

**Application No.**  
P/16/0033

**Date**  
18th August 2016

**Determining Authority**  
MTCBC

**Proposed Development**

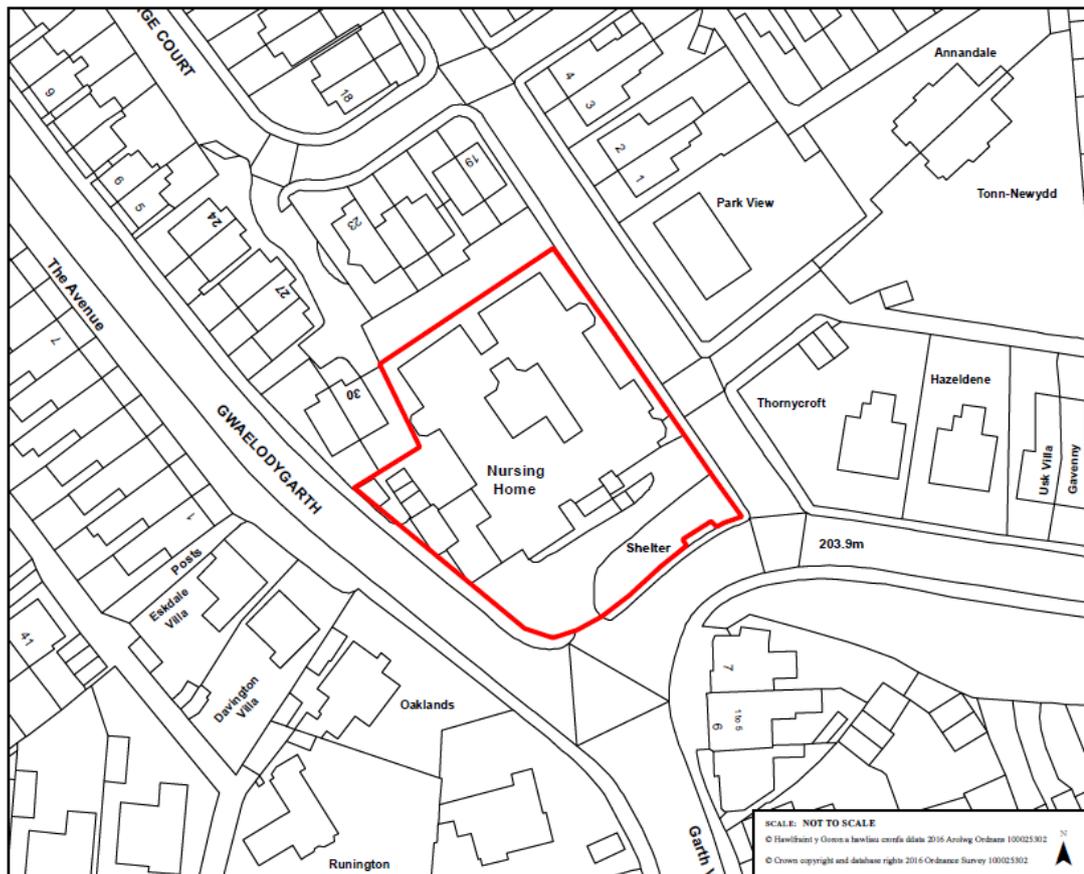
**Location**

**Name & Address of Applicant/Agent**

Conversion and extension of former nursing home to accommodate 23 dwellings

Former Merthyr Tydfil General Hospital  
High Street  
Merthyr Tydfil

Dr Das  
c/o Stephen George Architects  
25 Courtland Terrace  
Merthyr Tydfil  
CF47 0DT



**APPLICATION SITE**

This application relates to the former Merthyr Tydfil General Hospital building, which is situated in a prominent position with its main frontage orientated (south) towards High Street. The former hospital building is considered to be of local importance due to its architectural and historical merit that has a positive contribution to the quality of the Town Centre Conservation Area. The building was most recently used as a nursing home and has been vacant for a number of years. Whilst the exterior of the building generally appears to be in reasonable condition, there are evident signs of neglect with parts of the building deteriorating.

