

DELEGATED REPORT

Application No:	P/26/0023
Site Address:	10 - 13 Pontmorlais West Merthyr Tydfil CF47 8UT
Development:	Conversion to 8 Studios and alterations to shops with new shop fronts and rear dormer.
Case Officer:	Gareth Davies
Site Visit:	15th February 2026
Application Expiry Date:	2nd April 2026
Consultation reply date expired:	27th February 2026

APPLICATION SITE

The application site in this instance is a traditionally built structure located on the south side of Pontmorlais West and lies within the town centre conservation area, though outside of the Article 4 direction relating to Townscape Heritage. The property is a traditionally stone built structure with slate roof and a combination of walls in bare stonework and painted rendered finishes. A number of original window and door openings have been unsympathetically blocked up in brick or block work. At street level on Pontmorlais West there are currently two relatively unsympathetic shopfronts. At ground and first floor levels both properties function as shops with the lower and higher areas designated as storage.

The building is L-shaped with a curtilage that extends as far as the Nant Morlais. To the rear of the application property is the Merthyr Upholstery building which appears unused. A narrow access lane is located on the eastern side of the application property and this affords rear access for the application property, the Merthyr Upholstery building and some residential properties located to the rear and presumably above no.s 1-4 Bolgoed Place. The wider area is characteristically typical of edge of town centre locations, comprising a mixture of retail commercial and residential properties.

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The proposal seeks the refurbishment of the building in its entirety as follows: -

- Externally the repair of the built fabric and roof where required with a painted rendered finish being applied throughout. New window openings will be provided including French doors at the lower ground floor, along with the reopening of some of the original apertures and some new windows.
- The introduction of a rear facing dormer for nearly the full width of the larger element of the building with a flat roof and slate finish to the dormer walls.

- The sub-division of the ground floor facing Pontmorlais West into 4no retail units each with its own new shopfront in aluminium.
- Other than the shopfronts all new fenestrations will be in uPVC.

Internally the building will be arranged as follows: -

- Lower ground floor to become two studio apartments with a small utility area all accessed from the rear courtyard area.
- Ground floor to be sub divided into 4no small retail units accessed off Pontmorlais West with a studio to the rear.
- First floor to become 3no small studio units.
- Second floor (attic) to become 1no small studio unit.

The application is supported with the following documents: -

- Planning and Design Statement
- Green infrastructure Statement.
- Internal space justification
- Bat Survey report.

PLANNING HISTORY

Related application

P/07/0196 – Installation of information panel (on adjacent pavement) – Approved 15th June 2007.

CONSULTATION

Head of Engineering and Highways – No objections

Heritage Officer – No objections

Council Ecologist – No objections

Environmental Health Manager – No response received.

Rights of Way – No response received.

Regeneration – No response received.

Housing – No objections

Natural Resources Wales – No objections

Dwr Cymru Welsh Water – No objections

The Mining Remediation Authority – No response received.

South Wales Fire and Rescue Service – No objections

South Wales Police – No objection

PUBLICITY

In accordance with the Town & Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Wales) Order 2012 letters were sent to the adjoining properties on 6th February 2026 and site notices posted on 11th February 2026.

No objections or observations have been received as a result of the exercise.

POLICY CONTEXT

National planning policy

The Future Wales – the National Plan 2040 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.

Technical Advice Notes (TAN):

- TAN 5, Nature Conservation and Planning, September 2009
- TAN 11, Noise, October 1997
- TAN 12, Design, March 2016
- TAN 15 Development and Flood Risk, July 2004
- TAN 18, Transport, March 2007
- TAN 24, The Historic Environment, May 2017

Local planning policy

Merthyr Tydfil Replacement Local Development Plan (LDP) 2016-2031:

- SW3 - Sustainably Distributing New Homes
- SW4 - Settlement Boundaries
- SW9 - Planning Obligations
- SW11 - Sustainable Design and Placemaking
- SW12 - Improving the Transport Network
- CW1 - Historic Environment
- EnW1 - Nature Conservation and Ecosystem Resilience
- EnW4 - Environmental Protection

Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG):

- SPG 1- Affordable Housing, March 2012
- SPG 2- Planning Obligations, March 2012
- SPG 4- Sustainable Design, July 2013
- SPG 5- Nature and Development, May 2015

PLANNING CONSIDERATION

The key considerations in the determination of this planning application are the overall planning policy position, the land uses proposed, design considerations, amenity concerns, highway considerations, flood risk concerns, and ecology.

