

DELEGATED REPORT

Application No:	P/25/0216
Site Address:	Northern Boundary Wall At Site Of The Former Ysgol Santes Tudful School Queens Road Twynyrodyn Merthyr Tydfil
Development:	Partial demolition and like for like rebuilding of a 9m section of existing stone retaining wall, including reinstatement of coping stones and railings
Case Officer:	Kate Glover
Site Visit:	19th August 2025
Application Expiry Date:	3rd December 2025
Consultation reply date expired:	9th September 2025

APPLICATION SITE

The application site relates to a wall which faces an area of open public space known as The Gorsedd and marks the boundary of the Thomastown conservation area. The rear of the wall retains the ground level of the former Ysgol Santes Tudful School (now demolished). It is noted that the ground level of the former school site is between approximately 1.56 and 3.26m higher than that of The Gorsedd.

The wall is approximately 55m in length and approximately mid-way along the wall is a set of steps which would have enabled access between The Gorsedd and the former School. The wall to left of the steps (northeast), the steps and a small buttress also to the left of the steps, are constructed from random rubble stone, whereas the wall to the right (southwest) of the steps is finished with semi-dressed stone and light terracotta coloured coping stones. It is noted that until recently the wall was topped with iron railings, however these have been removed.

Close to the wall are a number of trees, whilst the majority of the trees are mature, there is one small specimen which is positioned within 2m of the lefthand side of the wall. The lefthand side of the wall is also covered with ivy in many places.

The wall and steps are attractive and provide an important contribution to the character and setting of the conservation area and its history.

The Gorsedd is also part of the Thomastown Park Open Space, and the site lies within the settlement boundary as designated within the Merthyr Tydfil Replacement Local Development Plan (LDP) 2016-2031.

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

This application seeks full permission to demolish and rebuild the section of the wall which is to the left (northeast) of the steps, erect railings along the entire length of the wall and carryout repairs and replace the coping stones on the right-hand wall. The details provided in support of the proposal includes a Structural Survey Report that notes the lefthand side of the wall is suffering from structural problems and requires rebuilding. In respect of the wall on the right side (southwest) of the steps, the structural report advises that there is no evidence details of structural problems.

The application also provides details of Tree Protection Measures and a Demolition Methodology for ecological considerations.

PLANNING HISTORY

The relevant planning history is summarised below:

P/21/0338 Erection of 10 detached dwellings
Reserved Matters Approval: 26 May 2023

P/18/0242 Residential development Former Ysgol Santes Tudful School Queens Road
Twynyrodyn Merthyr Tydfil
Outline Approval: 24 May 2019

CONSULTATION

Head of Engineering and Highways:	No objection
Planning Ecology Officer:	No objection.
Council's Arboriculturalist:	No objection
Environmental Health Manager:	No objection.

PUBLICITY

In accordance with the Town & Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Wales) Order 2012 site notices were displayed within the vicinity of the site.

No representations 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 (PPW) Edition 12 (February 2024) sets out the land use policies of the Welsh Government. The most relevant paragraphs are:

Paragraph 3.9 refers to character and states that *‘...the special characteristics of an area should be central to the design of a development. The layout, form, scale and visual appearance of a proposed development and its relationship to its surroundings are important planning considerations. A clear rationale behind the design decisions made, based on site and context analysis, a strong vision, performance requirements and design principles, should be sought throughout the development process ...’*

Paragraph 3.10 refers to the importance of appropriate building materials and states that *‘In areas recognised for their particular landscape, townscape, cultural or historic character and value it can be appropriate to seek to promote or reinforce local distinctiveness. In those areas, the impact of development on the existing character, the scale and siting of new development, and the use of appropriate building materials (including where possible sustainably produced materials from local sources), will be particularly important.’*

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...’*

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

TAN 12 – Design. This TAN 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.

The most relevant paragraph is, 5.6.2 which advises that *‘In areas recognised for their landscape, townscape, architectural, archaeological and/or historic value, such as National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, World Heritage Sites and conservation areas, the objective of sustaining character is particularly important and context appraisals should reflect this. The general aspects of the “character” objective of good design should be pursued but more detailed information may be needed in relation to key issues such as:*

- ***the setting and views*** of key buildings, landscape, parks and gardens, archaeology and skylines within, to and from the area;
- ***locally distinctive facing materials*** such as natural slate, brick quoins or natural stone in both buildings and the public realm;....’

