

**PLANNING SUPPORTING STATEMENT FOR A FULL
PLANNING APPLICATION TO EXTEND THE EXISTING
CLUB BUILDING AND IMPROVE FACILITIES AT
MARGAM YOUTH CLUB, GROESWEN PLAYING FIELDS,
KNIGHTS ROAD, MARGAM.**



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ABOVE: Margam Youth Club and Groeswen Playing Fields is accessed via a gated entrance off a spur road from Knights Road. The spur access road is fully tarmacked and curbed and with a pedestrian footway to each side. Footways have bollards installed to prevent unauthorised parking on pavements.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This statement has been prepared to support the submission of a planning application to Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council. The application seeks full planning permission for the extension of an existing club-house building and improvement in the facilities at Margam Youth Club.

1.2 The statement considers both the physical and policy context for the development and sets the design parameters to respond to this context. The statement gives consideration to the issue of amenity in terms of the character of the area, and to the potential impacts upon neighbours' amenity and explains how the applicant has carefully considered their design proposals to comply with current adopted planning policy and mitigate any adverse impacts. As part of the formal planning application the statement can, should the Local Planning Authority wish, form the basis of planning conditions on any approval notice.

1.3 The statement has been prepared by Kevin H. Jones pgDip Town Planning, M.R.T.P.I., a Chartered Town Planner who is both qualified and experienced in Development Management and operates a private planning consultancy based in Port Talbot and in line with the Royal Town Planning Institute code of conduct. The project itself is being assembled by the Margam Youth Club with all local professional assistance, with the design being produced by Seagrey Design and technical assistance in terms of drainage and structural engineering design being provided by Pebble Engineering, both also based within Sandfields, Port Talbot. The club aims to continue with this 'local' ethos through the development/construction stage, hoping to utilise as far as possible, local suppliers and construction firms within the Neath Port Talbot area to help realise the project.

2.0 BACKGROUND.

2.1 Margam Youth Club is a community use facility run on a 'not for profit' basis and with charitable status. The club and buildings have existed at the heart of the community for over 38 years and operates in conjunction with the use of the sports pitch on Groeswen playing fields to facilitate a number of local community football and outdoor recreation events. Those running and organising the club and coaching the various sporting activities all do so on a voluntary basis.

In the past, the club buildings have hosted a variety of community activities such as discos, judo, badminton, pool, table tennis and gymnastics. In addition to the regular weekly youth club for 5-12 year olds, the building has hosted coffee mornings and bingo evenings for the aged section of the community and regular after school clubs on week days, run by parents and often essential in providing care and activities for some children until parents finish work.

The club hosts an active football section with over 120 playing members and teams covering all age groups from under 5's to seniors and is actively involved with the 32-club strong Bridgend Port Talbot Junior Football League. On Saturdays the club holds inclusion football. On Sunday afternoons they organise a mini-browsers football team activity catering for the very young starting at 2 years old. A basketball team has recently started to use the club facilities. The club hosts a Tag rugby group for under 7's and also looks to offer seasonal activities such as cricket in the summer months.

In 2015, Margam Youth Club took over the 25 year lease on the Groeswen playing fields from Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council who were at that time looking to make cuts and close the playing fields. Since taking on the cost and responsibility to run and maintain the playing fields, the club now has regular use of its playing fields and facilities by Ysgol Cwm Bromptil, Groes Primary School and Afan College.

Today, the club buildings and playing fields host some form of activity 7 days a week and are open up to 9pm. The club facilities are closed only for public and bank holidays. There are no formal 'planning' restrictions upon the hours of use or days of use. A more detailed list of (pre-Covid restrictions as some activities are currently on hold) users and the days/times used for that activity can be provided to the Council if needed. Once the facilities have been extended and improved, the club expects to utilise the building up to 11pm.

The below chapter 3 highlights some of the physical shortcomings of the existing club building in relation to existing users. The club is a true community facility offering something across all age groups and physical ability, though the current building constrains what events and activities can take place and the numbers that can be accommodated. The club Trustees feel there is clearly demand within the community for more use of the building but that the club has outgrown what the current building can accommodate.

