

DELEGATED REPORT

Application No:	P/26/0067
Site Address:	Dowlais Primary School - Junior Department High Street Caeharris Dowlais Merthyr Tydfil CF48 3HB
Development:	Refurbishment and change of use of caretakers accommodation to multipurpose rooms for school and community use and external landscaping works
Case Officer:	Gareth Davies
Site Visit:	8th April 2026
Application Expiry Date:	25th May 2026
Consultation reply date expired:	28th April 2026

APPLICATION SITE

The application site in this instance is the former caretakers house within the grounds of Dowlais Primary School. The school sits on the northwestern side of Dowlais High Street opposite its junction with Azalea Park. The caretakers house sits on the High Street frontage and is a small detached three-bedroom property finished in a pale render with a tiled roof with a small private side garden area. Access to the application property and the wider site is via an access point on Dowlais High Street north east of the application property.

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The application seeks the refurbishment of the caretaker's house and its grounds to multi-purpose rooms for school and community use that will be available to the school to use during school hours and for the wider community outside of those hours.

The existing layout of the house shows a hallway, WC, kitchen, dining room, and lounge on the ground floor, and three bedrooms and a bathroom at first-floor level. The proposal is to create two multi-use rooms on the ground floor, along with the conversion of the kitchen to a tea room and an accessible WC. On the first floor, each of the bedrooms would become meeting rooms, and the bathroom would become an ambulant WC and store area. The new use will also involve the following structural changes:

- A new staircase
- New internal stud walls to facilitate the creation of a tea room and accessible WC on the ground floor and ambulant WC and store on the first floor.

- A new double glazed bi-fold door to proposed room 1 (formerly the dining room) in place of the existing window and door arrangement.
- New internal bi-fold doors will be provided between rooms 1 and 2 on the ground floor and rooms 4 and 5 on the first floor.

The proposal also involves the following external alterations to the garden and external areas around the existing house:

- Resin bond surface finish to the existing grassed area and patio.
- New hooped top railing and gate arrangements to facilitate the development and match the existing railings.
- The provision of 2no raised timber planters with native wildflower plants.
- A new paved entrance path to the north of the building.
- Change of garage door and provision of new dropped kerb access to the garage.

The application is supported with a Green Infrastructure Statement.

PLANNING HISTORY

P/21/0352 – Proposed single storey building to accommodate day care facilities with associated new footpath, landscaping and play area – Approved 25/11/2021.

P/18/0143 – Siting of cabin to contain classrooms, toilets, and store rooms – Approved 10th August 2018.

PUBLICITY

In accordance with the Town & Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Wales) Order 2012, letters were sent to the adjoining properties on 7th April 2026 and site notices were displayed within the vicinity of the site on 8th April 2026.

No representations were received as a result of this publicity exercise.

CONSULTATION

Head of Engineering and Highways – No objection.

Council Ecologist – No objection.

Environmental Health Manager – No objection.

Education – No response received.

Estates – No response received.

South Wales Fire and Rescue Service – No objection.

POLICY CONTEXT

National Planning Policy

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 33: National Growth Area – Cardiff, Newport, and the Valleys

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: Community Facilities
- Recognising the Special Characteristics of Places
- Recognising the Environmental Qualities of Places.

Local Planning Policy

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

The relevant LDP Objectives are:-

- 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 8 Community Facilities: To support existing community facilities and suitable community led development.
- LDP Objective 10 Biodiversity: To improve ecosystem resilience and connectivity which support habitats and species of principle importance.

The following development plan policies would apply:-

- Policy SW4: Settlement Boundaries
- Policy SW11: Sustainable Design and Placemaking
- Policy SW13: Protecting and Improving Local Community Facilities
- Policy EnW1 Nature Conservation and Ecosystem Resilience
- Policy EnW4: Environmental Protection

The following supplementary planning guidance is applicable:-

- 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)

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Key considerations in the determination of this planning application are compliance with planning policy, highway and access considerations, amenity concerns, and ecology.

Planning Policy

The property lies within the primary growth area and defined settlement limits, where LDP Policy SW4 supports development subject to compliance with other relevant policies of the plan and any other material planning considerations. Whilst the development would result in the loss of the caretaker's home, which forms part of the school, the proposal would provide an alternative use for the building to support activities within the school and serve as a wider facility for the benefit of the local community through the provision of multi-purpose rooms that can accommodate after-school activities. As such, the principle of the development is acceptable and complies with Policies SW4 and SW13 of the LDP.

Highways and Access

Access to the site and the wider school facility would remain unaltered by the proposal. It is acknowledged that there is a small number of parking spaces within the school grounds, but this is generally limited to staff, with the majority of pick-ups and drop-offs taking place along Gwernllwyn Road in dedicated bays alongside the main road. Whilst the proposal does not include the provision of any dedicated parking spaces, it is considered that the parking needs can be accommodated on Gwernllwyn Road outside the normal school peak times and that the facility would primarily serve people in the locality with good access to public transport.

The Head of Engineering and Highways has raised concerns that there is a potential for overlap between the use of the building for activities in conjunction with the school and its use by the wider community. This would give rise to potential congestion around the site access and on the High Street. As such it has been advised that any permission granted be subject to a condition that the multi-purpose rooms should only be open to community uses one hour after school ends.

