

PLANNING COMMITTEE	DATE: 22/11/2021
REPORT OF THE SENIOR PLANNING AND PUBLIC PROTECTION MANAGER	

Number: 6

Application Number: C21/0399/14/CR

Date Registered: 22/06/2021

Application Type: Full

Community: Caernarfon

Ward: Menai

Proposal: Internal and external alterations to convert the building into shops and holiday unit use

Location: Former Caernarfon Conservative Club Site, 1 Market Street, Caernarfon, Gwynedd LL55 1RT

Summary of the Recommendation: TO APPROVE WITH CONDITIONS

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1. Description:

- 1.1 A listed building application to convert an existing building, which is a former social club, into a mixed use of shops on the ground floor and the creation of 6 self-contained holiday units on the upper floors. It is proposed to divide the ground floor space into one shop with a storage room, kitchen and toilet for staff. The other section would be an office, with a kitchen and toilet. It is proposed to create two new entrances for the two new units. The main entrance will continue as an entrance to the units and also a bin and recycling area on the ground floor behind the stairs.
- 1.2 On the first floor it is proposed to have access to two units (units 5 and 6) where there will be a kitchen and open living room, two bedrooms and a bathroom. There would also be a storage area on this floor. On the second floor there will be a corridor with access to units 1, 2, 3 and 4 where there will be a kitchen and living room, toilet / bathroom and then stairs leading up to the units. There will be bathrooms and bedrooms on the 3rd floor, where a new floor will have to be installed.
- 1.3 Externally and on the eastern elevation it is proposed to create a new access to the office on the ground floor. The same openings would be retained, however, double doors would be installed within the central arch. It is also proposed to install 5 new rooflights on this elevation and to restore the existing windows. It is also proposed to create a new entrance on the southern elevation to the new shop and there will be double doors in keeping with the western elevation and to restore the existing windows. The only adaptations on the rear of the building will be 3 new rooflights.
- 1.4 The proposed development site is located within the development boundaries of the town of Caernarfon, which has been designated in the Local Development Plan as an Urban Service Centre. Its last use was as a social club, however it has stood empty for some time and is deteriorating. The site is located on the High Street and is surrounded by a mix of housing, public houses, restaurants, hotels and residential dwellings in every direction. The site is within the town's historic walls that is also part of the World Heritage Site, the Conservation Area and the building is also grade II listed.
- 1.5 The application is submitted to Committee as the proposal is for 5 units or more and is linked to planning application C21/0398/14/LL.

2. Relevant Policies:

- 2.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and paragraph 2.1.2 of Planning Policy Wales emphasise that planning decisions should be made in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Planning considerations include National Planning Policy and the Local Development Plan.
- 2.2 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 places a duty on the Council to take reasonable steps in exercising its functions to meet the seven well-being goals within the Act. This report has been prepared in consideration of the Council's duty and the 'sustainable development principle', as set out in the 2015 Act. In reaching the recommendation, the Council has sought to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
- 2.3 **Anglesey and Gwynedd Joint Local Development Plan 2011-2026, adopted 31 July 2017**
- PS20 - Preserving and, where appropriate, enhancing heritage assets

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2.4 **National Policies:**

Future Wales: The National Plan 2040

Planning Policy Wales (Edition 11, 2021)

Technical Advice Note (TAN) 24: The Historic Environment

3. **Relevant Planning History:**

3.1 C09A/0108/14/LL Alterations to create shops on the ground floor and residential units on the first and second floors - approved 29-1-2010

C09A/0109/14/CR Alterations to create shops on the ground floor and residential units on the first and second floors - approved 15-3-2010

C16/0184/14/CR Building renovation work to include internal work and create a new floor, external work to include the installation of new rooflights, re-open and create new openings on the gable and rear of the building and installation of new double-glazing units - The application was withdrawn.

4. **Consultations:**

Community/Town Council: There is no need for more holiday homes in this part of the town. We need places for people to live. Object on the grounds that the holiday element would be a type of over development in the area. Also, there is a lack of parking space in the streets opposite and an insufficient attempt has been made in the application to mitigate the impact of cars for another six units on the street.

British Archaeological Council: Not received

Ancient Monuments Society (Historic Buildings and Places): Thank you for consulting us on this application. We have reviewed the documents available on your website and the Ancient Monuments Society has no objection to the principle of repairing and converting this grade II listed former club building into a mixed-use development with retail units at ground level and holiday lets above. However, we have concerns about the lack of detail provided to support the application.

