

DELEGATED REPORT

Application No:	P/26/0048
Site Address:	93 Lower Thomas Street Merthyr Tydfil CF47 0DA
Development:	Erection of solar panels
Case Officer:	Marlene Ferreira
Site Visit:	12th March 2026
Application Expiry Date:	30th April 2026
Consultation reply date expired:	31st March 2026

APPLICATION SITE

This application relates to a terraced property, 93 Lower High Street, located near the town centre. The dwelling is a two-storey traditional modest property with concrete roof tiles and UPVc windows, which, due to its elevated position, is accessed by an array of steps off the front highway. The property, combined with other neighbouring dwellings along this row, forms part of a consistent and uniform street scene, and lies within the Thomastown Conservation Area.

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

This application seeks planning permission to install solar panels to the roof of the property.

A total of 4 solar panels would be installed on the front roof slope. Each solar panel would measure 1.134m wide, 0.30m deep and 1.76m high. Details of the solar panel colour and how these would be fixed to the roof have not been provided.

CONSULTATION

The following consultations were undertaken:

Town Planning's Ecologist	Further information requested in the form of PRA.
Environmental Health	No objection, subject to conditions.

PUBLICITY

In accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Wales) Order 2012, letters were sent to nearby properties and a site notice was displayed within the vicinity of the site. No letters of representation have been received in response to the publicity exercise.

POLICY CONTEXT

National Development Framework

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

Policy 1 – Where Wales Will Grow

Policy 2 – Shaping Urban Growth and Regeneration – Strategic Placemaking

Policy 9 – Resilient Ecological Networks and Green Infrastructure

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

National Planning Policy

- Planning Policy Wales (Edition 12, February 2024)

Paragraph 3.3 refers to good design and states that *‘...design is not just about the architecture of a building but the relationship between all elements of the natural and built environment and between people and places. To achieve sustainable development, design must go beyond aesthetics and include the social, economic, environmental, cultural aspects of the development, including how space is used, how buildings and the public realm support this use, as well as its construction, operation, management, and its relationship with the surroundings area...’*

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 and expressed, when appropriate, in a design and access statement...’*

Paragraph 3.14 refers to context appraisal and states that these *‘...should be used to determine the appropriateness of a development proposal in responding to its surroundings. This process will ensure that a development is well integrated into the fabric of the existing built environment...’*

Paragraph 6.16, 6.17 and 6.19 discusses the Welsh Government’s objectives for the historic environment and states that these seek to *‘...protect the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Sites; conserve archaeological remains, both for their own sake and for their role in education, leisure and the economy; safeguard the character of historic buildings and manage change so that their special architectural and historic interest is preserved; preserve or enhance the character or appearance of conservation areas, whilst the same time helping them remain vibrant and prosperous... 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... 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...'

- TAN's (Technical Advice Note)

TAN 5 – Nature and Conservation Planning (2009)

This TAN provides advice on development affecting designated sites and habitats, in addition to protected or priority habitats and species. Section 6.2.2 states that '*...It is essential that the presence or otherwise of protected species, and the extent that they may be affected by the proposed development, is established before the planning permission is granted, otherwise all relevant material considerations may not have been addressed in making the decision. It is considered best practice that such a survey is carried out before planning application is submitted. Planning permission should not be granted subject to a condition that protected species surveys are carried out and, in the event that protected species are found to be present, mitigation measures are submitted for approval. However, bearing in mind the delay and cost that may be involved, developers should not be required to undertake surveys for protected species unless there is a reasonable likelihood of them being present...*'

TAN 12 – Design (2016)

This TAN advises that the Welsh 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. Section 2.6 of TAN12 states that '*...Design which is inappropriate in its context, or which fails to grasp opportunities to enhance the character, quality or function of an area, should not be accepted, as these have detrimental effects on existing communities...*' Section 4.3 of TAN12 points out '*...Understanding the site and its immediate and wider context is the basis for a meaningful and sustainable design response, and is the responsibility of all those involved in the design process...*'

