

Planning and Design Statement:

January 2026

Location: 10-13 PONTMORLAIS WEST MERTHYR TYDFIL

Proposal: Conversion of existing shop premises into 4 self-contained ground floor retail units with new aluminium shopfronts; conversion of lower ground, first, and second floors to provide a total of 8 studio flats; including a rear dormer extension, floor level adjustments, and associated amenity/storage works.

1. Introduction and Vision

This statement supports a full planning application for the regeneration of 10-13 Pontmorlais West. The project seeks to breathe new life into a prominent building within Merthyr Tydfil by creating a vibrant mixed-use development. By subdividing the oversized ground floor into four smaller, more flexible retail units, the proposal responds to the current market demand for "start-up" or "micro-retail" spaces. The upper floors provide high-quality, modern studio accommodation, contributing to the town centre's residential density and economy.

2. Design and Scale

- **Ground Floor (Retail):** The installation of four modern **aluminium shopfronts** will provide a uniform, high-quality aesthetic that respects the commercial character of Pontmorlais while offering improved thermal efficiency and security. There will be a studio to the rear
- **Residential Conversion: * Lower Ground:** Utilizes the natural topography of the site. Accessed via the side lane/rear, providing privacy for two studio flats.
 - **First Floor:** Accommodates three studio flats accessed via internal stairways at both ends of the building to ensure safe fire egress.
 - **Second Floor (The Loft):** A new level created through a rear dormer extension and the strategic "dropping" of floor joists. This allows for sufficient headroom without significantly altering the primary roof ridge height, maintaining the street scene's character.
- **Materials:** Repainting and repairs will be sympathetic to the existing structure. New windows and roof-lights will be high-specification to ensure acoustic and thermal insulation.

3. Access and Amenity

- **Active Travel:** In line with sustainability goals, **8 secure cycle spaces** are provided in the rear amenity area, encouraging a "car-free" lifestyle suitable for a town centre location.
 - **Waste Management:** A dedicated, enclosed bin storage area at the rear ensures that refuse is managed without impacting the visual amenity of the front elevation or the side lane.
 - **Technology:** Units will be fitted with modern smart-home facilities and high-speed fibre connectivity, making them ideal for modern urban living.
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Relevant Planning Guidance

To ensure the success of this application, the project must adhere to the following local guidance documents provided by **Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council (MTCBC)**:

1. **Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) - Shopfront Design:** This provides specific standards for the proportions and materials of the new aluminium fronts.
 2. **SPG - Residential Design Guide:** Sets out the requirements for "studio" living, including minimum internal floor space standards and light requirements.
 3. **SPG - Sustainable Design:** Focuses on energy efficiency and the "dropping of floors" to ensure the carbon footprint of the renovation is minimized.
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Relevant Planning Law & Policy

National Policy (Wales)

- **Planning Policy Wales (PPW) Edition 12:** Emphasizes the "Town Centre First" approach, supporting mixed-use developments that increase footfall and vibrancy.
- **Future Wales: The National Plan 2040:** Focuses on increasing density in urban hubs to reduce the need for car travel.
- **Technical Advice Note (TAN) 12 (Design):** Requires the development to demonstrate high-quality architectural response to the local context.

Local Policy (MTCBC Local Development Plan 2016-2031)

- **Policy LDP1 (Sustainable Growth):** Supports the reuse of vacant or underutilized town center buildings.

- **Policy LDP5 (Main Town Centre Uses):** Encourages the retention of retail (A1) at ground floor while allowing residential (C3) on upper floors.
 - **Policy LDP18 (Transport):** Justifies the reduction in dedicated car parking spaces due to the building's proximity to Merthyr Tydfil's central bus and train stations.
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1. Heritage Statement

Property: 10-13 Pontmorlais West, Merthyr Tydfil

1.1 Assessment of Significance

The application site sits at the northern gateway of the town centre. Pontmorlais is characterized by its late 19th and early 20th-century commercial architecture, representing the town's "third phase" of growth fuelled by the coal and steam industries. 10-13 Pontmorlais West contributes to the continuous street scene that defines this area.