The site measures approximately 0.24 hectares and is largely occupied by the footprint of the former hospital building. The main southern part of the building appears to be made up

of four sections, each with different features to the front elevation. To the rear of the building are two wings that enclose a central court yard. There is an overgrown embankment next to the rear wings of the building and a hardstanding/parking area to the front. The site is bound to the north by existing dwellings that form part of Heritage Court which are elevated above the site. To the south-west and north-east are Gwaelodygarth and Alexandra Road respectively, which rise above the site from south-east to north-west resulting in part of the former hospital building being situated below the highway. Beyond these highways are residential properties, which are generally elevated above the roads and orientated towards the application site.

## PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

Full planning permission is sought for the conversion of the former hospital building to accommodate a total of 23 dwellings, including two extensions to the rear (northern) elevation. The proposal would essentially involve the sub-division of the property to create 9 no. one bedroom dwellings, 10 no. two bedroom dwellings and 4 no. 3 bedroom dwellings.

The majority of the building would be retained with the existing architectural features on the external elevations being restored/repared. The existing canopy above the main front entrance would be removed. The central court yard area would be utilised as a communal garden area, which would involve the demolition of an enclosed corridor that links together two rear wings of the building.

The proposed extensions would be situated on elevated land on the end of each rear wing of the building and would each accommodate a one bedroom flat. The extensions would both measure 8.6m wide by 5.9m deep and 8.1m high to the ridge of the existing building. The external finishes of the extensions would include facing brickwork to match the existing building with a slate roof.

The hardstanding area to the front of the building would be re-surfaced and a total of 6 parking spaces would be created with an associated turning area. Four of these parking bays would be suitable for disabled users. The proposal would rely on any additional parking requirements being accommodated along the adjoining highways. The submitted plans indicate that a total of 13 parking spaces could be accommodated along Gwaelodygarth and 9 parking spaces could be provided along Alexandra Road.

Whilst a detailed landscaping scheme has not been provided, the submitted plans indicate the existing trees to the front of the building would be removed and the area replanted. A new planted area would be created in the communal garden area and along part of the northern and eastern boundaries of the site.

## PLANNING HISTORY

P/97/0331 - Retention of canopy to front elevation.

Permission GRANTED on 04.09.1997

## CONSULTATION

### Internal consultees

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| Engineering and Traffic Group Leader                               | - | No objection.   |
| Economic Development   | - | No response.  |
| Town Planning Division's Policy & Implementation Group Leader      | - | No objection.   |
| Town Planning Division's Design, Heritage and Conservation Officer | - | No objection.   |
| Town Planning Division's Countryside Officer                       | - | No objection.   |
| Town Planning Division's Landscape Architect                       | - | A lack of consideration has been given to the hard and soft landscaping of the external areas within the site. Conditions to address this issue are required. |
| Environmental Health Manager                                       | - | No objection subject to conditions relating to construction hours, dust management and contamination.   |

### External consultees

- |                                      |   |  |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|
| Glamorgan Gwent Archaeological Trust | - | No objection subject to a condition relating to a programme of historic building recording and analysis. |
| Welsh Water                          | - | No objection subject to conditions relating to foul and surface water drainage.                          |
| Wales & West Utilities               | - | No objection.  |
| Western Power Distribution           | - | No response.   |

## PUBLICITY

In accordance with the Town & Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Wales) Order 2012, letters were sent to neighbouring properties on the 4<sup>th</sup> February 2016,

five site notices were displayed within the vicinity of the site on the 11<sup>th</sup> February 2016 and a notice was placed in the local newspaper on the 18<sup>th</sup> February 2016.

As a result of this publicity exercise 5 letters of objection were received, which raised the following concerns:

- The development would result in highway safety issues in the area with limited parking within the site. There would be an increase in traffic movements onto a busy main road which is used as a bus route and has a partially blind bend. Additional parking along The Avenue and Alexandra Road would lead to further congestion. It would also be difficult for pedestrians to cross the road safely due to the likely increase in traffic in the area.
- The provision of on-street parking along The Avenue would exacerbate parking issues for existing residents.
- Children often play in the streets and vehicles usually reverse along Heritage Court, Alexandra Close and Gwendoline Street, which is already dangerous without any increase in traffic from the development.
- There are concerns that Heritage Court would be used as an overflow area for parking which would cause contention between residents.
- The size of the plots is unsustainable with regard to outside space for residents, noise control, parking, refuse collection and emergency vehicle access.
- The development of the site may cause damage to existing retaining walls along the boundary of the site which support garden areas and pose a safety risk to existing residents.
- The provision of a communal garden area would attract groups of people which will increase the level of noise and disturbance in the area, possibly at anti-social hours.
- The proposal would likely result in disruption to existing services e.g. water and electricity.

