



PLANNING STATEMENT

PROPOSED ALTERATIONS TO EXISTING RESIDENTIAL DWELLING
AT OAK COTTAGE, HIGH STREET, PONTARDAWE, SWANSEA,
SA8 4JN

On behalf of
Mr and Mrs Morgan

Our Ref: 1903.a

Date: July 2026

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Approved by: Jason Evans

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Evans Banks Planning has been instructed by Mr and Mrs Morgan (the Applicant) to prepare this Planning Statement to accompany a full planning and Listed Building application for the proposed alterations to an existing residential dwelling at Oak Cottage, High Street, Pontardawe.

1.2 This Planning Statement therefore forms part of the submissions of the application to be considered by the Authority, and provides information on the following points:

- A detailed description of the site and surrounding area
- A description of the proposed development
- Consideration of relevant planning policy
- Assessment of the potential heritage and community impacts of the proposed change of use

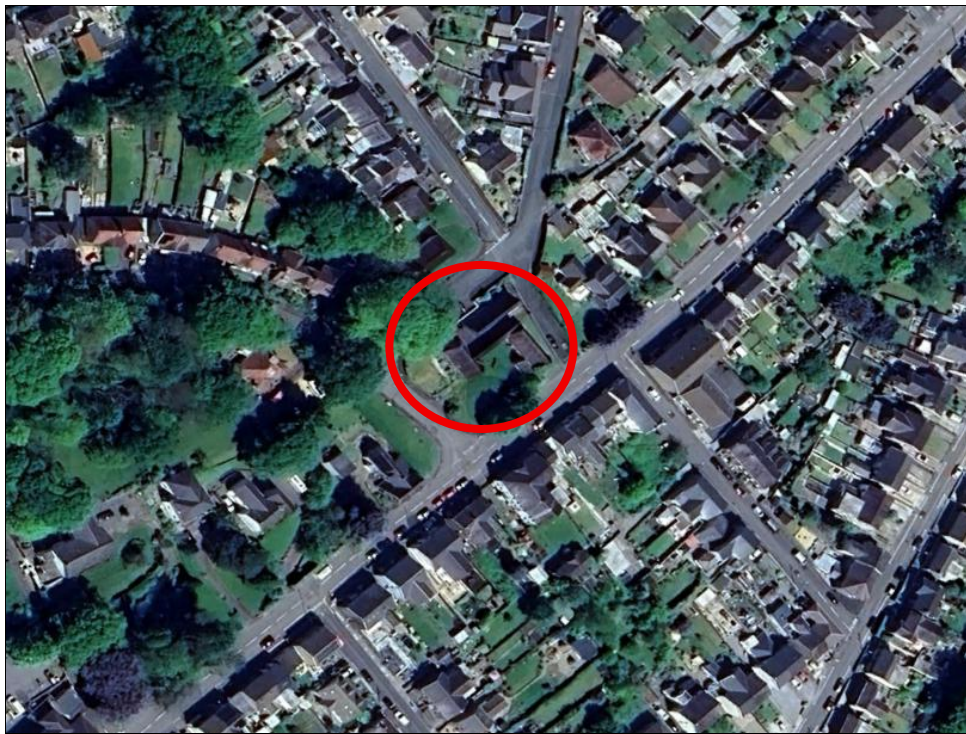
1.3 This Statement and Assessment should be read in conjunction with the following accompanying drawings.

- Location Plan
- Existing and Proposed Site Block Plans
- Existing and Proposed Elevations
- Existing and Proposed Floor Plans
- Proposed Porch Plan
- Proposed Demolition Plan
- Structural Report
- Transport Statement
- Green Infrastructure Statement
- Heritage Impact Assessment

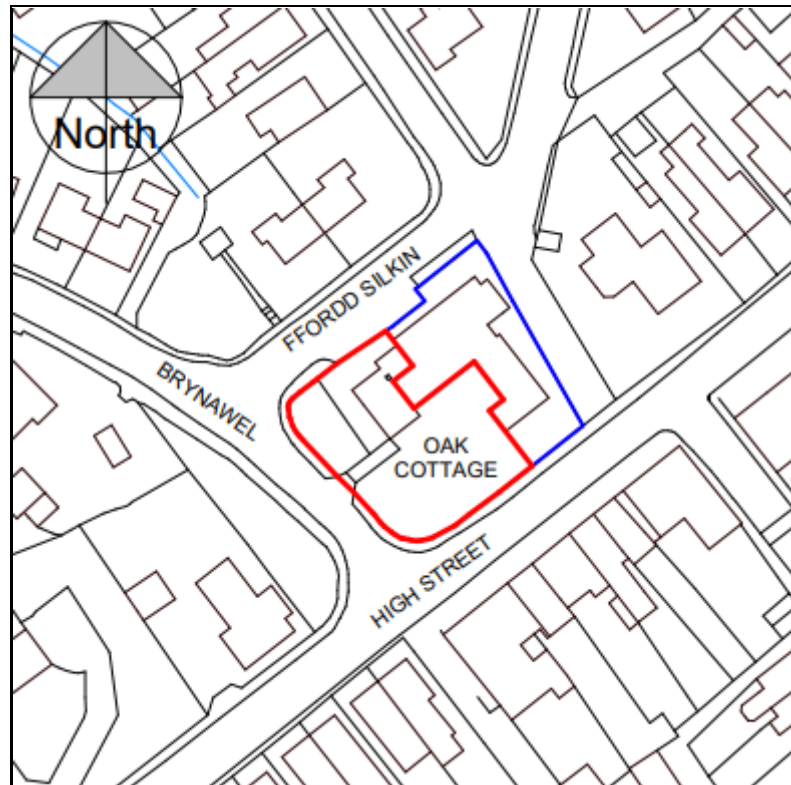
2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 THE SITE

- 2.1.1 The application building, Oak Cottage, is a Grade II Listed Building, located on the B-road known as High Street, within the established urban area of Pontardawe. The property is highlighted in red on both Photograph 1 and Plan A below.



