

DELEGATED REPORT

Application No:	P/23/0230
Site Address:	Sardis Congregational Chapel Station Terrace Bedlinog CF46 6TT
Development:	Conversion of chapel into 3 no. bedroom property to include rear single storey and first floor extensions.
Case Officer:	Marlene Ferreira
Site Visit:	12th October 2023
Application Expiry Date:	22nd November 2023
Consultation reply date expired:	24th October 2023

APPLICATION SITE

The application site relates to a single storey building, formerly known as Sardis Chapel, located off Station Terrace in the area of Bedlinog. The former chapel, framed by its front gabled entrance and finished with concrete roof tiles and pebble dashed elevations, sits on a site that slopes down gradually from the northeast (front) to the southwest (rear). It is located near the top of a no-through road and sits between a row of terraced properties to the southeast and detached modern brickwork dwellings to the northwest. The chapel was used by residents of the local community as a place of worship for many years. However, given a sharp decline in congregation numbers, the chapel closed in 2019 and has remained vacant and unused since this time.

The premises adjoins the highway (Station Terrace) to the front, 11 Station Terrace to the eastern side, Cwm Garan Station Terrace to the western side, and, Ty Coed 8 Chapel Street to the rear.

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

This application seeks planning permission to change the use of the former chapel (D1 use class) into a 3 bedroom property (C3 use class) to include the addition of a first floor and rear extensions.

The existing front gabled entrance would be demolished and the height of the main building would increase to include a first floor, thus, increasing the total height of the building from 4.55m to 7.8m at the front of the premises. At the rear, a first floor gable extension would be constructed. This would measure 3.9m wide, 1.3m deep and 6.8m in height. A flat roof single storey rear extension would also be constructed, which would

measure 3.68m wide, 3.6m deep and 2.84m in height (3.87 with roof lantern). The extended building would provide a lounge, kitchen, dining area, sunroom and WC at ground floor and 3 bedrooms and a bathroom at first floor. The proposed dwelling, would be finished with concrete roof tiles, rendered elevations and UPVc windows.

Given the demolition of the front gabled entrance, the property would be set back from the front highway and be served by a small front courtyard. The property, including the rear garden, which would be provided over a lower and an upper patio areas (following the removal of existing unprotected trees and vegetation), would be enclosed with a timber fence measuring between 1.5 and 1.6m in height, to provide a private garden area. It would also benefit from a driveway area to its northwestern side, following the removal of the front brickwork wall, which provide 2 tandem car parking spaces to serve its future occupiers.

PLANNING HISTORY

The Council's records do not indicate any other planning history for this site.

CONSULTATION

Head of Engineering and Highways	No objection, subject to conditions.
Policy Officer	No objection.
Ecology Officer	No objection, subject to conditions.
Environmental Health Manager	No objection, subject to conditions.
Bedlinog & Trelewis Community Council	No response.
Welsh Water	No objection, subject to conditions.

PUBLICITY

In accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Wales) Order 2012, adjoining properties were consulted and two site notices were displayed within the vicinity of the site. No letters of representation were received following this publicity exercise.

POLICY CONTEXT

National Development Framework

- Future Wales: the National Plan 2040 (February 2021)

Policy 1 – Where Wales Will Grow

Policy 2 – Shaping Urban Growth and Regeneration – Strategic Placemaking

Policy 4 – Supporting Rural Communities

National Planning Policies

- Planning Policy Wales - Edition 12 (February 2024)

Paragraph 3.3 refers to good design and states that *‘...design is not just about the architecture of a building but the relationship between all elements of the natural and built environment and between people and places. To achieve sustainable development, design must go beyond aesthetics and include the social, economic, environmental, cultural aspects of the development, including how space is used, how buildings and the public realm support this use, as well as its construction, operation, management, and its relationship with the surroundings area...’*

Paragraph 3.9 refers to character and states that *‘...the special characteristics of an area should be central to the design of a development. The layout, form, scale and visual appearance of a proposed development and its relationship to its surroundings are important planning considerations. A clear rationale behind the design decisions made, based on site and context analysis, a strong vision, performance requirements and design principles, should be sought throughout the development process and expressed, when appropriate, in a design and access statement...’*

Paragraph 3.14 refers to context appraisal and states that these *‘...should be used to determine the appropriateness of a development proposal in responding to its surroundings. This process will ensure that a development is well integrated into the fabric of the existing built environment...’*

Paragraph 3.55 states that *‘...previously developed (also referred to as brownfield) land should, wherever possible, be used in preference to greenfield sites where it is suitable for development. In settlements, such land should generally be considered suitable for appropriate development where its re-use will promote sustainability principles and any constraints can be overcome. It is recognised, however, that not all previously developed land is suitable for development...’*

