Application Ref: NP/11/411

Application Type

Full

Grid Ref:

SM75512525 C/O Agent

Applicant Agent

Acanthus Holden Ltd

Proposal

Re-development of site. Demolition of existing buildings and construction of two new apartments over retail

and construction of two new apartments over retail space with detached stores. Apartment to be used as

holiday lets.

Site Location

34-36, High Street, St Davids, Haverfordwest,

Pembrokeshire, SA62 6SD

Case Officer

Liam Jones

Summary

This application proposes the demolition of the existing buildings at the site and replacement with a new two and a half storey building to provide for 2 No. holiday lets and 2 No. ground floor retail units. Planning permission was initially sought for a similar proposal in 2010 (ref: NP/10/383) which was subsequently refused by the Authority. An appeal submitted by the applicant to the Planning Inspectorate was dismissed in July 2011.

This application has been submitted in an attempt to address the inspectors concerns as set out in the appeal. Amendments have been made to the front facade of the property as well as to the rear annexes proposed and on balance the changes proposed are considered to result in an acceptable development which address the inspectors concerns.

The application is brought before the Development Management Committee at the discretion of the Head of Development Management due to the previous application being considered at Committee and the level of public interest in the scheme.

Consultee Response

St Davids City Council: Supporting

Countryside Council for Wales: No objection

Dyfed Archaeological Trust: No objection

Dwr Cymru Welsh Water: Conditional Consent

Environment Agency Wales: Conditional Consent

PCC - Transportation & Environment: Conditional Consent

Public Response

The application was advertised by a site notice displayed at the front of site on 18th October 2011 as well as through neighbour notification letters forwarded to those in close proximity to the site.

8 No. letters of objection have been received from neighbouring occupiers in relation to this scheme with 2 No. of these being additional comments submitted following notification of amended plans received which followed the Authority's initial notification.

A number of concerns have been submitted and whilst it is not possible to list in detail every comment the below offers a summary of the main concerns raised following consultation with local residents:

- Loss of courtyard at the front would be detrimental to the character and special qualities of St Davids
- The proposed shop window design continues to have minimal detail and no window cills
- Proposal would continue to have a 'stark and unembellished' facade
- The key issue of bulk and scale has not been properly addressed. The site size is suited to one or two retail units and two two-bedroom flats at most.
- Too large considering the context of the site which will have a negative effect on high street residents
- Concern with how vague the submitted plans are with regards to the finishes, in particular the materials to be used
- Development will not benefit the local community in any way
- Modern design of the building is not in keeping with the historic environment that St Davids is valued for
- The large apartments constitute a change of use and not one that will bring employment to the area. Whilst these have been proposed to be for holiday lets, once they are built there could be the threat of other usage in the future that would strain parking even further.
- Shops at the front would inevitably result in lorries loading and unloading in the High Street creating a potential accident blackspot and traffic issue
- Proposed front facade extends beyond frontage of adjoining property creating an oppressive shadow over the entrance way
- The proposal would be harmful to the living conditions of both Nos. 40 and 42 by affecting light into bedrooms, dining room and communal areas of these properties.

- Upper floor windows looking directly into back garden of 40 and 42
- Concern over occupancy levels and parking issues

Policies considered

LDP Policy 01 - National Park Purposes and Duty

LDP Policy 05 - St Davids Local Centre

LDP Policy 08 - Special Qualities

LDP Policy 11 - Protection of Biodiversity

LDP Policy 15 - Conservation of the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park

LDP Policy 29 - Sustainable Design

LDP Policy 30 - Amenity

LDP Policy 32 - Surface Water Drainage

LDP Policy 33 - Renewable Energy

LDP Policy 48 - Community Facilities and Infrastructure Requirements

LDP Policy 53 - Impacts on traffic

PPW4 Chapter 04 - Planning for Sustainability

PPW4 Chapter 06 - Conserving the Historic Environment

SPG03 - Sustainable Design

SPG07 - Conservation Area Proposals

TAN 05 - Nature Conservation and Planning

TAN 12 - Design

Officer's Appraisal

Background & Description

The application site relates to a property positioned along the High Street of St Davids and within the Conservation Area. This revised application has been submitted following a recently dismissed appeal at the site.

Members will recall that planning permission was refused for the scheme subject of that appeal at the Development Management Committee of 23rd February 2011. Members resolved to refuse permission contrary to the officers' recommendation to approve the application.

History

- NP/10/383 34 36 High Street, St Davids Demolition of existing shop, flat and garage, construction of 2 new shops with 4 flats - Refused - 2 March 2011. Appeal dismissed on 13 July 2011.
- NP/10/382 34 36 High Street, St Davids Demolition of existing shop, flat and garage, construction of 2 new shops with 4 flats (Conservation Area Consent) - Approved - 11 March 2011

Current proposal

The application proposes the demolition of the existing two storey building and rear garage and the redevelopment of the site to include the construction of two new holiday let 4 bedroom apartments and two ground floor retail units.

The building proposed has a frontage to the High Street of 13.2m with the retention of a walkway between No. 32 High Street and the new development. The front facade of the property consists of twin gables which measure up to 10.4m above ground level. Fenestration at the front is provided in the form of two ground floor shopfronts, four sliding sash windows at first floor level and two matching windows at second floor. The main bulk of the building which is at two and a half storeys measures between 9.8m and 11m in depth into the rear of the site.

There are 2 No. annexes to the rear linked into the main block with hipped roofs and rear half dormer windows. The annexes measure 7m in height up to ridge level and approximately 4.5m to eaves level. These project away from the building by 5.5m and 6.4m respectively. 4 No. windows are provided at second storey level, 2 No. at first floor with Juliet style balconies and larger window openings are shown to be provided at the ground floor opening out onto 2 No. external courtyards each with a store and cycle store with steps up to a parking area providing for four vehicles. 6 No. Windows are proposed on the side elevation facing towards No. 32 High Street with all these proposed to be obscure.

