

**PLANNING AND RETAIL STATEMENT: FULL PLANNING APPLICATION FOR THE PROPOSED CHANGE OF USE FROM USE CLASS D1 TO USE CLASS A1 RETAIL ALONG WITH PARTIAL DEMOLITION, ALTERATIONS AND EXTENSION, VEHICULAR ACCESS AND CAR PARKING, DRAINAGE, LANDSCAPING AND ASSOCIATED WORKS AT THE FORMER NEWBRIDGE METHODIST CHURCH, BRIDGE TERRACE, NEWBRIDGE, NP11 5FH**

### Introduction

This Planning and Retail Statement relates to a Full Planning Application submitted on behalf of Buckland Dartford Ltd for the proposed change of use from Use Class D1 to Use Class A1 Retail along with partial demolition, alterations and extension, vehicular access and car parking, drainage, landscaping and associated works at the Former Newbridge Methodist Church, Bridge Street, Newbridge, NP11 5FH.

The following documents are submitted with this application:

- Application Form and Certificates;
- CIL Form;
- Plans and drawings, Inspire Design:
  - 235027-IDL-01-ZZ-DR-A-P2026-Proposed Site Layout Plan-S3-P02
  - 235027-IDL-01-01-DR-A-E2052-Existing Lower Roof Plan-S3-P01
  - 235027-IDL-01-01-DR-A-P2029-Proposed First Floor Plan-S3-P01
  - 235027-IDL-01-02-DR-A-E2057-Existing Roof Plan-S3-P02
  - 235027-IDL-01-02-DR-A-P2034-Proposed Roof Plan-S3-P01
  - 235027-IDL-01-GF-DR-A-E2051-Existing Ground Floor Plan-S3-P01
  - 235027-IDL-01-GF-DR-A-P2028-Proposed Ground Floor Plan-S3-P01
  - 235027-IDL-01-XX-DR-A-E3058-Existing Elevations 01 of 02-S3-P01
  - 235027-IDL-01-XX-DR-A-E3059-Existing Elevations 02 of 02-S3-P01
  - 235027-IDL-01-XX-DR-A-P1001-Site Location Plan-S3-P01
  - 235027-IDL-01-XX-DR-A-P3035-Proposed Elevations 01 of 02-S3-P01
  - 235027-IDL-01-XX-DR-A-P3036-Proposed Elevations 02 of 02-S3-P01
  - 235027-IDL-01-ZZ-DR-A-E2002-Existing Site Layout Plan-S3-P01
- Planning & Retail Statement, Highlight Planning;
- Green Infrastructure Statement, Highlight Planning;
- Transport Statement, Corun;
- Flood Consequences Assessment, JBA;
- Noise Impact Assessment, Hunter Acoustics.

### Application & Site Description

The site is circa 0.1ha and comprises a former Methodist Church, along with its parking area and associated curtilage. The Methodist Church is no longer in operation and is located in the centre of Newbridge, to the north of Bridge Street within close proximity of the Train Station. An informal parking area lies to the east of the site followed by the Ebbw River. A residential property known as Ty-Hir lies to the west of the site, whilst a joinery workshop building previously associated with the church lies directly to the north with a further commercial premises (pipe fabricators) further north.

The proposals comprise of the following:

- The conversion of the former church from Use Class D1 to Use Class A1 Retail providing a sales area of some 223sqm;
- Demolition of part of the building to facilitate circulation around the site;
- 14no. car parking spaces measuring 2.5m wide by 5m depth;
- A secure plant and bin store compound to the east of the building;
- Soft landscaping at the site's frontage.

## Policy Context

Policies of relevance are as follows:

- National Policy and Guidance:
  - Planning Policy Wales (Edition 11)
  - Technical Advice Note (TAN) 4: Retail and Commercial (2016)
  - TAN 11: Noise (1997);
  - TAN 12: Design (2016);
  - TAN 18: Transport (2007); and
  - TAN 23: Economic Development (2014).
- Development Plan:
  - Future Wales – the National Plan 2040;
  - Caerphilly County Borough Council LDP (2013) – policies:
    - CW2: (Amenity);
    - CW3: (Design Considerations: Highways);
    - CW8: (Protection of Community and Leisure Facilities);
    - CW15: (General Locational Constraints);
    - CW16: (Locational Constraints – Retailing).
- Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG):
  - LDP5 (Parking Standards); and
  - LDP12 (Shop Fronts and Advertisements)