The current cost of running both the club buildings and the playing fields costs around £15,000 per annum (insurance costs, utilities, changing rooms and club buildings maintenance and repair, cleaning, sports and activity equipment, pitch marking, grass cutting etc, etc) with such costs only likely to increase into the future. The club hopes that the expanded facilities will enable them to offer the building for occasional private events such as birthday parties or perhaps business network meetings and as such, generate valuable additional income in order to help with these costs. If successful as anticipated, the club may even generate employment opportunities to organise various activities and events and care take the site.

3.0 SITE DESCRIPTION AND EXISTING PHYSICAL CONTEXT.

3.1 Margam Youth Football Club is housed within a 354m² building situated to the South East end of Groeswen playing fields, Margam, within the Local Planning Authority area of Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council. The club house and playing fields are accessed via a gated entrance and spur road off Knights Road, to the East. Knights Road (which runs

into Toronto Avenue) is a residential street of largely 1950's style Local Authority type semi-detached dwellings and the occasional two storey block of flats. Residential rear gardens back on to the playing fields forming the north, South and East boundaries to the fields. To the West is the railway line and the A4241 Harbour Way linking Port Talbot with the M4.

3.2 The playing fields contain two buildings linked via the car park within the entrance. The first building houses changing room facilities and playing fields equipment and refuse storage. The second building, which is the subject of this application, is the club building offering approximately 290m² (net internal) floor area consisting of a 20m x 10.5m indoor sports hall, male and female toilet facilities, a domestic style kitchen area and small lounge and two rooms used as storage and as a computer games suite in association with the weekly youth club.



LEFT: The Junction of Knights Road with the spur lane giving access to Groeswen Playing Fields. The roads surrounding the playing fields consist of mainly 1930's and 1950's style semidetached housing which backs on to the playing fields.

3.3 The club building is of largely blockwork construction with a rendered external appearance. Shallow pitched roofs are covered with roofing sheet and sheet cladding to the upper part of the mono pitched roof covered extensions wrapping around the North and East corner of the sports hall and accommodating the toilets, lounge/kitchen and computer/storage rooms. Windows currently existing are at high level and covered with mesh external security grills. There are no existing windows which allow for a view out of the building.

3.4 The existing car park is tarmacked to the entrance and the rear of the changing room building and provides for 23 parking spaces in a 60-degree angled layout of demarcated spaces. This carpark has been extended to the rear of the club house building with a further area of compacted hardcore surface parking capable of containing up to an estimated additional 18 spaces (total spaces up to 41).

3.5 The entrance to the club building is via a set of double doors and level threshold next to the car park. Once within the building, an entrance lobby area gives access to the sports hall, separate small lounge/kitchen room, the toilets and to the computer room and storage room. Whilst separate male and female toilets are provided, these facilities are grossly inadequate and without proper separate disabled facilities. Ladies W.C. facilities are particularly poor with access to one cubicle via another meaning only one useable W.C. The current kitchen facility is also inadequate, being comprised of domestic kitchen units, sink and domestic hob and microwave. In practice, its current use is little more than an area in which to make tea/coffee or sell sweets and cold drinks. The lounge area provides seating for up to 18 people and so is too small for even just two football teams to get together socially before or after a match. Indeed, after match/tournament presentations often have to be held elsewhere at other clubs. With the lounge area so small and crowded, circulation space is also very poor for those with mobility difficulties.



Left; Existing small lounge and kitchen formed from domestic type units and a counter. The lounge is often too small for after match social gatherings and presentations. Circulation space is poor for those with mobility difficulties and whilst there are window viewing opportunities into the sports hall, only high level windows let in light from outside and no opportunity to view activities out on the sports pitch.

Right; Existing kitchen area is small and unsuitable for much other than making tea, coffee or very light snacks for a number of people when attempting to cater for team events



3.6 The lounge also provides an area in which to view the activities taking place in the hall, but no ability to view sports taking place outside on the sports pitches due to only high level windows existing. In order to make adequate provision for existing activities taking place at Margam Youth Club as well as cater for new community uses/events within the building proposed in the future, the club requires this proposed extension to the building to provide much needed toilet facilities including disabled provision, an expanded lounge area and proper kitchen/bar preparation and serving area.



Left; Existing combined disabled and ladies toilet provision unacceptable with a toilet cubicle accessed via the current disabled toilet provision.

