

SECTION A – MATTERS FOR DECISION

Planning Applications Recommended For Refusal

<u>APPLICATION NO:</u> P2014/1137	<u>DATE:</u> 16/02/2015
PROPOSAL:	Detached dormer bungalow with associated car parking.
LOCATION:	LAND TO THE FRONT OF 23 HEOL WENALLT, CWMGWACH, NEATH SA11 5PT
APPLICANT:	Mr Craig Taylor
TYPE:	Full Plans
WARD:	Blaengwrach

Background Information

Following the application being presented to a delegated panel, with a recommendation to refuse planning permission, Councillor Siddley requested on 2nd June 2015 that the application should instead be determined by Planning Committee, on the grounds that the proposal would not unacceptably affect the visual amenity of the street-scene.

At the Planning Committee on 16th June 2015, Members resolved that the application be deferred for a site visit, which will take place on 7th July 2015. The report which follows below is the same as that reported to the Planning Committee on 16th June 2015.

Planning History

The site has no relevant planning history.

Publicity and Responses (if applicable):

2 neighbouring properties were consulted and site notices were displayed on site. To date, no representations have been received.

Blaengwrach Community Council: No objection.

Coal Authority: No objection.

Head of Engineering & Transport (Highways): No objection, subject to conditions.

Head of Engineering & Transport (Drainage): No objection.

Welsh Water: No objection, subject to conditions.

Biodiversity Unit: No objection, subject to conditions.

Description of Site and its Surroundings:

The application site is located on land at 23 Heol Wenallt, Cwmgwrach.

The application site is an irregular parcel of land measuring 0.0253 hectares in area. It is divided into two parts. The main part measures 14m wide by 17m in length, while the second part fronts onto Heol Wenallt and measures 5m long by 3m wide. It is relatively flat in profile and comprises a grassed area with Leylandii trees, and currently forms part of the front garden of the host property (Number 23). It is bounded by residential properties to the north, east and west. Heol Wenallt is located to the south, off which pedestrian and vehicle access to the site is gained. There is also pedestrian and rear access to Number 23 off Heol Nedd.

It should be noted that the access strip off Heol Wenallt is outside of the ownership of the applicant. As the owner is unknown, Certificate D has been completed and an advert placed in the local press.

The site is located within the settlement limits as defined by Policy H3 of the adopted Neath Port Talbot Unitary Development Plan (UDP).

Brief Description of Proposal

This application seeks full planning permission for the erection of a detached dormer bungalow with associated car parking.

The proposed dormer bungalow would measure 9m wide by 8.6m in length, and would reach a height of 6.8m to ridge level. It is designed with a gable ended ridged roof running east to west. Two gabled dormers are proposed to the front elevation, and one to the rear. Windows and doors are proposed to the north, south and west elevations. The bungalow would provide a kitchen, bathroom, lounge and bedroom at ground-floor, together with two bedrooms and a bathroom within the roof-space.

Externally two car parking spaces are proposed to the west side of the property, accessed off Wenallt Road, with a small amenity space to the rear of the property.

A smaller front garden would be retained for the host property (Number 23), while access to the host property would need to be retained via Heol Nedd to the north. As previously stated, the owner of the access strip off Heol Wenallt is unknown and Certificate D has been completed. Furthermore, it should be noted that there would be a parcel of land between the front boundary of Number 23 and Heol Wenallt, which would be outside of the application site and outside of the control of the applicant.

EIA Screening/Scoping Opinion & Habitat Regulations:

As the development is not Schedule 1 or Schedule 2 Development on the EIA Regulations, a screening opinion will not be required for this application.

Material Considerations:

The main issues for consideration concern the principle of residential development at this site, together with the impact of the proposal upon visual and residential amenity, and also highway and pedestrian safety having regards to prevailing planning policies.

Policy Context:

The Development Plan for the area comprises the Neath Port Talbot Adopted Unitary Development Plan within which the following policies are of relevance:

- GC1 New Buildings/Structures and Changes of Use
- ENV17 Design
- T1 Location, Layout and Accessibility of New Proposals
- H3 Infill and Windfall Development within Settlement Limits
- ENV5 Nature Conservation

As the application site is located within the settlement limits defined by Policy H3 in the UDP, the principle of a residential development at this location is generally acceptable, provided there are no overriding highways, amenity or environmental objections. Such matters are addressed below.

With regards to the issue of affordable housing, as this application relates to planning permission for one unit only, the developer would not be required to provide 20% affordable housing in this instance.

Visual Amenity

This part of Cwmgwrach has a varied pattern of development, with the properties on the south side of Heol Wenallt, together with no's 24 and 25 on the northern side, directly fronting the street. In addition, the dwellings on Heol Nedd and Fothergill Road also largely front onto that street, including a relatively new detached dwelling located on the corner of Heol Wenallt, which fronts onto Fothergill Road. Within this context, the row of terrace dwellings at 15 – 23 Heol Wenallt are relatively unusual, insofar as they are located towards the rear of their large plots, behind 'front' garden in excess of 30m in length.

While a few of these (including 20 – 23) have some degree of vehicular and pedestrian access off Heol Nedd, all these two-storey terraced properties are designed so that their principal elevations / front doors face onto Heol Wenallt, behind their long front gardens, and with rear wings on the north-facing elevations. Notwithstanding the length of these gardens and the presence of some extensions to the principal elevations and, in some cases, outbuildings, they therefore nevertheless only properly *address* that street (which is also their postal address).