TAN 24 - The Historic Environment. The purpose of this TAN is to provide guidance on protection and enhancement of the historic environment.

The most relevant paragraph is, 1.14 which refers to conservation principles and *‘...recognises that the whole of the historic environment is a finite and shared resource. Every place has its own history, which has shaped its character and leaves tangible traces in its present form and fabric. This historic character makes each place unique and gives it a distinctive identity. Historic character should be taken into account in the management of*

change in order to sustain local distinctiveness and a sense of place. The use of an objective, structured approach to identify the elements of historic character and creating an evidence base is vital...'

Local Policy

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council Replacement Local Development Plan (LDP) 2016-2031:

- CW1: Historic Environment Policy
- SW11: Sustainable design and Placemaking Policy
- SW10: Protecting and Improving Open Spaces
- EnW1: Nature Conservation and Ecosystem Resilience Policy

Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG)

- Note No. 4 –Sustainable Design Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG)
- Note No. 5 –Nature and Conservation

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

The application site lies within the settlement boundary as defined by the LDP Proposals Map. Therefore, the principle of development is considered acceptable and is generally supported by Policy SW4 of the LDP, provided that the proposal is compatible with other relevant policies and material planning considerations.

The main issues to be considered when determining this application are:

- Visual impact of the development on the character and appearance of the Thomastown conservation area.
- The impact of the development on trees in a conservation area
- The impact of the development on the amenities of neighbouring residents.
- Impact on ecology.
- Retaining features

Visual Impact

A primary consideration in the assessment of this planning application is the proposal's impact on the special qualities of the Thomastown conservation area.

As noted above, the wall and steps are attractive and provide an important contribution to the history of the area, the former school, the visual qualities of The Gorsedd area of open space, and the character and setting of the wider conservation area.

The Structural Report submitted in support of the planning application notes that the length of the retaining wall on the left-hand side of the steps, has suffered from distortion and lateral forward movement and recommends rebuilding this section of the wall. The new retaining wall would measure approximately 1.58m high, be constructed from salvaged stone from the demolition, and cement coping stones would be used, with their design reflecting the form, size and design of the terracotta coping stones.

In respect of the wall to the right-hand side of the steps, the structural integrity of this section of the wall is advised as stable and insertion of weepholes to aid with drainage is recommended. Some of the coping stones are in need of repair or replacement, and the proposed plans state that the terracotta coping would be set aside and reused.

The proposed metal railings would measure approximately 1.80m high, be painted black and designed to replicate the design of the railings which have recently been removed. It is noted that the previous railing's balustrades were square and painted green.

The demolition and rebuilding of the left hand side of the wall is considered to be justified for the reasons set out in the structural report and the approach to rebuilding the wall using salvaged stone, new coping stones to match the terracotta coping, and black painted railings are considered to be acceptable and would not result in a detrimental impact on the special qualities of the conservation area. Accordingly the proposal meets with the requirements of LDP policies SW11 and CW1.

Trees in a Conservation Area

The Council's Arboriculturalist has not raised any objection to the proposed works, and as noted above, there are numbers of trees in the vicinity of the application site. The application is supported by a Tree Protection Statement which identifies that one small tree may be affected by the development, and all the other trees and their root systems would be protected by fencing during the construction phase.

The structural stability of the wall has been identified as needing attention and the wall is a boundary feature to a public area, and the possible removal of the identified small tree is considered acceptable in this instance. Further to this, the mature trees would be protected during the construction phase and would not be detrimentally impacted upon as a result of the development, the contribution that the trees make to the character and special qualities of the conservation area would be maintained. Accordingly, the proposal meets with the requirements of LDP policies SW11 and CW1.

Further consideration is given to the possible loss of the small tree in the ecology section of this report.

Amenities of Neighbouring Residents

The residential properties nearest to the application site are located at a distance of approximately 50m. Given the scale and nature of the proposed development and the separation distances involved, there would be no significant impact on the amenities of residents as a result of the proposal. As such, the proposal meets with the requirements of LDP policy SW11.

Impact on Ecology

The Planning Ecologist has suggested that a Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) should be undertaken to assess potential adverse impacts on protected species and habitats. Given the limited nature that the existing wall provides in relation to bat hibernation and there being only one record of a lesser horseshoe bat approximately 800m from the site, the submission of a PRA it is not proportionate or necessary.