TAN 24: The Historic Environment (2017)

Section 1.14 of TAN 24 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 Planning Policies

The Merthyr Tydfil Replacement Local Development Plan 2016-2031

LDP Policy SW4 – Settlement Boundaries

LDP Policy SW11 – Sustainable Design and Placemaking
LDP Policy CW1 – Historic Environment
LDP Policy EnW1 – Nature Conservation and Ecosystem Resilience
LDP Policy EcW8 – Renewable Energy

- Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG):

SPG4 - Sustainable Design, July 2013
SPG5 – Nature and Conservation, May 2015

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

The issues to consider under the assessment of this application relate to whether the proposed introduction of PV solar panels would be acceptable in respect of their impact upon the character and appearance of the property, the wider streetscene and the conservation area. The impact of the proposed development upon residential amenity and ecology are also important considerations.

Principle of development

The application site lies within the settlement boundary – Primary Growth Areas. New development in such areas is supported by LDP Policy SW4 provided it complies with other relevant planning policies.

Given the nature of development, LDP Policy EnW8 is also relevant. This policy states that the use of renewable energy will be supported as a means of reducing local carbon footprint.

The proposed development is therefore acceptable in principal and would accord with LDP Policies SW4 and EnW8.

Character and Appearance

The proposed development, as described above, seeks to introduce solar panels on the front roof slope of the existing dwelling.

The solar panels, given their siting within the front roof elevation, would appear clearly visible within the front streetscene. Although it is noted that the dwelling is elevated above the front highway, the solar panels would project approximately 0.050m above the roof line and would therefore amount to a visually prominent and incongruous feature within the front roof slope, which would appear at odds with character and appearance of the dwelling, and inconsistent with the rhythm of development along the terraced row. Furthermore, details of their colour and their method of installation have not been provided, which could potentially result in an even more prominent form of development.

Whilst the use of renewable energy solutions is supported and encouraged for use on residential properties under Policy EnW8 (as discussed above), new developments are also required to meet other relevant policies. LDP Policies SW11 and CW1 are therefore primary considerations. These policies state:

LDP Policy SW11: *Development must contribute to the creation of attractive and sustainable places through high quality, sustainable and inclusive design. Where appropriate new development will be required to:*

- 1. be appropriate to its local context in terms of scale, height, massing, elevational treatment, materials and detailing, layout, form, mix and density;*
- 2. integrate effectively with adjacent spaces, the public realm and historic environment to enhance the general street scene and create good quality townscape;*
- 3. not result in an unacceptable impact on local amenity, loss of light or privacy, or visual impact, and incorporate a good standard of landscape design;*
- 4. contribute to the provision of green infrastructure, including open space in accordance with the Council's standards, sustainable drainage systems where appropriate, and ensure that the County Borough's network of green infrastructure is accessible and connected;*
- 5. allow access for the widest range of people possible, and demonstrate that any traffic movements will not have an unacceptable impact on local amenity or highway safety and satisfy the Council's parking standards;*
- 6. incorporate a range of inclusive/adaptable design specifications, a mix of house types, tenures and sizes to meet identified local needs;*
- 7. incorporate resource efficient/adaptable buildings and layouts using sustainable design and construction techniques;*
- 8. minimise the demand for energy and utilise renewable energy resources;*
- 9. provide and protect relevant utility services and infrastructure without causing any unacceptable environmental impacts;*
- 10. incorporate measures to improve ground and surface water quality wherever possible; provide adequate facilities and space for waste collections and recycling;*
- 11. and promote the creation of healthy and active environments and reduce the opportunity for crime and anti-social behaviour.*

