

Sirhowy Ironworks (MM185), Blaenau Gwent

Setting Assessment for New Welsh Medium School

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A report for Blaenau Gwent County Borough
Council
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Summary

The Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust has undertaken an archaeological setting assessment of the scheduled monument of Sirhowy Ironworks MM185 in relation to proposed construction of a new school. This proposed development is located immediately to the east of the monument.

At present, there is a substantial block of woodland between the monument and the proposed school site. Its presence, combined with the fact that the monument is located at the base of a steep slope, creates a complete screening effect between the two areas. There are no views 'of', 'from' or 'in combination' that take in both the scheduled monument and the development site.

Provided that the existing woodland remains in place (and the development proposals do not include felling or other works in this area), the presence of a new school would not bring about any perceptible visual change. Indeed, the additional planting on the development margins, proposed within the designs, is likely to accentuate rather than reduce the effect of vegetation screening. All key views of the monument identified by this assessment will remain as they are presently. Despite the creation of a new school complex very close to the monument, it is also the case that no other (non-visual) changes to the setting are predicted, for example those arising from increased noise, traffic or visitor footfall.

Despite the proximity of the new school to the scheduled monument, its construction is considered to have a Neutral/No Change outcome. Neither the scheduled monument, nor its flanking woodland, will be physically affected. The monument's setting will not be altered or compromised, leaving its present condition, character, and the visitor's ability to understand and appreciate it, entirely unchanged.

Crynodeb

Mae Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Morgannwg-Gwent wedi cynnal asesiad o leoliad archaeolegol ar gyfer heneb gofrestredig Gwaith Haearn Sirhywi MM185, a hynny mewn perthynas â gwaith i adeiladu ysgol newydd arfaethedig. Mae'r datblygiad arfaethedig hwn wedi'i leoli yn union i'r dwyrain o'r heneb.

Ar hyn o bryd, mae yna floc sylweddol o goetir rhwng yr heneb a safle arfaethedig yr ysgol. Mae ei phresenoldeb, ynghyd â'r ffaith bod yr heneb wedi'i lleoli ar waelod llethr serth, yn creu effaith sgrinio gyflawn rhwng y ddwy ardal. Nid oes yna unrhyw olygfeydd 'o', 'oddi wrth' neu 'mewn cyfuniad' sy'n cynnwys yr heneb gofrestredig a'r safle datblygu.

Cyhyd â bod y coetir presennol yn aros yn ei le (ac nid yw'r cynigion datblygu yn cynnwys cwmpo coed na gwaith arall yn yr ardal hon), ni fyddai presenoldeb ysgol newydd yn arwain at unrhyw newid gweledol canfyddadwy. Yn wir, mae'r gwaith plannu ychwanegol ar ymylon y datblygiad, a gynigir yn y dyluniadau, yn debygol o gynyddu yn hytrach na lleihau effaith sgrinio y llystyfiant. Bydd yr holl olygfeydd allweddol o'r heneb a nodir gan yr asesiad hwn yn aros fel y maent ar hyn o bryd. Er gwaetha'r ffaith y bydd safle ysgol newydd yn cael ei greu yn agos iawn at yr heneb, mae hefyd yn wir na ragwelir unrhyw newidiadau (anweledol) eraill i'r lleoliad, er enghraifft y rhai sy'n deillio o fwy o sŵn, traffig neu gynydd yn nifer yr ymwelwyr.

Er gwaethaf agosrwydd yr ysgol newydd i'r heneb gofrestredig, ystyrir y bydd ei hadeiladu yn arwain at ganlyniad Niwtral/Dim Newid. Ni fydd yna effaith gorfforol ar yr heneb gofrestredig, na'r coetir bob ochr iddi. Ni fydd lleoliad yr heneb yn cael ei newid na'i beryglu, gan adael ei chyflwr a'i chymeriad presennol, ynghyd â gallu'r ymwelydd i'w deall a'i gwerthfawrogi, yn hollol ddigyfnewid.

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Abbreviations

GGAT:	Glamorgan Gwent Archaeological Trust
HER:	Historic Environment Record (curated by GGAT)
LB:	Listed Building
MM:	Scheduled Monument, e.g. MM218
NGR:	National Grid Reference
NMR:	National Monuments Record (curated by RCAHMW)
NMGW:	National Museum and Galleries of Wales
NPRN:	National Primary Record Number (in NMR) i.e. 43478
OD:	Ordnance Survey
OS:	Ordnance Survey
PRN:	Primary Record Number (in HER) i.e. 04700g
RCAHMW:	Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council are proposing a new Welsh Medium Primary School on land to the east of the scheduled monument of Sirhowy Ironworks MM185. The centre of the development (NGR SO 14368 10235) is approximately 121m to the northeast of the Scheduled Monument (Figure 1). However, of significance is the fact that the closest proposed building lies approximately 45m from the monument and the proposed school boundary is approximately 20m from the monument.

A desk-based assessment, which considers potential effects upon archaeological remains, has been undertaken in parallel with this heritage assessment (GGAT report 2021/039). Below is a brief description of the monument:

The monument comprises the remains of several buildings related to the production of iron. The Sirhowy Ironworks were established in 1778, and between 1794 and 1818 they were operated by William Borrow, Rev. Matthew Monkhouse and Richard Fothergill. In 1818 the works were acquired by James Harford (Harford, Partridge and Co. of Ebbw Vale) and operated as part of the Ebbw Vale Ironworks. In 1844 the works were bought by Abraham Darby and Co., at which point there were five furnaces in operation. The works developed under the new owners and innovations, such as hot blasting, resulted in the redesigning of the site and the construction of a huge freestanding furnace that towered above the existing structures. The ironworks closed down in 1882 but the site continued to produce coke for Ebbw Vale Ironworks until 1905. The remains were scheduled in 1973.

