled in the 1970's using cement mortar, concrete and old newspapers (as a filler) that date the interventions made to circa 1973. Other cracks are from interventions that were ill conceived but made decades or even centuries before. Lime mortar pointing and as necessary crack stitching and core consolidation will be undertaken using lime grouts and lime-based mortars to reinstate the integrity of the retained walling.

Externally, we understand that the walls have been lime washed for many years and in recent decades, use of hydrated bag-lime mixed with water has been the chosen method. Lime washing will continue to the house, whilst the new Barn style extension proposal that is to be built with Pennant rubble stone to match the house, but will an inner skin of cavity walling will be lime mortar bedded and pointed. Ideally this would be left as a visible difference to the original dwelling, but if deemed necessary, could be similarly lime washed in multiple coats with a traditional lime wash.

To the front entrance elevation, there is only a single gable today, but the various reports of the Royal Commission, the initial Cadw list entry and the booklet produced by Mr Brian Lodwick, the local historian catalogue the visual appearance of the structure and its historical connections with regards to Cilybebl. These sources indicate that before 1972-73 that the building would have had an additional gable and double-hung vertical sliding sash windows fitted to the front and left side elevations. These were removed circa 1973 and much wider, horizontal emphasised windows added. The proposal is to partially reinstate as they are far more effective at bringing day-light back into what is otherwise a dark dank interior space..

4.1.4 Although purpose-made, the 1970's timber windows utilised modern EGMA-type mouldings to their paint-coated softwood sections, and single-glazed with float glass. Subsequently, secondary glazing was fitted internally utilising modern powder coated aluminium sections. An additional window was added on the front left side at the first-floor level and the second gable on the front elevation was removed entirely, with only a low height but narrow window inserted into a modified reveal. Window openings were reduced and in situ cast reinforced lintels poured in place and in others, additional timber heads inserted presumably in the twentieth century and certainly by 1993. These frames by 2022/2023, were clearly failing and had been incorrectly and poorly inserted when undertaking a partial rebuild and remodelling. The lack of end bearing for the hot-potch of lintels and heads has we suspect contributed to the cracking evident within sections of the rubblestone walling. This could only be evidenced, once the internal cement render and gypsum plaster had been removed. Reinforced concrete cast in-situ heads were in places

poorly supported and had been faced with moulded stucco in an attempt to simulate pseudo-stonework. Exterior elevations were limewash painted using hydrated, lime applied via a ‘bagging’ technique.

Internally, we gather that the applicant first became concerned by cracking and loose and debonding plaster that was also displaying signs of cracking. Initially, as a small householder repair, they opened up a small section only for the inner face and core of the exterior walling to suddenly collapse and fall out. This caused considerable consternation as it was the bedroom of very young children. Further investigations followed that led to the removal of the cement-rendered plaster at first-floor level and subsequently at ground level. Large numbers of structural defects were identified. These are illustrated and described within Appendix A -annotated photographic plates that are associated with this HIA/SS (Heritage Impact Assessment/Statement of Significance). From reviewing these and other images, it can be seen that the building was in an extreme state of disrepair and being held together largely by 1970’s ill-conceived applied cement and gypsum plaster, applied wall linings and finishes. Lime based consolidation will be utilised using NHL 2 or an appropriate hot-lime mix/grout and stainless-steel crack ties, concealed internally.

4.1.5 Chimney stacks

The property currently has two chimney stacks, one set astride the right side (W) gable which was the principal hearth to the direct entry house, the other served what is believed to be a later added parlour on the left-side rear wing. An artistic sketch drawing undertaken in the 1990’s indicates a third stack astride the left side gable. However, from photographic evidence and viewing the now exposed building fabric we respectfully suggest that this never existed or at least, not to the current gable wall which the Royal Commission indicates is in a modified position to that of the earlier gable wall provided to the outer rooms of this Type A ‘direct entry’ dwelling house. The left-side space was unheated at the time and did not have a chimney, flue or fireplace opening, although it is conceivable that an earlier wall built further towards the East might have in the 17th Century, had a second chimney.

The right-side gabled hall’s, principal chimneystack has been reconstructed above roof level in the past. The exposed upper section rebuild was undertaken using clay bricks with a cement render applied and subsequently profiled to simulate natural stone by stucco finishing, circa 1972. Whilst lead flashings and soakers are fitted the detailing is poor and the stack has continued to be a source of significant moisture penetration entering via the large fireplace flue and hearth.

