

DELEGATED REPORT

Application No:	P/25/0305
Site Address:	86 High Street Merthyr Tydfil CF47 8UG
Development:	Change of use from Dance school to Massage Therapy
Case Officer:	Kate Glover
Site Visit:	11th December 2025
Application Expiry Date:	16th January 2026
Consultation reply date expired:	1st January 2026

APPLICATION SITE

The application site relates to the ground floor of 86 High Street, Pontmorlais, within the Town Centre. The premises are currently unoccupied; however, the site's planning history indicates a number of previous uses, with the most recent being a gym, as described in planning permission reference P/22/0331. While the planning application form refers to the current use as a dance school rather than a gym, both uses would likely fall within Use Class D2 (Assembly and Leisure).

The application site lies within the settlement boundary, Primary Growth Area, Town Centre Boundary, Town Centre Conservation Area and Article 4 Area as designated within the Merthyr Tydfil Local Development Plan 2016-2031.

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

This application seeks planning permission to change the use of the ground floor of the premises from a dance school to a massage therapy business (use class sui generis).

Internally, the premises would be re-organised to provide a reception area, 3 massage rooms, staff room, kitchen and WC. Externally, no alterations are proposed to the premises. No works are proposed to the frontage of the building or to the rear of the premises.

PLANNING HISTORY

The following planning history is relevant to this application site:

P/22/0331 Change of use from offices to gymnasium
Approved 03 February 2023

- P/19/0203 Change of use of ground floor from D2 (Assembly and Leisure) to B1 (offices) Approved: 10 September 2019
- P/17/0034 Change of use of ground floor from A2 (Accountants Office) to D2 (Assembly and Leisure)
Approved: 14 March 2017
- P/16/0360 Change of use of ground floor from A2 (Accountants Office) to D2 (Assembly and Leisure)
Refused: 12 January 2017
- P/03/0050 Conversion of garage to office and erection of side extension
Approved: 2 July 2003
- P/96/0371 Conversion of first and second floors into 3 self-contained flats
Approved: 28 November 1996

CONSULTATION

Planning Policy Officer No objection.

PUBLICITY

In accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Wales) Order 2012, letters were sent to the adjoining properties and 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) (Future Wales) sets out a strategy for addressing key national priorities through the planning system, including sustaining and developing a vibrant economy, achieving decarbonisation and climate-resilience, developing strong ecosystems and improving the health and well-being of our communities.

National Planning Policies

Planning Policy Wales (Edition 12, February 2024) (PPW).

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...'*

Paragraphs 4.3.30, 4.3.33 and 4.3.34 refer to mixed uses in centres and state *'...Although retailing (A1) uses should underpin retail and commercial centres, it is only one of the factors which contribute towards their vibrancy....'* *'...Vibrant and viable centres are distinguished by a diversity of activity and uses which should contribute towards a centre's*

well-being and success, whilst also reducing the need to travel. Development plans should include policies describing the types of use that are likely to be acceptable in primary and secondary areas...’ ‘...Leisure and entertainment, and food and drink uses can benefit retail and commercial centres, and with adequate attention to safeguarding amenities can contribute to a successful evening economy. In addition to general diversity of uses, mixed use developments, which combine retailing with entertainment, restaurants and, where appropriate, residential in a comprehensive and planned way should also be encouraged where appropriate to promote lively centres during both the day and the evening...’

Paragraph 6.1.14 refers to conservation areas ‘...There should be a general presumption in favour of the preservation or enhancement of the character or appearance of conservation areas or their settings. Positive management of conservation areas is necessary if their character or appearance are to be preserved or enhanced and their heritage value is to be fully realised. Planning authorities should establish their own criteria against which existing and/or new conservation areas and their boundaries should be reviewed...’

Local Planning Policies

The following policies of the Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council Replacement Local Development Plan 2016-2031 (LDP) are relevant to the determination of this application:

- SW4 Settlement Boundaries
- SW11 Sustainable Design and Placemaking
- SW12: Improving the Transport Network
- EnW4 Environmental Protection
- CW1: The Historic Environment
- EnW1 Nature Conservation and Ecosystem Resilience
- EcW3: Retail Hierarchy – Supporting Retailing Provision
- EcW5: Town and Local Centre Development

In addition, the application will be determined having regard to the advice contained within the following Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) Notes:

- Note 3, Shopfront Design
- Note 4, Sustainable Design

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

The issues to consider under the assessment of this application relate to whether the proposed development would be acceptable in this location in principle, and whether it would be acceptable with regards to its impact upon the appearance of the premises, the character and appearance of the conservation area, residential amenity, parking provision and highway safety, and ecology.

Principle of Development

The application site lies within the settlement boundary – Primary Growth Area and as such, the proposal would therefore be in accordance with LDP Policy SW4 since new development in this location is acceptable in principle, provided it complies with other relevant LDP policies.

The site lies outside the Primary Shopping Area but is located within the Town Centre boundary and LDP Policies EcW3 and EcW5 are therefore relevant. LDP 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...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 centres...'* LDP Policy EcW5 states that *'...development enhancing the vitality and viability of the Town and Local Centres will be supported...'* Thus, the proposed massage therapy facility would be providing a leisure facility and therefore would be considered an acceptable complementary use in the town centre which would not only bring the vacant premises back into use but would also enhance the vitality and viability within this part of the town centre. As such, the proposal would result in an acceptable development in accordance with LDP Policies EcW3 and EcW5.

Character and Appearance

The works proposed in association with the change of use relate to internal alterations only and as such would not have any adverse impact on the character and appearance of the premises or the conservation area. As such, the proposal would accord with LDP Policies SW11 and CW1.

Residential Amenity

The premises lies on a busy street within the town centre and is located in close proximity to other commercial businesses, including a Public House and Takeaway. Thus, the operation of the proposed use would not be deemed significantly more harmful to residential amenity when compared to the current commercial uses that already operate during late night hours, within close proximity of the application site.

It should also be noted that no letters of representation have been received from nearby occupiers in respect of this use. The proposed development would therefore comply with LDP Policies SW11 and EnW4.

Parking and Highway safety

The proposed use would not be served by on-site parking provision. However, the application site lies within a sustainable town centre location, near a variety of facilities and in close proximity to bus stops and a train station. In addition, a public car park lies within close walking distance of the application site. As such, the proposed development would therefore comply with LDP Policy SW11.

Ecology

In relation to ecology, local planning authorities seek to ensure that green infrastructure is protected, enhanced and the effects of climate change mitigated. The proposal raises no significant concerns in this regard given that the proposal affects the internal arrangement of the ground floor and no works are proposed to the external elevations. The development would have no impact upon green infrastructure or biodiversity interests and would not have any significant impact upon climate change. Given the nature of the proposal, ecological enhancements have not been sought in this instance.

As noted in chapter 6 of Planning Policy Wales (edition 12), applications should be supported by Green Infrastructure Statements (GIS). Likewise, given the nature of development, this would not be deemed a reasonable requirement in this instance. Accordingly, the proposal meets the requirements of LDP Policy EnW1.

CONCLUSION

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.

Having regard to the policy context above, the proposal is considered to be acceptable and 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 plan:

Drawing Title: Proposed Floor Plan, Drawing No: PDR/606/31/11/52/B, Received on 21 November 2025.

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

INFORMATIVES

1. 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.

2. 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.

RECOMMENDATION ENDORSED



Director of Neighbourhood Services

DATE: 09.01.2026