



SIX BELLS COLLIERY SITE, BLAENAU GWENT

DEVELOPMENT BRIEF

July 2008



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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

- 0.1 Document objectives
- 0.2 Background

SECTION 01: ASSESSMENT

- 1.1 Strategic context
- 1.2 The site
- 1.3 Policy and Guidance Review
- 1.4 Views and Vistas
- 1.5 Access and Movement
- 1.6 Topography
- 1.7 Landscape & Biodiversity
- 1.8 Built Context

SECTION 02: DESIGN OBJECTIVES & PRINCIPLES

- 2.1 Issues and opportunities
- 2.2 Design objectives

SECTION 03: DESIGN

- 3.1 Development concept
- 3.2 Indicative layout
- 3.3 Illustrative 3D view
- 3.4 Sustainability
- 3.5 Landscape
- 3.6 Access and movement
- 3.7 Parking

SECTION 04: CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 Conclusion

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INTRODUCTION

0.1 DOCUMENT OBJECTIVES

Powell Dobson Urbanists were appointed by Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council (BGCBC) to prepare a development brief to support the disposal of a portion of the former colliery site in Six Bells, Abertillery. This document will establish the capacity of the site for development and also set out the quality and standards of design that would be expected in the redevelopment of the site.

The production of this document has been informed by the following documents:

- [By Design, DETR \(2000\)](#)
- [Creating Sustainable Places, WAG \(2004\)](#)
- [Manual for Streets, DFT, WAG \(2007\)](#)
- [Technical Advice Note \(TAN \)12: Design](#)
- [Working Differently, WAG \(2006\)](#)
- [Blaenau Gwent Unitary Development Plan](#)
- [Planning Policy Wales](#)
- [A Model Design Guide for Wales - Residential Development \(Planning Officers Society for Wales & WAG\)](#)

These identify key design and sustainability considerations that will help to ensure that development is economically successful, of benefit to the local community and responsive to site characteristics.

This document will be adopted by BGCBC as Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) and will be used to assess any future planning applications.



Figure 1: Regional location

0.2 BACKGROUND

Six Bells is located in the South Wales Valleys, north of the city of Newport and in close proximity to the town of Abertillery.

The land identified in this brief is a former colliery site whose pit closed in 1988. In 2002 the site was reclaimed and restructured to enable development; three plateaus were created with planting on the banks between levels (see adjacent aerial photograph). This brief is principally concerned with the upper plateau and how it might be developed for residential use as allocated in the Unitary Development Plan.

The residential development potential of the upper plateau is set in the context of the other two plateaus and intermediate landscaping. The middle plateau is constrained by the presence of the pit head shafts but can be developed for recreation and ecology benefits, particularly as a green link. The lower plateau is allocated for a new primary school although constrained by potential flooding. The Ebbw Fach river runs through the lower levels and again provides ecological and recreational value with potential for further enhancement.

The vision of this document is to see part of the Six Bells colliery site brought back in to use to accommodate residential development. New residential accommodation will be set within the attractive wider setting of the valley as well as an enhanced local landscape. The development will have strong accessible links to the Six Bells community and, together with the introduction of a new school, aid the regeneration of the village.

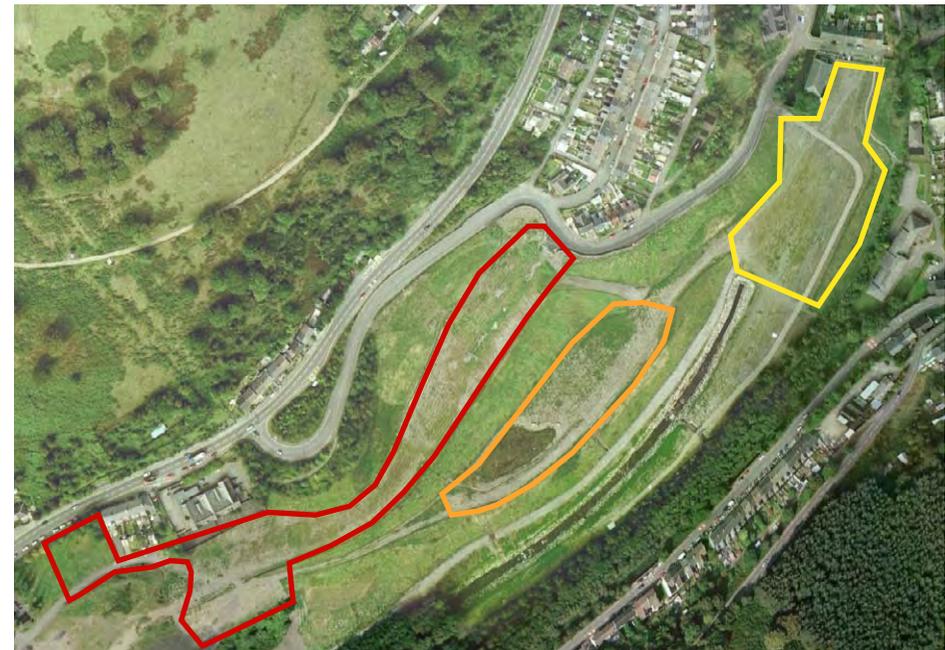


Figure 2: Plateau areas

- Upper (housing) plateau
- Mid plateau
- Lower (school) plateau

SECTION 01

SITE & CONTEXT ANALYSIS

The following pages establish the significant elements of the site's character and its context. It is important that these elements inform the basis for design.



SECTION

01

ANALYSIS

1.1 STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Six Bells is a former mining settlement in the Ebbw Fach valley between Aberbeeg to the south and Abertillery to the north. The nearest city is Newport, approximately 15 miles south from where there are regular bus links and connections to the wider bus and rail network. The A467 provides the main transport connection along the valley, ultimately connecting to the Heads of the Valleys Road in the north and Newport in the south.

Abertillery town centre is roughly 1.5km or 20 minutes walk from the site, providing local shops and facilities. Abertillery is currently undergoing a period of transformation as a number of regeneration schemes are planned and implemented in the town centre. This will help to improve the offer and appeal of the town to serve local needs.

Six Bells itself has a number of local shops although it lacks a defined centre. The northern edge of the site is close to the facilities in Six Bells.