## POLICY CONTEXT

The following policies are relevant in the determination of this application:

### National planning policy

Planning Policy Wales (PPW), 8<sup>th</sup> Edition, January 2016:

#### *Section 4 – Planning for Sustainability*

Para 4.11.9 – 4.11.12 sets out the principles of good design in new development proposals, which should take into account its relationship to its surrounding context. Regard should be given to the appropriate scale, appearance, landscaping and quality of building design and should also be accessible for all.

## *Section 5 – Conserving and Improving Natural Heritage and the Coast*

Para 5.5.1 – 5.5.3 notes that the impact a development proposal may have on wildlife or the landscape is an important consideration in determining applications. Where ever possible adverse effects on the environment should be avoided or acceptably minimised.

## *Section 6 – Conserving the Historic Environment*

Para 6.5.17 highlights that proposed developments located within a designated conservation areas should seek to preserve or enhance its character, appearance and setting.

Para 6.5.20 notes that regard should be given to the visual, historic and amenity contribution of trees in conservation areas and any new planting should be consistent with the character and appearance of the area.

## *Section 8 - Transport*

Para 8.7.1 sets out the criterion that should be considered where transport implications may occur, such as impacts on local travel demand, public transport provision, accessibility and highway safety.

## *Section 9 - Housing*

Para 9.3.1 – 9.3.4 highlights that new housing schemes should be well integrated with and connect to the existing patterns of settlements. In determining applications for new housing, including conversions and adaptation, particular regard shall be given to the area's character, amenity and density. High quality design and landscaping standards are also important.

Technical Advice Notes (TAN):

- TAN 5 Nature Conservation and Planning, September 2009
- TAN 6 Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities, July 2010
- TAN 11 Noise, October 1997
- TAN 12 Design, March 2016
- TAN 15 Development and Flood Risk, July 2004
- TAN 16 Sport, Recreation and Open Space, January 2009
- TAN 18 Transport, March 2007

## Local planning policy

Merthyr Tydfil Local Development Plan (LDP) 2006-2021:

- Policy BW1 - Development strategy – Primary Growth Area
- Policy BW4 - Settlement boundaries / locational constraints
- Policy BW5 - Natural heritage
- Policy BW6 - Townscape and built heritage

- Policy BW7 - Sustainable design and place making
- Policy BW8 - Development and the water environment
- Policy BW12 - Development proposals and transport
- Policy BW17 - Secure community infrastructure benefits
- Policy AS4 - Historic landscape
- Policy AS22 - Affordable housing contributions
- Policy TB11 - Access, parking and accessibility of local facilities

#### 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

#### Other material considerations:

- Merthyr Tydfil Town Centre Conservation Area Character Appraisal, June 2009
- CSS Wales Parking Standards 2008

## PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

### Land use

The application site is located within the settlement boundary and Primary Growth Area as defined by the LDP, where the majority of development is encouraged. As such, the principal of the development is supported by policies BW1 and BW4 of the LDP. Given that the site is located within a predominantly residential area, it is considered that the conversion of the building to accommodate residential units would be appropriate and would not be out of character with its surroundings. Furthermore, it is acknowledged that the building is currently in a poor condition and has been vacant for a number of years. The proposed conversion and restoration works would enable the building, which is considered to be of local historical and architectural importance, to be brought back into beneficial use. Therefore the principal of the development is considered to be acceptable.

### Design

The majority of the external envelope of the building would be retained or restored and unsympathetic modern additions would be demolished, such as the enclosed corridor with a flat roof that links the rear wings of the building. The removal of this corridor would enable the central court yard area to be opened up further and used as a communal garden.

The proposed extensions to the rear of the building would be of an appropriate design incorporating windows of a similar style to the hospital. The extensions would follow the existing form of the building in terms of its mass and scale and would generally be seen as a minor addition to the existing building.

