

## **SECTION A – MATTERS FOR DECISION**

### **Planning Applications Recommended For Approval**

<b><u>APPLICATION NO:</u> P2024/0685</b>	<b><u>DATE:</u> 24.10.2024</b>
<b>PROPOSAL:</b> The refurbishment of the Princess Royal theatre and civic square, including extension of the theatre.	
<b>LOCATION:</b> Princess Royal Theatre Port Talbot Civic Centre Access To Port Talbot Civic Centre Port Talbot Neath Port Talbot	
<b>APPLICANT:</b> Mr Clive Barnard Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council (NPTCBC)	
<b>TYPE:</b> Full Plans	
<b>WARD:</b> Aberavon	

### **SITE AND CONTEXT**

The application site is approx. 0.68Ha and located within the northern extent of Port Talbot Town Centre (LDP Town Centre R2/1 Port Talbot). The application site comprises The Princess Royal Theatre, the eastern wing of a defined civic block which includes the Port Talbot Civic Centre (Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council) and the adjacent civic square. The civic square is currently set around an earlier octagonal fountain / art feature forming the public realm to the front / principal elevations of the theatre (southwest facing) and civic buildings (southeast facing), which have a u-shaped format and unified architectural style (post-modern).

The Princess Royal theatre offers a 798-seat community theatre hosting a range of events and attracting visitors / tourists into Port Talbot town centre with the Civic Square providing a principal throughfare between the site, Aberfan Shopping Mall (further South) and high street / town centre (south easterly). The civic square connects to the primary public 'realms' of the wider town centre via the Aberavon Bridge (Grade II Listed), pedestrianised and offering passage on foot and via cycle across the River Afan which borders the site at the east. The site area adjoins the grounds of the Ebenezer Welsh Baptist chapel (built 1881 and Grade II listed) and the Aberavon Shopping Centre (circa 1970, redeveloped in 1990's), both of which also provide inward elevations to the Civic Square.

The site is associated with car parking (3 No. car parks), positioned to the northeast and southeast (abutting the eastern and northern elevations of the Princess Royal Theatre) with some broader areas of soft landscaping. The main access to the site is from the B4286 Heillbronn Way located along the northeastern boundary with pedestrian access possible from Station Road to the southeast, and the B4286 located along the northern site boundary. A detailed description of the Local Area and surrounding context can be found in para. 2.2 of the Planning Statement (The Urbanists, Oct 22, 2024).

### **DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT**

As described within the Planning Statement prepared by the Urbanists, dated 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2024 (as received on 23/10/2024) the proposed works are categorised as follows, "The proposals would see a combination of public realm enhancements and architectural interventions to upgrade this site / the improvement of the public realm and desirability of the area for use" and shall include:

- i) Landscaping works to the civic square, comprising resurfacing, extensive landscape planting and re-profiling areas to create spaces and features for relaxation, sustainable urban drainage, and active travel features, alongside a new amphitheatre, and space for 'pop-up' commercial uses.
- ii) Extensions to the Theatre and Civic Centre, to provide a rejuvenated and modernised theatre performance and associated spaces, enhanced contemporary elevations and new gateway entrance into the theatre.



The scope of the proposed works, including demolition of existing parts of the building fabric are discussed below with relevance to the submitted plans / drawings. For a broader comparison of the external alterations, the existing and proposed schemes can be compared via the below, and are discussed in turn under the section of the officer report entitled 'Visual Amenity':

- PRT Existing Context Elevations, Drawing No. 26CC03-AHR-32-TZZ-D-A-08120-P01
- PRT Proposed Context Elevations, Drawing No. 26CC03-AHR-32-TZZ-D-A-08400-P01

### **Basement Level (BL)**

#### *Relevant Plans:*

PRT Existing Basement, Drawing No. 26CC03-AHR-31-TB1-D-A-08109-P01

PRT Proposed Basement, Drawing No. 26CC03-AHR-31-TB1-D-A-08209-P01

#### (i) Proposed Elements:

- Foundations / supporting columns (7 No.) etc. to extension (to northeast elevation) completed at GF and FF and plinth for transdek lift system.

- Extension / foundation of 8.30m (length) x 6.10m (depth) with retaining works.
- New retaining wall to match existing retaining / brick works to rear (north) of plant rooms (gas 6.2 sqm, cable pit / switch room 12.2 sqm, and substation 27 sqm).
- Internal reconfiguration of layout to create additional stores and cellar (beer pipes to ground and first floor).

## **Ground Floor (GF)**

### *Relevant Plans:*

PRT Existing Ground Floor, Drawing No. 26CC03-AHR-T00-D-A-08110-P01

PRT Proposed Ground Floor, Drawing No. 26CC03-AHR-31-T00-D-A-08210-P01

#### (i) Proposed Elements:

- Restored stage area (252.20 sqm) completed in black ply stage surface.
- Extension to northeast facing elevation (rear of stage) with a clearance height of 6.00m for scenery access, with 1.50m clear width for access to rear of stage. Extension measures 5.25m – 6.15m (width) x 30.70m (length).
- New transdek dock lift (2 tonne 3.00m x 3.00m) with external roller shutter access (into car parking area).
- Internal alterations to create premier green room dressing room, WC facilities.
- Internal remodelling to create multi-purpose room.
- New internal subdivision / layout to create lobby areas (between foyer and theatre hall), with stores and secure control booth. Creation of bar store (17.80sqm).
- Extension to southwest elevation of building of 26.25m (length) x 6.00m (depth) to create a new entrance lobby 14.10sqm with multiple glazed doors as part of a curtain wall to provide internal / external connection during summer or outdoor performance.
- Side extension (south corner) of 3.80 sqm (depth) x 7.50m (width) to square off corner of the building to create larger WC facilities.
- Bar store to become lift lobby with addition of extension for evac lift (3.00m x 3.00m).
- Creation of info point (5.60 sqm) and theatre office (15.4 sqm) with digital booking screens.
- Remodelled bar servery area and auditorium entrance lobby with large foyer area.
- Front extension (south) with a footprint of 11.90m (depth - west) x 7.45m (depth, east) x 45.40m (breadth) to create a double height lobby and smaller entrance lobby (main entrance on east facing side).
- Installation of glazed doors to south facing elevation (new lobby) as part of a curtain wall to provide internal / external connection during summer or outdoor performance.

## **First Floor (FF)**

### *Relevant Plans:*

PRT Existing First Floor, Drawing No. 26CC03-AHR-31-T01-D-A-08111-P01

PRT Proposed First Floor, Drawing No. 26CC03-AHR-31-T01-D-A-08211-P01

#### (i) Proposed Elements:

- Extension to the rear (northeast elevation, matched with works at ground floor. clearance height of 6.00m for scenery access, with 1.50m clear width for access to rear of stage. Extension measures 5.25m – 6.15m (width) x 30.70m (length).
- Retention of existing voids (stage & theatre hall), and circle seating areas (185.20 sqm).
- Reconfiguration of partitioning for dressing rooms to create more efficient layout.
- New area for pre-booked drinks (10.40 sqm) to replace existing bar space.
- Redesign of glazing to external wall (southeast) to match the proposed works at ground floor to create a lobby of 9.20 sqm (prior to stair 2) and lift lobby / circulation area of 52.30 sqm prior to evac lift (3.00 sqm x 3.00 sqm).
- Incorporation of stair 3 into extended element with new glazing and stairwell void.
- Matched works at first floor to expand WC facilities. Side extension (south corner) of 3.80 sqm (depth) x 7.50m (width) to square off corner of the building.
- Extension to the southwestern elevation (as per lobby / foyer works at ground floor with a void at first floor to create open gallery space with a lid to the draught lobby. Extension matched to GF of 26.25m (length) x 6.00m (depth). Decorative panelling to front façade of the extension as detailed on elevations.
- Remodelling of internal layout to create bar store, interval drinks area, break out area and bar servery (via reduction to mayor parlour). New bar servery area of 28.3sqm and 'break out' area of 149.60 sqm) instead of smaller offices and a new Mayors Parlour (55.20 sqm).

## **Second Floor (SF)**

*Relevant Plans:*

PRT Existing Second Floor, Drawing No. 26CC03-AHR-31-T02-D-A-08212-P01

PRT Proposed Second Floor, Drawing No. 26CC03-AHR-31-T02-D-A-08212-P01

### (i) Proposed Elements:

- Completion of extension to rear as per works at GF and FF (northeast of the building), extension of 5.25m – 6.15m (width) x 30.70m (length) with an extensive green roof.
- Modification works to existing gantry access (to improve H&S), with mall mounted stair to access doors and electrical plan room to house AV rack, amplifier, fir curtain cogs etc.
- Superficial works to changing rooms, bar servery area and committee rooms including the replacement of windows, making good around openings, decorative refresh to rooms and minor acoustic upgrades.
- Continuation of evac lift shaft and stairwell voids as per GF and FF proposal with creation of a lift lobby (12.00 sqm) and dressing room area 37.60 sqm.
- Completion of 2-storey lobby extension with flat roof / green biodiverse roofing.

## **Roof Level (RL)**

*Relevant Plans:*

PRT Existing Roof, Drawing No. 26CC03-AHR-31-TR1-D-A-08113-P01

PRT Proposed Roof, Drawing No. 26CC03-AHR-31-TR1-D-A-08213-P01

### (ii) Proposed Elements:

- Maintenance access roof across extension to rear / north of the building.
- Lift installation and stairwell extension maintenance roofing.
- New access hatch within existing pitched roof structure.

The Civic Building is a steel frame construction with precast planks generally as floorplates throughout constructed in 1987 with roofing comprising timber purlins, felt, batten and slate roof tiles. With respect to the foundations, it is unlikely that piled foundations have been installed and the foundations of the existing building are expected to be spread pad and strip foundations. The proposed development/extension will have their own stability system and the existing building will not rely on the proposed for stability.

#### Key Alterations:

- 3 No. lift access points, along with more accessible routes into and through the building.
- Contemporary extension to principal facade to create double height front entrance / lobby to accommodate more customers and incorporate cafe space, ticket sales and info point encouraging greater commercial and retail yield.
- Rear extension to provide servicing / production wing for stage access with lift from street level and associated retaining works.
- Accessibility is prioritised through widening corridors and entryways.
- Alterations to create more spacious dressing rooms, a bar and coffee area and meeting and storage facilities to better utilise internal spaces.

The material schedule / outline specification for stage 2 (works to Princess Royal Theatre) are specified within document reference: Planning Design Statement, AHR, Ref: 26CC03-AHR-10-TXX-T-A-04202, October 2024. In summary, materials include:

- Fibre cement panel rainscreen cladding (ivory)
- Anodised aluminium cladding (gold)
- Perforated anodised brise soleil screens
- Standing seam cladding (Grey)
- Full height curtain wall system
- Integrated artwork (to be confirmed)
- Existing retained brickwork (dark buff facing brick)
- Existing retained slate roof
- Replacement windows
- Replacement doors
- Green roofing with PPC roof guarding

**Existing Brick Walls:** Allowance to be made for review of existing brick walls and check for any repairs that may be required to ensure weathertightness and longevity of walls Where required cleaning to be undertaken of existing exposed brickwork.

**Insulated Green Roof:** Green roof system incorporating a top quality, heavy duty, torch applied, SBS elastomeric bitumen capping sheet. The product features chemically treated bitumen to deliver superior root resistance which has been tested and approved by the FLL.

**Curtain Walling:** Structurally silicone glazed (SSG) curtain wall system to include fully glazed powered double doors and fully glazed powered sliding entrance doors.

## NEGOTIATIONS

Pre-application (positive feedback) advice was provided on 07/10/2024 under planning reference Q2024/0188 (Regeneration of the exterior and interior of the existing Princess Royal Theatre to include demolition works, contemporary extensions to the northeast elevation (rear), southeast elevation (side) and southwest facing elevations (front), installation of a green roof, insertion of lifts, with fenestration alterations and associated site works). As part of this application, following consultee comments from Neath Port Talbot County Brough Councils (NPTCBC) Biodiversity Officer on 01/11/2024 an amended landscaping scheme (inc. detailed planting specifications / schedule) with the below attachments was received on 25/11/2024:

- 26CC03-URB-XX-XX-DR-LA-XX-00300-P04 PRT Planting Schedule
- 26CC03-URB-XX-XX-DR-LA-XX-00301-P04 PRT Planting Plan 1 of 4
- 26CC03-URB-XX-XX-DR-LA-XX-00302-P04 PRT Planting Plan 2 of 4
- 26CC03-URB-XX-XX-DR-LA-XX-00303-P04 PRT Planting Plan 3 of 4
- 26CC03-URB-XX-XX-DR-LA-XX-00304-P04 PRT Planting Plan 4 of 4
- 26CC03-URB-XX-XX-DR-LA-XX-00305-P01 PRT Biodiversity Green Roof Plan
- 26CC03-URB-XX-XX-DR-LA-XX-00521-P01 PRT Biodiverse Roof Details

In addition, following consultee comments from Natural Resources Wales (NRW) dated 15/11/2024, with further clarity provided from NRW on 27/11/2024 the developer was required to provide an amended Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP). The applicant submitted revised details, by way of an updated CEMP (prepared by Morgan Sindall and dated 02-12-2024). Re-consultation was commenced with NRW on 04/12/2024 given the CEMP attempts to alleviate the concerns presented by NRW.

## PLANNING HISTORY

There is no relevant planning history for the site area of the 'Princess Royal Theatre and Civic Square Public Realm' as defined by the red-line boundary relevant to this planning submission.

## CONSULTATIONS

**NPTCBC Head of Engineering & Transport (Highways):** *No Objection subject to the suggested planning conditions being imposed.*

**NPTCBC Head of Engineering & Transport (Drainage / SAB):** *No objection, SAB approval is required.*

**NPTCBC Transport Strategy Manager:** Comments provided details of which are addressed under the section entitled 'Sustainable Travel' within the main body of the officer report.

**Mid and West Wales, Fire and Rescue Service:** The developer should consider the need to provide adequate water supplies and vehicle access for firefighting purposes on the site.

**NPTCBC Senior Environmental Health Officer:** *No Objection subject to conditions.*

**NPTCBC Senior Ecologist:** No objections subject to compliance with the approved plans.

**National Resources Wales (NRW):** Comments and amended details requested, addressed through amended Construction Management Plan, which can be conditioned. Addressed in more details within the following report.

**Welsh Water / Dwr Cymru (DCWW):** Comments and concerns provided to be addressed via SABs, and easements for infrastructure.

