

DELEGATED REPORT

Application No:	P/21/0291
Site Address:	Pontygwaith Farm Pontygwaith Treharris CF46 5PD
Development:	Conversion of stable building to bedrooms
Case Officer:	David Cross
Site Visit:	10th September 2021
Application Expiry Date:	4th October 2021
Consultation reply date expired:	2nd September 2021

APPLICATION SITE

This application relates to a residential property situated in a countryside location between the main settlements of Merthyr Vale to the north and Edwardville to the south. The property is accessed via a long and narrow lane that links Cardiff Road to the east. The dwelling itself has a linear form and appears to be made up of various elements, which may be as a result of historic extensions or conversions of outbuildings attached to the former farmhouse. These features are noticeable due to the changes in scale and ridge heights. Attached to the dwelling at a right angle is a small block of stables, which form an 'L' shaped arrangement around a front garden area.

On the south side of the stable building are a number of 'add-on' structures, which includes an extension with low profile roof, a large green house with a glazed lean-to roof and an enclosed animal pen with a lean-to roof. There is a hardstanding area adjacent to the extension which provides a link to the lane, as well as raised walkway which provides access around the stables and dwelling.

The land immediately south of the stables, at a lower level, is what appears to be a former ménage, which has since become covered in vegetation. A large area of land to the east and north of the dwelling are landscaped areas that appear to form part of private garden area. There is a fence line to south-east boundary that separates the property from the adjoining fields. In the wider surroundings it is noted that the River Taff is situated to the west and that there is a railway line to the east. The nearest residential property is approximately 90m to the north-east and separated by a woodland area.

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

Full planning permission is sought for the conversion of the existing stable building into 5 bedrooms that would be used and form part of the dwelling. This would involve alterations to the front (north) elevation comprising the replacement of the stable doors and windows

with new timber (black wood grain) doors and windows. Part of the stable building (closest to the dwelling) is recessed with the eaves creating a slight overhang. It is proposed to extend this part of the building out in line with the eaves to provide a continuous front elevation with the rest of the building. At the opposite end (closest to the gable) there are two modern upvc doors that serve a tack room. These would be replaced with a single timber doors and window to match the other proposed doors and windows.

On the rear (south) side of the building, an extension is proposed to replace the existing lean-to structures, following a similar footprint. The extension would measure 9.2m wide by 2.5m deep and 2.5m high (up to the eaves of the stable building) with a low profile roof. This would adjoin the existing extension on the rear of the stables and would match the same roof profile. Patio doors would provided on the new extension to serve each bedroom, which would open out on to the existing walkway. The extension would have a rendered finish to match the rest of the building and would have metal profiled roof covering.

PLANNING HISTORY

P/20/0245 - Construction of a two storey rear extension and store outbuilding.

Application still under consideration.

CONSULTATION

Head of Engineering - No objection subject to conditions relating to retaining works.

Planning Division's Ecologist - No objection subject to details of any external lighting scheme.

PUBLICITY

In accordance with the Town & Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Wales) Order 2012, a site notice was displayed within the vicinity of the site.

No representations were received as a result of this publicity exercise.

POLICY CONTEXT

National planning policy

The Future Wales – the National Plan 2040 sets out a strategy for addressing key national priorities through the planning system, including sustaining and developing a vibrant economy, achieving decarbonisation and climate-resilience, developing strong ecosystems and improving the health and well-being of our communities.

Planning Policy Wales (PPW), Edition 11, February 2021:

Para 3.5 – 3.15 set out the importance of high quality design to ensure inclusive design, to promote environmental sustainability and ensure high environmental quality. Regard

should also be given to the special characteristics of an area, community safety and to encourage sustainable forms of transport.

Para 3.55 notes that previously developed land wherever possible should be used in preference to greenfield sites where it is suitable for development.

Para 3.6 notes that all new development in the countryside should be of a scale and design that respects the character of the surrounding area.

Para 4.1.43 – 4.1.56 set out the need to reduce the level and speed of traffic in new development, the provision of car parking and how this may be integrated into new development to minimise the reliance on cars. Transport assessments are also an important mechanism to determine anticipated impacts a development proposal may have.

Para 6.4.21 – 6.4.23 note that local authorities should seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity and build resilient ecological networks to ensure that any adverse environmental effects can first be avoided, mitigated or compensated. Regard should also be given to any potential impacts on protected species which may result in disturbance or harm to the species or its habitat.