The large cross-sectional area of the flue is no longer appropriate for an open fire hearth and modern heating appliances and flue liners are necessary, (if excess smoke is not to be generated internally). The large historic flue had been lined with a flexible stainless steel flue liner by a previous occupier and a large cast-iron wood-burning stove placed at hearth level. Centuries of use of this previously unlined chimney have resulted in a heavy soot buildup and

sulphurous coal-tar that runs down into the back of the damp flue hearth, staining the fireplace and adjacent stone slab flooring permanently. Given that the west side gable elevation is that which is particularly exposed to driving wind and rain, strongly recommend that the Victorian brick chimneystack is rebuilt entirely above roof level using rubble stonework to match that of the main dwelling bedding and pointing with NHL-based lime mortars. Detailing of the stack needs to be enhanced with appropriate capping details, flaunching and flashings. At least one, if not two horizontal lead trays should be fitted in accordance with modern Lead Sheet Association Recommendations. To address the sulphurous rainwater run-off. We recommend adding a catch tray within the hood of the fireplace hearth and discharging soluble tar and water via a drainpipe on the exterior; and, to a place that it can be collected and disposed of safely.. The back of the fireplace should be cleaned to remove the tar residue and the walling repointed. A new stainless steel flue liner needs to be added for coal and wood solid fuel heating in accordance with HETAS requirements and the modern cast-iron stove reintroduced with an appropriate register plate.

The large inglenook oak beam will be retained as found.

The rear stack to the later added parlour and bedroom addition had been repointed but again very simplified details were incorporated. Its value is extremely questionable and given that its form is obviously a modern intervention that is no longer required or operational, recommend its removal. Its height is visually excessive but necessary if it is ever to be put back into operational use.

Where the main fireplace hearth chimneystack had been rebuilt above roof level decades before in clay brickwork as opposed to rubblestone historic detailing has been lost. Lead cover flashings were inserted at roof intersections but with no lead tray was incorporated, so essential to prevent rainwater and moisture dampness penetration into traditional buildings. Both chimneys are contributing to significant dampness internally.

A more vernacular finish needs to be given to its flaunching and capping.

4.1.6 Roof structure

The pitch of the roof is as stated above, relatively shallow for a traditional vernacular building built within Glamorgan. This is confirmed if one reviews the many vernacular farmstead examples recorded within the Glamorgan Inventory of the Royal Commission for Ancient and Historic Monuments (Wales) {RCAHM(W)}. The original roof structure would not have been thatched as it is of far too shallow a pitch and we suspect would not have performed adequately if stone tiles were fitted (as would have been the norm in a district where sandstone that splits on its bed joints was readily available.

No evidence of earlier roof coverings or historic timber structures, exist. The current timber roof structure is as shown, and is relatively modern and inappropriate. The original would have been far more substantial than that evident today and formed with green-oak timbers.

This current roof structure consists of lightweight, raised collar tie-type, intermediate timber trusses that have bolted connections and which in places have been strengthened further by adding additional cross ties at ridge level. Timbers utilised are modern sawn softwood sections that are clearly not traditional in either their detailing or spacing. We suspect the original roof trusses were replaced in the early decades of the twentieth century. Spacing of the truss bays is excessive and the in-line timber purlins have deflected due to excessive span and inadequate depth. Common rafters are fitted but are again of modest softwood sections. Alignment of the roof is poor and is clearly of no architectural or historical significance. Indeed, the height of the collars is such that much of the thrust of the principal rafter blades is placed on the inadequate walls to attempt to restrain. Gables have been added within the roof plane and differ from those of the original build period. To the front entrance elevation (N) the gable projection does not align evenly with that of what is presumed to be the earlier façade.

The proposal after considerable reflection, is to remove the modern roof structure, renewing completely. More substantial timber trusses, spaced at traditional spacings (in bays of 2.4-3.0 metre centres) is recommended. This accords with traditional building methods of vernacular structures constructed between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries. The intention to then leave the new replacement trusses and purlins partly exposed as architectural features. We noted that whilst the existing roof structure was lined internally previously with a sawn lath and plaster ceiling this would have dated from the early twentieth century and would be of no great historical value. Before this, we note from lime plaster applied to the upper gable on the left side, the ceiling extended above and upwards towards the ridge.