Planning Policy

The application site is located within the settlement boundary where new development is encouraged and supported in principle by Policy SW4 of the Local Development Plan (LDP). The proposed development promotes the use of part of the ground floor, upper floor and basement for residential use, along with the refurbishment of the main ground floor retail units. The provision of flats would reinforce the variety of uses within the northern end of the town centre alongside commercial/business uses. The provision of residential uses above (and in this case below), commercial premises also encourages greater vibrancy in the area with people coming and going at various times of the day. This in turn has economic benefits for existing businesses.

Flats above shops are a common feature of many town centres including Merthyr Tydfil, and there are already a number of residential uses above shops and licenced premises in the town centre which offer a highly sustainable location offering a focus for future growth and regeneration. As such the principle of development is considered acceptable. Other topic specific policy concerns are addressed below.

Land Use

Taking into consideration the nature of the development and the location of the site in close proximity to existing residential and commercial uses within the town centre conservation area, on the face of it at least, the proposal is appropriate to their local context in terms of the nature of the uses proposed. There are though concerns at the density and amount of residential development within the constraints imposed by the extent of the building itself which has the potential to deliver a relatively high density in relation to the building. However, having regard to the fact that the room sizes are not an issue subject to planning policy and that they technically exceed room size requirements set by Welsh Housing Quality Standards, this can form no basis for the refusal of the application. The amenity implications relating to the proposed development are otherwise discussed below.

Design Approach

The design approach aims to re-work the fabric of the existing building to provide 8no. flats and refurbish the 4no. shop units. The envelope of the building would be altered by the proposed works. As part of the development the applicant indicates an intension to drop the joists at first and second floor to improve/increase headroom on each floor this together with the proposed rear dormer extension and reopening of original openings on the upper floor will better facilitate the proposed residential provision. The roof will be re-slatted, and walls re-rendered. Shopfronts will be in aluminium and other windows fitted with uPVC. All shops will retain their individual access points and there will be three separate access points servicing the studio flats. On the whole, the approach involves an acceptable degree of intervention and the re-establishment of original openings, and the use of appropriate finish materials. The introduction of double doors on the rear access to the basement unit is an uncharacteristic intervention but is justified by the applicant on the

basis that it would be the only source of access and light to this unit and occupies an unobtrusive location at the rear of the property. On balance, the proposals comply with the requirements of replacement Local development plan Policy SW11 in respect of this issue.

Impact on the Conservation Area

Pontmorlais West is characterised by dense urban form, buildings set directly at the back of pavement and a strong horizontal emphasis to the street frontage, with upper floors historically in mixed or ancillary use.

While the building contributes positively to the townscape through its scale, plot rhythm, and overall form, the existing ground-floor shopfronts are of mixed quality and include later interventions that detract from architectural coherence. Upper floors have been underutilised, which the appraisal identifies as a recurring issue within the Conservation Area.

The proposal retains the established scale and massing of the building when viewed from Pontmorlais West. The subdivision of the ground floor into smaller retail units reflects the historic pattern of narrow frontages typical of the area and reinforces the fine-grained rhythm of the street.

The rear dormer extension is confined to the rear roof slope and has been designed to avoid any increase in the principal ridge height. As such, it does not interrupt the established roofscape when viewed from the public realm and does not alter the legibility of the historic street frontage.

The choice of materials and architectural detailing involving the use of slate roof painted render and aluminium shopfronts is acceptable and will replace the poor-quality modern shopfronts with a higher quality replacement. The reopening of original windows is acceptable as long as the materials used are sympathetic to the local situation. Given the location, the rooflights to be used in the development will need to be flush fitting conservation rooflights and this can all be achieved through applying conditions to any permission that might be granted.

Though just outside of the Conservation Area the proposal directly addresses several issues highlighted in the Character Appraisal, including the loss of active use on upper floors, the presence of unsympathetic shopfront alterations, and the need for regeneration that works alongside conservation objectives. This weighs heavily in favour of the proposal.