**The Coal Authority:** *No Objection.*

**Heneb, Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeology:** *No Objection.*

**Theatres Trust:** *Overall, we welcome this project and are pleased to see investment into this important theatre and its facilities.*

## REPRESENTATIONS

The neighbouring properties were consulted on 25/10/2024.

A site notice was also displayed on 28/10/2024.

The application was also advertised in the press on 01/11/2024.

In response, to date 1 no. representations have been received, with the issues raised summarised as follows:

1. The proposed design is hideous, not in-keeping with the local aesthetic or architecture.
2. Port Talbot has a strong legacy of Wales's industrial culture as well as Britain's beautiful architecture, predominantly made out of stonework. The proposal for the refurbishment looks distinctly American with big glass rectangles and aluminium panels.
3. The Council is short on funds and money should not be spent on something which looks nice but has no concrete benefits. The councils' efforts would be better spent focusing on their core objectives such as maintaining services and roads.

## REPORT

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 its sustainable development (or wellbeing) objectives. 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 set out below, 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.

## National Planning Policy:

[Future Wales: The National Plan 2040](#) is the national development framework, setting the direction for development in Wales to 2040. The development plan sets out a strategy for addressing key national priorities through the planning system, including sustaining and developing a vibrant economy, achieving decarbonisation and climate resilience, developing strong ecosystems and improving the health and wellbeing of our communities.

The following policies are of particular relevance to the assessment of this application:

**Policy 1** – Where Wales Will Grow

**Policy 2** – Shaping Urban Growth and Regeneration – Strategic Placemaking

**Policy 3** – Supporting Urban Growth and Regeneration – Public Sector Leadership

**Policy 6** – Town Centre First

**Policy 8** – Flooding

**Policy 9** – Resilient Ecological Networks and Green Infrastructure

**Policy 12** – Regional Connectivity

## **Welsh National Marine Plan**

[https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-11/welsh-national-marine-plan-document\\_0.pdf](https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-11/welsh-national-marine-plan-document_0.pdf)

This Plan extends up to the level of mean high water spring tides and the waters of every estuary, river or channel, so far as the tide flows at mean high water spring tide. In comparison, land-use planning boundaries generally extend to mean low water spring tides. This Plan therefore overlaps physically with terrestrial plans, helping to facilitate integration between land and sea planning and management.

### **Vision and objectives**

The vision for the Welsh inshore and offshore marine plan regions is: Welsh seas are clean, healthy, safe, productive and biologically diverse:

- Through an ecosystem approach, natural resources are sustainably managed, and our seas are healthy and resilient, supporting a sustainable and thriving economy;
- Through access to, understanding of and enjoyment of the marine environment and maritime cultural heritage, health and well-being are improving;
- Through Blue Growth more jobs and wealth are being created and are helping coastal communities become more resilient, prosperous and equitable with a vibrant culture; and
- Through the responsible deployment of low carbon technologies, the Welsh marine area is making a strong contribution to energy security and climate change emissions targets.

1. **Band One** activities are low risk, and little or no additional evidence is likely to be required to demonstrate compliance with this Plan.



2. **Band Two** activities are medium risk. Some evidence is likely to be required to demonstrate compliance with this Plan. The level of evidence required will be based upon the level of risk associated with the project.
3. **Band Three** activities are higher risk, including projects that require formal project assessment processes. A greater level of evidence is likely to be required to demonstrate compliance with this Plan. Proposals falling into Bands Two and Three should include a clear supporting statement on which plan policies are relevant, the extent to which the proposal complies with the policies and how the proposal contributes to the Plan vision and objectives.

### [Planning Policy Wales \(Edition 12, February 2024\)](#)

The primary objective of PPW is to ensure that the planning system contributes towards the delivery of sustainable development and improves the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, as required by the Planning (Wales) Act 2015, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and other key legislation and resultant duties such as the Socio-economic Duty. A well-functioning planning system is fundamental for sustainable development and achieving sustainable places

PPW promotes action at all levels of the planning process which is conducive to maximising its contribution to the well-being of Wales and its communities. It encourages a wider, sustainable and problem solving outlook which focuses on integrating and addressing multiple issues rather than on an approach which is fragmented, un-coordinated and deals with issues in isolation. It provides an opportunity to remove any actual or perceived problems in current approaches and stimulate and support innovative and creative ideas as well as high standards of evidence and assessment to underpin the preparation of development plans and strategies and individual proposals. Monitoring and learning from development outcomes so as to drive sustainable improvements in planning practice is also important.

**Planning Policy Wales** states that in respect of good design and making better places;

*Good design is fundamental to creating sustainable places where people want to live, work, and socialise. Design is not just about the architecture of a building but the relationship between all elements of the natural and built environment and between people and places. To achieve sustainable development, design must go beyond aesthetics and include the social, economic, environmental, cultural aspects of the development, including how space is used, how buildings and the public realm support this use, as well as its construction, operation, management, and its relationship with the surrounding area.*

*Design is an inclusive process, which can raise public aspirations, reinforce civic pride and create a sense of place and help shape its future. For those proposing new development, early engagement can help to secure public acceptance of new development. Meeting the objectives of good design should be the aim of all those involved in the development process and applied to all development proposals, at all scales.*

*The planning system should create sustainable places which are attractive, sociable, accessible, active, secure, welcoming, healthy, and friendly. Development proposals*

*should create the conditions to bring people together, making them want to live, work, and play in areas with a sense of place and well-being, creating prosperity for all.*

**PPW 12 – Accessibility 3.50:** A broad balance between housing, community facilities, services and employment opportunities in both urban and rural areas should be promoted to minimise the need for long distance commuting. Planning authorities should adopt policies to locate major generators of travel demand, such as housing, employment, retailing, leisure and recreation, and community facilities (including libraries, schools, doctor’s surgeries, and hospitals), within existing urban areas or areas which are, or can be, easily reached by walking or cycling, and are well served by public transport.

**PPW 12 - Chapter 4 (Active and Social Places):** A Resilient Wales is supported by protecting existing communities and natural environments while promoting well connected infrastructure and facilities closer to where people live. Good housing, access to services, green spaces and community facilities help to create the right conditions for better health and well-being.

To foster Cohesive Communities development will need to be well connected, with the emphasis on the promotion of accessible mixed-use development, comprising appropriate combinations of housing, employment, retailing, community, cultural and recreation opportunities.

**PPW 12 - Community Facilities 4.4.1:** Community buildings and spaces provide an important focus for sustaining communities and their well-being. They cover a broad range of activities and services that can be delivered by the public, private and third sectors. Community facilities contribute to a sense of place which is important to the health, well-being and amenity of local communities and their existence is often a key element in creating viable and sustainable places...4.4.2, planning authorities should work with their local communities to identify sites and buildings that can help deliver community benefits and which support the development plan, and where appropriate, place plan objectives.

**PPW 12 – Recreational Spaces 4.5.1:** Recreational spaces are vital for our health, well-being and amenity, and can contribute to an area’s green infrastructure. They provide a place for play, sport, healthy physical activity, and a place to relax often in the presence of nature, and they contribute to our quality of life. Networks of high quality, accessible green spaces and recreation spaces will also promote nature conservation, biodiversity and provide enjoyable opportunities for residents and visitors to participate in a wide range of physical activities. These activities are important for the well-being of children and adults and for the social, environmental, cultural, and economic life of Wales.

**PPW 12 – Formal and Informal Green Space 4.5.3:** Formal and informal open green spaces should be protected from development, particularly in urban areas where they fulfil multiple purposes. As well as enhancing quality of life, they contribute to biodiversity, the conservation of the historic environment, nature and landscape, better air quality, the protection of groundwater and as places of tranquillity... 4.5.6 Planning authorities should encourage the multiple use of open space and facilities, where appropriate, to increase their effective use... 4.5.7 Planning authorities should

consider scope to use disused land and routes as parks, linear parks or greenways in urban areas and encourage the provision of safe and attractive cycle routes and footpaths.

**PPW 12 - Green Infrastructure 6.2.3:** Green infrastructure is capable of providing several functions at the same time and as a result offers multiple benefits, for social, economic and cultural as well as environmental resilience. The components of green infrastructure, by improving the resilience of ecosystems, can result in positive benefits to well-being including flood management, water purification, improved air quality, reduced noise pollution and local climate moderation, climate change mitigation and food production. These benefits are important in urban environments where they can facilitate health and well-being related benefits of open space, clean air and improved tranquillity, for example, as well as creating a sense of place and improved social cohesion. In addition, green infrastructure has a role in protecting local distinctiveness, providing economic benefits and social and community opportunities.

PPW 12 is supported by a series of more detailed [Technical Advice Notes](#) (TANs), of which the following are of relevance: -

- Technical Advice Note (TAN) 5: Nature Conservation and Planning (2009)
- Technical Advice Note (TAN) 12: Design (2016)
- Technical Advice Note (TAN) 13: Tourism
- Technical Advice Note (TAN) 15: Development and Flood Risk (2004)
- Technical Advice Note (TAN) 16: Sport, Recreation and Open Space (2009)
- Technical Advice Note (TAN) 18: Transport (2007)
- Technical Advice Note (TAN) 24: The Historic Environment (2017)

### Local Planning Policies

The Local Development Plan for the area comprises Future Wales: The National Plan 2040 and the Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council Local Development Plan (2011-2026) Adopted January 2016, within which the following policies are of relevance:

### Strategic Policies:

- **Policy SP1** Climate Change
- **Policy SP2** Health
- **Policy SP3** Sustainable communities
- **Policy SP4** Infrastructure
- **Policy SP5** Development in the Coastal Corridor Strategy Area
- **Policy SP10** Open Space
- **Policy SP15** Biodiversity and Geodiversity
- **Policy SP16** Environmental Protection
- **Policy SP20** Transport Network
- **Policy SP21** Built Environment and Historic Heritage

### Topic Based Policies:

- **Policy SC1** Settlement limits
- **Policy OS1** Open Space Provision
- **Policy OS2** Protection of Existing Open Space
- **Policy EN6** Important Biodiversity and Geodiversity Sites

- **Policy EN7**      Important Natural Features
- **Policy EN8**      Pollution and Land Stability
- **Policy EN9**      Developments in the Central Port Talbot Area
- **Policy TR2**      Design and Access of New Development
- **Policy BE1**      Design
- **Policy BE2**      Buildings of Local Importance

*Supplementary Planning Guidance:*

The following SPG is of relevance to this application: -

- [Parking Standards](#) (October 2016)
- [Pollution](#) (October 2016)
- [Open Space & Greenspace \(July 2017\)](#)
- [Design](#) (July 2017)
- [Biodiversity and Geodiversity \(May 2018\)](#)
- [The Historic Environment](#) (April 2019) (incl. [Schedule of Buildings of Local Importance](#) and [SPG: Schedule of Designated Canal Structures](#))

Issues

Having regard to the above, the main issues to consider in this application relate to the principle of development, together with the impact on the visual amenity of the area, the amenities of neighbouring residents, highway safety, and active travel routes.

Principle of Development

The proposed development is a Levelling Up Fund (LUF) scheme that has successfully secured funding. The vision for the development as included in the funding submission was as follows: “To create a considered sequence of vibrant green spaces centred around the River Afan for Port Talbot’s local community and visitors to enjoy. Bringing to the town, a richness and diversity that will create new popular destinations that enhances the town’s vitality and supports its local businesses”

The objectives to achieve at the Theatre Site (via LUF) are summarised below:

- Ground floor extensions, including a remodelled foyer with glazed extension to the front, and single storey extension to the rear, together with internal alterations to the Princess Royal Theatre (PRT) (visualisation provided at Figure 4.2);
- Associated new: rear signage and public artwork; as well as side elevation elements including new theatre stage lift and signage;
- Creation of a new civic space which significantly increases the amount of greener creates a more inviting and usable space, acting as a destination for the town;
- Using trees and planting to frame buildings and create focal points, as well as seating to emphasise and enable the use of spaces;
- Measures implemented to prevent antisocial behaviour, which include lighting and bollards;
- Increased permeability and sustainable drainage systems designed into the civic space;
- Orientating the design/ layout of the civic space towards the PRT to celebrate the new glazed foyer area and tie into the public realm;

- Extending the new green space to the River Afan to enhance the setting to the Ebenezer Chapel and capture the benefits of the proximity to the river;
- Providing sheltered dwell space adjacent to the Chapel to accommodate semi-permanent active uses that would provide an active edge to the space;
- Generally capitalising on strong positive views towards Mynydd Emroch and Mynydd Brombil by framing views and creating a new dwelling space.

As detailed within the Planning Design Statement, AHR, Ref: 26CC03-AHR-10-TXX-T-A-04202, October 2024, and in response to the LUF objectives, the Princess Royal Theatre provides the following / enhanced offerings to the local community:

- A theatre space with a 798 seating capacity (reduced to 700 seats to accommodate scope of the works).
- A conference capacity of up to 250 people
- A stage area with a new rear wing space.
- Remodelled lightweight orchestra pit
- DDA stands for the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliant accesses.
- Remodelled servery areas with a coffee shop / bar area and facility to sell tickets in an entrance with good circulation space.
- Better circulation, access and egress for users during events.
- Modernised bar area at first floor.
- Remodelling to provide better Green Room facilities.
- Larger sound and lighting room with winch and rigging systems.
- Car park and entrance built on key placemaking principles
- Areas within the Civic Square / Public Realm for activities (i.e. Christmas Markets).
- Better connectivity between public spaces and the civic centre.
- External advertisements.
- Interior design to consider localism.
- Energy-efficient plant.
- BREEAM, very good rating.

By way of background positive pre-application advice was provided on 7<sup>th</sup> October 2024 under reference Q2024/0188 [Regeneration of the exterior and interior of the existing Princess Royal Theatre to include demolition works, contemporary extensions to the northeast elevation (rear), southeast elevation (side) and southwest facing elevations (front), installation of a green roof, insertion of lifts, with fenestration alterations and associated site works]. The scheme under assessment today, builds positively on the feedback provided at earlier stages of negotiation. In addition to the pre-application Q2024/0188 (sole relevance to the theatre and the civic square), pre-application Q2024/0192 was also considered in tandem; *Regeneration of Riverside Public Realm (Outdoor Space) in Port Talbot*. This scheme covers part 2 of the project (to be completed in future) which serves to regenerate the quality of the outdoor public space and/or active 'riverside' public realm on the southeastern side of the River Afan.

