

<b>Committee Date</b>	23-Mar-2011		
<b>Application Type</b>	Listed Building		
<b>Application Ref</b>	NP/11/069	<b>Grid Ref:</b>	SN13240062
<b>Applicant</b>	South Terrace Properties Ltd		
<b>Agent</b>	Mrs A Dallimore, C2J Architects		
<b>Proposal</b>	Construct 39 apartments, 68 bed hotel & 3 commercial units		
<b>Site Location</b>	Royal Gatehouse Hotel, White Lion Street, Tenby, Pembrokeshire, SA70 7ET		

### **Summary**

This application seeks listed building consent for the partial demolition of the Playhouse cinema, the retention of its façade and its extension to provide a combined cinema, hotel and commercial development use.

The main issues in this case relate to the justification for the partial demolition of a listed building, and the impact of the proposals on the character and appearance of the listed building.

The demolition of the existing listed cinema is considered to be justified and meet the requirements of Circular 61/96 due to the relative lack of importance of the main building in historic and architectural terms. It is not considered to be in the public interest to retain the main building in this instance. However, the façade is to be retained and the overall design of the proposal is considered to offer a combination of traditional vernacular design and an unashamedly modern link to the secondary frontage of the site. It is considered that the design is acceptable and would not have any adverse effect on the special architectural and historic interest of this listed building or its setting subject to a minor amendment to the cinema roof and subject to conditions relating to finishes, architectural details and colours.

It is recommended that Cadw be advised that it is the view of the NPA that listed building consent should be granted subject to conditions relating to

### **Consultee Response**

**Royal Commission Ancient & Historic:** Reply - No further observations on this development except to note that The Royal Playhouse Cinema was listed grade II for its special interest as incorporating C19th assembly rooms.

**Tenby Conservation Forum:** Reply - In general we are pleased to see that many of the criticisms made by the Conservation Forum (and others) in response to the previous proposals have been addressed. There are still aspects of the design which fall short of that which we should ideally wish to see but taking into account present commercial realities, we consider that, subject to the changes expressed below, there is no reason to refuse these proposals.

We note that there is no improvement in the proposals in respect of the hotel, although we have previously argued that the greatest benefit to Tenby from this scheme could be achieved by the inclusion of a high quality hotel with conference facilities. However, we recognise the difficulty of attracting a suitable operator and prepared to accept the inclusion of a cinema as an alternative. We do, however, consider that more space needs to be allowed at the north end of the design to allow for a stage and some changing facilities. If the proposal gave Tenby a cinema that could also be used for theatrical performances and small concerts, we would consider that the scheme met our requirements and also gives something back to Tenby.

There is a lack of detail concerning materials and various aspects of the design. The Royal Gatehouse site in particular calls for the highest standards. We recommend that any approval should be subject to the Authority's officers having the right to review the architectural details and proposed materials as the detailed specifications are produced, and to require changes within the framework of the overall proposals.

We are disappointed that the opportunity created by the demolition of the Royal Gatehouse has not been used to make a greater improvement to White Lion Street. Especially during pedestrianisation, this is an important two-way access road. We consider that the visual relationship between the pinch point at the seaward end of White Lion Street and the public square behind is important but would not be adversely affected if one metre were added to the width of the carriageway. We recommend this as a requirement of approval.

**Tenby Town Council:** Approve

### **Public Response**

No public response received.

### **Policies**

National Policy  
PPW4 Chapter 03 - Making and Enforcing Planning Decisions  
TAN 12 - Design  
Circular 61/96 - Conservation Areas

## **Officer's Appraisal**

### **Background**

Listed Building consent was refused last year for the partial demolition of the Playhouse cinema but including the retention of its façade and its extension to provide a commercial development on the grounds that the proposal was out of character with the Grade II listed building, and the demolition of a substantial part of the listed building was not justified as required by development plan policy and national planning advice. (NP/10/131).

### **Current Application**

This application again seeks consent for the partial demolition of the Playhouse cinema, the retention of its façade and its extension to provide a combined cinema, hotel and commercial development use.