The remains of the ironworks are located on the east side of the modern town and built into a steep west-facing slope. They consist of 3 barrel vaulted arches, the south much larger than the others, which formed part of the retaining wall against which the early furnaces were built, the base and 'bear' from the large freestanding furnace, and the remains of a late 19th century furnace at the south end of the site. Above the remains of the furnaces are the footings and other infrastructure from the charging houses and calcining ovens. The monument is of national importance for its potential to enhance and illustrate our knowledge and understanding of the development of the iron industry. An ironworks may be part of a larger industrial complex and their importance can further enhanced by their group value. The scheduled area comprises the remains described and areas around them within which related evidence may be expected to survive (Cadw 2021).

As the proposed development lies close to the scheduled monument MM185, Cadw requested a Setting Assessment be undertaken because the development proposals fall within defined criteria triggering an assessment (see Cadw 2017, *Setting of Historic Assets in Wales*, 11).

1.2 Methodology

1.2.1 Assessment Process

The assessment of asset setting follows the guidance set out in *Setting of Historic Assets in Wales* (Cadw 2017). This sets out a four-stage approach:

Stage 1: Identify the historic assets that might be affected by a proposed change or development.

Stage 2: Define and analyse the settings to understand how they contribute to the significance of the historic assets and, in particular, the ways in which the assets are understood, appreciated and experienced.

Stage 3: Evaluate the potential impact of a proposed change or development on that significance.

Stage 4: If necessary, consider options to mitigate or improve the potential impact of a proposed change or development on that significance.

The Trust works to the Standards & Guidance published by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists. The Institute has not published a Standard and Guidance for Setting Assessment, and the overriding guidance for such work in Wales is set out in *Setting of Historic Assets in Wales* issued by Cadw, but some of the underlying work would be covered by the *Standard and Guidance for archaeological Desk-based Assessments* (CIfA 2020), and has been followed as applicable in the context of this work.

1.2.2 Data-gathering: existing archive material

Information recorded on the regional Historic Environment Record (HER) and National Monuments Record (NMR) is assessed. Cartographic and documentary sources is consulted, along with relevant published information. Current Listed Building data and information on Scheduled Monuments is obtained from Cadw. Where necessary, collections of aerial photographs (such as that held by the Central Register of Air Photography for Wales) are accessed, as is relevant LANDMAP and Historic Landscape surveys.

The following bodies are consulted, as necessary:

- Cadw: Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings and Registered Landscapes, Parks and Gardens
- RCAHMW: NMR, aerial photos, archive and upland survey
- Regional HER: HER information and further information files
- Natural Resources Wales: Historic landscape issues
- Local archaeological and historical societies, museums and individuals
- Local Archive Service: Historic maps, plans and records
- CRAPW: Aerial photographic records

1.2.3 Site visits

A site visit is made to primarily record extant lines of sight, i.e. views from and to the archaeological asset(s), the potential significance of lines of sight, and assess any potential visual impact(s) to lines of sight deemed to hold likely archaeological significance. The visit also informs the formulation of potential mitigation. Archaeological sites and views are photographed by digital camera of no less than 9mp and notes made on significant views and site condition.

1.2.4 Criteria for Evaluation of the Archaeological Resource

The historic assets within the study area are categorised in accordance with the criteria set out in the Department of Transport/Welsh Office/Scottish Office *Design Manual for Roads and Bridges paragraph 3.4 Vol. 11 Section 3 Part 2 (Cultural Heritage)*.

- Category A: national importance
- Category B: regional importance

- Category C: local importance
- Category D: low importance
- To these two additional categories have been added:
- Category U: unknown
- Category N/A: not applicable

Table 1. Categorisation of archaeological sites

Category	Importance	Equivalent to
A	National	Scheduled monument Grade I or II* listed building/structure Site of national importance
B	Regional	Grade II listed building/structure Site of regional or county importance
C	Local	Site with local value
D	Low	Site with little or no significant value or which is so badly damaged that too little now remains to justify their inclusion in a higher grade
U	Unknown	Site of unknown condition or uncertain whether any remains survive and/or is of unidentified form, therefore
N/A	Not Applicable	Sites known to have been completely destroyed or those deemed as natural features

The assessment of the importance of individual historic assets is essentially a subjective exercise based upon the experience of the project team. The importance of certain historic assets will be implied by their status within the statutory framework. Scheduled Monuments will always be of national importance; Listed Buildings will be of at least regional importance. Values assigned to other sites are given both in relation to their individual importance and to their context within the wider landscape, whilst considering the following criteria:

- Condition
- Rarity
- Group association
- Historical association
- Confidence

Historic assets are attributed with values for each of these factors as detailed below. A combination of all these elements as well as professional judgement results in an overall designation for each site based on the categories listed above. A breakdown of the values given for each element of every site will be provided.

The **condition** of individual historic assets and the general overall condition of surviving remains has a bearing on the value of the sites themselves and on the value that they impart within a wider landscape context. The condition of sites is recorded following the system used by the Welsh Archaeological Trusts' HERs, using the following criteria:

- Intact
- Near intact
- Damaged
- Near destroyed
- Destroyed
- Restored
- Moved: the site has been moved (most likely to refer to loose finds)
- Unknown

For the purposes of desk-based and setting assessments, **rarity** is assessed at regional level only. The following criteria are used:

- High: very few sites of this type are known
- Medium: the site is not unusual, but cannot be considered common
- Low: the site is quite common

Group association is where a connection between sites within the landscape can be demonstrated. These will usually be of the same period, but may include groups where the presence of an earlier site or sites has led to the formation of a later complex, or where an earlier site or sites can be shown to have acquired importance as part of a later complex. The criteria are as follows:

- High: the site forms part of an interconnected complex occupying a clearly definable landscape where little or no fragmentation has occurred
- Medium: the site is part of an interconnected complex which is either limited in scope or badly fragmented
- Low: there are few or no other sites which are associated

Historical association is where there is a link between the historic asset and known historical or cultural persons or events. Prehistoric sites, which are by definition before historical evidence, cannot have any contemporary historical association, but they may acquire later associations. For the Roman and Early Medieval periods, where survival of historical evidence is poor and patchy, any contemporary documentation at all will be important. Two classifications are given for historical association, one reflecting the certainty of the identification, and the other its importance. Only sites with certain or possible association can be assessed for importance, and historical association can only increase the importance of a site; the absence of it will never decrease its importance.