*Tackling key issues in Neath Port Talbot;* As outlined within section 1.3.1 of the LDP a plethora of key issues have been identified, the following of which are of most relevance to this case:

**KI 3:** Economic growth in Neath Port Talbot has stagnated over the last 10 years

**KI 10:** There are concerns over the vitality and viability of the town, district and local centres.

**KI 14:** There are significant areas of brownfield (previously developed) land requiring remediation and regeneration.

**KI 16:** There is a need for improvements to the highway network to facilitate new development, deliver key regeneration proposals and improve accessibility.

**KI 17:** There is a need to address dereliction and loss of character in settlements and urban centres

Considering the above, the scheme works to improve an existing economic outlet which also provides stable and flexible employment opportunities and assists in supporting public services, retail, and tourism within the county borough. Given the PRT and Civic Squares central context, serving as a key node within the Town Centre the cohesive regeneration of both sites assists in achieving the latter, but notably enhancing the vitality and viability of Port Talbot Town Centre and in the foreseeable future, the Port Talbot Riverside Realm. The development includes existing urban sites that feature well-established uses, with LUF making it possible to remediate and regenerate locally desirable sites. Likewise, although no major upgrades to highway infrastructure are proposed here, the site is well supported by existing infrastructure and therefore, it is possible to deliver a key regeneration proposal that also primarily serves to improve accessibility, not only at PRT but also around the public realm. Contemporary extensions to the existing building, which currently has limited architectural merits, serves to revitalise the aesthetics of the civic building with unique, identifiable and locally distinct architectural elements, that makes subtle references to existing material palettes, the industrial history of Port Talbot and the character of adjacent developments, including Listed artefacts. The scheme has considered relevant placemaking principles set out within PPW and the Placemaking Charter (Welsh Government and the Design Commission for Wales).

#### *Principle of Development*

The application site as defined by the red-line boundary and as known as ‘Princess Royal Theatre, Port Talbot Civic Centre’ lies within the defined settlement limit (LDP Policy SC1) and LDP strategy area of Port Talbot (Aberavon Ward) an identified ‘Town Centre’ district R2/1. LDP Policy SP3 (Sustainable Communities) in union with Policy SC1 (Settlement Limits) cites that with the defined settlement limits, proposed development in sustainable locations that is proportionate in scale and form to the role and function of the settlement and that accords with the settlement hierarchy will be permitted / acceptable in principle.

LDP Policy SP5 specifies that in the Coastal Corridor Strategy Area, sustainable growth and development will be promoted to benefit the County Borough as a whole, while protecting and enhancing the area’s character and environment. This includes, criterion 4; safeguarding existing employment uses and sites for employment purposes; and criterion 5; promoting mixed use regeneration schemes at Neath Town Centre, Port Talbot Town Centre and Aberavon Seafront.

In short, this proposal comprises the regeneration of the existing (circa. 798 seat) theatre and conference complex at the Port Talbot Civic Centre, with works to enhance areas of the Civic Square / Public Realm under the Levelling Up Fund (LUF). Extensive external works, incorporating contemporary styled extensions in addition to the reconfiguration of the internal floor plans (across GF, FF, and SF) will provide enhanced offerings within a valuable community leisure facility (D2 Use Class -

Assembly and leisure). As clarified by the applicant, “the project aim is to make the Theatre more appealing to the community, encourage a more diverse use and create a strong identity”, notably by ensuring spaces / places are fully accessible to a diverse portfolio of users, afford a theatre outlet for a wider variety of show types and enhancing potential for commercial/ retail yield. There are no objections to the principle of the development, providing all other relevant planning policy and material planning considerations are satisfied.

#### *Local Development Plan (LDP) Policies*

LDP Policy R2 (Proposals Within Retail Centres) cites that (1) within the designated retail centres, uses that would enhance the vitality, viability, and attractiveness of the centre, including uses in classes A and D will be permitted where:

- a) The proposal integrates with and strengthens the layout, retail character and pedestrian flows of the centre; and
- b) Does not prejudice the effective use of upper floors; and
- c) Maintains a vibrant and attractive shopping street frontage.

Proposals for the redevelopment or conversion within a retail centre of retail, commercial, leisure or community premises to ground floor uses not complying with point 1 of this policy will only be permitted where:

- a) It is demonstrated that the existing use is no longer viable or appropriate in the location; and
- b) The proposal would not result in the loss of a supermarket, shop, café, or public house which is important in terms of providing facilities to serve the community; or:
- c) The proposal would result in the redevelopment of derelict, unsightly, underused, and vacant land / premises for alternative uses which would have significant social, community or regeneration benefits.

With respect to the above criteria, given the PRT falls under a D Class Use, the project would accord with objective (a), with preserved and improved offerings / facilities (conference suites) at upper floors. Although the theatre does not strictly form part of the established retail frontages within the Port Talbot Town Centre, its frontage has a clear dominance over the Civic Square as a pinnacle building / gateway feature in the broader context. The works which comprise adding architectural merit to the building with a contemporary frontage onto the Civic Square contribute to a significant visual and physical enhancement of the public realm and wider ‘retail centre’, satisfying the objectives of (a) to (c). It is also noted that the regeneration of the existing theatre would help to bring people into the town centre, which would improve the vibrance and vitality of the town centre, with visit making use of other facilities located within the town centre, such as shops, bars, and restaurants.

The square is characterised by a geometry reflecting that of the PRT and Civic Centre and acts as a key thoroughfare / connector for pedestrians and cyclists transitioning between the site (from Heilbronn Way) and onward to the Aberavon shopping mall and town centre (further southeast inc. High Street / Station Road). At present the space is largely constrained by raised planting beds set around an octagonal shaped fountain centred around an existing public art installation. Landscape features radiate outward from this feature, including adjacent brick-plinth planters and associated integrated and freestanding street furniture. Although the existing layout is structured around this focal point, key desire lines to the Civic Centre are interrupted, limiting the versatility of the space. The existing hardscaping is limited by way of structure, textures, materiality, and topography, such that the space is unattractive with poorly maintained planting. The current circumstances deter longer dwell times and the landscaping has minimal contributions towards local biodiversity.

The proposed public realm / civic square regeneration scheme provides for enlarged pedestrianised terraces with stepped access around the façade of the building with DDA friendly ramped access points. A central focal point remains, with seating set around a 'stage' (outdoor amphitheatre) feature that is well integrated into the space and allows for freer circulation around the square. Vistas and vernaculars are enhanced with the proposed contemporary building extensions framed to culminate views across the square. In addition, the scheme introduces mixed paving types, contemporary street furniture providing seating in a range of coordinates across the public realm and rejuvenated ornamental planting, in modern raised / topographically styled planters and lower-lying beds and across existing lawns. Therefore, the criterions of the policy are dually satisfied.

### Public Open Space

LDP Policy SP10 (Open Space): Open Space Provision will be made to ensure that all residents have access to adequate open space through the following measures:

1. Ensuring that new development addresses local needs;
2. Retaining and protecting existing open space.

The policy sub-text para 5.1.52 specifies, "the strategy is to address inequalities in open space provision where possible through the planning system by retaining and enhancing existing provision and requiring new development to make provision for open space where there is a need. The term 'open space' refers to publicly accessible recreational space and includes playing fields, sports pitches, and courts; children's play areas, facilities for older children, informal open space, greenspace, parks and allotments."

The Civic Square regeneration scheme includes:

- Removal of the central water feature – with scope to accommodate contemporary art installations prepared by local artists.
- Additional steps / seating to create an outdoor amphitheatre style arrangement (around the central platform).
- Additional seating made from a low carbon material, modern and robust, vandal resistant and an all-inclusive design; positioned as borders around raised and level planting beds / features.
- Changes to the topography and utilities with creation of main arrival steps leading up to the building primary frontages and new levels (removal of existing raised planters).
- Development of a SuDS approach with green biodiverse roofing and rain gardens.
- An alternative area for a focal point or siting of a Christmas tree etc.
- A revised drainage scheme to better manage water flows / flooding.
- Retention of existing trees where possible and introduction of new trees and mixed-level native ornamental planting.
- Resurfacing with fresh paving and asphalt surfaces.





The revised soft and hard landscaping schemes would result in a contemporary refresh / overhaul of the existing civic square creating an attractive public realm, with space for activities, with improved accessibility and a clear, integrated pedestrian approach to the primary entrances / façades of the civic building and the PRT. In addition, suitably integrated GI will enhance the aesthetics and character quality of the 'place' in addition to the biodiversity of the site. In union with the works to enhance the exterior of the PRT, the rationale behind the scheme is evidenced, with emphasis on the connections and movements between outdoor and indoor spaces. The enhancement of green infrastructure, biodiversity net gain and incorporation of SuDS features is highly welcomed. With respect to Policy SP10 and strategic objectives of the LDP, the scheme would satisfy both parts, accord with broader objectives and result in considerable improvements to the existing offerings of informal open space.

The councils' expectations in relation to open space are clarified within Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG): Open Space and Greenspace (July 2017), and SPG: Biodiversity and Geodiversity (May 2018) which discusses appropriate mechanisms to enhance biodiversity and G.I (section 2.4 Green Infrastructure). In union the broader objectives of LDP Policy SP2 (Health) would be met; (3) Healthier, more active and safer lifestyles will be encouraged through the retention of a range of accessible leisure, recreational, health, retail, social, cultural and community facilities throughout the County Borough and (4) Accessibility within and between communities will be improved to encourage active travel; relevant Key Policies: TR1-TR2; BE1.

With reference to placemaking principles, the public realm should feature streets and public spaces that are well defined, welcoming, safe, and inclusive with a distinct identity. Public areas are designed to be robust and adaptable with landscape, green infrastructure, and sustainable drainage well integrated. They are well connected to existing places and promote opportunities for social interaction and a range of activities for all people. As this scheme involves the improvement of areas comprising the established public realm within Port Talbot, the Local Planning Authority will support the scheme providing it supplies:

- Defined public spaces that support and complement existing places
- Priority given walking, cycling, and playing.

- High quality well distributed green spaces and Green Infrastructure (GI) that supports everyday physical activity, provides an attractive setting, and supports biodiversity.
- An appropriate variety of spaces that support different uses.
- Use of materials that are robust, sustainable and contribute to character.
- Well integrated green infrastructure that delivers targeted benefits such as: active travel, reduce surface water, mitigates air pollution, noise abatement, supports biodiversity, and/ or reduces urban heat island effects.
- An inclusive environment in which people with different physical abilities, ages or backgrounds are not excluded and all people feel safe.
- Active travel connections provide a more direct route to key destinations.



LDP Policy BE1 (Design): All development proposals will be expected to demonstrate high quality design which fully takes into account the natural, historic and built environmental context and contributes to the creation of attractive, sustainable places. Proposals will only be permitted where all of the following criteria, where relevant, are satisfied:

1. It complements and enhances the character and appearance of the site, building or area in terms of siting, appearance, scale, height, massing, and elevation treatment;
2. It respects the context of the site and its place within the local landscape, including its impact on the important arterial gateways into the County Borough, its effects on townscape and the local historic and cultural heritage and it takes account of the site topography and prominent skylines or ridges;
3. It utilises materials appropriate to its surroundings and incorporates hard and soft landscaping and screening where appropriate;
4. It would not have a significant adverse impact on highway safety, the amenity of occupiers of adjacent land or the community;
5. Important local features (including buildings, amenity areas, green spaces and green infrastructure, biodiversity and ecological connectivity) are retained and enhanced as far as possible;
6. It achieves and creates attractive, safe places and public spaces, taking account of 'Secured by Design' principles (including where appropriate natural surveillance, visibility, well-lit environments and areas of public movement);

7. It plays a full role in achieving and enhancing an integrated transport and communications network promoting the interests of pedestrians, cyclists and public transport and ensures linkages with the existing surrounding community;
8. It uses resources, including land and energy, as efficiently as possible through:
  - (a) Making the best and most efficient use of the land available through being of appropriate density taking into account the character and appearance of the area, normally a minimum of 35 dwellings per hectare in the Coastal Corridor Strategy Area or a minimum of 30 dwellings per hectare in the Valleys Strategy Area;
  - (b) The layout and form of the development does not preclude the reasonable use of other adjacent land;
  - (c) Developing brownfield land in preference to greenfield land where possible;
  - (d) Minimising building exposure while maximising solar gain.
9. Its drainage systems are designed to limit surface water run-off and food risk and prevent pollution;
10. The layout and design of the development achieves inclusive design by ensuring barrier free environments, allowing access by all and making full provision for people with disabilities.

The successive sections of this report assess the relevant aspects of the criterion above. The 10 No. criteria of LDP Policy BE1 (Design) must be satisfied in accordance with guidance within TAN 12: Design (2016). BE1 in union with TAN 12 high quality developments that meets the standards for 'good design' as set out by Welsh Government (drawn from policy guidance within FW and PPW). The objectives of this policy are discussed within the Planning Statement and Design and Access Statement (DAS) that support this application. It is demonstrated that TAN 12 and LDP Policy have informed the concept development (evidenced at pre-application stage) and been competently considered when finalising this scheme.

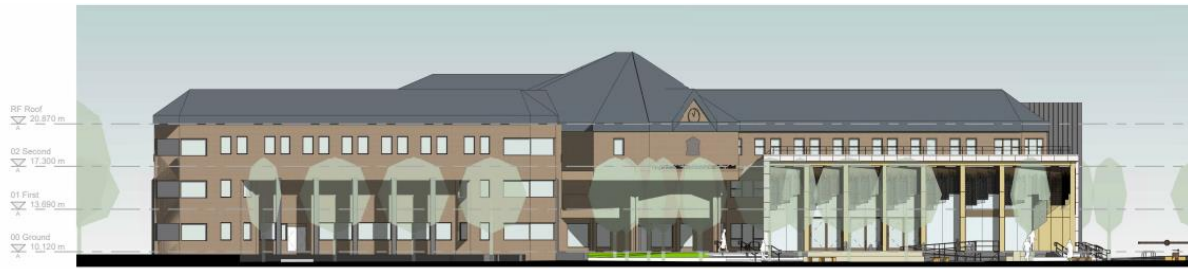
In tandem with LDP Policy BE1, Policy SP21 (Built Environment and Historic Heritage) also operates to; (i) secure high-quality design standards in all development proposals, (ii) Protecting arterial gateways from intrusive and inappropriate development and (iii) safeguard features of historic and cultural importance. The concept idealises retaining key features, (i.e. honouring original scale and massing of the PRT) whilst enhancing the identified character and appearance of the setting albeit introducing contemporary forms. The general principles of Policy SP21 would be carried through in this scheme. Based upon the portfolio of plans and supporting information that have been submitted, the LPA is confident that several relevant criteria of the policy are suitably met, notably in respect of Criteria (1) to (7), 9 and 10. Based on the comments provided from NPTCBC internal consultees (inc. Highways / SAB Engineers and Sustainable Travel), there are no significant conflicts with Policy BE1, further discussed under the relevant sections of this officer report. Robust information has been provided with respect to criterion 9 and the scheme (subject to SAB) is likely acceptable.