The materials used on the rear extensions and as part of any repair works, including the replacement of external windows and doors, should be sympathetic to the historic

appearance of the building. Whilst specific details of the materials to be used have not been provided, the proposed design approach is to match the existing finishes. A condition can be imposed on any permission to agree the external finishes to the elevations, roof, windows and doors.

Whilst the submitted plans indicate the removal of trees at the front of the building and the provision of new planted areas within the central court yard and around the site, specific details have not been provided at this stage. The approach to the proposed soft landscaping within the site is considered to be acceptable in principle. Particular care should be given to ensure the landscaped areas are sensitively designed to respect and reflect the character of the building and surrounding area. In particular, landscaping works to the front of the building would have the greatest potential to impact on the quality of the development, as well as the character and visual amenity of the conservation area. It is noted that the Town Planning Division's Landscape Architect has raised concerns in respect of the lack of detail provided at this stage. A condition can be imposed on any permission to agree the specific details of the landscaping scheme.

It is considered that the proposal would improve the general appearance of the former hospital building and would have a positive impact on the character of the surrounding area. Therefore, the proposal complies with policy BW7 of the LDP.

### Amenities

The properties that have the greatest potential to be affected by the development would be Nos. 19 – 23 Heritage Court, which adjoin the northern boundary of the site and are opposite the proposed rear extensions.

It is noted that the application site is at a significantly lower level than the rear garden areas serving Heritage Court and the majority of the proposed rear extensions would be hidden behind a 5m high retaining wall and boundary fence. Part of the roof of the extensions would be visible above the rear garden fences with a setback of approximately 3.5m to 5.7m. It is considered that the extensions would not result in overbearing impacts and there would be no windows that would overlook the neighbouring properties.

Concerns have been raised as a result of the publicity exercise in respect of noise and disturbance from the communal garden which could attract large groups of people. The court yard would primarily be used to access the dwellings in the rear wings of the building. Nevertheless, it is considered that the domestic use of the communal garden would have no greater impact on the area than is to be expected from a private garden.

Concerns were also raised in respect of any damage to neighbouring garden walls and the disruption to existing services e.g. water and electricity. Any potential damage to neighbouring properties would be a civil matter and would not constitute a reason for the refusal of this application. Additionally, any disruption to services would normally be temporary in nature and would be a matter for the service providers to regulate.

It is considered that the proposed development would not have an adverse impact on residential amenity. Therefore, the proposal complies with policy BW7 of the LDP.

## Heritage

The former hospital building is located in the Town Centre Conservation Area and is identified in the Conservation Area Character Appraisal as a locally listed building of historical and architectural merit. The building is also located adjacent to a group of large villas that form a gateway into the conservation area from the north-east.

The proposed development would retain much of the external elevations of the building, which can be repaired with some original features reinstated, such as decorative stone balustrades and a staircase to the front facade. The existing slate roof would also need to be restored. The proposed extensions on the rear elevation would be sympathetic to the character and appearance of the building with matching exterior features, including decorative plinths, quoins and window heads.

It is considered that the extension and conversion of the former hospital building, would significantly improve the current appearance of the building, which would enhance the character of the conservation area. The beneficial use of the building would also assist in ensuring the building is appropriately maintained and continues to have a positive impact on the quality of the surrounding environment. In this regard it is noted that the Design, Heritage and Conservation Officer has not raised any objection. Therefore, the proposal complies with policies BW6 and AS4 of the LDP.

## Highways

Access to each of the dwellings would be via the main entrance to the building on the southern elevation, which includes a ramped walkway. The majority of the dwellings would then be accessed through the building from the lobby with the two storey dwellings (located in the rear wings of the building) being accessed from the central court yard. An internal lift would also be provided to ensure ease of access to the first floor level for people with mobility issues. As such, it is considered that suitable pedestrian access can be accommodated within the site to meet the needs of future occupiers.

The existing vehicular access into the site from High Street would be retained as part of the proposal, with the existing hardstanding area to the front of the building being resurfaced to provide 6 allocated parking spaces. Access would also be provided from the car park to a covered area at the lower ground floor level, which would be used to store recycling/waste bins. It is considered that the former uses of the building as a hospital and care home would have likely generated a fair amount of traffic from staff and visitors. However, it is difficult to establish any precise details, particularly given that the building has been vacant for a number of years.

