

Application Number: DM/2026/00294

Proposal: The proposed development involves repurposing Thornwell Pavilion into a family-oriented soft play centre with an integrated cafe, to provide affordable indoor leisure and recreational facilities for children aged 0 - 12 and their parents and carers

Address: Thornwell Pavilion, Tenby Lane, Thornwell, Chepstow

Applicant: Robert Harper

Plans: Location Plan - , Site Plan - , Existing Floor Plans - , Proposed Floor Plans - , Biodiversity Net Gain - May 2026

RECOMMENDATION: Approve

Case Officer: David Wong
Date Valid: 31.03.2026

This application is presented to Planning Committee on the basis that more than five objections have been received from third parties. No technical objections have been raised by consultees

1.0 APPLICATION DETAILS

1.1 Site Description

1.1.1 This application relates to a change of use of the former Thornwell Pavilion into a family-oriented soft play centre with an integrated café. This space is aiming to provide indoor leisure and recreational facilities for children aged 0 - 12 and their parents and carers.

1.1.2 No external or internal alteration is proposed; the proposal would simply utilise the main pavilion room to create the designated soft play space with tables and chairs for parents and carers.

1.1.3 Thornwell Pavilion is a single-storey community building located adjacent to the Thornwell playing fields. It is understood that the building has historically been used by Chepstow FC for sports related activities and community gatherings. The club has since ceased operations at the pavilion, and the building is currently vacant.

The building comprises:

- o A main hall
- o Kitchen
- o Male, female, and accessible toilets
- o Ancillary circulation space

1.1.4 There is no change to pedestrian access or parking arrangements. The building is located adjacent to the public parking provision associated with the playing fields.

1.2 Value Added

1.2.1 In this instance, two bird boxes are being proposed to serve as the Biodiversity Net gain enhancement measure.

2.0 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY (if any)

| Reference Number | Description | Decision | Decision Date |
|-------------------------|--------------------|-----------------|----------------------|
|-------------------------|--------------------|-----------------|----------------------|

| | | | |
|---------------|---|-----------------------|------------|
| DM/2019/00054 | Erection of a children's activity play area. Also the construction of a disabled accessible walled patio area with benches and seating for all. The walls to be topped with flowers. | Approved | 29.04.2020 |
| DM/2026/00294 | The proposed development involves repurposing Thornwell Pavilion into a family oriented soft play centre with an integrated cafe, to provide affordable indoor leisure and recreational facilities for children aged 0 - 12 and their parents and carers. | Pending Determination | |
| DC/2007/00664 | Extension of existing car park, additional 10 spaces. | Approved | 24.08.2007 |

3.0 LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICIES

Strategic Policies

S5 LDP Community and Recreation Facilities
S8 LDP Enterprise and Economy
S13 LDP Landscape, Green Infrastructure and the Natural Environment
S16 LDP Transport
S17 LDP Place Making and Design

Development Management Policies

DES1 LDP General Design Considerations
EP1 LDP Amenity and Environmental Protection
EP3 LDP Lighting
CRF1 LDP Retention of Existing Community Facilities
GI1 LDP Green Infrastructure
MV1 LDP Proposed Developments and Highway Considerations
NE1 LDP Nature Conservation and Development

4.0 NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY

Future Wales - the national plan 2040

Future Wales is the national development framework, setting the direction for development in Wales to 2040. It is a development plan with 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. Future Wales - the national plan 2040 is the national development framework and it is the highest tier plan, setting the direction for development in Wales to 2040. It is a framework which will be built on by Strategic Development Plans at a regional level and Local Development Plans. Planning decisions at every level of the planning system in Wales must be taken in accordance with the development plan as a whole.

Planning Policy Wales (PPW) Edition 12

The primary objective of PPW is to ensure that the planning system contributes towards the delivery of sustainable development and improves the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, as required by the Planning (Wales) Act 2015, the Well-being of

Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and other key legislation and resultant duties such as the Socio-economic Duty.

A well-functioning planning system is fundamental for sustainable development and achieving sustainable places. PPW promotes action at all levels of the planning process which is conducive to maximising its contribution to the well-being of Wales and its communities.

5.0 REPRESENTATIONS

5.1 Consultation Replies

Chepstow Town Council - recommends approval.

