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The old Tabernacle Chapel which was destroyed in a fire in 2008



The development of the new flats has been hit by a string of delays



The Grade 11-listed chapel burnt down in 2008

Flats on chapel site near completion

A LONG-delayed housing development on the site of an old listed chapel which was destroyed in a fire in 2008 should be fully occupied by residents in spring this year, developers have said.

The development of 22 flats at the former Tabernacle Chapel site between Mill Street and Powell Street in Aberystwyth has been beset with problems that have led to a string of delays.

But Mid Wales Housing Association said this week that it expects building work to be completed shortly so residents can move in.

The announcement will come as a relief to potential residents who have been left waiting to move in following the liquidation of the original contractors, problems with steel structure suppliers and a blunder that saw a bay window damaged

by Antony Gedge
antony@cambrian-news.co.uk

after it emerged that the windows were protruding further than they should under the planning permission granted.

Alex Dawson, the senior development officer at MWHHA, said the first completed flats should be available for tenants shortly.

He said: "The association took over direct control of the completion works required at the Tabernacle development following the liquidation of the original contractor, Vallis Facilities Management Ltd.

"A number of programming and logistical issues were identified at the time which had to be addressed before the works could physically be undertaken, and these centred upon

the construction of the striking steel concourse which provides access to all levels from both Mill Street and Powell Street.

"The association took great care to finalise the design and construction details and that, regrettably, had an impact on the timetable. In addition, a methodical and careful approach is required when taking over contract works from another organisation.

"It is pleasing to be able to report that the first units will be completed in the near future, and the prospective tenants, who have waited so patiently for the scheme to complete, will shortly be invited to view the flats prior to taking up occupation.

"The programme of phased completion and occupation dates should mean that the scheme is fully occupied in the spring. We will be pleased to report further with a for-

mal completion date."

The Grade 11-listed Tabernacle Chapel, which was built in 1880, closed in 2002 because the maintenance costs were too expensive for the 70-strong congregation. It was bought by developers who planned to turn the building into flats, but the chapel was destroyed in a fire in July 2008, before the first flat was finished.

Planning permission was later granted to demolish the chapel and build a new block of flats. However, Vallis FM went into liquidation in 2016 leaving building work uncompleted and MWHHA having to consider how to complete the scheme.

That was followed with issues in early 2017 when it emerged that there were problems with suppliers of steel structures that were going to be used for the interior of the blocks

leading to further delays. Another blunder saw bay windows created which protruded further than they should have over the pavement in Mill Street.

MWHHA had to apply to change the conditions of the initial planning permission and just months after that application was approved, a window of one of the blocks was damaged after it was hit by a lorry.

Shane Perkins, the MWHHA chief executive, said any development that overran because of issues would face pressure on costs, but said the upcoming completion of the project would be a boost.

"I am pleased that the £2m invested by MWHHA and Welsh Government will shortly mean we will be able to provide some exceptional new homes to local people in need," he said.