

DELEGATED REPORT

Application No:	P/24/0243
Site Address:	62C High Street Cefn Coed Merthyr Tydfil CF48 2PL
Development:	Erection of a first floor extension, change of use to an office and associated external works including new shopfront
Case Officer:	Rebecca Owens
Site Visit:	23rd October 2024
Application Expiry Date:	21st October 2025
Consultation reply date expired:	22nd September 2025

APPLICATION SITE

The application relates to a single storey retail unit located in the local centre of Cefn Coed and within the settlement boundary. The area comprises of a mixture of retail, commercial and residential uses. The site is bound by a highway to the front, commercial units on either side (that may provide first floor living accommodation) and is attached to an annexe to the rear which does not form part of the site.

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

Full planning permission is sought for the erection of a first floor extension, change of use to an office and associated external works including new shopfront.

The first floor extension would overhang the existing front elevation by 1.8m. The main floor area would be 9.5m in width by 11.2m in depth and this would have a pitched roof with a ridge height of 15.1m. To the rear of this the first floor extension would extend over a single storey rear annexe and would be 6.7m in depth by 4.3m in depth with a flat roof 11m in height. The extension would feature a first floor window and roof lights in the front and rear roof plane and in the flat roof. It would have an artificial slate roof and the elevations would also be finished with artificial slate hanging tiles.

A new aluminium shop front is proposed at ground floor level which would comprise of a door and three window panes. There would also be an external roller shutter installed with the shutter box concealed within the overhang of the first floor extension. Around the shopfront at ground floor level the front elevation would be finished with green glazed tiles.

It is proposed to use the whole of the extended building as an office and thus a change of use is sought from the current A1 retail use.

PLANNING HISTORY

There is no recent planning history which needs to be considered when determining this application.

CONSULTATION

The following bodies were consulted and their responses are presented below:

Head of Engineering and Highways	No objection
Planning Policy Officer	No objection
Ecologist	No objection
Environmental Health Manager	No objection

PUBLICITY

In accordance with the Town & Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Wales) Order 2012, letters were sent to neighbouring properties and two site notices were displayed within the vicinity of the site.

One letter of objection was received following this publicity exercise. The main points raised within this are summarised below:

- The proposal would not be in keeping with other properties in the area;
- Parking is limited in the area and additional employees with their vehicle would create a problem in the surrounding streets;
- The proposed extension would be forward of the original front wall and it is questioned whether this land is in the ownership of the applicant.

Local ward councillor have been consulted and have not requested the application be presented to the planning committee. As such the application is to be determined under delegated power by the Director of Neighbourhood Services.

POLICY CONTEXT

National Development Framework

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

Local Planning Policies

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

- SW4 Settlement Boundaries
- SW9 Planning Obligations
- SW11 Sustainable Design and Placemaking
- SW12 Improving the Transport Network
- SW13 Protecting and Improving Local Community Facilities
- CW1 Historic Environment
- EnW1 Nature Conservation and Ecosystem Resilience
- EnW2 Internationally and Nationally Protected Sites and Species
- EnW3 Regionally Important Geological Sites, Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation, Local Nature Reserves and Priority Habitats and Species
- EnW4 Environmental Protection
- EcW4 Retail Allocation
- 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 2, Planning Obligations.
- Note 3, Shopfront Design
- Note 4, Sustainable Design.
- Note 5, Nature and Development.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Principle

The application site is located within the settlement boundary where development is acceptable in principle subject to other relevant policies and material planning considerations.

In this respect it is noted that the application site is located in the Cefn Coed local centre and as such Policies EcW3 and EcW5 are relevant.

Policy EcW3 advises 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 designated local centres including Cefn Coed. Proposals for new and enhanced retail, leisure and other complementary provision in these centres will be permitted where they improve the vitality and viability of the centre(s) concerned. Policy EcW5 also promotes development that would enhance the vitality and viability of the Town and Local Centres. It specifies that within local centres, the change of use of the ground floor to a 'non-A' use classes will only be permitted where:-

- It is demonstrated through active and appropriate marketing that the existing use is no longer economically viable; and
- The proposal would not result in an over concentration of non-A1 uses that would be detrimental to the vitality, attractiveness and viability of the local centre; and

- The proposal would not result in the creation of a dead window frontage; and
- The proposal would not have an unacceptable effect on the amenity and viability of neighbouring uses, having regard to the 'agent of change principle'.

The proposal would result in the loss of an A1 retail use. However, this is limited in both the size of the unit and its current use, which only operates for a limited time during the year. The proposal would replace this with an A2 use (offices). This is considered to be an appropriate use within a local centre that would increase the variety of services operating within the local centre, thereby improving its vitality, attractiveness and viability. The proposal would also provide an active frontage which also contributes to the aims of these policies, which is preferable to the current arrangement where it is closed for a significant period of time and providing no contribution to the streetscene or local centre. As such, the proposal should bring the property back into full-time beneficial use. It is also noted, that an A2 use is permitted to change to an A1 use without the need for a planning application. Taking the above into consideration, the proposal would adhere to policies Ecw3 and EcW5.

It is also recognised that the proposal would result in the loss of a community facility with the loss of the A1 unit. Policy SW13 states that the provision of new and enhanced community facilities will be supported subject to satisfying other relevant LDP policies and that the Council will protect and support the enhancement of the County Borough's existing community facilities. However, development proposals that would result in a loss of an existing community facility will only be permitted where they meet certain criteria. In this respect it is noted that there are a number of other shops within the local centre and that the proposed office use could provide an alternative community facility. Furthermore, as noted above the shop is of limited size and is largely closed thus providing no benefit to the local community for the majority of the time. Thus taking the above into consideration, it is concluded that the proposal would satisfy Policy SW13.