1.2 Impact of Proposals

- **Shopfronts:** The replacement of older, mismatched fronts with four high-quality **aluminium units** is designed to harmonize the ground floor. While aluminium is modern, the slim-profile frames and proportional pilasters will be specified to mimic traditional shopfront divisions.
 - **Dormer & Roofline:** The rear dormer is positioned to be invisible from the primary Pontmorlais West highway, preserving the street scene. The use of front roof-lights ensures natural light for the second floor without disrupting the traditional slate-fronted aesthetic.
 - **Preservation:** Repairs to the existing masonry and the re-use of upper floors (which have been underutilised) will ensure the long-term structural integrity of this heritage asset.
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2. Residential Specification: The Studio Flats

The development provides **8 self-contained studio flats** designed for high-density, high-quality urban living.

2.1 Spatial Configuration

Floor	Unit Type	Access	Key Features
Lower Ground	2 x Studios	Side Lane / Rear	Direct access to rear amenity area; large windows facing the rear for natural light.
First Floor	3 x Studios	Front / Main Stair	Dual-aspect layouts where possible; optimised for acoustic separation from ground floor retail.
Second Floor	2 x Studios	Internal Stair	Level and sloping ceilings utilising the new dormer; "dropped" floors ensure a proportionate ceiling height.

2.2 Modern Facilities & Technology

- **Smart Living:** Each studio will be equipped with integrated smart heating systems and internet technology
 - **Acoustics:** High-performance soundproofing (to Building Regs Part E) will be installed between the retail units and the first-floor flats to ensure a quiet residential environment.
 - **Thermal Efficiency:** The "high window" specification refers to the use of argon-filled double glazing, significantly reducing heat loss and external noise from the town centre.
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3. Relevant Planning Law & Guidance

National Policy (Wales)

- **Planning Policy Wales (PPW) Edition 12:** Strongly supports the "Town Centre First" principle, encouraging the conversion of upper floors to residential use to support town centre vitality.
- **TAN 12 (Design):** Provides the framework for ensuring the new shopfronts and dormers meet high architectural standards.
- **Welsh Development Quality Requirements (WDQR) 2021:** While primarily for social housing, these standards provide the benchmark for the "modern facilities" and space standards (e.g., minimum internal storage) targeted by this development.

Local Policy (MTCBC)

- **Replacement Local Development Plan (2016-2031):**
 - **Policy CW1 (Historic Environment):** Requires developments in Conservation Areas to "preserve or enhance" the area's character.
 - **Policy LDP5:** Specifically supports residential uses above ground-floor retail.
 - **Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG):**
 - **Shopfront Design SPG:** Dictates the proportions for the new aluminium doors and signage zones.
 - **Residential Space Standards SPG:** Ensures that the "dropped floors" in the second-floor studios provide enough volume and light to be considered high-quality dwellings.
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3. Waste Management Plan

To comply with **Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council (MTCBC)** standards and the **Workplace Recycling Regulations (Wales) 2024**, the development includes a specialized waste strategy for the 7 studio flats and 4 commercial units.

3.1 Residential Waste Provisions (7 Studios)

The Council operates a "123+ system" (3-weekly refuse, weekly recycling/food). For 7 studio flats, communal storage is required in the rear amenity area:

- **Refuse (Non-Recyclable):** 2 x 240-litre grey wheeled bins (to meet the 60L per occupant standard).
- **Dry Recycling:** 2 x 240-litre blue-lidded bins for paper, card, plastic, and cans.
- **Food Waste:** 2 x 23-litre external food caddies (collected weekly), with individual 7-litre internal caddies provided for each studio kitchen.
- **Glass:** Dedicated red boxes or a 140-litre glass bin.

3.2 Commercial Waste Provisions (4 Units)

Under the **2024 Welsh Workplace Recycling Laws**, businesses must separate waste at the source. Each of the 4 retail units will be responsible for their own trade waste contracts

Segregation: Separate zones for commercial paper/card, glass, and plastic/metals to prevent cross-contamination with residential waste.

- **Security:** Lockable enclosures internally.

3.3 Access and Management

- **Collection Point:** Bins will be moved by a management company or residents to the designated "tipping point" on collection days, ensuring they do not obstruct the side lane or Pontmorlais West frontage.
 - **Design:** The enclosure will be 2m high, ventilated, and constructed with a hard-standing, easy-to-clean floor as per **Approved Document H6**.
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4. Comprehensive Planning Framework

4.1 Relevant Planning Law (National)

- **The Environment (Wales) Act 2016:** Mandates the separation of waste streams, which this project facilitates via the rear amenity design.
- **The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015:** The project supports "A Prosperous Wales" by providing modern, tech-ready homes and "A Resilient Wales" through heritage preservation.
- **Active Travel (Wales) Act 2013:** The provision of 8 cycle spaces directly fulfills the requirement to prioritize walking and cycling over private car use in town centers.

