

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

IN SUPPORT OF PLANNING APPLICATION

FOR

PROPOSED CONVERSION OF BUILDING
TO PROVIDE 14NR OPEN MARKET RESIDENTIAL APARTMENTS

AT

MARKET HALL, BLAENAU FFESTIONIOG



BY



MARCH 2020

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SECTION 1 – INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The applicant initially submitted a planning application (submitted 12th February 2019) for the conversion of the Market Hall building to provide supported living accommodation in partnership with Myspace Housing Association, however although the application was supported and recommended for approval by the local authority, many within the local community raised concerns with regards to the potential impact of such a development on the local community with the main concerns being that the supported living aspect of the development would attract ‘outsiders’ to the area which could worsen the existing anti-social behaviour issues within the Community.
- 1.2 The applicant having taken regard of the concerns raised by the local community has appointed Cynan Consulting Limited to submit an amended application for the conversion of the existing Market Hall building to provide 14nr self-contained open market apartments in lieu of managed rented accommodation which the applicant hopes will be received favourably by the local community and will provide high quality open market accommodation within the area.
- 1.3 Having reviewed and considered the concerns raised with regards to the proposed housing mix, the applicant has chosen to submit the application based on the mixed 1 and 2 bedroom accommodation in lieu of the exclusively 1 bedroom apartment development initially submitted in 2019; which will provide an improved offering to local home buyers whilst also offering a mixed range of accommodation to suit an increased demographic.
- 1.4 This Design and Access Statement should be read in conjunction with the plans and drawings which form this application and includes:
- Site Location Plan
 - Proposed Ground Floor Plan
 - Proposed First Floor Plan
 - Proposed Elevations

2.0 SECTION 2 – PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

2.1 SITE LOCATION

2.1.1 The application site lies within the settlement of Blaenau Ffestiniog. The Market Hall building is located within the North West of the town off the high street and forms a substantial two storey stone building which has fallen out of use.

Figure 1 – Location within settlement



2.1.2 The Market Hall building lies adjacent to the Market Place off the High Street which serves a terrace of 3nr properties including the Market Hall and public car park. Although the Market Hall does not include any lands which could form parking provision, it has been confirmed by the highways department that the development could utilise the existing public parking provision on land immediately to the North of the building which includes approximately 6nr spaces whilst land immediately to the West of the Market Hall provides approximately 20nr parking spaces. The applicant therefore proposes to utilise the existing parking provision surrounding the building for residents of the proposed Market Hall development, however all spaces would remain available to the public at all times.

Figure 2 – Site Plan



2.1.3 The site is located next to a small terrace of residential properties and lies within an area which is made up of a mix of residential and commercial properties along the high street. The High Street predominantly consists of shops, offices, public houses and restaurants which ensures that the proposed residential development will benefit from nearby amenities. The site is within a short walk to the town centre which lies approximately 400m to the East.

Figure 3 – View from High Street



2.1.4 The site adjoins a railway line to the South with a predominantly residential area beyond which is directly linked to the rear of the Market Hall via pedestrian footbridge.

Figure 4 – View of Train Line and Bridge



2.1.5 The Market Hall building is located within the settlement and development boundary of the town and is not subject to any special designations such as listed building. It should be noted however that the Market Hall has been subject to a recent site visit by CADW following a call by a member/s of the public that the building to be considered for listing, however no correspondence has been received to date and is therefore considered that the building is not under consideration and will not become listed, however should this change, the applicant is prepared to submit the required applications.

Figure 5 – Joint Local Development Plan Map



2.2 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 2.2.1 This application seeks full planning permission for the conversion the Market Hall, Blaenau Ffestiniog to provide a 2-storey residential building comprising of 14nr apartments (8nr 1 bedroom apartments, 6nr 2 bedroom apartments) with ancillary internal bin store and cycle store).
- 2.2.2 The proposed development would require minimal alteration to the fabric of the building with no demolitions or extensions required to accommodate the proposed residential development. External alterations would be minimal and would be limited to the addition of 9nr new window openings and relocation of 2nr doors. All alterations to the external facades of the building will include the sourcing of matching stone and slate materials to maintain the character of the building.
- 2.2.3 As previously stated, it is proposed to utilise the existing public parking provision for discretionary use by residents which will also be available to the general public.
- 2.2.5 All 14nr apartments will provide high quality and efficient homes for residents. As per the submitted design drawings, the proposed residential development can adequately be accommodated within the existing building whilst respecting the character of the building.