Paragraph 4.2.17 goes on to state that *‘...maximising the use of suitable previously developed and/or underutilised land for housing development can assist regeneration and at the same time relieve pressure for development on greenfield sites...’*

Paragraph 6.4.3 discusses biodiversity and states that *‘...the planning system has a key role to play in helping to reverse the decline in biodiversity and increasing the resilience of ecosystems, at various scales, by ensuring appropriate mechanisms are in place to both protect against loss and to secure enhancement...’*

- TAN (Technical Advice Note)

TAN 5 – Nature and Conservation Planning (2009)

This TAN provides advice on development affecting designated sites and habitats, in addition to protected or priority habitats and species. Section 6.2.2 states that *‘...It is essential that the presence or otherwise of protected species, and the extent that they may be affected by the proposed development, is established before the planning*

permission is granted, otherwise all relevant material considerations may not have been addressed in making the decision. It is considered best practice that such a survey is carried out before planning application is submitted. Planning permission should not be granted subject to a condition that protected species surveys are carried out and, in the event that protected species are found to be present, mitigation measures are submitted for approval. However, bearing in mind the delay and cost that may be involved, developers should not be required to undertake surveys for protected species unless there is a reasonable likelihood of them being present...'

TAN 12 – Design (2016)

This TAN advises that the Welsh Government is strongly committed to achieving the delivery of good design in the built and natural environment, which is fit for purpose and delivers environmental sustainability, economic development, and social inclusion at every scale throughout Wales. Section 2.6 of TAN12 states that '*...Design which is inappropriate in its context, or which fails to grasp opportunities to enhance the character, quality or function of an area, should not be accepted, as these have detrimental effects on existing communities...*' Section 4.3 of TAN12 points out '*...Understanding the site and its immediate and wider context is the basis for a meaningful and sustainable design response, and is the responsibility of all those involved in the design process...*'

Local Planning Policies

- The Merthyr Tydfil Replacement LDP 2016-2031

Policy SW1 - Provision of New Homes

Policy SW3 – Sustainably Distributing New Homes

Policy SW4 - Settlement Boundaries

Policy SW11 - Sustainable Design and Placemaking

Policy SW13 - Protecting and Improving Local Community Facilities

Policy EnW1 - Nature Conservation and Ecosystem Resilience

Policy EnW4 - Environmental Protection

- Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG):

SPG4 - Sustainable Design, July 2013

SPG 5 – Nature and Development, May 2015

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

The issues to consider when assessing this application relate to whether the proposed development is acceptable in principle in this location, and whether, the proposed dwelling, in terms of its siting, scale and design, would be acceptable with regards to its impact upon the character and appearance of the area, residential amenity, ecology, parking provision and highway safety.

Principle of Development

The premises lies in the settlement boundary, where new development is generally supported by LDP Policy SW4, provided it complies with other LDP policies and material planning considerations. The principle of development would therefore be acceptable.

The application site, given its previous use as a chapel, is a recognised community facility. As such, LDP Policy SW13 is a relevant policy consideration. This policy states that *'...the provision of new and enhanced community facilities will be supported, subject to satisfying other relevant LDP policies. The Council will protect and support the enhancement of the County Borough's existing community facilities...'*

It goes on to clarify that *'...Development proposals that would result in a loss of an existing community facility will only be permitted where alternative provision of at least equivalent value to the local community can be provided nearby, or it can be demonstrated that existing provision is inappropriate or surplus to the needs of the community and is no longer required, or it can be demonstrated there is no longer a viable community use for the facility...'*

As discussed earlier in the report, the former chapel is closed and has remained vacant and unused since 2019. The supporting information submitted with the application confirms that the congregation declined significantly resulting in only 2 people attending the chapel prior to its closure. The information also includes details of Bethal Chapel, located at the end of Mary Street, which lies approximately 0.3 miles from the application site and remains an active place of worship. Given the length of time the property has been empty, the low attendance numbers prior to its closure and the alternative provision available close by, it is considered that the proposal meets the relevant criteria set out under LDP Policy SW13 and would therefore accord with this policy.

The proposed development would therefore be acceptable in principle in this location and would accord with LDP Policies SW4 and SW13.

Character and Appearance

The proposal to provide a new dwelling on this site would include numerous external alterations as discussed above. The main alteration would relate to the increase in the height of the building. This modification would result in a prominent alteration, however, it would not dominate or detract from the appearance of the property or the wider street scene. Indeed, the proposed dwelling would have a typical two-storey façade, rear gable projection, rear single storey projection and a gable end roof design. Its overall scale, design and appearance, when viewed along Station Terrace, would therefore reflect the existing row of terraced dwellings along this street, many of which have also been extended to the rear by means of single and two storey rear extensions.

