

DELEGATED REPORT

Application No:	P/21/0339
Site Address:	17 - 32 MTCBC Gurnos Workshops Pen-y-dre Gurnos Merthyr Tydfil
Development:	Refurbishment of neighbourhood learning centre comprising the rendering of three buildings, installation of new windows and doors, the creation of 5 flats, wardens accommodation in building 2, installation of solar panels and associated landscaping works
Case Officer:	David Cross
Site Visit:	8th October 2021
Application Expiry Date:	22nd November 2021
Consultation reply date expired:	21st October 2021

APPLICATION SITE

This application relates to three separate buildings, which are used together as part of the Neighbourhood Learning Centre, located on the northern edge of the Gurnos residential area. The application site includes an existing carpark in the south-west part of the site and the grassed areas around the buildings.

The site is bound to the north-west by the main highway (Gurnos ring road) and on all other side are neighbouring residential properties, including Pen-Y-Dre to the east and Forsythia Close to south-east and south-west.

Building 1 (units 17-20) in the eastern part of the site accommodates a mixture of uses, including a shop, workshops for training purposes, store rooms, offices and welfare facilities. Building 2 (units 21-26) in the northern part of the site accommodates a hair dressers, a shop, store rooms, offices and welfare facilities. Building 3 (units 27-32) in the southern part of the site accommodates teaching rooms, IT suites, studios rooms, a kiln room, meeting rooms, store rooms, offices and welfare facilities.

Each of the buildings comprise of two distinct blocks that are linked together by a central entrance lobby and staircase serving the first floor level. The buildings have a brickwork finish with concrete roof tiles and many of the existing window and door openings have either mesh security coverings, roller shutters or metal panels that can be opened up. A small bin store area is proposed on the northern side of building 2 measuring 2.9m wide by 2.2m deep and would be enclosed by larch planks measuring 1.8m high to screen the wheelie bins.

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

Full planning permission is sought for the refurbishment of the Neighbourhood Learning Centre comprising the rendering of the buildings, installation of new aluminium framed windows, removal of existing security grilles and the replacement of roller shutters. Solar panels would also be installed on building 2 on the southern aspect of the roof.

The proposal also seeks the change of use of building 2 (units 21-26) to provide 5 self-contained 1 bedroom flats and a warden's flat at both ground and first floor level, which would be used to provide support accommodation. It is noted in the Design and Access Statement (DAS) that the flats would be used by young people leaving foster care or those who may be vulnerable as a result of being homeless or threatened with homelessness. The DAS notes the intention is to create a unique accommodation centre with direct access to onsite learning and training provision that could lead to higher education or employment with support from a community employment mentor.

The application includes some associated landscaping works, involving repairs to existing footpaths, the lowering of existing walls to open up the environment. A native hedgerow would be planted along the north-west boundary of the site to provide a buffer between the site and the main highway. A number of trees would be planted around the building, as well as areas created for new ornamental shrubs to generally improve the overall quality and well-being of the surrounding environment.

PLANNING HISTORY

- P/07/0137 - Erection of exhaust flue to building
Permission GRANTED on 04.05.2007
- P/97/0161 - Change of use from residential to storage in connection with furniture re-cycling scheme.
Permission GRANTED on 12.06.1997

CONSULTATION

- Head of Engineering - No objection
- Planning Division's Ecologist - No objection subject to conditions relating the implementation of the ecological mitigation measures, landscape management and external lighting.
- Environmental Health Manager No objection subject to conditions relating to construction hours, dust and waste management, land contamination and imported soils.

PUBLICITY

In accordance with the Town & Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Wales) Order 2012, a letter was sent to an adjoining property and 3 site notices were 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 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.

Technical Advice Notes (TAN):

- TAN 5 Nature Conservation and Planning, September 2009
- TAN 12 Design, March 2016

Local planning policy

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

- Policy SW4 - Settlement Boundaries
- Policy SW9 - Planning Obligations
- Policy SW11 - Sustainable Design and Placemaking
- Policy SW13 - Protecting and Improving Local Community Facilities
- 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 2 Planning Obligations, March 2012
- SPG 4 Sustainable Design, July 2013
- SPG 5 Nature and Development, May 2015

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Land use principle

The application site lies within the settlement boundary where the majority of new development is generally encouraged and supported by Policy SW4 of the LDP. Although the majority of the Neighbourhood Learning Centre would continue to operate as existing, it is proposed that one of the buildings would be converted in to flats to provide supported accommodation. Given the predominantly residential nature of the surrounding area, the proposed flats would integrate well with the local context. Furthermore, it is noted that building 2 was historically used as flats (ref P/97/0161) and as such this application seeks to essentially revert it back to a previous use. Accordingly, the principle of the development is acceptable.