3.0 SECTION 3 – DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

3.1.1 Design and Access Statements (DAS) were introduced to help ensure that both design quality and inclusive access are given sufficient consideration as part of the planning process and should demonstrate and clearly communicate the logical design process. The requirements of a DAS reflect the objectives of good design and should include the following considerations:

- Access;
- Character (including amount, layout, scale, appearance and landscaping);
- Community Safety;
- Environmental Sustainability; and
- Movement to, from and within the development.

3.2 ACCESS

3.2.1 It is proposed that vehicular access will be provided via the existing highway access to the Market Place from the High Street which accommodates existing residential properties neighbouring the Market Hall. Parking will be accommodated within the existing public parking spaces in the immediate area surrounding the Market Hall. The Welsh Government and local authority highways department have previously confirmed that the proposed arrangements are adequate and have raised no objections.

3.2.2 A secure cycle store will be provided internally for residents which will provide secure and dry storage and with the proposed development being located close to local amenities and the town centre it is considered that the facilities will help improve the uptake of walking and cycling ensuring reduced vehicle movements which will add to the sustainability of the development.

3.2.3 Due to the existing streetscape and topography of the site and surrounding area it is considered that the proposed development is fully accessible for all including those with physical impairments and disabilities. The site location adjacent to the high street ensures access to public transport and amenities.

3.3 CHARACTER

3.3.1 The proposed residential use of the Market Hall is consistent with the existing land uses within the area. Whilst there is a mix of commercial and residential uses within the vicinity, the commercial uses are predominantly located on the High Street which has a more commercial character. The Market Hall is located just off the high street and neighbours an existing residential terrace and relates closely with the residential area to the South which is linked by a pedestrian footbridge over the existing railway line which provides residents to the South with a link to the amenities located on the High Street.

3.3.2 The existing building is not listed, however it is noted that the building does contribute towards the character of the area and forms part of the history of the town. The careful and sympathetic design of the proposed residential development ensures that the character of the building is retained with minimal alterations to the external facades of the building whilst the open plan nature internally lends itself to the proposed development with little alterations required to the internal fabric of the building to accommodate the proposed residential development.

3.3.3 The redevelopment of the existing Market Hall building which has remained empty for many years will ensure that the building becomes viable and is utilised which will ensure that the Character of the building and the area is maintained ensuring its long term future.

3.3.4 The proposed residential development will also have a positive impact on the housing mix of dwellings and building types in the locality and meeting all relevant and applicable policy and design criteria in the process.

3.3.5 By making use of an existing empty building the development will reduce the need for new build developments within the locality ensuring that attractive views, vistas and the general character of the area is conserved, in terms of its surroundings and wider context.

3.4 COMMUNITY SAFETY

3.4.1 The redevelopment of an empty building within the town will ensure that the structure will be maintained and will avoid the building falling into disrepair which over time can create wider issues within the community and create a draw for anti-social behaviour.

3.4.2 The redevelopment of the Market Hall building will restore the cul-de-sac once again to a fully active part of the town and community instead of a problematic area which has historically been used for dumping vehicles and anti-social behaviour especially on the car park to the West of the building.

3.4.3 The cycle and bin storage which has been integrated internally within the design will ensure that residents will have secure storage whilst also ensuring that waste bins etc. will not be left out along public footpaths or near vehicles within the adjacent car park.

3.5 ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

3.5.1 The proposals seek to achieve the most efficient use and protection of natural resources using modern building materials and solutions. The apartments will also make use of energy and water efficient fittings. The proposal will represent a quality and sustainable development which will have a positive social, economic and environmental impact.

3.5.2 The proposed method for the disposal of foul drainage will be via mains sewer. No other environmental issues or impacts are envisaged as the site is not within an area identified as being at risk of flooding.

