

Planning Statement

Erection of 9 flats, construction of off-street parking spaces and associated work

at

former garages site, Heol Dinas, Penparcau, Aberystwyth, SY23 1SL

November 2020

Sylfeini cadarn | Firm foundations
Cartrefi gwell | Better homes
Cymunedau cryf | Strong communities



Background

The site is currently occupied by 38 derelict garages, which are unsightly, unsafe and hazardous. The proposed redevelopment will transform the locality and provide 9 one-bedroom flats for affordable (social) rent, each with their own parking space, together with new community parking.

The unique layout of the site (being only 5m deep but very long) lends itself well to the use of modern method of construction because it allows the homes to be constructed predominantly off-site with the minimum of local disruption.

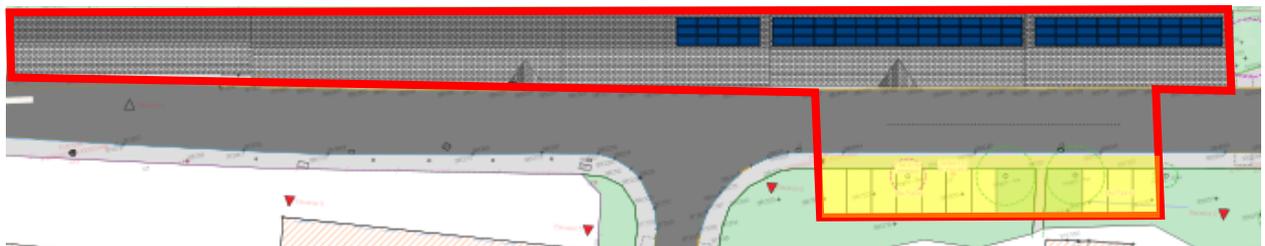
The design adopts a modular approach, with all 9 homes being the same unit, set out in a staggered and stacked arrangement to form one cohesive building that provides each flat with its own dedicated amenity area and parking space.

Planning History

Planning Permission reference number A120679, granted 30th November 2012, permitted the demolition of the existing garages (38 of them) and the erection of 12 one-bedroom flats with garages. See approved drawing below:



This permission included the creation of additional off-street parking spaces on the opposite side of Heol Dinas, as highlighted yellow below.



These additional spaces were constructed in 2016 and constituted a formal commencement of the planning permission. The construction of the flats has not yet commenced due to lack of grant funding.

The current application proposes an alternative scheme for 9 one-bedroom flats.

Site Context and Housing Need

Paragraph 3.2.43 of the Ceredigion LDP Settlement Group Statements (Volume 2A) identifies Penparcau as an area with poor housing quality:

“Poor housing quality is also a major concern with two areas within the top 10 most deprived wards in terms of housing in Wales. Looking at the town as a whole also masks pockets of deep-rooted social and economic deprivation, such as high unemployment and inactivity rates, poor housing quality and low skill levels in Penparcau and Rheidol wards – two significant areas of Aberystwyth.”

Paragraph 3.2.43 – Ceredigion LDP Settlement Group Statements (Volume 2A)



The existing redundant garages at Heol Dinas are a magnet for anti-social behaviour and detract from the appearance of the street. Tai Ceredigion have previously made improvements to the street scene by creating additional car parking spaces (under permission A120679) and improved the appearance of the three-storey development adjacent the site through external wall insulation and rendering. The replacement of the redundant garages with nine new homes will be a significant further improvement.

There is strong housing demand in Aberystwyth for one bedroom homes, and the proposed development of nine new homes will directly address that need. The Association does have a good number of other, larger, properties in the area so the addition of one bedroom homes will complement that provision perfectly. In view of this demand for one-bedroom properties, and the physical constraints of the site (making modular development preferable), it makes sense for the new scheme to be one type of accommodation.

Principle of Development and the Key Planning Considerations

The proposal to provide housing at this site has been established by the previous planning permission (and its commencement) is in accordance with **Ceredigion LDP policy S02**: Development in Urban Service Centres.

The demolition of the existing garages has been approved under the previous planning permission and can take place under that permission. Ecology issues were assessed under that previous permission, including a bat survey that concluded that the existing garages were not suitable for bats and could be demolished without any mitigation measures.

The key difference with the previous planning permission and the current scheme is the design of the flats and the number of the units to be provided and it is therefore considered that design (along with the associated parking and residential amenity issues) are the key consideration with the current application. These issues are addressed, in turn, below.

