

# **Land at Common Road, Merthyr Tydfil**

## **Heritage Impact Statement**

McDonald's Restaurants Ltd

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## **1.0 Introduction**

1.1 This Heritage Impact Statement (HIS) has been prepared on behalf of McDonald's Restaurants Ltd., to accompany a planning application for a new Drive-Thru restaurant located on land located on the north side of Heads of the Valleys Road, east of Dowlais Top.

1.2 In accordance with national and local legislation and policy, and relevant Cadw guidance, this HIS describes the significance of the historic assets with the potential to be affected by the proposed development, including any contribution made by their setting, and assesses the possible impact of the proposals on that significance.

### **Scope**

1.3 The following historic assets were considered to be potentially affected by the proposal:

- 1 Station House (Historic asset of special local interest); and,
- 2 Merthyr Tydfil Registered Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest.

1.4 A record on the Historic Environment Record identified as Brecon-Merthyr Railway is located approximately 70m to the north east of the site. This does not appear extant on aerial photography or mapping, and may be recorded as a below-ground remain. Given this, and the modern development on the site and within the surrounding area, it is considered that there would be no material impact on the railway line and so it is not considered further.

1.5 The site is not located within a conservation area or Registered Park and Garden. There are no listed buildings on the site or within the close surrounding area.

1.6 While Station House is not formally included in the Merthyr Tydfil Local List, it is of some local interest as a historic station building. Whilst the term historic asset of special local interest is typically used for locally listed buildings in national guidance, for the purpose of providing a robust assessment, this statement assesses Station House as a historic asset of special local interest.

## 2.0 Heritage Policy

### Policy Context

- 2.1 The relevant statutory development plan comprises the Merthyr Tydfil Replacement Local Development Plan (MTRLDP, adopted January 2020).
- 2.2 The historic assets identified within the scope in the previous section are non-designated and so there are no statutory heritage provisions relevant to this assessment.
- 2.3 **Planning Policy Wales Edition 12 (2024) (PPW)**, supplemented by Technical Advice Notes, Circulars, and Policy Clarification letters, sets out land use planning policies for Wales and provides a national planning policy framework for Wales.
- 2.4 PPW, through a series of key themes, seeks to guide plan making and decision taking to meet its overall objectives. Chapter 6, Distinctive and Natural Places, sets out planning policy in relation to the Historic Environment (6.1). This is supplemented by Technical Advice Note 24 The Historic Environment (2017). Technical Advice Note 12 Design (2016) is also relevant.
- 2.5 **Section 6.1.7.** of PPW sets out the overarching aim of the policy:
- “It is important that the planning system looks to protect, conserve and enhance the significance of historic assets. This will include consideration of the setting of an historic asset which might extend beyond its curtilage. Any change that impacts on an historic asset or its setting should be managed in a sensitive and sustainable way.”*
- 2.6 **Section 6.1.9.** sets out how decisions should be considered by the planning system:
- “Any decisions made through the planning system must fully consider the impact on the historic environment and on the significance and heritage values of individual historic assets and their contribution to the character of place.”*
- 2.7 **Section 6.1.21.** outlines policy specific to historic landscapes:
- Planning authorities should protect those assets included on the register of historic landscapes in Wales. As above, the sharing and use of evidence and assessments undertaken for wider reasons, such as Green Infrastructure Assessments, should be used to identify and better understand historic landscapes and ensure their qualities are protected and enhanced. The register should be taken into account in decision making when considering the implications of developments which meet the criteria for Environmental Impact Assessment or, if on call in, in the opinion of the Welsh Ministers, the development is of a sufficient scale to have more than a local impact on the historic landscape. An assessment of development on a historic landscape may be required if it is proposed within a registered historic landscape or its setting and there is potential for conflict with development plan policy.”*
- Technical Advice Note 24: Historic Environment (2017)**
- 2.8 The TAN (Section 7) states that the “Register of Historic Landscapes in Wales is a non-statutory advisory register”, and that information on the register should be taken into

account when determining planning applications which, in the opinion of Welsh Ministers, is of a sufficient scale to have more than a local impact on the historic landscape.