Historical association- identification

- Certain
- Possible
- Unknown

Historical association-importance

- High: proven connection with a nationally or regionally important character, event or process; detailed contemporary information about the site
- Medium: proven connection with a locally important character, event or process; possibly connection with a nationally or regionally important character, event or process; limited contemporary information about the site
- Low: non-specific mention of site; not necessarily contemporary; folk story

The assignment of values to identified interests requires consideration of the reliability and accuracy of the source data, ranging from fully recorded features seen in open excavation to antiquarian comments on finds of note from a poorly defined location. This may also be determined by any historical associations as described above. The **confidence** with which the values have been assigned is noted, using the following criteria:

- Very high: existing information is derived from excavation to modern standards with full supporting detail
- High: existing information is reliable and detailed
- Medium: existing information is apparently reliable but limited in detail
- Low: existing information is too limited to allow its reliability to be assessed

1.2.5 *Archaeological assessment criteria: Indirect Effects (monument and landscape setting)*

Indirect effects identified for the archaeological resource include those of visibility and setting issues. Only monuments of National and Regional importance with a direct visual significance will be assessed for indirect effects. Indirect effects to category A and B sites will be measured against criteria for the assessment of indirect, visual impacts based upon the ASIDOHL2 methodology in *Guide to Good Practice on Using the Register of Landscapes of Historic Interest in Wales in the Planning and Development Process* (2nd Edition 2007). The grading for the assessment is as follows:

- **Very severe:** the setting of, key views and/or essential lines of sight to and from the monument are dominated or obscured by the development. The form, scale and appearance, including motion, of the development, compromises the cultural integrity of the monument and its setting resulting in severance of historical links and/or degradation of an unaltered setting.
- **Severe:** the setting of, key views and/or essential lines of sight to and from the monument are interrupted by the development. The form, scale and appearance, including motion, of the development, largely affects the cultural value of the monument and its setting resulting in possible severance of historical links and/or uncharacteristic change to a largely unaltered setting.
- **Considerable:** the development is significantly visible in or interrupts the setting of, key views and/or essential lines of sight to and from the monument. The form and appearance, including motion of the development results in discordance with the monument and change to a largely unaltered setting.
- **Moderate:** the development is visible in key views and/or essential lines of sight to and from the monument and its setting. The form and appearance, including motion of the development results in discordance with the monument and/or alteration to its setting.
- **Slight:** the development is noticeable in key views and/or essential lines of sight to and from the monument and its setting. The form and appearance, including motion of the development is noticeable and results in minor alteration to the setting of the monument.
- **Very slight:** the development is barely noticeable within the setting of, key views and/or essential lines of sight to and from the monument. OR: The setting is already largely altered and unsympathetic and/or the form and appearance, including motion of the development is barely noticeable and results in little discernible change to the setting.
- **None:** the development is not noticeable within the setting of, key views and/or essential lines of sight to and from the monument. OR: The setting is already altered and unsympathetic and/or the form and appearance, including motion of the development is not noticeable and results in no discernible change to the setting.

The assessment of individual sites is essentially a subjective exercise based upon the experience of the project team. The following aspects will be considered when determining the results of the assessment.

- Any potential impacts that the development may have on the relationships of the monument to its surrounding landscape, including other monuments.

- The nature, extent and intrinsic value of the monuments setting, including its role in relation to the monument; the impact to both the immediate, essential setting and the wider setting is considered.
- Interference with the intervisibility between the monument and other related monuments or particular landscape elements, impact to key viewpoints, vistas and lines of sight.

The purpose of the monument and significance of views to and from it will be considered in terms of visual intention. Whilst the location, construction and function of some monuments were specifically chosen to afford views of a particular area or monument(s), others may instead have been the targets of observation. The visual impact of the development in terms of form, scale, appearance and the effect of movement of constituent parts as well as the extent of encroachment of the development into the setting (both immediate and wider) of the monument should be considered.

Inter-visibility between monuments will be determined and cross-referenced, where possible, to assist in determining the impact of the development on the between monuments. Impacts to the direct lines of sight as well as impacts upon wider views of monuments will be determined and graded using the categories described above (very severe down to very slight).

1.3 Site location and description

The proposed development site (Figure 1) is centred on SO 14368 10235 at Sirhowy in the Borough of Blaenau Gwent and bounded to the north and east by Chartist Way, an urban artery accessing housing. To the south is a continuation of the reclaimed land on which the development is proposed. To the west, separated from the development site by approximately 20m of woodland, is the Scheduled Monument boundary of the Sirhowy Ironworks MM185, with housing to the north of the monument.

The topography of the proposed development, an area of grass and scrubland and former tip area, falls 6m in height from approximately 348m OD at the east to 342m OD in the west over a distance of 120m. From here, the ground then falls to the level of the Scheduled Monument and Graham's Yard Road, both lying between 313m and 320m OD. Woodland dominates and demarcates this quite steeply falling ground between the monument and the proposed development area.

1.4 Historic Assets within the Study Area

A search of local site data held by the HER, NMR and Cadw was undertaken to inform the study (see Table 2 below). With reference to the DBA (GGAT report 2021/039), Table 2 lists all known sites within the study area. As discussed in the following section, following a review (Stage 1 of the Cadw 2017 process), all but one of these assets were assessed as of no significance to the setting assessment. This exception, scheduled monument MM185, was identified for further analysis, i.e. taken forward to Stages 2-4.