By bringing vacant upper floors back into residential use, improving the coherence and quality of the ground-floor frontage, and retaining the building's overall form and scale, the scheme supports the long-term vitality and architectural integrity of this part of the town. The rear dormer, by virtue of its discreet siting, allows viable reuse without eroding the historic street scene.

The application property sits outside but on the boundary of the town centre conservation area and has the potential to impact its setting. For the most part, the proposed alterations are internal and aimed at providing the necessary reconfiguration to facilitate the provision of the studio flats. The re-use of the currently blocked up original windows on the front elevation is welcome. The proposed external finishes are appropriate to the property and the wider locality. Dormer extensions are not uncommon in the area, and, in this instance,

the structure would to some extent be screened from the conservation area by intervening buildings and natural vegetation. The application has been subject to consultation with the Council's heritage advisor, and subject to the reinstated windows being appropriately restored there are no objections to the proposed development. Accordingly, the proposed alterations to the building are considered acceptable and in compliance with the requirements of Replacement Local Development Plan Policies SW11 and CW1 as far as the impact of the development on the conservation area is concerned.

Highway Considerations

The application site has frontage on to Pontmorlais West and a service lane to the side of the property and there is no vehicle parking space associated with the property at present and there is no intention to provide any under this planning application. Parking restrictions and traffic regulation orders are in place on the street frontage. The proposed development would secure the provision of 7no. cycle stands and has good access to the Town Centre and is also close to local bus stops. Consequently, the Head of Engineering and Highways has not raised any objection to the proposed development, and the proposals are considered compliant with the requirements of Policy SW12 of the Replacement Local Development Plan.

Amenity Impacts

In terms of visual amenity, the proposed development has the potential to deliver substantial improvements to a fairly prominent building set of the edge of the Town Centre Conservation Area. The restoration will be undertaken using appropriate finish materials to the external fabric of the building and new windows and rooflights will ensure acoustic and thermal insulation to current building regulations. The establishment of four shop units and the provision of new shopfronts represent a substantial visual improvement over the existing arrangement, and the reopening of second floor windows will go some way towards restoring the original appearance of the building. The dormer extension would be to the rear of the building and would not be readily visible from the street frontage or from any public areas on the High Street due to the presence of intervening buildings. Furthermore, it will not project above the ridge of the building.

There is some concern that some of the proposed studio apartments are smaller than would normally be expected the smallest two only having a floorspace of 25 sq m. with two of the others also under 30 sq.m. in overall floorspace. By contrast the largest apartment in the basement is some 120 sq.m. though that has limited lighting with only a set of french doors on the rear elevation offering a source of natural daylight. The applicant's agent acknowledges that a number of units fall below the 37 sq.m. benchmark that is often applied to new build developments arguing that a departure from that standard is justified on the basis that, the proposals are financially viable and would bring a redundant and underused asset back into use, that the building lends itself to the division as designated in terms of the architectural constraints presented and that the lack of floorspace is compensated by design quality. The agent also points out that despite the limited floorspace, each unit would retain its functional amenity with each unit fully self-contained with integrated facilities.

Nothing in planning policy at the local or national level sets minimum floorspace standards for residential conversions and as such the acceptability of the proposed scheme is a judgement call on whether or not the proposed units deliver an acceptable standard of residential amenity for those who would occupy them. In this case, and whilst there are

clear concerns in this case, the proposed development on balance delivers improvement to the building and a type of accommodation that is in high demand in the area and as such, despite certain concerns, the proposals are considered acceptable in this instance.

Ecology

The Council Ecologist has raised a number of issues with regard to the proposed development principal among which was the lack of a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal to support the proposed development. However, following an exchange of correspondence with the applicant's agent and confirmation that the open areas and trees along the banks of the Nant Morlais will be unaffected by the proposed development no objection is raised to the proposals on ecological grounds. The submitted Green Infrastructure Statement and Bat Survey Report both are acceptable documents that both follow industry standards in the manner that they have been surveyed and prepared and the overall findings are sound. As such the proposals subject to them being able to deliver Net Benefit for Biodiversity through the application of planning conditions to any permission that might be issued is acceptable, and compliant with the requirements of Replacement Local Development Plan Policy EnW1.