It is recognised however that its frontage would include a glazed panel alongside the height of the front entrance door and this is a feature which is not generally found on dwellings of a traditional terraced appearance. It was therefore suggested that this be removed, however, the applicant explained that the glazed panel would provide additional natural light into the hallway of the property and as such, declined to amend the plans to show its omission. This small scale feature, although proposed on the dwelling's front elevation would not be deemed to significantly harm the appearance of the property or the wider street scene and would therefore be considered acceptable in this instance.

It is also recognised that the proposed dwelling would be set back from the front highway and thus comprise a front enclosed courtyard, which would be at odds with the neighbouring properties to the southeast (since these relate to traditional terraced dwellings sited hard up to the front highway). However, this setback (resulting from the

removal of the front gabled entrance formerly serving the chapel) would not be deemed to have a significantly adverse impact on the appearance of the street scene, since the neighbouring modern brickwork properties to the northwest are also set back from the front highway and benefit from a front courtyard/driveway areas.

Thus, it is considered that the proposed dwelling, including its material finishes, would result in an acceptable form of development in context with the character and appearance of the existing street scene and would therefore accord with LDP Policy SW11.

Residential Amenity

The proposed dwelling would involve changing the use of the former chapel into a residential property and this would be in context with surrounding built environment given that the area is predominantly residential. Specifically, it would be located between 11 Station Terrace, an end of terraced dwelling located to the southeast and Cwm Garan Station Terrace, a detached brickwork modern dwelling located to the northwest. Given its scale and orientation, the proposed dwelling would not be deemed to have any significant adverse impact on these neighbouring properties.

The application property would be set back off the boundary with 11 Station Terrace and would be the same height as this neighbouring property. Furthermore, the two-storey development would not project any further to the rear than the former chapel, and instead would largely sit alongside the side gable wall of this neighbouring dwelling. As such, it would not be deemed to have a significantly overbearing impact or result in any significant loss of light upon the rear windows or garden of this neighbouring property. It is acknowledged that two windows would be installed on the side of the proposed dwelling, at ground floor and at first floor, which would serve the downstairs lounge area and the upstairs bathroom. However, the ground floor window would be facing a blank wall since the neighbouring property's western side elevation does not have any side facing windows and the first-floor window would be obscurely glazed and prevent any high-level overlooking opportunities into the neighbouring property's garden. Indeed, the ground floor of the chapel has three large side facing windows to each of the elevations, thus, the proposed new windows would be deemed significantly less harmful to the amenities of neighbours. As such, the proposed windows would not result in any loss of privacy to the amenities of these neighbouring occupiers.

The application property would also be set back off the boundary with Cwm Garan and would not exceed the roof height of this neighbouring dwelling. Indeed, the two-storey development would also run alongside the two-storey side wall of this neighbouring dwelling and as such, would not result in any significant overbearing or loss of light impact upon the rear windows or garden of this neighbouring dwelling. A new small ground floor window which would serve the downstairs WC would replace three large side facing windows formerly serving the chapel, and as such, would not be harmful to the private amenities of this neighbouring property, particularly since the eastern side elevation of the neighbouring dwelling is also free of any ground floor windows.

As a result, the relationship between the proposed dwelling and the existing neighbouring dwelling would be considered acceptable and the proposal would therefore comply with LDP Policy SW11.

Ecology

Given the nature of the proposed development and the fact that the existing building is suitable for bats and nesting birds, a Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) was requested by the Council's Ecology Officer. A PRA was received on the 22nd November 2023. The report confirmed that bat droppings were found and concluded the chapel to be a bat roost. As such, further survey work was requested. An acceptable Bat Activity Survey with Green Infrastructure Statement was received on the 6th March 2025. This report recommended mitigation, compensation and enhancement measures, such as undertaking works in the winter months under the supervision of a qualified ecologist, use of bitumen type 1 felt in the roof, erection of bat and bird boxes, provision of lawn areas in the garden, etc. The Council's Ecologist reviewed the report and did not raise any concerns with the recommendations put forward, provided that the development is carried out in accordance with the relevant documents. Thus, the proposed development is considered acceptable, provided a suitably worded condition is added to any planning permission granted to ensure that the development is carried out in accordance with the submitted information. The proposed development would therefore accord with LDP Policy EnW1.

Parking Provision and Highway Safety

The proposed 3 bedroom property would be served by on-site parking provision by means of a driveway area to the northwestern side of the property. This would provide two tandem parking bays, which would be deemed sufficient to serve a 3 bedroom property. Furthermore, additional unrestricted on-street parking is available along the front highway. Indeed, the parking requirements for a 3 bedroom property would be significantly lower than that which would be required to serve an operational chapel. As such, the head of Engineering and Highways has not raised any concerns in respect of vehicles reversing onto the highway or any objections in respect of the proposed development overall. The proposal would therefore not give rise to any significant detrimental highway or pedestrian safety concerns and would accord with LDP Policy SW11.

CONCLUSION

The proposed development for the reasons discussed above is therefore considered acceptable and would comply with the relevant LDP policies.