4.0 THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT.

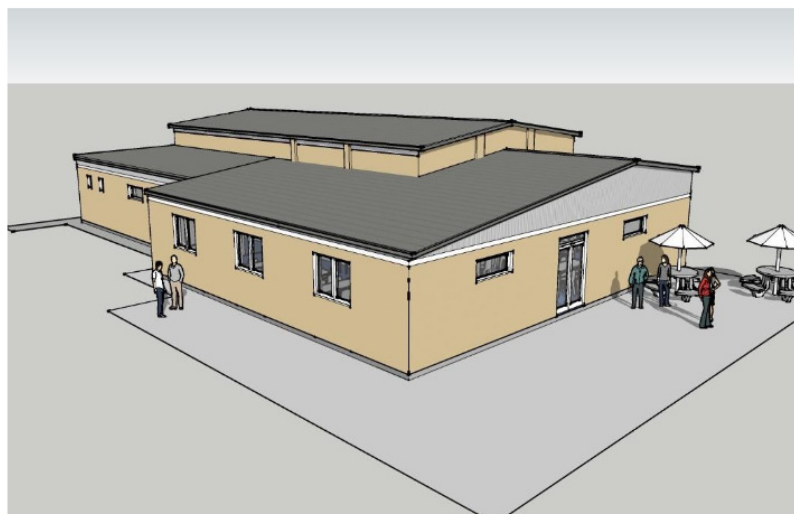
4.1 The application proposes a 165m² extension to the existing building in lean-to form wrapping around the north west corner of the existing sports hall and joining onto the existing lean-to projection currently accommodating the lounge and kitchen area. The additional space created in the extension allows for a reworking and improvement of the

toilet facilities to increase capacity of both male and female W.C. arrangements and provide a separate unisex disabled toilet facility to the required standards.



Above; Photo shows the general area in which the proposed new extension would sit. The area chosen to extend is away from nearby housing which is the other side of the building. The proposed extension sloping roof will tie in with the existing roof of the projecting lean-to shown in the photo, then wrap around the building to give a single storey gable projection from the existing sports hall gable.

Below; Artists impression of the building same area of the building following extension. Further 3D views are included within the application submission of plans.



4.2 The lounge area is expanded to provide a space capable of holding approximately 112 people seated within a space that can be easily sectioned off to accommodate different activities. The area provides for viewing activities within the sports hall and also out to the external sports pitch via windows at standard level looking in the direction of the playing fields. Double French doors provide both fire escape and lead out to the new hard surface patio viewing area. This new patio area will be laid in a way so as to allow permeability of surface water to soak away below or onto the surrounding grassed playing fields. New windows and the new French doors will be protected against crime when the building is not in use by colour coated roller shutters fitted within the window/door reveals.

4.3 Between the new lounge and toilet facilities, a new kitchen, kitchen store/preparation area and bar servery area is created to a commercial standard allowing for the preparation of hot and cold foods/snacks to club users when needed. The club recognises that expanded facilities may mean an increased demand for parking and so to mitigate for the impact of this, the club proposes to properly surface and demarcate the 18 individual parking spaces within the existing compacted surface parking area. It will also extend this area slightly to accommodate an additional 12 new parking spaces and provide for dedicated disabled parking space. Total parking availability under the proposal will stand at 52 spaces, two of which will be disabled spaces.



Above; Existing compacted surface carpark will be properly surfaced and demarcated to ensure it operates efficiently to accommodate the correct number of parked vehicles for its

size. The car park will have 2 disabled parking spaces set out and the surface will be extended to accommodate additional parking to mitigate for the extended floor space to the Council's SPG parking standard.

5.0 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT.

5.1 National Planning Policy.

5.1.1 National Planning Policy is contained within the Welsh Governments Planning Policy Wales, edition 10 (PPW) and additional guidance within topic specific Technical Advice Notes (TAN). The goal of PPW is "sustainable placemaking" as a way of achieving "well being". It does this by ensuring planning policies and planning decisions over development all contribute to achieving sustainable development by improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well being of Wales as required by the Planning (Wales) Act 2015 and the well being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

5.1.2 Section 4.4 of PPW acknowledges the importance of community facilities delivered not only by the public and private sectors but also by the third sector (charities, not for profit organisations, community interest companies etc) such as provided by Margam Youth Club. Paragraph 4.4.1 of PPW states that '*Community facilities contribute to a sense of place which is important to the health, well being and amenity of local communities and their existence is often a key element in creating viable and sustainable places*'. Outdoor sports on Groeswen playing fields such as football are a fundamental part of the operation of Margam Youth Club. PPW is supportive of enabling opportunities for sport, recreation and outdoor activity indicating in paragraph 3.3.2 that Local Planning Authorities should support the development and maintenance of places that support healthy and active lifestyles across all ages and socio-economic groups. PPW also talks about good design stating that 'Good Design is inclusive design'.