In terms this proposal, the plans clearly demonstrate that the enhanced internal layout of the PRT and external ingress/egress points / access upgrades will provide for a development that will achieve inclusive design by ensuring barrier free environments, and will improve access to a range of users, making full provision for people with disabilities. The existing PRT complex, falls short of the criteria of current LDP policies, hence the improvements are supported.

Impact on Visual Amenity / External Design Assessment



Proposed external elevations can be seen comparatively on plan ref: PRT Proposed - Context Elevations, Drawing No. 26CC03-AHR-32-TZZ-D-A-08400-P01 and compared against the existing; PRT Existing – Context Elevations, Drawing No. 26CC03-AHR-32-TZZ-D-A-08120-P01. A summary of the works across each façade is presented below:



1. Proposed Long Front Elevation  
1 : 200

### Front Elevation (South Facing):

Detailed on 'Proposed Elevations 1 of 2', Drawing No. 26CC03-AHR-32-TZZ-D-A-08401-P01, this elevation features a contemporary welcome lobby / two-storey extension with a horizontal format spanning the breadth of the façade and slightly beyond to the east. The front extension provides an open-plan, light, and highly accessible foyer / lobby area at ground floor with an entirely open void to second floor of approx. 9.00m.

The building envelope, features glazing (curtain wall glazing system), with integrated glazed curtain wall doors recessed into the structural 'frame' with a further projecting building collar.

Stylistically the extension features flat roofing, with a recessed glass façade and building frame / parapet completed in mixed materials; inner face completed in gold anodised aluminium cladding and external collar of fibre cement panel rainscreen cladding. In union, the extension has integrated 'artwork' comprising suspended perforated anodised aluminium brise soleil screens. The roofing is finished with parapet capping (Insulated proprietary polyester heavy duty anodized (costal) aluminium capping with closed lapped joints and continuous EPDM). Additional superficial modifications to the existing building form include, physical enhancement by way of new fenestration to 3<sup>rd</sup> floor openings (like-for-like alterations), with existing brickwork and slate roofing retained.

With respect to the use of anodised aluminium cladding, the applicant provided the manufacturing guarantee; with guarantees on the longevity of the colour of this material with prolonged exposure to the predicted levels / intensity of UV in this location and its weathering. In addition, this material would be prone to vandalism and based on the specifications is likely to be resistant to vandalism from prospective sources (i.e. physical external damage). As per policy BE1 (6) 'Secured by Design' principles (including where appropriate natural surveillance, visibility, well-lit environments and areas of public movement) have been considered and evidenced in the supporting plans; both for PRT and the Civic Square.

### *Heights, Scale and Massing:*

With respect to the building heights, the roof level of the extension lies at the cill level of openings at second floor, such that this fenestration is not impacted by the development. The fenestration at 2<sup>nd</sup> floor appears as a hovering grid of openings above a series of square columns supporting the roofing at of the lower recessed entry façade (setback at ground and first floor). The prevalent post-modern municipal

architectural character of the Civic Centre building is preserved as a backdrop to the contemporary elements; succinctly incorporating elements of the historic vernacular. The use of varying materials and textures adds an emphasis to the structure against the brickwork background with a contemporary aesthetic that is clearly defined as a 'new' architectural element, yet has a novel synchrony with the existing building, by way of showing its interior as a 'visual portal' from the public realm. The use of glazing gives a clear view into the interior of the building, enabling spectators to connect to this space from the outdoors and visibly 'see' the operational function of the building as a public theatre. Internally, the open design (double height foyer and bar area) encourages passive wayfinding and creates a sense of space / place.

The idea of 'connectivity' is reflected in the design with purposed architectural juxtaposition, enhanced using a statement colour (gold) to highlight structural elements. It is agreed that the contemporary addition, with a distinct flat roof form, enhances the featureless entry façade and creates a unique, clearly indefinable, projecting gateway into the theatre building – meeting the project brief. As highlighted within the concept statement, "the main building facade is south-oriented, creating a potential issue with excessive solar gain. A facade design involving the use of a solar-shading device minimises this whilst providing a striking appearance to the building."

The theme that the outdoors and the interior are 'connected spaces' is further reflected in the use of the braise soleil panels, which are also perforated to allow sunlight to penetrate the building to create natural light patterns within the gallery space for visual interest. It is noted that, a perforated design has been used on the cladding screen on the canopy of the Grade II listed Aberavon Bridge; inspiring the design of the screening. The ornamentation with a variety of material and panelling types / orientations and scales creates an attractive projecting façade.

### River elevation (east facing):

Detailed on 'Proposed Elevations 1 of 2', Drawing No. 26CC03-AHR-32-TZZ-D-A-08401-P01) features the side elevation of the proposed 2-storey, highly contemporary front extension.



2. Proposed Long River Elevation  
1: 200

A desirable aspect of this elevation is that the architectural composition of the proposed front extension (new PRT entrance) is still fully visible to this elevation / vista with a secondary entry point / gateway that has a clearly defined contemporary aesthetic and holds the intended dominance over the host building as PRTs 'public access portal'. This layout carries the design around the southeastern corner of the site and connecting to the 'contemporary' additions on this side.

From this side the extension appears as a partially projecting mass in union with the proposed lift shaft. Stylistically there is a pleasing contrast between materials, with the recessed façade completed in anodised aluminium cladding (gold) with the outer

parapet / frame finished in fibre cement panel rainscreen cladding. The full height curtain wall system with a powered entry door is visible at this side (as a continuation of the proposed feature glazing) in addition to a subtle glimpse of the perforated anodised aluminium Soliel screens at a high-level which adds visual interest to this elevation. Illuminated building signage (lettering) assists in giving prominence to the entryway and advertising the use of the building to the public realm. The contemporary cladding finish is highly contrasted with the vertical standing seam cladding (dark grey), existing brickwork, and slate roofing, such that contemporary additions take a prominence in each key vista.

To the rear the side elevation of the rear contemporary extension / unit (artwork display box) unit can be viewed, completed in matched panelling, with the same recessed façade and outer, defined building collar; for a welcomed visual / architectural coherency between new elements.

The use of standing seam cladding is not opposed, given this material suitably amalgamates with the existing building fabrics and proposed material palette. The dark grey colour of this materials helps set-back the lift shafts against the brighter tones used in the front extension and matches the colouration of existing roofing (grey slate roof tiles).

Across this elevation the historic character of the building is still highly observed with the original building heights respected, such that the lift shafts do not project over the ridge of the existing roofing, as noted secondary elements. The design is matched to the function of these spaces (as lift shafts / voids) however, the original pattern of fenestration is largely respected, with contemporary upgrades to existing vertical glazing. This elevation is highly visible along Hellibron way (elevated section of highway), and within the southerly / easterly viewpoints from rear and side car parking areas, although less visible within the pedestrianised public realm areas.

### Rear Elevation (north facing):

Detailed on 'Proposed Elevations Sheet 2', Drawing No. 26CC03-AHR-32-TZZ-D-A-08402-P01) features a contemporary 3-storey extension with a rectangular format featuring a recessed art display (details to be confirmed) with illuminated building signage (Theatre / Theatre lettering), finished in fibre cement panel rainscreen cladding. The contemporary art installation and advertisements at this side provide a visual enhancement to an otherwise stark elevation with vast areas of brickwork and minimal fenestration.



3. Proposed Road Elevation  
1 : 200

Standing seam cladding adorning the lift shaft (visible on southeast facing elevation) is partly visible as a contrasting backdrop in addition to retained brickwork and slate roofing across the existing northern elevation. Lower-lying features include an architectural concrete / engineering brick retaining wall (in lieu of the existing retaining features). At this side, the works also comprises a replacement curtain wall to the stairwell (replacement of existing building fabric / glazing) and enlarged louvres

(required for access / replacement to plantroom), with new louvred PPC plant enclosure. The existing roller shutters at this side are retained. The retention of the triangular / irregular shaped window detailing at this side (serving stairwells) preserves more notable, original architectural features.

This side of the theatre features backstage access and services bays, comprising the primary operational elevation of the site (inc. access to cellar / plant rooms and staff quarters etc). The proposed removal of the awkward stair access for an integrated building foundation is welcomed and enhances the northeastern corner profile. A consistent material palette is used across this elevation to succinctly integrate / unify the scheme across the entirety of the building profile. The use of vertical columns to support the ground floor preserves access to the rear bays situated at basement level and is reflective of the vertical columns used historically to add definition to the building. The minor changes to fenestration / louvres at this side are acceptable.

The exterior showcasing artwork (that potentially could be an interchangeable installation or LED display) and the role of the building serves to advertise the venue within higher vantage points / vistas (identifiable 'flag post' seen from Heilbronn Way, B4286). The building envelope works with the existing composition of the building, notably with a subordinate scale, height, and massing, such that the original building can still be observed behind.

Section 5.5.10 of the sub-text to LDP Policy BE1 specifies, "Arterial Gateways' are those areas adjacent to the County Borough boundary which are prominent when entering or leaving Neath Port Talbot and help to define the character and image of the area. There are concerns that previous developments within these areas have detrimentally affected the appearance of the locality and consequently the first impressions given to visitors and the overall image of the County Borough."

Considering the broader objectives of the Policy BE1 and overarching LDP Strategy and the nature of this statement, the proposal is beneficial, defining / enhancing 'gateways' from/to the Civic Square and Riverside regions, when entering and leaving the area utilising key commuter links (i.e. Heilbronn Way and A48). The previous Civic Centre and PRT development is significantly enhanced both visually and in terms of functionality / accessibility. The policy sub-text adds greater weight to the desirability of this outcome and in support of the proposal, highlighting:

*Para. 5.5.12 (BE1): Within these gateway areas, new developments will be required to take full account of their visual impact when seen from the main transport arteries, with careful attention being paid to siting, design, appearance, massing and scale to minimise any visual intrusion and where appropriate enhance the visual aspects of the area.*

*Para. 5.5.13 (BE1) Drainage systems should be designed to ensure that developments have no detrimental effects on the water environment or on food risk. Normally this will involve the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) techniques.*

*Para. 5.5.14 (BE1) In order to make the best use of available land, developments should be designed where possible to maximise the accommodation provided while remaining in keeping with the surrounding area.*

The proposed regeneration scheme successfully achieves the latter from a planning perspective and meets the objectives of LDP Policy BE1 (Design), parts 1 to 3.

## Impact on Residential Amenity

The closest noise sensitive receptors, by virtue of residential dwellings are situated approx. 125m to the northeast along Prior Street and residential apartments (1 to 41) within Oriel House approx. 20m from the border of the Civic Square and 90m to the nearest elevation of the Theatre. In general, the area is characterised by heavy urban activity, comprising commercial / retail and office uses.

## Noise

The following documents have been submitted to support this application:

- (i) Formant Stage 3 Acoustic Design Report, Report ref. 26CC03-FOR-10-XX-T-OJ-0003, Revision: P01, Date 29-08-2024

The acoustic condition of the existing theatre has been benchmarked and a detailed summary is provided in Section 4 of the acoustic report. Key points are summarised as follows:

- No significant upgrades to the building envelope are required to reduce noise break-out.
- Internally, auditorium noise levels were dominated by ventilation system noise at around 40 dBA and this needs to be reduced significantly.
- Environmental noise break-in to the auditorium was around 30 dBA and this should be reduced as much as practicable.
- Room acoustics in the auditorium were mixed and measures should be developed to improve the 'muddy' sound under the balcony whilst trying to maintain the room acoustics elsewhere in the room.
- Concert noise transfer to adjacent meeting rooms was high but it is not practicable within the scope of this project to mitigate this.

In response to the above findings, the report highlights, "Improvements to the auditorium building envelope sound insulation are proposed via a high performance get-in door, additional acoustic lining to the soffit above the stage and high sound insulation walls/roof to the new extension. The upgrades represent the best practicable improvements working to achieve the 'no worse than existing' brief, but the sound insulation performance will ultimately still be limited by the retained elements." With further details provided within the 'Acoustic Design Strategy' section of the report (page 2). In short, the proposed scheme should achieve a lower noise target of 30 dBA.

As provided within section 4.5 of the report: external baseline noise measurements were undertaken between 21-24 March 2024 at three locations outside the building (OP1-3), representative of the location of the three nearest NSRs. The measurements were repeated between 20:00 and 20:45 whilst a 'typical noisy event' took place in the theatre (live band: The Blockheads). An unattended noise logger was left running at the site at position OP4 between 05 and 09 May 2024". The locations are as follows: OP1 - car park adjacent to theatre, OP2 - plaza representative of the flats at Oriel House, OP3 – Prior Street and OP4 – 1<sup>st</sup> floor balcony on the front of the theatre building. As conclude, during a live event, music was just audible at locations OP1 and OP2, proximate to the theatre, however it did not dominate the soundscape at either location. The soundscape at these locations was dominated by traffic noise from the M4 and the sound of water in the river. At OP3, music was not clearly audible, and the



soundscape was dominated by traffic noise from the M4 (constant) and from local roads (more sporadic). Therefore, the report concludes, that entertainment noise break-out from the auditorium would be unlikely to result in any significant adverse noise impacts at any of the NSR locations.

Upon review of the above the Councils Environmental Health (EVH) Officer confirms the following:

*The report demonstrates that there is minimal noise breakout from the theatre during a noisy event, and as this application relates to the refurbishment of the existing theatre which has operated in the same way for many years without noise complaints, we do not have any objection or require any noise conditions be applied to the planning consent.*

Based on the above comments, these matters have been suitably addressed and standard planning conditions in respect of noise curfews in the relevant context shall be applied, only if considered necessary.

### Parking and Access Requirements and Impact on Highway Safety

Strategic LDP Policy SP20 (Transport Network) advises on the numerous measures that must be secured to ensure the transport system and infrastructure will be developed in a safe, efficient, and sustainable manner. Notably, via the following criterion:

1. Implementing key transport projects and supporting schemes identified in the Joint Transport Plan;
2. Promoting connectivity and access to public transport through improving bus and rail facilities;
3. Supporting enhancements to the walking and cycling network;
4. Promoting park and share schemes along key highway routes;
5. Promoting efficient use and links to the transport network through the identification of a road hierarchy;
6. Restricting development which would have an unacceptable impact on highway safety; Requiring development proposals to be designed to provide safe and efficient access and promote sustainable transport;
6. Requiring appropriate parking provision;
7. Facilitating movement of freight by means other than road.