The roof of the building shows 4 No. obscurely glazed roof lights facing towards No. 40 High Street, 1 No. obscurely glazed roof light facing towards No. 32 High Street along with 3 No. inward facing roof lights and a central roof lights providing downward light into the apartments. 4 No. 2m x 1m solar panels are shown to be proposed on the side elevation of the building set into the roofplane by 4.5m and 5m.

In terms of works to the rear, plans show the provision of a new retaining wall which measures no more than 0.9m in height to provide for a flower bed between the adjoining wall. 4 No. air to water heat exchangers are shown to be sited alongside. Plans show bat tubes to be inserted at eaves level to the side elevation of the rear extension and in a new garden storage building to provide sufficient space for cycle storage.

The internals of the building show 2 No. retail units each measuring 6.1m wide with a depth of approximately 7m. Access to the apartments is shown to be made through the rear entrance into a ground floor consisting of an open plan kitchen and dining room. The first floor provides 2 No. bedrooms, ensuite, toilet and living room whilst the second floor includes 2 No. additional bedrooms each with an ensuite.

With regard to external materials the walls are proposed to be painted scribed render to the front with painted render elsewhere. The roof is to be natural slate with zinc or lead to the flat roofed areas. Guttering and downpipes are

proposed to be powder coated aluminium whilst all doors and windows which includes the shop fronts are to be timber painted. The new boundary walls are proposed to be finished in rubble masonry whilst the rear hardstand areas are to be concrete, stone setts or tarmac.

The application has been supported with the following documentation:

- A Design and Access Statement
- Transport Statement
- Bat Survey
- Code for Sustainable Homes Pre- Assessment

Key Issues

The main issues to consider in this re-submitted application relate to the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the St. Davids Conservation Area, the special qualities of the National Park and the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers. Other issues to consider relate to parking and highway safety, drainage and water pollution prevention, biodiversity as well as sustainable design.

Given that a recent appeal was dismissed by the Planning Inspectorate on 13th July 2011 the reasons given by the inspector and specific consideration of the planning merits are material considerations in this application which must be taken into account in making a decision.

Site Context & Principle of development

The site relates to an existing two storey building with rear flat roof extension and garage which lies within the local centre boundary of St Davids. The application proposes the re-development of the building which is presently an unused retail unit with flat above into 2 No. holiday lets with 2 No. ground floor retail units.

It is of relevance that the Authority has considered through the granting of Conservation Area Consent on 11th March 2011 (NP/10/382) that the demolition of the existing buildings on site is acceptable. These buildings are considered to be in particularly poor condition and make no positive contribution to the character of the Conservation Area.

Policy 5 of the Local Development Plan gives priority to aim to meet the housing need of the local area, provide for employment development, provide live/work units, to protect and enhance the district shopping centre, ensure developments permitted contribute to the protection and enhancement of the City's special qualities and to permit proposals that assist in delivering improved traffic management. Policy 50 favours retail developments to ensure that the vitality, viability and diversity of shopping centres is maintained and enhanced. Section 4.228 of the LDP explains that "residential development above ground level will be considered appropriate".

In view of the policy context and the poor condition of the existing buildings on site the proposal which will provide for 2 No. 4 bedroom holiday lets and 2 No. new ground floor units will contribute to the economic viability of the area and is considered to be acceptable in principle. However a detailed consideration needs to be given to its impact upon the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, the special qualities of the National Park as well as upon the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers.

Character and Appearance

In considering the previous appeal for a similar proposal the inspector paid close attention to the impact of the proposal upon the character and appearance of the St. Davids Conservation Area siting its conflict with Policies 5, 8 and 30. The scheme proposed was considered to neither preserve nor enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. The second thrust of reasons for dismissing the appeal surrounded the impact of the rear projection of the building upon the living conditions of the occupiers of Nos. 40 and 42 which was considered to conflict with Policy 30.

The inspector citied the main reasons for dismissing the appeal as being:

- Windows having a horizontal emphasis which would be at odds with the vertical rhythm of other properties to both sides
- Double gable arrangement would create the impression of two buildings but the proposed shopfront would span across the notional divide thereby disturbing the vertical rhythm of the streetscape
- Plain rendered facades in the City are usually relieved by decorative joinery or moulded details whilst that of the appeal proposal would be stark and unembellished
- The easternmost annexe would have a dominant and oppressive visual impact when viewed from the rear garden of No. 40
- The easternmost annexe would also have an overbearing visual impact when viewed from windows (of 42) as a result of its height and rearward projection. There would also be a material reduction in daylight received through the ground floor windows in the main part of the dwelling.

The applicants have sought to address the issues raised by the inspector in the appeal with a re-design of the front of the building as well as a significant reduction in massing of the annexes to the rear.

The shape and profile of the building when viewed from the front has not changed from the previous submission. The inspector considered that the proposed building which would be two and a half storeys in height with twin gables facing the road would have a similar ridge height to other properties in the area and would not be out of keeping with the existing variety found on the High Street and would not be of an excessive scale or mass. In this respect the height, width and general scale of the property proposed as viewed from the front is considered to be acceptable.

The traditional style sash windows on the front facade of the property now display a good vertical rhythm and are of a scale comparable with both

adjoining properties. The first floor windows are positioned just below the windows of the two nearest properties and the ground floor shopfronts are considered to balance appropriately with a central void creating the impression of two buildings. The windows at first floor level are of a similar appearance to other gable fronted buildings in the centre of St Davids, add variety to the streetscene in this location and are considered to be of an appropriate scale and positioning in the context of the building and general street.

The inspector considered that the shop front on the previous scheme would span across the whole building and therefore disturb the vertical rhythm of the streetscape. The applicant has redesigned this aspect to now provide for a pair of shopfronts as opposed to a single continuous one. The shopfront which will be a traditional shopfront in proportion and styling now reflects the traditional form in St Davids and subject to conditions requiring additional control over the detailing is acceptable. The applicants are happy to show details of a more pronounced window cill and would agree to a condition requiring the joinery details to be submitted and agreed prior to commencement.