Flood Risk

A small undeveloped part of the site adjacent to the Nant Morlais falls within Flood Zones 2 and 3 as defined by The Flood Map for Planning prepared and Maintained by Natural Resources Wales. Highly vulnerable development would not normally be permitted within these flood zones. However, NRW have advised that having regard to the limited extent and location of flood risk shown to be affecting the application site the proposals could be considered acceptable subject to the developer being made aware of the potential flood risks to these areas. A copy of the correspondence has been forwarded to the applicant's agent.

CONCLUSIONS

The site lies within settlement limits where there is a presumption in favour of development subject to other policy and material considerations being satisfied. In this instance, the proposal is consistent with key policy concerns and is demonstrably satisfactory in terms of the proposed land use, impact on the conservation area, highways, ecology, and flooding. Whilst there are some amenity concerns around the size of some of the units, on balance this is outweighed by the benefits that the current scheme offers.

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 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 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.

RECOMMENDATION: BE APPROVED for 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:

- TP revs 12-26 a
- Bat Survey Report may 2026
- Green Infrastructure Statement
- Planning and Design Statement

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

3. Details of all external materials and finishes, including render colour, window frames, shopfront framing, and signage backgrounds, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to their installation. The development shall thereafter be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason - To ensure that the external appearance of the proposed development will be in keeping with the character of the area and adjoining buildings in the interests of visual amenity and to accord with Policy SW11 of the Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council Replacement Local Development Plan

4. Prior to the occupation of the flats, details of cycle storage facilities, as illustrated in Drawing No. CCE0/9, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The cycle storage facilities shall be provided in accordance with the approved details prior to the beneficial occupation of the flats and retained thereafter for such purposes.

Reason - To promote sustainable modes of transport in accordance with Policy SW12 of the Merthyr Tydfil Replacement Local Development Plan.

5. Prior to the development being brought into use, the bin storage facilities, as illustrated in Drawing No. CCE0/9, shall be provided and retained thereafter for such purposes.

Reason - In the interests of highway safety and general amenity in accordance with Policy SW11 of the Merthyr Tydfil Replacement Local Development Plan.

6. Prior to installation, full details of all new windows on the principal elevation shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Details shall include scaled elevation drawings (1:20), sections, opening method, frame depth, colour and finish. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason - To ensure that the external appearance of the proposed development will be in keeping with the character of the area and adjoining buildings in the interests of visual amenity and to accord with Policy SW11 of the Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council Replacement Local Development Plan

7. Prior to installation, details of the rooflights, which shall be conservation-style units, set flush with the roof plane, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason - To ensure that the external appearance of the proposed development will be in keeping with the character of the area and adjoining buildings in the interests of visual amenity and to accord with Policy SW11 of the Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council Replacement Local Development Plan

8. Prior to installation, full details of the proposed shopfronts shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The details shall include:

- Scaled elevation and section drawings at 1:20 and 1:10;
- Details of stallrisers, pilasters, fascias, cornices, doors and glazing;
- Materials, finishes, colours, frame profiles and sections;
- Details of the signage zone, including illumination (if any);
- Details of any internal roller shutters which shall be of a brick-bond style.

The shopfronts shall be installed strictly in accordance with the approved details.

Reason - To ensure that the external appearance of the proposed development will be in keeping with the character of the area and adjoining buildings in the interests of visual amenity and to accord with Policy SW11 of the Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council Replacement Local Development Plan

10. Demolition or construction works shall not take place outside the hours of 08:00 and 18:00 Mondays to Fridays and 08:00 and 13:00; on Saturdays and at no time on Sundays or Public Holidays.

Reason - To ensure that the noise emitted/activities are not a source of nuisance to occupants of nearby properties in accordance with Policies SW11 and EnW4 of the Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council Replacement Local Development Plan.

11. No surface water from any increase in the roof area of the building or impermeable surfaces within its curtilage shall be allowed to drain directly or indirectly to the public sewerage system.

Reason - To prevent hydraulic overloading of the public sewerage system, to protect the health and safety of existing residents and ensure no pollution of, or detriment to the environment in accordance with Policy EnW4 of the Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council Replacement Local Development Plan.

RECOMMENDATION ENDORSED



Director of Neighbourhood Services

DATE: 30.06.2026