Design and Visual Amenity

The application site is located on the main highway through the settlement of Cefn Coed and within the designated local centre. The street is mainly characterised by traditional, two storey, terraced properties that have a mixture of uses including ground floor retail and commercial units. However, within the immediate vicinity of the site it is recognised that there are a variety of different properties present which vary in their design, materials and fenestration although these are mainly of a traditional appearance. Even within this context, the application building itself is somewhat distinctive in that it is single storey and set back from the main front building line. The proposal would introduce a first floor to the existing unit so it is more akin to the height of other buildings along the street and whilst this would overhang the existing front elevation, the extension would align with the building line established by the other properties on either side, giving the appearance of a recessed shopfront to the ground floor. It is therefore considered that its scale and general design is acceptable. However, the extension would feature a large first floor window in its front elevation which would be off set to one side and feature a glazed balustrade. It is considered that this would appear out of place on both the building itself and within the wider streetscene. Furthermore, whilst it is recognised that there are a mixture of finishes visible within the area, the elevational treatments tend to comprise of stone, render and brickwork. The proposed external finish comprising of glazed tiles to the ground floor with artificial slates to the first floor would introduce elevational treatments which are not in keeping with those in the area and as such are deemed to be unsympathetic and incongruous. In addition, the use of slate tiles to the first floor gives the extension a top

heavy appearance and emphasises the larger first floor element. Thus, whilst there is no objection in principle to a first floor extension, as a result of the material finishes and poor front fenestration, the development would represent a discordant feature within the streetscene and would be visually harmful to the character of the area. Accordingly, the development would be contrary to Policy SW11 of the LDP.

Residential Amenity

Whilst the application site is situated in a local centre where there are a mixture of uses, the area also has a large proportion of residential properties and regard has been had for the impact of the proposal on the residential amenities of neighbouring occupants. It is noted that the proposed first floor extension would be located in close proximity to the properties on either side of the site. However, having regard to the modest size of the extension and its position alongside the flank elevations of these adjoining properties which are two storey in height, it is not considered that it would have a significant overbearing impact or result in any harmful loss of light or overshadowing. It is also noted that the only window would be located within the front elevation where they would not give rise to any overlooking or loss of privacy. It is recognised that roof lights are also proposed but these would not allow for any harmful views into the neighbouring properties.

It is recognised that the use as an office would result in a level of activity from comings and goings and as such may create some noise and disturbance. However, it is not considered that this would be any greater than that of a shop. In addition, it is located in a local centre where there a certain level of activity is to be expected given the other commercial uses in the area. In this respect it is also noted that no objections were received from the Environmental Health Manager. The proposal is therefore acceptable in terms of its impact on residential amenity and would comply with Policy SW11 of the LDP.

Parking and Highway Safety

The application site does not benefit from any off-street parking and none is proposed as part of this application. However, given the scale of the building and its location within a sustainable location, where there are good transport links, it is not considered that the lack of parking would have an adverse impact upon the existing highway network or highway safety. It is also recognised that its current use as a retail unit would generate a parking demand. As such no concerns are raised within this respect and no objection has been received from the Engineering and Highways Manager.

Ecology

A bat survey report has been submitted in support of the application. This sets out the results of a Preliminary Roost Assessment and a dusk activity survey. No evidence was recorded of bats using the building and bats (and roosts) were therefore considered likely absent. In addition, whilst it has been noted that the building supports limited features that could be exploited by nesting birds, no active nest was identified during the survey visits. A number of recommendations and enhancements are outlined within this report which are considered to be appropriate and the local planning authority's Ecologist has not raised any objection to the development subject to these being met. This can be controlled via condition.

It is recognised that chapter 6 of Planning Policy Wales (edition 12) requests that applications be supported by Green Infrastructure Statements (GIS). This was requested

but has not been forthcoming. However, in this instance, due to the scale and nature of the development, which only includes a first floor extension above an existing unit and a change of use and having regard to the conclusions and recommendations proposed within the Bat Survey Report, the submission of a GIS is not considered necessary to determine the application. It is considered that there is limited biodiversity value to the existing site and the extension would not likely result in any significant loss to this. With the proposed enhancements which can be secured by condition, it is considered that there would be a net benefit to biodiversity which would contribute to the wider green infrastructure objectives. The proposed development would therefore comply with LDP Policy EnW1.

Conclusion

For the above reasons the proposal is not deemed to be acceptable by virtue of its unsympathetic external finish and inappropriate front fenestration, which would represent a discordant addition that would be visually harmful and fail to respect the character area, contrary to the LDP policies.

In reaching the recommendation, the requirements of section 3 and 5 of the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 have been taken into account. The recommendation is in accordance with the Act's sustainable development principle through its contribution towards the Welsh Minister's well-being objective of supporting safe, cohesive and resilient communities.

Accordingly the following recommendation is made:

RECOMMENDATION: BE REFUSED for the following **REASON:**

1. The proposed extension by virtue of its unsympathetic external finish and inappropriate front fenestration would represent a discordant addition which would be visually harmful and fail to respect the character area, contrary to Policy SW11 of the Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council Replacement Local Development Plan 2016-2031.

RECOMMENDATION ENDORSED



Director of Neighbourhood Services

DATE: 24.09.2025