

INTERNAL MEMORANDUM

To: Gareth Davies - Development Control Case Officer

Reference: P/26/0047

From: Planning Policy and Implementation Section

Ask for: David James

Extension: 7053

Date: 24th April 2026

Summary

No objection raised. The development meets Replacement LDP Policy SW4, and appears to meet the requirements of policies EcW3 & EcW6.

If minded to approve in principle, particular consideration should be given to the impact of the development on the character of the area, in terms of visual impact, and the impact on highway safety (Policies SW11 & EnW4). Consideration should also be given to the impact on any relevant historic environment assets (Policy CW1), and the impact on biodiversity (Policies EnW1, EnW2 & EnW3).

Observations in respect of the above development

1. Proposed Development

An application for the erection of 3 no. totem poles, each to display Retail Park and traders' signage, at Unit E, Dowlais Top Retail Park, Dowlais, Merthyr Tydfil.

2. Development Plan Framework

The existing development plan framework in Merthyr Tydfil is provided by:-

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 8 Community Facilities: To support existing community facilities and suitable community led development.*
- *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 11 Countryside and Landscape: To protect and enhance the character and appearance of the landscape and the countryside.*
- *LDP Objective 12 Economic Development: To provide and safeguard appropriate land for economic and skills development.*
- *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 and Ecosystem Resilience*
- *Policy EnW2: Internationally and Nationally Protected Sites and Species*
- *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 EnW5: Landscape Protection*
- *Policy EcW2: Protecting Employment Sites*
- *Policy EcW3: Retail Hierarchy – Supporting Retailing Provision*
- *Policy EcW5: Town and Local Centre Development*
- *Policy EcW6: Out-of-Town Retailing Areas*

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 4: Sustainable Design (July 2013)*
- *Merthyr Tydfil Local Development Plan Supplementary Planning Guidance Note 5: Nature and Development (May 2015)*

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
- Activities in a Place: Retail and Commercial Development
- Economic Infrastructure: Economic Development
- Recognising the Special Characteristics of Places
- Recognising the Environmental Qualities of Places

Technical Advice Notes (TANs)

Technical Advice Note (TAN) 4: Retail and Commercial Development (November 2016)

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 6: Town Centre First
- Policy 33: National Growth Area: Cardiff, Newport and the Valleys

3. Policy Considerations

The site of the proposal is located within the Primary Growth Area, and within the settlement boundary, where development will be allowed subject to the proposals compatibility with other plan policies and material considerations (**Policy SW4**). It is also located within Dowlais Top Retail Park, which is identified as an existing out-of-town retail area by **Policy EcW6**.

Policy SW9 relates to planning obligations. However, given the nature of the proposal, on-site provision of affordable housing or open space, or a financial contribution towards affordable housing, would not be sought. Additionally, Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) would not be chargeable.

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.
- incorporate resource efficient/adaptable buildings and layouts using sustainable design and construction techniques;
- minimise the demand for energy and utilise renewable energy resources;
- provide and protect relevant utility services and infrastructure without causing any unacceptable environmental impacts;
- incorporate measures to improve ground and surface water quality wherever possible;
- provide adequate facilities and space for waste collections and recycling.
- promote the creation of healthy and active environments and reduce the opportunity for crime and anti-social behaviour.

The proposed totem signs are fairly typical of those found within out-of-town retail and commercial areas. They are also relatively small for this type of signage. However, given their positioning at junctions, and that they would be illuminated, the views of the Public Health Manager & Engineering and Traffic Group Leader should be sought in terms of the potential impact of the signs on highway safety and light pollution.

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. As such, the views of the Engineering and Traffic Group Leader 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 is located within a Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest in Wales. As such, this and any other relevant historic environment assets should be taken into consideration, and the views of the relevant Officer or external Heritage body sought in this regard, as appropriate.

Policy EnW1 seeks to protect nature conservation and ecosystem resilience. **Policy EcW2** seeks to protect the conservation value of internationally or nationally designated sites, including the area, structure and function of designated features, **Policy EnW3** states that development proposals likely to have an adverse impact on Regionally Important Geological Sites, Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation, Local Nature Reserves, or Priority Habitats and Species will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that:

1. The need for the development clearly outweighs the conservation value of the site;

2. Adverse impacts on nature conservation features or geological features can be avoided;
3. Appropriate and proportionate mitigation and compensation measures can be provided; and
4. The development maintains and where possible enhances biodiversity and geodiversity interests.

As such, the views of the Council's Ecologist should be sought.

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.

It is noted that the proposed signs would be illuminated. As such, the views of the Environmental Health department/Public Health Manager should be sought as appropriate.

Policy EcW3 states 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 and being followed by the local centres of Dowlais, Gurnos, Cefn Coed and Brecon Road/Morgantown, Troedyrhiw, Aberfan, Treharris and a new local centre forming part of the 'Hoover Strategic Regeneration Area'. Proposals for new and enhanced retail, leisure and other complementary provision in all these centres will be permitted where they improve the vitality and viability of the centre(s) concerned. Outside the above centres, proposals will be subject to an assessment of need and a strict application of the sequential test. Proposals will then only be permitted where they avoid causing harm to town/local centre vitality and viability.

Policy EcW6 states that proposals for retail development on new sites or existing retail areas in out-of-town locations, including changes of use, extensions, the merger or subdivision of existing units or amendments to existing planning conditions relating to the sale of goods will only be permitted where:

- It can be demonstrated that there is an additional need for the proposal which cannot be provided within an existing town or local retail centre, and
- The proposal would not either individually or cumulatively with other existing or consented developments have an unacceptable impact on the trade, turnover, vitality and viability of the town or local centres.

The application site is located within Dowlais Top Retail area. This area is not included in the Retail Hierarchy identified in Policy EcW3, as it is neither a town centre, nor a local centre. However, it is identified as an existing out-of-town retail area by Policy EcW6.

The proposed signs are typical of those found at such locations, and not considered, that they would have an unacceptable impact on the trade, turnover, vitality or viability of Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre or any of the identified Local Centres. The proposal would there comply with Policies EcW3 and EcW6.