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Table 2: Interests initially examined to identify historic assets within the study area

No	PRN	NAME	PERIOD	TYPE	CONDITION	STATUS
1	06034g	132 Drystone Walled Landscape, Nant Y Croft	Unknown	Field Boundary	Near Destroyed	
2	05987g	141 Old Hargan Fach And Drystone Walled Landscape	Post Medieval	Building	Near Destroyed	
3	05996g	142 Merthyr, Tredegar And Abergavenny Railway, Dukestown	Post Medieval	Railway	Near Destroyed	
4	05975g	145 Cast-Iron Weir , Dukestown	Post Medieval	Weir	Near Intact	
5	02308g	16-18 Beaufort:1 Yellow Row	Post Medieval	House	Destroyed	
6	05266.0g	A185 Desk-Based Assessment L16	Post Medieval	Railway	Not Known	
7	09068g	Accommodation Row	Post Medieval	Workers Housing	Not Known	
8	06828g	Air Shaft	Post Medieval	Ventilation Shaft	Near Intact	
9	02314g	Charles Street, Sirhowy	Post Medieval	House	Not Known	
10	06826g	Coal Shaft	Post Medieval	Colliery	Destroyed	
11	10656g	Drill Hall, Sirhowy	Modern	Drill Hall	Damaged	
12	09410.1g	Ebbw Vale Private Line Later Tramroad	Post Medieval	Tramway	Near Destroyed	
13	09410.0g	Ebbw Vale Private Line Tramroad	Post Medieval	Tramway	Near Destroyed	
14	04735g	Limekiln Row, Carpenters Yard	Post Medieval	Row House	Destroyed	
15	02499.0m	Merthyr, Tredegar And Abergavenny Railway	Post Medieval	Railway	Near Intact	
16	07967m	Merthyr, Tredegar And Abergavenny Railway Dukestown	Post Medieval	Railway	Excavated	
17	09700g	Pond, Tredegar	Post Medieval	Pond	Near Intact	
18	05265.0g	Rassau Railroad	Post Medieval	Tramway	Near Destroyed;Intact	
19	06827g	Reservoir	Post Medieval	Reservoir	Near Intact	
20	06829g	Rifle Range And Targets	Post Medieval	Firing Range	Destroyed	
21	09053g	Sirhowy House	Post Medieval	House	Intact	
22	MM185/ LB22496/02220g/34141	Sirhowy Iron Works	Post Medieval	Iron Works	Near Intact	Scheduled Monument; Listed Building

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No	PRN	NAME	PERIOD	TYPE	CONDITION	STATUS
23	09052g	Sirhowy Old Coal Level 1	Post Medieval	Level	Not Known	
24	09066g	Sirhowy Old Quarry 1	Post Medieval	Quarry	Not Known	
25	09088g	Sirhowy Structure 2	Post Medieval	Structure	Not Known	
26	09059g	Sirhowy Tunnel	Post Medieval	Tunnel	Not Known	
27	LB22490/11549g/307467	St George's Church Tredegar	Post Medieval	Church	Intact	Scheduled Monument; Listed Building
28	06825g	Stone Level	Post Medieval	Adit	Not Known	
29	06830g	Stone Level	Post Medieval	Adit	Destroyed	
30	09023g	The Goldmine Inn (Sirhowy Inn)	Post Medieval	Public House	Destroyed	
31	09139g	Tredegar Ironworks	Post Medieval	Iron Works	Not Known	
32	05995.0g	Tredegar Tramroad	Post Medieval	Tramway	Damaged; Near Destroyed	
33	02499.1m	Trefil Viaduct	Post Medieval	Railway Viaduct	Not Known	
34	09410.3g	Tunnel On Ebbw Vale Private Line (Later Addition)	Post Medieval	Tunnel	Intact	
35	422018	Dukestown Cemetery, Tredegar	Modern	Cemetery	Intact	
36	422019	Rhoslan Housing Estate, Sirhowy	20th Century	Housing Estate	Intact	
37	307491	Tabernacle, Dukestown, Tredegar	Post Medieval	Chapel	Damaged	
38	309100	The Immaculate Conception Catholic Church, Tredegar	Post Medieval	Church	Intact	
39	43005	Sirhowy Tramroad Co Tramroad	Post Medieval	Tramway	Intact	
40	12835	Congregational Chapel, Dukestown	Post Medieval	Chapel	Intact	
41	12834	St Luke's Road Chapel, St Luke's Road, Dukestown	Post Medieval	Chapel	Intact	
42	12375	Carmel English Baptist Church, Picton Road, Scwrfa, Sirhowy	Post Medieval	Chapel	Intact	
43	10890	Sirhywi,English (Dukestown), Dukestown	Post Medieval	Chapel	Intact	
44	12839	Rehoboth, Sirhywi	Post Medieval	Chapel	Intact	
45	12838	Church, Charles Street And Sycamore Avenue, Ashvale	Post Medieval	Chapel	Intact	
46	12837	Ebenezer, Ebenezer Street, Scwrfa	Post Medieval	Chapel	Intact	

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No	PRN	NAME	PERIOD	TYPE	CONDITION	STATUS
47	10889	Sirhywi,Cymraeg (Sirhowy,Welsh)	Post Medieval	Chapel	Intact	
48	10869	Siloh Baptist Chapel	Post Medieval	Chapel	Intact	
49	10882	Sirhywi (Sirhowy)	Post Medieval	Chapel	Intact	
50	12836	Carmel, Picton Road, Scwrfa	Post Medieval	Chapel	Intact	
51	12771	Bethel Full Gospel, Tredegar	Post Medieval	Chapel	Intact	
52	12770	Salem, Charles Street, Tredegar	Post Medieval	Chapel	Intact	
53	12767	Trinity (Spiritualist), Gelli Road, Tredegar	Post Medieval	Chapel	Intact	
54	10880	Commercial Street, Commercial Street, Tredegar	Post Medieval	Chapel	Intact	
55	10853	Picton Street, Picton Street, Tredegar	Post Medieval	Chapel	Intact	
56	10866	Church Street Chapel, Church Street, Tredegar	Post Medieval	Chapel	Intact	
57	404196	Graham's Navigation Colliery;Edward James' First Class Pit; Number 9 Pit;Sirhowy Colliery	Post Medieval	Colliery	Intact	
58	286427	Picton Road, 11-12, Scwrfa	Post Medieval	Workers Housing	Intact	
59	286197	St Luke's Road, 1-2, Scwrfa	Post Medieval	Workers Housing	Intact	
60	286196	St Luke's Road, 3, Scwrfa	Post Medieval	Workers Housing	Intact	
61	286194	Greenfield Cottages , 3, Scwrfa	Post Medieval	Workers Housing	Intact	
62	286355	Star Row, 1-4, Scwrfa	Post Medieval	Workers Housing	Intact	
63	286428	Picton Road, 2-3, Scwrfa	Post Medieval	Workers Housing	Intact	
64	286041	Carpenter's Yard, 13-15, Tredegar	Post Medieval	Workers Housing	Intact	
65	286199	Carpenter's Yard, 3-5, Tredegar	Post Medieval	Workers Housing	Intact	
66	286198	Picton Road, 13-14, Scwrfa	Post Medieval	Workers Housing	Intact	
67	286193	Greenfield Cottages , 1-2, Scwrfa	Post Medieval	Workers Housing	Intact	
68	407944	Sirhowy Inn;Goldmine Inn; Sirhowy Hill, Tredegar	Post Medieval	Inn	Intact	
69	402627	Gwent Shopping Centre, Tredegar	Modern	Shopping Centre	Intact	
70	413896	Central Surgery, Church Street, Tredegar	20th Century, Modern	Surgery	Intact	