The majority of the proposed dwellings would accommodate 1 and 2 bedrooms with 4 of the residential units providing 3 bedrooms. Given the size of the dwellings, it is considered that these would likely attract individuals, couples or small families. As such, the provision of one parking space for 1 and 2 bedroom dwellings and two parking spaces for the 3 bedroom dwellings would be appropriate. Due to the constraints of the site, the majority of the parking needs would have to be met along Gwaelodygarth and Alexandra Road. A parking layout plan has been submitted in support of the application to illustrate how many cars would potentially park along the highway to either side of the site.

It is acknowledged that on-street parking in the area is sometimes problematic, particularly along Gwaelodygarth, where existing residents rely on parking along one side of the carriageway. It is also accepted that the proposed development would have an impact on the demand for on-street parking in the area. However, regard should also be given to the previous uses of the building and the potential impact this may have had on the area. Indeed if the building was refurbished, it could continue to be used as a care home facility without any further planning permission.

It should be noted that the parking spaces along the highway would not be allocated for the proposed development and would remain equally available to existing residents in the area. Whilst the proposal would undoubtedly have an impact on the demand for on-street parking in the area, it would not differ significantly to that which might have been expected from its former uses. It is considered that the existing highways adjoining the site have some capacity to accommodate additional on-street parking. The Engineering and Traffic Group Leader has highlighted that it would be necessary to amend the existing Traffic Regulation Orders currently in place along Gwaelodygarth i.e. the provision of double yellow lines. There are concerns that the increased demand for on-street parking in the area may lead to vehicles more regularly being parked along both sides of Gwaelodygarth, which may impinge on the free flow of traffic and cause highway hazards. A condition could be attached to any permission that requires a scheme be submitted to extend the double yellow lines at the junction of Gwaelodygarth and High Street, to ensure vehicles are not parked too close to the junction. The scheme would also need to include the provision of double yellow lines along one side of Gwaelodygarth to minimise any potential for indiscriminate parking, which may impact on the free flow of traffic in the area.

The application site is located on the fringe (within approximately 250m) of the town centre and within 1km of the central bus and train stations. There is also a bus stop located next to the southern boundary of the site. It is considered that the dwellings would be in a sustainable location with good access to public transport, which would be suitable for families with low or no car ownership.

It is noted that the majority of the concerns raised as a result of the publicity exercise related to on-street parking problems and the potential highway safety concerns as a result of any increase in traffic in the area. Given the size of the building and the limited space within the site to accommodate off-street parking, it is considered that any reasonable use of the building would inevitably have an impact on the existing highway. Notwithstanding the impact on parking in the area, regard should also be given to the importance of the building and the contribution it has on the quality of the area. The benefits of bringing the building back into use to provide residential units within a sustainable location are considered to outweigh any impact the development may have on the parking demand in the area. Regard has been given to the level of traffic that would be generated by the proposed development, the vehicular access into the site and pedestrian movement in the area. In this respect the Engineering and Traffic Group Leader has not raised any capacity issues or highway safety concerns. Therefore, the proposal complies with policies BW12 and TB11 of the LDP.

### Environment

Due to the poor condition of the former hospital building, it was identified by the Town Planning Division's Countryside Officer that there was potential for the building to be used

by birds and bats. As such, an Ecological Survey Report was submitted in support of this application. It concluded that there was no evidence of bats using the building with a low number bird species recorded at the site. Therefore, the building in its current condition is not considered to be of any significant ecological value and the proposed development would not adversely impact on protected species. In this regard it is noted that the Town Planning Division's Countryside Officer is satisfied with the survey work carried out and has not raised any objection to the proposal. Therefore, the proposal complies with policy BW5 of the LDP.

### Planning obligations

The requirement for an affordable housing contribution or any other appropriate planning obligations has been assessed by the Town Planning Division's Policy and Implementation Group Leader using the Three Dragons Toolkit. In this instance no such planning obligations have been sought as this would likely render the development financially unviable. Therefore, the proposed development complies with policies BW17 and AS22 of the LDP.