- 2.9 Section 8 sets out policy on historic assets of special local interest. Specifically, the glossary of terms defines these as:

*“Local historic assets which are not already designated as scheduled monuments, listed buildings or conservation areas, or registered historic parks and gardens which make an important contribution to local distinctiveness and public knowledge. Their selection should be based on sound local evidence and consultation and may be maintained on a list by the local planning authority.”*

### **Merthyr Tydfil Replacement Local Development Plan (2016-2031) (MTRLDP, January 2020)**

- 2.10 The relevant LDP policy for the historic environment is Policy CW1:

*“The integrity of our historic environment assets will be conserved and enhanced.*

*“Development proposals will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated they would preserve or enhance the architectural quality, character or the historic or cultural importance of our designated historic environment assets.*

*“Development affecting undesignated historic environment assets including, Locally Listed Buildings or structures, Landscapes of Outstanding Historic Interest in Wales, Urban Character Areas and Archaeologically Sensitive Areas should have regard to their special character and archaeological importance.”*

### **Material considerations**

- 2.11 Other material considerations include:

- 1 Merthyr Tydfil Built Heritage Strategy and Action Plan (August 2008);
- 2 Guide to Good Practice on Using the Register of Landscapes of Historic Interest in Wales in the Planning and Development Process (2007);
- 3 Caring for Historic Landscapes (2003); and,
- 4 Other relevant Cadw guidance, including Heritage Impact Assessment in Wales (May 2017) and Setting of Historic Assets in Wales (May 2017).

- 2.12 The thrust of national and local policy is to preserve and, where appropriate, enhance the significance and setting of historic assets.

### **Application of Policy**

- 1.1 The following are the key heritage policy considerations the proposal will be assessed against:

- 1 Does the proposal preserve and, where appropriate, enhance the setting and significance of the affected historic asset of special local interest? (Paragraph 6.1.17, PPW; Policy CW1, MTRLDP); and,

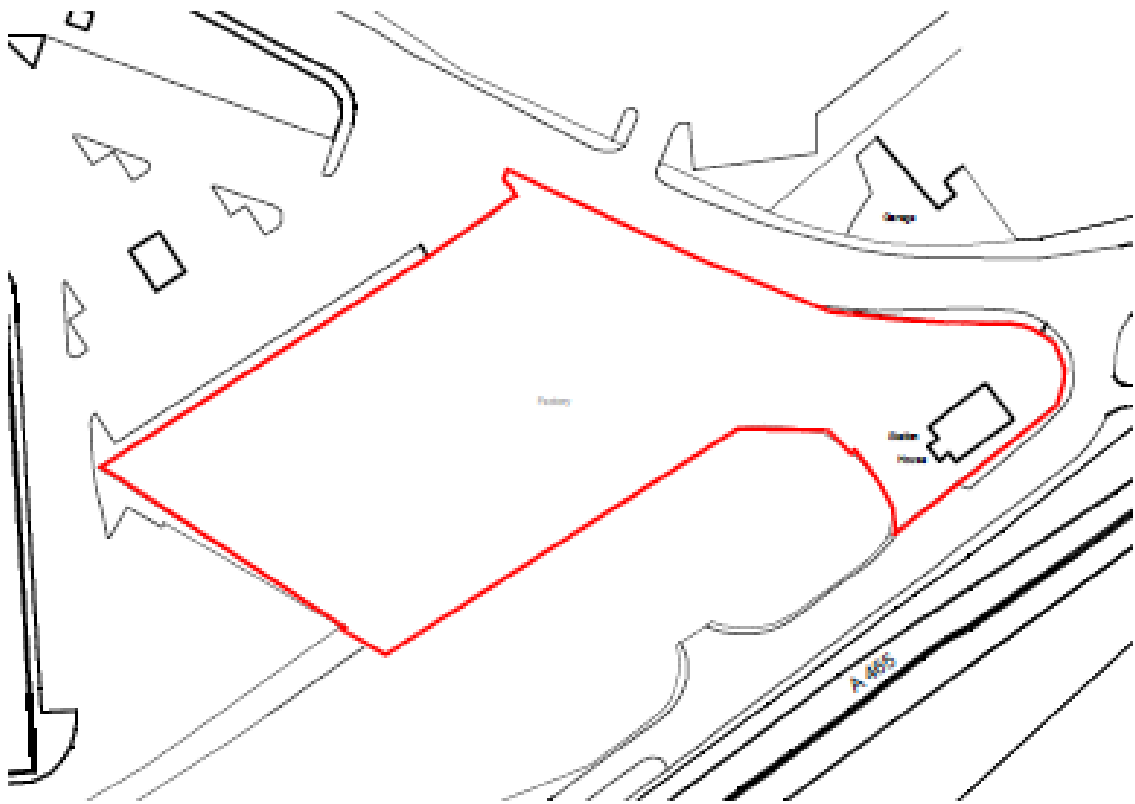
- 2 Does the proposal preserve or enhance the significance and heritage value of the Registered Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest? (Paragraphs 6.1.17 and 6.1.21; Policy CW10, MTRLDP)