Photographs illustrate just how friable and loose the condition of the walls were at the time of the recent interventions. Whilst we do not countenance the unauthorised procedural interventions it is clear that the walls and mortar dust fill of the rubble core would inevitably have started to run as soon as modern cement renders were removed and in places, sections of walling would simply fall out, having no bonding strength, given movement and settlement that had occurred over centuries. The use (in many areas) of a clay-based mortar and earth and rubble infill has resulted in considerable rebuilding becoming necessary, both in the past and recently, using Blue Pennant sandstone to large areas with concrete blockwork on the inner face of the wall in other areas that were intended to be plaster finished. Given that the walls were already largely cement rendered internally, vapour open characteristics of the walls had previously been compromised, internally. Application by other owners of silica-alkyd and vinyl paints further compounded moisture movement issues.

The proposal is now to render the concrete block repaired walling with a built-up lime-based plaster and to apply limewash, Kleim or a clay-based mineral paint to the rebuilt sections of the Blue Pennant sandstone that have been built fair-faced using rectangular squared rubble. Other areas to be consolidated with traditional lime mortars and grouts after crack stitching with stainless steel rods and mesh.

4.1.7 Windows and doors

Those fitted to the building prior to the recent works were purpose-made, paint coated, softwood windows that were single glazed and inserted as part of the post-1972 interventions. They have no historical precedents, and although one can discern that they had possibly alluded to attempt a copy a sub- mediaeval vernacular building form, had failed miserably in this task. Prior to 1972, the building had retained double-hung vertical sliding sash windows as was reported by the Royal Commission in their field notes and by the Cadw list descriptions, to this and parts of the rear elevation. Whilst these sash windows were clearly later interventions than the original build in the 1630's (as we gather from Royal commission sources that double-hung sash windows were not common in Wales until the 1730's), they added far greater daylighting to the upper floors of the premises. Their insertion presumably facilitated by incorporation of two Gables on the front (N) elevation, only one of which currently remains. These would have brought improved day-lighting, ventilation and much needed headroom within what would otherwise create a squalid internal environment.

As part of proposals to regularise, it is now intended to block up one of the later 1970's added window interventions on the north elevation as it creates a distorted appearance symbiotic of a modern detached dwelling with its horizontally emphasised window apertures.

Whilst stained hardwood could be added, their fitting would also be deemed to be conjectural.

To the front of the premises, we recommend that the Gables are reinstated as shown in the 1952 photographs of the Royal Commission and that traditionally detailed, purpose-made, double-hung sliding sash windows are fitted. These windows could be glazed with either slim thermal insulation units or a bonded glass solution adopted such as that offered by Hereford Glass. Whilst fully accepting that this is not the original appearance of the building, it is a relevant point in time for the restoration of the dwelling. The building had previously been altered when the projecting front gable and lean-to loggia/porch were added. These although not as old as the original fabric (as can be discerned from the Royal Commission evidence and sketch) are themselves of a considerable age. Reinstatement of vertically orientated windows would also greatly improve the quality of daylighting within the ground and upper floors, as at the present time this is seriously compromised. Any reinstatement of the original built appearance of Cefn Celfi would necessitate reconstruction of much of the front elevation and is we suggest both unnecessary and from a conservation philosophy perspective, inappropriate.

This building has changed many times in the past, hence honest interventions should not be discouraged given that the sustainable future of this building rests with it being able to adapt to twenty-first-century demands.

4.1.8 Lintels

The original timber lintels and camber arched heads have been lost. There is no evidence of hood labels or stone heads having been fitted. In the 1970's remodel, cast-in-situ reinforced concrete lintels were formed. In many places, the bearing of the lintels is wholly inadequate and if the existing wide openings are to be retained there will be a need to fit modern lintels to comply with building regulation practice requirements.

4.1.9 New stonework

This has been rebuilt internally where it has been necessary to stitch and tie back the structure debonding rubble stone on the inner wall face following the removal of the cement render and gypsum plaster finishes. Whilst the modern stonework is well executed from a craft perspective it uses relatively regular squared rubble stonework and whilst the applicants considered this to be a feature from a historical perspective, is incorrect. We therefore recommend it is either lime-plastered or limewashed.

To those sections that were intended to be plaster-finished, concrete blockwork has been used to re-support the wall and roof structure. We recommend that this is replastered using traditional lime-based mortar in three-coat work.