Para 6.6.22 – 6.6.29 sets out the need to consider the potential consequences of flooding and the need for development to avoid high risk zones and not increase flood risks arising from rivers on or off the site itself.

Technical Advice Notes (TAN):

- TAN 5 Nature Conservation and Planning, September 2009
- TAN 6 Planning of Sustainable Rural Communities, July 2010
- TAN 12 Design, March 2016
- TAN 15 Development and Flood Risk, July 2004
- TAN 18 Transport March 2007

Local planning policy

Merthyr Tydfil Replacement Local Development Plan (LDP) 2016-2031:

- Policy SW4 - Settlement Boundaries
- Policy SW11 - Sustainable Design and Placemaking
- Policy EnW1 - Nature Conservation and Ecosystem Resilience
- Policy EnW3 – Regionally Important Geological Sites, Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation, Local Nature Reserves and Priority Habitats and Species.
- Policy EnW4 - Environmental Protection

Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG):

- SPG 4 Sustainable Design, July 2013
- SPG 5 Nature and Development, May 2015

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Principle and design

The application site is located outside of the settlement boundary as defined by policy SW4 of the LDP. As such, the proposal would constitute countryside development. Outside of settlement limits, development will not be permitted unless it relates to, amongst other criteria, the re-use, adaption or replacement of rural buildings and dwellings.

It is advised in TAN 6 (Section 3.2), when assessing planning applications for the re-use or adaption of a rural building, the primary consideration should be whether the nature and extent of the new use proposed for the building is acceptable in planning terms. Additionally, it notes that conversion proposals should respect the landscape and local building styles and materials.

In this instance, the proposal involves the conversion/re-use of the stable building to provide additional bedrooms that would form part of the existing residential property. This is deemed to be an appropriate use given the relationship between the stable building and the dwelling. Taking into account the size of the property and its extensive grounds, the creation of additional bedrooms can be suitably accommodated. It has been noted by the applicant that the bedrooms would also provide accommodation for family members who come to visit from abroad. It appears that the stable block has not been used for horses for some time, which in part is evident by the poor condition of the former ménage. Currently the building is being used for storage. As such, the principle of re-using the stable building as part of the dwelling is deemed to be acceptable.

It is proposed that the building would be adapted in a few ways to accommodate its re-use. The existing stable doors and windows would be replaced largely using the existing openings. An extension would be provided to the front of the stable building in the place of a small recess under the existing roof. To the rear, the attached greenhouse structure and animal pen would be removed and a new extension would be constructed that follows a similar footprint with a 1m wide walkway being retained. This extension would be of a similar height to that of the greenhouse with a similar roof profile, which also matches that of the existing rear stable annexe. Taking into account the removal of the attached structures, the footprint of the proposed extension would result in a modest increase in floor space. The rear extension would be in keeping with the general character of the site and would improve the appearance of the stable building with the removal ad hoc structures that have differing material finishes. The design of the extension would appear as an ancillary element that maintains the original form of the stable block.

The extent of the residential curtilage is not clear from the submitted plans or aerial photographs of the site, given the extensive maintained garden area around the property and the open layout of the site i.e. there is easy access around the stable building to the front/rear garden areas. Indeed, adjacent to the existing greenhouse there is a garden patio area with French doors leading directly into the dwelling, which presents a residential environment adjacent to the stables. Notwithstanding the name of the property, there is little evidence of the former use of the site as a farm, with the fields and ménage to the south being visually separated from the rest of the property by post and rail fencing or notable changes in levels. Within this context, the proposed development would be seen in relation to an existing group of buildings of a residential nature. The alterations to the stable building would be of an acceptable design that do not significantly harm the

character or appearance of the property within its rural setting. In this respect, it is noted that the dwelling appears to be made up of a series of linked buildings, which is emphasised by the staggered roofline. Various single storey additions have also been constructed to both the front and rear aspects of the property, giving the building a modular appearance. The introduction of a similar addition to the rear of the stable block would not consequently appear out of place. Furthermore, the extension would have a rendered finish to match the rest of the dwelling and a profiled metal roof that is similar to that used on the existing stable annexe.

