



Design and Access Statement

The Ffwrwm, High Street,
Caerleon

August 2026

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Introduction

David Glasson Planning Limited (DGP), have been instructed by Highmore Group to prepare a design and access statement for the proposed change of use of 5 shops (A1) to mixed use (A1/A3) at the Ffwrwm, High Street, Caerleon NP18 1AG

This statement sets out the background and justification for the proposed development and should be read in conjunction with the accompanying plans (prepared by *Griffiths Design*),

DGP extends its gratitude to Highmore Group for their kind assistance in the preparation of this statement.

Site Context

The “Ffwrwm” (derived from the Latin ‘Forum’ which is Welsh for a “seat”) is an enclosed paved/cobbled courtyard of five shop units (arrowed in red), restaurant (‘The Snug’) occupying a backwater set off the High Street in the Caerleon Conservation Area.

The surrounding area is characterised by a tightly packed townscape with buildings lining the streets described in the Conservation Area Appraisal as “*simply ornamented, proportionally balanced and generally of a modest domestic scale*”.

The site is within Flood Zone 1.

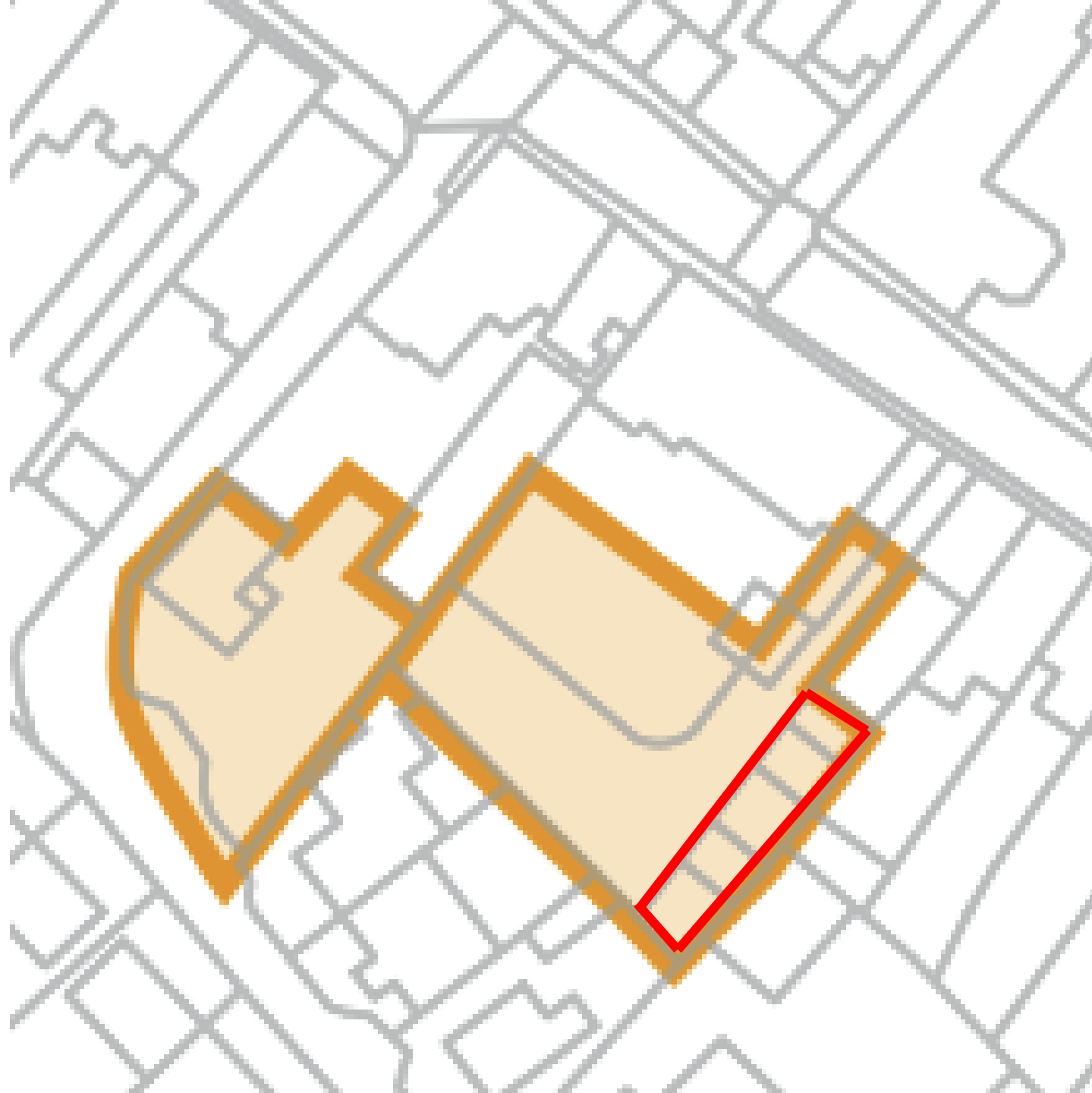


Source: Google Earth

Heritage Setting

With the distinction of having been the gates to the Roman Legionary fortress the Ffwrwm is recognised as a Scheduled Monument (Ref No: MM240 – designation opposite with shop units indicated in red)

