

Dyddiad/Date: 25/09/2024

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Dear Sir / Madam

RE: Support for Planning Application – Development of Supported Accommodation

Planning Department
Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council
Civic Centre, Castle Street
Merthyr Tydfil
CF47 8AN

I am writing to formally support the planning application for the development of a supported accommodation scheme in Merthyr Tydfil, which is critical to addressing the pressing housing needs in the area. This application outlines a carefully planned response to the local housing crisis, particularly for individuals experiencing homelessness and requiring high or intensive support.

Need for the Development:

In line with the Welsh Government's strategy for ending homelessness, it is evident that the current housing and homelessness services in Merthyr Tydfil are under significant pressure. Legislative changes, including the Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016 and recent amendments to the Homelessness Orders, have further strained an already overburdened system. This, combined with the increasing socio-economic challenges and rising demand for affordable and supported housing, has led to an unprecedented need for additional supported accommodation.

As of September 25th, 2024, there are 117 individuals in temporary accommodation, with 37 in unsuitable B&B placements. Approximately 39% of these individuals require high or intensive support, which underscores the necessity for a development that offers tailored services to help them transition to independent living. Without such accommodation, many are at risk of remaining marginalised, prolonging their stay in inappropriate settings such as B&Bs.

Resident Selection Process:

The proposed development will cater to individuals experiencing homelessness who meet specific eligibility criteria, including those with complex support needs related to mental health or substance misuse. Residents will be assessed by the local housing team, ensuring they are matched with the appropriate accommodation and support services to maximise positive outcomes. In instances where no immediate vacancies are available, alternative arrangements will be made.

Support Offered to Residents:

The proposed accommodation will offer comprehensive housing-related support for up to 19 individuals with high or intensive needs. The development aims to provide not only emergency shelter but also a pathway to independence. An in-house support provider will manage day-to-day operations, offering residents 24/7 care and assistance.

Tailored support will be provided in areas such as mental health, substance misuse reduction, and the development of essential life skills. Additionally, the project will collaborate with local institutions to offer training programs, empowering residents to become self-sufficient and equipped for sustained independent living.

Facilities and Living Conditions:

The refurbished building will include;

- A communal/training kitchen for practical learning and shared experiences,
- A communal dining area to foster a sense of community,
- A communal lounge/activity room to encourage social interaction,
- Upgraded room facilities with kitchenettes, promoting autonomy,
- On-site laundry facilities, and
- 24/7 on-site staff to support residents in real-time.

These facilities are designed to create a safe, supportive, and nurturing environment for residents, providing them with the stability they need to rebuild their lives.

Duration of Stay:

The typical stay in the supported accommodation will be up to two years, though this may be extended on a case-by-case basis, depending on individual needs and the availability of suitable move-on accommodation.

Anti-Social Behaviour Management:

The successful support provider will manage any instances of anti-social behaviour through a structured approach, beginning with non-legal solutions such as advising residents when their behaviour is unacceptable. Should these measures prove ineffective, formal notifications and, ultimately, eviction may be considered if residents fail to adhere to agreed-upon behaviour standards.

Staffing and Operations:

The project will be staffed by a dedicated team comprising:

- 1 Manager,
- 7 Scheme Support Officers,
- 1 Accommodation Coordinator, and
- 4 Project Workers.

A maximum of five staff members will be on-site at any given time, ensuring continuous support and supervision for residents.

Conclusion:

This supported accommodation development is a critical step in addressing the urgent housing and support needs in Merthyr Tydfil. The project will not only provide immediate shelter but also empower individuals with the skills necessary for long-term independence. The planned facilities and comprehensive support services will enable residents to thrive in a safe, structured, and supportive environment.

I strongly believe this project aligns with both local and national strategies for tackling homelessness and should be approved to help alleviate the current housing crisis in our community.

Thank you for considering this application. Please do not hesitate to contact me if further information is required.

Yours sincerely,

Kristen Cooper
Housing Development and Strategy Officer
Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council
Kristen.cooper@merthyr.gov.uk

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg / We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English