

PLANNING COMMITTEE	DATE: 01/07/2019
PLANNING AND PUBLIC PROTECTION SERVICE SENIOR MANAGER'S REPORT	PWLLHELI

Number: 5

Application Number: C19/0323/11/LL

Date Registered: 28/03/2019

Application Type: Full - Planning

Community: Bangor

Ward: Deiniol

Proposal: Alterations to the first and second floors to create eight self-contained living units, along with changes to the front elevation of the building.

Location: 233-235, High Street, Bangor, Gwynedd, LL571PA

Summary of the Recommendation: TO APPROVE WITH CONDITIONS

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1. Description:

- 1.1 This is a full application to make alterations to the first and second floors to provide eight self-contained living units (including two affordable units), along with changes to the front elevation of the building. Internally, the proposal will entail the provision of eight one-bedroom units which also contain a kitchen, a living room and an en-suite room. The units will vary in terms of floor area from 24m² to 25.8m², and will be linked to the ground floor by the existing internal staircase. There will be no increase in the current floor area of the building, which is 413m², and the ground floor will continue to be a shop with Class A1 use. Externally, the proposal will include making minor changes to the building's front and side windows by including emergency escape windows in the existing openings.
- 1.2 A bin storage area and recycling point for the units and the existing shop will be located to the rear of the building, with access from Waterloo Street. The site is located within the development boundary, on the High Street in the city centre and within the conservation area and the defined town centre and primary retail area as noted in the LDP. It is a 3-storey building of substantial size, and is of classic modern design. Deiniol Shopping Centre and the associated car park are located to the north of the site; the High Street, with retail buildings and residential buildings farther along, is located to the east of the site; Waterloo Street, with retail buildings farther along, is located to the south of the site; and retail buildings with the cathedral farther along are located to the west.
- 1.3 As part of the application, a Design and Access Statement, a Linguistic Statement and a Housing Mix Statement were submitted.

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 Act (Wales) 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 (LDP) adopted 31 July 2017:-**
- Policy PS1 - the Welsh Language and Culture.
- Policy ISA1 - infrastructure provision.
- Policy PS 4 - sustainable transport, development and accessibility
- Policy TRA2 – parking standards.

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Policy PS5 - sustainable development.

Policy PCYFF1 – development boundaries.

Policy PCYFF2 – development criteria.

Policy PCYFF3 – design and place shaping.

Policy PS15 - town centre and retail developments

Policy MAN1 - proposed developments in town centres

Policy MAN 2 - primary retail areas

Policy PS16 - housing provision.

Policy PS17 - settlement strategy.

Policy TAI1 - housing in the sub-regional centre and the urban service centres

Policy TAI8 - housing mix.

Policy TAI9 - sub-dividing existing property to self-contained flats and Houses in Multiple Occupation

Policy PS18 - affordable housing

Policy TAI15 - threshold of affordable housing and their distribution.

Policy PS 20 - preserving and where appropriate enhancing heritage assets.

Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG): Housing Mix.

SPG: Affordable Housing.

SPG: Planning for sustainable building

SPG: Planning and the Welsh Language.

2.4 **National Policies:**

Planning Policy Wales, Edition 10, (2018).
 Technical Advice Note (TAN) 12 Design (2016).

TAN 18 – Transport (2007)

TAN 22 - Planning for sustainable buildings (2010)

3. **Relevant Planning History:**

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3.1 There is no relevant planning history to this particular site.

4. Consultations:

Community/Town Council:	No objection.
Transportation Unit:	No objection as the site is in a central location within the city and is within reasonable distance of local facilities.
Natural Resources Wales:	No observations.
Welsh Water:	No objection, but a condition regarding the disposal of surface water from the site. In this case, such a condition is irrelevant as the proposal does not include the creation of new impermeable surfaces within the site.
Public Protection Unit:	No objection to the storage and recycling area.
Housing Strategy Unit:	According to the figures of the Council's Housing Options Team, it appears that there are 940 on the waiting list for one-bedroom flats in Bangor, and that 63% of the local population are priced out of the housing market in this area. Based on the information submitted with the application it seems that the proposal partly addresses the need for affordable one-bedroom units in Bangor, and it is expected that 20% of the units will be affordable.
The Welsh Language Unit:	The following information was submitted:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The size of the development means that it is unlikely to lead to a significant increase in the number of residents moving into the ward. • It is also acknowledged that there is unlikely to be an impact on schools as it is an unsuitable development for families. • Although the development could attract non-Welsh speaking students to live in the units, there is no robust evidence, however, to suggest that the language would be negatively affected should the application be approved, and it is believed that the impact of this development on the language would be neutral. • In order to promote the language, advice can be sought from Hunaniaith (Gwynedd Language

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Initiative), Menter Iaith Bangor or the Welsh in Business Officer.

