

Development Management  
Planning Service  
Newport City Council  
Civic Centre  
Newport  
NP20 4UR

Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> December 2024

Dear Sirs,

24/0770 | LISTED BUILDING CONSENT FOR THE CHANGE OF USE, CONVERSION, REFURBISHMENT AND ALTERATIONS OF TREDEGAR CHAMBERS TO CREATE A MIXED USE SCHEME COMPRISING 15 APARTMENTS AND 5 RETAIL UNITS (A1/A2 USE) | 76-81 Bridge Street Newport South Wales NP20 4AQ

### **Comments from Economic Regeneration service**

I write in reference to the above planning application for the change of use, conversion, refurbishment and alterations of Tredegar Chambers, to create a mixed-use scheme comprising fifteen apartments and five retail units (A1/A2 use).

The site referenced is located at 76-81 Bridge Street, a key pedestrian travel route from Newport Railway station into the broader city centre. It is a prominent corner building, with its ground floor commercial space having remained principally vacant since its former occupiers Thomas Cook left roughly seven years ago. This loss of a high profile tenant followed by long-term, vacancy is a common occurrence on the high street nationally, due to a drop in demand for large retail high space and the emergence of alternative forms of shopping e.g. online sales.

The City Council's emerging placemaking plan builds on the principles of placemaking as identified by the Design Commission for Wales (DCfW). Strong places are defined by three common factors, a rich mix of local activities (specifically land use, pedestrian flows, and sensory inputs); a physical setting defined by a permeable and visually attractive townscape; and meaning/purpose given through perceived function and cultural association. The emerging plan not only focuses on the regeneration of the built environment, then, but also looks to influence footfall through interventions that encourage a mixed range of uses. It also seeks to influence the public realm, and improve the perceptions of residents, businesses and investors alike on their perceptions of the city centre.

There are a number of sites across Newport city centre that have the potential to influence both urban form and overall user experience; but clear barriers exist preventing such development progressing. For example, the heritage value of Newport's buildings should be celebrated, yet long term vacancy has left a number in disrepair. Coupled with substantial conservation deficits arising from the requirement for more sensitive restoration work, realising these projects has become increasingly difficult and requires their owners to develop creative solutions for repurposing. Furthermore, the longer they are left vacant, the further they deteriorate, compounding the issue and creating long-term challenges where

solutions are not immediately apparent. The emerging placemaking plan looks to promote the refurbishment of local heritage assets with modern purpose that complements not threatens their intrinsic local value.

The redevelopment and repurposing of Tredegar Chambers is therefore a key priority for the Economic Regeneration service as part of its efforts to stimulate capital regeneration; due to its size, overall impact on the urban vernacular, and general impact on streetscape for both Cambrian Road and Bridge Street. On the basis of what constitutes a positive change for the mix of uses across buildings in the city centre, and the economic development of the wider environment into neighbouring wards, the creation of fifteen apartments of high quality should be highly welcomed, especially for a site in need of renewed investment. The introduction of and investment in these types of homes physically emphasises the aspiration of the local authority to position the city as a base for young professionals in key emerging sectors such as cyber. It will also serve as a benchmark to encourage others looking to realise similar projects in Newport city centre in terms of expected, high standards of conversion.

Furthermore, the retained retail units on the ground floor for A1/A2 will offer commercial space along a key city centre street attracting footfall and premises for services in a sustainable location. As the site lies between Cambrian Road and Bridge Street, it serves as a key reference point for pedestrians moving through the space, and through renewed investment it is hoped further uses complementary to the upper floor refurbishment can be realised.

In summary NCC's economic regeneration service believes this proposal will realise substantial benefit in line with those targeted through the emerging placemaking plan for the city centre, and should be granted permission to proceed.

Regards

Team Manager- Economic Regeneration