

INTERNAL MEMORANDUM

To: Rebecca Owens - Development Control Case Officer

Reference: P/25/0327

From: Planning Policy and Implementation Section

Ask for: David James

Extension: 7053

Date: 9th December 2025

Summary

No objection raised. The development meets the relevant Replacement LDP policies (SW4 & Ecw3, & EcW5).

If minded to approve in principle, particular consideration should be given to the impact of the development on the character of the Town Centre Conservation Area (and any other relevant Heritage assets), the impact on surrounding area and occupiers in terms of noise and disturbance, traffic generation and parking provision, and any other relevant risks to public health and safety, particularly flooding, and the impact on biodiversity (Policies SW11, SW12, CW1, EnW1, EnW3 & EnW4).

Observations in respect of the above development

1. Proposed Development

An application for the change of use of the ground floor and basement from retail use to offices, new shopfront and alterations to fenestration in rear elevation at 28 Victoria Street, Merthyr Tydfil.

2. Development Plan Framework

The Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council Replacement Local Development Plan (2016 - 2031)

The relevant LDP Objectives are:-

- *LDP Objective 1 Sustainable Population Growth: To encourage a sustainable level and distribution of population growth.*
- *LDP Objective 2 Welsh Language and Culture: To protect and enhance Welsh language and culture.*
- *LDP Objective 4 Regeneration: To promote the suitable reuse of previously developed land and the continued regeneration of local communities.*

- *LDP Objective 6 Sustainable Design: To promote high quality, sustainable and inclusive design and support measures which mitigate the predicted effects of climate change.*
- *LDP Objective 7 Transport: To support an integrated transport system, promote active travel and ensure new developments are accessible by walking, cycling and public transport links.*
- *LDP Objective 9 Heritage and Cultural Assets: To protect, enhance and promote all heritage, historic and cultural assets.*
- *LDP Objective 10 Biodiversity: To improve ecosystem resilience and connectivity which support habitats and species of principle importance.*
- *LDP Objective 14 Town and Local Centres: To develop the town and local centres as accessible, attractive, viable and vibrant places.*

The following development plan policies would apply:-

- *Policy SW4: Settlement Boundaries*
- *Policy SW9: Planning Obligations*
- *Policy SW11: Sustainable Design and Placemaking*
- *Policy SW12: Improving the Transport Network*
- *Policy CW1: Historic Environment*
- *Policy EnW1: Nature Conservation & 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*
- *Policy EcW3: Retail Hierarchy – Supporting Retailing Provision*
- *Policy EcW5 Town and Local Centre Development*

The following supplementary planning guidance is applicable:-

- *Merthyr Tydfil Local Development Plan Supplementary Planning Guidance Note 2: Planning Obligations (March 2012).*
- *Merthyr Tydfil Local Development Plan Supplementary Planning Guidance Note 3: Shopfront Design (May 2013).*
- *Merthyr Tydfil Local Development Plan Supplementary Planning Guidance Note 4: Sustainable Design (July 2013).*

National Planning Policy

Planning Policy Wales (Edition 12, February 2024)

Planning Policy Wales provide guidance on matters relevant to this application, namely:

- Placemaking in Action: Good Design Making Better Places
- Strategic Placemaking: Previously Developed Land
- Active and Social Places: Living in a Place
- Activities in Places: Retail and Commercial Development
- Recognising the Special Characteristics of Places
- Recognising the Environmental Qualities of Places

Future Wales: The National Plan 2040 (February 2021)

Future Wales provides guidance on matters relevant to this application, including, but not limited to:

- Policy 1: Where Wales will grow
- Policy 2: Shaping Urban Growth and Regeneration – Strategic Placemaking
- Policy 33 – National Growth Area – Cardiff, Newport and the Valleys

Technical Advice Notes (TANs)

TAN 4: Retail and Commercial Development (November 2016).

TAN 12: Design (March 2016).

TAN 15: Development, Flooding and Coastal Erosion (2025)

TAN 24: Historic Environment (May 2017).

3. Policy Considerations

The application site is a commercial unit located within the Town Centre Conservation Area and within Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre (Policies CW1 and EcW5). The site is located within the Primary Growth Area and settlement boundary, where new development can be considered acceptable in principle (Policy SW4) subject to proposals being compatible with the Plan's other policies and all other material considerations.

Policy SW9 considers the requirement for planning obligations. Where appropriate and having regard to development viability, planning obligations will be sought for:

1. On site provision of affordable housing on sites of 10 homes or more at a level of:
 - 10% in the Primary Growth Area.
 - 5% in the Other Growth Area.
2. A financial contribution towards the provision of affordable housing:
 - On sites of between 5 and 9 homes or;
 - On sites of 10 or more homes, where on-site provision is not appropriate.
3. The provision of open space on sites of 10 homes or more, where there is an identified need.
4. Other relevant obligations not included within the Council's Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Regulation 123 List of Infrastructure.

Considering the nature of the development, on-site provision of affordable housing or open space, or a financial contribution towards affordable housing, would not be sought. Additionally, the development would not be liable for CIL.

Policy SW11 advises that development must contribute to the creation of attractive and sustainable places through high quality, sustainable and inclusive design. Where appropriate, new development will be required to (amongst other things):

- be appropriate to its local context in terms of scale, height, massing, elevational treatment, materials and detailing, layout, form, mix and density;
- integrate effectively with adjacent spaces, the public realm and historic environment to enhance the general street scene and create good quality townscape;
- not result in an unacceptable impact on local amenity, loss of light or privacy, or visual impact, and incorporate a good standard of landscape design;
- allow access for the widest range of people possible, and demonstrate that any traffic movements will not have an unacceptable impact on local amenity or highway safety and satisfy the Council's parking standards.

