

Project Design St Thomas's Church, Talywain



Map Reference SO20SE Grid Reference SO2619504044

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background and context

An archaeological desk-based assessment has been undertaken by Glamorgan Gwent Archaeological Trust on behalf of Trendy Flats Ltd of the land at St Thomas's Church, Talywain. The purpose of the archaeological desk-based assessment is to inform planning authority for a proposed residential building inside of the church, for which a planning application is to be submitted in 2020.

The archaeological fundamental study area is located within the heart of Talywain, Torfaen on the junction of Commercial Road and Bluets Road. It was previously owned by the Church of Wales who closed the doors in 1995 (Argus, 2003) before being sold in the early 2000's. Church of Wales nor CADW hold any significant records of previous archaeological investigations of the site or any background of the site. However previous planning permissions to Torfaen Borough Council can be looked at. This archaeological core study area is predominantly overgrown and uneven land surrounding a derelict building.

This project aims to look at if there's any reasons as to why Torfaen Borough Council should potentially deny planning permission for the renovation of St Thomas's Church, Talywain into a residential building due to its status as a graveyard and a grade II listed building.

1.2. Site location, description and topography

The premises is situated at a prominent position in Talywain, at the junction of Commercial Road and Church Road, the primary local distributor is Class II County Highway B4246 (Torfaen Borough Council, 2006). The church is a 19th century two

storey, rectangular shaped building with the dimensions of 13.5m wide, 23.5m long and 8m height to eaves level(Torfaen Borough Council, 2006). On both the South West front, and North East rear of the property are an entrance porch and sanctuary chancel(Torfaen Borough Council, 2006). There is only one access to the site, a double entrance gate on the South East Highway, with the building being set back 10 metres and all the land surrounding it being a consecrated graveyard enclosed within a stone wall with trees and hedgerows surrounding the north and east boundaries.(Torfaen Borough Council, 2006). Opposite the church is a 12-15 car public car park on Bluetts Road.

The generic topography of Talywain and the area of the church is fairly flat, and the trees at the back of the site are protected under the Tree Preservation Order No 135A. The topography of the area was altered by glaciation during the Pleistocene period approximately 18,000 years ago, to create the landscape of Talywain and the surrounding areas.

1.3. The Development

The proposed development comprises of converting the existing vacant church premises into a residential building, consisting of six flats, with the area being divided into two parcels, of three levels that can be accessed via a new internal staircase and a long corridor. Each flat would consist of a double bedroom, kitchen/living room and toilet. There is no provision for vehicular parking or access on site. Other refurbishments will include replacement slates for the roof and the placement of new windows and doors.

During Construction and operation, the development may have direct or indirect impacts upon archaeological features within the area. The effects of this development will be assessed as a part of the Environmental Impact Assessment.(“The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011,” n.d.).

1.4. Legislation, policy and guidance

Table 1 provides a summary of legislation and policy relevant to this assessment

The assessment has been undertaken taking the relevant heritage legislation and guidance into account which is outlined below;

Table 1:

Legislation	Relevant Provisions
Planning (listed buildings and conservation areas) Act 1990.	Part 1, chapter II, control of works in respect of listed buildings, section - F1 (1) - Protection is granted to listed buildings for works that alter the manner in which would tamper with the character of the building of special architecture or historical interest, unless authorisation is granted Part 1, chapter II, Authorisation of works: listed buildings consent, section 8. (1) – authorisation for works that alter listed buildings are through: a) Written consent granted by the local planning authority or the secretary of state b) The works are performed within the terms of the consent and conditions applied
Planning policy Wales. Edition 10	6.0.1-6.1.11 Outlined what classifies a site to be referred to as a Historic environment due to certain historic features which may apply due to the following historical assets: - o Listed building - o Historical assets of special local interest - o Archaeological remains (schedule monument)(Welsh Government, n.d.) 6.5 highlights the need for Local Authorities to have special regard towards the desirability of preserving a building and setting. Protection of Historic environments include the following: - o safeguard of historic buildings special architecture and historic interest. - o conservation of archaeological remains for their own sake and for education, leisure and economy. Protection is also granted for the preservation of the buildings, its setting and any special archaeological features or historical interest it possess

Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act (1979)	Outlined the statutory protection of archaeology and sites with archaeological importance, this was amended by the National Heritage act (1983)
Torfaen Local Plan	As the site is located within a adaptable urban boundary of Torfaen's Local plan, policy S3, S5, G1 and G5 are considered applicable to the application which will include the plan, appearance, entry, parking and impact upon residential amenities.(Torfaen Borough Council, 2006) Policy H4 will be used to refer to any alteration of Listed Buildings to ensure that the important architectural value is not negatively affected
Burial Act 1857	Under Section 25 of the 1857 Act, it is a felonious offence to remove human remains from any place of burial without suitable authorisation supplied by the Ministry of Justice (MoJ), however, recent legislative changes show that some cases are excused from this requirement

2. Aims, Methodology and Sources

2.1. Aims

The aim of this desk-based assessment is to:

- Establish the baseline information regarding archaeology and background of the area;
- To establish the archaeological potential and significance of the area; and
- To assess the potential for the Development to harm archaeological resources, either directly or indirectly within the area

2.2. Consultation

2.2.1. **Economic Development** – a discussion with the local area would need to be held, however, with the increase of residential houses comes an increase in economy in the local area, alongside the good transport links would help job growth.

2.2.2. **Conservation** – due to the partial conversion of a Grade II Listed Church to form a dwelling, details of materials and windows will need to be supplied and accompanied by a letter which includes construction, insulation and ventilation.

2.2.3. **Pontypool Community Council** – “St Thomas Church is a listed building, which holds a central focal point within the community of Talywain, the church dates back to 1831 and was built around the time of industrial past, there are also other present listed building within the community... It is a community concern that the graveyard surrounding St Thomas’s Church has been left abandoned, vandalised and neglected for many years. In granting planning for the change of uses for St Thomas’s a planning condition might be added stating that any subsequent permission to remove the graveyard of its stones, that consideration be given in respect to any member of the community who may have someone buried at the churchyard.”(Torfaen Borough Council, 2006)

2.3. Methodology

2.3.1. Collection of Baseline Data

2.3.1.1. This assessment has been undertaken in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologist's guidance for Historic Environment Desk-Based Assessment and other relevant guidance under the current best practices. ("CIfA regulations, standards and guidelines | The Institute for Archaeologists," 2012).

2.3.2. Desk Based Data

2.3.2.1. Heritage data was collected for the Area from the following resources:

- Historic Wales for the details of archaeological sites and registered areas
- National Monuments Records for Wales containing the records of archaeological sites, events, conservation areas and listed buildings
- Cadw listed buildings for descriptions of listed buildings, dates and reasons of designations, locations, history and exterior and interior information
- Torfaen County Borough Council were consulted as part of the study. They hold documents of previous planning permissions and events of the site.
- Gwent Archives hold information of the roll of honour and people who are buried on site.

2.3.3. Site Walkover (when appropriate)

A site walkover will be undertaken by an appropriately qualified surveyor and archaeologist. Observations have been made noting the conditions of the building as well as the use and potential use of the different parts of the site, conditions of archaeological interests, surface features, building features and observation notes.

2.3.3.1. Limitations of the site walkover is that it means it is limited due to remains can be present without any indication of their presence above ground, it also limited by ground and weather conditions, as well as the state of vegetation, where in this case, is overgrown.

2.3.3.2. Collection and disposal and conservation strategy for artefacts

Not applicable at this stage, however a graveyard survey will need to be taken and potentially the inside of the church (memorials etc) may be taken to the local museum.

3. Archaeological and Historical Background.

St Thomas's church was built in 1831-32 by Edward Haycock of Shrewsbury ("Listed Buildings - Full Report - HeritageBill Cadw Assets - Reports," n.d.) in the 'commissioners gothic' and 'lancet' style ("Church of St Thomas, Abersychan, Torfaen," n.d.) St Thomas Church was built during the gothic architectural revival, which saw many public buildings and Anglican churches constructed during the early to mid-19th-century ("Architectural Style: Gothic Revival," n.d.) many being a part of the Church Buildings Acts of 1818 ("Church Building Act 1822 (repealed)," n.d.) and 1824 ("Church Building Act 1822," n.d.) which St Thomas's church could have been a part of, however, documentation of these appear to be lost. This styling was adopted for many new Anglican churches that were created around this time frame, St Thomas' church development was necessary for the area due to the development of the collieries and ironworks in the local areas and the workers they had brought in since 1823 ("Listed Buildings - Full Report - HeritageBill Cadw Assets - Reports," n.d.)