Public Consultation: A notice was posted on the site and nearby residents were notified. The notification period has already ended but no objections were received from the public to the proposal following the statutory advertisement period.

5. Assessment of the material planning considerations:

The principle of the development

- 5.1 As referred to above, the site is located within the development boundary of Bangor sub-regional centre and the application conforms to the requirements of Policy PCYFF1 of the LDP. Policy TAI9 permits the sub-division of existing properties into self-contained flats provided they conform to the relevant criteria:-
- Criterion 1 - the property should be suitable to be sub-divided for the type and number of units proposed without having to make substantial alterations and extensions - there is no proposal to extend the substantially sized existing building and the only changes to the external appearance of the building will be the creation of escape windows within the window frames themselves.
 - Criterion 3 - ensure that the proposal will not have a detrimental impact on the amenities of nearby residents - although residential dwellings and commercial properties are located around the application site, it is not believed that the proposal would have an unacceptable impact on the residential amenities or general amenities (on the grounds of overlooking and noise nuisance), considering the central location of the site within a busy and established retail area. It is also noted that no response was received from the public to the application following the statutory notification period.
 - Criterion 4 - the proposal should not exacerbate existing parking problems in the local area - considering the central location of the site in the city and its proximity to local facilities such as car parks and public transport, it is not anticipated that the proposal would contribute towards parking problems within the local area.
- 5.2 Policy TAI15 states that every development is required to achieve an appropriate mix based on the tenure, type and size of affordable housing, which is reiterated by Policy TAI8 along with the SPG: Housing Mix. To this end, it is believed that the provision of two affordable units on the basis of relevant weekly social rent (i.e., a figure which reflects the average price of £80.24 for social rent in Wales, and which is confirmed in the applicant's Housing Mix Statement) is acceptable, and it is believed that the provision of eight one-bedroom units is also acceptable considering that it would help to address the acknowledged significant need for this type of accommodation within the City.
- 5.3 The Housing Mix Statement submitted by the applicant states that there is a lack of provision with regard to one-bedroom units (studio flats) for two in Bangor. 13% of

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the current housing stock in Gwynedd is one-bedroom social rent units, but the need for this type of unit within the County is far greater (with the figure currently at 26%). The information received from the Housing Strategy Unit confirms a lack of provision with regard to this type of accommodation, stating that there are 940 applicants on the Council's Housing Options Team register who specifically wish to obtain one-bedroom units in the Bangor area; and the Housing Strategy Unit has confirmed that approving this application would go some way toward responding to the demand for social housing of this kind.

- 5.4 Considering the above assessment and subject to the proposal's compliance with the relevant policies within this assessment, it is considered that this application is acceptable in principle.

Visual amenities

- 5.5 The alterations to the external elevations of this striking three-storey building are minimal, undertaking changes only to the design of some front and side windows on the first and second floors in order to create emergency exits. To this end, it is not believed that the proposal significantly affects the visual amenities of this part of the streetscape, or that it undermines the area's designation as a conservation area. Ensuring suitable use will be a way of securing the building's use and long-term condition. It is considered that the proposal is acceptable based on the requirements of Policies PCYFF2, PCYFF3 and PS20 of the LDP.