Photograph 1 – Google Earth Image (May 2025)



Plan A – Location Plan

2.1.2 Oak Cottage is a substantial former Curate's Cottage and associated National Schoolroom, constructed in 1856 as part of the local church school group. The building is historically significant, having served as a schoolmaster's residence, a home for the curates of Llangiwig Parish, and subsequently as accommodation for individuals supported by the church. In 2017, the property was purchased by Mr and Mrs Morgan (the Applicants), who converted it into a family home while maintaining its historic character.

2.1.3 The building is constructed of course rock-faced sandstone with yellow terracotta dressings and a slate roof, typical of mid-19th century Gothic school architecture. The terracotta, manufactured locally at Ynysmeudwy, is one of the largest surviving examples of this material in the area. Oak Cottage retains several key architectural features, including mullioned windows with terracotta detailing, gabled porches with

cross finials, and pointed traceried windows indicative of its original ecclesiastical and educational function.

2.1.4 The internal arrangement of Oak Cottage is reflective of its dual historic use as a residence and educational facility. The former teacher's cottage comprises multiple rooms over two principal floors, and over time, some structural modifications have occurred, including the removal of chimneys, later insertions of softwood windows and doors, and post-war internal finishes such as cement renders, concrete ground floors, and plasterboard linings. Despite these alterations, the principal fabric of the building remains intact, including roof structures, external walls, and original joinery details in key locations.

2.1.5 Oak Cottage remains structurally legible as a mid-19th-century former institutional building, with its traditional stone construction, vernacular detailing and characteristic roof form continuing to express its original architectural language. The HIA identifies areas of age-related deterioration typical of historic buildings, including weathered masonry, isolated cementitious repairs, slipped slates, and mixed-condition joinery. These issues do not undermine the building's integrity but highlight the need for cyclical maintenance and targeted conservation repair. The building retains evidential value through surviving historic fabric such as masonry, roof structure, and original joinery, and communal value through its longstanding presence within the town and its role in local collective memory.

2.1.6 Oak Cottage possesses significant heritage value across several categories:

- **Evidential value:** The building retains substantial elements of its original fabric and form, providing a clear understanding of its 19th-century construction techniques and subsequent adaptations.
- **Historical value:** The property represents a fine local example of a Victorian National School and associated teacher's residence, reflecting the growth of formal education for the working population in mid-19th century Pontardawe.

- **Aesthetic value:** The Gothic design, craftsmanship, and use of locally produced terracotta contribute to the building's architectural interest, despite some loss of detail from later modifications.
- **Communal value:** Oak Cottage has long served the local community, initially in education and church-related functions, and later as a residential dwelling. Its association with St Peter's Church, use of local materials, and role in early education reinforce its significance to the community.

2.1.7 The building's history is also tied to local philanthropy and industrial development. Funding for the original construction was provided by a combination of prominent Victorian industrialists, local landowners, and contributions from the general community, highlighting its role as a communal asset. These associations, combined with its architectural integrity, underpin the rationale for its Grade II listing by Cadw on the 13th of March 2003 (Source ID: 80988).

2.1.8 In summary, Oak Cottage represents a well-preserved example of mid-19th century Gothic school architecture with substantial historic, aesthetic, and communal significance. The proposed domestic alterations seek to maintain the residential function for the applicant's family while respecting the building's heritage significance and ensuring its continued relevance to the local area. Photographs 2 to 11 below highlight the aforementioned features of the Listed Building.



Photograph 2 – Principal Elevation



Photograph 3 – Front and Northern Elevations



Photograph 4 – Western Elevation



Photograph 5 – Eastern (Rear) Elevation



Photograph 6 – Eastern (Rear) Elevation and Proposed Access Point to Community Hub