The church was part of the civil parish of Trevethin and became its own ecclesiastical parish of Abersychan in its own right in 1844 (Church of England et al., n.d.) . The church was reseated in 1869 and then later restored in 1974. It is now disused and is now considered a dangerous area and, therefore, is locked off from public access. ("Listed Buildings - Full Report - HeritageBill Cadw Assets - Reports," n.d.)

Due to the 1969 law (redundant churches and other religious buildings act 1969) Churches were allowed to be released for alternative purposes, where private ownership may be granted, seemingly the church was sold into the private sector after 1997 where the church closed its doors for the final time.

St Thomas Church has connections to important individuals who are buried in the church's graveyard. One of these important people is rumoured to be John Jeremiah Morgan (JJM), born in 1782. JJM was enrolled into the Monmouthshire militia and then joined the Royal Welch Fusiliers, which saw him serve during the Peninsula Campaign, it is also believed in local history and oral tradition that JJM served during the Battle of Waterloo in 1815, which supposedly was the foundation to the naming of the Waterloo Road in Talywain. JJM's funeral and burial were at St Thomas' Church where it is documented by local newspapers at the time to have attracted large crowds of locals to the area. It is believed that his gravestone and body are still present in the graveyard, however, it is currently not possible to confirm this until access to the site is available. Although large parts of JJM's story is not backed with concrete evidence and therefore, can be heavily questioned. Due to the local importance of this person, with his story being intertwined

with sections of the village and his military career, one must suggest that it is an integral part of the history of the local area, but also the church.(Rosser, 2018)

Another grave of importance is off George James, who was a victim of the Llanerch Colliery Disaster 1890. However, the grave has seen damage due to a fallen wall. The condition of the grave is not currently known but may be unreadable or unrecognizable. This would provide doubt to the story attached to George James and therefore, will be unlikely to be supported with firm evidence.

Inside the church, boasts two war memorials plaques that are situated together on one of the churches walls, the oldest is commemorating local soldiers who gave their lives during World War One, this memorial is very weathered and only part of the memorial is readable. Two individuals that are referenced on the memorial are AB Mathews who died on the 13th of November 1916 and Reginald Savery who died on the 9th of January 1916.(Gwent Archives, 2020) The second and newer memorial is to the local soldiers who perished during World War Two, this memorial is in good condition, however due to the nature of the church being closed, it is potentially going to be moved to the local church.

4. Human Resources

4.1. Copyright

Glamorgan Gwent Archaeological Trust shall retain copyright of any commissioned reports, or other project documents under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 with all rights reserved, excepting that it hereby provides an exclusive licence to the client for the use of the documents in all matters directly relating to the project.

4.2. Archive Deposition

The Archive documents will be deposited with Listed Buildings Record of Historic Wales and Torfaen Museums depending on the results.

4.3. Timetable

Currently, all the desk-based information is in this document, however a timetable will be put together once a decision to make it an on-site project has been made.

4.4. Staffing if the assessment is taken on-site.

A project team of four fieldworkers who will be put together and under the supervision of a project manager. The project manager will be a member of staff, and the rest of the team will be hired for the project. There will be a supervisor who deals with onsite queries and tasks.

4.5. Health and Safety for on-site work

The contractors will be responsible for the health and safety of their team. A risk assessment will be provided by the project manager and will be reviewed on arrival on site. As the site is listed and overgrown, there will be procedures in place to make sure the site is safe for staff.

4.6. Monitoring Procedures

A planning committee will be monitoring the guidelines set in place and checking that valid results will be given. Trendy Flats Ltd will also be ensuring the contract is being fulfilled.

4.7. Costings.

When the decision to take this on site has been made, the costings will need to be looked at. These will include the labour costs, through Glamorgan Gwent Archaeological Trust staff the costings are as followed;

- A Project Manager will cost £300 per day
- Four fieldworkers will cost £100 each per day
- Admin for the site will cost £300 per day

5. Conclusion

5.1. The desk-based assessment has revealed that outside of remains in the graveyard, there is low number of potentials for further archaeological remains in the subject area. This is based on limited return of records for the area. However, a walkover survey could possibly identify areas of potential if available.

There seems to be no real issue with Trendy Flats Ltd renovating the building into flats, as long as the correct measures are taken due to the state of the building being Grade II listed, as well as the need to ensure the Burial Act is followed.

There is also potential for indirect impacts to affect the site in the proposed plan regarding parking. This should be investigated fully by the County Planning Permission department, taking into account the way the development would affect the setting of the site

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