General and residential amenities

- 5.6 Policy PCYFF2 of the LDP states that proposals should be refused if they have a significant detrimental impact on the health, safety or amenities of the occupants of local property, land uses, or other property due to an increase in activities, disturbance, noise etc. In terms of noise nuisance, it is believed that residential use of two floors above the existing shop would not have a significant impact on the general amenities of nearby residents, considering the scale and density of the proposal itself along with the fact that it is located within a busy retail area which already accommodates popular functions such as public houses and restaurants.
- 5.7 It is not believed that the proposal would exacerbate the current situation substantially in terms of overlooking and loss of privacy, particularly considering the location and layout of the existing windows on the building's exterior elevations. No new opening/window would be created, and the existing windows look out towards the Deiniol Shopping Centre car park at the rear of the building and towards retail buildings to the south. It must also be considered that community and passive overlooking already exists between the various uses in the catchment area of the application site and that approving this proposal would not exacerbate this situation to such an extent that the application would have to be refused on the grounds of its detrimental impact on residential amenities. To this end, it is believed that the proposal complies with the requirements of Policy PCYFF2 and TAI9 of the LDP.

Transport and access matters

- 5.8 The site/building is located centrally within the city and consequently, there are no parking facilities within the curtilage of the site itself and this situation is reflected at other sites within the city. The residential units will be very close to local facilities, including car parks and public transport; therefore, the Transportation Unit does not

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object to the application as submitted. It is believed that the proposal is acceptable on the grounds of the requirements of Policies ISA1 and TRA2 of the LDP.

Affordable housing matters

- 5.9 Policy TAI 15 of the LDP seeks to ensure an appropriate provision of affordable housing in the Plan area and the threshold for affordable housing in Bangor is 20%. As the proposal includes providing eight residential units, the figure of 20% means that two units would need to be affordable. However, should it be impossible for two of the units to be affordable, in accordance with the policy, consideration would need to be given to a pro-rata contribution. The applicant has confirmed within the Housing Mix Statement document submitted with the application that the proposal includes two affordable units with their rent based on the current national social rent level of £80.24 for one-bedroom units.
- 5.10 Taking into account the location, size and type of units proposed, it seems very likely that they will all be affordable anyhow. Despite this, the applicant has confirmed a willingness to do this, and notes that the two affordable units will be provided formally and that the rent will be based on social rent. This can be secured by attaching a suitable condition to the planning permission.

Language and Community Matters

- 5.11 As the proposal will lead to more units than the indicative housing provision and in accordance with Policies PS1 and PS5 of the LDP, the applicant has submitted a Language and Community Statement to support the planning application on the grounds of protecting, supporting and promoting the Welsh language. The Statement comes to the following conclusions:-
- The development would not have a negative effect on the linguistic or the social character of this part of Bangor (Deiniol Ward), and the development would address current/future local needs in terms of affordable housing within the city.
 - Although there has been a decrease in the number of people within the ward who are able to speak Welsh, it must be remembered that Bangor is a city of a transient nature, and that the two affordable units would meet the significant need for this type of accommodation within the city. It is hoped that approving this application would make a small contribution towards reversing this decline.
- 5.12 As noted above, the Welsh Language Unit has concluded, in response to the statutory consultation process, that the size of the development means that it is unlikely to lead to a significant increase in the number of residents moving into the ward. It is also acknowledged that there is unlikely to be an impact on schools as it is an unsuitable development for families. Although the development could attract non-Welsh speaking students to live in the flats, there is no firm evidence, however, to suggest that the language would be negatively affected should the application be approved, and it is believed that the impact of this development on the language would be neutral.
- 5.13 In light of the above assessment, it is believed that this development is unlikely to have a substantial impact on the number of Welsh speakers in the area, or on opportunities for the local population to speak Welsh; that the risk that the development itself would have a significant and substantial impact on the linguistic character and balance in the

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community is low; and that the development is, therefore, acceptable based on the requirements of Policies PS1 and PS5 of the LDP.

Educational matters

- 5.14 The relevant policy within the context of educational contributions for residential developments is Policy ISA1 of the LDP. The SPG: Housing developments and Educational provision, is also relevant when discussing this application. Based on the content of the SPG and considering that the proposal only includes the provision of one-bedroom units, the applicant will not in this case be expected to contribute toward the cost of providing educational facilities as the SPG considers that children and young people (4-18 years of age) will not normally reside in units of this size.

6. Conclusions:

- 6.1 Having considered this assessment and all the relevant matters including the local and national policies and guidance, as well as all the observations received, it is believed that this proposal is acceptable and satisfies the requirements of the relevant policies as noted above.

7. Recommendation:

- 7.1 To approve in accordance with the following conditions:-
1. Five years.
 2. In accordance with the plans.
 3. Ensure that two of the units are affordable by submitting an affordable housing scheme.