

DELEGATED REPORT

Application No:	P/21/0131
Site Address:	Morlais Medical Centre Berry Square Dowlais Merthyr Tydfil CF48 3AL
Development:	Lay concrete slab for the siting of a prescription dispensing unit to the side of Pearn's Pharmacy
Case Officer:	Marlene Ferreira
Site Visit:	20th April 2021
Application Expiry Date:	10th May 2021
Consultation reply date expired:	10th May 2021

APPLICATION SITE

The application site relates to a semi-circular grassed area located to the east of Pearn's Pharmacy which lies within the northeast section of the Morlais Medical Centre, a red brick building, part two-storey, part single storey, located at the corner of Victoria Street with Berry Square in Dowlais.

The grassed area has a maximum width of approximately 11 metres and a maximum depth of approximately 3.4 metres and is under the same ownership as Pearn's Pharmacy. It abuts the highway, Berry Square to the north, Victoria Street to the east, and Pearn's Pharmacy to the south and west.

The application site lies within the settlement boundary – Primary Growth Area and within the Dowlais Local Centre, as designated within the Merthyr Tydfil Replacement Local Development Plan 2016-2031.

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

This application seeks planning permission to lay a concrete slab within the grassed area, measuring a maximum of 5.1 metres in width and 3.15 metres in depth, to allow for the erection of an automated prescription dispenser and the provision of a ramped and a stepped access.

The solo automated dispensing unit would have a shallow monopitched roof with a 0.8 metre front overhang and measure 3.35 metres in width (including front overhang) and 2.2 metres deep, with a maximum height of 2.6 metres. It would be constructed with a white metal roof and elevations.

The ramped access would be sited to the front (south) of the dispensing unit and the stepped access would be sited to the rear (north) of the dispensing unit.

The supporting information submitted with the application, states that the installation of the dispensing unit would benefit customers as it would reduce the risks of contracting coronavirus, since patients would be able to maintain a safe distance, avoid queues and provide a contact free service.

PLANNING HISTORY

P/21/0132 - Advertisement consent for signage on prescription dispensing unit to the side of Pearn's Pharmacy – Refused: 3rd June 2021.

P/16/0003 - Change of use of part of the building to a pharmacy (A1 use class), creation of new entrance with canopy and footpath and installation of new external air condenser unit – Approved: 1st February 2017

P/16/0002 – Erection of two illuminated signs – Approved: 8th February 2017

P/16/0001 – Single storey rear extension – Approved: 20th July 2016

P/08/0139 - Erection of two storey rear extension, creation of new vehicular access and associated parking – Approved: 2nd July 2008
CONSULTATION

Head of Engineering	No objection.
Town Planning's Policy Section	No objection.
Town Planning's Ecologist	No objection, subject to conditions.
Environmental Health Manager	No objection, subject to conditions.

PUBLICITY

In accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) Order (Wales) 2012, letters were sent to nearby occupiers and 3 site notices were displayed within the vicinity of the site. One letter of representation has been received as a result of this publicity exercise which raises the following concerns:

- The main objection would be based on visual impact and highway safety;
- The unit is a standalone from the Morlais Medical Practice building and is an incongruous feature at this location;
- It is large and unit and designed to attract members of the public with the use of such large signage. This would distract drivers on approach to the junction causing a potential safety hazard;

- An additional highway hazard would be caused by the parking of vehicles near the unit on double yellow lines and near the junction, as already occurs when deliveries are made to the pharmacy, resulting in a highway safety concern;
- The stocking of medicines would take place in an unsecure manner, since the unit is not adjoining the pharmacy and as such, the unit would be better suited internally so that the dispensing part is built onto the external elevation facing the road;
- The unit is considered inappropriate in this location and contrary to LDP Policy SW11 Sustainable Design and Place Making.

Ward members were advised on the objections received but have not requested that the application be determined at Planning Committee. As such, the application will progress to be determined, under delegated powers, by the Chief Officer Planning and Neighbourhood Services.

POLICY CONTEXT

National Development Framework

- Future Wales: the National Plan 2040 (February 2021)

National Planning Policies

- Planning Policy Wales (Edition 11, February 2021)

Sections 3.3 – 3.16 set out the principles of good design in new development proposals, which should take into account its relationship to its surrounding context.

The policies in PPW are supported by Technical Advice Notes (TANs). The most relevant TANs to this application are as follows:-

TAN 12 - Design advises that the Assembly Government is strongly committed to achieving the delivery of good design in the built and natural environment, which is fit for purpose and delivers environmental sustainability, economic development, and social inclusion at every scale throughout Wales.