## 3.0 Site and Surroundings

- 3.1 The site comprises primarily an area of hardstanding, with some existing trees and some buildings/structures (Figures 3.1, 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4). Station House (figure 3.5) is also located within the application site boundary to allow the delivery of a cycle path route.
- 3.2 The site is bounded to the west by a large supermarket building with an associated carpark, with a small green buffer (Figure 3.6). To the south is another area of hardstanding and Heads of the Valleys Road. To the north is a large discount furniture retailer store and an MOT testing centre (Figure 3.7). These buildings are modest in terms of architectural detailing, of a functional appearance and up to three storeys in height.

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Figure 3.1 The site



Source: AEW

Figure 3.2 View into the site from the north.



Source: Google Maps (August 2022)

Figure 3.3 One of the existing buildings within the site.



Source: EDP

Figure 3.4 Structure within northeastern part of application site.



Source: EDP

- 3.3 The nearby surroundings are characterised by industrial, outlet and large retail uses to the north and west. To the south is the newly built bypass. Being on the edge of the Dowlais Top settlement, the wider surroundings are characterised by the settlement to the west, and further north, south and east is landscape of varying heights.
- 3.4 As well as the presence of industrial and retail built form, green infrastructure is present in the area, with green verges, trees and natural planting.

Figure 3.5 Station House.



Source: EDP

Figure 3.6 View towards Lidl.



Source: Google Maps (August 2022)

Figure 3.7 View towards furniture shop.



Source: Google Maps (August 2022)

## Historic Development

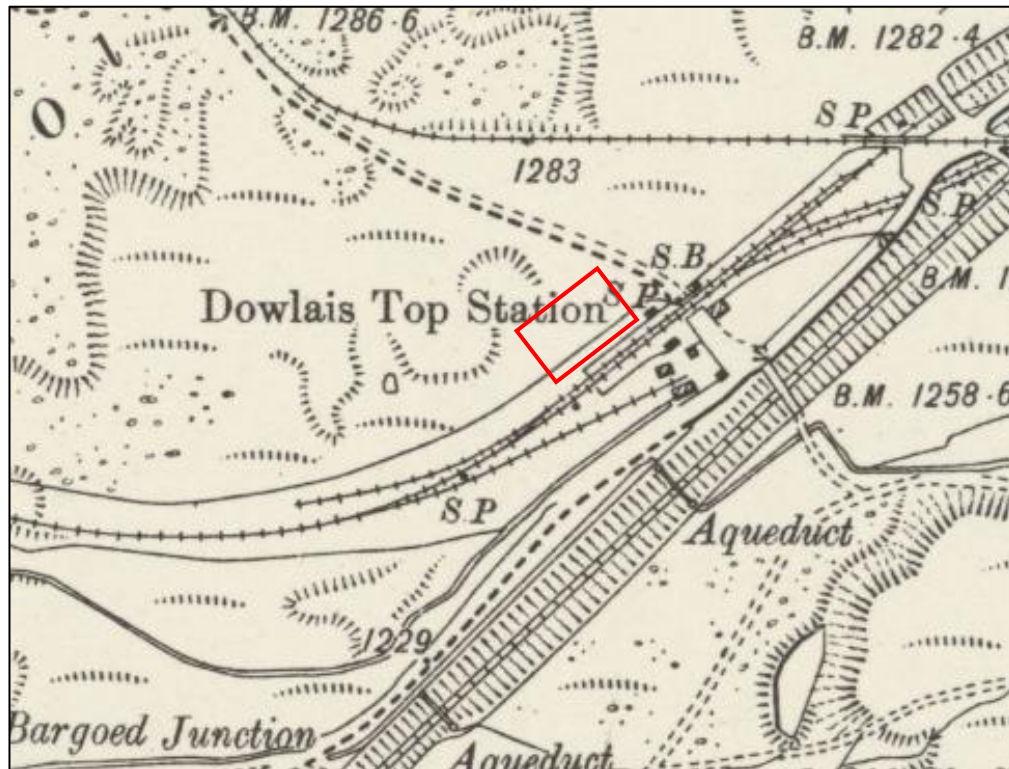
- 3.5 On the earliest available historic mapping, the site is undeveloped and remains so until the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Of note is the Merthyr, Tredegar and Abergavenny Railway line which ran along the south of the site, and Station House which appears present on mapping from 1897 (Figure 3.8). The line reached Dowlais by 1873, and so it is likely that Station House was built around this time.<sup>1</sup> There is no change within the site by the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century (Figure 3.9). The railway line ceased to operate public services by 1960, but some parts remained in use for goods for another decade or so.
- 3.6 Towards the latter part of 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Penygarnddu Industrial Estate began to be built out north and west of the site. The buildings within the site do not appear present on historic photographs, and as late as 2002 the most substantial building was not yet constructed.<sup>2</sup> The supermarket immediately to the west of the site is apparent on online sources from circa 2008.