The Monument comprises buried feature and earthwork representing part of the Roman legionary fortress. The fortress at Caerleon or *Isca* is one of only three permanent legionary fortresses in Britain and was founded around AD75. The application site covers the location of the *Porta Praetoria*, the main entrance to the fortress. Although the exact form and structure of the gateway is unknown the monument is of national importance for its potential to enhance our knowledge of Roman military organisation.





Caerllion Rufeinig | Roman Caerleon - Working in Partnership Needs You!

‘Roman Caerleon’

Museums service Amgueddfa Cymru, Cadw and Newport City Council are working together to maximise the potential of Caerleon’s Roman heritage by delivering an improved experience across the Roman and other sites for the benefit of the community and visitors.

Source: Cadw published 20 May 2024



Existing Site

The Ffwrwm contains a restaurant ("The Snug") which is not part of this planning application and 5 shop units extending into a rear courtyard which were formerly used for retailing including spiritual gifts, art, antiques as well as a hairdressers and natural health clinic.

Units 1 to 5





Sculpture Garden

The Ffwrwm is home to renowned sculpture works and carvings which vividly convey ancient tales of Wales set within a 18th century walled garden of shrubs and trees including carved Arthurian thrones to the knights of the Round Table, metal sculpture of the duelling knights Arthur and Mordred (pictured top right) , animals and spirit creatures and reputedly the largest lovespoon in the world at 44 feet long (pictured top left).

A comprehensive search of the planning history has not been possible due to Council archive records being inaccessible as a result of health and safety issues. The following details have been sourced from available on-line records so can only represent a partial picture of the property subject of this application.

Planning permission was granted on 6th November 1989 (**Application No: 1/17791**) for:

“Change of use of garage to Craft Workshops and barn to Art Gallery, restaurant and associated toilets”

This permission was subject to a Section 52 Agreement which is unavailable at the time of writing.

Planning permission was granted on 29th March 2007 (**Application No: 06/1432**) for:

“Change of use to retail sales within Class A1”

The officer report remarked: *“There are five single storey units, two of which are vacant and all subject to restrictive conditions requiring they be used for craft workshops only, any retail element is ancillary for the sale of goods produced in the workshops.... The units, owing to their size, are more suited to specialist retailers such as antiques and other retailing uses that are based around tourism. Moreover, widening the scope for attracting occupiers into the units will also ensure that the vitality and growth of The Ffwrwm can be maintained. Any prolonged vacancies, particularly if all of them cannot be occupied, will result in the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and setting of the surrounding Ancient Monuments being harmed”.*

Planning permission was granted on 1st July 2010 (**Application No: 06/1207**) for:

“Variation/removal of restrictions upon usage and occupancy of units contained in Section 52 Agreement of planning permission 1/17791 for the change of use of garages to craft workshops and barn to art gallery, restaurant”

The officer report remarked: *“Having regard to the above it is considered that having given permission to allow the use of the small units for A1 purposes thereby removing the restriction that they be used as craft workshops for the production of craft products of an artistic nature and the retail sale of these products or products of a similar nature not produced within the craft workshops, it is reasonable to permit the variation of the Section 52 Agreement to similar effect and remove part 1d. However all other parts of the legal agreement remain valid and include restrictions that are comparable with those included as conditions on the most recent planning permission”.*

A Section 106 Agreement was concluded that amended the original Section 52 Agreement as follows:

- Clause 1(d) shall be deleted
- Clause 1(e) shall be amended as follows: “that each of the units shall be occupied by a separate business that shall be a separate commercial entity from any other business in any other unit ...”
- Clause 1(f) shall be amended so that “craft workshops” shall be deleted and replaced with the word “units”.

Planning permission was granted on 14th July 2011 (**Application No: 11/0547**) for Unit 2:

“Change of use from barber shop to photography studio (with retail element)”

Planning History



Planning Policy

Future Wales The National Plan 2024 (February 2021) ("FW")

Policy 1 – Where Wales will grow

The Welsh Government supports sustainable growth in all parts of Wales

Policy 2 – Shaping Urban Growth and Regeneration

The Welsh Government supports The growth and regeneration of towns and cities should positively contribute towards building sustainable places that support active and healthy lives, with urban neighbourhoods that are compact and walkable, organised around mixed-use centres and public transport, and integrated with green infrastructure.