Sirhowy Ironworks (MM185), Blaenau Gwent: Setting Assessment for New Welsh Medium School

N o	PRN	NAME	PERIOD	TYPE	CONDITION	STATUS
71	414896	North End (Scwrf) Miners Welfare Hall And Institute, Tredegar	20th Century	Miners Institute, Working Mens Institute	Intact	
72	421301	Mission Church, Sirhowy, Tredegar	20th Century	Mission Church	Intact	
73	404197	Dukestown	Post Medieval	Town	Intact	
74	422134	Sirhowy Rifle Range	19th Century	Firing Range	Intact	
75	402631	Quarries, Tredegar	Unknown	Quarry	Intact	
76	22485	W Boundary Walls, Gates And Railings At St George's Church	Post Medieval	Walls	Intact	Scheduled Monument; Listed Building
77	22491	Christina Louise Nursing Home (Aka Central Surgery)	Post Medieval	Nursing Home	Intact	Scheduled Monument; Listed Building
78	22497	Former Tramroad Bridge Over Sirhowy River	Post Medieval	Bridge	Intact	Scheduled Monument; Listed Building
79	22498	Ironworks Boundary Stone	Post Medieval	Stone	Intact	Scheduled Monument; Listed Building

1.5 Site visit

A site visit was undertaken on 24th May 2021. The weather conditions at the time of the visit were cloudy with hazy sunshine, mingled with intermittent periods of heavy thundery rain. The visit was carried out to determine the implications of the proposed development on the scheduled monument and its view-sheds.

The development area, occupying a gently sloping plateau to the northeast of scheduled monument (Sirhowy Ironworks (MM185)), lies approximately 20m OD above it. The area proposed for development covers 21,470sqm and is subdivided into smaller land parcels, each enclosed by wire fencing, and under pasture being used for livestock grazing (Figure 1).

During the visit, it was noted that the proposed development site has undergone significant landscaping, with ground levels at the northern tip of the development area being raised by as much as 4m (Plate 10). A mature band of woodland, comprising both deciduous and coniferous species, and being c. 80m in length, runs along the western edge of the development area covering the sloping topography (Plate 11).

The woodland, with its mixed tree varieties provides a significant screen of foliage all year round. This fact, combined with the significant difference in height between the development area and the scheduled monument, precludes any intervisibility between the development area above, and from the scheduled monument Sirhowy Ironworks below (Plates 1 and 2).

A series of inclines, the remains of the Ebbw Vale Private Line Later Tramroad (PRN 09410.1g), are located within the strip of woodland between the ironworks and development area. When visited, these too were completely obscured from the ironworks and development site by the tree cover (Plate 4 and 5). All additional historic assets identified within the study were visited and photographed, and viewsheds to and from the scheduled monument identified and recorded.

Three key views were identified during the site visit to inform the setting. The first is from the footpath directly in front of the Sirhowy Ironworks (MM185) on Graham's Yard. The second is from the corner of the unmarked road and Graham's Yard. The third is from the southern end of Graham's Yard and the junction of Dukestown Road (Figure 3).

2. Stage 1. The Historic Assets Relevant to the Study

2.1 The Development and the Study Area

The development proposal is for a new Welsh Medium Primary School to the east of the Scheduled Monument Sirhowy Ironworks (MM185, see Figure 1).

The scope of this assessment has been established by consultation, namely that it is confined to the Sirhowy Ironworks (Table 3). As a part of this scope, this assessment has considered whether any of these other historic assets within the study area have relevance, or contribute to, the setting of MM185. However, although many are broadly contemporary, this assessment did not identify any with specific relevance to the setting of the scheduled monument.

Table 3: Relevant Historic Asset

ID	Name	NGR	Period	Type	Status
MM185/ LB22496 /02220g/ 34141	Sirhowy Ironworks	SO1430710101	Post Medieval	Iron Works	Scheduled Monument / Grade II* Listed Building

2.2 Significance of the Historic Assets

Sirhowy Ironworks was established in 1778 and closed in 1882, although the site continued to produce coke for Ebbw Vale until 1905.

The remains of the ironworks are located on the east side of the modern town and built into a steep west-facing slope. They consist of three barrel vaulted arches, the south much larger than the others, which formed part of the retaining wall against which the early furnaces were built, the base and ‘bear’ from the large freestanding furnace, and the remains of a late 19th century furnace at the south end of the site. Above the remains of the furnaces are the footings and other infrastructure from the charging houses and calcining ovens. The monument is of national importance for its potential to enhance and illustrate our knowledge and understanding of the development of the iron industry.

An ironworks may be part of a larger industrial complex and their importance can further enhanced by their group value. The scheduled area comprises the remains described and areas around them within which related evidence may be expected to survive (CADW 2021).

The value of the Sirhowy Ironworks were assessed according to the assessment criteria, as summarised in Table 4.