Local Planning Policies

- Merthyr Tydfil Replacement local Development Plan (LDP) 2016-2031

Policy SW4 – Settlement Boundaries

Policy SW11 – Sustainable Design and Placemaking

Policy SW13 – Community Facilities

Policy EnW1 – Nature Conservation and Ecosystem Resilience

Policy EnW4 – Environmental Protection

Policy EcW3 – Retail Hierarchy – Supporting Retailing Provision

Policy EcW5 – Town and Local Centre Development

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

The issues to consider under the assessment of this application relate to whether the proposed siting of an automated dispensing unit and associated works, would be acceptable in this location in principle, and whether it would be acceptable with regards to

its impact upon the character and appearance of the area, residential amenity, ecology, parking provision and highway safety.

Principle of Development

The proposed development would be sited in the settlement boundary and within Dowlais Local Centre and seeks to serve the existing Pearn's Pharmacy.

LDP Policy SW4 supports the provision of new development in the settlement boundary, provided it complies with other policies and other material planning considerations.

LDP Policies EcW3 and EcW5 support the siting of retail or other complementary development in local centres. LDP Policy EcW3 states that *'...proposals for new and enhanced retail, leisure and other complementary provision in centres will be permitted where they improve the vitality and viability of the centres concerned...'* and LDP Policy EcW5 states that *'...development enhancing the vitality and viability of the Town and Local Centres will be supported...'*

LDP Policy SW13 seeks to protect and improve local community facilities and states that *'...the provision of new and enhanced community facilities will be supported subject to satisfying other relevant LDP Policies...the Council will protect and support the enhancement of the County Borough's existing community facilities...'*

The principle of development in this location is therefore considered acceptable and would comply with LDP Policies SW4, SW13, EcW3 and EcW5.

Character and Appearance

The proposed development, as described above, would be located on a small semi-circular grassed area, immediately adjacent Pearn's Pharmacy that fronts Berry Square and Victoria Street (the main road through Dowlais).

The proposed unit and associated stepped and ramped access would result in the loss of a landscaped/grassed area. The landscaped area provides a soft visual break from the built development on this highly visible corner location. The siting of the dispensing unit (and associated steps and ramps) combined with its design would result in an incongruous and visually dominant form of development that would significantly harm the character and appearance of the area. Indeed, the proposal with its white metal material finishes and shallow monopitched roof design with front projecting canopy, when viewed against the existing building would only exacerbate its inappropriateness. This, combined with its overall scale and 2.6 metre height, would amount to an incongruous and visually prominent form of development which would have an adverse impact on the character and appearance of Morlais Medical Centre and the wider street scene. The addition of brightly coloured advertisements, particularly to its front elevation that would be clearly visible when travelling north along Victoria Street, would further exacerbate its harm when viewed within the surrounding context. Thus, the proposed development would not accord with LDP Policy SW11.

Residential Amenity

The proposed development would be located a significant distance away from nearby residential properties and therefore there would not be impact from this proposal. The development would therefore comply with LDP Policy SW11.

Ecology

Given the location and nature of development, the Council's Ecologist has not requested any survey work to be undertaken. However, it has been requested that enhancement works be carried out (i.e. installation of a bird box). The proposed development would therefore comply with LDP Policy EnW1.

Parking Provision and Highway Safety

The proposed unit, given its intended use, would increase the demand for on-site and on-street parking. It should be noted however that an on-site parking area is provided to the west of the premises (some of which are disabled spaces). This parking facility along with the use of the two public car parks to the north and south of the application site would be sufficient to cater for the additional parking requirements that would result from the dispensing unit. In addition, the application site lies within a sustainable location, within close proximity to alternative modes of transport other than the private car (i.e. being sited near bus routes).

Although it is noted that concerns have also been raised in respect of the proposed unit resulting in a distraction to drivers, given its location near the junction with Berry Square, the Head of Engineering has considered the proposed development and has not raised any objection. Furthermore, concerns were also raised in respect of illegal parking along double yellow lines near a junction. Illegal parking is not a matter that can be controlled by the planning department.

The proposed development would therefore not give rise to any significant highway or pedestrian safety concerns and would therefore comply with LDP Policy SW11.

CONCLUSION

For the reasons discussed above, the proposal, although acceptable in this location in principle, and in respect of its impact upon residential amenity and highway and pedestrian safety, it would have a detrimental impact upon the character and appearance of the area. As such, it would be contrary to LDP Policy SW11.

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.

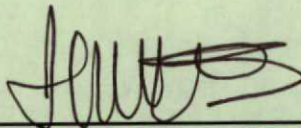
Accordingly the following recommendation is made:

RECOMMENDATION: BE REFUSED

REASONS:

1. The proposal, by virtue of its prominent siting and design would amount to an incongruous form of development which would significantly detract from the character and appearance of Morlais Medical Centre and the wider area, contrary to Policy SW11 of the Merthyr Tydfil Replacement Local Development Plan 2016-2031.

RECOMMENDATION ENDORSED



Head of Town Planning

DATE:

3/6/21