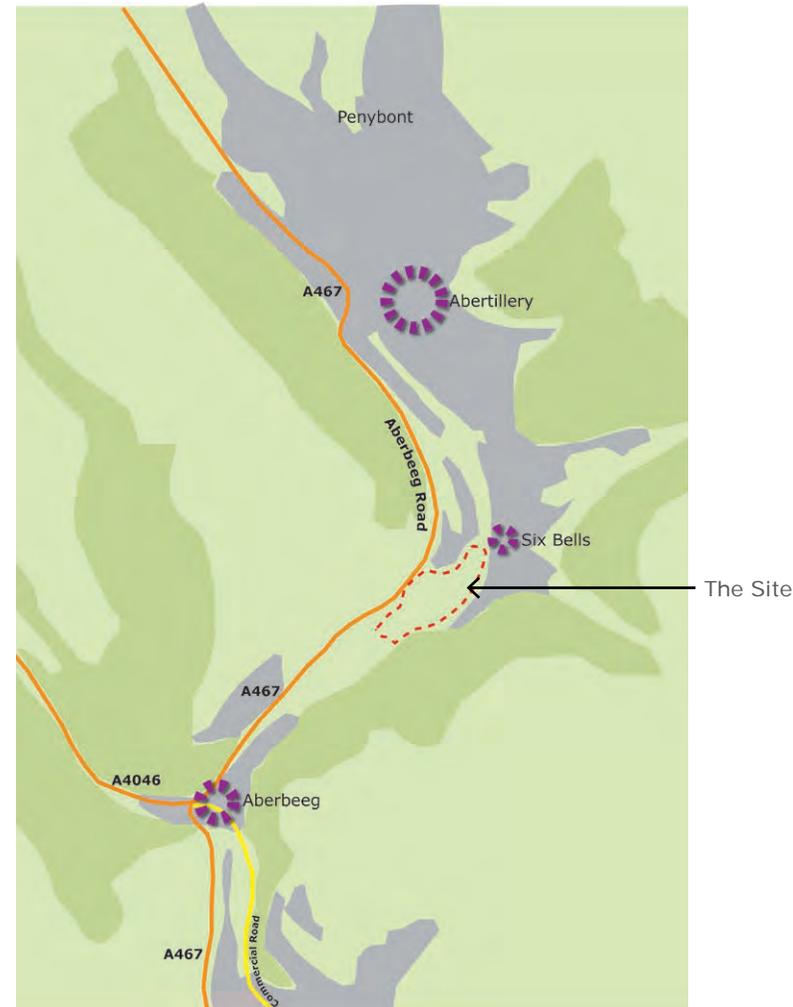


Figure 3: Strategic context

1.2 THE SITE

The overall study area has a total area of 13.7 hectares in a strip of land running from the north-east to the south-west. The site is bounded to the north and north west by Six Bells Road, Chapel Road and the back of the former Arael Infants School. Along the eastern and southern edge runs the line of the dismantled railway which is being developed as a key cycle route within the region, however, in the long term it may be brought back into use as a railway link.

The redline boundary indicated on all plans is the extent of Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council's ownership.

There are no buildings or structures within the study area, however the former school and Bethany Baptist Church sit adjacent to it. The site is overlooked by a few properties on Six Bells Road and Chapel Road and, during the winter months, properties on Victoria Road on the other side of the Valley.

The site currently consists of levelled areas of grassland intersected by tree-planted slopes. A pond has been created on the middle plateau and the Ebbw Fach river runs along the lower level.



Figure 4: Aerial view of the site

1.3 POLICY AND GUIDANCE REVIEW

The relevant planning policy and guidance for this site is set out below. The preparation of this document has been steered by these policies and guidance which should be given due regard in the further development of any proposals for this site.

National Planning Policy

Planning Policy Wales (March 2002) sets the context for sustainable land-use policy in Wales. Key policy objectives in this document include: promoting resource-efficient settlement patterns that minimise land-take and urban sprawl, avoiding development on greenfield sites wherever possible, and locating development so as to minimise the demand for travel, especially by private car. In promoting sustainable patterns of development the Welsh Assembly states that higher density development should be located at transport hubs and interchanges and close to route corridors.

The *Wales Spatial Plan* sets out a strategic framework to guide future development and policy interventions in Wales. The plan seeks to promote a sustainable economy and its objectives include:

- Building sustainable communities
- Promoting a sustainable economy
- Valuing the environment
- Achieving sustainable accessibility
- Respecting distinctiveness

The *Heads of the Valleys Programme* is a 15 year regeneration strategy developed in full partnership with five local authorities, including Blaenau Gwent, to tackle the root causes of economic inactivity and other key issues in the area within the context of the Wales Spatial Plan. The *Heads of the Valleys Strategy* is a strategic framework for

the Heads of the Valleys area. The strategy seeks to make the area a culturally rich place where people will want to live, work and play in an attractive natural and built environment.

UK Biodiversity Action Plan

This initiative seeks to conserve and enhance biological diversity within the UK and contribute to the conservation of global biodiversity through all appropriate mechanisms. The objectives are:

- To conserve and where practicable to enhance: the population and natural ranges of native species; natural and semi-natural wildlife habitats; ecosystems that are characteristic of local areas.
- To increase public awareness of, and involvement in, conserving biodiversity.
- To contribute to the conservation of biodiversity on a European and global scale.

The impact of this at a more local level is distilled in the Local Biodiversity Action Plan (see below).



Ecohomes

Residential development on this site should meet Ecohomes Excellent standard. This requires the following elements to be taken into account in the development process and the lifetime of the properties:

Energy

Emissions insulation, white goods, lighting

Transport

Proximity to public transport, cycle storage, live-work units

Pollution

Insulation, surface water runoff, renewable energy, flood risk mitigation

Materials

Environmental impact, local sourcing, recycling

Water

Efficient use

Land use & ecology

Ecological enhancement, protection, building footprint

Health and wellbeing

Daylight, sound insulation, private space

Management

Home user guide, considerate constructors, construction site impacts, security

Biodiversity By Design

Biodiversity by Design is a TCPA Sustainable Communities guide. It's aim is to provide guidance on how to maximise the opportunities for biodiversity in the planning and design of sustainable communities. This guidance puts forward the following design principles that should be considered and balanced in the design and development process:

- Pollution control
- Natural air conditioning
- Microclimate control
- Flood prevention
- Health and wellbeing
- Social cohesion
- Property values (impact of adjacent natural green spaces)

Reference should be made to the Biodiversity By Design toolkit and best practice in the development of proposals for this site.

Local Planning Policy

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council is currently in the process of preparing a Local Development Framework. A Delivery Agreement is in place which aims to have the Plan adopted by August 2011. Pre-Deposit Participation has recently been completed and consultation on the Preferred Strategy will take place autumn 2008. In the meantime the development plan currently in force is the *Blaenau Gwent Unitary Development Plan* Adopted July 6th 2006.

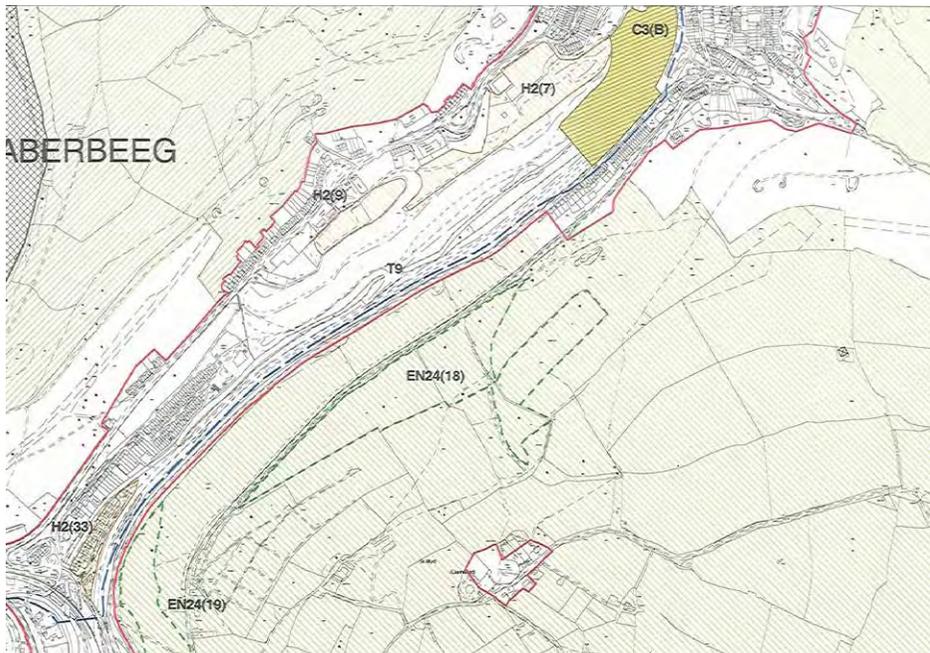


Figure 5: Extract from UDP Proposals Map

Allocations

There are two specific designations for the study area within the UDP. An area of the lower plateau is allocated under policy *C3(b)* for an education facility. An area of 2ha on the upper plateau is allocated for housing development and the site is expected to deliver 50 houses (*H2(7)*). Proposals for the site should not prejudice this expected density level (*H3 Residential Density on Housing Allocated Land*).

The following general policies are of importance to the development of the site, however full consideration should be given to the UDP as a whole.

Residential development

Residential development proposals for over 30 units on allocated sites will be subject to a negotiated element of affordable housing based on needs evidence (*H11 Affordable Housing*).