4.1.10 Primary oaks beam and filler joist floor to the Hall

These are much impacted by timber decay mechanisms such as dry and wet rot that have attacked the beams over centuries. They have been poorly patch repaired in more recent decades. The applicants wish to reinstate the principal oak beams conserving the solid material and using steel sections to carry the dead loads. These will help to tie the front and rear walls together and can be concealed by the filler joist floor and infill oak strips acting as gussets. The condition of the oak beams can be clearly shown on the annotated photographic slides. Sensitive restoration retaining the sound historic fabric is possible, if good crafts are directly engaged to ensure the work is completed sensitively.

The existing floor had previously been covered with modern softwood boards, which themselves had been attacked by fungal and insect decay mechanisms and also needed to be replaced. The filler joists were poorly fitted and had shrunk over centuries from the green oak timbers originally used. They incorporate reed moulds that can be replicated in new slightly longer timber sections. When appropriate they can then be colour- stained to match the effect of the timbers shown on the Royal Commission sketch.

4.1.11 Stone arch at the base of the fireplace staircase

From the photographic illustrations available one can clearly discern that the arch that the applicant removed was not a four-centred Tudor style arch but a later rebuild using a single ring, stone arch. The Royal Commission in the 1960's field notes, indicated that the arch was fractured but the formal drawing produced presumably from the field notes showed a skewed four-centred arch that we suspect had been inaccurately drawn up for publication purposes.

Whilst this is pure conjecture, it is clear that the current applicant did not damage or disfigure an arch of historical significance. As part of mitigation measures, they are fully prepared to obtain a new skew-angled ‘Tudor style’ four-centred arch in local Pennant sandstone from a skilled banker mason to assist with mitigation of the remediation works.

4.1.12 Finishes

It is proposed that the walls are lime mortar plastered internally, possibly utilising a lime and cork render as advocated by the Ty Mawr Lime Company and finished with either a lime-wash, casein, distemper or clay-based paint.

4.1.13 Joinery

Where the existing timbers cannot be retained it is suggested that matching oak sections are used to form architraves and skirting boards but only where necessary as it is unlikely these were incorporated in the 1630’s.

4.1.14 Floors and Finishes

The existing ground floor has been raised and a modern, lightly reinforced concrete floor inserted. This has helped consolidate the rubble stonework walling where loose or where floor levels and the base of the wall are similar. Whilst a limecrete floor is today often specified, in this instance with the waterlogged site it is suggested it is unlikely to be suitable. Retention of the concrete floor with damp-proof membrane is necessary. Thermal insulation will need to be incorporated to meet modern building regulation standards and underfloor heating can be incorporated. This will be a means whereby radiators can be obviated as they have no historical precedence in the historic parts of a building of this age.

Ground floor areas will then largely be covered with Pennant sandstone flags bedded and pointed in lime-based mortar. It is accepted that this will not generate a vapour-permeable solution however, this is what the applicants were trying to avoid as the existing stone flags were delaminating due to constant wetting and drying cycles arising occurring that was resulting in contour scaling of the flagstone finish with moisture drying into the building.

Upper floors it is suggested will be covered with wide Oak or Elm boards to the hallway area and bedrooms, other than to potentially wet areas such as bathrooms. Softwood timber boards fitted to the modern replacement softwood joisted floors that replace earlier softwood joisted sections of the building, where ceilings may exist.

This, after repairing and treating the principal oak beams and refitting. Adding new filler joist flooring and trimmings where the notches previously arose. These to be carefully spliced in using matching hardwood sections and stained and wax polished.

It is requested that the existing ground floor kitchen and bathroom receive a tiled finish to facilitate easy cleaning.

4.1.15 Ceilings

First-floor level ceilings will follow the roof line and create an insulated warm roof that whilst not able to achieve full building regulation standards will go some way to enhancing thermal efficiency and the requirements of approved document L. The actual standard achieved will be as negotiated with the local authority building control officer. Given that the ceiling will contain high-performance insulation, reinstatement of the lath and plaster ceiling will achieve little. It is requested that a plasterboard-lined ceiling can be fitted to the new timber roof structure that will be engineer-designed and laid out with a far more traditional series of truss bays.

4.2 Building Services

4.2.1 Electrical

Services generally will be concealed within replacement lime plaster and applied finishes. The work will be to the IET wiring Regulation standards.

4.2.2 Plumbing and heating

The property will be fitted with an accredited underfloor heating system at ground and first floor levels. This fed via a ground source heat pump with water storage and control set within the early twentieth century lean to addition attached to the left side elevation.

4.2.3 Sanitary ware

Modern bathroom and kitchen fitments will be incorporated.