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<sup>1</sup> Industrial Wales, *Merthyr, Tredegar and Abergavenny Railway*, accessed: <http://industrialgwent.co.uk/e31-mtar/index.htm>

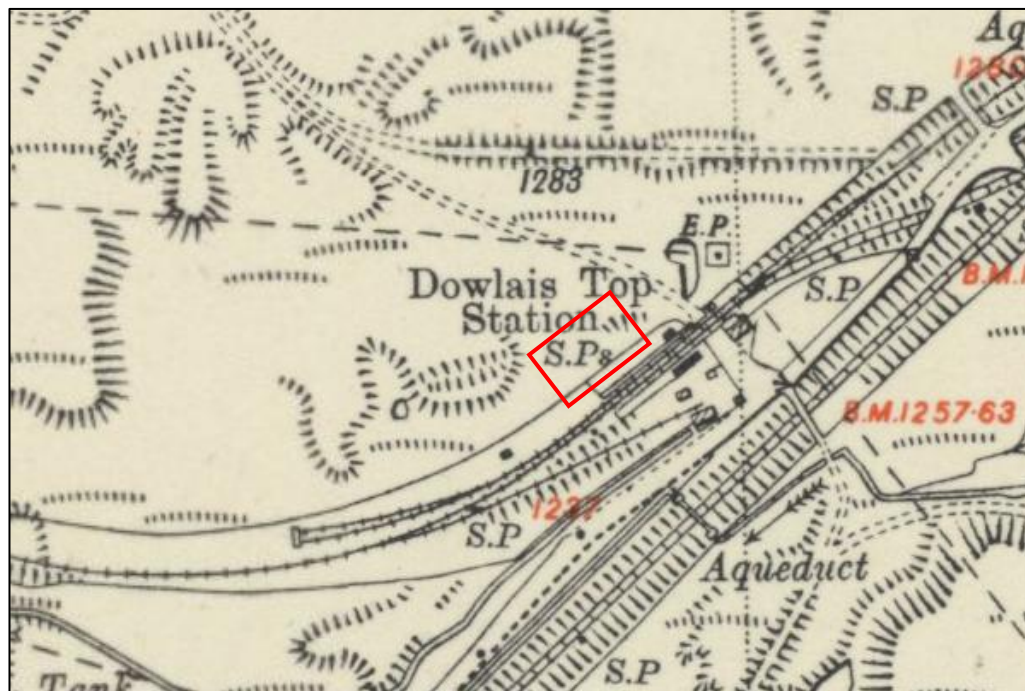
<sup>2</sup> Alan George, *Dowlais Top Station*, accessed: [http://www.alangeorge.co.uk/DowlaisTop\\_Station.htm](http://www.alangeorge.co.uk/DowlaisTop_Station.htm)

Figure 3.8 Glamorgan Sheet VI.SW Revised:1897, Published:1901. Site is indicated in red.



Source: National Library of Scotland

Figure 3.9 Brecknockshire Sheet XLVI.SW. Revised:1948, Published:1951. Site is indicated in red.



Source: National Library of Scotland

## 4.0 **Significance of Heritage Assets**

- 4.1 In accordance with national and local policy, this HIS establishes the significance of the historic assets to be affected, including an understanding of setting and how it contributes to significance, to a level proportionate to understanding the effect of the proposal.