Table 4: Appraisal of Value of Historic Assets

ID	Name	Condition	Rarity	Group Association	Historic Association	Confidence	Value
MM185/LB22496/02220g/34141	Sirhowy Iron Works	Near Intact	High	Medium	High	High	A

The scheduled monument of the Sirhowy Ironworks (MM185) was assessed as being of National significance (Category A). This grading, combined with the setting assessment criteria set out by Cadw (2017), provides the rationale for carrying out the current setting assessment, namely: ‘it [the proposed development] is within a distance of 0.5 kilometres from any point of the perimeter of a scheduled monument.’

3 Stage 2: Definition and Analysis of the Setting

3.1 The Setting of Sirhowy Ironworks in relation to the development area

The proposed development is located to the east of the monument and centred on NGR SO 14395 10235 (Figure 1). The proposed development area is bounded to the north and east by Chartist Way, an urban artery accessing housing, whilst to the south is a continuation of the reclaimed land on which the development is proposed. To the west, and separated by approximately 20m of woodland, is the Scheduled Monument boundary relating to Sirhowy Ironworks MM185, with housing to the north of the monument.

The topography of the proposed development, an area of grass and scrubland and former tip area, falls 6m in height from approximately 348m OD at the east to 342m OD in the west over a distance of 120m where the ground then falls to the level of the Scheduled Monument and Graham's Yard road both lying between 313m and 320m OD and Nos. 12-13 High Street (LB27116 and LB2530). This drop, however, is obscured by woodland. This woodland entirely demarcates and screens the proposed site from the monument.

Three key views were identified during the site visit to inform the setting. The first is from the footpath directly in front of the Sirhowy Ironworks (MM185) on Graham's Yard. The second is from the corner of the unmarked road and Graham's Yard. The third is from the southern end of Graham's Yard and the junction of Dukestown Road (Table 6). All these views are at a common ground level with the monument, on its south/south-west side. As Plates 2 and 3 show, the monument exists within an urban/suburban environment, to the northeast of which is the sharply rising, tree-covered backdrop.

Table 6: Key viewpoints

Viewpoint	Location	Relevant viewshed
1.	Path directly in front of the Sirhowy Ironworks (MM185)	East. 180° panoramic view of MM185
2. approach along Graham's Yard from the south	Public footpath on Graham's Yard	Northeast (arc view of approx. 45°) MM185 lies on eastern side of road.
3. (approach along Graham's Yard from the south)	Public footpath on Graham's Yard	Northeast. MM185 visible over top of vegetation.
4.(approach along unmarked road from the east)	Corner of the unmarked road and Graham's Yard	North. Limited view of MM185 visible over top of vegetation.
5. (approach along Dukestown Road from the south)	Southern end of Graham's Yard and the junction of Dukestown Road	North. Limited view of MM185 visible over top of buildings and vegetation.

4 Stage 3: Evaluation of Potential Impact

4.1 Introduction

The main visual impact assessment on the Scheduled Monument was undertaken from: a) extensive photography conducted during a site visit (See Figure 3 and Appendix II); b) comparison with cartographic sources and client-supplied information regarding the proposed development (Figure 2); and c) assessment of local landforms and vegetation, and photography of existing conditions.

The proposed development is a new school located to the east of the scheduled monument (MM185). The closest proposed upstanding structure to the monument boundary is approximately 45m away, whilst the school boundary is approximately 20m away. No height details of the building are at present known; however, preliminary designs indicate a flat roofed structure estimated between 4m to 6m in height (see Plates A and B below).



Plate A. Image showing proposed new school design and layout



Plate B. Image showing proposed new school design and layout. This aspect would be facing the monument MM185

At present, the woodland between the monument and the proposed school site, combined with the difference in height between the two areas, presents an effective screen in both directions. There are no views ‘of’, ‘from’ or ‘in combination’ that take in both the scheduled monument and the development site.

As discussed above, the new school buildings are set back from the edge of the development boundary and have a relatively low, single-story profile. Moreover, the development form adjacent to the boundary is car parking, with additional planting to be established on the margins.

Provided that the existing woodland remains in place (and the development proposals do not include felling or other works in this area), the presence of a new school would not bring about any perceptible visual change. Indeed, the additional planting on the development margins is likely to accentuate, rather than reduce, the effect of vegetation screening. Even in a theoretical scenario where the woodland is felled at some point in the future, the topography is such that, from ground level within the monument, the school would still not be visible. The key views of the monument identified by this assessment (Table 6) will remain exactly as they are presently.

Despite the creation of a new school complex very close to the monument, it is also the case that no other (non-visual) changes to the setting are predicted, for example those arising from increased noise, traffic or visitor footfall.

In sum, and despite the proximity of the new school, its construction is considered to have a Neutral/No Change outcome. Neither the scheduled monument nor its flanking woodland will be physically affected. In overall terms, therefore, the monument’s setting will not be altered or compromised, leaving its present condition, character, and the visitor’s ability to understand and appreciate it entirely unchanged.

5 Stage 4: Mitigation against Impact of a Proposed Change or Development

5.1 Introduction

The objective of mitigation is to limit and reduce any residual impact a development might have on the heritage resource to an acceptable level by a range of measures. The exact mitigation measures adopted are dependent on the nature and scale of the final detailed development plans.

5.2 Mitigation

Given the No Change outcome of this assessment, no additional mitigation within the development proposals are deemed necessary. The present plans for tree planting on the development's margins (embedded mitigation within the present design) are considered to provide a useful (though not essential) addition to the existing vegetation screening between the site and the monument.