Photograph 7 – Existing Residential Amenity Space



Photograph 8 – Existing Residential Amenity Space



Photograph 9 – Existing Internal Features



Photograph 10 – Existing Internal Features



Photograph 11 – Existing Internal Features

2.2 THE SURROUNDING AREA

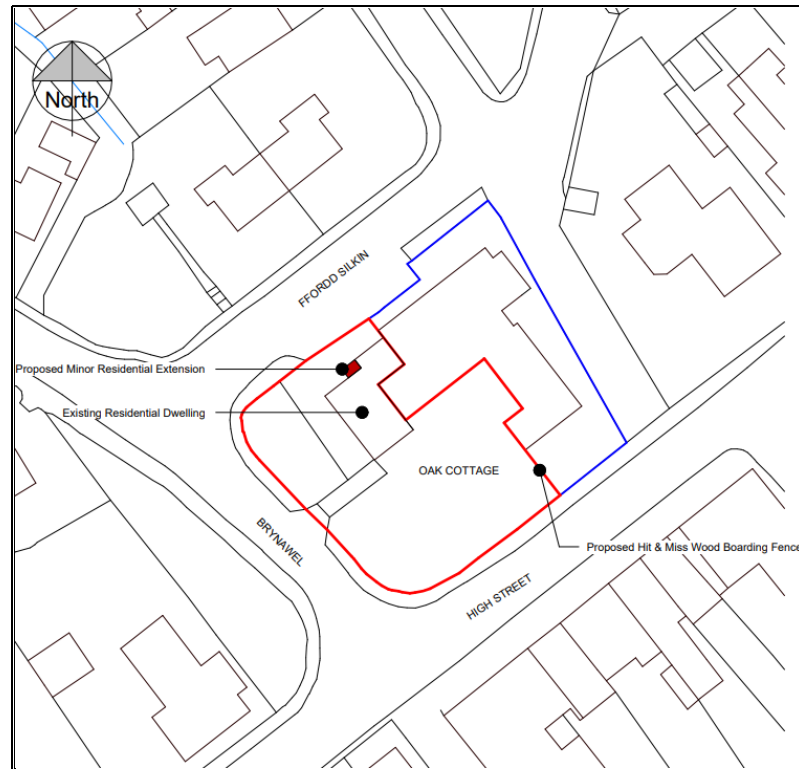
- 2.2.1 In the immediate sense, Oak Cottage sits within a mixed-use streetscape, off the northern flank of High Street, Pontardawe. Immediately to the north of the building is the short road known as Ffordd Silkin with its dedicated parking bays, with Smithfield Road then located to the east and Brynawel to West.
- 2.2.2 The street scene in Pontardawe primarily consists of buildings with commercial uses at ground floor level and with residential accommodation above. To the east and west, adjoining properties follow this pattern, contributing to the vibrancy of the town centre. Across the street to the south, further commercial and residential buildings continue the established rhythm and character of the High Street. No changes to parking or access to the site from High Street are proposed, with the family home retaining its existing front entrance and the rear of the building accessed via the existing rear route for the proposed community hub.
- 2.2.3 In the wider sense, Pontardawe is the third largest settlement in the County Borough and the largest within the valley areas. The town benefits from excellent transport links, connecting to the M4 via the A4067, and serves as a hub providing access to Neath, Swansea, and the wider valleys. Nestled at the foothills of the Brecon Beacons and the Black Mountain, Pontardawe lies along the River Tawe, which flows through the valley towards Swansea Bay.
- 2.2.4 Pontardawe also acts as a local town centre for the surrounding valley communities, offering a wide range of retail, leisure, educational, and employment opportunities. In recent years, the town centre has seen a number of regeneration initiatives, including upgrades to existing facilities and enhancements to the public realm. These improvements have created high-quality public spaces suitable for community events and festivals held throughout the year, increasing the accessibility and overall attractiveness of the town centre.
- 2.2.5 Within a matter of metres of the application site are the 'Ffordd Silkin', 'Ivy Bush', 'Thomas Street', 'St Peters Church' and 'Kitty's' bus stops, which connect the area with

the settlements of Ystradgynlais, Abercrave, Neath, Swansea and beyond via the 903, 905, X6 and X26 bus services respectively.

3.0 THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

Project Rationale

- 3.1 The proposal relates to minor alterations to the existing residential dwelling at Oak Cottage, a Grade II Listed Building on High Street, Pontardawe. The works are intended to improve the functionality of the family home while preserving the established domestic use and respecting the building's historic character.
- 3.2 The scheme has been carefully developed to ensure that the residential function remains fully intact, with modest external and internal alterations designed to enhance the usability of the dwelling for the applicant's family. The layout and design have therefore been tailored to ensure that the domestic function remains wholly self-contained and sympathetic to the building's historic fabric.
- 3.3 Plan B below illustrates the proposed Site Layout for this development.



Plan B – Site Layout Plan

Proposed Uses and Accommodation

- 3.4 The front section of Oak Cottage will continue to serve as a private family residence, accessed via the original front entrance. The proposed works will improve the internal layout and functionality of the dwelling while retaining its historic character and architectural interest.
- 3.5 The adaptation of the building ensures that the residential use continues to complement the building's historic character, maintaining its long-established domestic function and ensuring its continued stewardship.

External Alterations

- 3.6 The proposed external alterations to Oak Cottage are modest in nature and have been sensitively designed to preserve the character and appearance of this historic building. They include the reinstatement of the front porch, which will be carefully designed to reflect its former traditional form and detailing, reinstating a feature that once

contributed to the building's historic character. In addition, a small, discreet extension is proposed on the northern side elevation to subtly round off the existing residential kitchen and dining area, ensuring this element integrates seamlessly with the host building. A new like-for-like window is also proposed at first floor level on the southern side elevation of the retained residential part of the property, designed to match the proportions, materials and detailing of the existing windows.