Welsh Water - No objection.

MCC Public Rights of Way - No objection.

LREC Search Results - No significant ecological record identified.

5.2 Neighbour Notification

Six Supporters highlight the pavilion is underused - proposal would benefit local children and families, providing a safe play area currently lacking in Chepstow (especially after Whirlikids' closure).

Economic & community benefits - Would create jobs, bring positive economic impact, and serve as an asset for Thornwell and Chepstow.

Seven objectors stress loss of community asset - the pavilion was built as a community hub; changing use to commercial would violate its intended purpose and displace volunteer-led services (football, youth clubs, mental health charity).

Parking & traffic concerns - Car park already full during football; adding a play centre would cause overspill, congestion, pedestrian risks, and harm residential amenity.

Demand & competition questioned - Recent closure of Whirlikids and existing soft play at Chepstow Rugby Club (with adequate parking) suggest insufficient demand.

No consultation or notice - Applicants failed to engage current users (e.g., Thornwell R&W FC) or display statutory notices properly.

Noise & operational impact - Continuous daytime operation (including Sundays/bank holidays) would increase noise, footfall, vehicle movements, and alter quiet residential character; neighbours request strict conditions on parking, hours, noise mitigation, and child safety.

5.3 Other Representations

None received.

5.4 Local Member Representations

None received.

Please note all representations can be read in full on the Council's website:

<https://planningonline.monmouthshire.gov.uk/online-applications/?lang=EN>

6.0 EVALUATION

6.1 Principle of Development

6.1.1 Community facilities are essential for promoting quality of life and sustainability in local communities. LDP Policy CRF1 seeks to protect and retain existing community facilities in Monmouthshire's towns and villages. The change of use or conversion of neighbourhood or village shops, halls, public houses, and other community facilities will only be permitted where:

a) the local community would continue to be adequately served by facilities with easy and convenient access by non-car modes; or, in respect of commercially-operated facilities,

- b) there is evidence that the facility is not, and could not reasonably be expected to become, financially viable, or that the facility (if non-operational) has been vacant for a substantial period; and
- c) genuine attempts to market the facility, whether in use or vacant, have been unsuccessful.

6.1.2 The building is owned by Monmouthshire County Council. The Council's Landlord Services confirmed that construction of the Pavilion was funded by the National Lottery and gifted to MCC. It was previously let to a football club for hosting events and games evenings. Unfortunately, the football club breached their conditions, leading to repossession of the building in September 2024. Subsequently, extensive outreach was undertaken to community groups, with support from the Council's Community Support Network Lead and GAVO to liaise with their contacts. However, no community groups came forward to express interest. Marketing via Rightmove and the MCC website generated interest from several parties. As multiple parties were interested at the time (December 2025), a tender submission deadline was set, but only one party submitted a tender. Therefore, criterion c) of LDP Policy CRF1 is satisfied, and the application will be treated on its own merits, discussed further below.

6.2 Design/Place Making

6.2.1 There is no change to the design of the building; all changes are internal only. The site lies within the Chepstow Town Boundary, one of the most sustainable locations in Monmouthshire. Planning Policy Wales Edition 12 (PPW12) emphasises that effective economic planning requires authorities to work strategically and co-operatively, directing development and investment to the most efficient and sustainable locations. This proposal therefore aligns with the ethos of Place Making as set out in the Welsh Government's vision. There is no conflict with LDP Policy DES1.

6.3 Green Infrastructure/Landscape

6.3.1 Chapter 6 of PPW12 requires a Green Infrastructure (GI) statement proportionate to the scale and nature of development. A step-wise approach considers impacts on biodiversity, habitats, and GI assets present on or adjacent to a site, seeking to manage harm by (a) avoiding, (b) minimising, and (c) mitigating/restoring.

6.3.2 This application relates solely to a change of use, with no physical alteration to the building's external appearance or site envelope. No tree or hedgerow removal is required to facilitate the proposed use. Consequently, there is no harm to the site's GI, consistent with LDP Policy G11.

6.4 Biodiversity

6.4.1 PPW12 states that the planning system has a key role in reversing biodiversity decline and increasing ecosystem resilience by ensuring appropriate mechanisms to protect against loss and secure enhancement. The planning system should ensure an overall net benefit for biodiversity and ecosystem resilience, resulting in enhanced wellbeing.