Para 5.4.4 (LDP) states; "In order to reduce the need to travel and restrict negative impacts of traffic growth, the LDP will assist in developing a sympathetically designed, high quality and well-maintained network of public transport, cycle and walking routes in and between communities. The Plan will support the implementation of planned new walking and cycling routes and will give favourable consideration to proposals that will improve the cycle and walking network and public and community transport". Parking provision for both motor vehicles and bicycles will be required to be incorporated into new developments.

In union with LDP Policy SP20, Policy TR2 (Design and Access of New Development) species, development proposals will only be permitted where all of the following criteria, where relevant, are satisfied:

1. The development does not compromise the safe, effective, and efficient use of the highway network and does not have an adverse impact on highway safety or create unacceptable levels of traffic generation; Appropriate levels

- of parking and cycling facilities are provided and the access arrangements for the site allow for the safe manoeuvring of any service vehicles associated with the planned use;
2. The development is accessible by a range of travel means, including public transport and safe cycle and pedestrian routes;
  3. Transport Assessments and Travel Plans are provided for developments that are likely to create significant traffic generation.

The authority has set out parking and access standards that developments will be required to meet in line with the CSSW Parking Standards (2008/2014). Due to the diverse nature and varying characteristics of the County Borough, the Authority has divided the area into parking zones, with respective parking standards applied to each zone. Full details are set out in supplementary planning guidance (SPG): Parking Standards (October 2016). In addition to LDP policy, guidance within PPW shall be followed to in addition to (PPW) Technical Advice Note (TAN) 18: Transport (2007).

The application is supported by a Technical Note, Ref: 1776-ACS-ZZ-XX-RP-T-001-A TN (Princess Royal Theatre – PRT, Port Talbot), prepared by Acstro and dated 12<sup>th</sup> July 2024. The TN relates to the proposed redevelopment of the PRT and associated public realm area (phase II of the LUF project) and considers the sites accessibility by active travel modes of transport and the availability of nearby public car parking.

The active NPT Cycle Network / Active Travel (AT) route travels along the northwest to northeastern periphery of the site (along Heilbronn Way, B4286 and under viaduct to the multistorey car park) with access via pedestrian / cycle links from car parks 2 and 3 (Port Talbot Civic Centre). Pedestrian links from the Civic Centre and Theatre complex are well established with access on foot into the Aberavon Shopping Centre and Port Talbot Bus Station further southwest, also easily accessed via cycle on the same AT route as previously described. Areas to the front of the Civic Centre / Theatre are highly pedestrianised (mostly level and accessible) with the public realm focused around a central fountain / monument. From this 'Civic Square' a designated pedestrian AT route travels to Port Talbot Parkway (Town Centre) via the River Afan crossing (past Ebenezer Chapel and onwards towards Tesco). A short pedestrian (AT route - Sustrans) links Port Talbot Civic Centre to Pentyla / Baglan Road; route from Civic to residential area to the north of the M4, aligning along Pentyla / Baglan Road (A48). Longer term alignment of this route is yet to be established.

All walking and cycling infrastructure should be designed to comply with the Welsh Governments Policy & Strategy – Active Travel Act Guidance (ATAG), July 2021. The guidance is issued using the powers of the Welsh Ministers to give guidance under sections 2(6), 2(9), 3(4), 4(5), 5(2) and 7(2) of the Active Travel Act (2013) and is prepared in alignment with the seven Well-being Goals (Wales) central to PPW. Active Travel routes should be coherent, direct, safe, comfortable, and attractive and mapped via 'Active Travel Network Maps (ATNM)' – showing existing routes and future routes which shall combine the Existing Routes Map and the Integrated Network Map required by the act. Full details of the ATNM requirements are provided in chapter 10 (ATAG). The Councils Active Travel Network Map (ATNM) shows both existing and future routes in the vicinity of the proposed development. The future routes show where routes need improvement and/or a new link is required, and existing routes represent a route that has passed an audit and therefore meets AT requirements.

The TN highlights that “a future walking and cycling route (FRPT-SU113) is shown crossing the public realm space to the south and east of the theatre. As such, the development of this area will incorporate measures to facilitate the delivery of this

route.” The route will be designed in accordance with Welsh Government’s 2021 ‘Active Travel Guidance’ document.

**Cycle Parking:** Cycle parking provision will be in accordance with the Council’s adopted Parking Standards (Supplementary Planning Guidance – SPG), which specifies a minimum of 1 stand per 10 members of staff plus 1 stand per 30 seats for theatre users.

**Vehicle Parking:** The redevelopment of the site will result in the loss of 7 No. parking spaces that are located to the rear of the existing theatre building (car park 2). Including the Civic Centre car park there are 3 No. council public car parks within a 5-minute walk of the site, providing a total of 992 parking spaces (912 at times the civic centre car park is not open to the public). The loss of 7 No, spaces equates to a reduction of less than 1% of this parking capacity.

No concerns have been raised by the Councils Transport Strategy Manager with respect to the concluded impacts, nor any matters that could not be dealt with via the imposition of standard conditions. With respect to this planning proposal, there no AT routes that would be impacted by the works, with enhancements to existing infrastructure. Pedestrian routes around the building shall be largely retained, with pedestrianised areas preserved. Routes / access into the building itself, shall be enhanced and made more accessible to a broader range of users as discussed / evidenced in the plethora of supporting material.

Based upon the Active Travel assessment and the conclusions above, the proposal complies with LDP Policies; SP20 and TR2.

### Biodiversity / Ecology and Green Infrastructure

#### *National Policy:*

**Environment (Wales) Act 2016:** The Environment (Wales) Act sets out the approach for the sustainable management of natural resources in Wales, which will help to mitigate for and adapt to the impacts of climate change.

Section 6 (S6) of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 introduces an enhanced biodiversity and resilience of ecosystems duty for public authorities in the exercise of functions in relation to Wales. In accordance with the S6 duty, public authorities must seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity so far as consistent with the proper exercise of their functions and in so doing promote the resilience of ecosystems. Section 7 of the Environment (Wales) Act requires the Welsh Ministers to prepare and publish a list of living organisms and types of habitats that are of principal importance for maintaining and enhancing biodiversity in Wales. This section replaces the duty outlined in Section 42 of the NERC Act 2006.

**Planning Policy Wales, Edition 12:** Chapter 6 of PPW sets out how the quality of the built environment should be enhanced by integrating green infrastructure into development through appropriate site selection and use of creative design. With careful planning and design, informed by an appropriate level of assessment, green infrastructure can embed the benefits of biodiversity and ecosystem services into new development and places, help to overcome the potential for conflicting objectives, and contribute to health and well-being outcomes.

A green infrastructure statement must be submitted with all planning applications and should be proportionate to the scale and nature of the development proposed and will

describe how green infrastructure has been incorporated into the proposal. The green infrastructure statement will be an effective way of demonstrating positive multi-functional outcomes which are appropriate to the site in question and must be used for demonstrating how the step-wise approach (Paragraph 6.4.15 of PPW 12) has been applied. The DECCA framework (as outlined within PPW, Chapter 6) sets out 5 key considerations of habitats and species which lead to Ecosystem Resilience (ER).

The main policy requirements within PPW 12 can be summarised as follows:

**Green Infrastructure:** Stronger emphasis on taking a proactive approach to green infrastructure covering cross boundary considerations, identifying key outputs of green infrastructure assessments, the submission of proportionate green infrastructure statements with planning applications and signposting Building with Nature standards.

**Net Benefit for Biodiversity and the Step-wise Approach:** Further clarity is provided on securing net benefit for biodiversity through the application of the step-wise approach, including the acknowledgement of off-site compensation measures as a last resort, and, the need to consider enhancement and long-term management at each step. The use of the green infrastructure statement as a means of demonstrating the stepwise approach is made explicit.

**Protection for Sites of Special Scientific Interest:** Strengthened approach to the protection of SSSIs, with increased clarity on the position for site management and exemptions for minor development necessary to maintain a 'living landscape'. Other development is considered unacceptable as a matter of principle.

**Trees and Woodlands:** Closer alignment with the stepwise approach, along with promoting new planting as part of development based on securing the right tree in the right place. At a minimum any tree felled must be replaced at a ratio of at least 3 trees of a similar type and size planted for every 1 lost.

**PPW, Technical Advice Note 5 - Nature Conservation and Planning (1996):** (TAN5) provides advice on how land use planning system should contribute to protecting and enhancing biodiversity and geological conservation. The guidance indicates that biodiversity conservation and enhancement is an integral part of planning for sustainable development. The guidance advocates a collaborative approach where LPAs, developers and key stakeholders in conservation should work together to deliver sustainable development.

**Future Wales: The National Plan 2040:** Future Wales (FW) - The National Plan 2040 was adopted in February 2021 as the national development framework (NDF) setting the direction of development in Wales to 2040. Policy 9 (Resilient Ecological Networks and Green Infrastructure) encourages the maintenance and enhancement of biodiversity, the resilience of ecosystems, and green infrastructure assets. The key objectives of Policy 9 are;

- identify areas which should be safeguarded and created as ecological networks for their importance for adaptation to climate change, for habitat protection, restoration or creation, to protect species, or which provide key ecosystems services, to ensure they are not unduly compromised by future development; and
- identify opportunities where existing and potential green infrastructure could be maximised as part of placemaking, requiring the use of nature-based solutions

as a key mechanism for securing sustainable growth, ecological connectivity, social equality and well-being.

In all cases, action towards securing the maintenance and enhancement of biodiversity (to provide a net benefit), the resilience of ecosystems and green infrastructure assets must be demonstrated as part of development proposals through innovative, nature-based approaches to site planning and the design of the built environment.

*Local Policy:*

**The Local Biodiversity Action Plan (2014):** Para 1.2.45 of the LDP (Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council Local Development Plan (2011-2026) Adopted January 2016) specifies, “The Neath Port Talbot Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) 2014 is a tool for securing and focussing the resources needed to protect and enhance the biodiversity of the County Borough. The focus of the LBAP is to achieve no net loss of listed habitats and species, and a gain in the (perceived or actual) extent / population of listed habitats and species”. Therefore, the LBAP provides a foundation / set of actions on which organisations should build and follow, to protect and enhance biodiversity in the county borough.

**Neath Port Talbot Environment Strategy (2008-2026):** The purpose of the Environment Strategy is to provide the framework within which to achieve an environment that is clean, healthy, and thriving, has improving economic prosperity and is valued by residents, businesses, and visitors alike. As outlined within para. 1.2.48 of the LDP, a key objective includes:

- Built Environment: planning, buildings, neighbourhoods, environmental health, housing, energy, climate change, renewable energy, economic development, and tourism.
- Transport & Travel: cars, motorbikes, walking, public transport, cycling, freight, alternative fuels and initiatives.
- Environmental Responsibility: sustainable purchasing, social enterprises, buying decisions, food marks, waste, recycling, eco-schools and Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship (ESDGC)

**Local Development Plan (2011-2026):**

The above objectives feed into the principal policies within the LDP, of which Policies EN6 and EN7 will be of relevance insofar as there is a need to ensure any impacts on biodiversity/ natural features are appropriately assessed and, where applicable, mitigated.

Policy EN 6	Policy EN 7
IMPORTANT BIODIVERSITY AND GEODIVERSITY SITES	IMPORTANT NATURAL FEATURES
Development proposals that would affect Regionally Important Geodiversity Sites (RIGS), Local Nature Reserves (LNRs), Sites of Interest for Nature Conservation (SINCs), sites meeting SINC criteria or sites supporting Local Biodiversity Action	Development proposals that would adversely affect ecologically or visually important natural features such as trees, woodlands, hedgerows / field

<p>Plan (LBAP) or S42 habitats or species will only be permitted where:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. They conserve and where possible enhance the natural heritage importance of the site; or</li> <li>2. The development could not reasonably be located elsewhere, and the benefits of the development outweigh the natural heritage importance of the site. Mitigation and/or compensation measures will need to be agreed where adverse effects are unavoidable.</li> </ol>	<p>boundaries, watercourses or ponds will only be permitted where:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Full account has been taken of the relevant features in the design of the development, with measures put in place to ensure that they are retained and protected wherever possible; or</li> <li>2. The biodiversity value and role of the relevant feature has been taken into account and where removal is unavoidable, mitigation measures are agreed.</li> </ol>
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**Adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) - Biodiversity and Geodiversity (May 2018):** This SPG provides information and guidance setting out the expectations on all development proposals to protect, conserve, enhance and manage important habitats, species, and sites of geological interest. The Council's planning policy is set out in the Neath Port Talbot LDP, namely Strategic Policy SP15 (Biodiversity and Geodiversity) and detailed policies EN6 (Important Biodiversity and Geodiversity Sites) and EN7 (Important Natural Features) and this SPG should be read in the context of these policies and explanatory text.

The SPG sets out a basic framework for dealing with biodiversity and geodiversity in the planning process in Neath Port Talbot. In specific regard to biodiversity, a great deal more detailed guidance can be found in the British Standard 42020:2013 'Biodiversity – Code of Practice for Planning and Development'. Whilst the SPG does not repeat sections of the British Standard, the document does signpost relevant sections where appropriate.

*Ecological Assessment:*

The application is supported by; Princess Royal Theatre and Civic Square, Green Infrastructure Statement (GIS), ref: 2264-URB-XX-XX-RP-PL -XX-001 (dated 21/10/2024. PPW (Ed. 12) provides the legislative and national planning policy context for GI Statements. With the LDP and relevant SPG there is no specific policy guidance on GI Assessments, however, the policy context (as per the above) is relevant. The prepared GIS has been informed by the following documents which also support this application:

- Noise Assessment
- Energy/ Sustainability Statement
- Phase 1 Site Investigation
- Phase 2 Site Investigation Report
- Archaeology Desktop Report
- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal
- Bat Surveys
- Flood Consequences Assessment
- Tree Survey, Arboricultural Impact Assessment & Tree Protection Plan

The GI establishes the baseline at the site (Section 3) identifying that the site currently comprises amenity spaces, parking areas and the built form (theatre building) and

therefore there is limited ecological value. Soft landscaping predominantly encompasses areas of manicured lawn with mature shrubbery contained within raised and non-raised beds and a variety of mature trees. In general opportunities exist, for invertebrates and species that forage on them, and potentially roosting birds. With respect to the site's proximity to the SINC watercourse (river Afan), although this increases its potential to be used by wildlife utilising the river corridor, there is no significant connection. The mitigation hierarchy is detailed within section 4.1 of the GIS.