Paragraph 5.9 and 5.13 of Technical Advice Note 24: The Historic Environment (TAN 24, May 2017) and the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 require planning authorities to have special regard to the desirability of preserving listed buildings or their setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which they possess.

Whilst the AMS welcomes most elements of the proposal, such as

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the restoration of the sash windows to the first level, we find the accompanying plans and statement provide almost no details about the historic and architectural significance of the building beyond that provided in Cadw's list description. There is little discussion about the internal features – other than the cast iron pillars at ground level - and how the proposed alterations would affect the historic building fabric. This should be provided in order to make a fair assessment of the impact of the proposed works and extension.

Paragraph 5.12 of TAN 24 notes that a ' Heritage impact assessment should be proportionate both to the significance of the listed building, and to the degree of change proposed, and the statement should provide enough information to allow the local planning authority to judge significance and impact when considering applications for listed building consent.'

Further detail about the new ground floor doors and windows is also needed (e.g. materials), though this can be managed by a condition.

I would be grateful if the AMS could be informed of the outcome when this becomes available.

The Twentieth Century Society:

Not received

The Georgian Group:

Not received

The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings:

Not received

The Victorian Society:

We broadly agree with the AMS about this scheme. In principle, the return of this prominent building to use is very positive, and the proposed division into retail on the ground floor and accommodation on the upper floors seems reasonable — it anyway reflects a historic division of the building. The proposals to restore the existing windows where possible, and replicate them where unsalvageable or missing, is also positive.

However, as the AMS notes in its letter of advice, the application contains very little assessment of the significance of the building, especially with respect to the interiors. Many such clubs were thoroughly modernised in the mid-C20, and often little of historic or aesthetic significance remains — is that the case here? What was the historic plan-form like? Currently the spaces on the upper floors of the building are mostly open: is this a part of their historic character? Does it reflect their historic function? If so, the relatively intense

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subdivision will cause some harm to significance by obscuring the historic volumes. What is the current roof structure? Is it original? Is it expressed on the second floor, or is it hidden? If it is expressed as part of the historic treatment of the large second floor space then, again, the inserted floor will cause some harm to significance.

No sections are provided, so it is hard to know firstly how this inserted floor will be constructed, and secondly how it will interact with the existing second-floor windows. With respect to the former, it will be important to know how the proposed floor is supposed to relate to the current roof structure — if, e.g., the current roof structure will have to take increased loadings, or if it will have to be altered to provide adequate headroom to the bedrooms. If the roof structure is historic, and has to be heavily altered or replaced, then this will cause harm to the significance of the building. With respect to the latter, the documents suggest that the proposed new floor will cut across the level of these windows, and either that it will be extended up to their inner face, cutting off the topmost panes, or that the ceiling will be slanted upwards at the windows, allowing the full height of the windows to light the second floor. There is nothing to suggest which of these options has been selected. Neither is ideal, but the second is preferable — either way, the proposals should be clarified.

Lastly, the treatment of the ground floor: from images available online it looks like the timber verticals of the inserted windows are an integral part of their frames. They therefore cannot, as the application suggests, simply be removed. What is proposed is in fact the wholesale replacement of the ground floor windows. Given that the ground floor was historically open, the replacement of heavy wooden-framed windows with something more permeable might be seen as an enhancement. What is proposed, however, is the minimum possible intervention, and it feels like an opportunity missed. The inserted walls under the inserted windows are to remain, so the historic open character will not be meaningfully restored; the conversion of two of these arches to full length glass doors will only dilute the consistency of the existing treatment and thus harm the character of the building further.

I note that the list description states that these openings were originally secured with iron gates, ‘one of which is retained inside the building’. Is this still the case? If so, what will happen to it? The existing ground floor window frames were clearly designed to mimic in some way a form of historic railing. If an example of the historic precedent still exists then the applicants could be encouraged to take it as a cue for a revised design.

All of this is to say that the current application does not provide enough information to allow a meaningful assessment of the harm to significance that might be caused by the proposals. The Victorian

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Society strongly advises your authority to withhold consent until more information is provided.

Senior Conservation Officer: No consultation - The Conservation Unit dealt with this application, and therefore the Conversation Unit's professional opinion has been included in the report and is therefore not reported separately.

Public Consultation: A notice was posted on site and in the press, and nearby residents were informed. The advertising period ended and no correspondence was received in relation to the application.

