

INTERNAL MEMORANDUM

To: Caroline Pulley
From: Matt Davies (Ecologist)
Ext: 5278
Memo number: 2
Date of previous memo: 14/10/2021
Date: 04/11/2021

SUBJECT: P/21/0352 | PROPOSED SINGLE STOREY BUILDING TO ACCOMMODATE DAY CARE FACILITIES WITH ASSOCIATED NEW FOOTPATH, LANDSCAPING AND PLAY AREA | DOWLAIS PRIMARY SCHOOL HIGH STREET CAEHARRIS MERTHYR TYDFIL CF48 3HB

Proposed development site on grassland, with adjacent broadleaved woodland habitat.

The following reports have been submitted in support of the application:

1. Arboricultural Implications Assessment and Method Statement. Flying Start Dowlais. Revision 1 - August 2021. Steve Ambler and Sons Tree Specialist Ltd.
2. Ecological Report. Land at Dowlais Primary School, Dowlais, Merthyr Tydfil. Celtic Ecology and Conservation Ltd. Issue 1. Dated 10/10/2021.

Previous comments at the Pre-App enquiry stage can be seen below in black – previous comments for full application (memo #1) shown in green, with further comments in red.

Trees

Planning Policy Wales (PPW) Edition 11 - 24th Feb 2021 states that planning authorities must follow a stepwise approach to maintain and enhance biodiversity and build resilient ecological networks by ensuring that any adverse environmental effects are firstly **avoided**, then minimized, mitigated, and as a last resort compensated for; enhancement must be secured wherever possible. The first priority for planning authorities is to avoid damage to biodiversity and ecosystem functioning. Where there may be harmful environmental effects, planning authorities will need to be satisfied that any reasonable alternative sites that would result in less harm, no harm or gain have been fully considered.

This policy is mirrored within the MTCBC Replacement Local Development Plan (2016-2031) - Policy EnW1: Nature Conservation and Ecosystem Resilience.

In order to **avoid** the ecological issues in relation to the loss of trees, the scheme should be adjusted in order to retain the trees. I am in agreement with the comments below as set out on page 8 of the Arboricultural report:

'The repositioning of the proposed building several metres beyond the limits of the RPA to the northwest is likely to remove all the present conflicts with T1, T7 and G2.'

The scheme has now been amended with the building repositioned. There is still an element of conflict between the building position / paved areas and the RPAs and canopies of T1 and G2. In addition, the report states that the close position to T7 will become problematic as its crown develops to maturity.

Page 6 states:

'Under the current proposal, no trees are lost to this proposal.'

I welcome the change in terms of no loss of onsite trees, however, I would recommend MTCBC's tree officer (Andrew Taylor) assesses the Arboricultural report in terms of tree health.

Andrew Taylor's comments (MTCBC tree officer):

'I have had a look at the drawings and I am happy that tree health will not be compromised with this plan. No trees are marked for removal, the paths are no dig with geo-mesh modules as to British standards and the service channels run around the root protection areas (this should be checked by building control during construction).

There may be issues with maintenance after completion with regards to tree pruning due to the close proximity of the building to the tree(s) (namely T1), but I see no reason from a tree health point of view why planning cannot be approved.'

Construction methodology for the paths as referred to above will be followed. A planning condition will be used to ensure this is undertaken.

NB in addition, trees requiring pruning will need an assessment (by a suitably qualified ecologist) of those parts of the tree to be removed. Further measures may be required if the tree parts include features suitable for roosting bats. Works will be undertaken outside of the bird breeding season (generally from 1st March until 31st August, although birds are known to nest outside of these dates in suitable conditions).

Document 2 is acceptable in terms of the assessment of the onsite trees for bat roosting suitability.

Reptiles

The grassland habitat has suitability for reptile species. Therefore, a Reptile Mitigation Strategy must be submitted for approval in writing prior to determination of planning.

Could this be supplied for consideration please? The report is referred to within the Access Statement, but I can't see it on Information @ Work?

Document 2 is acceptable in terms of the reptile presence and likely absence survey.