The scheme will largely introduce new areas of biodiversity / habitats, inc. green roofing, raingarden areas, amenity planted beds (native species) and bulb planted areas in existing amenity grassland. The extent of some grassland will be permanently lost, contradicted by a gain in the extent of tree cover. Given the baseline condition of the site and overall enhancement will be provided. With respect to the above GIS statement, the Council's Senior Ecologist concludes, "I am happy with the narrative in the GIS regarding the DECCA framework, particularly explaining the loss of some habitats will be outweighed by the increase in quality."

With respect to the proposed hard and soft landscaping scheme, planting schedule and biodiverse roofing strategy the Council's Ecologist is satisfied with the proposal, following a period of negotiation (as outlined in the preceding sections of this report)

With respect to trees within the application site, the proposal is supported by an Arboricultural Impact Assessment, Ref:

Project Reference – ArbTS\_1869.2\_PRINCESS ROYAL THEATRE & PUBLIC REALM, prepared by ArbTS and dated 21<sup>st</sup> October 2024.

The above report includes:

- Tree Survey Data & Tree Constraints Plan - ArbTS - Arboricultural Technician Services Ltd, drawing No. ArbTS\_1869.2\_PRINCESS ROYAL THEATRE & PUBLIC REALM\_TreeCP (project ref: 1869.2).
- Tree Protection Plan, Drawing No. ArbTS\_1869.2\_PRINCESS ROYAL THEATRE & PUBLIC REALM\_TreeCP (project ref: 1869.2)
- Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) and Arboricultural Method Statement, all completed to the British Standard 5837:2012 (Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction. Recommendations).

As outlined within the AIA, the Preliminary management recommendations are as follows: *The survey has identified preliminary management recommendations for the trees on or adjacent to this site. Details regarding these specified operations are provided within the report (See Appendix 1 - Tree Survey Data). Where work priority is stated to be H – High due to safety reasons, these operations should be carried out as soon as possible. Where work priority is said to be M/H – medium/high or higher, these operations should be undertaken before the commencement of any works on site.* (Project Ref: ArbTS\_1869.2\_PRINCESS ROYAL THEATRE & PUBLIC REALM 21<sup>st</sup> October 2024).

The majority of trees on site (as defined within section 3.2 of the report) are Category C (low – optional for retention) with 15, category B and 5 Category A. The following individual trees will be lost:

- T20 – Whitebeam – Moderate Quality (B category)
- T9 – T17 ( 9 Small Rowan Trees of fair to poor health with limited future) – Low quality (C category)

- T26 – Small Hawthorn – Low quality (C category)
- T27 – Small Rowan – Low quality (C category)
- T30 – Whitebeam – Low quality (C category)

Most trees to be removed are Category C, with 1 no. category B. Group tree loss features Tree Group – G6 – 2 Small Hawthorn - Low quality (C category).

As discussed above, any trees which are to be lost shall be replaced at a 3:1 ratio in line with Chapter 6 of PPW 12:

*PPW para. 6.4.42: Permanent removal of trees, woodland and hedgerows will only be permitted where it would achieve significant and clearly defined public benefits... Where loss is unavoidable developers will be required to provide compensatory planting (which is proportionate to the proposed loss as identified through an assessment of green infrastructure value including biodiversity, landscape value and carbon capture). Replacement planting shall be at a ratio equivalent to the quality, environmental and ecological importance of the tree(s) lost, and this must be preferably onsite, or immediately adjacent to the site, and at a minimum ratio of at least 3 trees of a similar type and compensatory size planted for every 1 lost.*

It has been demonstrated that the above objective has been achieved, as evidenced on the above 'PRT Planting Plan' (4 Parts) and 'Planting Schedule'. In summary, 15 trees are identified to be removed to facilitate the construction of the proposed development design. All but one of these trees identified for removal are small, low-quality trees (C Category) with a limited future. These would not constrain the development of the site and are readily mitigated via replacement tree planting. The Council's Ecologist agrees that suitable mitigation / replacement planting has been incorporated into the landscaping proposal.

The application package includes a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) prepared by Ecological Services Ltd, Version 1.0 and dated 12<sup>th</sup> April 2024. The Princess Royal Theatre sits in the eastern wing of a larger building (Port Talbot Civic Centre), for completeness, the PEA covers the entire building and adjacent grounds.

Section 4 'Recommendations and Mitigation' of the report highlights that, "further survey work and consideration of the ecological mitigation and compensation that development of the site may require, is needed once detailed plans are known". The PEA advises of the following, which should be submitted in support of any future planning application:

**Bat Activity Surveys:** Two bat activity surveys will need to be carried out and must follow the guidance within the BCT Good Practice Guidelines 2023 (4th Edition).

**Root Protection Zone (RPZ):** RPZ's must be implemented around any retained trees which lie adjacent to or within the boundary of the proposed development site. The recommendations within British Standard BS 5837, 'Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction' will be followed. Measures will include clear marking of the RPZ to guarantee no machinery is used or digging carried out in that area. This will ensure that there is no detrimental impact to the trees and the flora or fauna it supports.

**Nesting Birds:** Trees and buildings within the site have potential for use by nesting birds. Any tree or building works must be completed outside of the bird nesting season of March to August inclusive.



**Lighting Scheme:** careful consideration must be given to the use of lighting within the development site, as this can adversely affect the activity of a variety of fauna, particularly foraging bats, nesting birds, and invertebrates. Light spillage into adjacent semi-natural habitats must be avoided and brightness kept to the lowest permissible level in the areas adjacent to such habitats. All lighting must meet recommendations in the BCT Guidance Note 08/23 Bats and Artificial Lighting at Night. Therefore, the applicant should submit a lighting scheme for both Sites 1 and 2.

The PEA presents several measures that may be implemented to secure a Net Benefit for Biodiversity (NBB), in accordance with the requirements of the Planning Policy Wales, Ed. 12 (2024) and BSI 42020:2013, robust mitigation measures must be incorporated into the scheme to demonstrate that a NBB can be achieved in compliance with overarching national policies but also, Policies EN6 and EN7 of the Local Development Plan:

Following the PEA the following have been prepared and made available to the LPA: Bat Survey V1.0, prepared by Ecological Services Ltd and dated October 2024.

The Bat Survey includes an internal scoping survey (section 7.0) and 2 No. emergence surveys (section 8.0) completed June and July 2024. Section 9/0 of the report 'Concluding Remarks and Recommendations' presents the following facts:

- During the emergence surveys, no bats were observed emerging from the building.
- Throughout the surveys, a very low number of bat calls were recorded, and no bats were observed using the building. Therefore, it is suggested that the proposed building works will have a negligible impact on the local bat population.
- The building does not offer significant hibernation potential for bats. The external walls were sound with no visible apertures for bats preventing access into the wall structure. The building is in use and therefore central heating will be on which does not provide a thermally stable environment for hibernating bats. When considering the absence of bat access points into the wall structure, the hibernation use of the building is considered to be limited.
- No evidence of nesting bird use of the building was observed during the surveys.
- Given the potential roosting features within the building and proximity of the building to the River Afan, the building was assessed as having moderate potential for bat roosting use.
- The site is located in an area with excellent ecological connectivity for bats to the wider environment and the surrounding environment does offer potential for bat use.
- There were moderate amounts of ambient lighting within the vicinity of the building.
- A suitable external lighting plan must be implemented to reduce any disturbance to the bats feeding and commuting within the vicinity of the property.

On the basis of the above and in agreement with the Councils Ecologist an informative note shall be attached to the decision notice regarding the possible presence of bats and nesting birds. As outlined within section 10.0 of the report, in order to comply with The Environment (Wales) Act 2016, ecological gain will be included into the scope of works. This will consist of: 1 No. Schwegler IFQ Surface Mounted Bat Box and 2 No. Vivara Pro WoodStone Swift Nest Boxes as detailed on the proposed elevations. These biodiversity enhancements shall be secured by planning condition.

The application is supported by a proposed external lighting scheme; 'External Lighting Layout - Civic Centre', Drawing No. 26CC03-HYD-55-CXX-D-E-55001-P01. The lighting scheme shall be completed in accordance with these scheme as per the requirements of planning conditions (condition 02, Approved Plans List).

### A Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP)

The submitted CEMP outlines how the developer will minimise any negative environmental impacts of the proposed construction project and demonstrates that the construction works will be appropriately managed to comply with the relevant environmental legislation:

- IAQM - Guidance on the assessment of dust from demolition and construction, January 2024 (Version 2.2)
- BSI - ISO 14001 - Environmental Management System (EMS)
- Control of Pollution Act 1974
- Environmental Protection Act 1990

NRW initially provided comments in relation to matters they considered relevant for inclusion within the documents. The applicant submitted a revised CEMP that specified the measures that would be carried out to ensure that the development would comply with the required regulations and guidance. As such, the submitted revised CEMP is considered to be acceptable.

### Flood risk / Drainage

The application is supported by;

Princess Royal Theatre, Flood Consequences Assessment (FCA), ref: MSX-JBAB-XX-XX-RP-Z-0001-S3-P01-Princess\_Royal\_Theatre\_FCA (Version 1), prepared by Morgan Sindall and dated July 2024.

The application site falls within Flood Zone C1 (Served by significant infrastructure, including flood defences) as identified within TAN 15: Development and Flood Risk (2004), Development Advice Map (DAM). The application site also falls under NRW's Flood Map for Planning (FMfP) Flood Zones 2, 3 (Rivers) and Flood Zone 3 (Seas). The Princess Royal Theatre and Civic Square lie to the northwest of the River Afan.

Technical Advice Note (TAN 15): Development and Flood Risk (2004), specifies (para, 6.2) that New development should be directed away from zone C and towards suitable land in zone A, otherwise to zone B, where river or coastal flooding will be less of an issue. In zone C the tests outlined in sections 6 and 7 of TAN 15 will be applied, as new development should only be permitted within zones C1 and C2 if determined by the planning authority to be justified in that location.

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 this particular type of development have been considered, and in terms of the criteria contained in sections 5 and 7 and appendix 1 (TAN 15) have been found to be acceptable.

TAN 15, para. 7.1, highlights “If a development proposal in zone C1, or in C2 if it is defined as being of low vulnerability, meets the test outlined in section 6, the justification will be in the knowledge that those developments will flood and will need to be planned accordingly. This section will apply in zone C, and those parts of zone B where flooding has been identified as a material consideration to allow for localised problems.” As discussed within the FCA, topographical surveying of the site was completed by Gwalia Surveyors in March 2024 (portfolio of surveys have been attached to the submission; ref: 3348-E (01, 02), 3348-F (01, 02, 03 and 04), 3348-S (01) and 3348-T Princess Theatre 2D Rev A, 3348-U Princess Theatre). Figures 2-3 within the FCA show NRW's Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) data, which provides an alternative illustration of the site topography.

Ground levels across the Princess Royal Theatre and Civic Square (Riverside Public Realm) redevelopment site fall in a north easterly direction from the higher points in the south of the site and at the main building towards the northern topographic depression. The theatre building has a Finished Floor Level (FFL) of 10.14mAOD. The route of the River Afan Watercourse (waterbodies) lies to the eastern boundary of the site, flowing southerly through Port Talbot (to Severn Estuary). The riverside realm is also bordered on the western side by the river (opposing east elevation of Aberavon Shopping Mall). Both sites are protected by flood defences which are present along the banks of the River Afan and comprise of a flood wall which protects the sites from a 1% AEP event. The FCA further discusses the FFL of the buildings / sites and external improvements which include landscape works, the removal of the central water feature and the addition of SuDS features.

The FCA concludes, that both the Princess Royal Theatre and Civic Square Redevelopment site and the Port Talbot Town Centre Riverside Public Realm site are at low risk of flooding from rivers, according to NRW's Flood Risk Assessment Wales (FRAW) Flood Risk from Rivers map, with the results of a detailed fluvial flood risk assessment discussed in section 5 of the FCA. The section of greatest relevance is section 6 of the FCA (Assessment of Acceptability Criteria) in relation to the tests / acceptability criteria as outlined in TAN15. The following has failed to be demonstrated:

*The developer is required to demonstrate that the site is designed to be flood-free for the lifetime [Ref: TAN-15 A1.5] of development for a 1 in 100 (1%) chance (fluvial) and 1 in 200 (0.5%) chance (tidal) flood event including an allowance for climate change in accordance with TAN-15 table A1.14.*

The Princess Royal Theatre is used as a public building (in addition to the Civic Square, which forms part of a Public Realm) which is classified as highly vulnerable development. However, development proposals at the site will not change the development use nor intensify the development. The 'Riverside Public Realm' (stage 2 of the LUF Project) will be public open space which is not explicitly classified in the flood risk vulnerabilities in TAN-15. Therefore, the development is classified as 'Other'. Lying in Zone C1, the site is within areas of the floodplain which are developed and served by significant infrastructure, including flood defences (TAN-15 Defended Zone of the FMfP). The site is at little or no risk of flooding from the sea, groundwater, or sewer flooding.

With respect to the above:

*Detailed hydraulic modelling has been used to assess the risk of fluvial flooding to the site. This demonstrates that the proposed rear extension in the Princess Royal Theatre and Civic Square Redevelopment site will be flood-free in the post-development 1% AEP plus climate change and 0.1% AEP event fluvial event and the front extension will flood to shallow depths.*

However, as the entrance is required to be at the same level as the existing building, it is not possible to increase the finished floor levels. The FCA therefore recommends that a Flood Response Plan (FRP) is prepared to ensure that future occupiers of the site are aware of the flood risk with flood risk management actions in place. On that basis, the FCA concludes that the Acceptability Criteria in compliance with the aims and objectives of PPW and TAN-15 have been met. With respect to the tests outlined within TAN 15, the LPA must be satisfied that the tests can be passed, taking a clear steer from NRW as statutory consultees.