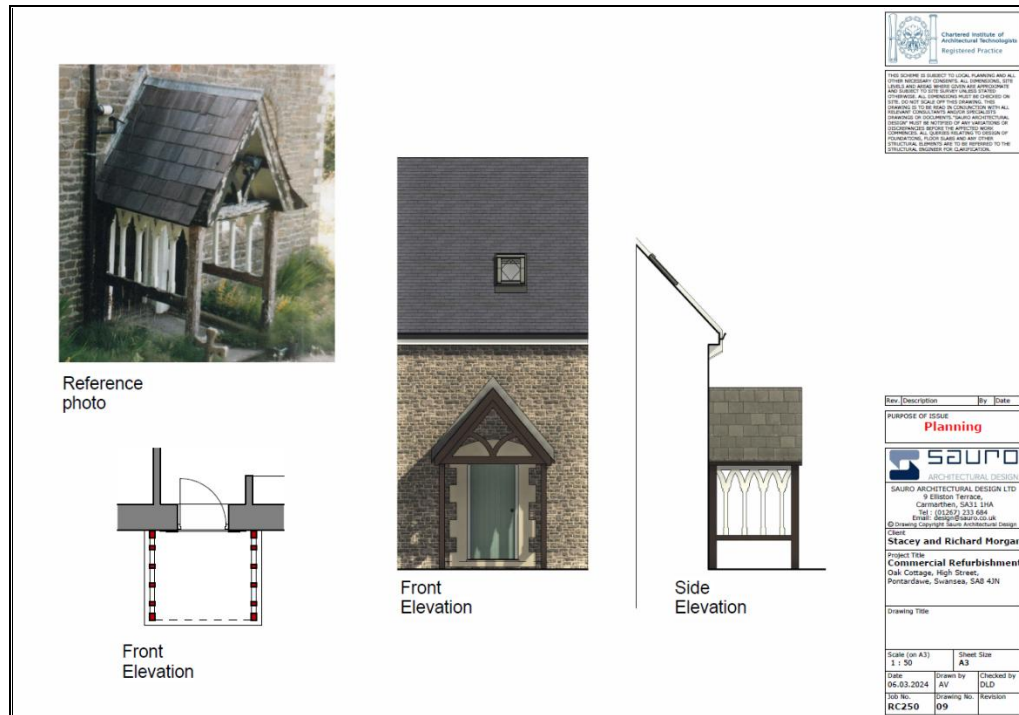
- 3.7 In addition, the existing skylight serving the first-floor bathroom will be replaced with a new conservation-style roof window. This will provide improved natural light and ventilation while ensuring that the external appearance remains sympathetic to the building's historic character
- 3.8 To further enhance the site's ecological value, the scheme also includes the installation of one bat box and one bird box on the suitable external elevations, providing biodiversity enhancements in line with policy expectations. Collectively, these alterations are minimal yet sympathetic, ensuring the external appearance, heritage significance and ecological value of Oak Cottage are preserved and enhanced.
- 3.9 The Existing Elevations are illustrated in Plan C below, while the Proposed Elevations and Porch Details are shown in Plans D and E.



Plan C – Existing Elevations



Plan D – Proposed Elevations



Plan E – Proposed Porch Details

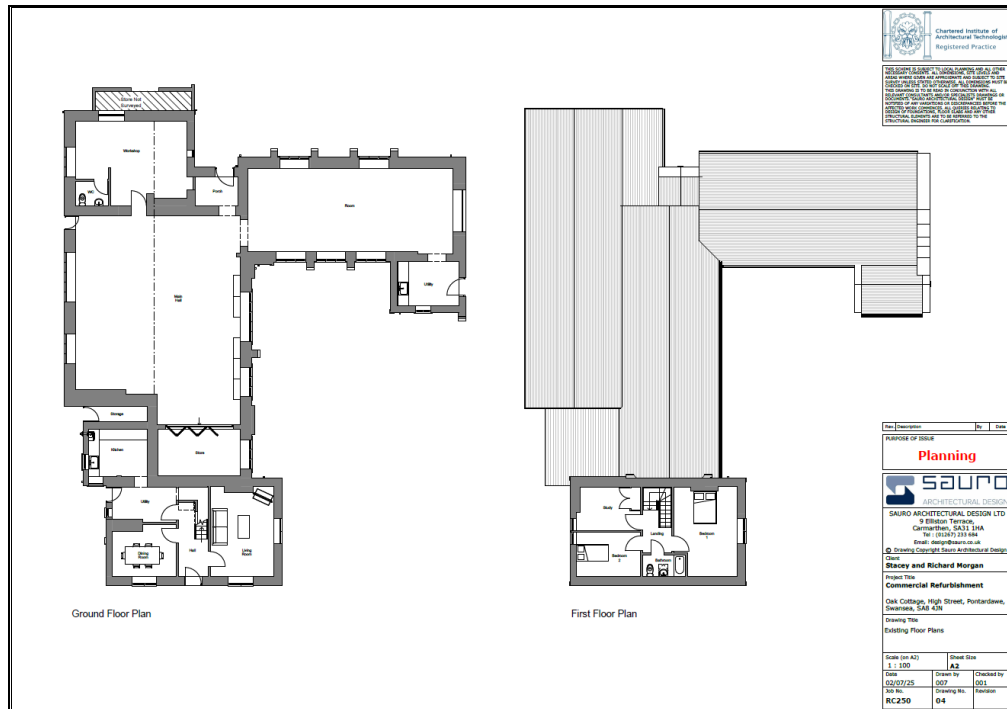
Conservation-led Rationale

- 3.10 The HIA confirms that all proposed external works are modest, reversible and confined to areas of lower historic sensitivity. The reinstatement of the historic porch restores a lost architectural feature that contributes positively to the building's Gothic-influenced composition. The small northern extension is subservient in scale, uses matching materials, and does not affect principal elevations or roof form. Lime repointing replaces harmful cementitious repairs, improving breathability and long-term fabric performance. These interventions collectively enhance the building's condition while preserving its architectural interest.