Policy 6 – Town Centre First

Town centres are the most accessible parts of our towns and should be the focus of growth and regeneration.

Planning Policy Wales (Edition 12 | February 2024) ("PPW")

4.3.33 Vibrant and viable centres are distinguished by a diversity of activity and uses which should contribute towards a centre's well-being and success,

4.3.34 Leisure and entertainment, and food and drink uses can benefit retail and commercial centres, and with adequate attention to safeguarding amenities can contribute to a successful evening economy.





Planning Policy

Building Better Places: The Planning System Delivering Resilient and Brighter Futures (2020)

This document sets out the Welsh Government's planning policy priorities to assist in taking action in the recovery period after the Covid-19 pandemic crisis. The planning system should be centre stage in the consideration of built and natural environment issues that have arisen from this situation.

The planning system will need to adapt quickly to the economic changes which will occur as a result of the pandemic which could largely accelerate trends which had already begun to occur. Economic forecasts will need to be re-examined to ensure that the supply of land for employment uses is adequate and fit for the future, taking into account the need for a choice of sites.

Technical Advice Note 5: Nature Conservation (2009)

Technical Advice Note 11: Noise (1997)

Technical Advice Note 12: Design (2016)

Technical Advice Note 18: Transport (2007)

Technical Advice Note 23: Economic Development (2014)

Technical Advice Note 24: The Historic Environment (2017)

Planning Policy

Newport Local Development Plan (2015) (“LDP”)

Policy CE7 Conservation Areas

...development should avoid any adverse effect on an area and have regard to the Conservation Area's Appraisal where applicable. Whilst this will usually involve the careful use of traditional materials, in a traditional manner, there may also be scope for good modern design, particularly where attractive new compositions or points of interest can be created.

Policy R9 Change of Use to Non-Retail Uses Inside Local Centres

Within Local Centres, there are many shops or groups of shops serving predominantly the local area. The assessment of the potential loss of such a facility will need to take account of the impact on the overall level of local provision. Because small scale retail provision is usually found in predominantly residential areas emphasis will be placed on residential amenity including issues such as noise, odours and emissions