Lighting

If there is to be external lighting, a lighting plan must be submitted (demonstrating consideration for nocturnal species such as bat and invertebrate species) for approval in writing prior to determination of planning. The plan must comply with the following guidelines:

<https://theilp.org.uk/publication/guidance-note-8-bats-and-artificial-lighting/>

Is there any information regarding lighting? NB internal lighting must also comply with the above guidelines.

Still require information regarding onsite lighting.

Enhancements

In accordance with the Environment (Wales) Act 2016, enhancements will be required.

- Integrated bat and bird boxes within the new building (bat box will not be illuminated)
- Hedgehogs – gaps will be created in boundaries (13cm x 13cm) to allow free passage across the site. This includes the fencing associated with the new building.
- Creation of a wildflower area for the benefit of pollinators. Area and seed mix must be specified.
- The Arboricultural report describes mitigation for tree losses in the open space to the west and the north – see page 14. Assuming the scheme is amended to avoid impacts and therefore loss

of the trees, this mitigation for tree loss will still be instigated as an enhancement, rather than a mitigation measure. In contrast to the recommendation within the report, a mix of 5 or more different species will be used that are not currently present onsite, e.g., hornbeam, hazel, beech, silver birch, sessile oak, willow sp.

The enhancement features must be fully specified and added to all relevant plans for the site.

I can't see any reference in the submitted documents to the enhancements set out above.

Document 2 sets out a range of enhancement measures:

- *EITHER a Schwegler 1WQ (or similar) bat box will be erected on the new Flying Start building (the location to be determined by the ecologist, but preferentially facing between south east and south west at a minimum height (if possible) of 3.5m above ground level; OR a pole mounted bat box (design at **Appendix C**) to be located by the ecologist in consultation with the school and Flying Start design team;*

A bat box on the new building OR a pole-mounted bat box would be acceptable. NB if the building bat box option is used, the box will be integrated rather than surface mounted (e.g., <https://www.nhbs.com/search?q=bat+box> or similar).

- *Integrated bird boxes in the form of 1(no.) Schwegler 1SP sparrow nest terrace and 2(no.) Woodstone Built in Swift Nest Box A will be built into building facing between south and west in locations to be determined by the ecologist in consultation with the Flying Start design team;*

The bird box models are acceptable, however they will be installed facing north to avoid strong sunlight and to face, and be adjacent to, the woodland habitat.

- *A wildflower area to benefit pollinating insects will be created. The area will be no less than 100m² and be planted with a combination of seed mixes such as Emorsgate ESG2 – Fine Grassland Mixture sown with ESF2 – Wild Pollen And Nectar Flowers (or similar) to provide a native species wildflower area. The preferred location will be in the swales proposed on the north western and south eastern side of the new Flying Start building (as per **drawing TS1428 PA-03**); however, this will be determined in consultation with the Flying Start design team and Dowlais Primary School.*

The specific area for wildflowers will be established/finalised.

- *Other landscape planting e.g. native species trees may be implemented on a like for like basis using native species of as local a provenance as possible as necessary in the event that there will be any loss of trees from the site. The preferred location for this is along the Gwernllwyn Road boundary.*

Document 1 describes mitigation for tree losses in the open space to the west and the north – see page 14. Assuming the scheme is amended to avoid impacts and therefore loss of the trees, this mitigation for tree loss will still be instigated as an 'enhancement', rather than a mitigation measure. In contrast to the recommendation within the report, a mix of 5 or more different species will be used that are not currently present onsite, e.g., hornbeam, hazel, beech, silver birch, sessile oak, willow sp.

A line of trees at the south western school boundary (to the north east of Gwernllwyn Road) as suggested in Document 2 would be acceptable.

NOTE: where and if close boarded fencing is required, holes 150mm x 150mm will be provided at no less than 10m intervals at the base of the fence(s) along its length to allow the free passage of hedgehogs across and around the site.

Any proposed onsite fencing will incorporate gaps for hedgehogs (130mm x 130mm).

NB All enhancement measures will be fully specified and added to all relevant plans for the site prior to determination.

Landscaping

The 'Site Modifications' drawing (11 October 2021 | TS1428 PA-03) shows '*Swales with biodiversity*', but with no further detail is provided. This detail is required – specifically, an establishment, management and maintenance plan covering at least the first 5-years. NB – all planting will be native species of local (if not, Welsh) provenance.

Still required.