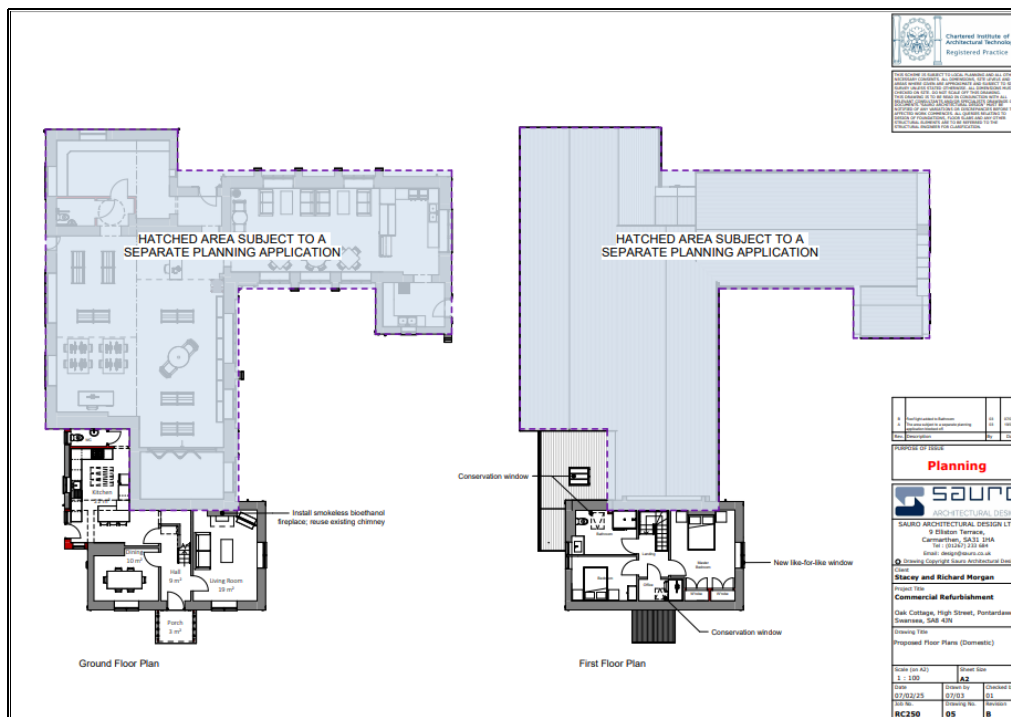
Internal Layout and Adaptations

- 3.11 Internally, the proposal has been developed with a strong focus on retaining the building's historic features and fabric. Original elements, including key ceiling features and walls will be preserved, maintaining the building's special architectural interest.

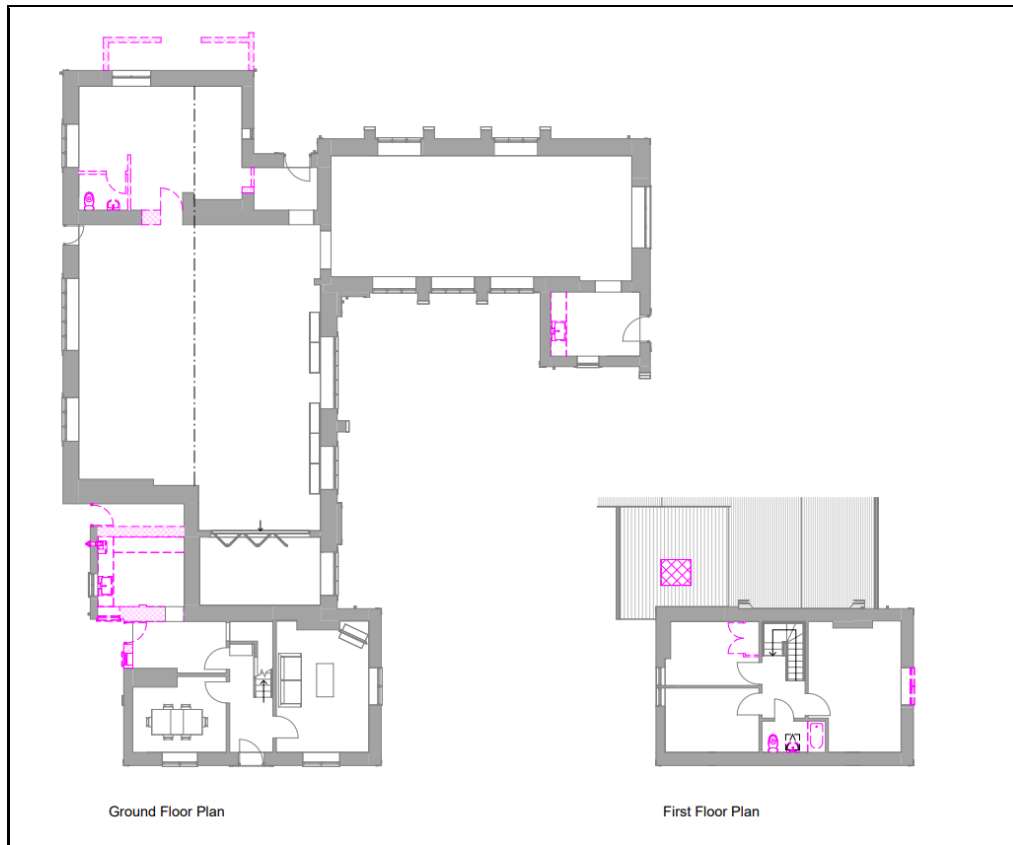
- 3.12 Therefore, the proposed works to Oak Cottage have been carefully designed to enable its conversion while maintaining the building's character and ensuring the continued use of the residential element by the applicant's family. The existing ground floor currently accommodates a hall, dining room, utility, living room, kitchen, storage areas, store, main hall, workshop, rear porch, an additional utility room, and an unused room. The first floor, which forms part of the residential unit to be retained, currently provides two bedrooms, a study, a landing and a bathroom.
- 3.13 The residential section on the ground floor will remain largely as existing, other than the inclusion of the aforementioned modest extension to round off the existing kitchen and dining area, improving its functionality as a family space.
- 3.14 At first floor level, which will continue to be used as private residential accommodation, only very minor internal changes are proposed. The existing study will be converted into a bathroom to better serve the household, while the current bathroom will be repurposed as a small home office. All other rooms will remain unchanged, and throughout the retained residential and newly created community hub areas, care will be taken to preserve the existing historic fabric and features of the building.
- 3.15 It should be noted that a small number of internal walls will be removed where necessary to facilitate these alterations. This includes the demolition of limited sections to accommodate the minor kitchen/dining extension, and to deliver the first-floor residential alterations.
- 3.16 The Existing Floor Plans are illustrated in Plan F below, while the Proposed Floor and Demolition Plans are shown in Plans G and H.