The conversion of building 2 to provide residential accommodation would result in the loss of the existing hairdressers, shop and office space, which is used in association with the wider Neighbourhood Learning Centre. Policy SW13 of the LDP seeks to protect the loss of community facilities, unless it can be demonstrated that alternative provision can be provided, it is surplus to the needs of the community or that it is no longer viable. In this instance, the Design and Access Statement (DAS) notes that the workshops within building 1 and 3 would be retained in order to continue providing training and support for young people. The proposed flats would provide supported accommodation with an on-site warden, which would operate alongside the existing facilities provided as part of the wider Neighbourhood Learning Centre. As such, it is considered that the proposed conversion of building 2 to provide supported accommodation would provide a new and enhanced community facility that would be an integral element to the support already provided by the Neighbourhood Learning Centre. Therefore, the proposal complies with policy SW13 of the LDP.

Design approach

The proposal seeks to refurbish the exterior of the building with a new insulated rendered finish applied to the elevations and the installation of new doors and windows in the existing openings. It is noted in the DAS that the existing windows are currently single glazed and in a poor condition. It is intended that these would be replaced with double glazed windows. These alterations would not only improve the overall quality and appearance of the buildings, they would also improve their energy efficiency. The existing properties in the surrounding area have a mixture of external finishes, which includes brickwork, render and cladding on the upper parts of the dwellings. As such, the proposed renovation of the Neighbourhood Learning Centre would not have an adverse impact on the character or appearance of the surrounding area.

It is noted that solar panels would be installed on building 2 above the main entrance on the southern side of the roof. The solar panels would be discreetly located between the gable ends of the building where there would be limited views of the panels from the

surrounding area. The solar panels would be further screened from the adjacent buildings. The installation of solar panels would enable the building to take advantage of renewable resources and minimise its demand for energy.

The proposed bin store would be situated next to the flats and although its position is in a fairly open part of the site, there are limited alternative locations for such facility, given the existing arrangement of the buildings with the public open spaces. Nevertheless, the bin store area would provide appropriate screening and the planting of a hedgerow would help to minimise any harmful visual impacts.

It is acknowledged that the replacement roller shutters would be installed on building 1, which serve an existing workshop and shop. Although details of the roller shutters have not been provided at this stage, the principle of installing new shutters is acceptable and a suitable condition can be attached to any permission to confirm its specific design and installation.

The proposed hard and soft landscaping scheme would generally improve the quality of the open spaces around the buildings, which currently comprises a mixture of paving, tarmac and grassed areas. The introduction of a new hedgerow, trees and ornamental/native shrub planting would add some variation and interest to the open spaces, which helps to balance out the hard landscaped area between the buildings. Additionally, it is noted that various repairs would be undertaken on the existing tarmac areas, with new paving to be laid around the entrances to the buildings. Furthermore, it is considered that the reduction in the height of the brickwork wall that encloses the ramped access to building 1, would help to create a more open environment that is more welcoming to visitors. It is noted that new railings would need to be installed around the ramped area for safety reasons but would maintain the open feeling to that area.

Overall, the proposed development is of an acceptable design and would not adversely impact on the character or appearance of the surrounding area. Therefore, the proposal complies with Policy SW11 of the LDP.

Amenity

Taking into account the residential nature of the surrounding area, it is not considered that the conversion of building 2 into flats would generate a significant level of traffic movement in the area, that may otherwise lead to a source of noise and disturbance. The coming and goings of residents would not likely differ significantly to its present use as a training facility. Additionally, the flats would be of a sufficient distance away from the neighbouring occupiers to not adversely impinge on their residential amenity in terms of overlooking. In this regard, it is acknowledged that no objections have been raised by local residents. The use of building 2 as flats, together with accommodation for a warden would likely improve the natural surveillance in the area and would help to reduce the potential for anti-social activities. Therefore, the proposal complies with Policy SW11 of the LDP.

Highway implications

The existing pedestrian and vehicles access points into the site would be utilised, with a carpark for approximately 10 cars provided in the northern part of the site off Pen-Y-Dre. Another carpark with 31 parking spaces is located in the south-west part of the site with

access directly off the main highway. The existing access into the site is of an adequate standard to accommodate the development, in particular the proposed flats.