4.2.4 Drainage

The existing septic tank will be checked, maintained and tested to meet local authority/NRW standards. Surface water run-off has been reduced as a result of new drainage measures completed. Please refer to the Site Plan and Drainage Plan layouts. Consent to regularise these is required. There will be no discharge from the premises. The property is currently served by a septic tank installation and hence there is no change.

4.3 Proposed new side extension

Following extensive discussions, considered research and through the development of a series of design stage concepts, the applicant, Architect and the Historic Building Consultant have developed these proposals after very careful consideration of the many permutations and possibilities that would enhance the appearance of the farmstead, allowing for the long-term

sustainability of the house and retention of an evolved vernacular form that meets modern family living and the functioning of the farmstead.

It is proposed to add an extension on the left side following the outline of the later cowshed extension which is today, only partly standing. It is recommended as it a sensitive reinstatement that has a form that is not without historic precedence at Cefn Celfi.

To the left side, the standing remains of the old cowshed can still be discerned by a few rubble stone walls as is recorded on the Royal Commission drawings. The new extension will it is suggested, follow the outline of what was this later intervention, presumably undertaken to the side of the premises after the original left side gable had been removed and the width of the dwelling reduced slightly from that existing in the 1630's at some time in the past two hundred years.

Within this proposed extension (that will require planning and listed building consent) it is suggested that a modern (safe to utilise) hardwood staircase can be incorporated as well as additional living facilities that will accommodate the applicants growing family.

The extension will be detailed in rubble stonework but built to modern standards of building construction, with low energy thermal performance characteristics that will help offset some of the fabric losses that will inevitably occur within the traditional sections of this listed structure.

The proposed extension will attempt to simulate a cart shed and small cowshed to the front elevation with window apertures and conservation rooflights, primarily set on the south-facing elevation that is far less conspicuous.

Fully accepting that this is a partial conjectural reconstruction that will have modern facilities internally, it will provide much of the day-lighting, wellness and space that the existing farm house is compromised or lacks.

It has been suggested to us that the height of the extension is reduced and set back slightly. Such that it is subservient to that of the house. Faced in rubble Pennant sandstone and pointed with a traditional lime-based mortar the buildings details will simulate many that are included in the Royal Commission's Glamorgan Inventory, Volume 2 or Peter Smith's book 'Houses of the Welsh Countryside' that highlight similar structures. Given that the former cowshed structure is now partly overgrown with ivy and set on very basic footings on a waterlogged site it is suggested that the existing walls are taken down and rebuilt as part of the extension with hay loft vents incorporated albeit in slightly repositioned locations. The roof will be covered with natural slate, to match that of the main house and the rubblestone faced and pointed as already outlined.

4.4 Identification of the proposed changes to building elements, components and finishes, setting out the reasoning behind the some potential preferred options for future phases.

The following table is a brief overview of the building's condition and construction. It has been provided purely to assist the listed building consent and planning application and for outlining recommendations.

6.3.1 Exterior:

Cefn Celfi - Significance of its Building Elements and Components as described in section 4.0 to 4.3 above and summarised below.

Element/Component	Construction	Condition	Recommendation	Reasoning	Significance
Roof	Natural slate	Poorly applied and detailed natural Welsh slate. Strip and replace with Glendene Canadian slates of a similar colour and geology.	Lay more consistently with slight overhangs to the verge details and enhance the chimney interface weathering is to reduce risks of water penetration. Replacement slates to be of similar colour. Glendene Canadian slates to be used.	Enhanced performance and weathering detailing.	High.
Chimney stacks	Cement Rendered, Lime stucco coated and simulated to appear as rubble stone.	Cut down details with poor drips and ineffective flashings and no horizontal tray.	Take down and reconstructed using rubble stone and lime wash. Incorporate lead trays replacement flue's and liners to meet modern standards and prevent smoking with carbon monoxide entering the sitting room.	Avoidance of leaks and reduction in the coal tar residue run-off. More efficient use of fuel and safe burning of kiln dried logs.	High-aesthetically. High priority-functional
Rainwater Services	White uPVC sections.	Fair but in need of further repairs and poorly detailed. Poor	Replace with traditionally moulded half round cast-iron sections, paint coated. Rainwater downpipes to incorporate ear type collars	Reinstatement of a more traditional detail at an appropriate point in time.	Medium