With respect to flood risk NRW provide the following assessment:

*Our Flood Risk Map confirms the application site lies entirely within Zone C1 of the Development Advice Maps (DAM) contained in Technical Advice Note (TAN) 15: Development and Flood Risk (2004). The Flood Map for Planning identifies the application site to be at risk of flooding and falls into Flood Zone 3 Rivers and TAN15 Defended Zone.*

*We note the proposals are for an extension to the existing theatre, which is considered less vulnerable development (LVD). The application is supported by a Flood Consequence Assessment (FCA) by JBA, dated July 2024 (Doc Ref. MSX-JBAB-XX-XX-RP-Z-0001-S3-P01- Princess\_Royal\_Theatre\_FCA Revision 1), which we have reviewed.*

*As this is an extension to the theatre, we note there will be no change in the vulnerability of the development, nor is it intended to increase its capacity. The FCA, which we note is supported by hydraulic modelling, shows that the proposed development will not increase flood risk to third parties, as it is stated that any areas affected are under the Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council's ownership.*

*Additionally, we note that the owner/operator of the site are aware of and acknowledge the flood risk. We are in agreement with the FCA's findings and noting the scale and nature of the proposals as an extension to the existing building, we consider the proposals are acceptable.*

Therefore, the relevant tests in sections 6 and 7 of TAN15 are 'passed'. In union Policy 8 (Flooding) of FW is met, in addition to Policy EN8

#### Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS)

The Councils Drainage Engineer (SAB) advises that SAB approval is required. The SAB is in receipt of a full SAB Application for this development, received on 6/11/2024 reference S2024/0039 (refer to the 'consultee comments' section preceding this chapter). Therefore, an appropriate site drainage strategy shall be secured. However, given the plethora of plans submitted to support this application and the modelling / surveying that has been done, it is demonstrated that these matters can be dealt with

promptly and efficiently (pre-commencement). With SAB approval in place the proposal meets the requirements of LDP policies EN8 and BE1.

With respect to the comments submitted by DCWW, SAB are aware of these matters and working closely with the service provider and developer through the SAB determination phases. This would be a private matter for DCWW to resolve with the developer via their own legislation. If changes to the landscaping and suds features are required, these matters would need to be addressed post planning.

### Contaminated Land

LDP Policy EN8 (Pollution and Land Stability) states:

Proposals which would be likely to have an unacceptable adverse effect on health, biodiversity and/or local amenity or would expose people to unacceptable risk due to the following will not be permitted:

- Air pollution;
- Noise pollution;
- Light pollution;
- Contamination;
- Land instability;
- Water (including groundwater) pollution.

Proposals which would create new problems or exacerbate existing problems detailed above will not be acceptable unless mitigation measures are included to reduce the risk of harm to public health, biodiversity and/or local amenity to an acceptable level. Noise has been discussed under 'Residential Amenity' in addition to Lighting, which has been touched upon under 'Biodiversity and Ecology'. The package of supporting information includes a variety of land stability and topographical surveys, including an assessment of existing underground infrastructure (utilities); thus, demonstrating that robust surveying has been undertaken prior to finalising the scheme.

The application site does not specifically fall within an area of known / high risk of land contamination. The following documents have been submitted to support this application:

- (i) Tetra Tech Limited Phase 1 Geoenvironmental Assessment Desk Top Study, dated April 2024, reference 784-B046183, and;
- (ii) Tetra Tech Limited Ground Investigation Report, dated August 2024, reference 784-B046183

Upon review of the above the Councils Environmental Health (EVH) Officer confirms the following:

*We are in agreement with the conclusions in relation to Benzo(ghi)perylene. We agree that 1 No. minor exceedance of the conservative SSV for this type of land use does not warrant any further remediation. This is on the basis that the proposed landscaped areas within the scheme are formal planting as opposed to open park land and as such exposure will be significantly less than in a normal public open space scenario.*

*With regard to ground gas, there has only been one monitoring visit and whilst on that occasion the gas concentrations were low, they do not represent a worst case scenario because it was conducted during high barometric pressure. One ground gas monitoring visit does not comply with the guidance and as such we recommend*

*conditions requiring further visits and an updated ground gas risk assessment to confirm the findings before we can be satisfied that the gas regime has been adequately characterised.*

Conditions are to be imposed as suggested by the EVH team:

Upon review of the submitted information, NRW provide the following clarifications on Contaminated Land:

*We note the historical land uses of the site are unlikely to have resulted in significant contamination. The results of the ground investigation presented support this, and do not indicate there to be significant contamination. Hydrocarbon odours are noted at location WS10; however, the leachate analysis did not identify significant contamination. We note that groundwater was not encountered at the site, however soil leachate results are a conservative alternative to quantify leachable components of any contamination. We therefore have no concerns to raise over contaminated land.*

Based on the above, it would only be prudent to apply the standard conditions relating to contaminated ground as additional surveying / ground gas monitoring has not been requested by NRW. The LPA is confident that these matters have been addressed by the two surveys / reports specified above. Overall, there are no conflicts with LDP Policy EN8.

#### Impacts Upon Historic Assets

The application is supported by Grade II Ebenezer Chapel, Forecourt Walls, Railings, Gates and Aberavon Bridge Archaeological Assessment (May 2024), GGAT report no. 2024/017.

The following policies within the Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council Local Development Plan (2011-2026) Adopted January 2016 are of relevance:

**Policy BE1 (Design):** All development proposals will be expected to demonstrate high quality design which fully takes into account the natural, historic and built environmental context and contributes to the creation of attractive, sustainable places.

**Policy BE2 (Buildings of Local Importance):** Development proposals that would affect buildings that are of local historic, architectural, or cultural importance will only be permitted where:

1. They conserve and where appropriate enhance the building and its setting; or
2. It is demonstrated that the development could not reasonably be accommodated without affecting or replacing the building and the reasons for the development outweigh the heritage importance of the site.

**Policy SP21 (Built Environment and Historic Heritage):** The built environment and historic heritage will, where appropriate, be conserved and enhanced through the following measures:

1. Encouraging high quality design standards in all development proposals;
2. Protecting arterial gateways from intrusive and inappropriate development;
3. Safeguarding features of historic and cultural importance;
4. The identification of the following designated sites to enable their protection and where appropriate enhancement:

- a) Landscapes of Historic Interest;
- b) Historic Parks and Gardens;

- c) Conservation Areas;
- d) Scheduled Ancient Monuments; and
- e) Listed Buildings and their curtilage.

PPW: Listed Buildings 6.1.10 - There should be a general presumption in favour of the preservation or enhancement of a listed building and its setting, which might extend beyond its curtilage. For any development proposal affecting a listed building or its setting, the primary material consideration is the building, its setting, or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

The following historic assets are located within proximity to the site area:

- (i) Ebenezer Chapel, Grade II\* designated on 22/07/1980

Listed grade II\* as an unusually finely detailed building in scarce Romanesque style by a nationally important chapel architect. Group value with its forecourt, gate piers and railings and Aberavon Bridge.

- (ii) Forecourt Walls, Railings and Gates Ebenezer Chapel, Grade II designated on 31/01/2000

Listed for the fine ironwork. Group value with Ebenezer Chapel.

- (iii) Aberavon Bridge, Grade II designated on 29/08/1979

The bridge crosses the River Afan and serves as the physical link between the shopping centres of Aberavon and Port Talbot, the former development of the 1990s. The roadway is now pedestrianised. Bridge of 3 low segmental arches with flat deck. Spandrels and parapets faced with coursed stone; voussoirs, pilasters and cutwaters of tooled dressed stone, listed as a C19 bridge of unusually high architectural quality.

In addition to the above LDP policies, overarching national legislation is defined within The Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2023, the first consolidated legislation in the Welsh Government's initial five-year program to improve the accessibility of Welsh law. The Act was brought into force 04/11/2024.

Cadws best-practice guidance, is also of relevance:

- Cadw's Conservation Principles for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment in Wales (Conservation Principles).
- Cadw CHAPELS IN WALES Conservation and Conversion (1999)
- Cadw Managing Change to Listed Buildings in Wales
- Cadw Managing Easy Access to Listed Buildings in Wales (Technical Guidance, 2022)

PPW - Technical Advice Note 24: The Historic Environment (May 2017)

Technical Advice Note (TAN) is read in conjunction with Planning Policy Wales (PPW) which sets out the land use planning policies of the Welsh Government, including for

the Historic Environment (Chapter 6 – Distinctive & Natural Places). PPW, the TAN, and the Welsh Government's Historic Environment Service (Cadw) best practice will also be taken into account by the LPA, both in the preparation the local development plan (LDP) and during the determination of planning applications.

The submitted Archaeological Impact Assessment (AIA), draws on Cadw's Conservation Principles (2011), Heritage Impact Assessment (2017) and Setting of Historic Assets in Wales (2017). Where relevant, the assessment of significance for historic assets makes reference to the four 'heritage values' which are defined by Cadw's Conservation Principles (2011).

The proposed works as cited in the preceding sections of this assessment would not involve alterations to any listed artefacts or unduly Impact the character of any of the Grade II listed structures. Likewise, the proposals would not adversely impact the character of the wider curtilage / setting of these buildings (in accordance with part 1 of Policy BE 2). The works to upgrade hard surfacing within the public realms, at the Civic Square would terminate prior to adjoining the existing surfacing over Aberavon Bridge, with areas of soft landscaping set on the grounds adjacent to the bridge.

The AIA concludes, "The proposed external works to the theatre and council buildings are fairly limited in terms of landscaping and could add to the existing ecological environment with increased planting and would open up the space. The biggest impact visually, would be the provision of the glass box extension to the Princess Theatre, altering the appearance of the entrance, and its closeness with the noted assets. However, given that the surrounding modern developments have already had an impact on the original setting of the church, and that the proposals are sympathetic to the 'style' and 'theme' of the surrounding area, the impact on the known heritage assets will be minimal. During the course of the works, it is anticipated that access to the Church and Bridge would be temporarily restricted. It is not expected that any sightlines will be impeded by the proposed works. If so, they would be temporary. Overall, the proposed development is evaluated to have very little impact on the overall setting of the Chapel or Bridge."

The proposed enhancements to these areas are visually sympathetic and an enhancement of existing fabrics within these public realms with a more contemporary styling and cleaner aesthetic. Therefore, the wider setting will provide a more attractive backdrop to these listed features whilst still providing a novel sense of coherency between old and new materials (modern paving types juxtaposed with older stones / textures). The proposed soft landscaping scheme is welcomed to provide improved green infrastructure within an otherwise significantly urbanised and hard surfaced area, notably given the Civic Square Public Realm is a pedestrianised space. The AIA concludes, "Overall, it is considered that with the proposed sympathetic changes the renovation proposals will equate to a "Negligible" outcome for the setting of the Listed Buildings. Indeed, the outcome for the long term may be considered to be beneficial."

Therefore, there are no conflicts with the LDP policies; BE1, BE2 and SP21.

### Archaeology



**GGAT Sites:** Ebenezer Baptist Church - Ebenezer Chapel built in 1836, (iron date plaque now set in the SW forecourt wall to the side of the present chapel), has the appearance of having been rebuilt or refurbished in the late 19th century.

With relevance to the above Heneb (Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeology) provide the following comments:

*“We have consulted information in the Historic Environment Record (HER) and note there are no known archaeological sites within the proposed development area. However, there are adjacent Listed Buildings, including Ebenezer Chapel (Grade II\*, Cadw ref. 14174), its Grade II Forecourt Walls, Railings and Gates (Cadw ref. 22805) as well as Aberavon Bridge (Grade II, Cadw ref. 14173/22804).*

*We note the submission of an Archaeological Assessment by GGAT Archaeological Services (report no. 2024/017, dated May 2024) which concludes there will be a ‘Negligible’ impact on the settings of the Listed Buildings. A review of historic Ordnance Survey mapping indicates terraced housing within the application area.*

*However, it is likely that the subsequent development of the site, including the construction of the Princess Royal Theatre, will have had an adverse effect on any potential remains. Overall, it is unlikely that significant archaeological remains will be encountered during the course of the work.*

*As a result, there is unlikely to be an archaeological restraint to this proposed development and consequently, as the archaeological advisors to your Members, we have no objections to the positive determination of this application. The record is not definitive, however, and features may be disturbed during the course of the work. In this event, please contact this division of the Trust.”*

AS such a suitably worded informative will be imposed on any decision notice issued advising on the action that should be taken should any archaeological remains be found.

### Other Matters

Responses to the issues raised by public representatives are addressed in turn below:

1. *The proposed design is hideous, not in-keeping with the local aesthetic or architecture.*

A design assessment of the proposal is offered within the main body of the officer report. On balance, the LPA are satisfied that the proposal complies with the key criterions of LDP Policy BE1 (Design).

2. Port Talbot has a strong legacy of Wales' industrial culture as well as Britain's beautiful architecture, predominantly made out of stonework. The proposal for the refurbishment looks distinctly American with big glass rectangles and aluminium panels.

The proposal combines contemporary elements with the existing historic fabrics of the Civic Centre sympathetically whilst retaining as much of the original facades as possible. The scheme assists in improving access into the Theatre complex whilst connecting with the adjacent public square in a more succinct, efficient capacity, such

that connectivity is also improved into the public realm and across to wider areas with Port Talbot Town Centre.

3. The Council is short on funds and money should not be spent on something which looks nice but has no concrete benefits. The councils' efforts would be better spent focusing on their core objectives such as maintaining services and roads.

The scheme is supported by Levelling Up Funding (LUF) from UK Government (Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023) and as such is underpinned by a detailed LUF bid that sets out the qualitative and quantitative business case for the proposal. The 'Investment Themes' section of the LUF prospectus provides an overview of the types of capital projects that qualify for funding. The LUF technical note sets out potential outputs and outcomes from projects, and places are strongly encouraged to design their bids so that the outputs delivered align with investment themes. As LUF is supporting this project (as part of a wider scheme – inc. Port Talbot Riverside Realm as highlighted within the Officer report), the LUF funding related this element (phase 1) is to be defrayed by March 2025 (or by 2025/26 by exception). Therefore, a complete discrete project must be secured / active, even if associated works are ongoing (Phase 2). All funding provided from the Fund should be spent by 31 March 2025, and, exceptionally, into 2025-26 for larger schemes. The maintenance of adopted highways or existing services (i.e. public waste collections) etc. is not eligible for LUF funding.

## CONCLUSION

The decision to recommend planning permission has been taken in accordance with Section 38 of The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, which requires that, in determining a planning application the determination must be in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The Development Plan comprises Future Wales - the National Plan 2040 and the Neath Port Talbot Local Development Plan (2011–2026) adopted January 2016.

It is considered that the proposal represents an appropriate form of development that would have no unacceptable impact on visual, residential or highway amenity. Accordingly, the proposed development is in accordance with Policies SC1, SP3, SP5, SP10, SP20, SP21, R2, TR2, EN6, EN7, EN8, BE1, BE2 of the Neath Port Talbot Local Development Plan.