6.4.2 In this instance, two bird box are proposed as the Biodiversity Net Gain enhancement measure, which is considered a proportionate response to the nature of this application (a change of use of an existing building). An appropriately worded compliance condition will be imposed accordingly, in accordance with LDP Policy NE1.

6.5 Impact on Amenity

6.5.1 Noise impact is a key consideration for this type of use. Proposed opening hours are 09:00 to 17:00, Monday to Sunday, including Bank Holidays. These are considered reasonable operational hours for this use. No extension is required to facilitate this soft play business, and the building's physical size inherently limits its capacity. The building stands in isolation, with the nearest residential property approximately 30m away, separated by an intervening tree line that provides a natural buffer. The Council's Landlord Services confirmed that when the Pavilion was previously let to the football club, no operational hours were imposed. Following liaison with the Council's Environmental Health Department, it was confirmed that no complaints have been received regarding noise generated from the Pavilion in the past. Therefore, limiting operational hours as proposed represents a significant improvement over the building's previous use (compliance of LDP Policy EP1).

6.6 Traffic Movement

6.6.1 Third-party objections raised concerns that the car park is already full during football and other sporting events, and that a play centre on this site would cause overspill, congestion, pedestrian risks, and harm to residential amenity. The Pavilion previously hosted events and games evenings regularly, and the Council's Landlord Services confirmed that no operational hour restrictions were imposed during the football club's tenancy. Therefore, the former use could have operated between 09:00 and 17:00, Monday to Sunday, including Bank Holidays. The proposed soft play use is comparable in this regard. The area has ample on-street parking. Furthermore, following consultation with the Highways Department, they confirmed no past complaints regarding overspill or congestion. Accordingly, there are no substantive grounds to refuse this application on highways grounds, and it complies with LDP Policy MV1.

6.7 Sustainable Location

6.7.1 The site is in a sustainable location (aligned with PPW12) within a predominantly residential area, accessible. This will naturally encourage users to travel to the site by non-motorised modes. The site is also accessible via the local bus service.

6.8 Parking

6.8.1 The area has ample on-street parking. The building is within walking distance of public car parking provision for users who wish to travel by motorised vehicles.

6.9 Surface Water and Foul Drainage

6.9.1 There is no change to these elements. No extension is proposed under this application, and the proposed use relies on existing arrangements. Welsh Water has raised no objection.

6.10 Job opportunities

The proposed soft play centre would generate direct employment opportunities within the locality, contributing positively to the local economy. It is currently envisaged that the centre would create one full time and two part time positions, covering roles such as customer services, facility supervision, cleaning and café operations. Operating on a daily basis, the centre would provide regular and sustained employment for local residents. These opportunities would support wage based income within the community and encourage secondary local spending by employees. As such, the development would deliver a demonstrable economic benefit to the area, inline with the economic development objectives within LDP Policy S8.

6.11 Response to the Representations of Third Parties and/or Community/Town Council

6.11.1 No objections received from consultees.

6.11.2 Responses to third-party objections:

The Pavilion was built as a community hub, not for a private business - Please refer to paragraph 6.1 of this report.

The proposed use will cause overspill and congestion - Please refer to paragraph 6.6.

Recent closure of Whirlikids suggests insufficient demand - The question of demand, supply, and competition is not a planning material consideration.

No consultation took place with long-standing community users - Please refer to paragraph 6.1.

Failure to display statutory notices properly - Site notices have been displayed in multiple locations, including the patio area of the Pavilion, a light column on the main road in front of the Pavilion, and on Tenby Lane.

Noise impact - Please refer to paragraph 6.5.

6.12 Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

6.12.1 The duty to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales has been considered, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, under section 3 of the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (the WBFG Act). In reaching this recommendation, the ways of working set out at section 5 of the WBFG Act have been taken into account and it is considered that this recommendation is in accordance with the sustainable development principle through its contribution towards one or more of the Welsh Ministers' well-being objectives set out in section 8 of the WBFG Act.

6.13 Conclusion

6.13.1 Having assessed the potential impacts set out above, the proposed use is considered acceptable at this location. The recommendation is therefore for approval subject to conditions.