The site occupies one of the most prominent, important and key locations in Tenby and any proposals on this site require the most careful and detailed consideration. The application proposes to remove the remaining rubble and buildings from the site, with the exception of the façade of the Playhouse cinema which will be incorporated into the new scheme. The proposed development would comprise a frontage and corner development to the Norton and White Lion Street comprising 39 full residential apartments on six floors. The area to the rear of this block and with a frontage to White Lion Street would comprise a new five storey building, falling in height to four and three storeys, comprising a 68 bed hotel on four floors with commercial (A3 – food and drink uses) on the ground floor. The existing Playhouse cinema façade would be retained, with a newly constructed building to the rear comprising a replacement cinema on the ground floor and some of the hotel rooms referred to on the two floors above. A new public square would be provided to the front of the cinema and hotel entrance fronting White Lion Street and the scheme makes allowance for improvements to the pavement and carriageway widths at the junction of White Lion Street and the Norton. Car parking would be provided in a basement area below the apartment block with an entrance from the Norton, with further parking to the west of the new cinema, accessed from a new entrance from Deer Park (referred to in application NP/11/064). An accompanying planning application for the redevelopment of the site has been submitted under reference NP/11/068.

The application was accompanied by a Design and Access Statement, a statement in respect of the partial demolition of a listed building, and a record of conditions in respect of the existing building.

### **LDP:**

There is no statutory requirement to have regard to the provisions of the development plan in considering applications for listed building consent. However, there should be a general presumption in favour of the preservation of listed buildings and the continuation or reinstatement of the original use

should generally be the first option when the future of a listed building is considered.

### ***Officers Considerations***

This application is on the agenda as it is related to a major application in the National Park (more than ten dwellings) that appears elsewhere in this agenda.

This application is for listed building consent and therefore consideration of the proposal is confined to matters relating to the partial demolition of a listed building, and the impact of the proposals on the character and appearance of the listed building. In this instance therefore the matters for consideration are the demolition of the main part of the Playhouse cinema and the extension to the remaining façade to provide a replacement cinema, new hotel rooms and commercial units.

### ***Demolition***

With regard to its demolition, the applicant states that its architectural value predominantly relates to the front elevation to White Lion Street with the exterior having little architectural merit and which does not make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the building or the conservation area. It is stated that the building has been significantly altered and retains little detailing of architectural or historical significance. However, in view of the importance of the façade the scheme has been developed to retain and repair this as an integral part of the re-development proposals.

Circular 61/96 set out the steps that should be taken prior to permission being granted for the complete or substantial demolition of a listed building and essentially sets out three key "tests". These relate to:

- i.) the condition of the building, the cost of repairing and maintaining it in relation to its importance and to the value derived from its continued use.
- (ii) the adequacy of efforts made to retain the building in use.
- (iii) the merits of alternative proposals for the site.

It is considered that this scheme represents a substantial demolition of this building, and as such this policy advice is relevant. The applicant's submission states that the form and layout of the cinema does not meet current market requirements which is geared to smaller multi screen facilities. It is stated that opportunities to utilise the building for alternative uses are limited by its form and poor condition. Since the last refusal a structural survey has been carried out and has been provided with the listed building application. It does not provide costs of repairs, but does conclude that substantial work is required to put the cinema back into full repair – largely comprising of works to roofs, render, joinery, rainwater goods, internal finishes and services. The Authority's Conservation Officer has inspected the building externally and internally and would agree with the findings of the report.

Notwithstanding the condition of the building, its importance is clearly highly relevant. It is clear that the majority of the affected finishes/details are relatively modern in date (cement render, asbestos sheet roof, casement windows, much internal detail), the building having been substantially altered and extended prior to listing in 1977. The pedimented façade and the interior balcony are the main historic features. The former is to be retained, the latter proposed for removal. The balcony is relatively plain and does not have the opulence typical of many cinemas and theatres of the early C20. It does not form part of an architectural ensemble, the rest of the interior space of utilitarian character. In itself, the balcony is of little architectural and historic merit, and retention in situ does not appear to be in the public interest.

Deliberate neglect does also have a bearing in 'weighting' the relevance of costs, but while the building is shabby and run-down, minimal works have kept it weather tight and safe for public use, and no formal listed building enforcement has been necessary.

The Authority's Conservation Officer is satisfied that it would not be in the public interest to seek the full restoration of the cinema. Legislation does not permit enforcement measures to secure the restoration of listed buildings to their appearance prior to listing: to perpetuate the appearance of what presently exists would seem disproportionate in this case. The incorporation of the front elevation within the redevelopment retains the key architectural feature as a façade to a new cinema facility to the rear and keeps this prominent landmark for the public to enjoy. This is supported by the list description notes that the building which states that this is 'included for street façade and as the remains of a C19 assembly room'.