It is further considered that the decision complies with Future Wales - the National Plan 2040, specifically Policies 2, 3, 6, 8 and 9 and the Council's well-being objectives and the sustainable development principle in accordance with the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

**Approval, subject to conditions.**

### Time Limit Conditions

1. The development shall begin no later than five years from the date of this decision.

Reason:

To comply with the requirements of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

### List of Approved Plans

2. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans and documents:
  - PRT Construction Environmental
  - Management Plan, prepared by Morgan Sindall (dated 02/12/2024), as received on 02/12/2024;
  - PRT Planting Schedule, Drawing No. 26CC03-URB-XX-XX-DR-LA-XX-00300-P04;
  - PRT Planting Plan 1 of 4, Drawing No. 26CC03-URB-XX-XX-DR-LA-XX-00301-P04;
  - PRT Planting Plan 2 of 4, Drawing No. 26CC03-URB-XX-XX-DR-LA-XX-00302-P04;
  - PRT Planting Plan 3 of 4, Drawing No. 26CC03-URB-XX-XX-DR-LA-XX-00303-P04;
  - PRT Planting Plan 4 of 4, Drawing No. 26CC03-URB-XX-XX-DR-LA-XX-00304-P04;
  - PRT Biodiversity Green Roof Plan, Drawing No. 26CC03-URB-XX-XX-DR-LA-XX-00305-P01;
  - PRT Biodiverse Roof Details, Drawing No. 26CC03-URB-XX-XX-DR-LA-XX-00521;
  - as received on 25/11/2024.
  - Princess Royal Theatre Flood Consequences Assessment, Version 1, prepared by Morgan Sindall (July 2024);
  - PRT Ground Investigation Report, Ref: 784-B046183, prepared by Tetra Tech (August 2024);
  - PRT Phase 1 Geoenvironmental Assessment Desk Top Study, Ref: 784-B046183, Prepared by Tetra Tech (August 2024);
  - Arboricultural Impact Assessment, ArbTS\_1869.2\_PRINCESS ROYAL THEATRE & PUBLIC
  - REALM, prepared by ArbTS, dated 21/10/2024; as received on 30/10/2024.
  - Technical Note / Transport Statement, ref: 1776-ACS-ZZ-XX-RP-T-001-A TN, prepared by Acstro, dated 12/07/2024);
  - Preliminary Ecological Assessment, V1.0, prepared by Ecological Services Ltd, dated 12/04/2024;
  - Planning Design Statement, Ref: 26CC03-AHR-10-TXX-T-A-04202 (October 2024);
  - Bat Survey, V1.0, prepared by Ecological Services Ltd (October 2024);
  - Formant Stage 3 Acoustic Design Report, Report ref. 26CC03-FOR-10-XX-T-OJ-0003, Revision: P01, dated 29/08/2024;
  - PRT Landscape Planning Statement, Rev P01, The Urbanists, dated 21/10/2024;
  - PRT Proposed Basement, Drawing No. 26CC03-AHR-31-TB1-D-A-08209-P01;
  - PRT Proposed Ground Floor, Drawing No. 26CC03-AHR-31-T00-D-A-08210-P01;
  - PRT Proposed First Floor, Drawing No. 26CC03-AHR-31-T01-D-A-08211-P01;
  - PRT Proposed Second Floor, Drawing No. 26CC03-AHR-31-T02-D-A-08212-P01;
  - PRT Proposed Roof, Drawing No. 26CC03-AHR-31-TR1-D-A-08213-P01;

- PRT Proposed Context Elevations, Drawing No. 26CC03-AHR-32-TZZ-D-A-08400-P01;
- PRT Proposed Elevations 1 of 2, Drawing No. 26CC03-AHR-32-TZZ-D-A-08401-P01;
- PRT Proposed Elevations 2 of 2, Drawing No. 26CC03-AHR-32-TZZ-D-A-08402-P01;
- Proposed Site Levels Layout Civic Square, Drawing No. 26cc03-HYD-50-CXX-D-C-00202-P02;
- Site Constraints Plan Civic Square, Drawing No. 26CC03-HYD-50-CXX-D-C-00500-P06;
- Active Travel Route Plan Civic Square, Drawing No. 26CC03-HYD-50-CXX-D-C-01000-P02;
- Vehicle Tracking Refuse Vehicle, Drawing No. 26CC03-HYD-50-CXX-D-C-01303-P04;
- Vehicle Tracking Fire Tender, Drawing No. 26CC03-HYD-50-CXX-D-C-01302-P07;
- Kerbing & Finishes Plan Civic Square, Drawing No. 26CC03-HYD-50-CXX-D-C-01400;
- Proposed Site Sections Civic Square, Drawing No. 26CC03-HYD-50-CXX-D-C-03400-P02;
- Post-Development Catchment Plan Civic Square, Drawing No. 26CC03-HYD-50-CXX-D-C-04300-P04;
- Exceedance Plan Civic Square, Drawing No. 26CC03-HYD-50-CXX-D-C-04400-P01;
- Information & Communication Plan Civic Square, Drawing No. 26CC03-HYD-50-CXX-D-C-04900-P01;
- Proposed Drainage Plan Civic Square, Drawing No. 26CC03-HYD-52-CXX-D-C-03000-P08;
- Drainage Construction Details Civic Square, Drawing No. 26CC03-HYD-53-CXX-D-C-05000-P01;
- SuDS Construction Details Civic Square, Drawing No. 26CC03-HYD-53-CXX-D-C-06000-P02;
- External Lighting & Lux Layout, Drawing No. 26CC03-HYD-55-CXX-D-E-55001-P01;
- Proposed External Services Layout, Drawing No. 26CC03-HYD-30-CXX-D-ME-30001-P01;
- PRT Civic Square, Illustrative Masterplan, Drawing No. 26CC03-URB-XX-XX-DR-LA-XX-00005-P04;
- PRT Sheet Key Plan, Drawing No. 26CC03-URB-XX-XX-DR-LA-XX-00006-P04;
- PRT Redline Boundary Plan, Drawing No. 26CC03-URB-XX-XX-DR-LA-XX-00010-P01;
- PRT Green Infrastructure Assessment Plan, Drawing No. 26CC03-URB-XX-XX-DR-LA-XX-00011-P01;
- PRT Hard & Soft Landscaping Masterplan, Drawing No. 26CC03-URB-XX-XX-DR-LA-XX-00012-P04;
- PRT Red Line Boundary 1 of 4, Drawing No. 26CC03-URB-XX-XX-DR-LA-XX-00101-P04;
- PRT Red Line Boundary 2 of 4, Drawing No. 26CC03-URB-XX-XX-DR-LA-XX-00102-P04;
- PRT Red Line Boundary 3 of 4, Drawing No. 26CC03-URB-XX-XX-DR-LA-XX-00103-P04;
- PRT Red Line Boundary 4 of 4, Drawing No. 26CC03-URB-XX-XX-DR-LA-XX-00104-P04;

- PRT Landscape Enabling Works 1 of 4, Drawing No. 26CC03-URB-XX-XX-DR-LA-XX-00105-P04;
- PRT Landscape Enabling Works 2 of 4, Drawing No. 26CC03-URB-XX-XX-DR-LA-XX-00106-P04;
- PRT Landscape Enabling Works 3 of 4, Drawing No. 26CC03-URB-XX-XX-DR-LA-XX-00107-P04;
- PRT Landscape Enabling Works 4 of 4, Drawing No. 26CC03-URB-XX-XX-DR-LA-XX-00108-P04;
- PRT Vegetation Retention and Removal GA 1 of 4, Drawing No. 26CC03-URB-XX-XX-DR-LA-XX-00109- P04;
- PRT Vegetation Retention and Removal GA 2 of 4, Drawing No. 26CC03-URB-XX-XX-DR-LA-XX-00110- P04;
- PRT Vegetation Retention and Removal GA 3 of 4, Drawing No. 26CC03-URB-XX-XX-DR-LA-XX-00111-P04;
- PRT Vegetation Retention and Removal GA 4 of 4, Drawing No. 26CC03-URB-XX-XX-DR-LA-XX-00112- P04;
- PRT General Arrangement 1 of 4, Drawing No. 26CC03-URB-XX-XX-DR-LA-XX-00201-P04;
- PRT General Arrangement 2 of 4, Drawing No. 26CC03-URB-XX-XX-DR-LA-XX-00202-P04;
- PRT General Arrangement 3 of 4, Drawing No. 26CC03-URB-XX-XX-DR-LA-XX-00203-P04;
- PRT General Arrangement 4 of 4, Drawing No. 26CC03-URB-XX-XX-DR-LA-XX-00204-P04;
- Proposed Hardscape GA 1 of 4, Drawing No. 26CC03-URB-XX-XX-DR-LA-XX-00401-P04;
- Proposed Hardscape GA 2 of 4, Drawing No. 26CC03-URB-XX-XX-DR-LA-XX-00402-P04;
- Proposed Hardscape GA 3 of 4, Drawing No. 26CC03-URB-XX-XX-DR-LA-XX-00403-P04;
- Proposed Hardscape GA 4 of 4, Drawing No. 26CC03-URB-XX-XX-DR-LA-XX-00404-P04;
- PRT Cross Sections AA, Drawing No. 26CC03-URB-XX-XX-DR-LA-XX-00601-P01;
- PRT Cross-Sections BB, Drawing No. 26CC03-URB-XX-XX-DR-LA-XX-00602-P01;
- PRT Cross-Sections CC, Drawing No. 26CC03-URB-XX-XX-DR-LA-XX-00603-P01;
- PRT Cross Sections DD-EE, Drawing No. 26CC03-URB-XX-XX-DR-LA-XX-00604-P01;
- PRT Elevations AA, Drawing No. 26CC03-URB-XX-XX-DR-LA-XX-00605-P01;
- Planning Statement, prepared by the Urbanists, dated 22/10/2024;

Reason:

In the interests of clarity

### Pre-Commencement Conditions

3. Prior to the start of development on site, the tree protective fencing as detailed within the Arboricultural Impact Assessment, Ref: Project Reference - ArbTS\_1869.2\_PRINCESS ROYAL THEATRE & PUBLIC REALM, prepared by ArbTS (dated 21st October 2024) and detailed on Tree Protection Plan, Drawing No. 1869.2 shall be fully implemented on site and the specifications of the fencing shall be in full compliance with BS5837: "Trees in Relation to

Design, Demolition and Construction to Construction - Recommendations" (2012). The fencing shall be retained in situ for the duration of all construction operations on site.

Reason:

In the interests of protecting retained trees on site in accordance with Policy EN7 of the Neath Port Talbot Local Development Plan.

#### Action Conditions

4. Prior to their use in the construction of development hereby permitted, full details and samples of the materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason:

In the interest of the visual amenity of the area and to ensure the development complies with Policy BE1 of the Neath Port Talbot Local Development Plan.

5. Prior to the first beneficial use of the development hereby approved, full details for the secure storage of cycles shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, and such facilities shall thereafter be retained as approved at all times.

Reason:

In the interest of highway safety and to ensure the development complies with Policy TR2 of the Neath Port Talbot Local Development Plan.

6. In the event that contamination is found at any time when carrying out the approved development that was not previously identified, work on site shall cease immediately and shall be reported in writing to the Local Planning Authority. A Desk Study, Site Investigation, Risk Assessment and where necessary a Remediation Strategy must be undertaken in accordance with the following document:- Land Contamination: A Guide for Developers (WLGA, WAG & EAW, July 2006). This document shall be submitted to and agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority. Prior to occupation of the development, a verification report which demonstrates the effectiveness of the agreed remediation, shall be submitted to and agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority.

Reason:

To ensure that risks from land contamination to the future users of the land and neighbouring land are minimised, together with those to controlled waters, property and ecological systems, and to ensure that the development can be carried out safely without unacceptable risks to workers, neighbours and other off site receptors, and to ensure compliance with Policies SP16 and EN8 of the Neath Port Talbot Local Development Plan.

#### Regulatory Conditions

7. Any bollards erected on site shall have a minimum spacing of 1.50m between it and any other bollard or the closest adjacent feature.

Reason:

To comply with Welsh Governments Active Travel Act Guidance (July 2021) and Policy TR2 of the Neath Port Talbot Local Development Plan.

8. Any external lighting shall be installed in accordance with the details on Drawing No. 26CC03-HYD-55-CXX-D-E-55001-P01, External Lighting Layout & Lux, Civic Centre as received on 23/10/2024.

Reason:

In the interest of visual amenity and biodiversity and in accordance with Policy SP15 and EN6 of the Neath Port Talbot Local Development Plan.

9. Prior to the first beneficial use of the development hereby permitted, the biodiversity enhancement measures shall be provided in accordance with: Princess Royal Theatre and Civic Square, Green Infrastructure Statement, ref: 2264-URB-XX-XX-RP-PL -XX-001 (21/10/2024); PRT Green Infrastructure Assessment Plan, Drawing No. 26CC03-URB-XX-XX-DR-LAXX-00011-P01; and Bat Survey, V1.0, prepared by Ecological Services Ltd and dated October 2024 and shall be retained as such thereafter.

Reason:

In the interest of providing artificial nesting habitats to secure a net benefit for biodiversity in accordance with Planning Policy Wales (Ed. 12).

10. Demolition or construction works shall not take place outside the hours of 08:00 to 18:00 Monday to Friday, 08:00 to 13:30 on Saturdays and no works on Sundays or Bank Holidays.

Reason:

In the interest of residential amenity and to ensure the development complies with Policy BE1 and EN8 of the Neath Port Talbot Local Development Plan.

11. All planting, seeding or turfing comprised in the approved details of landscaping shall be carried out in the first planting and seeding seasons following the occupation of the building or the completion of the development, whichever is the sooner; and any trees or plants which within a period of 5 years from the completion of the development die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of similar size and species, unless otherwise alternative species is agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority.

Reason:

In the interests of maintaining a suitable scheme of landscaping to protect the visual amenity of the area, to maintain the special qualities of the landscape and habitats through the protection, creation, and enhancement of links between sites and their protection for amenity, landscape and biodiversity value, and to ensure the development complies with Policies SP15 and BE1 of the Neath Port Talbot Local Development Plan.

12. The development, hereby approved shall be completed in accordance with the Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), prepared by Morgan Sindall (dated 02/12/2024).

Reason:

In the interests of biodiversity and the amenity of the area as a whole and to ensure the development complies