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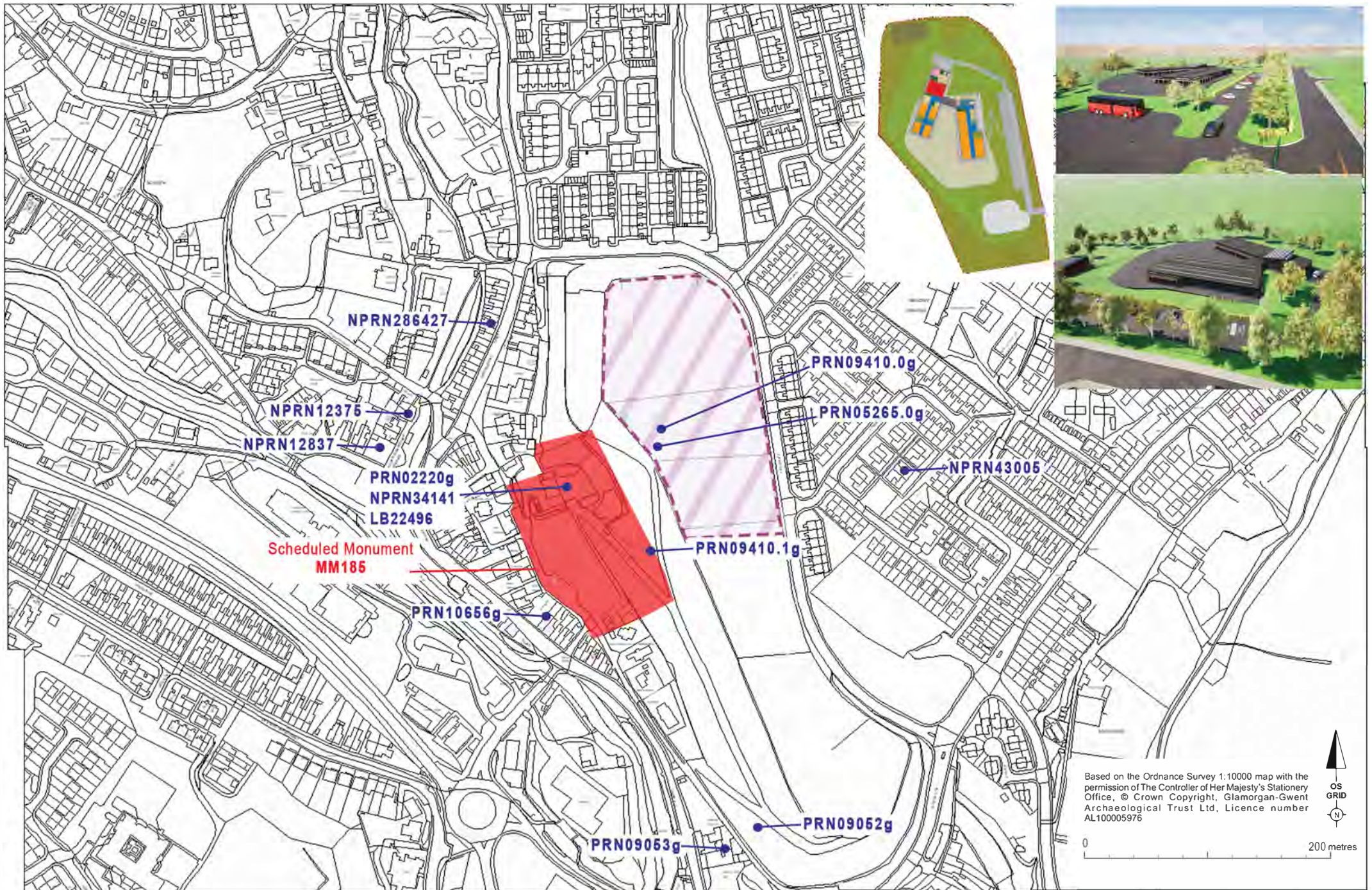


Figure 1. Plan showing the proposed development area (purple), Scheduled Monument MM186 (red), historic assets (blue) and preliminary school design and layout (insets - Copyright the client).

