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Wrexham County Borough Council
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FAO Mrs S Holman

22 September 2014

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Dear Mrs Holman,

**RE: Feasibility of the Retention/Conversion of the Existing Buildings
Land at Hafod Tileries, Johnstown, Application Ref: P/2013/0545**

Prior to the decision to pursue demolition and mixed use development on the site, the applicant considered the redevelopment/re-use of the buildings. However, following completion of the building condition survey report (attached), which highlighted the dilapidated condition of the buildings and the complexity and cost of retention and redevelopment, in addition to the applicants view of the lack of demand for apartments in this location, it was determined that the conversion of the building was not practical or financially viable.

The Condition Survey submitted demonstrates that:

- i. The contemporary structures are in a substantially adequate structural condition although these are essentially basic industrial buildings with floor slab arrangements highly customized for their current usage with little prospect of active use or real benefit from conversion.
- ii. The older construction suffers from, water ingress at roof level with resulting timber decay, substantial lean and twist of both external and internal walls, damp penetration at low levels and isolated areas of local cracking to walls.

The two major factors which would make the redevelopment of the older buildings both costly and problematic are the water ingress at roof level with resulting timber decay and the substantial lean and twist of both external and internal walls. The practical implications for the retention and redevelopment of the buildings are explained in greater detail in the attached Building Condition Survey but can be summarised as:

- i. There has been an obvious lack of adequate maintenance over a prolonged period of time and many key roof elements have been compromised. One trial high level investigation of an area appearing 'relatively solid' from ground level revealed considerable rot. It must be assumed that in addition to the obvious areas, there are many other areas significantly affected. It is considered that the roof may become structurally unstable in the short to medium term.

- ii. The displaced form appears to be of some age and the buildings are probably in equilibrium should they remain undisturbed, however this is not an option if a viable and productive use for the site is to be found. It is likely then that repairs would trigger instability of the walls with new load paths and probable loading eccentricities. These distortions would also prove a significant problem for future development of the existing structure where additional floor levels are likely to be required.

Irrespective of particular defects the form of the old construction would make it difficult to develop and as noted above the addition of floor levels is a likely requirement for residential conversion, where none presently exist. Additional significant loading would definitely be applied to the building if any attempt were made to redevelop it and it is also considered unlikely that the foundation construction would have sufficient additional capacity to accept the required additional load.

It is noted that the buildings have not been deemed to be worthy of listing for their architectural merits, similarly their historical significance is unlikely to be great enough to merit listing since neither have been constructed before 1840, which is the date before which buildings are usually listed on the basis of age alone. The buildings are also not included in a conservation area of the adopted local plan. The site and buildings currently standing could have been protected from demolition and full scale redevelopment, but at no point has the Council or English Heritage sought to do this.

The applicants have considered converting the existing buildings, but for the reasons outlined above it was determined this would be impractical (in addition to the very onerous recent additions to the building regulations). It is also noteworthy that neither the market demand or developer appetite for conversion to apartments exists for this site. The market demand is heavily skewed towards family houses and this also applies to lending criteria for the site purchase by house builders.

The application site comprises a substantial parcel of previously developed land, the majority of which is derelict and dilapidated (the tile works closed in 2008 and since then the conditions of the building have been deteriorating with little benefit to the local community). The proposal represents the best chance to bring the site back into an active use to bring considerable economic, social and environmental benefits. It should also be noted that if the applicant had pursued the retention and redevelopment of the Tile Works, this would have reduced the level of affordable housing that would be able to be provided in order to make the scheme viable (please note the viability report submitted).

As the application is submitted in outline form, there is scope for the Local Planning Authority to ensure that the design of the buildings is of a high quality and sympathetic to the existing character. It is also possible to place elements or markers identifying points of interest relating to the Victorian Brick and Tile industry within the scheme and as part of a display record within the POS.

We trust this justification is sufficient, however should you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact the writer

Yours sincerely

pp 

Chris Still
Planning & Development Manager