Should development be proposed outside the area allocated for housing, as it is within a defined urban area, it will be permitted (*H4 Development within the Urban Area*) providing that it meets a number of criteria including:

- Development of the site will not result in loss of land of recreation or amenity or townscape value
- Amenity and play space will be provided for the development
- Development would be in keeping with the overall character and appearance of the area in term of scale and design
- The development would not harm any area or building of particular interest or any area of nature conservation value or archaeological interest
- The site would not be over developed or result in inadequate parking facilities

- The development would be well related to public transport and would not impair highway safety
- The development is designed to reduce crime
- The development will not have an adverse impact on rights of way network

Design

The character, quality, design, scale, materials, density and layout of the development are stressed in policies *D1 Landscape and Design*, *EN2 Strategic Environmental Policy* and *EN6 Design Quality and Visual Amenity*. Each of these should be sustainable and in keeping with the topography, natural setting and character of the area.

Policy *D1 Layout and Design* states that development will be permitted where:

- Residential amenity is not prejudiced
- A site appraisal informs the basis for designing the layout
- Satisfactory pedestrian and vehicle access can be achieved to adequate standards
- A landscaping scheme is an integral part of the proposal

Transport/Movement

If new development cannot be adequately served from the existing highway network it should be designed to ensure that highway safety is not prejudiced and environmental harm is avoided (*T4 Highway Considerations in New Development*). Where new development alters or has a material effect on the existing highway network standards set out in the design guide for residential and industrial roads prepared by the highway authority must be met (*D2 Residential and Industrial Estate Roads*).

Provision of off street parking should be supplied in accordance with the councils approved standards (*T10 Car Parking*).

Any proposed scheme should incorporate appropriate cycle provision and cycle routes (*T9 Cycle Route Development*), safe convenient and pleasant pedestrian routes (*T7 Pedestrian Safety*) and retention or diversion of existing routes (*T8 New Developments and Pedestrian Routes*).

Environment

Strong consideration should be given to the impact of development on ecology and biodiversity. Where development proposals impact adversely on wildlife, the ecological diversity of the site or habitats and protected species it will not be permitted (*EN16 Ecological Diversity and Wildlife Corridors & EN17 Habitats & Species*). Additionally if there is a detrimental impact on SINC's or Local Nature Reserves development will only be permitted where the need for the development outweighs the losses to biodiversity and these losses can readily be mitigated within the borough council area.

Local Biodiversity Action Plan for Blaenau Gwent 2000-06

The LBAP is a shared initiative that brings together statutory organisations and the community to compile and deliver the actions of the plan. The purpose of the plan is to ensure that action is taken to preserve and enhance localities and features, supporting habitats and species which have been identified as locally important as well as those which are nationally and internationally important. Species and habitats listed in LBAPs are a material consideration for the Local Planning Authority in determining planning applications.

Supplementary Planning Guidance

Renewable Energy SPG (Draft)

Biodiversity SPG (Draft)

The purpose of this Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) is to assist those submitting and determining planning applications in Blaenau Gwent to ensure that biodiversity, and where relevant, geodiversity, are protected and conserved when development is proposed.

The SPG advocates a five point approach to developing with biodiversity:

1. Adequate information
2. Avoidance of harm
3. Mitigation to reduce unavoidable harm
4. Compensation to offset residual harm
5. New benefits

Reference should be made to the guidance contained in this document in the development of proposals for the site.

It is strongly recommended that developers enter into early discussions with council planning officers and ecologist as well as the relevant environmental agencies prior to submitting a planning application.

Planning Obligations SPG (Draft)

This document sets out guidance relating to obligations for developer contribution as expressed in the UDP (policies H11, EN14, T4, M4 and M18). This guidance will be taken as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. Those obligations likely to be relevant to the Six Bells colliery site include but are not limited to:

Affordable Housing

20% requirement for affordable housing for developments of 30 or more dwellings or on sites over 1 hectare. This provision should be 50% social rented and 50% intermediate, the type and size of units will be determined on a case-by-case basis. Affordable housing should be pepper potted throughout the development and should be physically indistinguishable.

Off-site Highway Works

Obligations and contributions in respect of off-site traffic, transport and highway initiatives will be required where there is a requirement to improve existing or construct new highway infrastructure, public transport provision, cycle routes and footpaths to ensure that the development site can be accessed in a safe and appropriate manner. Contributions will also be sought for the following off-site improvements, where appropriate:

- Improvements to public transport;
- Traffic management;
- Provision for pedestrians;
- Provision for cyclists;
- Road safety schemes;
- Controlled parking zone(s);
- Road network improvements; and
- Public off street parking

The level of contribution will be calculated on a site-by site basis.

Education Facilities

A contribution towards educational facilities will apply to new residential development containing 10 or more dwellings. The SPG provides guidance on how this contribution will be calculated according to the likely number of additional pupils generated by the development.

Given the proximity of the proposed new primary school, contributions are likely to be required towards this.

Community Development and Recreational Facilities

Where residential development is likely to increase the need for such facilities, the Council will seek a contribution towards either building more facilities or improving existing facilities. Details on how this contribution will be calculated is provided within the SPG document.

Public Open Space

The Council will seek a contribution as part of new residential developments to ensure that the additional demand generated for public open and recreational space is met. The Council's requirements are based on the NPFA's Six Acre Standard.

Biodiversity and Geodiversity

A planning contribution will be sought where appropriate to ensure that biodiversity and geodiversity might be protected and enhanced as a result of new development and in order to ensure that necessary and sufficient management and monitoring of biodiversity and geodiversity is carried out. Contributions and obligations will be sought for the following, where appropriate:

- secure appropriate access and interpretation facilities;
- provide new habitats and enhance existing habitats (on or off-site);
- off-site surveys/monitoring of the effects of development;
- manage existing and new habitats

Provide new nature reserves or the funding of nature reserve management or provision.

The level of contribution will be determined on a site-by-site basis.

Other Contributions

These may include

- Skills and labour market
- Community safety
- Public Art

1.4 VIEWS AND VISTAS

The housing plateau is situated in an attractive valley location with views out over the surrounding settlement to the hills beyond.

This setting provides an attractive recreation route for pedestrians. Consideration should be given to the natural character of the site and its relationship to new development.

There are particularly attractive views from the housing plateau to the north east and south east which should be capitalised on.

Due to the elevated position of the housing plateau, it is in a visible location from other parts of the settlement. The visual impact of any development should therefore be carefully considered.