## Analysis

### Principle of Development and Placemaking

The application site is a vacant brownfield site located in the Northern Connection Corridor. Policy SP5 (Settlement Boundaries) is the key policy mechanism for achieving resource efficient settlements within the LDP. The delineation of the settlement boundary defines the area within which development would normally be allowed, taking into account material planning considerations. Importantly it promotes the full and effective use of urban land and concentrates development within existing settlements. The policy also seeks to prevent coalescence and inappropriate development in the countryside. The application site falls within the defined settlement boundary for Newbridge. In policy terms re-development of the site would be consistent with Policy SP5 of the Caerphilly County Borough Local Development Plan up to 2021 – Adopted 2010 (LDP ) in that it promotes the full and effective use of urban land and serves to concentrate new development within the existing settlement.

Policy SP2 (Development Strategy in the Northern Connections Corridor (NCC) requires development proposals within the NCC to promote sustainable development. Specifically proposals in this area should be targeted to both greenfield and brownfield sites having regard to the social and economic functions of the area; reduce car borne trips by promoting more sustainable modes of travel; make the most efficient use of existing infrastructure; and protect the natural heritage from inappropriate forms of development.

Policy SP4 (Settlement Strategy) defines the settlement hierarchy for towns and villages across the county borough and identifies those areas where development would be supported and enhanced based on the specified role and function of a particular area. The Strategy seeks to concentrate new development to respond appropriately to the economic, social and environmental needs of individual settlements and thus settlement boundaries are identified accordingly to indicate the potential areas where development is likely to be permitted. Newbridge is a residential and commercial area and the application site meets the definition of previously developed land (also referred to as brownfield) as set out in Planning Policy Wales (PPW).

In settlements, brownfield land should generally be considered suitable for appropriate development where its re-use will promote sustainability principles and any constraints can be overcome. Policy SP2 also requires that new proposals reduce car borne trips by promoting sustainable modes of travel

and make the most efficient use of existing infrastructure. Chapter 4 of PPW covers the theme of active and social places. With respect to transport the planning system should enable people to access jobs and services through shorter, more efficient and sustainable journeys, by walking, cycling and public transport.

The site is within walking distance of residential properties and a number of other local facilities (e.g. school, leisure centre, rugby club) to facilitate linked trips within the local catchment area of Newbridge. The site is easily accessible by public transport with Newbridge Train Station located directly opposite the site and bus stops located on Bridge Street some 100 metres to the south-east.

Criterion D of Policy SP2 seeks to protect the natural heritage from inappropriate development. The application proposes convenience retail development on previously developed land within the settlement boundary, does not result in any loss of trees and would deliver soft landscaping as part of the proposals.

Policy CW8 (Protection of Community and Leisure Facilities) states that *“Proposals that would result in the loss of a community and/or leisure facility will not be permitted except where:*

*A A comparable replacement facility can be provided by the developer either on or off site, and within easy and convenient access on foot or by bicycle, or*

*B It can be demonstrated that the facility is surplus to requirement”*

The Methodist Church closed in early 2023 owing to it being surplus to requirements and was sold to the Applicant in April 2023.

Worship for Methodists is available at local churches at Pontllanfraith Methodist Church or Blackwood Methodist Church, both of which can be accessed from Newbridge via bicycle or public transport. Other facilities for community use are available on foot within Newbridge, including:

- Newbridge Leisure Centre;
- Newbridge Library / Newbridge Memo;
- Revive Church Newbridge;
- Tabernacle Baptist Church Newbridge;
- The Parish Church of St Paul Newbridge and
- Our Lady of Peace Catholic Church.

It has therefore been demonstrated that the facility is surplus to requirement and Methodist Churches and community facilities are available within easy reach. Accordingly, the proposal complies with Policy CW8.

Policy CW16 (Locational Constraints - Retailing) sets out the criteria whereby new retail stores or additional retail floor space will be permitted outside defined Principal Town Centres, only where:-

*“A the vitality and viability of nearby Principal Town Centres will not be undermined, taking into account the cumulative effects of other approved retail developments, recently completed developments and Plan commitments and*

*B the proposal will not undermine the Council's retail strategy, a Town Centre Action Plan or any regeneration plans that the council has formally approved, or*

*c The proposal is:*

*i A new retailing unit of 1000sqm. or less in size, or the change of use of such a size, and*

*ii To serve neighbourhood needs, or is ancillary to another commercial use.”*

Newbridge is not identified as a primary or secondary shopping area with the nearest identified Retail Centre being Blackwood (some 3 miles away). The proposal falls well below the threshold of 2,500sqm set in TAN 4 and therefore does not require a Retail Impact Assessment to consider any impacts on

Blackwood. Notwithstanding this, the scale of the proposal (at 223sqm gross sales area) would serve immediate neighbourhood needs and would not undermine or compete with the nearest retail centre of Blackwood. There are no sequentially preferable sites within Blackwood given that the proposal is being advanced to serve the needs of Newbridge residents. The proposal would therefore comply with Criterion A of Policy CW16.