The application site comprises approximately 60% of the existing front garden of no. 23 Heol Wenallt, and would thus sub-divide the existing front garden of that property, with the proposed property located forward of the "principal elevation" of the host property, and separating that property from Heol Wenallt visually and physically.

While it could be considered to continue the frontage of no's 24 and 25 to the west, given that the front elevation would be in line with those dwellings, it is considered that the proposed new dwelling, given its siting to the front of the principal elevation, would result in the introduction of a contrived form of development, which would interrupt the relationship of properties on, and be out-of keeping with, the street-scene, to the detriment of the setting of the terraced row of properties and wider pattern of development in this area.

In addition, the fact that the property would be set back behind an area of land outside of the applicants control would also lead to an unusual situation where

boundary enclosures would themselves be set back from the highway, thus adding to the concerns that the new dwelling would appear out of context.

While it is noted that the relatively new property on the corner of Heol Wenallt and Fothergill Road (no. 5a) has been erected to the 'front' of this row of terraced dwellings (r/o 5 Fothergill Rd / 15 Heol Wenallt), that property has nevertheless been sited such that it fronts onto Fothergill Road and, due to its corner position, does not have the same degree of harm that would be caused by the proposed new dwelling to the front of this end of terrace dwelling.

Accordingly, by reason of the introduction of a new dwelling in the front garden of no. 23 Heol Wenallt, between the principal elevation of that property and the street, the development would appear contrived and out of keeping with the street-scene, to the detriment of the setting of the terraced row of properties. As such, it is considered that the proposal would have an unacceptable detrimental impact upon the character and appearance of the area, contrary to Policies GC1 and ENV17 of the Neath Port Talbot Unitary Development Plan.

Residential Amenity

With regards to potential overbearing and overshadowing issues, it is noted that the proposed dwelling would reach a height of 6.8m to ridge level and the application site is relatively flat in profile. Furthermore, there would be a separation of 19m to the properties opposite to the south, 17m to Number 24 to the west and 18.5m to the host property (Number 23) to the north.

Having regard to the height of the property and distances above, it is considered that the proposed dwelling would not have an unacceptable adverse impact upon the neighbouring properties in terms of any overbearing impact or in terms of overshadowing.

In respect of potential overlooking issues, it is noted that the kitchen and lounge windows to the side and rear of the property could be screened by a suitable boundary treatment, to prevent any overlooking upon the host property or surrounding neighbouring dwellings. Similarly, it is acknowledged that the bathroom window proposed in the rear dormer could be fitted with non-opening, obscure-glazing, and a condition could be imposed to require the Velux roof lights to the rear to be relocated such that they would be high level, in order to prevent any unacceptable looking upon the neighbouring properties.

Turning to the windows to the front elevation, it is noted that there would be a separation distance of 19m between Numbers 13 and 14 opposite to the south.

As the ground-floor windows would be separated by Heol Wenallt, and the first-floor dormer windows would be higher than the bungalows opposite looking over the roof-space, it is considered that they would also not create unacceptable overlooking issues.

In terms of amenity space serving both dwellings, it is noted that the proposal would sub-divide the existing front garden, which given its length and layout acts as the primary amenity space serving no. 23. The scheme would, however, retain sufficient amenity space to serve the existing dwelling, while providing approximately 82 sq.m. of private rear amenity space to serve the new dwelling, both of which are considered acceptable.

Notwithstanding the above, the primary objections to the development on character grounds outlined above remain.

Highway Safety (e.g. Parking and Access)

As the proposed development would provide off-road parking for two vehicles (with the potential to provide a third space if necessary), it is considered that there would be no detrimental impact upon highway or pedestrian safety.

The host property, no. 23, also has off-street car parking at present to the side of the dwelling, which is accessed off Heol Nedd. These spaces would also be retained, thus ensuring that both properties would be served by adequate off-street car parking spaces. It should also be noted that the Head of Engineering and Transport (Highways Section) offers no objection to the proposal, subject to conditions.

Ecology (including trees & protected species)

As the Biodiversity Unit offer no objection to the proposal, subject to a condition in respect of bird boxes, it is considered that there would be no overriding issues in terms of ecology.

Others (including objections)

None

Conclusion

While it is considered that the proposed development would not have a detrimental impact upon residential amenity, and there would be no adverse impact upon highway and pedestrian safety, it is nevertheless considered that,

by reason of the introduction of a new dwelling in the front garden of no. 23 Heol Wenallt, between the principal elevation of that property and the street, the development would appear contrived and out of keeping with the street-scene, to the detriment of the setting of the terraced row of properties. As such, it is considered that the proposal would have an unacceptable detrimental impact upon the character and appearance of the area, contrary to Policies GC1 and ENV17 of the Neath Port Talbot Unitary Development Plan.

RECOMMENDATION: Refusal

(1) The proposed development, by virtue of its siting forward of the 'principal elevation' of the host property and adjoining terraced dwellings would result in the introduction of a contrived form of development out-of keeping with the street-scene and to the detriment of the setting of the terraced row of properties. As such, it is considered that the proposal would have a detrimental impact upon the character and appearance of the area, contrary to Policies GC1 and ENV17 of the Neath Port Talbot Unitary Development Plan.