1. View over settlement and hills to the north east



2. Countryside view to the south west



3. View across the valley to housing on the facing side



4. View along the lower path towards Six Bells



5. The lower path is screened by trees



6. View from other side of the valley into the site



Figure 6: View locations

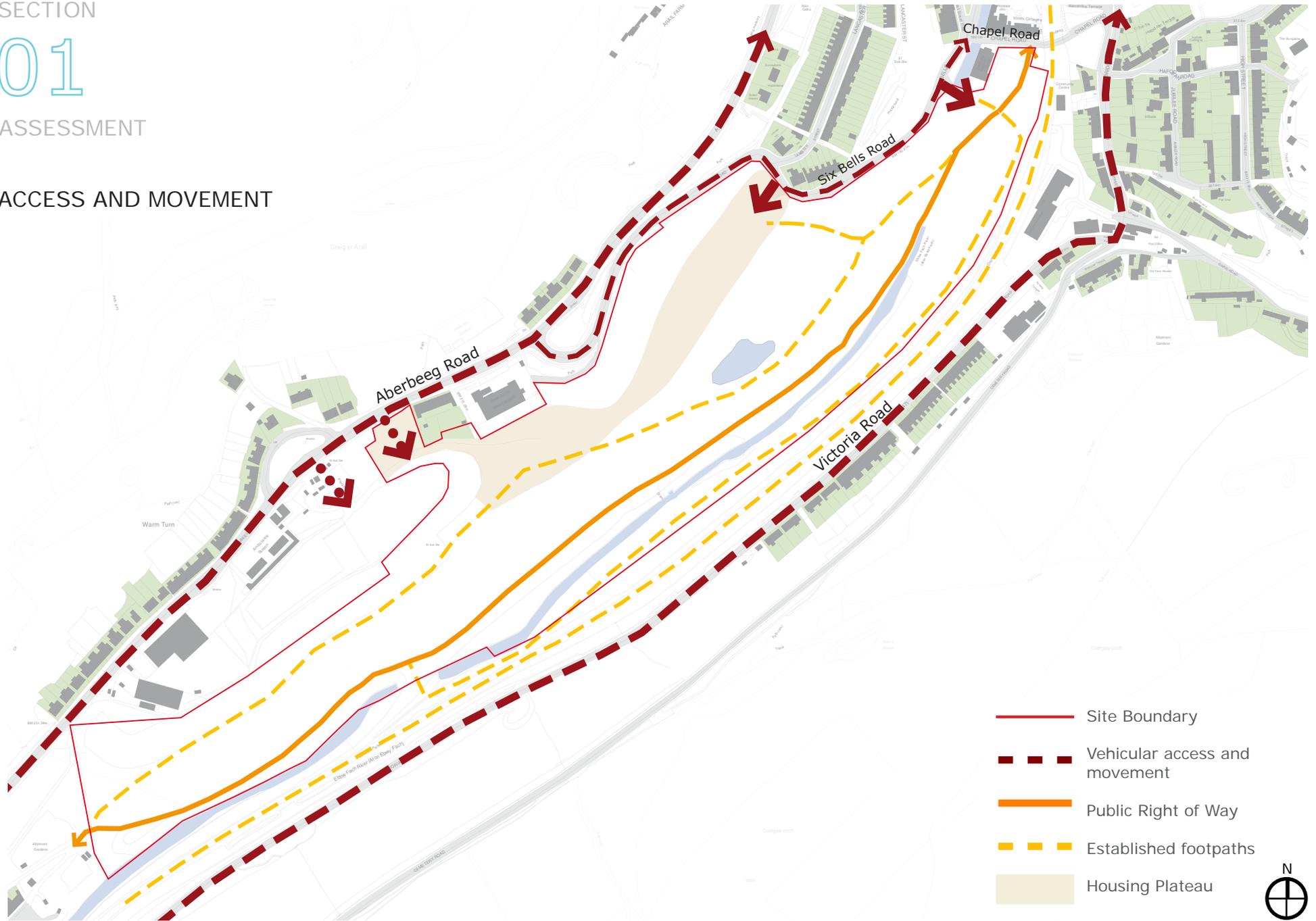
DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

Views out of the site should be exploited.

Consideration should be given to the visibility of the housing plateau.

SECTION
01
ASSESSMENT

ACCESS AND MOVEMENT



18 Figure 7: Access and movement plan

1.5 ACCESS AND MOVEMENT

Surrounding Roads

To the north of the site the A467 (Aberbeeg Road) is the main route through the valley. Six Bells Road branches off of the main road and provides access down to the lower levels of the valley. On the other side of the valley Victoria Road which turns into Bridge Street is an important through route that also accommodates local shops.

The connection between the two sides of the valley at this point is via Chapel Road and a tunnel under the former railway line. Although this is a two way street the tunnel is only wide enough for one car which can cause congestion and nuisance to local residents due to drivers beeping their horn. The local authority intends to install traffic lights to control movement through the tunnel. However, this will still remain a pinch point in the local highway network.

A traffic impact assessment will be required to accompany any proposed development.

Access

Vehicular access to the housing plateau can be taken from Six Bells road where an access point has already been prepared.

However, the maximum residential cul-de-sac length allowed by BGCBC is 150m which will only serve half of the length of the housing plateau. Therefore a second access will be required. It is proposed that this access is taken off of Aberbeeg Road either via an upgrade of an existing track that runs adjacent to a play area or a new road adjacent to the houses on Aberbeeg road. Whilst the former makes use of an existing track and access here could also serve the additional allocated housing site, this land is not within the ownership of the local authority. Should this prove to be inviable and the later alternative can be achieved within the current local authority ownership.

Desire lines

Vehicular desire lines are limited on this site to access to new development. However pedestrian desire lines are important and should be accommodated and incorporated into the proposed scheme.

There are currently well used recreation walking routes that run along the valley on either side of the river and through the middle plateau. The former railway line is also being developed as a strategic cycle route. These routes are of local importance and should be maintained and enhanced where possible. The route to the west of the river is a public right of way.

The development of the housing plateau should be linked to these recreation routes. Additionally new residential development should be linked to the Six Bells community and facilities via accessible pedestrian routes to the north and east.



Chapel Road and the tunnel under the former railway is a pinch point



Potential new access from Aberbeeg road adjacent to play area

DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

Secondary access to housing plateau is required

Need to accommodate recreation routes and accessible links to Six Bells community

SECTION
01
ASSESSMENT

TOPOGRAPHY



20 Figure 8: Topography plan

1.6 TOPOGRAPHY

Six Bells is set in the Ebbw Fach Valley. The valley rises up steeply on either side of Six Bells. The majority of the settlement is located on the eastern side of the Ebbw Fach River on the lower side of the valley slopes. The housing plateau sits roughly 30m above the river.

The land has been reformed to accommodate development. The upper plateau provides a level area of approximately 1.7ha.

The housing plateau is backed by a bank of 8-9 metres that rises up to Six Bells Road. This bank contains some established trees and some more recent planting. This plateau then drops away in another bank of approximately 10 metres to the east. A pathway leads from the lower plateau up to the middle plateau and meets the upper plateau adjacent to the former Arael School.

Beyond the re-modeled area the land slopes down to the river in a more natural form.



View of site showing housing plateau and mid plateau

DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

A level plateau has been established for development

Development should be sympathetic to the visibility of the plateau and the organic Valley vernacular