The previous submission showed a blank and plain rendered finish to the front of the building. The inspector noted that plain rendered facades in the City are usually relieved by decorative joinery or moulded details and considered that the appeal proposal would be stark and unembellished. The new proposal shows scored smooth render with triple keystones above the windows which reflect local tradition in the area. Small detailing including a log and date stone at the top of each gable has been included whilst the re-design of the shopfront and fenestration ensures a traditional form of build typical of the Conservation Area.

The loss of the front courtyard has been noted in the representations made by neighbouring occupiers as well as being cited as a reason for refusal on the scheme refused by members under application NP/10/383. Whilst this concern is noted the inspector found in conclusion that the loss of the courtyard would not have a negative impact. He explained: "The reason for refusal refers to the loss of the courtyard at the front of the existing building. Although a number of properties on High Street have such courtyards, others, including those immediately to the west of the appeal site, are located at the back of the footway. It cannot be said that those with courtyards would have a negative impact in that respect through not incorporating a courtyard". The applicant has commented that there is a benefit in the proposed scheme as the revised building line creates a far wider pavement to the existing and with the building facing north it is not such an attractive space to spend time in. Whilst, the loss of a courtyard is regrettable, on balance and on consideration of the inspectors comments it is not considered that this could amount to a reason for refusal on this ground.

Finally, the amended plans submitted by the applicant indicate the provision of solar panels to the roof of the property. These plans were submitted shortly after registration of the application along with the addition of heat exchangers

in the rear amenity area and an enlargement to the shed in Order to obtain a Code for Sustainable Homes rating. Representations received raise issue with this aspect of the proposal citing concern that the solar panels would be detrimental to the character and special qualities of St Davids and that other applications have been rejected on the basis that they are not suited to a Conservation Area. Without details of the specific cases or matters surrounding other refusals officers are unable to comment on or compare cases. However, it should be noted that each application must be judged on its own merits. On the basis of the plans put forward with the solar panels sited between 4.5m and 5m away from the frontage of the property it is considered that their impact upon the character of the Conservation Area will be negligible. The introduction of energy efficient measures are acceptable in principle under policies 29 and 33 provided there are no overriding environmental or amenity considerations with less obtrusive approaches being favoured. It is not considered that the solar panels, heat exchangers or enlargement to the rear outbuilding would impact unacceptably on the character and appearance of the St Davids Conservation Area.

In summary of the above, it is considered that the scheme put forward would enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and comply with the aims of Policies 1, 5 and 8.

Neighbouring Amenity

A particular concern of the inspector in the previous appeal related to the extent of annexes and their resultant impact on the amenity of the occupiers of No. 40 and No. 42 High Street. Due to the height being at two and a half storeys and rearward projection of the easternmost annexe it was considered to have a dominant and oppressive visual impact when viewed from the garden of No. 40. Given that No. 42 contains habitable rooms at ground, first and second floor levels facing onto the annexe the inspector felt that the location of the windows makes them vulnerable to new development. The easternmost aspect was felt to have an overbearing visual impact as well as resulting in a material reduction in daylight received through the ground floor windows in the main part of the dwelling.

The application submitted shows a significant reduction in the scale of the rear annexes to take into account the potential impact on neighbouring occupiers. The annexes have been reduced in height set below the proposed eaves of the main building at 7m above ground level. The hipped roof form and eaves level being lower than the existing flat roof extension at the site is considered to be a marked improvement on the previous application.

The annexe adjoining No. 40 would be positioned in near proximity to the rear projection of that dwellinghouse. Notwithstanding this there are no windows on the property which would be directly overlooked by the development. Concern has also been raised in representations put forward by the occupiers of No. 42, which is positioned approximately 9m eastwards of the proposed rear annexe, regarding the impact of the development on their amenity. This impact has been assessed both on site and through the applicant's submissions. Whilst the concerns are noted particularly with the bulk of the

proposal, the reductions in scale to the rear annexes are considered to be, on balance, sufficient to address any amenity issues.

There are 4 No. air to water heat exchangers sited behind a screen to the rear of the property. It is not considered that these would give rise to any unacceptable visual impact upon the amenities of those near the site by reason of their discrete siting behind an existing wall at the site. In order to consider and control the potential impact of these by reason of any noise emission a condition to require full details should be attached before the erection of the exchangers.

Amenity Space

Whilst it would not be usual to provide a significant level of amenity space to serve occupiers of holiday apartments the scheme nonetheless provides a good level of rear amenity space consisting of an external courtyard along with space for cycle and general storage as well as parking.

Parking & Highway Safety

In the appeal decision the inspector noted that interested persons were concerned with the level of off-street parking to be provided with 1 space per flat and none for the retail units. The consultation responses received also raised concern with the level of parking to be provided. Of particular relevance is that the scheme proposed 4 holiday flats as opposed to the 2 holiday flats proposed in this application and no objection was raised on parking and highway safety grounds by the inspector or the highway authority.

As part of the current application Pembrokeshire County Council Highways Authority has been consulted and offers no objection subject to conditions. Its response notes the existing access off Bryn Road to the rear of the site and it is satisfied that the pull in bays will help with manoeuvring parked cars onto Bryn Road. It welcomes the widening of the footway to the frontage and the Highway Authority would be pleased to accept dedication once completed. Conditions are recommended in this instance.

Comments received from interested parties suggest that parking will be an issue for those living in St Davids. Whilst the use of the building will create additional vehicular movements officers consider that there would be no reasoned basis to reject the application on parking or highway safety grounds. The site lies within a city location with public car parks and bus routes within easy reach of the site and other commercial business receive deliveries via the High Street. Furthermore Planning Policy Wales (Edition 4 February 2011) encourages less parking provision in new developments in order to promote sustainability aims explaining at paragraph 8.4.2 "Local authorities should ensure that new developments provide lower levels of parking than have generally been achieved in the past."

In view of the advice given by the Highway Authority and the planning policy framework it is considered that the development will meet the aims of Policy 53 and there will be no detrimental impact on parking or highway safety such that the application could be refused on these grounds.

Sustainable Design

The scheme has been designed to meet a Code for Sustainable Homes Level 3 and the applicant has included sustainable measures in design including solar panels, air to water heat exchangers as well as cycle storage areas.