LDP 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.*

Having regard to the above criteria set out under LDP Policies SW11 and CW1, it appears evident that the development, as proposed, would not amount to a sympathetic roof alteration to the property or wider street scene, which would enhance or conserve the character and appearance of the conservation area. As it stands, the proposal would therefore not accord with LDP Policies SW11 and CW1. In order to address the concerns raised with the visual impact of the proposal, the agent was contacted and invited to amend the scheme. Specifically, it was requested that the solar panels be set into the roof, since this would result in little or no projection above the roof line. Details of the colour of the solar panel and its method of installation were also requested. Combined, this would help to ensure that the solar panels would appear less prominent and match, as closely as possible, the colour of the existing roof tiles, resulting in an almost unnoticeable proposal when viewed within the streetscene.

The agent provided written confirmation that the *'applicant would not be able to install flush panels'*, and as such, the application proposal remains unaltered.

It is therefore considered that the proposed development would appear as an unsympathetic and visually incongruous alteration to the roof of the dwelling, which would significantly harm the character and appearance of the modest terraced property, and that of the wider streetscene. It would also fail to enhance or conserve the character and appearance of the Thomastown Conservation Area. As such, it would result in an unacceptable form of development which would fail to accord with LDP Policies SW11 and CW1.

Residential Amenity

The proposal has been considered in respect of its impact upon surrounding neighbouring occupiers. However, given the nature and siting of the development, the proposal would not be considered to cause any significant harm upon the surrounding residential amenity. In this respect, no representations were received following the publicity exercise. The relationship between the proposed development and the neighbouring dwellings would therefore be considered acceptable and would accord with LDP Policy SW11.

Ecology

The Council's Ecologist has considered the proposed development and requested that a Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) for bats and nesting birds (undertaken by a suitably qualified and experienced ecologist) is required to be submitted in support of the application. The Council's Ecologist has clarified that the report must provide *'...sufficient information for the local planning authority to assess any potential adverse impacts of the proposed development on priority and protected species and/or habitats, or to identify what further information is required before a full assessment is possible. The results of the PRA will be used to inform whether further surveys are required, or to establish the need for and extent of any mitigation and compensation measures required as part of the proposed development.'*

Whilst the submission of PRA is supported, this additional information has not been sought given the concerns with the solar panels, in terms of their unacceptable visual impact and detrimental impact upon the character and appearance of the property, streetscene and conservation area. Whilst the PRA would assist in identifying any potential ecological impacts, it would not in this instance overcome the conflicts with Policy SW11 and CW1 of the LDP.

As noted in chapter 6 of Planning Policy Wales (edition 12), applications should be supported by Green Infrastructure Statements (GIS). In this instance a GIS has not been submitted. Notwithstanding this, it is evident that the existing green infrastructure would not be impacted by the development. Ecological enhancements could also be suitably secured by condition to ensure reasonable net benefits in biodiversity are achieved.

In the absence of any ecological consideration, the proposed development would therefore fail to accord with LDP Policy EnW1.

CONCLUSION

The proposal would amount to unacceptable form of development which would detract from the character and appearance of the modest two storey dwelling, the wider street scene and that of the conservation area. As such, it would not accord with the relevant LDP Policies.

Finally, 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.

Accordingly, the following recommendation is made:

RECOMMENDATION: BE REFUSED

1. The proposed development, given its siting on the front roof elevation, projection above the roof line and prominence within the street, would appear as an unsympathetic and visual incongruous alteration which would have a detrimental impact upon the character and appearance of the property, the wider streetscene and the Thomastown Conservation Area, contrary to Policies SW11 and CW1 of the Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council Replacement Local Development Plan.

2. Insufficient information has been provided to adequately demonstrate that the proposal would not result in an unacceptable adverse ecological impact, nor has it been demonstrated that a net benefit would be provided in respect of biodiversity. The development is therefore contrary to Policy EnW1 of the Merthyr Tydfil Replacement Development Plan and Planning Policy Wales Edition 12.

RECOMMENDATION ENDORSED



Director of Neighbourhood Services

DATE: 24.04.2026