5.1.3 The aim of this current planning application and proposed development is to significantly improve an existing community facility, providing for inclusion and increased and more flexible space to better accommodate the existing club uses and activities. It will also allow for a wider variety of future community uses in terms of events and new clubs ensuring the continued viability of the Margam Youth Club and buildings. The proposals provide new dedicated disabled parking spaces and disabled toilet facilities which, along with the additional space created within the lounge extension will allow for better and more inclusive uses to take place, allowing Margam Youth Club to build upon existing activities such as inclusion football etc. As such, the principle of this proposed development should be seen as being strongly supported by Welsh Government planning policy as contained in PPW.

5.1.4 In addition to PPW, guidance within the Welsh Governments TAN 15 – Development and Flood Risk, is of some relevance. It is acknowledged that the site and Groeswen playing fields sit within flood Zone B shown on the Development Advice Maps maintained by Natural Resources Wales. TAN 15 aims to direct vulnerable development away from areas

at risk of flooding and sets out a precautionary framework for use in Development Management.

5.1.5 The use of the building as a community facility supporting youth and sporting club activities and in conjunction with the outdoor recreation playing fields means that persons using the facility are able to decide at the time of their use whether they wish to accept the risks associated with potential flooding. The development could be considered to fall within the definition of 'less vulnerable development' defined within the TAN. Moreover, the application proposes extension to an existing building in such community use. As such, the Table at Section 9 of the TAN indicates that in terms of flooding policy the application should be acceptable providing that users are made aware of the potential flooding risk and that the development does not increase the risk of flooding elsewhere.

5.2 Local Planning Policy

5.2.1 Planning Application and Appeal decisions must be made in accordance with the adopted Development Plan and other material planning considerations. Such Local Development Plans are a fundamental tool in ensuring Local Authorities look for the areas they cover to meet the objectives within the Welsh Governments planning policies and the Well Being of Future Generations Act.

5.2.2 The adopted Statutory Development Plan for the area within which the application site is positioned is the Neath Port Talbot Local Development Plan, adopted January 2016 (LDP). Within this LDP, the application site is shown to be within defined settlement boundaries as set in Policy SC1. The application site is not within the setting of any Listed Building or Scheduled Ancient Monument and is not within a designated Conservation Area.

5.2.3 In principle, the extension and improvement of Margam Youth Club building facilities should be considered as being supported by Neath Port Talbot strategic policies on Sustainable Communities and on Health. Policy SP2 on Health contains five criteria, two of which are particularly relevant in its support of community facilities and sporting provision. The policy states;

POLICY SP2 – Health.

The following measures will be taken in relation to the high levels of poor long term health and sickness in Neath Port Talbot:

1. The development of sustainable, safe and confident communities will be promoted through the colocation of jobs and facilities and the development of community facilities and services in accordance with the settlement framework; Relevant Key Policies: SC1-SC2; I1; EC1-EC6; BE1.....

3. Healthier, more active and safer lifestyles will be encouraged through the retention of a range of accessible leisure, recreational, health, retail, social, cultural and community facilities throughout the County Borough; Relevant Key Policies: OS1-OS2; SC2; I1; R1-R3; BE1.

5.2.4 The supporting text for this policy indicates it is not just development of new community facilities that are encouraged but also the protection of existing facilities and the co-location or multi use in terms of activities provided. The protection of such facilities from loss is further enforced by Policy SC2 – Protection of Community Facilities.

5.2.5 Strategic policy OS2 – Protection of Open Space, has some relevance here as the policy seeks to prevent the loss of playing fields and other important formal open space within the urban area. This proposed development will indeed build upon part of the existing open space of Groeswen playing fields by extending the building and parking provision. However, whilst the policy supporting text indicates that the loss of even a small area can have impact upon the local area, the impact in this case is not detrimental. The club buildings and their proposed extension is supportive of the continuing future, active use and existence of the Groeswen playing fields and the area of land required for these extended facilities is insignificant in relation to the overall area of open space remaining available here.