5. Assessment of the material planning considerations:

The impact of the development on the setting and character of the Listed Building

5.1 Paragraph 5.13 of Technical Advice Note (TAN) 24: The Historic Environment, states that Local Planning Authorities should consider the following matters:

- 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, 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

5.2 The proposal involves the conversion of the former club into 6 holiday units, located within the town centre that is within the conservation area and the Heritage Site, and is also a listed building. It is proposed to divide the ground floor space into one shop with a storage room, kitchen and toilet for staff. The other section would be an office, with a kitchen and toilet. It is proposed to create two new entrances for the two new units. The main entrance will continue as an entrance to the units and also a bin and recycling area on the ground floor behind the stairs. The proposal does not involve any significant alterations to the building externally, apart from new doors and the new rooflights. The alterations to the building are work that will improve the appearance of the building which has been in a poor condition for some time and has significantly deteriorated.

5.3 The property has been empty for some time and is deteriorating, with large holes in the roof where water has been leaking into the building. This has caused significant damage to the building, and birds have also used the floors of the building for years. There are now no noteworthy features remaining in the building, many of the features disappeared during its use as a social club, and the building can therefore be divided into new units fairly easily without having a detrimental impact on its character.

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- 5.4 On the first floor it is proposed to have access to two units (units 5 and 6) where there will be a kitchen and open living room, two bedrooms and a bathroom. There will also be a storage area on this floor. On the second floor there will be a corridor with access to units 1, 2, 3 and 4 where there will be a kitchen and living room, toilet / bathroom and stairs leading up to the units. There would be bathrooms and bedrooms on the 3rd floor, where a new floor will have to be installed. It is proposed to use the existing vents on the building's roof to enable vents to be installed through the building from the kitchens and bathrooms.
- 5.5 Externally and on the eastern elevation it is proposed to create a new access to the office on the ground floor. The same openings will be retained, however, double doors will be installed within the central arch, and these will be glass doors. It is also proposed to install 5 new rooflights on this elevation and to restore the existing windows. It is also proposed to create a new entrance on the southern elevation to the new shop and there will be double doors in keeping with the western elevation and to restore the existing windows. The only adaptations on the rear of the building will be 3 new rooflights. It is not believed that these adaptations are likely to negatively impair the character of the building as it would ensure its use once more, and the two new openings will not lead to the loss of any historic fabric. However it is intended to restore the existing windows where possible, and install secondary glazing within the building that will ensure that the windows and historic fabric of the buildings are retained, which is to be welcomed and also meet the policy requirements of policy PS 20 of the LDP.
- 5.6 Since no original features remain within the building, there is not much historical fabric to lose by converting the building, apart from the windows as noted above. The Ancient Monuments Society and the Victorian Group reflect this in their observations, with a lack of detail within the application. However, since the building has seen so many changes over time, no features remain. The Victorian Group have also stated concern regarding how the new floor and the second floor would have an impact on the existing windows, as the floor would go across the windows. The plans have changed following the observations and discussions and the floor would have a slope off the window, in order to reduce the visual impact. It will also be possible to place a screen or film on the windows that would be a dark colour so as to prevent seeing the floor. It is felt that this is fair, however, bearing in mind also the size and significant height of the building it is not believed that this would be very obvious from street level.
- 5.7 It is felt that the work would be a significant improvement by restoring a building that is very striking within the streetscape and also within the town's walls. In this case it is considered that the work would be a significant improvement and would meet with the requirements of the policies noted above.

6. Conclusions:

- 6.1 In accordance with the above assessment, it is not believed that any matter raised is contrary to the requirements of the relevant policies and it is considered that the proposal meets with the requirements of the policies noted above and is acceptable for approval.

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7. Recommendation:

7.1 To approve – conditions

- 1 - The development to which this permission relates shall be commenced not later than FIVE years from the date of this permission.
- 2 - The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in strict conformity with the details shown on the plan(s) numbered D794.06P2, D794.07P2, D794.08P2, D794.09P2, D794.10P2, D794.11P2, D794.12P2, D794.13P2, D794.14P2, D794.15P2, D794.16P2, D794.17P1, D794.18P1, D794.19P1 and D794.20P1 submitted to the Local Planning Authority, and contained in the form of application and in any other documents accompanying such application unless condition(s) to amend them is/are included on this planning decision notice.
- 3 - Any replacement windows installed on the original building shall be of timber construction, painted and single glazed, of a style and type to match the existing windows. The original glass should be reused where possible.
- 4 - Full details of any secondary glazing must be submitted and approved by the Local Planning Authority in writing before they are installed.
- 5 - The rooflights shall be of a conservation type and flush with the roof.
- 6 - All rainwater goods shall be of cast metal type.