A Demolition Methodology has been submitted in support of the application, and sets out a precautionary approach to works, including no demolition to take place in the bat hibernation period (December to February (inclusive)), supervision by an appropriately qualified ecologist and contingency measures should evidence of a bat or bat roost be encountered.

In relation to the timing of works as set out in the Demolition Methodology, it is noted that the bat hibernation season is typically from late October to early November until March to May, depending on weather conditions, with the core hibernation period usually being during December and February. Whilst the timing of the works is not strictly within the entire hibernation period, the works are required for reasons of the wall's stability and the initial demolition works during roosting or hibernation periods, would be overseen by an ecologist. The Demolition Methodology can be listed on the planning permission under the list of approved documents and an informative can be attached to any consent to inform the applicant of their responsibility when undertaking works in relation to European Protected Species and also in relation to birds.

It is noted that chapter 6 of Planning Policy Wales (edition 12) (PPW) requests that applications be supported by Green Infrastructure Statements (GIS). In relation to ecology and in particular trees, local planning authorities seek to ensure that green infrastructure is protected, enhanced and the effects of climate change mitigated. PPW also advises that *"Permanent removal of trees, woodland and hedgerows will only be permitted where it would achieve significant and clearly defined public benefits. Where individual or groups of trees and hedgerows are removed as part of a proposed scheme, planning authorities must first follow the step-wise approach as set out in paragraph 6.4.15. Where loss is unavoidable developers will be required to provide compensatory planting (which is proportionate to the proposed loss as identified through an assessment of green infrastructure value including biodiversity, landscape value and carbon capture). Replacement planting shall be at a ratio equivalent to the quality, environmental and ecological importance of the tree(s) lost and this must be preferably onsite, or immediately adjacent to the site, and at a minimum ratio of at least 3 trees of a similar type and compensatory size planted for every 1 lost. The planting position for each replacement tree shall be fit to support its establishment and health, and ensure its unconstrained long-term growth to optimise the environmental and ecological benefits it affords."*

As noted above the Council's Arboriculturalist has not objected to the development. A Tree Protection Statement has been submitted in support of the proposal and the mature trees and therefore, those contributing the majority of ecological benefits would not be affected by the proposal. It is unfortunate that the ivy will be removed and a small tree could be lost, however it is noted that the wall is structurally unsound and is directly adjacent to an area of public space and PPW does allow the removal of trees where a proposal enables a significant and clearly defined public benefits. As such, given the identified issues in relation to the stability of the wall, it is considered that the loss of the ivy and possibly the tree is acceptable in this instance.

Given the approach to the demolition of the wall and the protection of mature trees, the proposal meets with the requirements of PPW and LDP policy EnW1.

Retaining Features

The development would require retaining features above 1m high. The application is supported by structural calculations in respect of both the new wall and new railings. The

Engineering Team are satisfied with the calculations and have not realised any objections to the proposed works.

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 and documents:

Drawing Title: Proposed plans and ele's, Drawing Number 1153.03B, received on the 6 November 2025

Drawing Title: Details, Drawing reference 1153.05A, received on the 29 September 2025

Tree Protection Statement received on the 29 September 2025

Demolition Methodology Ecology Considerations received on the 29 September 2025

Covering letter from Expedite (dated 29 July 2025), Received on the 1 August 2025

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

3. The new railings shall match in design and colour the railings shown on approved plan Drawing Title: Details, Drawing reference 1153.05A. The railings shall be maintained in accordance with the details for the lifetime of the development.

Reason - To protect the character and appearance of the conservation area in accordance with Policy CW1 of the Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council Replacement Local Development Plan.

4. The stonework used on the new stone wall, shall match the existing stonework on the adjacent steps in respect of dimensions, colour, texture, weathering, coursing and pointing.

Reason - To protect the character and appearance of the conservation area in accordance with Policy CW1 of the Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council Replacement Local Development Plan.

5. The new concrete coping stones to be used on the rebuilt section of wall, shall match the design, form and size of the coping stones used on the southwest section of the retaining wall. The coping stones shall be maintained in accordance with this condition for the lifetime of the development.

Reason - To protect the character and appearance of the conservation area in accordance with Policy CW1 of the Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council Replacement Local Development Plan.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'C. May', is positioned above a horizontal line.

Director of Neighbourhood Services

DATE: 18.11.2025