It is acknowledged that new development in a countryside location should be strictly controlled. The extent that a building needs to be adapted to accommodate a new use should also be carefully considered, taking into consideration the harm it may have on the character and appearance of the site within the surrounding countryside environment. In this particular instance, given the close relationship between the stable building and the dwelling, the modest replacement of small ad hoc structures and the general design and scale of the proposed alterations/extensions, the development is deemed to be acceptable and accords with policy SW4 and SW11 of the LDP.

Highway implications

The existing access leading to the application site from Cardiff Road is via a long narrow lane that also serves 4 other residential properties. This lane is largely only wide enough for traffic movements in a single direction, with a few points along its length where the lane is wider to enable vehicles to pass. There are also sections of the lane that are steep or have blind corners that limit driver visibility. Due to the constraints along this lane, traffic speeds are generally low. The access for vehicles terminates to the south of the site where it becomes a pedestrian/cycle only route across a bridge.

Given that the conversion of the stable building to provide bedrooms as part of the dwelling, it is necessary to consider the access and parking requirements for the property as whole. The CSS Wales Parking Standards sets out the parking requirements for residential properties, which includes conversions. In relation to properties located in rural areas, it sets out the need for 1 parking space per bedroom with a maximum requirement of 3 parking spaces. Whilst the submitted plans do not illustrate the existing parking arrangement, it was noted during the site visit that the front garden area includes a hardstanding that could adequately accommodate more than 3 parked vehicles.

It is anticipated that the development has the potential to increase the level of traffic in the area, particularly if more people reside at the property. It is accepted that the access lane is generally of a substandard condition and that it is also used by pedestrians and cyclists, being in close proximity to the Taff Trail. Given the limited use of the lane (serving a total of 5 properties), with no through access, the increase in traffic movements would likely be marginal as part of a residential use. As such, the proposal would not give rise to major change in the highway circumstances that may lead to significant highway safety concerns. In this regard, it is noted that the Head of Engineering has not raised any objection to the development. Therefore, the proposal complies with policy SW11 of the LDP.

Ecological impact

A Preliminary Bat Roost and Nesting Bird Assessment has been submitted in support of the application. The report notes that the area surrounding the building provides high quality foraging and commuting habitat for bats, due to features such as the ancient woodland adjacent to the building and other linear features like hedgerows and tree lines which provide an ecological corridor. The dwelling and stable block were also inspected and a number of opportunities where bats could use the property were identified. Indeed, evidence of bat droppings were found in the loft space of the dwelling. Accordingly, further flight surveys and dusk emergence surveys were undertaken as set out in the Bat Survey Report. It was concluded in the report that a single Pipistrelle bat was seen using the stable block.

The Bat Survey Report notes that a license would be required from Natural Resources Wales to undertake works on the stable building. The report notes that the existing roof of the stables building would be temporarily affected when the proposed extension is built, but the existing roof would not be altered and a lifted tile identified in the survey will be retained. The report notes that the extension would have a lean-to roof that ties-in to the existing roof, so only the lower level of roof tiles would be affected. Therefore, the report concludes the proposed development is unlikely to have a significant impact in the long-term on bats using the building. To provide further enhancement, two bat boxes are proposed to be installed on nearby trees. Any new external lighting would also need to ensure that existing access points to bat roosts and the newly installed bat boxes remain unilluminated. Other areas known to be used for bat commuting/foraging will also be maintained as dark corridors.

The Planning Division's Ecologist has acknowledged that a suitable survey and assessment have been undertaken and that the compensation and enhancement measures are acceptable. However, it has been noted that further details are required in respect of any external lighting to ensure dark corridors are maintained. The applicant has indicated that the details of the external lighting scheme has not been determined at this stage. This can be appropriately controlled by condition to ensure such details are provided prior to any works commencing on the stable building. This would also be a matter that needs to be addressed as part of the bat license. Accordingly, it has been adequately demonstrated that the proposed development would not have a significant impact on protected species and habitats. Therefore, the proposal complies with policies EnW1 and EnW3 of the LDP.

Flood risk

It is acknowledged that the application site lies in close proximity to a C2 flood zone as identified on the DAM maps produced by Natural Resources Wales. Whilst the existing stable building and residential property lie entirely outside of this flood zone, it is noted that the land to the south of the stables, which include the former ménage and nearby fields are situated in the C2 flood zone.