4.2 Local Planning Policy (MTCBC)

- **Policy LDP24 (Environment):** Protection of the visual amenity. The high-quality aluminium shopfronts are chosen specifically to provide a clean, modern finish that is durable against urban wear and tear.
 - **Policy LDP29 (Transport/Parking):** Given the 7 studios are "car-free" (zero parking spaces), this policy is met by the building's location within **400m** of the Merthyr Tydfil Bus Station and Railway Station.
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5. Summary of Key Technical Improvements

- **Floor Dropping:** Structural engineers to confirm that dropping the first and second-floor joists is feasible to achieve a suitable headroom in the second-floor studios.
- **Fire Safety:** To comply with **Building Regulations Part B**, the dual-stairway design (at each end of the building) provides a protected "means of escape" for all upper-floor residents.
- **Smart Tech:** Each unit is designed for "Type 4" high-speed connectivity, supporting the Welsh Government's digital inclusion goals.

6. Design and Access Statement (DAS) Summary

This summary outlines how the development at 10-13 Pontmorlais West ensures inclusive design and ease of movement for all users, in accordance with Technical Advice Note (TAN) 12: Design.

6.1 Physical Access

- **Retail Units:** Each of the four new shopfronts will be designed with **level thresholds** and wide-access doors (minimum 900mm clear opening) to ensure that wheelchair users and those with limited mobility can access the shops directly from the Pontmorlais West pavement.
- **Residential Units:** The lower ground floor studios are accessed via the side lane/rear, which will be surfaced to provide a smooth, slip-resistant path. The upper floors are served by two separate internal staircases. The stairs will be designed with contrasting nosings and continuous handrails to assist those with sensory or mobility impairments.

6.2 Movement and Connectivity

- **Sustainable Transport:** The location is categorized as a "Highly Sustainable Location." It is within a 5-minute walk of Merthyr Tydfil Bus Station and a **7-minute walk** of the Railway Station.
 - **Cycle Provisions:** 8 secure, sheltered cycle spaces are located at the rear, encouraging active travel. This helps offset the lack of on-site vehicular parking, which is consistent with the MTCBC LDP for town-centre redevelopments.
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7. Comprehensive Planning Law & Policy Framework

7.1 National Law (Wales)

- **Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990:** Section 72 requires that special attention be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of Conservation Areas. Our **Heritage Statement** demonstrates that the aluminium shopfronts and rear dormer meet this "preserve or enhance" test.
- **The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 (as amended for Wales):** While this project requires Full Planning Permission, the design adheres to the density and usage principles encouraged for "Class A" (Retail) to "Class C3" (Residential) conversions.

7.2 Local Planning Policy (Merthyr Tydfil CBC)

Policy Ref	Requirement	Development Response
LDP Policy 18	Parking Standards	Justification for zero parking based on central location and 8 cycle spaces.
LDP Policy 24	Quality of Design	High-grade aluminium and "dropped floor" engineering to maximize internal volume.
LDP Policy 26	Heritage Assets	Rear-facing dormer preserves the historic "frontage" profile of Pontmorlais West
SPG - Shopfronts	Traditional Proportions	The 4 units maintain the vertical rhythm of the street.

8. Structural and Internal Specification

The conversion involves significant internal engineering to ensure the "**Modern Facilities and Technology**" mandate is met:

- **Structural Floor Adjustment:** The dropping of floors is a technical solution to provide a high-quality "loft living" experience in the second-floor studios without increasing the building's overall height.
- **Modern Amenities:** Each studio will include integrated kitchen appliances, modern shower rooms with mechanical extract ventilation, and dedicated utility points.
- **Connectivity:** Pre-installed Cat6 cabling and high-speed fibre-to-the-premises (FTTP) will be standard across all 8 flats and 4 shops.

9. Conclusion

This proposal represents a sensitive yet ambitious redevelopment. It preserves the character of the Pontmorlais West while providing modern, tech-enabled, and energy-efficient spaces that meet the needs of the 21st-century Merthyr Tydfil economy.