### **Station House (Historic asset of special local interest)**

- 4.2 Station House is an attractive building of local historic interest. It is two storeys, with three bays and a pitched roof. The frontage is stone, with render to the gable ends. It likely dates from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century and was the station house for Dowlais Top on the Merthyr, Tredegar and Abergavenny Railway line.
- 4.3 The building has aesthetic value as one of the remaining built historic features of the immediate area, of which there are few. The historic value is derived from the association with the railway line, which is no longer extant. There have been some later alterations to the building, which do detract from the historic character and aesthetic value to some degree.
- 4.4 It should also be noted that the building has not been considered of sufficient interest to be locally listed.
- 4.5 The setting has been somewhat compromised by the incoherent form of the surroundings, including the small scale-built form of the house to the rear, larger supermarket building, the areas of poorly maintained hardstanding and green space, and various fences and other paraphernalia. The site therefore forms a negative feature within the setting. The loss of the railway line has removed the surrounding context from this building, and its original function as a station house is no longer visually apparent. Historic photographs show that the surroundings were primarily open fields previously.

### **Merthyr Tydfil Registered Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest**

- 4.6 The significance of the Merthyr Tydfil Registered Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest is derived primarily from the landscape form and features associated with the industrial revolution. According to Heneb, Merthyr Tydfil was the most significant Welsh town of the period, and the town and its environs are an example of an internationally renowned industrial landscape of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>3</sup> In the vicinity of the site, the railway would have formed part of this character, and the numerous quarries in the wider surroundings also.
- 4.7 There is also a natural element to the landscape, rather than being solely industrial, in that the town occupies a natural basin, with high hills and ridges on all sides. Development was typically confined to this basin and along tributary valleys.
- 4.8 The site forms a very small part of the landscape and currently does not form a positive feature due to the poorly maintained areas of hardstanding. Built form already exists on the site and within the surroundings.

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<sup>3</sup> Heneb, *Historic Landscape Characterisation: Merthyr Tydfil*, accessed at: [https://heneb.org.uk/archive/ggat/cadw/historic\\_landscape/Merthyr\\_Tydfil/English/Merthyr\\_Main.htm](https://heneb.org.uk/archive/ggat/cadw/historic_landscape/Merthyr_Tydfil/English/Merthyr_Main.htm)

## **2.0 Proposal's effect on significance**

### **The proposal**

2.1 The full details of the proposal are included in the accompanying Planning Statement and shown on the application drawings. The elements of the proposal relevant to this assessment are:

- 1 The demolition of the buildings on site;
- 2 Construction of a new one storey building, with timber effect and grey cladding panels, and canopies;
- 3 Associated plant to roof;
- 4 New carparking, tarmacked areas, footpaths and planting; and,
- 5 A new fence and gate to create a secure compound.

### **Assessment of effects**

2.2 The proposals would have no material impact on the setting and significance of Station House. The removal of the existing, poor quality, buildings on site, and poorly maintained hardstanding and the construction of a well-designed and coherent place would comprise a minor visual enhancement. The original setting of Station House has already been disrupted to a significant degree by the loss of the railway line, and the development of the immediate area into an industrial park.

2.3 The use of differing materials, colour and a degree of pedestrian usability would result in a building that is of a higher quality design than the existing buildings in the vicinity, including the supermarket and furniture shop.

2.4 The impact on the Merthyr Tydfil Registered Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest would be minor and focused to a very small area of the landscape overall. As above, the introduction of a well-design building and removal of poor-quality elements would be of a minor benefit to the landscape, and the presence of built form in this area is already established by the supermarket building, among others. The significance and heritage value of the landscape would be preserved.

### 3.0 Conclusion

3.1 In summary, the significance, character and setting of Station House and the Merthyr Tydfil Registered Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest would be preserved, and the policy tests met as follows:

- 1 Does the proposal preserve and, where appropriate, enhance the setting and significance of the affected historic asset of special local interest? (Paragraph 6.1.17, PPW; Policy CW1, MTRLDP).

*Yes, the proposal would form a minor visual enhancement to the setting of Station House by removing detracting elements. The setting has already undergone much change. The significance would be preserved.*

- 2 Does the proposal preserve or enhance the significance and heritage value of the Registered Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest? (Paragraphs 6.1.17 and 6.1.21; Policy CW10, MTRLDP)

*Yes, the proposal would preserve the significance and heritage value of the registered landscape. As above, the removal of detracting elements would be a minor visual improvement, and there is already precedent for built form in the surrounding area. The application site also forms a very small part of the overall landscape.*





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