Plan F – Existing Floor Plans



Plan G – Proposed Floor Plans



Plan H – Proposed Demolition Plans

Fabric Retention and Reversibility

- 3.17 The HIA confirms that all significant historic fabric – including original joinery, ceilings, walls, and roof structure – will be retained. Internal changes are limited to non-historic partitions required to improve domestic functionality. All new works are designed to be reversible where possible and clearly legible as contemporary interventions, ensuring the building's special interest remains unharmed.

Parking, Access, and Sustainability

- 3.18 The location of Oak Cottage within the town centre means that the site is highly accessible by foot and public transport, further reducing reliance on private vehicles and supporting the sustainable operation of the proposed community hub.

- 3.19 Therefore, although there is currently no onsite parking provision, there are an abundance of nearby car parks and on street parking bays that can be utilised if required, particularly the parking bay situated along the northern perimeter of the site. As such, this provides a level of parking commensurate with the site's sustainable location and use as a community hub within the Town Centre.
- 3.20 Access to the residential dwelling will continue to be taken via the existing front entrance, ensuring safe movement for residents while respecting the building's historic layout.

Drainage

- 3.21 All existing surface and foul water drainage connections will be utilised.

Heritage and Conservation Considerations

- 3.22 The proposed works have been designed to minimise impact on the listed building. Most original openings, windows, doors, and architectural features will remain unchanged, while internal adaptations are carefully planned to avoid permanent loss of significant fabric.

4.0 PLANNING POLICY

4.1 PRIMARY LEGISLATION CONSIDERATIONS

- 4.1.1 The *Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990* states under Section 16 that “*special regard shall be had to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural interest which it possesses.*”.
- 4.1.2 Welsh Government Circular 61/96 “*Planning and the Historic Environment: Historic Buildings and Conservation Areas*” informs that the purpose of listing is to ensure that a building’s special architectural or historic interest is fully recognised and that any works for the alteration or extension in any way which would affect its character as a listed building, are brought under statutory control (Paragraph 46).
- 4.1.3 Paragraph 66 identifies that consent is normally required for any works of alteration which would affect the character of a building of special architectural or historic interest.
- 4.1.4 Paragraph 68 emphasises that the listing status of a building “*should not be seen as a bar to all future change*” yet withstanding the theme of the 1990 Act, in that it places a statutory requirement on local planning authorities to have “*special regard shall be had to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural interest which it possesses.*”. Paragraph 69 then sets out that applicants must be able to justify their proposals and they will need to show why works which affect the character of a listed building are desirable or necessary. They must provide the local planning authority with full information, to enable them to assess the likely impact of their proposals on the special architectural or historic interest of the building and on its setting.
- 4.1.5 The application proposal relates to only minor physical alterations and additions to facilitate the building’s change of use, with key historic and original elements that led to its Listing being retained as part of the proposals being put forward. In addition, it

will be through the proposed conversion works that the current condition, and special interest, of the Listed Building, will be retained for further years to come.

4.1.6 The Heritage Impact Assessment demonstrates that the proposed works preserve the building's special architectural and historic interest by focusing change only in areas of low significance, retaining all principal elevations, and reinstating lost features. The conservation-led approach fully accords with the statutory requirement to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the listed building, its setting, and its features of interest.

4.1.7 With the above in mind, it is considered that the alterations retain the key remaining original features of the building, ensuring that any impact on the Listed Building in question does not result in any detriment to its character, setting or special historic interest.

4.2 NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

4.2.1 Planning Policy Wales (12th Edition) (2024) sets out the Assembly's guidelines for ensuring that the character of historic buildings is safeguarded from alterations, extensions or demolition that would compromise a building's special architectural and historic interest (Paragraph 6.1.1).