Walls					
Original section	Random rubble local Pennant sandstone to front, side and rear of principal elevations bedded in a mixture of Earth mortars, white lime and charcoal generated mortar as well as black lime/ash and cements . That is likely to be hydraulic in nature.	Fair/Variable. Eroded mortar joints, numerous cracks have been repaired and other areas have been unstable.	Repair and re-point as found necessary. Some use has previously been made of cement-based mortar render when bedding replacement sandstone. The more recent work is quite well executed but is if anything, a little too perfect. Recommend either lime washing/Kleim paint coating or lime plastering.	Reinstatement of a more traditional detail at an appropriate point in time.	Medium.
Side Lean-to additions	Cement rendered clay common brickwork and rubble-stone walling to the side and rear elevations. Areas being altered are in poor repair.	Poor.	Clean down, repair and replaster as necessary, slating where appropriate. These areas will largely be utilised as building services plant spaces for the ground source heat pump installation.		Low
Windows	Deteriorating single glazed mullioned rebated surrounds as well as timber windows together with:	Aesthetically very poor. Use had been made of secondary glazing internally.	Replace with traditionally detailed sections of a far more appropriate form to restore to something akin to the turn of the twentieth century (circa: 1900).	Reinstatement of a more traditional detail at an appropriate point in time.	Low risk.
Exterior Doors and frames (Front)	Painted Timber.	Replace with traditionally detailed as per the conservation drawing details attached.	Reinstatement of a more appropriate form and detailing.		
Proposal (Rear)					

4.1.2 Interior

Element/Component	Construction	Condition	Recommendation	Reasoning
Ceilings.	These were generally lath and plaster but some had been repaired/replaced or finished at an earlier time. They were finished previously and have now been removed..	Very poor. Much has been lost or severely damaged. The range of new uses proposed will require fire and acoustically attenuated ceilings. There is little virtue in retaining or reinstating in lath this could be contemplated if deemed important to Cadw.	Replace with modern fire and noise (acoustic) protecting certificated systems.	To meet statutory requirements.
First Floor				
Ground Floor	There was no ceiling to the primary beams and filler joist floor. The softwood tee and gee boards were left exposed.	The filler joists will need to be replaced as they were badly decayed and the primary beams have been strengthened. The oak sections need to be carefully replicated and stained.	Apply intumescent coatings to help support fire resistance.	To enhance fire protection as far as practicable.
	Where modern joists had been inserted these were previously plaster boarded and skim finished..		Reinstate.	

Interior walls	Load-bearing sections have been repaired and strengthened with stone and concrete blockwork. In situ poorly detailed concrete lintels have been removed and new lintels fitted	Lime plaster in three coat work and finish with a clay-based paint or similar.	To reinstate a traditional appearance.	Medium
	Fireplace opening, hearth and stone spiral staircase	Reinstate the pointed stone arch to the stairs and remove the precast concrete lintels, reinstating flat stone slabs to the soffit after removing the tar staining.	To attempt to dry down the interior and remove the coal tar contaminate residues.	High
Interior partitions	Construct lightweight timber stud partitions to suit nearly configured internal spaces and link with the proposed extension.	Timber and plasterboard partitions, plaster finished to match the internal wall faces.	Ditto	Low
Staircases				
Stone spiral staircase	Provide a rope or blacksmith forged curved handrail	To attempt to make as safe as practicable.	Repair treads	Fix handrail to this secondary stairs of curved blacksmith forged steel or rope.
Ground floor to 1st floor within the extension.	Oak dogleg timber staircase to provide safe access and use by the family.			Low: Almost essential safety factor
Internal doors and frames.	Replace the modern doors with purpose made oak Joinery bead and butt	Many previously were relatively modern 1970-2000 date replacements and added nothing	Replace with new doors and frames formed of oak with bead and butt traditional details	Medium.