The Circular also requires consideration to be given to the adequacy of efforts to retain the building in use. Whilst the current cinema has now closed, the proposal is for a replacement cinema, designed to meet modern requirements and with tiered seating. In this case, had the building been of greater architectural and historic merit, a case should be made for retention to serve the new cinema. However, in light of the conclusions above and with regard to the fact that upgrading to modern standards is likely to impact on what little is left of the historic interior – suggests that retention is not in the public interest. A replacement facility is proposed within the development.

The Circular also prescribes the open marketing of such a building to retain it in use. Given its central location within the application site, together with the advice provided above, this does not seem reasonable in the case of the Playhouse: such action is more applicable to an individual property, whereas the cinema is historically contiguous to the former hotel complex.

The third test in the Circular relates to the merits of alternative proposals for the site. In this case, the façade is to be incorporated within the scheme, fronting commercial units and the entrance to the new cinema facility. While the sole retention of a façade is not generally an acceptable approach (61/96 para 98), it has been suggested above that the façade is the chief feature of interest. Its retention has been carefully considered and a method statement

available for its structural treatment during construction. The new extensions are set well back and give the façade due prominence. The glazing of the arcaded openings with simple fenestration is 'honest' and respects the character of the façade

In conclusion to this aspect of the application, it is considered that the partial demolition of the cinema is justified and that the criteria laid out in the Circular has been adequately addressed.

### ***Impact on the Character and Setting of the Listed Building***

In addition to the above, a key issue in considering this application is the detailed design of the proposal and its impact on the listed building and its setting.

It cannot be emphasised enough the importance of this site in both its local context in Tenby, but also in terms of the contribution it makes to the wider National Park, both visually, socially and economically. The design of the proposal is the result of numerous meetings, pre-application and post refusal discussions with officers. It was agreed at an early stage of discussions that the Norton frontage building should replicate the former Gatehouse building with a more contemporary element to the White Lion Street frontage linking to the former Playhouse façade. This approach was also fully endorsed by the Design Commission panel.

The proposal that has been presented does now attempt to replicate the former Gatehouse in design terms although includes an additional floor; achievable in the same height as the previous building by lowering the ceilings and distances between the floors. It is considered that the massing of the buildings proposed are acceptable and provides an appropriate solution in scale terms to read with the context of the surrounding buildings.

Since the last refusal the applicant's agent has amended the scheme to provide a far more faithful replica of the original Gatehouse, albeit meeting more modern standards. The design of the basement area to the Norton, whilst still providing the "service" elements to the apartments above in terms of the car park and disposal of waste, cycle store etc, has been carefully designed to provide a more attractive presentation to the public pavement. This has been achieved through providing a rustication to the render (a finish that is typical throughout Tenby town) and providing ventilation grills and car park gates that are wrought iron to reflect the detailing of the balconies on the upper floors. The window proportions and details of these with recessive sizes from ground to roof, the dormer details and mouldings and general fenestration to the Norton is now considered to far better replicate the original building and will sit well within the surrounding Victorian architecture which provides the "picture postcard" image of Tenby when viewed from North Beach.

The frontage to White Lion Street has also been altered, providing a transition from the more traditional building through a glazed link to a further traditionally

proportioned and detailed building and then linked to the retained cinema façade with a very modern approach. The new cinema is bold and modern in design with a combination of finishes and textures to soften its overall massing. Whilst the “link” is unashamedly modern, it is considered that subject to full detailing of the materials and colours to be used that this provides an exciting new design for Tenby in a location where this can be accommodated whilst conserving the character of the Conservation Area and wider area. The proposal, whilst linked to the retained listed cinema façade, does not seek to overwhelm this in proportion or design and retains this as a dominating part of the overall scheme. It is however considered that the cinema roof behind needs to be reduced in terms of its overhang to minimise any potential dominance of the listed building and this amendment has been requested from the applicant's agent.

### ***Conclusion***

It is therefore considered that adequate justification has been made for the substantial demolition of this listed building and the proposed re-development of the site would not have any adverse effect on the special architectural and historic interest of this listed building or its setting subject to the amendment described above and subject to conditions requiring approval of the architectural details, finishes and colours.

### ***Recommendation***

That Cadw be advised that it is the view of the National Park Authority that listed building consent should be granted subject to appropriate conditions and highlighted in this report.