4.2.2 Technical Advice Note (TAN) 24: "The Historic Environment" (May 2017). Paragraph 5.15 states that *"When determining a listed building consent application, the local planning authority should consider the following issues:*

- *The importance and grade of the building and its intrinsic architectural or historic interest.*
- *The physical features of the building which justify its listing and contribute to its significance, (for example its form and layout, materials, construction and detail) including any features of importance such as the interior, which may have come to light after the building's inclusion on the list.*

- *The contribution of curtilage and setting to the significance of the building, as well as its contribution to its local scene.*
- *The impact of the proposed works on the significance of the building.*
- *The extent to which the proposed works would bring substantial community benefits for example, by contributing to the area's economy or the enhancement of its local environment."*

4.2.3 As detailed in Section 4.1, the application proposal has been developed in line with the relevant guidance and principles to ensure it is sympathetic to, and harmonious with, the core rationale behind the building's Listing. The majority of the building's historic fabric will be retained, with the only external changes comprise modest interventions, such as the reinstatement of the former front porch, a small kitchen/dining extension to the northern side elevation, and the installation of a like-for-like window on the southern elevation of first floor of the residential dwelling. These works are designed to be sensitive and in keeping with the building's historic character, ensuring that the overall appearance, setting and special architectural interest of the Listed Building and its contribution to the surrounding historic environment remain preserved.

4.2.4 The approach to the interior of the building follows the same sensitive rationale, with all original historic features and architectural elements being retained and safeguarded wherever possible. On this basis, the proposal aligns with the guidance and requirements of TAN 24, which emphasises the importance of conserving the special interest of historic buildings through appropriate and sympathetic reuse.

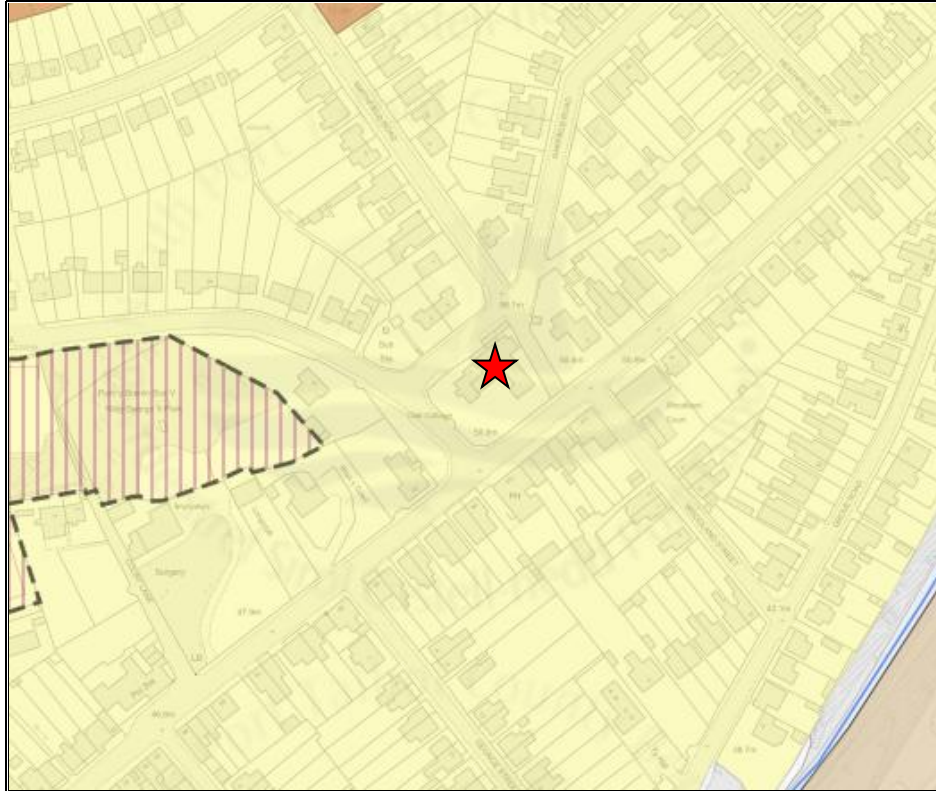
4.2.5 The HIA assesses the building against Cadw's Conservation Principles, confirming medium evidential, historical, aesthetic and communal value. The proposed works sustain these values by improving condition, removing unsympathetic modern materials, and enhancing legibility of historic fabric. The scheme therefore aligns with TAN 24's emphasis on sympathetic reuse and conservation of significance.

4.3 LOCAL PLANNING POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

4.3.1 In terms of *Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004*, the adopted development plan for the area within which the application site is positioned is the *Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council Local Development Plan (LDP)*. It is therefore the policies of this document that have been referred to in the preparation of the proposal subject of the planning application in question, including the following:

- Policy SP 6 – Development in the Valleys Strategy Area
- Policy SP 20 – Transport Network
- Policy SC 1 – Settlement Limits
- Policy EC 5 – Employment Uses in the Valleys
- Policy TR 2 – Design and Access of New Development
- Policy SP 15 – Biodiversity and Geodiversity
- Policy SP 21 – Built Environment and Historic Heritage
- Policy BE 1 – Design
- Policy BE 2 – Buildings of Local Importance

4.3.2 In terms of the LDPs Proposals Map, as can be seen from the extract below, and under the Settlement Hierarchy, the property (red star) lies within the defined Settlement Limits of the Town Centre of Pontardawe, with Towns described in the LDP as being *“regionally important settlements providing the widest and most diverse range of functions. Located on the strategic road network, they are fully accessible by a range of transport options”*.