Such a condition is considered unreasonable and would be difficult to enforce, given that the facility would function in conjunction with the school and would prevent the use of the building for uses such as after school clubs and other extracurricular activities, which in itself may not generate any additional traffic movements. Additionally, it is noted that there would be an element of parking and traffic movements associated with the existing use of the building as a caretakers house.

Consequently, in this instance, it would not be appropriate to impose such a condition. The use of the building for after school activities would not have an unacceptable impact on parking, as the students would already be at the school to attend the extracurricular activities. Outside the normal peak pick-up and drop-off periods during normal term time, there would be no significant impact in terms of parking or traffic movements that would give rise to any adverse highway safety concerns. Indeed, there would be sufficient parking for visitors outside normal school hours along Gwernllwyn Road. Therefore, the proposal is considered compliant with the requirements of Policy SW12 of the LDP.

Impact on Amenity

The proposed development would be located centrally in the Dowlais area adjacent to the main road, and in close proximity to a mixture of commercial and residential uses. The proposal would not result in a loss of light or privacy to any adjacent dwellings, the nearest of which is Ynys Dawel, which is over 20m from the application property and occupies higher ground. It is noted that there are no proposed alterations that affect the scale or mass of the building and the alterations to the elevations are minor in nature and do not impact the amenity of the area (indeed they could be considered permitted development if the building were to remain as a house).

The only issue that is likely to impact the amenity of the nearest residents is the proposed use of the building as a school and community facility. During school hours the building would be used in association with the school and the various educational and pastoral functions and so would not likely give rise to any greater impact on amenity. Outside of school hours, the building is of such a size and design that it would not cater for a use by large groups and could only be used for smaller scale community-based activities. The building is situated a reasonable distance away from other residential properties and it lies on the High Street, where there are a number of commercial properties and is heavily trafficked. This supports the case that the proposal would not give rise to unacceptable levels of noise and disturbance in the area that may impact on the amenities of nearby residents. Therefore, the proposal complies with the requirements of Policy SW11 of the LDP.

Ecology

The application is supported by a Green Infrastructure Statement which evaluates the existing features within the site and the impact of the proposed works. In this regard, it is noted that to the rear of the property there is an area comprising grass and patio. To the side is an area of grass with a number of trees. It is proposed that the small area of grass to the rear of the property would be lost to create a resin-bound surfaced area. To mitigate this loss, the proposal would include the provision of raised planters to the rear and side containing native wildflower species, along with the provision of bird and bat boxes on the building itself. The statement acknowledges the limited ecological value of the site, the impact of the development, and considers that the mitigation proposed delivers net benefit for biodiversity.

The Council's Ecologist has not requested any further survey work or raised any objection to the proposed development. However, it has been noted that some of the benefits suggested in the Green Infrastructure Statement, particularly the bird and bat boxes, have not been appropriately positioned. To address these concerns, a condition can be imposed requiring further details of the ecological enhancements to be agreed. Therefore, the proposal complies with Policy EnW1 of the LDP.

Other Matters

The application site, like much of the County Borough, is located within a landscape of outstanding historic interest in Wales. However, the proposals would have no positive or negative impact on that landscape and, as such, there is no conflict with Policy CW1 of the LDP.

Environmental Health have suggested that conditions be applied to any permission that might be granted to control dust that might result from works at the premises and to ensure that any waste generated is disposed of in an appropriate manner. The conditions are not deemed necessary given the small scale nature of the development to convert the existing property.

The South Wales Fire & Rescue Service suggest that suitable access be maintained for firefighting appliances along with appropriate water supplies being available for firefighting purposes. The school is already well served with both.

Dwr Cymru Welsh Water in raising no objections to the proposed development also suggest the use of a condition to restrict the discharge of surface water should the proposals involve any increase in roof area or impermeable surfaces. As the application involves only a change of use of the existing building this is unnecessary.

CONCLUSIONS

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 in section 5 of the WBFG Act have been considered and, therefore, the proposal is in accordance with the sustainable development principle through its contribution towards one or more of the Welsh Ministers' well-being objectives, as required by section 8 of the WBFG Act.

The proposed development is demonstrably acceptable in terms of the general requirements of planning policy and in how that policy affects the key areas for consideration in this case, (amenity, highways, and ecology). The proposal is also compliant with all other material planning considerations. Accordingly, 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 plans and documents: -

- location plan Drawing no. 001
- Proposed Site Plan Drawing No.203 Rev A
- Proposed Floor Plan Drawing No. 210
- Proposed Elevations Drawing No. 220 Rev A

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

3. Details for the provision of bird and bat boxes and the proposed planting schedule, that will provide net benefit for biodiversity, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of works. Bird boxes shall be placed in the trees to the south of the site and bat boxes shall be relocated to the highest practicable point on the north facing elevation of the property. The agreed details shall be fully implemented prior to the first beneficial use of the multi-purpose rooms hereby approved.

Reason - In order to deliver net benefit for biodiversity in accordance with Policy EnW1 of the Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council Replacement Local Development Plan.

RECOMMENDATION ENDORSED



Director of Neighbourhood Services

DATE: 22.05.2026