



Petitions Committee of the Welsh Assembly  
Cardiff Bay  
Cardiff  
Wales  
CF99 1NA

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21 February 2012

Dear Ms Phillips,

**Talgarth Hospital, Powys**

We write to give our strong support to efforts to save the former mental asylum at Talgarth. SAVE has been closely involved in finding solutions for a large number of mental hospitals being made redundant since we published the first comprehensive survey of the architecture of mental hospitals, *Mind Over Matter* in 1995. In our experience these large Victorian and Edwardian hospitals are eminently suitable for reuse. Almost all of them are built on fine south-facing sites to ensure there was constant fresh air and sun in the wards.

They are often laid out on impressive formal geometric plans. The hospital at Talgarth is on an arrow-shaped or echelon plan which gives all the wards good views out over the beautiful surrounding countryside. In addition, the small courtyards behind provide shelter from wind and intimacy of a small village.

We wish to point to three very successful examples of reuse of hospitals built on similar plans.

The first is the former Exe Vale Hospital outside Exeter. This is built on a radial plan and fell into a very serious state of decay considerably worse than Talgarth. It was nonetheless successfully rescued and converted as a mixture of flats and houses by the development company, Devington Homes. The hospital now makes extremely attractive homes for families and retired people and every unit has been sold. The following link - <http://www.devingtonhomes.co.uk/devington-park.php> illustrates how handsome the buildings now look, how attractive the homes are within and also shows the very well managed landscape around the hospital.

The second example is the former hospital at Moorhaven which is on the edge of Dartmoor National Park and is therefore very comparable to Talgarth. This has been successfully converted to a village community with houses and cottages in the former ward buildings and communal facilities in the hall, chapel etc.

The third is the former Warley Hospital outside Brentwood, Essex. This is laid out on an intricate plan of three-sided courtyards comparable to the layout at Talgarth. The courtyards have not been used for parking but have been planted as gardens providing an extremely attractive approach and outlook for the houses. A similar plan could be adopted at Talgarth.

The Talgarth Hospital buildings are situated in a conservation area and there should be a strong presumption in favour of retention. We urge your authority to resist any application for demolition of the original stone-built hospital buildings. Completed in 1903 these are well and substantially built and all of a piece built to a carefully considered plan by the architects, Giles, Gough and Trollope.

The situation of the hospital outside Talgarth in the National Park means that a substantial residential development can be created without the need for new buildings that might be out of character in the park. There is also potential for a number of holiday lets which would encourage tourism to the area. Self-catering accommodation is becoming increasingly popular in all holiday destinations notably in Wales.

A number of the Talgarth buildings would adapt extremely well to this use.

A scheme along the lines we propose would leave the hospital surrounded by lawns and its attractive landscape setting would remain as it was when it was first designed. This is an exceptional opportunity to preserve a substantial complex of historic buildings in their original setting.

Yours sincerely,



Marcus Binney  
President, SAVE Britain's Heritage

Cc: Abigail Phillips, Petitions Committee Clerk, National Assembly for Wales~  
Petitions, National Assembly for Wales  
John Tushingham, MWAHANG Secretary  
Virginia Brown, MWAHANG