

Justification for Compliance with Policy EcW2 – Protecting Employment Sites

Proposal:

Change of use of an existing industrial unit (Use Classes B1, B2, B8) to Bricklaying Learning centre (Use Class D1) within Units 2-4 Compass Court, Merthyr Tydfil Industrial Park.

Policy Context:

Policy EcW2 of the Merthyr Tydfil Replacement Local Development Plan (2016–2031) seeks to protect designated employment sites for employment uses (B1, B2, B8) unless specific criteria are met.

The policy states that:

“Development proposals for uses other than those stipulated and that would result in the loss of employment land / premises at the above sites will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that the proposal would not lead to an unacceptable change in the nature of the employment site and where the existing use is inappropriate or the land / premises are surplus to the requirements of the employment market.”

Justification:

1. Surplus to employment market requirements:

- The unit has been vacant for a prolonged period of time despite marketing efforts (with the previous use being a gym), indicating limited demand for traditional industrial uses at this location.
- The units were originally constructed in 2016, and were marketed for over 12 months at that point, with the first occupier being a gym in late 2017. The gym vacated the unit in late 2024 and the unit has been vacant since that point in time.
- The units have been marketed through Stuart Hogg Property Consultants since Summer 2024:

<https://stuarthogg.net/2025/04/24/merthyr-tydfil-units-2-4-compass-court-industrial/>

<https://stuarthogg.net/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/10534.pdf>

- The nature of the unit and its location within the estate make it suitable for vocational training, which aligns with the skills needs of the local workforce.

2. Change in nature of Employment Site:

- The proposed bricklaying learning centre will continue to support employment-related activity by providing vocational training in construction trades, with the training being provided by Merthyr College.
- The centre will enhance the skill base of local residents, supporting future employment in the construction sector, which is a key growth area in the region.

- The unit is approx. 550 sqm, and the change from B-class uses to a bricklaying learning centre will not change the character of the overall employment sites as Merthyr Tydfil Industrial Park totals circa 80,000 sqm of floor space with the majority falling into B Class use.

3. Wider Community and Regeneration Benefits:

- The proposal supports the Council's strategic objectives for education, skills development, and tackling economic inactivity.
- It aligns with the RLDP's emphasis on regeneration and sustainable development, particularly in areas of deprivation.
- The centre will contribute to the vitality of the industrial park by increasing footfall and activity, without undermining its primary employment function.

Conclusion:

The proposed change of use complies with Policy EcW2 by not unacceptably changing the character of the employment site, addressing local skills gaps, and delivering wider socio-economic benefits. The unit is surplus to the requirements of the B-Class use employment market and it represents a sustainable and appropriate reuse of existing infrastructure in line with the RLDP's strategic aims.