	moulded or semi-rough sawn finished	to the significance of the heritage asset.		
Skirting Boards.	Many are now lost. They were damaged and scuffed and vulnerable to decay at ground level.	Poor.	As part of any repair or renewal of sections of the building it would be sensible to consider renewing or repairing and matching, but avoiding fitting skirting boards where traditional stonework exists..	Medium.
Decorations.	Modern synthetic vinyl paints, papers and silica alkyd gloss finishes.	Poor and in need of complete renewal.	Redecorate but taking appropriate measures where older lead based paints may remain exposed or coated over.	The final designs internally will depend upon the uses and the requirements of the family. These are at present some regularly updated finishes, whilst others are in a very dilapidated state and need safe stripping and preparation before attempting to redecorate. Use vapour open of breathable materials wherever practicable.
Building services	Of varying types and ages.		Upgrade sensitively as budgets allow. A ground source heating system, with heat pumps is being considered. Underfloor heating coils will be used in the historic Hall section.	No significance. There are a necessary cost of modern life and building use.
Heating	Redundant solid fuel fireplaces, some of which have been removed and openings blocked...		Overhaul and vent flues if possible.	Service, repair and replace in accordance with modern building regulation requirements, AD L or low energy heat pumps depending on applications.
Ventilation			Upgrade to meet Building Regulatory standards where practicable and possibly consider MHVR discreetly routed within the Ceiling plenum of the new roof structure.	To reduce mould and condensation risks.

Electrical services			Upgrade.	There are no significant historic light fittings. LED fittings could be incorporated in communal and service areas with decorative light fittings to suit the ambience of the fit out.
Sanitary ware	Modern		Replace/upgrade as required.	No significance upgrade as far as possible.
Kitchen equipment	Modern		Replace/upgrade as required.	No significance upgrade as far as possible.
Roof space	Where concealed spaces exist route Building services. In other areas of the ceilings will be exposed as a cathedral-style roof.		Insulate and ventilate correctly using where practicable a warm roof solution.	Medium

Lighting: The building should be provided with appropriate, traditionally detailed lighting where tis can be accommodated in the original section. Examples to be provided and supplied for subsequent agreement.

4.5 Design Considerations and Reasoning

Historic buildings within NPTCBC (like many others across the UK) are currently facing enormous challenges posed by the impacts of obsolescence in its many forms and the huge societal changes arising that are related to Brexit, the Covid pandemics, inflationary pressures, energy crisis and those that are climate change induced.

Occupation with appropriate repair and maintenance will ensure the long-term care and sustainable management of this building.

The architectural and historic significance of Cefn Celfi House should be viewed within the context of its location, the history and the association with the adjoining land and buildings. It is not an outstanding example of its type and is today significant primarily for the remains of its front entry form, stone spiral stair, fireplace hearth and Hall. It continues to contribute in a modest manner to the vernacular tradition, despite being much altered. It has however to be fit for continuing use/reuse in the 21st century and made structurally stable.

These proposals allow for the building to be repaired and restored to a period that reflects its evolution. Whilst the cow house reconstruction is partly conjectural, it reflects the vernacular form and materials there were used in buildings of this type locally whilst generating appropriate family accommodation suitable for a modern age.

5.0 ASSESSMENT OF IMPORTANCE / SIGNIFICANCE OF HISTORIC ASSET

IMPORTANCE / SIGNIFICANCE	ARCHAEOLOGICAL REMAINS	HISTORIC BUILDINGS	HISTORIC LANDSCAPES
Very High (international)*	World Heritage Sites Other sites of acknowledged international importance Sites that can contribute significantly to acknowledged international research objectives	World Heritage Sites Other buildings of recognized international importance	World Heritage Sites Historic landscapes of international value, whether designated or not Extremely well preserved historic landscapes with exceptional coherence, time depth, or other critical factor(s)
High (National)*	Scheduled Ancient Monuments Undesignated schedulable importance sites of quality and Sites that can significantly contribute to acknowledged international research objectives	Scheduled Ancient Monuments with standing remains Grade I and all Grade II* Listed Buildings (Scotland Category A) Other listed buildings that can be shown to have exceptional qualities in their fabric or historical associations not adequately reflected in their listing grade Conservation Areas containing very important buildings Undesignated structures of clear national importance	Designated historic landscapes of outstanding interest Undesignated landscapes of outstanding interest Undesignated landscapes of high quality and importance, and of demonstrable national value Well preserved historic landscapes, exhibiting considerable coherence, time depth or other critical factor(s)
Medium (Regional)*	undesignated assets that contribute to regional research objective	Grade II Listed Buildings (Historic (unlisted) buildings that can be shown to have exceptional qualities in their fabric or historical associations Conservation Areas containing buildings that contribute significantly to its historic character Historic townscape or built-up areas with important historic integrity in their buildings, or built settings (e.g. including street furniture and other structures)	Designated special historic landscapes Undesignated historic landscapes that would justify special historic landscape designation, landscapes of regional value Averagely well-preserved historic landscapes with reasonable coherence, time depth or other critical factor(s)
Low (Local)*	undesignated assets of local importance Assets compromised by poor preservation and/ or poor survival of contextual associations Assets of limited value, but with potential to contribute to local research objectives	Locally listed buildings (unlisted) buildings of modest quality in their fabric or historical association Historic townscape or built up areas of limited historic integrity in their buildings, or built settings (e.g. including street furniture and other structures)	Robust undesignated historic landscapes Historic landscapes with importance to local interest groups Historic landscapes whose value is limited by poor preservation and/or poor survival of contextual associations
Negligible*	Assets with very little or no surviving archaeological interest	Buildings of no architectural or historical note	Landscapes with little or no significant historic interest
Unknown*	The importance of the resource has not been ascertained	Buildings with some hidden (i.e. inaccessible) potential for historic significance	