Plan I – Extract from LDP Proposals Map

- 4.3.3 As a result of the above, the proposal seeks to retain the established external appearance and character of the building. The site is located within the defined settlement limits of Pontardawe and within its established town centre and therefore the scheme fully accords with the principles of Policy SC 1, which supports appropriate forms of development within settlement boundaries. Furthermore, by maintaining the building's active presence and contribution to the town centre streetscape, the proposal also aligns with Policy SP 21, Policy BE 1 and Policy BE 2, which collectively seek to protect and enhance the character and appearance of the built environment and ensure that development proposals respect and reinforce local distinctiveness.
- 4.3.4 The proposal seeks to retain and enhance the existing residential use at the front of Oak Cottage through modest alterations including the reinstatement of the front porch, a small kitchen/dining extension, and a like-for-like first-floor window. The approach ensures that the building continues to make a positive contribution to the town centre,

in accordance with Policy SP 21 (Built Environment and Historic Heritage), which emphasises the protection, enhancement, and sensitive adaptation of historic assets.

- 4.3.5 In line with Policy SC 1 (Settlement Limits), Oak Cottage is located well within the defined settlement boundary of Pontardawe. The scheme retains a residential use supporting the vitality of the town centre and providing a sustainable use for the building without expanding its footprint beyond the modest extension proposed.
- 4.3.6 The proposals also fully consider Policy TR 2 (Design and Access of New Development). The residential dwelling will continue to be accessed via the existing front entrance, ensuring safe and functional circulation. Internal adaptations have been designed to retain the building's key historic features, including original structural elements, while making the domestic spaces suitable for modern family life.
- 4.3.7 In terms of parking requirements, the location of Oak Cottage within the established town centre means that the site is highly accessible by foot and public transport, further reducing reliance on private vehicles and supporting the sustainable operation of the residential dwelling. This is illustrated below at Figures 1 to 4, which show the presence of walking and cycling routes in close proximity to the site, in addition to the abundance of nearby bus stops as mentioned at Section 2 of this Statement.



Figure 1 – 20 Minute Walking Radius Map



Figure 2 – 30 Minute Cycling Radius Map



- 4.3.8 The proposed domestic alterations are modest in scale and will not materially alter the established residential use of the building. The works are therefore not expected to generate any additional parking demand beyond that associated with the existing dwelling.
- 4.3.9 Therefore, the parking generated by the proposed use will be accommodated on-street, as is the case for the current permitted uses. There are no parking restrictions on the streets adjacent to the site and it is considered that there is ample spare capacity to accommodate that demand safely.
- 4.3.10 Policies BE 1 (Design) and BE 2 (Buildings of Local Importance) emphasise that alterations should respect the scale, character, and architectural quality of historic buildings. The external form and principal elevations of Oak Cottage will remain largely unchanged, with minor rear alterations including a small side extension to round off the kitchen/dining area, reinstatement of the front porch, and a new like-for-like first-floor window. Internally, some small sections of existing walls are to be removed in order to accommodate the extension, and allow for residential first-floor alterations, while original features and historic elements will be retained.
- 4.3.11 Policy SP 15 (Biodiversity and Geodiversity) requires that development protects local habitats and natural features. The proposal incorporates the continued maintenance and management of the existing amenity lawns, alongside the introduction of one bat box and one bird box to the suitable elevations, as outlined in the accompanying Green Infrastructure Statement.
- 4.3.12 Overall, the scheme aligns with these key Neath Port Talbot LDP policies by retaining and enhancing the existing residential use, preserving the building's heritage significance, and ensuring its continued contribution to the town centre. The proposal therefore demonstrates full compliance with the relevant local planning framework while delivering a sustainable, viable future for the residential dwelling at Oak Cottage.

5.0 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 The proposal represents a series of modest physical alterations to the residential dwelling at Oak Cottage, a Grade II Listed Building. While the external interventions are limited and carefully designed to retain the character of the building, their significance lies in enhancing the functionality of the family home while preserving its historic fabric.
- 5.2 Oak Cottage has a rich history as a former Curate's Cottage and National School building, and while it has been maintained as a family residence since 2017, the rear section of the property has remained underused. The proposed domestic alterations will improve the usability of the dwelling while ensuring that this historically significant part of the building continues to contribute positively to the local streetscape and heritage of Pontardawe.
- 5.3 The scheme has been carefully designed to minimise impact on the historic fabric of the building. Externally, the reinstatement of the porch, the modest kitchen/dining extension, and the like-for-like first-floor window are all sympathetic interventions that preserve the building's architectural presence. Internally, the historic key features will be largely retained, with only a small section of internal walls to be removed in order to enable the viability of the proposal.
- 5.4 The proposed domestic alterations ensure the continued stewardship of the Listed Building by enhancing its suitability as a family home. This approach not only preserves the physical integrity of the asset but also reinforces its long-established residential function.
- 5.5 The Heritage Impact Assessment prepared by Nathan Goss Conservation confirms that the proposed works preserve the building's architectural and historic interest, enhance its condition, and secure its long-term sustainable use. The alterations are confined to areas of low significance, retain all principal historic fabric, and introduce modest

improvements that reinforce the building's domestic function while respecting its heritage value.

5.6 In summary, the application proposes sensitive and modest alterations that respect the Listed Building's character, historic interest, and architectural integrity, while securing a viable and sustainable future use. Therefore, Oak Cottage will continue to make a positive contribution to the townscape, heritage, and community life of Pontardawe.

5.7 On this basis, it is respectfully requested that full planning permission and Listed Building Consent be granted for the proposed works.