In accordance with the CSS Wales Parking Standards 2008, at least 1 parking space would normally be sought for a 1 bedroom flat, which would equate to a total of 6 designated parking spaces in this instance. This can be adequately provided within the existing carparks. In this respect, it is not anticipated that the parking needs of the proposed flats would differ greatly from its present use. Furthermore, it may be reasonable to assume that in many instances, those residing in the supported accommodation, due to their personal circumstances, may not always have access to their own vehicle. As such, the demand for parking is likely to be low. It is acknowledged that the Head of Engineering has not raised any significant highway safety concerns. Therefore, the proposal complies with policy SW11 of the LDP.

Ecological impact

An Ecological Assessment report has been submitted in support of the application, which considers the potential impact the development may have on protected species.

It was identified during the survey work that the site was being used by common pipistrelle and soprano pipistrelle bats. It is noted in the report that there appears to be a bat roost for a low numbers of common pipistrelle within the on-site buildings. Further survey work was undertaken, which included an inspection of the buildings and emergence/re-entry surveys. It is concluded in the report that a bat roost has been identified in each of the buildings and that the bat activity was relatively high with pipistrelles commuting and foraging all over the site. Approximately 10-15 bats were observed during the survey and it is thought that each building is a day roost for a single pipistrelle bat. Accordingly, it will be necessary for a bat license to be sought from Natural Resources Wales, which will likely require a method statement for the works to be carried out under supervision.

Whilst there are no works proposed to the roofs of the buildings, the application of insulated render on the elevations has the potential to cause disruption to the bat roosts identified. The works to the exterior of the building are likely to involve removal and replacement of the fascia/barge boards. To minimise the potential impacts, it is recommended in the Ecological Assessment that the replacement fascia/barge boards should be of the same material as existing and that 15-20mm gaps will be left between the wall and fascia on all elevations to ensure the bats continue to have access into the buildings. It is recommended that two bat boxes be attached to the trees in the northern part of the site and that the bat access points into the building and the bat boxes shall not be directly illuminated, with all external lighting facing downwards. The Planning Division's Ecologist is satisfied with the survey work undertaken and has not raised any objection to the development. It has also been highlighted by the ecologist, that the external lights shall have a colour temperature of 3000k or less. Full details of the lighting scheme can be secured by condition to ensure it is of an appropriate design prior to the installation of any external lights. Therefore, it has been adequately demonstrated, subject to appropriate mitigation, that the development would not have an adverse impact on protected species. Therefore, the proposal complies with policy EnW1 and EnW3 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:

RECOMMENDATION: **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. TS1457-PL-09, Building 1 Proposed Ground Floor Plan, received 30.09.2021
Drawing No. TS1457-PL-10, Building 1 Proposed Elevations, received 30.09.2021
Drawing No. TS1457-PL-11, Building 1 Proposed Sectional Elevations, received 30.09.2021
Drawing No. TS1457-PL-12, Building 2 Proposed Floor Plans, received 30.09.2021
Drawing No. TS1457-PL-13, Rev A, Building 2 Proposed Elevations, received 01.10.2021
Drawing No. TS1457-PL-14, Rev A, Building 2 Proposed Sectional Elevations, received 01.10.2021
Drawing No. TS1457-PL-15, Building 3 Proposed Floor Plans, received 30.09.2021
Drawing No. TS1457-PL-16, Building 3 Proposed Elevations, received 30.09.2021
Drawing No. TS1457-PL-17, Building 3 Proposed Sectional Elevations, received 30.09.2021
Drawing No. TS1457-PL-19, Refuse - received 30.09.2021
Drawing No. TS1457-PL-21, Rev B, Proposed Site layout & External Works, received 05.11.2021
Landscape Management and Maintenance Plan, Rev A - received 05.11.2021
Ecological Assessment (prepared by BE Ecology), Issue 1, VC - received 05.11.2021

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

3. **No external lighting shall be installed on the Neighbourhood Learning Centre buildings**, 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 the access points to bat roosts, including the newly installed bat boxes shall not be directly illuminated, in accordance with the recommendations of the Ecological Assessment, Issue 1 VC, received 05.11.2021. 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.

4. **Before any roller shutters are installed**, details shall first be submitted to be approved in writing by the local planning authority. The details shall include a cross section through the building at a scale of 1:20 to illustrate the installation of the roller shutters. All works 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.

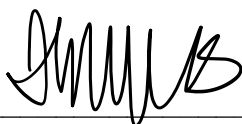
INFORMATIVES

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>

RECOMMENDATION ENDORSED



Head of Town Planning

DATE:

24/11/21