7.0 RECOMMENDATION: APPROVE

Conditions:

1 This development shall be begun within 5 years from the date of this permission.
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 list of approved plans set out in the table below.
REASON: To ensure the development is carried out in accordance with the approved drawings, for the avoidance of doubt.

3 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.

4 All works shall proceed in accordance with Drawing XXX. Evidence of implementation of the measures to achieve net benefit for biodiversity must be provided to the LPA no more than three months later than the first beneficial use of the development.
REASON: To provide biodiversity net benefit and ensure compliance with PPW 12, the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 and LDP policy NE1.

5 Notwithstanding the Town & Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 (or any Order revoking or re-enacting that Order with or without modification) no additional external lighting or lighting fixtures shall be installed on any land or buildings within the application site until an appropriate lighting strategy and plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The strategy and plans shall include details of all external lighting; provide detail of lighting types, positioning and specification. No additional lighting, unless it is in accordance with the approved details, shall be installed on site.
Reason: To ensure retention of roosting/foraging opportunities for Species of Conservation Concern and to ensure compliance with LDP Policy NE1.

6 The premises shall not be used for the approved purposes outside the following times 09:00 - 17:00.
REASON: In the interests of amenity and to ensure compliance with LDP Policy EP1.

INFORMATIVES

1 Due to the minor nature of the proposed development (including any demolition) and the location of the proposed development, it is considered that the proposals did not need to be screened under the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations.

2 Please note that Bats are protected under The Conservation of Habitats and Species

(Amendment) Regulations 2017 and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). This protection includes bats and places used as bat roosts, whether a bat is present at the time or not. If bats are found during the course of works, all works must cease and Natural Resources Wales contacted immediately. Natural Resources Wales (NRW) (0300 065 3000).

3 All birds are protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. The protection also covers their nests and eggs. To avoid breaking the law, do not carry out work on trees, hedgerows or buildings where birds are nesting. The nesting season for most birds is between March and September.

4 Welsh Water Advisory Notes:

The planning permission hereby granted does not extend any rights to carry out any works to the public sewerage or water supply systems without first having obtained the necessary permissions required by the Water industries Act 1991. Any alterations to existing premises resulting in the creation of additional premises or merging of existing premises must also be constructed so that each is separately connected to the Company's water main and can be separately metered. Please contact our new connections team on 0800 917 2652 for further information on water and sewerage connections.

The applicant is also advised that some public sewers and lateral drains may not be recorded on our maps of public sewers because they were originally privately owned and were transferred into public ownership by nature of the Water Industry (Schemes for Adoption of Private Sewers) Regulations 2011. The presence of such assets may affect the proposal. In order to assist us in dealing with the proposal the applicant may contact Dwr Cymru Welsh Water to establish the location and status of the apparatus. Under the Water Industry Act 1991 Dwr Cymru Welsh Water has rights of access to its apparatus at all times.

In accordance with Planning Policy Wales (Edition 12) and Technical Advice Note 12 (Design), the applicant is advised to take a sustainable approach in considering water supply in new development proposals, including utilising approaches that improve water efficiency and reduce water consumption.

We would recommend that the applicant liaises with the relevant Local Authority Building Control department to discuss their water efficiency requirements.

Our response is based on the information provided by your application. Should the proposal alter during the course of the application process we kindly request that we are re-consulted and reserve the right to make new representation.

If you have any queries please contact the undersigned on 0800 917 2652 or via email at developer.services@dwrcymru.com

Please quote our reference number in all communications and correspondence (PLA0094527).

5 MCC Public Rights of Ways Informative:

The applicant's attention should be brought to Public Footpath 355/14(2) in the community of Bulwark and Thornwell which runs adjacent to the site of the proposed development.

Public Path no. 355/14(2) must be kept open and free for use by the public at all times. No barriers, structures or any other obstructions should be placed across the legal alignment of the path, and any damage to its surface as a result of works or private vehicular use must be made good. If the path needs to be temporarily closed to allow works, the applicant should apply for a temporary traffic prohibition order.

Also included is a map extract at 1:500 showing the County Council's interpretation of the public right of way alignment. This is not indicative of the extent of the public rights and is provided for information purposes only.