Design

The proposed development comprises of 9 one bedroom flats that are to be constructed using modern methods of construction to a high energy performance standard, and responding to Welsh Government Development Quality Requirements (DQR) and Secure by Design (SbD) requirements.

The scheme has been chosen by Welsh Government to receive grant funding under the Innovative Housing Programme (<https://gov.wales/innovative-housing-programme>), subject to planning permission. The Innovative Housing Programme (IHP) is a programme that provides grant to innovative housing of outstanding design. It is a highly competitive programme due to the limited grant funding available each year and Barcud are delighted to have been successful in obtaining this grant for year 20/21 (the first time this grant has been allocated to scheme in Ceredigion).

As part of the grant bid and allocation process the scheme has undergone a design review by the Design Commission for Wales (DCfW), which involved a team of design experts (architects and urban designers) scrutinising the design and recommending improvements. The proposal presented to the Local Planning Authority under this current application is the end result of this design process.

It is considered that the proposed development offers an exciting opportunity to significantly enhance the street scene along Heol Dinas by removing unsightly redundant garages and providing a replacement building that is of a high quality design. It has the potential to uplift existing residential development along this street and make a significant contribution towards regeneration of this area of Penparcau.

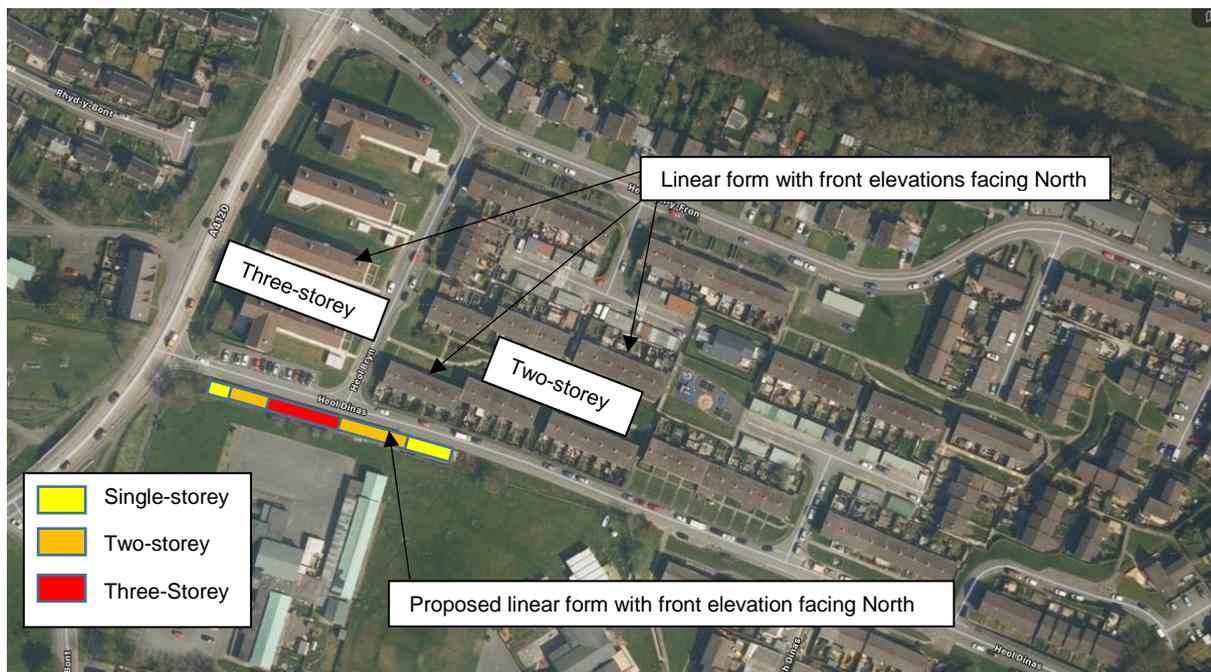
Although it is an innovative design, the proposal complies with Ceredigion LDP policies on design as follows:

LDP policy DM06: High Quality Design and Placemaking requires all new housing development in Ceredigion to be of high quality design and create a sense of place. The policy, amongst other things, requires development to promote innovative design whilst having regard to local form, design and material. Paragraph 8.65 of the LDP expands on this point as follows:

“Innovatively designed development is encouraged as it can help enforce local pride and create a sense of place. The use of modern architecture can be successful if the relationship between the existing built form is reflected. For example, the use of natural stone, slate and timber are prominent throughout Ceredigion, these materials used alongside more modern ones such as steel and glass can help connect two very different forms, allowing the new development to reflect the existing built form whilst being innovative”.