Finally, 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.

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:

- Proposed Ground Floor Drawing No. ST-03 Rev B, received: 10th March 2025;
- Proposed First Floor Drawing No. ST-04 Rev B, received: 10th March 2025;
- Proposed Elevations Drawing No. ST-05 Rev E, received: 10th March 2025;
- Sections Drawing No. ST-06 Rev B, received: 10th March 2025;
- Site Plans Drawing No. ST-07 Rev B, received: 10th March 2025;
- Street Scenes Drawing No. ST-08 Rev C, received: 10th March 2025;
- Bat Activity Survey, Issue 1 Version D, received: 6th March 2025;
- Preliminary Roost Assessment, November 2023, received: 22nd November 2023.

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

3. Prior to the occupation of the dwelling hereby approved, a plan indicating the height, design, materials and type of all boundary treatments to be erected, including any gates, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The boundary treatments shall be completed as approved before the occupation of the dwelling.

Reason - To ensure that the new development will be visually attractive and in the interest of highway safety in accordance with Policy SW11 of the Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council Replacement Local Development Plan.

4. The construction of the car parking area to the east of the property, as shown on Site Plan (Drawing No. ST-07 Rev B, received: 10th March 2025), shall be completed in accordance with the approved details prior to the occupation of the dwelling hereby approved, and the car parking spaces shall remain available for their designated use in perpetuity.

Reason - To ensure that vehicles are parked off the highway in the interests of road safety in accordance with Policy SW11 of the Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council Replacement Local Development Plan.

5. Notwithstanding the provisions of schedule 2, Part 1, Class B of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 (as amended for Wales) (or any order revoking and re-enacting that order with or without modification), no additions or alterations shall be carried out to the roof of the dwelling hereby permitted, other than those expressly authorised by this permission.

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

6. Before the development hereby permitted is brought into use, the first floor southeast facing side window shall be fitted with obscured glazing, details of which shall first be submitted to and agreed in writing by the local planning authority. The window shall be permanently retained in that condition thereafter.

Reason - In the interest of residential amenity and to accord with Policy SW11 of the Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council Replacement Local Development Plan.

7. No surface water and/or land drainage shall be allowed to discharge directly or indirectly into the public sewerage system.

Reason - To ensure adequate disposal of surface water drainage in accordance with LDP Policy EnW4 of the Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council Replacement Local Development Plan.

8. **No external lighting shall be installed**, until a detailed lighting scheme has first been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The lighting scheme shall demonstrate dark zones at the boundaries and across the site, dark corridors for bat foraging/commuting with access points to bat boxes to remain unilluminated. The lighting scheme must conform to the latest guidance for wildlife-friendly lighting. Guidance Note GN08/23 Bats and Artificial Lighting At Night. Bat Conservation Trust and The Institute of Lighting Professionals 2023 - <https://theilp.org.uk/publication/guidance-note-8-bats-and-artificial-lighting>. 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 Policy EnW1 of the Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council Replacement Local Development Plan.

9. Prior to the beneficial use of the dwelling hereby approved, the enhancement measures proposed, as stipulated in the recommendations set out in the Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment and Bat Activity Survey, shall be implemented and shall be retained thereafter in perpetuity.

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

10. Demolition or construction works shall not take place outside the hours of 08:00 to 18:00 Mondays to Fridays and 09:00 to 14.00 on Saturdays and at no time on Sundays or Public Holidays.

Reason - To ensure that the noise emitted/activities are not a source of nuisance to occupants of nearby properties in accordance with Policies SW11 and EnW4 of the Merthyr Tydfil 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. This planning permission does not provide consent to undertake works that require a European Protected Species (EPS) licence.
All bats and their roosts are protected under UK and European legislation. It is an offence to deliberately kill, injure, capture or disturb a bat or to recklessly damage or destroy their breeding sites or resting places.

If works are planned on a building/tree in which bats are found to be roosting, Natural Resources Wales (NRW) must be contacted. on 0300 065 3000 or at <https://naturalresources.wales/permits-and-permissions/species-licensing/apply-for-a-protected-species-licence/bat-licences/?lang=en>.

If work has already commenced and bats are found, or if any evidence that bats are using the site as a roost is found, work should cease and NRW should be contacted immediately.

Under these circumstances, an EPS licence is likely to be required to undertake the works within the law.

3. 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.

4. If a drop kerb is required, an application form to obtain permission for this aspect of the development can be obtained from the highways department;

Website: <https://www.merthyr.gov.uk/resident/parking-roads-and-travel/roads-footways-and-pavements/dropped-kerb/>

Email: Highways.CustomerCare@merthyr.gov.uk Tel no : 01685 727470 or 725000

RECOMMENDATION ENDORSED



Director of Neighbourhood Services

pp

DATE: 18.03.2025