Drainage and water pollution prevention

In terms of drainage, Welsh Water as well as the Environment Agency have been consulted as part of the application. No objection has been raised subject to conditions from both bodies. The Environment Agency asks for a scheme to dispose of surface water to be submitted and approved in writing whilst Welsh Water require that foul water and surface water discharges are drained separately from the site.

Biodiversity and Protected Species

The site has not been identified as one which contains protected species and no objection has been received from the Countryside Council for Wales.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is considered that the applicant has addressed the inspector's reason for dismissing the previous appeal at the site with changes to the design of the scheme as well as the massing to the rear of the property. The development will preserve the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and whilst of a considerable massing will have no detrimental impact upon the amenity of neighbouring occupiers.

In view of the above and following a detailed consideration of all relevant planning merits and material considerations the application is considered to meet the aims of policies 1, 5, 8, 15 and 30 of the Adopted Local Development Plan.

Recommendation

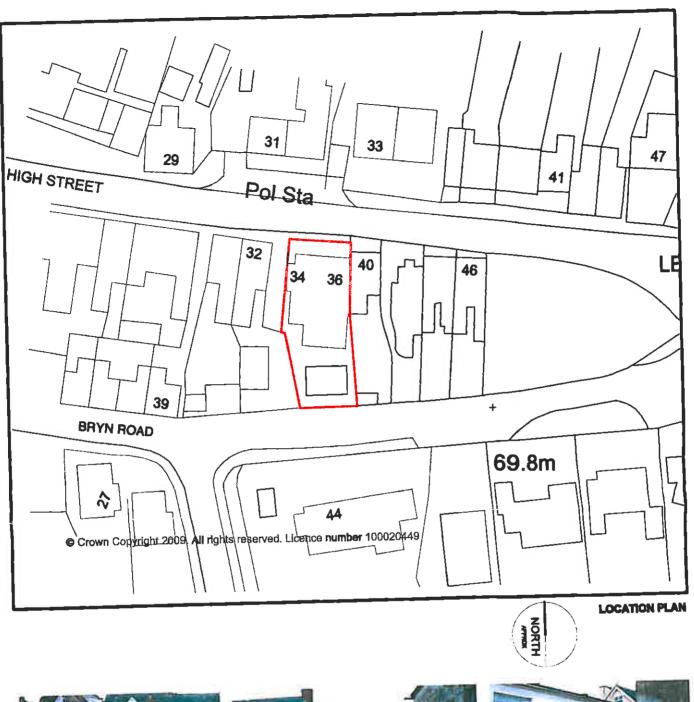
The application be approved subject to the following conditions:

Development to commence within 5 years
Development in accordance with amended plans
Samples of materials/finishes to be agreed
Full details and samples of shopfronts to be agreed
Holiday occupancy condition for holiday units
Highway conditions relating to parking, deliveries and surfacing
Drainage conditions
Details of air to water heat exchangers
Construction methodology

Additional Material

Decision Drawings

- S001 Site Location Plan (dated 28/9/11)
- S101 Existing Site Layout (dated 28/9/11)
- S201 Existing Elevations (dated 28/9/11
- P102 Proposed First and Second Floor Plan (dated 28/9/11)
- P301 Proposed Sections (dated 28/9/11)
- P302 Proposed Section (dated 28/9/11)
- P210 Proposed Elevations in Context (28/9/11)
- P103 A Proposed Roof Plan (dated 26/10/11)
- P202 A Proposed Rear Elevation (dated 26/10/11)
- P201 A Proposed Front Elevation (dated 18/11/11)
- P203 B Proposed Side Elevations (dated 18/11/11)