Adapted from Design Manual for Roads and Bridges, Volume II, Section 3, Part 2 (2007)

5.1 MAGNITUDE OF IMPACT ON THE HISTORIC ASSET

MAGNITUDE OF IMPACT	ARCHAEOLOGICAL REMAINS	HISTORIC BUILDINGS	HISTORIC LANDSCAPES
Major	Change to most or all key archaeological materials, such that the resource is totally altered Comprehensive changes to setting	Change to key historic building elements, such that the resource is totally altered Comprehensive changes to setting	Total change to historic landscape character resulting from: Changes to most or all key historic landscape elements, parcels or components Extreme visual effects Gross change to noise or change to sound quality Fundamental changes to use or access
Moderate	Changes to many key archaeological materials, such that the resource is clearly modified Considerable changes to setting that affect the character of an asset	Changes to many key historic building elements, such that the resource is significantly modified Changes to the setting of an historic building, such that it is significantly modified	Moderate change to historic landscape character resulting from: Changes to many key historic landscape elements, parcels or components Visual change to many key aspects of the historic landscape Noticeable differences in noise or sound quality Considerable changes to use or access
Minor	Changes to key archaeological materials, such that the asset is slightly altered Slight changes to setting	Change to key historic building elements, such that the asset is slightly different Change to the setting of an historic building, such that it is noticeably changed	Limited change to historic landscape character resulting from: Changes to few key historic landscape elements, parcels or components Slight visual changes to few key aspects of the historic landscape Limited changes to noise levels or sound quality Slight changes to use or access
Negligible	Very minor changes to archaeological materials, or setting	Slight changes to historic buildings elements or setting that hardly affect it	Very small change to historic landscape character resulting from: Very minor changes to key historic landscape elements, parcels or components Virtually unchanged visual effects
No change	No change	No change	No change

5.2 SIGNIFICANCE OF IMPACT ON THE ASSET

MAGNITUDE OF IMPACT	VERY HIGH	HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW	NEGLIGIBLE
NO CHANGE	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral	Neutral
NEGLIGIBLE	Slight	Slight	Neutral/Slight	Neutral/Slight	Neutral/Positive
MINOR	Moderate / Large	Moderate / Slight	Moderate	Slight	Neutral
MODERATE	Large / Very Large	Moderate / Large	Moderate	Slight	Neutral/ Slight
MAJOR	Very Large	Large / Very Large	Moderate/ Large	Slight/ Moderate	Slight

Adapted from ICOMOS guidance, Jan (2011).

MITIGATION: The works now proposed mitigate as much harm as possible to the asset by good design and minimising the intervention necessary to achieve these outcomes. The proposal uses appropriate materials and good quality design, as well as having considered the likely impact on the setting, surrounding buildings and environment.

6.0 CONCLUSION and OVERALL SUMMARY OF THE ASSESSMENT and IMPACT ON THE HISTORIC ASSET

During the time that has been available to reflect on past mistakes, the applicant and occupiers have carefully reconsidered the most appropriate long-term solution for the property. Fully accepting that this will entail significant capital investment and the existing building will always have its deficiencies that reflect its age, form and weathering challenges, there remains an opportunity to restore and conserve the most significant fabric and structure whilst also creating sympathetic new family accommodation within the extension but with the opportunity to retain use of the existing house as part of the family home.

Significant further repairs and upgrading works are required to the building and it is hoped that the authorities will be supportive and not negative to granting this, ensuring both the saving of a historic asset and the safety and viability of the premises as the home of the applicant's young family.

This application offers a viable, continuing, and sympathetic use for the building. The support of all parties reading is urged to ensure sustainable ongoing use.

Trevor Francis