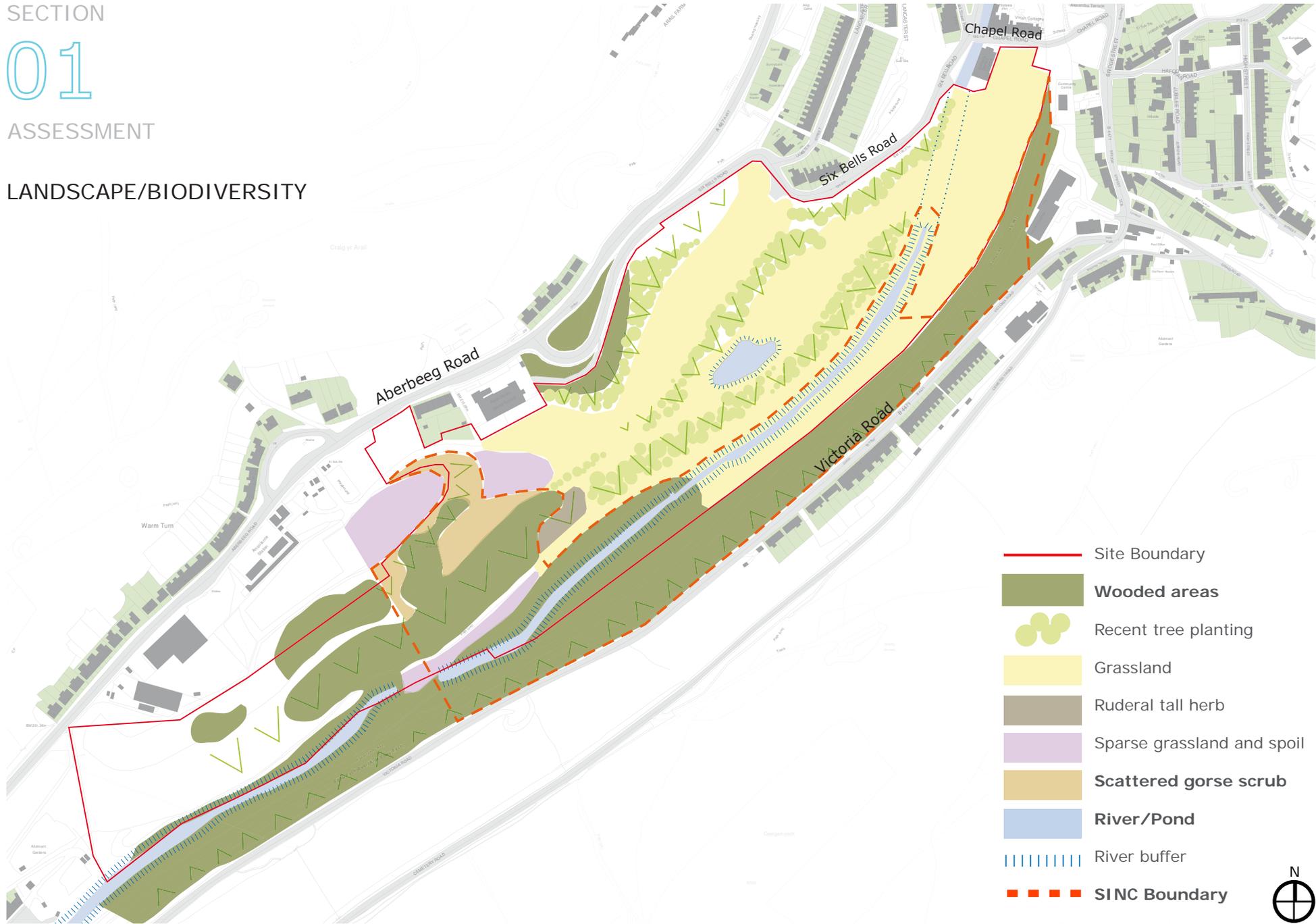


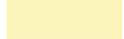
SECTION

01

ASSESSMENT

LANDSCAPE/BIODIVERSITY



-  Site Boundary
-  **Wooded areas**
-  Recent tree planting
-  Grassland
-  Ruderal tall herb
-  Sparse grassland and spoil
-  **Scattered gorse scrub**
-  **River/Pond**
-  River buffer
-  **SINC Boundary**



22 Figure 9: Landscape plan

1.7 LANDSCAPE/BIODIVERSITY

Since mining activity ceased on this site it has become significant for its local biodiversity and landscape value. Some of this value was lost when the site was prepared for redevelopment but it retains local importance.

The Six Bells Colliery Site Biodiversity Survey 2007 (Birches Consultancy) reassessed the site following the works to prepare the site for development. This report found that there are a number of habitats that qualify for the selection of a SINC. These are:

Woodland- along the disused railway and in the south east of the site

Scrub Communities- small areas of scattered gorse scrub remain unchanged

Acid Grasslands- within the areas of scrub communities

Standing open water- the pond that has been created on the middle plateau supports a good emergent vegetation community.

Site of Importance for Nature Conservation

Part of the study area has been identified as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC). This does not include the housing plateau but does take in land adjacent to it, therefore development proposals should be sensitive to the surrounding biodiversity value.

Local Nature Reserve

Part of the wider study area is a candidate Local Nature Reserve (cLNR) and is therefore afforded statutory protection. This does not include the housing plateau however it does abut it. LNRs are declared under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. They are managed for their nature conservation interest and should provide for an element of public access, education and study potential. CCW must be consulted on any development proposal that may affect the special interest of a LNR.

LBAP Priority Habitats and Species

Upland Oak Woodland, Wet Woodland

In recent years, following improvements to the condition of the river and surrounding habitats, wildlife has been returning to the site. Evident species include herons, ducks and otters. Development proposals should seek to enhance the surrounding natural setting and biodiversity value and work positively with this natural asset. The opportunity for creating habitats and incorporating sustainable features should be considered. This may include native tree planting, a considered landscape strategy, improved access and interpretation, green roofs and sustainable urban drainage.

Connections will also be made between the proposed school and the education value of the LNR area.



DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

Development should seek to enhance and protect local biodiversity

1.8 SURROUNDING BUILT CONTEXT

**Housing type and style**

The two storey terrace is the dominant housing type in the surrounding area. These are typical of the Welsh valley style and vary between stone and red brick although the window and door detail varies. There are few examples of recent development in the immediate area. This predominant typology means there is a lack of variety and choice in the local area, in particular the availability of larger four bed properties and smaller one or two bed properties.

Built form

The terrace housing reinforces the street pattern in the local area with properties looking out onto the public realm of the street and across the valley. The line of streets generally follow the contours of the valley in an organic form. Due to the topography, some roads have properties fronting onto the street on one side but rear boundaries the other side. However this should be avoided where possible to give active frontage and natural surveillance to the street. In some locations properties have a small front garden where as others open directly onto the pavement.

DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

Development proposals should present an appropriate response to the character and style of the surrounding built form.

Key Buildings

Two notable buildings in the vicinity of the site are Bethany Baptist Church and the former Arael School building. The school is comparable in height to surrounding residential development and has some historic quality. The chapel is more dominant in scale but lower down the valley. Both buildings should be given consideration for their contribution to the character of the site.



SECTION 02

DESIGN OBJECTIVES & PRINCIPLES

The appropriate design response should be based on the full appreciation of the site specific constraints and opportunities which are summarised in this section. This section also sets out a series of relevant design objectives which should be given full consideration by developers in preparing proposals that comply with best practice. These objectives can also act as a check list for the Council to use as an appraisal tool against any forthcoming planning applications