5.2.6 The following detailed LDP planning policies have also been considered of relevance in the preparation of this application and proposals; BE1 – Design,

BE1 Design *'All development proposals will be expected to demonstrate high quality design which fully takes into account the natural, historic and built environmental context and contributes to the creation of attractive, sustainable places.*

Proposals will only be permitted where all of the following criteria, where relevant, are satisfied:

- 1. It complements and enhances the character and appearance of the site, building or area in terms of siting, appearance, scale, height, massing and elevation treatment;*
- 2. It respects the context of the site and its place within the local landscape, including its impact on the important arterial gateways into the County Borough, its effects on townscape and the local historic and cultural heritage and it takes account of the site topography and prominent skylines or ridges;*
- 3. It utilises materials appropriate to its surroundings and incorporates hard and soft landscaping and screening where appropriate;*
- 4. It would not have a significant adverse impact on highway safety, the amenity of occupiers of adjacent land or the community;*
- 5. Important local features (including buildings; amenity areas, green spaces and green infrastructure, biodiversity and ecological connectivity) are retained and enhanced as far as possible;*
- 6. It achieves and creates attractive, safe places and public spaces, taking account of 'Secured by Design' principles (including where appropriate natural surveillance, visibility, well-lit environments and areas of public movement);*

7. It plays a full role in achieving and enhancing an integrated transport and communications network promoting the interests of pedestrians, cyclists and public transport and ensures linkages with the existing surrounding community;

8. It uses resources, including land and energy, as efficiently as possible through:
(a) Making the best and most efficient use of the land available through being of appropriate density taking into account the character and appearance of the area;
(b) The layout and form of the development does not preclude the reasonable use of other adjacent land; (c) Developing brownfield land in preference to greenfield land where possible; (d) Minimising building exposure while maximising solar gain.

9. Its drainage systems are designed to limit surface water run-off and flood risk and prevent pollution;

10. The layout and design of the development achieves inclusive design by ensuring barrier free environments, allowing access by all and making full provision for people with disabilities.'

5.2.7 The proposal can be seen to be in compliance with the relevant criteria of LDP Policy BE1. In terms of criteria 1 and 2, the form and appearance of the proposed extension respects the character of the existing building. Similar roof form and roof pitch is used to tie in with existing projecting elements from the sports hall and proposed external rendered finish and roof sheet and cladding colouring will match the existing building. The scale of the proposed extension remains subservient to the existing overall building in terms of height and scale and there is no significant adverse impact upon the landscape of the playing fields or character of the area.

5.2.8 In terms of criteria 3 and 9, the proposed external materials are appropriate to the existing building and to the area in which it is situated. The proposal includes a new area of hard landscaping in the form of a new patio area, together with the extension, proper surfacing and demarcation of spaces in the car park. The new patio area will be formed from concrete paving slabs but laid so as to have permeable joints and drainage run-off to the grassed playing fields surrounding it. The car park tarmac surface will incorporate a drainage fall to similarly drain the area to soak away on the playing fields. Whilst some existing roof water from the building appears to drain to the public drainage system, all new roof water drainage pipes from gutters and down pipes on the proposed new extension will drain to a properly constructed soak away within the playing fields.

5.2.9 With reference to criteria 4, the site is an existing football playing fields and buildings in (use class D2) youth club use and the proposals will not significantly or materially alter highway safety for those accessing to and from the site. The proposals will not change the character of the use or activities likely to take place. Benefit will occur in the form of the proper surfacing and demarcation of the existing car park in order increase available parking provision to mitigate the impact of extended and improved facilities. In terms of existing neighbours' amenity, the proposed extensions are sited on the existing building towards the playing fields on elevations away from residential development closest to the club buildings. This, together with the substantial distances involved between the extension and the

nearest dwelling house, means that neither the proposed construction or future operational use of the proposed extension will adversely affect residential amenity.