Paragraph 8.65 of the Ceredigion LDP

The proposed development reflects the existing built form along Heol Dinas in terms of its orientation, scale, height, and linear form – see image/notes below



The existing surrounding residential development is finished in a mix of brick and white render with concrete tiled roof and is generally uninspiring. The proposed development uses a mix of natural timber, glass and blue/black brick to provide an attractive design that represents a significant enhancement over the existing garages it replaces.



The modular form of the development provides an opportunity for each flat to be 'stacked' in an altering form to provide an interesting, active, frontage along Heol Dinas. The units have been stacked to form three-storeys adjacent to existing three-storey development, and reduced in height down to two and one-storey adjacent the existing two-storey development. This design not only reflects existing form, it also follows the contour of the land and help protect residential amenity.



Residential Amenity – Neighbouring Residents

To the north, on the opposite side of Heol Dinas, is entirely residential, and the design of the proposed development has factored in the location, nature and scale of these existing properties to ensure that the development does not have an adverse impact on the amenities of the neighbouring occupiers. The proposed development responds to the neighbouring properties by reducing in height (from west to east) so that by the time the development is adjacent the existing two-storey homes it is either single storey or a maximum of two storeys (please refer to aerial image on previous page). This will ensure that the development is not overbearing on, or unduly overlooks, the neighbouring properties.

To the south of the site is a large school site and grounds, and the development has been orientated so that there are no habitable room windows in the proposed flats facing the school grounds. In addition, the raised amenity areas for each flat includes 1.8m high screening along the south elevation to prevent overlooking of the school grounds from these amenity areas.

According to feedback from existing residents, lack of parking can be an issue on Heol Dinas. The proposed development aims to address this issue by providing a

private space for each new home but also provide nine additional spaces for general community use – which will remove cars from the street and ease pressure considerably along Heol Dinas. This provision, along with the replacement of the existing garages with a well-designed building will enhance the street scene considerably which will be of benefit to the existing residents and wider community.

Residential Amenity – Residents of the proposed development

Each flat will provide the floor area and space standards required by the DQR for a one bedroom/two person flat, but also provide:

- private external amenity space, closely linked with the relevant flat and providing space for relaxation and recreation, as well as practical aspects such as clothes drying. The importance of access to outdoor space has been increasingly recognised in the light of the current pandemic.
- a private car parking space, provided with electric car/mobility scooter charging facilities.
- secure bike store and bin store.

The four ground floor flats are also designed so they will be suitable for residents with limited mobility. These flats are set back from the public highway and include a dwarf brick wall and planting to provide a private defensible space / front forecourt.

Planters are also provided on upper-storey properties as a means of ‘greening’ the development, assist with sustainable surface water drainage, and screen/maintain privacy between flats.

The proposed development is unusual in the sense that it provides very good spacious and practical external amenity areas for all flats, even the upper storey flats, as well as nearby off-street parking.

Parking

The location of this development and its proximity to services and transport infrastructure (there is a bus service along Heol Dinas) will enable the homes to be enjoyed by residents who do not have access to a private vehicle.

Notwithstanding, the scheme provides one car parking space per bedroom which is in accordance with recommended guidance.

In addition to parking for the new flats, the proposed development includes the construction of 9 additional car parking spaces for general community use, which

will be available to all existing residents along Heol Dinas. This 9 additional spaces are in addition to the 14 spaces already constructed by the Association under the previous permission.

The development therefore not only provides parking for the proposed flats but also helps ease on-street parking pressures in the vicinity of the site. It also proposes three less units than the previously approved development and will therefore generate less traffic than the previous scheme.

Conclusion

The proposed development provides an innovative, well-designed, solution to this problematic garage site.

In our opinion, it provides a better scheme (in terms of design, energy performance and residential amenity) than the previously approved building. It has been chosen by Welsh Government as one of few developments in Wales that is worthy of grant support this year through the Innovative Housing Programme.

We sincerely hope that Ceredigion Council agree that this is an exciting opportunity that needs to be grasped with both hands and grant planning permission so that development can progress this financial year.



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