SECTION
02
 EVALUATION

2.1 ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

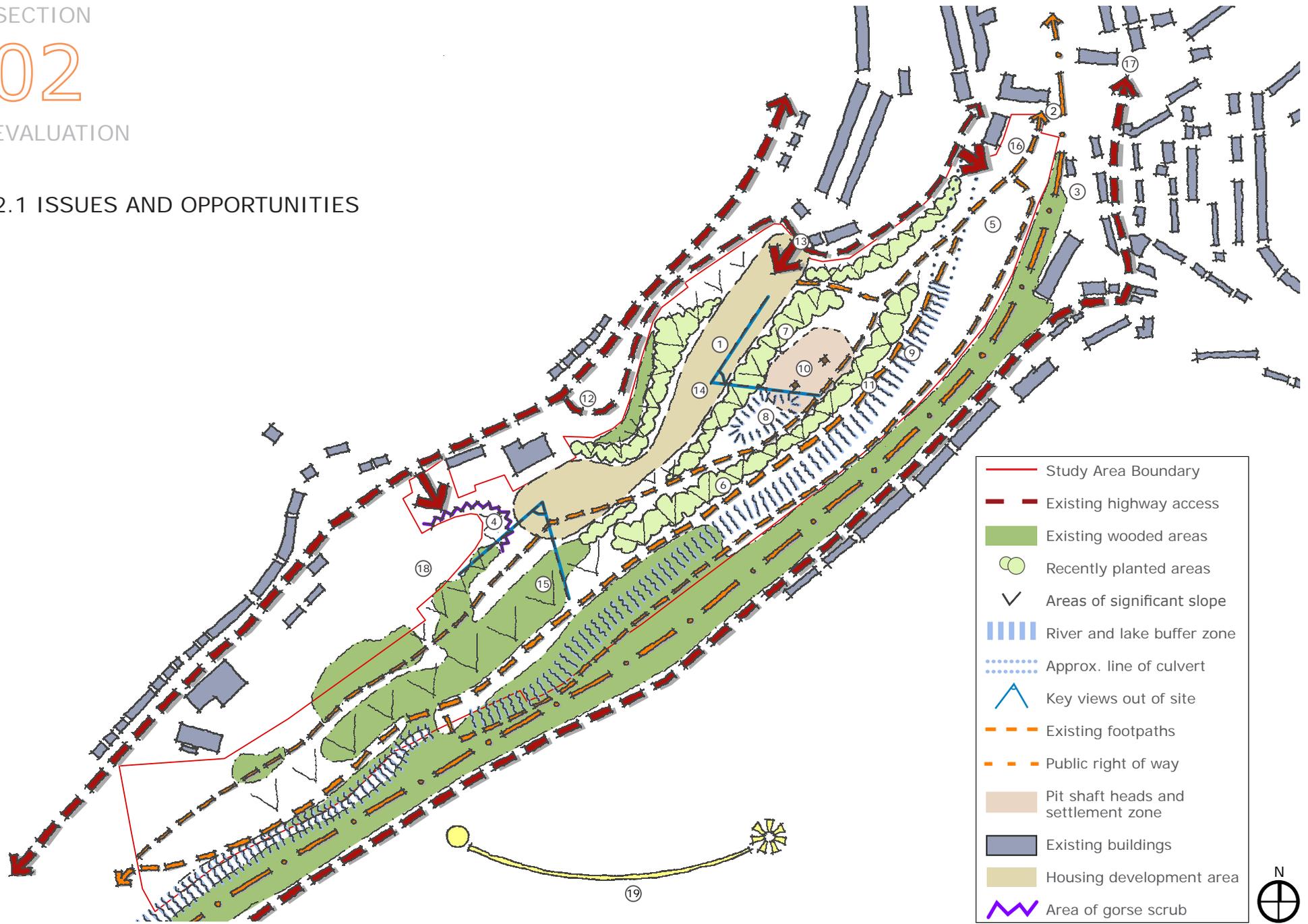


Figure 10: Issues & opportunities plan

Following the analysis of the site, the some key issues and opportunities have been identified:

Issues:

1. Housing site constrained by slope
2. Current congestion around Six Bells Road/Chapel Road (adjacent tunnel)
3. There are limited connections to the site from the east
4. Second access is likely to be required for the housing plateau (Max. cul-de-sac length exceeded)
5. Potential flooding of lower plateau
6. Lower plateaus allocated as a Local Nature Reserve and SINC
7. Different levels restrict development and connections
8. Water runoff needs to be accommodated
9. Buffer zone around the river and culvert to be maintained (7m for river 5m for pond)
10. Former mine shafts, ground conditions and stability (?)
11. Maintain existing public right of way and key pedestrian routes

Opportunities:

12. Main access onto Aberbeeg Road
13. Existing road access onto housing plateau
14. Attractive views across and down the valley should be maximised
15. Attractive setting of Local Nature Reserve, SINC and surroundings should be enhanced with potential to enhance interaction with nature and biodiversity
16. Proposed new school can act as a community focus in the area
17. The site is in close proximity to centre of Six Bells and the facilities available there
18. Potential to connect to additional housing site outside study area (?)
19. Southern aspect

2.2 DESIGN OBJECTIVES

This section identifies some core design objectives devised to help create environments that are sustainable and that exhibit a high level of design quality. They have been extracted from best practice urban design guidance including 'Creating Sustainable Places' (WAG), the Design Compendium, Responsive Environments, Manual for Streets and Building for Life. These guidelines have been based on comprehensive research studies to determine what elements make a 'place' that is practical, appealing, well designed and sustainable.

Key principles that these document highlight are set out below and any design proposals for this site must seek to address them:

- Economic viability
- Compactness
- High Quality
- Accessibility
- Environmental Capital
- Context and Character
- Legibility
- Resource use, BREEAM
- Variety and diversity
- Adaptability
- Richness
- Continuity and enclosure



ECONOMIC VIABILITY

Financial viability will be of fundamental importance to the success of the scheme. To ensure economic success the scheme will need to:

- Respond to market analysis in the provision of suitable housing tenure and form, as well as required public amenities
- Adopt a strong design ethos to create an exemplar development and provide a positive, local, desirable precedent



COMPACTNESS

To provide a truly sustainable scheme it is essential to use efficient and appropriate land uses. This will need to be achieved through:

- Providing an appropriate density of development in close proximity to public transport routes and public amenities
- Creating places for people, whilst recognising the need for the car, through prioritisation of routes for pedestrians and cyclists, and careful consideration of surface treatments.
- The provision of practical and useable amenity space, which reflect desire lines and meet public need



HIGH QUALITY

To create an attractive and desirable scheme it is necessary to apply high quality design and use high quality materials throughout. Not only will this increase aesthetic value and reduce maintenance costs, high quality design will help fulfil all other design objectives.



ACCESSIBILITY

The site sits alongside an established cycle and public transport network. It should be incorporated into the local movement network by:

- Facilitating movement within the local area and beyond
 - Connect to the surrounding area, particularly facilities in Six Bells
 - Provide safe connections to local bus stops on Aberbeeg Road and in Six Bells
 - Ensure pedestrian movement is safe and easy with cars prevented from dominating
 - Providing safe and easy access to the well established public footpaths
- The scheme must also be DDA compliant.

2.1 DESIGN OBJECTIVES



ENVIRONMENTAL CAPITAL

The scheme must seek to maximise the use of existing site features and biodiversity enhancement. The following must be considered:

- Mitigation against loss of landscape/habitat features
- Incorporate principles of Biodiversity By Design
- Integrate existing landscape features into scheme
- Reference should be made to Blaenau Gwent SPG on Renewable Energy (due 2008) and Best Practice in Biodiversity and Geodiversity Conservation in Planning and Development (draft)



CONTEXT AND CHARACTER

Integrating the site into the surrounding area and establishing character is vital in delivering an exemplar scheme and important on this prominent site. To enable this:

- The site should be linked with its environs through landscape enhancements
- The development must adopt a style and character which draws on and interprets the traditional style of the surrounding settlement
- The scale and massing of the development should respond to surrounding development



LEGIBILITY

A legible scheme will allow people to easily read their surroundings and orientate themselves. Legibility should be created or enhanced by:

- Creating distinction and identity using wider views and existing features to aid orientation
- Use of a clear street hierarchy
- Characterful and defined spaces which are distinct and memorable.
- Key buildings to act as visual markers
- The use of landscaping and varying materials to indicate clear routes



RESOURCE USE, BREEAM

The achievement of sustainable objectives is a primary consideration for design. Ecohomes Excellent level must be achieved and in order to make efficient use of the site, the following strategies must be considered:

- Sustainable building principles
- Solar orientated design
- Energy efficient and sustainable heating systems
- Compact building form
- Suitable drainage techniques and SUDS
- Sourcing sustainable building materials



VARIETY AND DIVERSITY

Variety and diversity are integral factors in increasing the choice available to people. This may be visually in terms of building form and detail, or the nature of a given space. It may also be in residential type and size. Variety and diversity should be increased via the following:

- Providing a mix of property types and tenures
- Variety in building form, plot structure, detailing and materials to create uniqueness
- Creating distinctive spaces that add character to the development



ADAPTABILITY

The scheme must be designed to be robust, to accommodate possible change in use over time as the needs and expectations of inhabitants and users change.