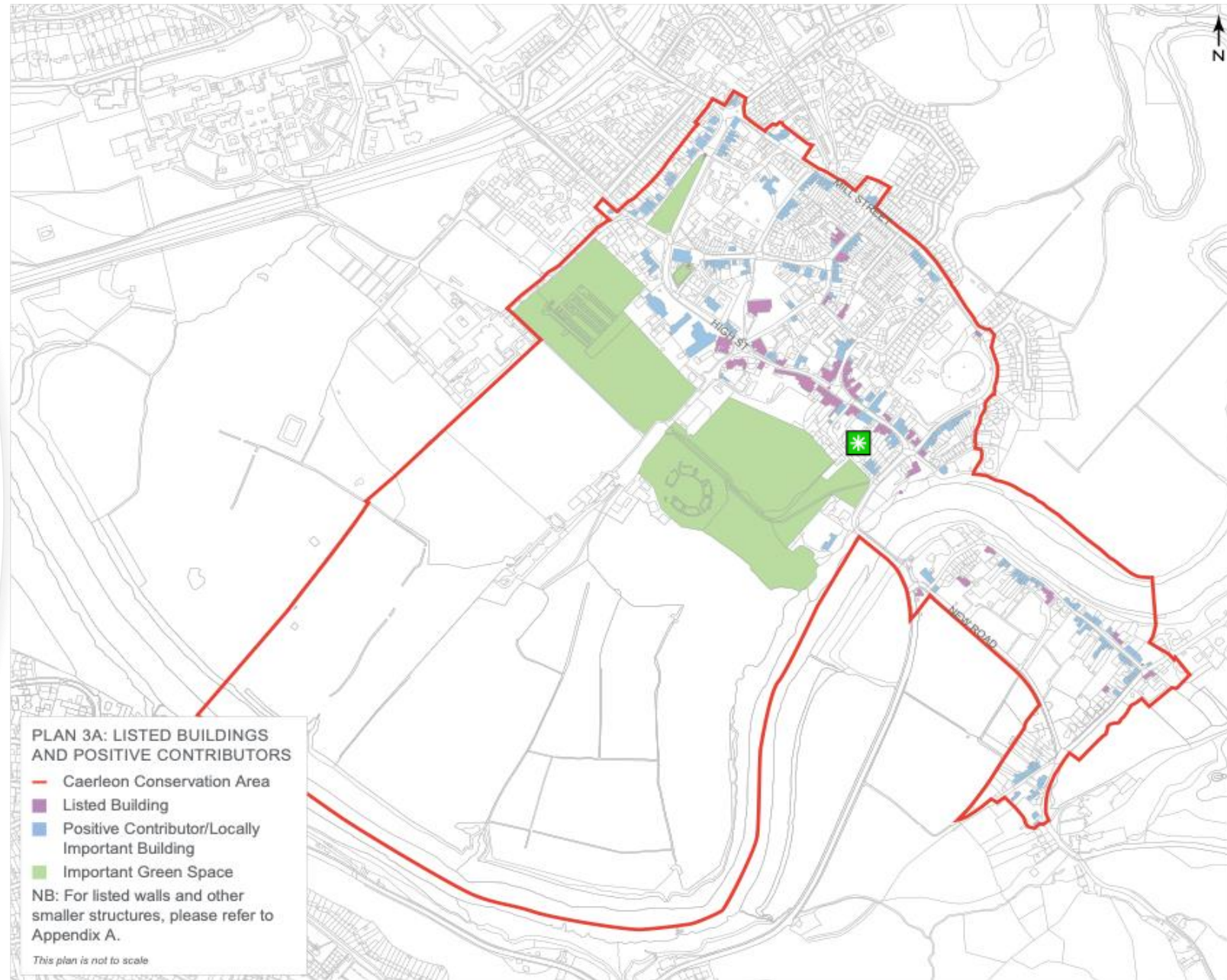


Caerleon Conservation Area Appraisal (2019)

The Caerleon Conservation Area was originally designated on 11 June 1970 and extended on 8 December 1977 and is one of 15 Conservation Areas in Newport City Council.

The Conservation Area recognises its rich history and how the Roman origins of the settlement and later medieval development has resulted in today's unique character and strong archaeological presence.

Site (🌟)



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Proposed Change of Use

The site has an established history of independent retail use offering an array of locally sourced art and crafts and local services, but the units have ceased trading and are in need of refurbishment and repairs, both internally and externally.

In order to widen their commercial appeal and attract a wider clientele it is proposed allowing the units to be used for A1 (Shops) or A3 (food and drink establishments) which would allow for a mix of activity in a food quarter setting so encouraging visitors to combine a retail/food and drink experience while appreciating the sculpture garden and heritage significance of the Ffwrwm.



Design Concept and Principles

The design rationale for the development is to sensitively refurbish the units to enable a wider appeal to the retail and hospitality sectors.

The aim is to retain the small-scale configuration of the units nature and avoid any change to their essential proportions and size.

The design rationale is based on functionality of purpose, uncluttered appearance and a simple palette of materials.

The proposed scheme has been guided by the immediate and wider context and is a meaningful and sustainable design response.



Scale, layout, context and appearance

No changes are proposed to the existing scale.

The simple form, massing and proportions of the shops presents an unassuming and uncomplicated character.

The close proximity of the restaurant means there will continue to be a close physical and visual relationship with the existing use.

Shopfront changes will blend with the existing built form.



Access

TAN 12 sets out one objective – **Ensuring ease of access for all**

The site has the benefit of a suitable pedestrian access off the High Street allowing good accessibility to and from the town centre.

The town centre location ensures scope for non-car modes including walking and cycling.

The site benefits from a level access with key facilities at ground level so allowing access for all people including those with mobility impairments, sensory impairments and learning difficulties.



Landscape

The existing courtyard contains a pleasing mixture of hard and soft landscaping including a mixed group of trees (see below), which is used for sitting out and appreciation of the sculpture garden.

The existing trees have recently been the subject of an arboricultural report and a schedule of works approved under Application No: 26/0444 (27 07 26)

Environmental Sustainability

TAN12 sets out three objectives:

Achieving efficient use and protection of natural resources

Enhancing biodiversity

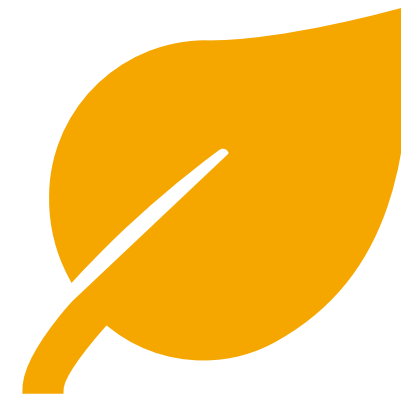
Designing for change

The proposed works will comply with current Building Regulations. Building materials will be responsibly sourced.