3.6 MOVEMENT TO, FROM AND WITHIN THE DEVELOPMENT

- 3.6.1 It is proposed that vehicular access will be provided via the existing highway access to the Market Place from the High Street which accommodates existing residential properties neighbouring the Market Hall. Parking will be accommodated within the existing public parking spaces in the immediate area surrounding the Market Hall. The Welsh Government and local authority highways department have previously confirmed that the proposed arrangements are adequate and have raised no objections.
- 3.6.2 A secure cycle store will be provided internally for residents which will provide secure and dry storage and with the proposed development being located close to local amenities and the town centre it is considered that the facilities will help improve the uptake of walking and cycling ensuring reduced vehicle movements which will add to the sustainability of the development.
- 3.6.3 Due to the existing streetscape and topography of the site and surrounding area it is considered that the proposed development is fully accessible for all including those with physical impairments and disabilities. The site location adjacent to the high street ensures access to public transport and amenities.

4.0 SECTION 4 – PLANNING HISTORY

4.1 The Market Hall building has been subject to limited planning history which is summarised below:

Figure 6 – Planning Timeline

Dates	Events
September 2008	Planning permission was granted (ref C08M/0077/03/R4) for the change of use of the site from council depot to use as a multi-purpose arts, education and Community Centre (including part demolition and the erection of extensions). The permission was not implemented, and the building remained vacant.
May 2018	Pre-application advice received from the local planning authority which was supportive of proposals to convert the vacant building into managed accommodation flats.
June 2019	Following submission of planning application by the applicant, the proposals were presented to the local authority planning committee who deferred the decision pending further information with regards to the need for such a concentration of managed living accommodation within the settlement.

5.0 SECTION 5 – PLANNING POLICIES

5.1 The Anglesey and Gwynedd Joint Local Development Plan (Joint LDP) was adopted on the 31st July 2017 and is therefore the statutory development plan relevant to this application.

5.2 The application site lies within the development boundary of Blaenau Ffestiniog as shown in Figure 5. The Settlement Hierarchy identifies Blaenau Ffestiniog as a 'Urban service centre' with the plan providing the following vision for the town:

'Blaenau Ffestiniog will be a good place to live, work in and visit. It will be well known for culture and art, strong community feeling and stunning landscape. The town's businesses will be maintained and supported. It will be a quality centre for visitors, using its unique characteristics, including its proximity to the Snowdonia National Park, local outdoor activity opportunities and the rich slate heritage.'

5.3 The site is located within the development boundary and lies within existing residential properties close to local amenities. The proposed development makes use of an existing vacant building which makes for sustainable development and revitalises the local area.

5.4 In terms of amenities the site is located within walking distance of the high street and the town centre with shops, services, employment opportunities and community and leisure facilities available to residents without the need for vehicle use. Easy access to public transport also ensures that the proposed residents have access to services within the town and within the wider area.

6.0 SECTION 6 – CONCLUSION

- 6.1 It is noted that the site is located within the development boundary of Blaenau Ffestiniog as noted in the Joint Local Development Plan.
- 6.2 The existing Building is not designated or protected for any use specified in the Plan.
- 6.3 The indicative level of housing supply to Blaenau Ffestiniog over the Plan period, as set out in Appendix 5 of the Joint Local Development Plan (298 units). It is therefore considered that approving the development on this site would contribute towards the local authority's housing supply goals.
- 6.4 The proposed development will provide a good housing mix which contributes to the range of housing on offer within Blaenau Ffestiniog.
- 6.5 It is considered that the mix of units offered is suitable to promote a sustainable mixed community which will appeal to a wide demographic. The provision of one- and two-bedroom apartments increases choice for smaller families, young couples or households of older people who want to move into accommodation which is less than what they already have. These types of households would find it difficult to afford and manage larger size accommodation.
- 6.6 This Design and Access Statement has been provided in support of this amended application for the conversion of the existing Market Hall building to provide 14nr self-contained open market apartments.
- 6.7 It is considered that the proposed development complies with the local authorities planning policies and represents sustainable development when considering the proposed redevelopment of an existing building in a convenient town centre location accessible by all means of transport and close to local amenities.