### CONCLUSIONS

For the above reasons, the proposed development is considered to be acceptable and complies with the relevant LDP policies. The proposed development would enable a building of historic importance to be refurbished and brought back into use, which would enhance the character and appearance of the Town Centre Conservation Area. The residential use of the building is considered to be appropriate and would be in a sustainable location, with good access to public transport and other local services/facilities. Although the development would not result in highway safety concerns, it is accepted that the development would have an impact on parking along the highway. It is considered that the merits of the development outweigh any on-street parking issues. Accordingly, the following recommendation is made:

### **RECOMMENDATION: BE APPROVED** subject to 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:

Drawing 7868-05C (Proposals - Lower Ground Plan)

Drawing 7868-06C (Proposals - Upper Ground Floor Plan)

Drawing 7868-07C (Proposals - First Floor Plan)

Drawing 7868-08B (Proposed Elevations and Sections)

Drawing 7868-09B (Parking Proposals) Rev B

Drawing 7868-10 (Proposed Roof Plan and Courtyard Elevations)

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

3. **No development or site clearance shall take place** until there has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority a scheme of hard and soft landscaping. The scheme shall include indications of all existing trees (including spread and species) and hedgerows on the land, identify those to be retained and set out measures for their protection throughout the course of development. The hard landscaping works shall be completed prior to the occupation of the residential units.

**Reason** - To ensure that the new development will be visually attractive within the Town Centre Conservation Area and in the interests of amenity, to accord with Policy BW7 of the Merthyr Tydfil Local Development Plan.

4. All planting, seeding or turfing comprised in the approved details of landscaping shall be carried out in the first planting and seeding seasons following the occupation of the buildings or the completion of the development, whichever is the sooner; and any trees or plants which within a period of 5 years from the completion of the development die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of similar size and species.

**Reason** - To ensure that the new development will be visually attractive within the Town Centre Conservation Area and in the interests of amenity, and to accord with Policy BW7 of the Merthyr Tydfil Local Development Plan.

5. **Prior to works commencing on site** details / samples of the materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the rear extensions and existing building, including the external windows and doors, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. 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 Town Centre Conservation Area and adjoining buildings in the interests of visual amenity and to accord with Policy BW7 of the Merthyr Tydfil Local Development Plan.

6. **No works shall commence on site** until an appropriate programme of historic building recording and analysis has been secured and implemented in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority.

**Reason** - As the building is of archaeological and cultural significance the specified records are required to mitigate impact and in accordance with policy BW6 of the Merthyr Tydfil Local Development Plan.

7. **Before works commence on site**, a scheme for the provision of extended double yellow lines at the junction of Gwaelodygarth and High Street and the provision of double yellow lines along one side of Gwaelodygarth, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The approved scheme shall be implemented prior to the occupation of any residential unit.

**Reason** - To minimise the potential for indiscriminate parking that may impact on the free flow of vehicular traffic along Gwaelodygarth, in the interest of highway safety and in accordance with policy BW12 of the Merthyr Tydfil Local Development Plan.

8. **No development shall take place** until details, including structural calculations and facing materials, of any retaining wall which exceeds 1 metre in height have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The walls shall be completed in accordance with the approved details before the development hereby approved is brought into beneficial use.

**Reason** - In the interest of safety and visual amenity in accordance with Policy BW7 of the Merthyr Tydfil Local Development Plan .

9. Demolition or construction works shall not take place outside the hours of 08:00 to 18:00 Mondays to Fridays and 09:00 to 14:00 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 Policy BW7 of the Merthyr Tydfil Local Development Plan.

10. Notwithstanding the provisions of schedule 2, part 1, classes A and E of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 (as amended for Wales) (or any order revoking and re-enacting that order with or without modification), no extensions, buildings or raised platforms shall be erected other than those expressly authorised by this permission.

**Reason** - In the interest of visual amenity in accordance with Policy BW7 of the Merthyr Tydfil Local Development Plan.

## **INFORMATIVES**

1. The applicant/developer is advised to contact Welsh Water on 0800 917 2652 or via email at [developer.services@dwrwymru.com](mailto:developer.services@dwrwymru.com) in respect of any permissions required for the discharge of foul and surface water into the existing drainage systems.
  2. The applicant/developer is advised to contact the Highway and Traffic Group Leader on 01685 726216 in respect of any amendments to the existing Traffic Regulation Orders along Gwaelodygarth.
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