- Creating flexible development plots, to allow units to be converted or extended
- High quality architecture that is built to last, and permits alteration to the structure over time
- Designing spaces that are capable of adapting over time and which can fulfil a number of roles



RICHNESS

Richness relates to the sensory experience of a place. The design should seek to stimulate the senses through detailed design and to allow for richness to develop over time. In doing so, the design should consider how to enhance the user experience through:

- Sight
- Touch
- Smell
- Sound
- Movement



CONTINUITY & ENCLOSURE

The enclosure of streets and spaces, a consistent building line and active frontages onto the public realm are essential components. The development must have:

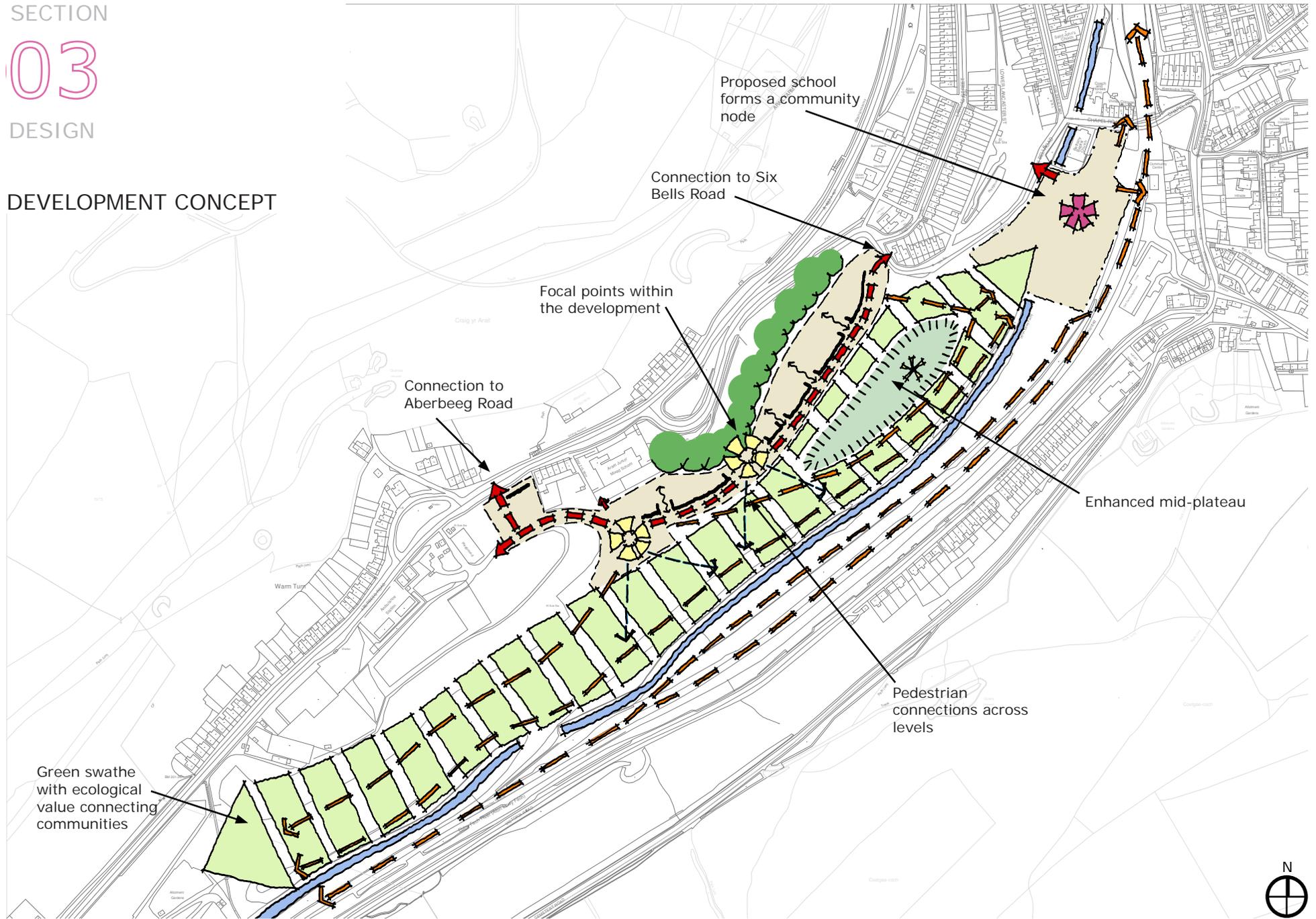
- Units that face on to streets and spaces creating high levels of activity and surveillance
- Spaces that are well enclosed by development to create a sense of place and to promote public safety and security
- A relationship between building height and road/space width to create the appropriate sense of enclosure in relation to spatial role and form

SECTION 03

DESIGN

Section 02 Evaluation presented the constraints and opportunities of the site and a series of design principles. In order to illustrate how these findings could be addressed, a development concept and indicative layout have been produced.

DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT



36 Figure 11: Development concept



3.1 DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT

This section of the document illustrates a development concept and indicative layout for the site. This responds to the evaluation of the site and its context set out in the previous sections of this document. This is accompanied by a number of principles that should be applied in the final design of the site.

The adjacent concept plan sets the housing site within the context of a wider vision for the whole study area. Key elements of the concept are:

- Enhancing the green connection along the valley on the lower plateaus incorporating the SINC and Local Nature Reserve areas
- Making pedestrian connections to this green swathe from the housing plateau
- Enhance the ecological and community value of the mid plateau with the introduction of a focal point such as an 'eco play area'
- Connections should also be made to the proposed new school

Concept principles for the development of the housing plateau include:

- Ensure development presents a positive face to views from across the valley
- Punctuate the linear nature of the site with focal points
- Maximise views out across the valley

3.2 INDICATIVE LAYOUT

Building on the wider concept for the study area, the adjacent indicative layout plan illustrates a potential development scenario for the housing site.

The plan illustrates linear residential development facing out over the valley with enclosed rear gardens. The linearity of the site is punctuated with spaces which lead into mews court spaces accommodating parking and additional units.

A minimum density of 35 dwellings per hectare (dph) would achieve 60 dwellings on the site, a higher density of 40 dph would give 68 dwellings.

A mix of terraces, semi-detached and detached properties may be used but the continuity of the building line should be maintained.

It is considered that development should be primarily 2-2.5 storey with elements of 3 storey at key locations.

Corner buildings should be given special consideration to avoid blank gable ends.

Positive spaces should be created where the site widens at the southern end.

The style and design of individual properties must be appropriate to the setting and acknowledge the surrounding traditional valley form of development.

The adjacent section shows how the street might be treated with small front garden spaces, pavement, some on street parking, a narrow two-way carriageway (in line with Manual for Streets guidance) and drainage channel adjacent to the existing bank.

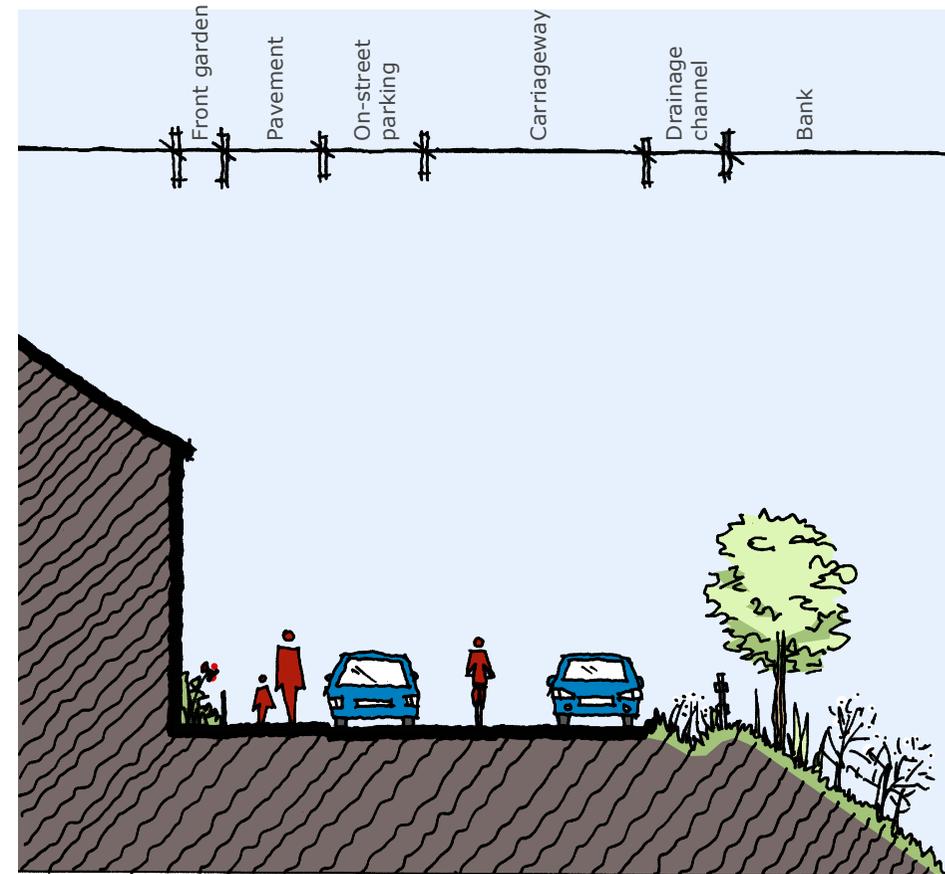


Figure 13: Indicative street section for main route through the site

3.3 ILLUSTRATIVE 3D VIEW



40 Figure 14: Sketch 3D view of indicative layout



3.4 SUSTAINABILITY

Residential development should achieve BREEAM excellent rating on this site. The design of the housing should take advantage of solar gain from the southerly aspect of the site.