The Ecology Officer has advised that no trees due to be felled are likely to support roosting bats. However, there is still an opportunity for ecological enhancements including bat boxes and bird boxes.

The schedule of tree works confirms that tree surgeons will check for protected species such as nesting birds.

The scheme will maximise the use of renewable energy where possible as well as rainwater harvesting.





Community safety

TAN 12 sets out two objectives:

Ensuring attractive, safe public spaces

Security through natural surveillance

The units are an established adjunct to the courtyard which on account of its enclosed space already promotes a sense of respect, territorial responsibility and community welfare as well as natural self-policing to discourage anti-social or criminal behaviour.

The proposed layout has well-defined access routes and entrances that provides for convenient movement without compromising security.

The resumption of comings and goings to the units and associated activity in the courtyard will strengthen general security through greater passive surveillance of the surrounding area and create a sense of safety so reducing the risk of crime.

No floodlights are proposed or harsh lighting is intended to avoid unwanted light spill and any lighting will be confined to low-key exterior lighting to deter any vandalism and criminal intentions.

Management and maintenance will ensure the units are tidy and well cared for to show crime and disorder will not be tolerated.

Heritage Appraisal

In regard to heritage assets, the intervening distance and visual separation between the site (shown as 1 – 5) and closest Listed Buildings on the High Street (blue dots on plan) is such that there is no tangible physical or visual inter-relationship to result in any adverse impact on their character, appearance or setting.

Note: Caerleon House (bottom left) was de-listed in 2022 but is recognised in the Conservation Area Appraisal as a positive contributor /locally important building (bottom left).

There are no groundworks in this planning application to interfere with the underlying Scheduled Monument.



Illustrative Images



Conclusion

The proposed external changes are limited to refurbishment and repairs to create a tasteful and appealing retail/food quarter. The character and appearance of the Conservation Area will therefore be preserved, if not marginally enhanced.

The shop units are currently unoccupied and making no contribution to the enjoyment of the sculpture garden or the wider courtyard space. The vacant shops are in urgent need of refurbishment and present a poor image to locals and visitors to Caerlon and the historic home of the Roman Gate.

The proposal exemplifies the 'Town Centre' approach with mixed A1 and A3 which are easily accessible and will regenerate this part of the town and in so doing benefit the wider commercial centre and contribute to its well-being and success in line with FW and PPW.

The site has a long history of retail which needs enhancing through the opportunity to offer food and drink so strengthening its commercial viability, particularly given its virtual invisibility from the principal retail throughfare of High Street. The single aspect orientation of the units into an enclosed courtyard will contain activity and limit any adverse impact to the amenities of the surrounding area. There are no highway implications as this is a wholly pedestrian environment with no vehicular access.

There is already an active A3 use at the courtyard and any additional A3 uses will similarly face onto the courtyard which is frequented by locals and tourists alike so there should not be any discernible increase in noise or activity. The limited size of the shops will militate against any harm one might expect from a larger operation.

The shops evolved from the previous craft workshops and now need to further evolve with the flexibility to offer A3 hospitality. The size of the units will appeal to local business so continuing the tradition of independent trading at the Ffwrwm. The officer's comments in 2010 are relevant today: *"Any prolonged vacancies, particularly if all of them cannot be occupied, will result in the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and setting of the surrounding Ancient Monuments being harmed"*.



Conclusion cont/d

The Ffwrwm has a long tradition of housing an eclectic display of Celtic and Arthurian sculptures and carvings paying homage to Welsh art, culture and folklore as well as providing a dedicated space for local independent businesses.

The proposed will broaden the commercial appeal of the shops and allow for a greater diversity of activity. There is already a well established existing A3 use in the form of the restaurant and additional A3 smaller scale uses would not therefore be out of conformity with the character of the courtyard which already has an outside seating area. The ability to make the shop units more flexible with a choice of A1 and A3 uses can only increase the appeal of the courtyard to passing footfall which is vital on account of its backwater location.

This revitalisation of the Ffwrwm dovetails with the new deal launched in 2024 to promote Caerleon's rich Roman history and bring more visitors to the town. In not only rejuvenating the Roman Gate space, the proposal will augment the visitor experience with a wider choice of food and drink.

This proposal should create the conditions for a revival of the Ffwrwm as a cornerstone in the history of Caerleon and provide an atmospheric base within the perceived public realm for local business to flourish thereby securing its role as a custodian of the Scheduled Monument and strengthening its valuable contribution to the town's character, surrounding townscape and Conservation Area.

In our view this proposal is in conformity with national planning policy, Technical Advice Note (TAN) 24: The Historic Environment and the Newport LDP.