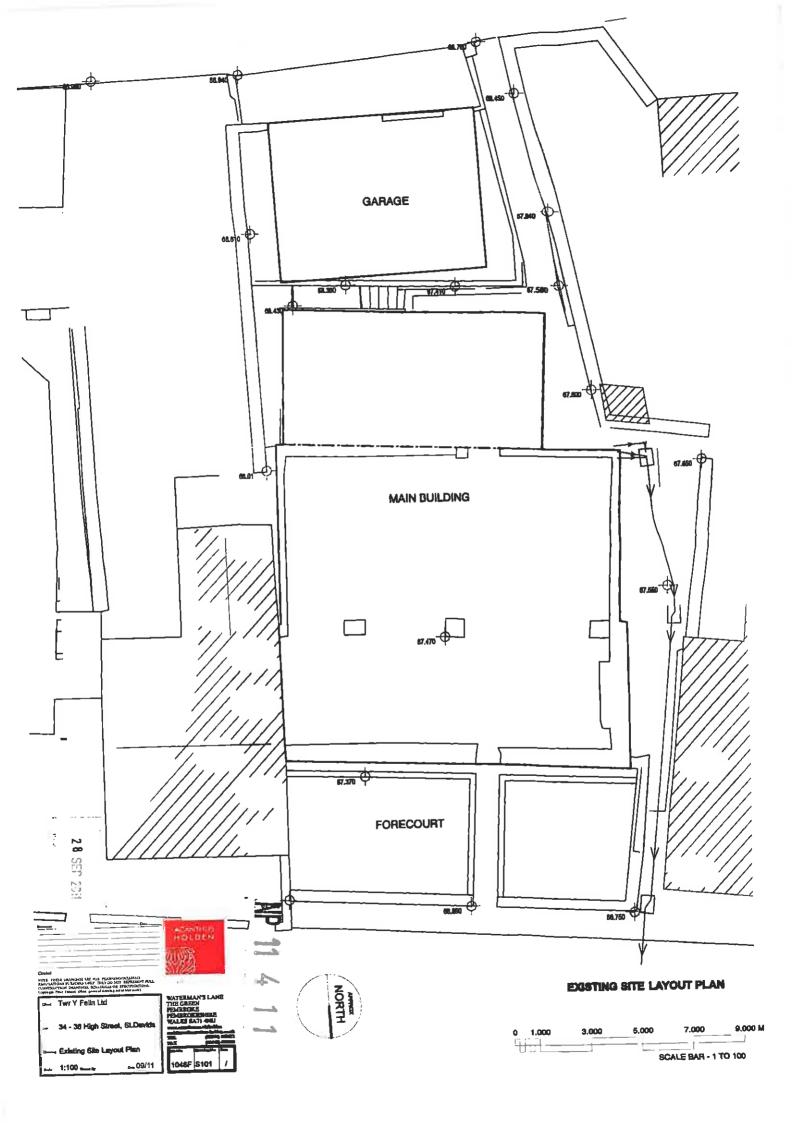


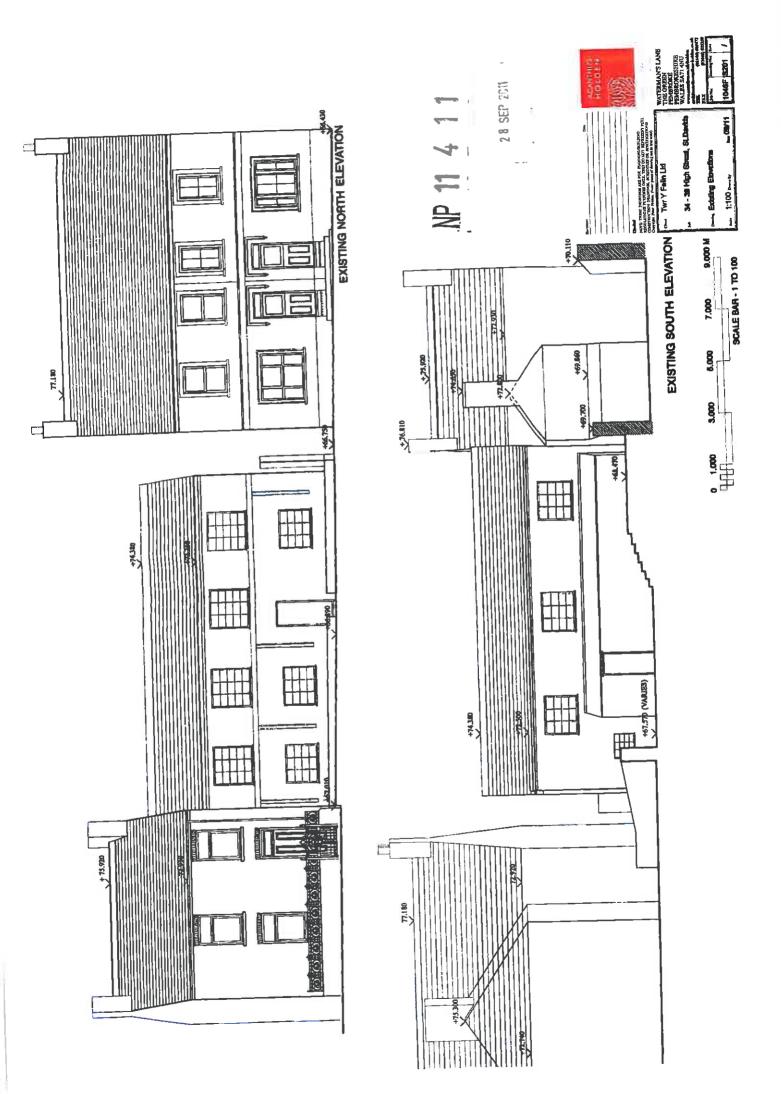


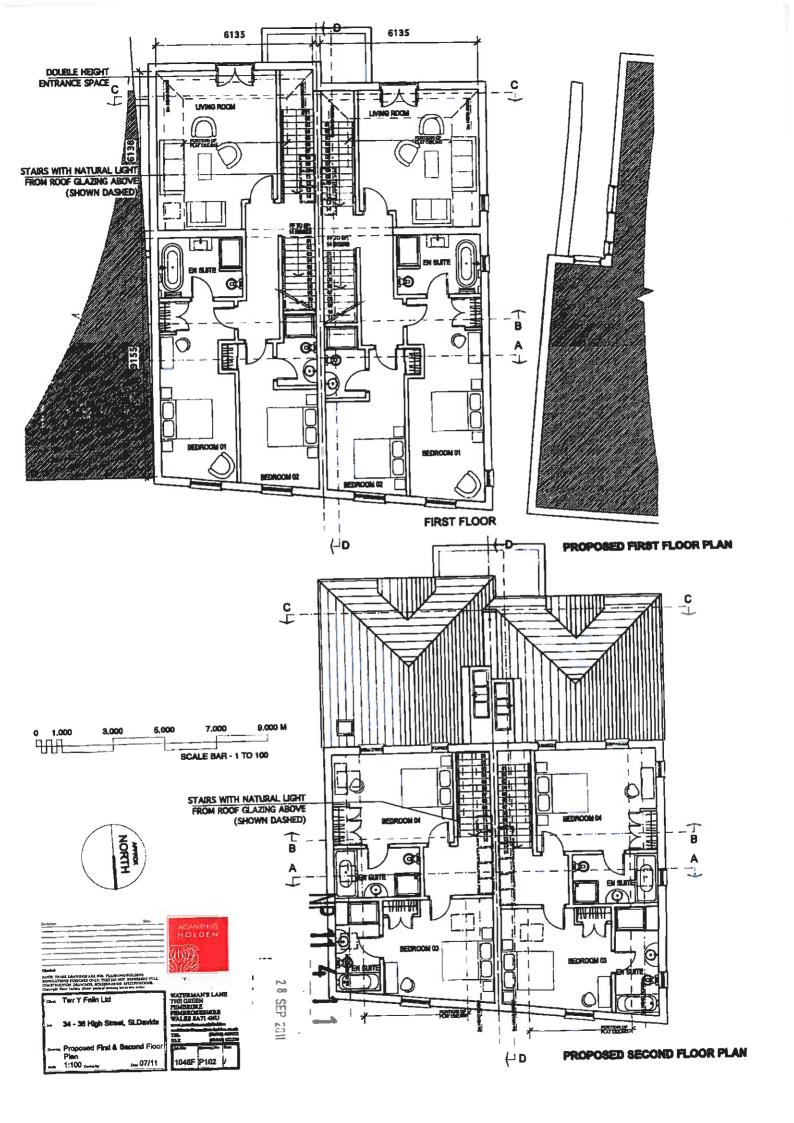
SITE PHOTOS

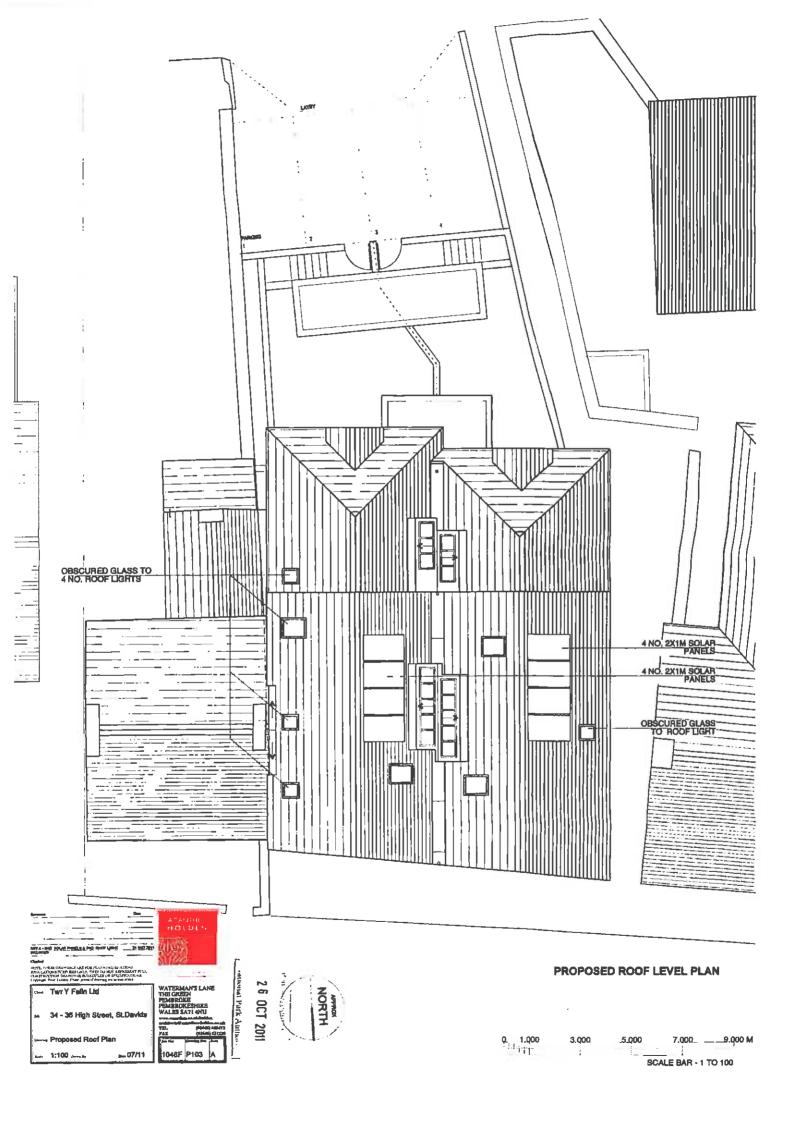


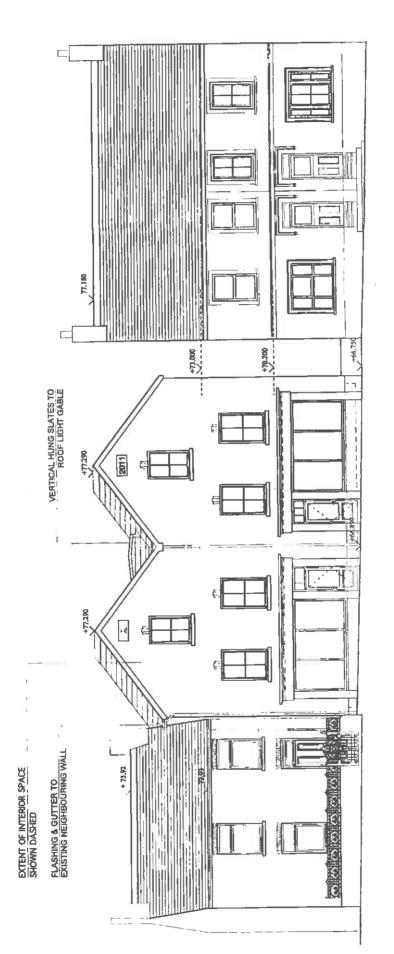








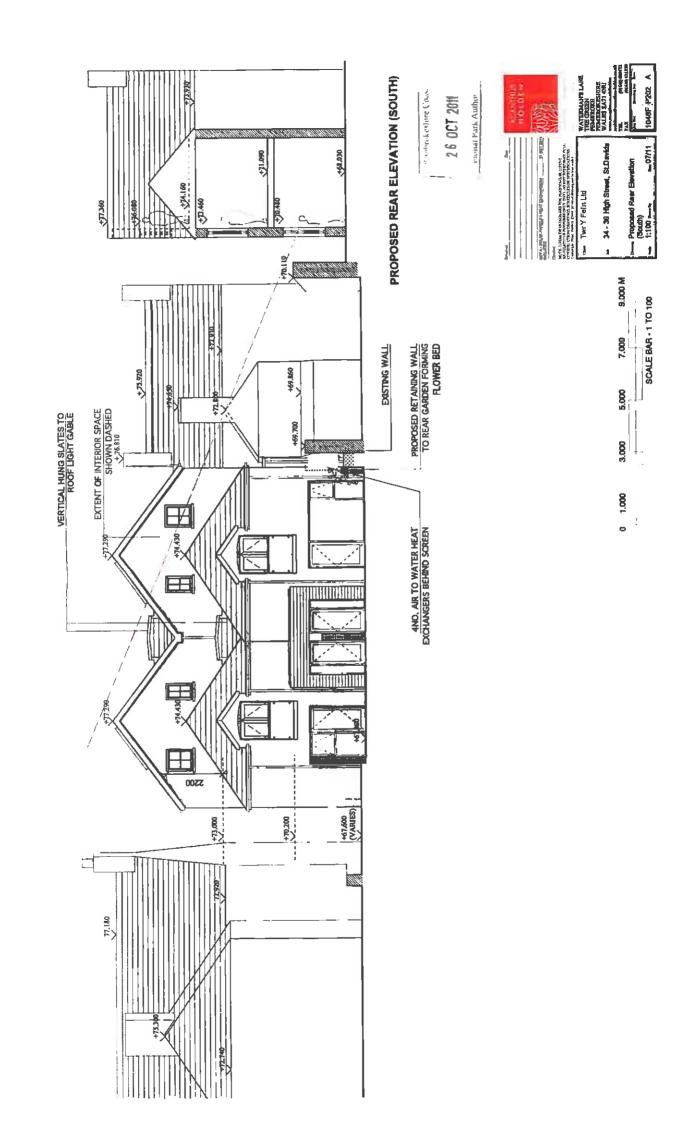