Other sustainable elements may include:

- Solar power
- Green roofs
- Choice of local and sustainable materials
- Cycle storage
- Live-work units

Surface water runoff should be carefully managed and incorporated into the design. This could include drainage channels alongside the road.



Glazed sun spaces



Roadside swale

3.5 LANDSCAPE

Development should interact positively with the surrounding landscape. Where possible housing should look out over the surrounding green space so as to make a positive edge and take advantage of views.

Additional planting should be incorporated into the development with strategic tree planting particularly to reinforce edges and soften the backs and sides of properties.

Space should be provided to allow residents to introduce their own 'green' elements such as space in front of houses to grow plants.

A new Local Equipped Area for Play may be incorporated in the development where the site is too narrow for housing or alternatively as part of enhancements to the middle plateau. An 'eco play area' should be considered which uses timber and recycled materials for the play equipment which can also then be re-recycled.



Housing overlooking open space



Space for planting in front of house



Eco play area

3.6 ACCESS AND MOVEMENT STRATEGY

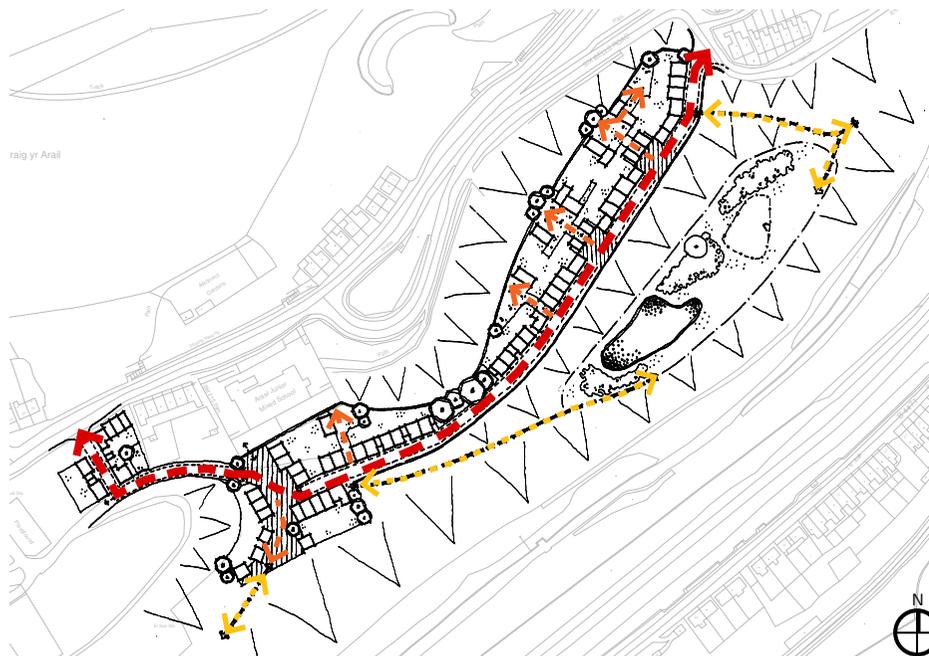


Figure 15: Access and movement

-  Vehicular route and access
-  Access to mews courts
-  Key pedestrian links



Streets designed around the pedestrian



Footpaths should be safe and attractive

Vehicular Movement

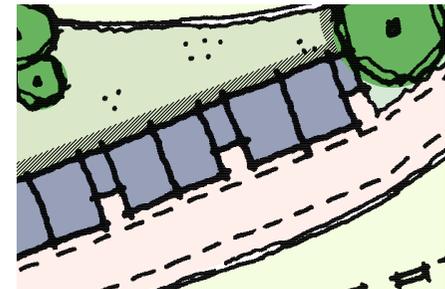
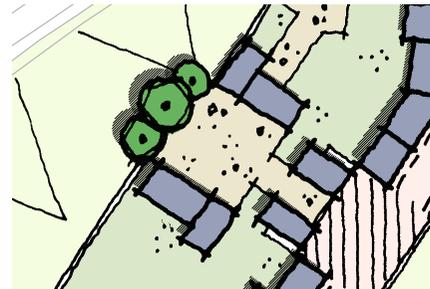
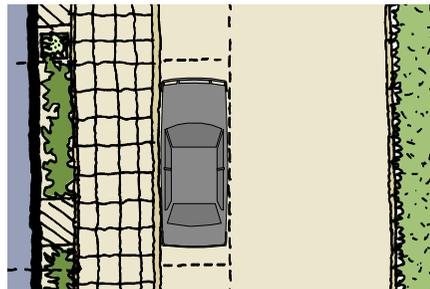
- Utilise existing access point off Six Bells Road
- Create a low speed route through the site to provide access to residential development
- Adopt principles of Manual for Streets to ensure a pedestrian friendly route with high 'place value'
- A second access/egress point can be taken from Aberbeeg road given appropriate visibility splays
- Secondary vehicular access to mews courts

Pedestrian Movement

- Accommodate existing routes that connect to the lower plateaus
- Ensure connections from the development to these footpaths and vehicular access points

3.7 PARKING

Car parking should be accommodated in safe and convenient locations but in a way that does not dominate the environment. Parking and street activity are inextricably linked and this relationship should be given full consideration in the design of the scheme.



Parking in front of houses

On-street Parking

- On street parking allows people to park close to their properties and creates activity on the street
- Parking should be well incorporated to avoid visual dominance



Well overlooked rear court

Mews Parking Courts

- Can be used to supplement on-street parking
- Spaces should be overlooked by properties
- Flats-over-garages (FOG) can be used to provide additional parking and activity within the space



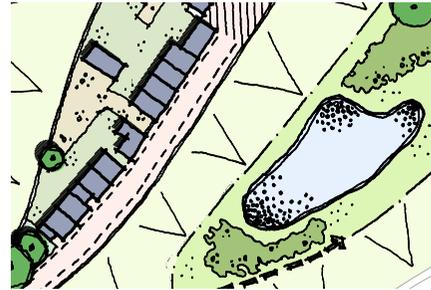
Well integrated private garages

Private garages

- Individual garages can be used where there are adjacent to the dwelling, they should not be in isolated locations
- FOGs should be located close to the properties that they serve

SECTION 04

CONCLUSION



4.1 CONCLUSION

The former Six Bells Colliery site offers the opportunity for the development of high quality residential development set in an attractive wider and local landscape with good transport links and proximity to the Six Bells community and Abertillery.

The proposed development should contribute to the local authority and community aspirations for the landscape and ecology value of the wider site and ensure positive integration of development into the landscape.

The design principles as set out in this document should be followed as a minimum to ensure that a high quality and sustainable development is achieved and the aspirations of Bleanau Gwent County Borough Council are met.