Active A1 convenience retail uses in the area around Newbridge include Premier Convenience Store and One Stop (both on High Street, some 300m to the south-west) and Greenfield Stores, some 300 metres to the north-east of the application site, similar in nature to the proposed use. It is considered that the proposal with 223sqm gross internal retail sales area would not undermine the main retailing function along High Street. It is more likely to provide the basic daily staples to those residents in the immediate area or those who have used the nearby Newbridge Train Station, School or Leisure Centre, rather than catering for more extensive requirements or for weekly trips to stock up on household needs and food. On that basis it is considered that the proposal serves neighbourhood needs and complies with the requirements of Criterion c of Policy CW16.

The former Co-op within the Station Buildings adjacent to the train station closed in 2021 and have remained vacant largely due to a poor level of parking provision. At the time of the Co-op's closure Chris Evans MP for Islwyn stated: *"This will be a devastating blow to the local community who now will not have easy access to groceries. Those who are reliant on public transport will now have to pay to access their groceries as there are no other supermarkets within walking distance of Newbridge. For those on low incomes this will have a huge impact"*. The provision of new convenience retail will help address the concerns raised above. Additionally, the proposed development aligns with Future Wales' 'Town Centre First' policy contributing to the vibrancy of the existing neighbourhood.

In line with national planning policy, SP6 (Place Making) requires development proposals to contribute to the creation of sustainable places by having full regard to the context of the local, natural, historic and built environment and its special features. Policy SP6 requires new development to incorporate resource efficiency and passive solar gain through layout, materials, construction techniques, water conservation and where appropriate through the use of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS). In that the proposed development exceeds more than 100 square metres of floor space the development will require SUDs approval. Those technical details will require consideration from the Sustainable Drainage Approval Body (SAB) and is an independent approval process outside of planning legislation.

Policy, SP6 also requires mitigation measures that improve and maintain air quality. The nearest air quality management area within Caerphilly County Borough Council (CCBC) is Hafodyrnys with Blackwood High Street also designated as an automatic monitoring site in the County Borough. Given the distance away from Blackwood High Street and notably Hafodyrnys, which is located much further away from the site together with the limited scale of the development, it is not considered that the proposed development will give rise to any detrimental impact on the nearest air quality management area or monitoring sites. Furthermore, the modal shift in travel patterns is an essential part of reducing the growing concerns related to air quality and the proposal will reduce reliance on the private car by providing local convenience retail to the residents of Newbridge.

### Transportation

A key objective of Planning Policy Wales – Edition 11 is to ensure that new development is located and designed in a way which minimises the need to travel, reduces dependency on the private car and enables sustainable access to employment, local services and community facilities. This will be achieved through integrating development with sustainable transport infrastructure and designing schemes in a way which maximises provision and use of sustainable forms of travel including prioritising these modes over the private car. Delivering this objective will make an important contribution to decarbonisation, improving air quality, increasing physical activity and realising the goals of the Well-being of Future Generations Act. Paragraph 4.1.10 of PPW confirms that the planning system has a key role to play by facilitating developments which:

- are sited in the right locations, where they can be easily accessed by sustainable modes of travel and without the need for a car;
- are designed in a way which integrates them with existing land uses and neighbourhoods; and
- make it possible for all short journeys within and beyond the development to be easily made by walking and cycling.

Policy CW1 (Sustainable Transport, Accessibility and Social Inclusion) requires development proposals that have the potential to generate a significant number of trips (either as an origin or a destination) to be designed to ensure that car borne trips are kept to a minimum. It is therefore important to ensure that provision is made within the development to actively encourage walking and cycling and that appropriate infrastructure is included in the layout to facilitate short trips on foot. In that regard, the proposed development can incorporate cycle parking and is served by convenient and frequent access to public transport. Therefore, the range of accessible and sustainable travel choices to and from the development site will reduce the need to travel by private motor vehicles. 14no. car parking spaces are provided in line with the car parking standards set out in Supplementary Planning Guidance LDP5: Car Parking Standards.