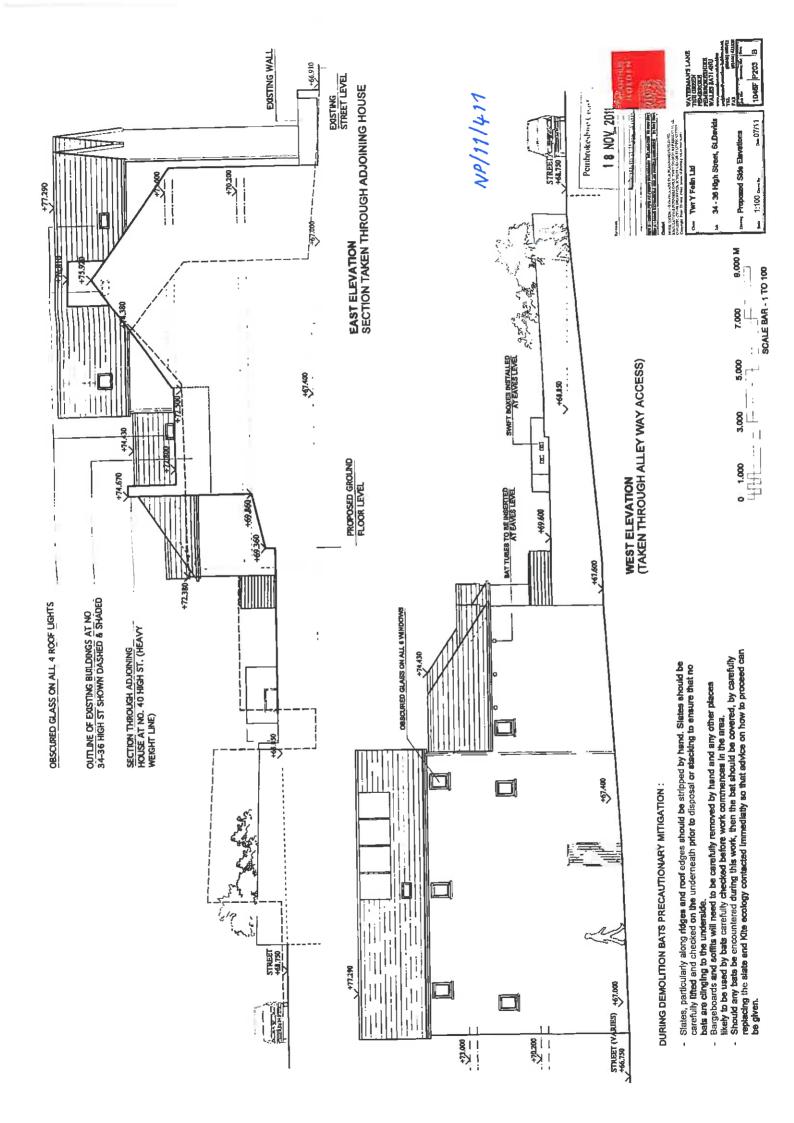


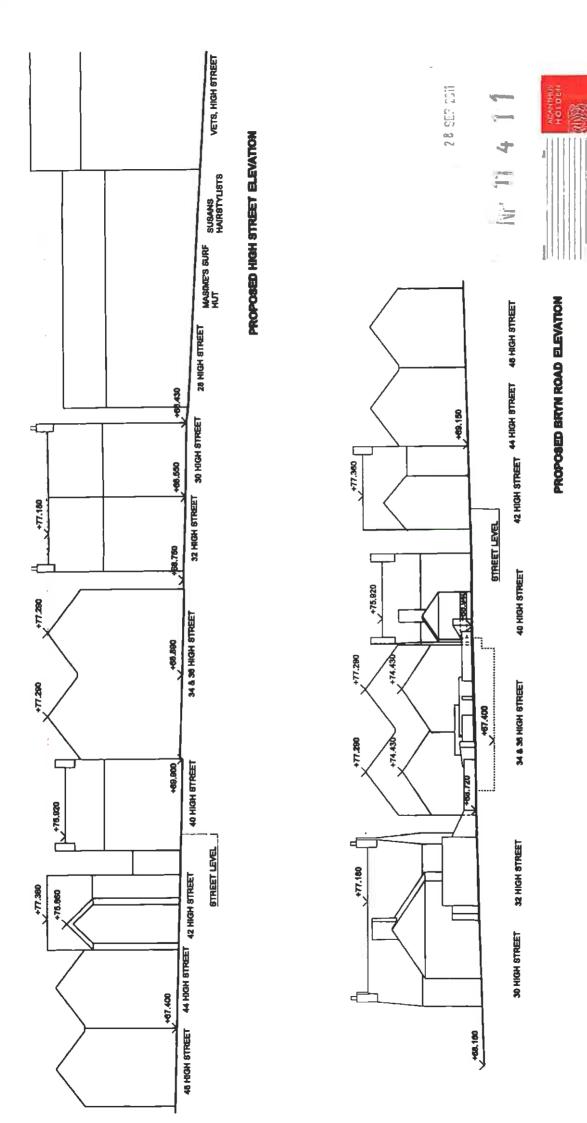
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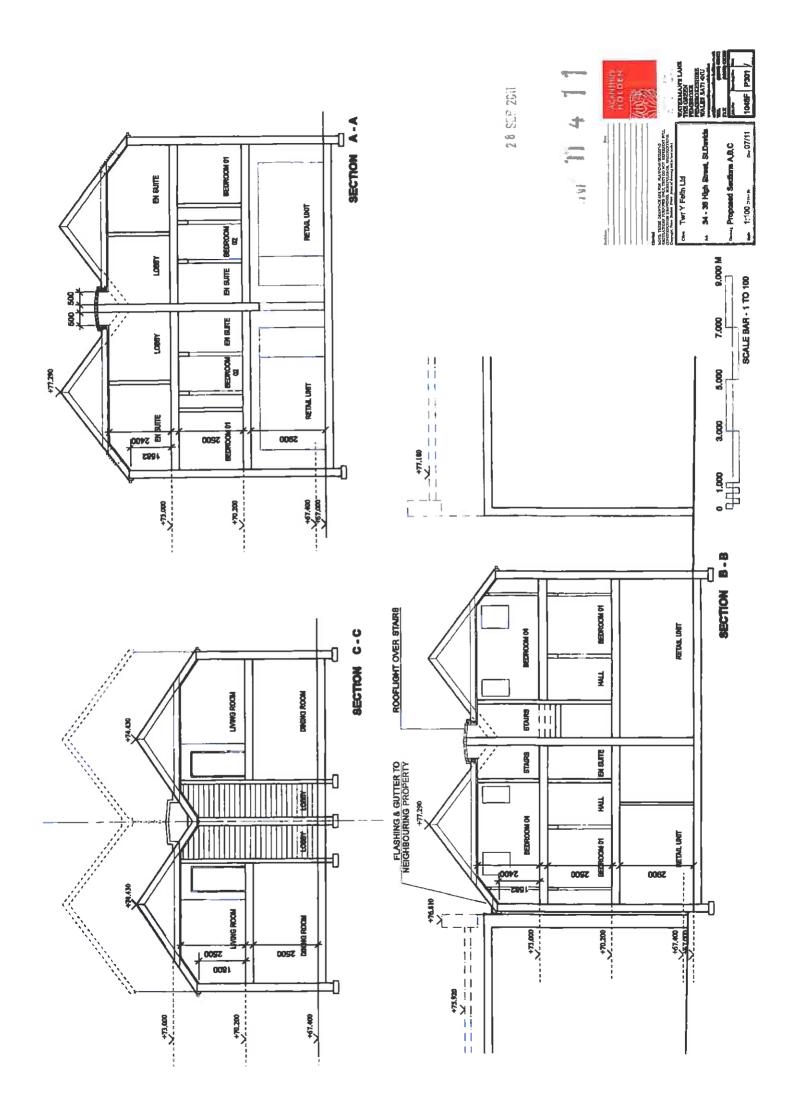
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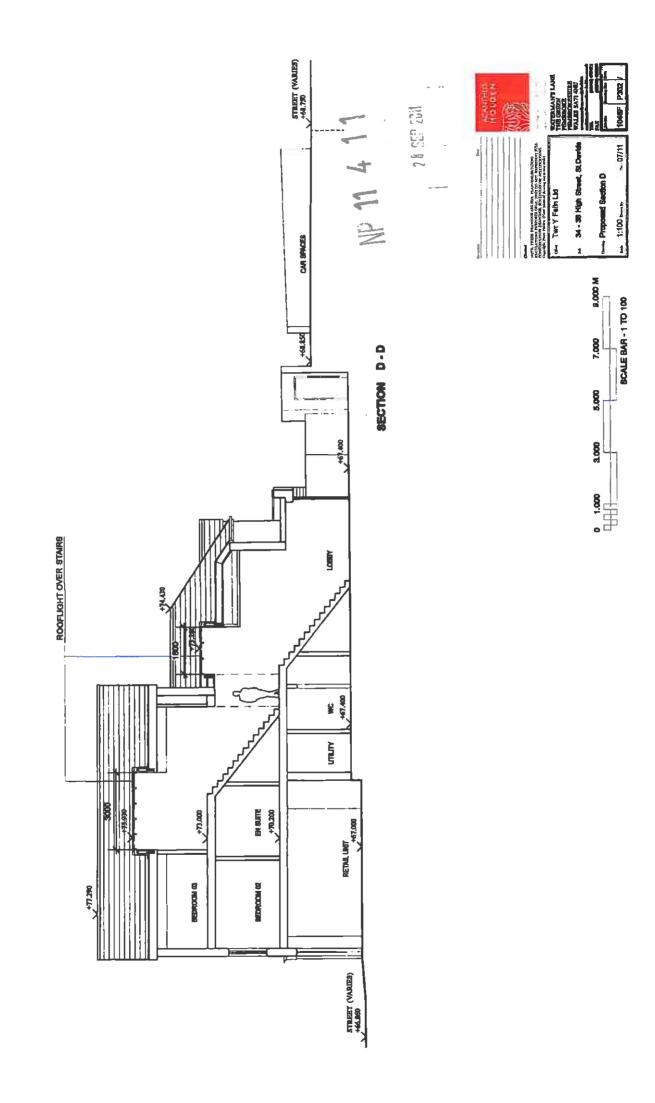
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EXISTING WINDOW VIEW FROM SECOND FLOOR BEDROOM OF NO.42 (VIEWED CLOSE UP)



PROPOSED WINDOW VIEW FROM SECOND FLOOR BEDROOM OF NO.42 (VIEWED CLOSE UP)

IVI 11 4 1 1 BOTH VIEWS ARE FACING WEST

14 34 - 30 High Street, St Davids one Perspective Views

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EXISTING VIEW FROM FIRST FLOOR DINING ROOM (GROUND FLOOR NO.42)

PROPOSED WINDOW VIEW FROM GROUND FLOOR DINING ROOM OF NO.42 (VIEWED CLOSE UP)