Considering the nature of the development, and the location of the site (in close proximity to existing residential and commercial uses and within the Town Centre Conservation Area) consideration should be given to the above issues. Particular consideration should be given to the impact of the proposed change of use, and external alterations, on the character of the Town Centre Conservation Area, including their elevational treatments, and how they integrate with the adjacent buildings. As such, the views of the Council's Environmental Health department and the Head of Engineering and Highways should be sought where appropriate.

Policy SW12 supports development that encourages a modal shift towards sustainable transport, including the enhancement of pedestrian, cycle, rail and bus facilities, in addition to any necessary road improvements. Developments will be expected to demonstrate how they reduce the need to travel and encourage the use of sustainable transport. It is noted that the application site is located in close proximity to both the bus and train stations in Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre. As such, the views of the Head of Engineering and Highways should be sought in this respect.

Policy CW1 advises that the integrity of our historic environment assets will be conserved and enhanced. Development proposals will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated they would preserve or enhance the architectural quality, character or the historic or cultural importance of our designated historic environment assets. And that, development affecting undesignated historic environment assets including, Locally Listed Buildings or structures, Landscapes of Outstanding Historic Interest in Wales, Urban Character Areas and Archaeologically Sensitive Areas should have regard to their special character and archaeological importance.

The site lies within the Town Centre Conservation Area, the Town Centre (High Street and Pontmorlais) Urban Character Area (UCA1) and the Merthyr Tydfil Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest. The impact of the change of use, proposed extension, and associated alterations, on the character of the Conservation Area should be particularly considered. As such, the views of the appropriate Council Officer, or Heritage body, should be sought as required.

Policy EnW4 advises that development proposals will be required to demonstrate they will not result in an unacceptable impact on people, residential amenity, property and / or the natural environment from either:

- Pollution of land, surface water, ground water and the air;
- Land contamination;
- Hazardous substances;
- Land stability;
- Noise, vibration, dust, odour nuisance and light pollution; or

- Any other identified risk to public health and safety.

Where impacts are identified the Council will require applicants to demonstrate that appropriate measures have been incorporated to reduce, or minimise the impact identified to the lowest possible acceptable level. Planning conditions may be imposed or legal obligation entered into, to secure any necessary mitigation and monitoring processes. As such, the views of the Head of Engineering and Highways and Environmental Health department should be sought as appropriate.

The application also lies within a Flood Zone C2 as illustrated on the LDP Constraints Map, and Floodmap Zone 2 on the Natural Resources Wales environmental data maps. Paragraph 6.6.26 of PPW11, which considers development and flood risk, states that reference should be made to TAN 15: Development and Flood Risk and that *“Developments located within flood risk areas remain at risk from flooding even if mitigation measures are applied.”* Paragraph 6.6.29 further states *“the ability of emergency services to respond to flood events should be taken into account when considering if a development is appropriate.”*

Section 9 of TAN 15 considers the vulnerability of different land uses to flooding and identifies three separate development categories: highly vulnerable development (which includes all residential premises), less vulnerable development, and Water Compatible Development (Paragraph 9.1a, Figure 4). Paragraph 9.2 defines Highly vulnerable development as development where the ability of occupants to decide on whether they wish to accept the risks to life and property associated with flooding, or be able to manage the consequences of such a risk, is limited.

Paragraph 10.24 states that in zones 2, 3 and TAN 15 defended zone developers must undertake a flood consequences assessment proportionate to the nature and scale of the proposal. Before granting planning permission, decision makers should be satisfied the scheme is justifiable in accordance with the principles set out in section 8, where they are not satisfied, planning permission should be refused. In these zones, Planning Authorities should seek all opportunities to provide enhanced flood protection for existing communities at risk.

Given that the proposal relates to the upper floors of the building, the proposal may be acceptable. However, an FCA should be submitted, and Natural Resources Wales should be consulted as appropriate.

Policy EcW3 advises that Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre is the favoured location for retail, leisure, and other complementary development, being situated at the head of a retail hierarchy. Proposals for new and enhanced retail, leisure and other complementary provision in this location will be permitted where they improve the vitality and viability of the centre.

Policy EcW5 advises that development enhancing the vitality and viability of the Town and Local Centres will be supported. It also states that within the Town Centre Primary Shopping Area (PSA)...., the change of use of the ground floor to ‘non-A’ use classes will only be permitted where:-

- It is demonstrated through active and appropriate marketing that the existing use is no longer economically viable; and,
- The proposal would not result in an over concentration of non-A1 uses that would be detrimental to the vitality, attractiveness and viability of the local centre; and,
- The proposal would not result in the creation of a dead window frontage; and,

- The proposal would not have an unacceptable effect on the amenity and viability of neighbouring uses, having regard to the 'agent of change principle'.

The proposal is for a change of use of the ground floor and basement from retail to office use. The site is located within Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre, but outside the Primary Shopping Area.

It is acknowledged that the proposal would result in retail floorspace being lost. However, the LDP recognises that retail uses must be carefully blended with cultural, leisure and other uses if the Town Centre is to continue to thrive. The Town Centre Partnership has led to projects stimulating activity, promoting a diversity of uses and increasing access and attractiveness. As such, an office would be appropriately located within the town centre, and is not considered to be detrimental to its vitality, attractiveness or viability.

As such, the proposal would be in accordance with the requirements of Policies EcW3 and EcW5.