5.2.10 In terms of criteria 5, the proposed development enhances existing use/facilities within the Groeswen playing fields. The proposed extension takes up an insignificant area in relation to the overall size of the playing fields and therefore, cannot be said to contribute to any loss of useable playing field or outdoor recreational green space. As the area is an existing maintained playing field use, the small scale development proposed is unlikely to adversely affect biodiversity or any known ecological interest.

5.2.11 With reference to criteria 6, it is understood that the existing building and external spaces surrounding it are already covered by a CCTV monitoring and recording system. The proposed new extension will incorporate a number of new windows at standard level allowing for the first time, passive surveillance opportunities over areas of the sports pitch, changing room building and the new patio area to be created. These windows and the proposed French doors connecting to the patio will be protected when the building is not in use by solid colour coated security roller shutters, with shutter guides set within the window reveals and roller gear hidden within the building, making the shutter installation significantly more secure and yet unobtrusive in terms of the building design.

5.2.12 In terms of criteria 7, the development site is within settlement and already well connected to the surrounding road footways and network of existing pedestrian routes. Encouragement for cycling is provided by secure cycle parking provision within the resurfaced car park, close to the building entrance where the comings and goings from the building will provide surveillance over this area.

5.2.13 Criteria 8 is primarily concerned with the development brownfield sites and efficient use of land, having little direct relevance to this proposal. Criteria 9 is addressed above and criteria 10 provides part of the reason justification for this application proposal so as to provide improved facilities in order to increase inclusivity and increase use of the building to a wider section of the community, including those with disabilities. In conclusion then, the application proposals can be seen to be in full compliance with LDP policy BE1 on securing good design.

5.2.14 Policy TR2 on the Design and Access of new Development works in conjunction with the Council's adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) note on Parking Standards (October 2016). Policy TR2 states;

TR2 – Design and Access of new Development

Development proposals will only be permitted where all of the following criteria, where relevant, are satisfied:

- 1. The development does not compromise the safe, effective and efficient use of the highway network and does not have an adverse impact on highway safety or create unacceptable levels of traffic generation;*

- 2. Appropriate levels of parking and cycling facilities are provided and the access arrangements for the site allow for the safe manoeuvring of any service vehicles associated with the planned use;*
- 3. The development is accessible by a range of travel means, including public transport and safe cycle and pedestrian routes;*
- 4. Transport Assessments and Travel Plans are provided for developments that are likely to create significant traffic generation.*

5.2.14 The proposed extension and improvement of facilities at Margam Youth Club will in no way compromise the safe, effective and efficient use of the local highway network or highway safety. The established access spur road off Knights Road is safe and more than adequate for the existing and the proposed improved facilities. These improved facilities are unlikely to generate unacceptable new levels of traffic movements to or from the site.

5.2.15 As indicated previously, the site is well linked within the urban area by both road and pedestrian footways. Public transport bus routes (82, 87 and X1) are available nearby from Margam local centre situated along the A48. The development has an established existing car park which will be improved and expanded to provide additional car parking and secure cycle parking to mitigate the impact of the development. This parking additional provision is found by resurfacing and properly demarcating parking spaces within the existing compacted gravel surface car park and extending this slightly to create new parking spaces at the rate of 1 parking space per 10m² of extension to the existing building which is the given standard within the Council SPG.

5.2.16 The proposed extension adds an additional 165m² to the existing building giving an additional parking requirement of 16 spaces. It is considered reasonable to provide some of these spaces (4) within the existing gravel car park area as in practice, due to inconsiderate parking a non-demarcated car park area will accommodate 1/3 fewer vehicles than a properly surfaced and laid out car park would do. An additional 12 new parking spaces are then provided by extending this car park.

However, amendment to provide further additional car parking area and spaces could be considered should the Council believe that further additional parking provision is necessary.

6.0 CONCLUSION

6.1 The application proposals for extension to the existing youth club building will provide the space needed to better accommodate existing clubs and activities and for significantly improved facilities, allowing for increased inclusion. The increased space provided will result in flexible space able to accommodate a wider range of community uses, clubs and income generating events, ensuring the continued viability of the club facilities into the future.

6.2 This application to extend and improve the facilities in community use can be seen to be fully supported by both Welsh Government National and Neath Port Talbot Local

planning policy. The design and appearance of the proposals are in keeping with the existing building and will not result in any significant detrimental impact upon residential amenity or the character of the area. As such, the application should be approved and planning permission granted.