Policy CW3 (Design Considerations - Highways) requires development proposals to have regard for the safe, effective and efficient use of the transportation network. A Transport Statement prepared by Corun accompanies the planning application and provides a comprehensive assessment of the transport implications associated with the proposed development. The Assessment concludes that there are no reasons, in highway and transportation terms, why the proposals should not be granted planning permission.

Furthermore, it should be noted that any vehicle trips to the proposed store are likely to predominantly consist of pass-by (e.g. to local schools, leisure centre, rugby club etc) and diverted trips from other existing stores, or be part of a linked trip e.g. work-shop-home given the location, size of store and limited range of products for sale.

Swept path analysis drawings to accompany the site layout plan have been prepared by Corun and demonstrate that the servicing and delivery vehicles can safely access and egress in forward gear. These vehicle arrangements would include deliveries and waste collections to and from the convenience store.

In summary, the development proposals therefore have regard for the safe, effective and efficient use of the transportation network and complies with LDP policy.

### **Residential Amenity**

Policy CW2 (Amenity) states that development proposals must have no unacceptable impact on the amenity of adjacent properties or land; would not result in the overdevelopment of the site; and the proposed use is compatible with surrounding land uses. In that regard the proposed convenience store demonstrates that adequate parking and turning for deliveries can be provided within the site together with providing areas of soft landscaping to enhance the site's visual amenity. The proposal is not considered to be over-development and is compatible with surrounding land uses.

In terms of its impact upon residential amenity the nearest occupiers to the convenience store are Ty-Hir, Bridge Street (to the west of the building) and 4-9 Bridge Street (to the south of the building). Given that the proposals comprise change of use (without significant new built development), overbearing, overshadowing and overlooking are not considered to be an issue in this instance.

A noise assessment has been commissioned by the Applicant. This consider noise egress from external plant equipment and the receiving and unloading of delivery vehicles. The report demonstrates an acceptable impact upon residential amenity of existing residents. The proposed development is therefore considered compliant with Policy CW2.

### Flood Risk, Drainage and Ecology

The site is located within Flood Zone C2 within the Development Advice Map. The proposals comprise the change of use from a highly vulnerable development use (i.e. a public building for a place of worship) to a less vulnerable development use (i.e. retail).

TAN15 advises that less vulnerable uses such as retail C2 if determined by the planning authority to be justified in that location. It goes on to state that:

*“Development, including transport infrastructure, will only be justified if it can be demonstrated that:-*

*i. Its location in zone C is necessary to assist, or be part of, a local authority regeneration initiative or a local authority strategy required to sustain an existing settlement; or,*

*ii Its location in zone C is necessary to contribute to key employment objectives supported by the local authority, and other key partners, to sustain an existing settlement or region;*

*and,*

*iii It concurs with the aims of PPW and meets the definition of previously developed land (PPW fig 2.1); and,*

*iv The potential consequences of a flooding event for the particular type of development have been considered, and in terms of the criteria contained in sections 5 and 7 and appendix 1 found to be acceptable”*

In respect of points i, ii to iii above, the proposals are located on previously developed land and facilitate the regeneration of the area bringing a vacant building of some architectural quality and local historical value back into beneficial use, providing a convenience retail use that supports the needs of the local area and creating circa 20 operational jobs. In respect of point iv above, the potential consequences of flooding have been considered within the Flood Consequences Assessment submitted as part of the application, which demonstrates that the proposals are acceptable in terms of complying with the relevant criteria of TAN 15.

The proposals will be subject to a separate SAB application which will be submitted on behalf of the Applicant.

The proposals are wholly located on a brownfield site and therefore considered to be of negligible ecological value. The proposals will deliver biodiversity enhancements through the provision of areas of landscaping and SuDS.

### Conclusions

In conclusion, it has been demonstrated that the proposed development accords with the Development Plan and is supported by national planning policy.

The proposed development will have numerous benefits for the residents of Newbridge – including:

- The delivery of much needed convenience retail to the benefit of the local community;
- The change of use of a vacant building with a high-quality scheme that enhances the character and appearance of the surrounding area;
- Supporting the vibrancy of Newbridge being in an accessible location and increasing foot traffic locally;
- The provision of biodiversity enhancements;
- Improvements to the local surface water drainage regime through the provision of SuDS;
- The creation of jobs during construction and circa 20 jobs during operation.

I trust that the above and enclosed are sufficient to enable your consideration of the application. If you require any further evidence to assist with your determination please do not hesitate to ask.