The conversion of the stable building to form part of the residential property would result in a highly vulnerable form of development. However, given that the building lies outside of the C2 flood zone, a flood consequence assessment has not been undertaken. It appears that both the dwelling and the associated garden areas are flood free and that there is a significant change in levels between the stable building and the ménage which has the potential to flood. Additionally, during a flooding event, there would appear to be a safe

point of access to the site along the lane, which rises to the north. Accordingly, the proposed development would not subject to the stable building or the dwelling to any greater risk from flooding that pose a health and safety concern. Therefore, the proposal complies with policy EnW4 of the LDP.

CONCLUSIONS

The duty to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, under section 3 of the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 ("the WBFG Act") has been taken into consideration when determining this application. In reaching the following recommendation, the ways of working set out at section 5 of the WBFG Act have been considered and thus the proposal is in accordance with the sustainable development principle through its contribution towards one or more of the Welsh Ministers well-being objectives set out as required by section 8 of the WBFG Act.

For the above reasons the proposed development is acceptable and complies with the relevant LDP policies. Accordingly, the following recommendation is made:

RECOMMEDNATION: BE APPROVED subject to the following **CONDITIONS:**

1. The development shall begin not later than five years from the date of this decision.

Reason - To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

2. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans and documents:

Drawing No. 382/2, Rev A - Proposed Floor Plans, received 07.10.2021

Drawing No. 382/4, Rev A - Proposed Stable Elevations, received 07.10.2021

Drawing No. 382/6, Rev A - Proposed Block Plan, received 07.10.2021

Bat Survey Report v2.2 (Prepared by David Clements Ecology Ltd), dated November 2021

Reason -To ensure compliance with the approved plans and clearly define the scope of the permission.

3. **Prior to any construction works commencing on site**, details of the roofing material to be used on the proposed extension shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason - To ensure that the external appearance of the proposed development will be in keeping with the character of the area and adjoining buildings in the interests of visual amenity and to accord with Policy SW11 of the Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council Replacement Local Development Plan.

4. **No external lighting shall be installed on the stable block**, until a detailed lighting scheme has first been submitted to an approved in writing by the local planning authority. The lighting scheme shall demonstrate that dark corridors for bat foraging/commuting will be maintained and that the access points to bat roosts, including the newly installed bat boxes shall remain unilluminated, in accordance with the recommendations of the Bat Survey Report v2.2, dated November 2021. The lighting scheme shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason - To protect the natural environment and important habitat in accordance with Policies EnW1 and EnW2 of the Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council Replacement Local Development Plan.

5. **Prior to any works commencing on the stable block**, two bat boxes and two bird boxes shall be installed in accordance with the details and locations set out in the Bat Survey Report v2.2, dated November 2021

Reason - To protect the natural environment in accordance with Policies EnW1 and EnW2 of the Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council Replacement Local Development Plan.

6. The bedroom accommodation provided within the stable building hereby approved, shall only be used as part of the main dwellinghouse and not for any other use other than for purposes within Class C3 in the schedule to the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987, or in any provision equivalent to that class in any statutory instrument revoking and re-enacting that order with or without modification.

Reason - In the interest of highway safety in accordance with Policy SW11 of the Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council Replacement Local Development Plan.

INFORMATIVES

1. Warning: An European protected species (EPS) Licence is required for this development.

This planning permission does not provide consent to undertake works that require an EPS licence.

It is an offence to deliberately capture, kill or disturb EPS or to recklessly damage or destroy their breeding sites or resting places. If found guilty of any offences, you could be sent to prison for up to 6 months and/or receive an unlimited fine. To undertake the works within the law, you can obtain further information on the need for a licence from Natural Resources Wales on 0300 065 3000 or at <https://naturalresources.wales/conservation-biodiversity-and-wildlife/european-protected-species/?lang=en>

2. All birds, their nests and eggs are protected by law under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) while they are breeding.

If works to any trees, hedgerows and/or other nesting bird habitat (including buildings with suitable features) are to be undertaken, they will take place outside of the bird nesting season. If the works must be undertaken during the nesting season (generally from 1st March until 31st August, although birds are known to nest outside of these dates in suitable conditions), a breeding bird survey will be

required and must be carried out by a suitably qualified ecologist. Any active nests identified will be protected until the young have fledged.

Where a Schedule 1 species (as defined in the Wildlife and Countryside Act - <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1981/69/schedule/1>) is involved, compensation for impacts, e.g., loss of nesting sites, will be devised and implemented.

RECOMMENDATION ENDORSED

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J. M. R.', written over a horizontal line.

Head of Town Planning

DATE:

24/11/21