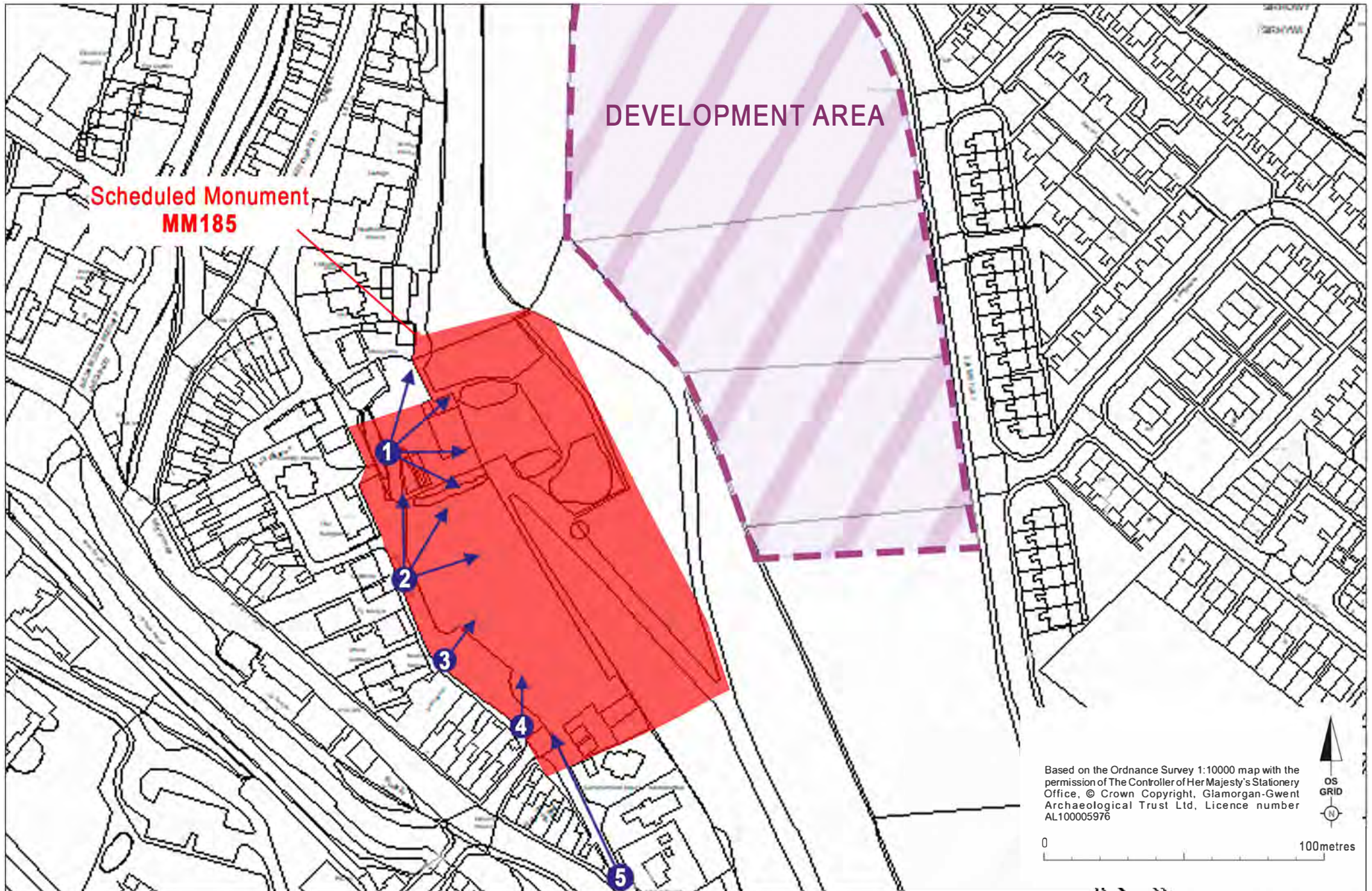


Figure 2. Key view-sheds identified in association with the scheduled monument (MM185) and the location and direction from which they originate.

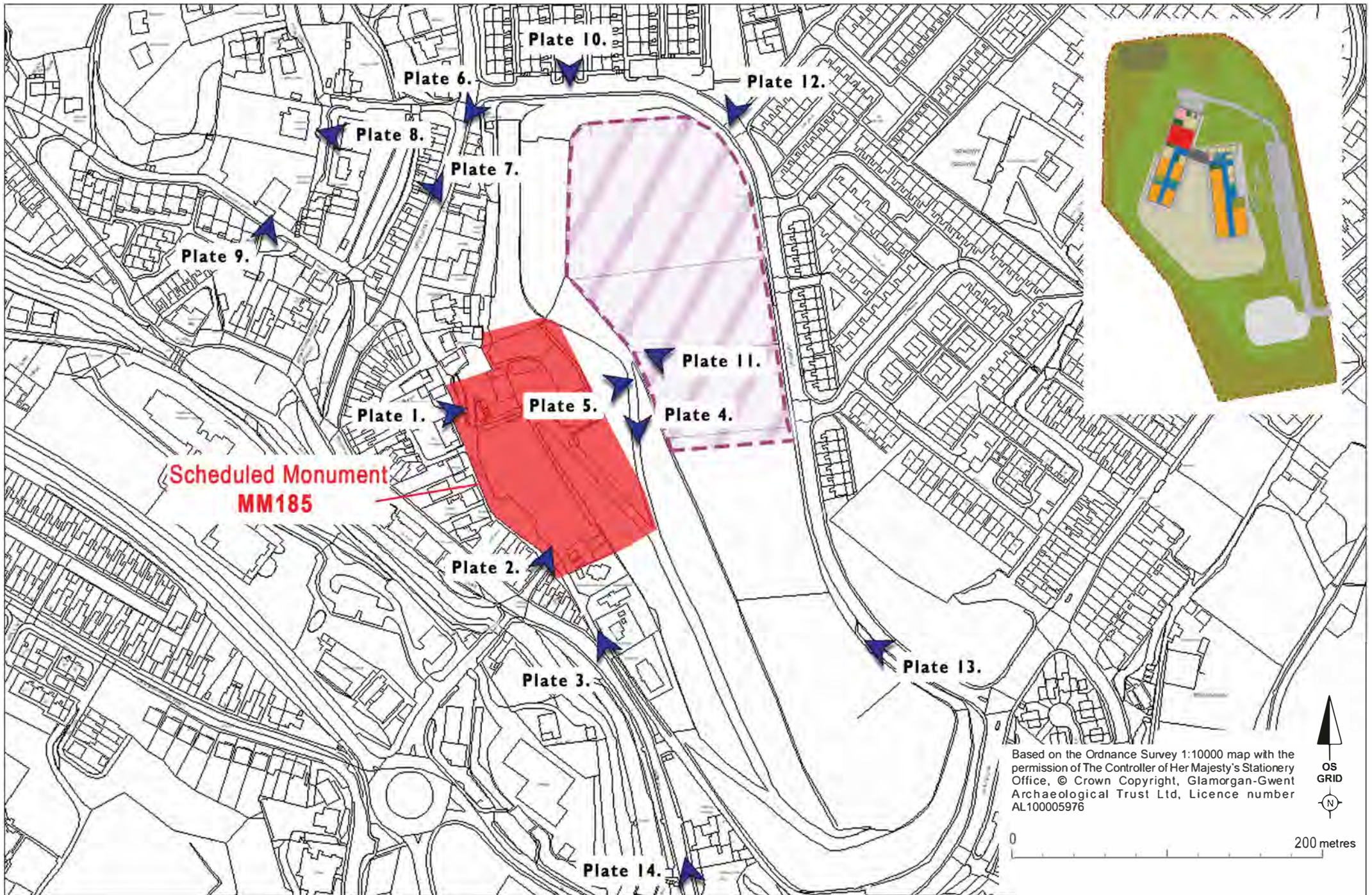


Figure 3. Plan showing the location and direction of site visit photographs in relation to the scheduled monument MM185 (red), the development area (purple) and proposed development layout (inset).

Appendix II: Site visit photographs



Plate 1. Sirhowy Ironworks (MM185/ LB22496/PRN02220g) from the footpath at Graham's Yard. View to the east. The development area lies beyond the treeline that crowns the top of the slope.



Plate 2. View of the ironworks from the corner of unmarked road and Graham's Yard. The top of one of the furnaces is just visible above the flat roofed building. View to the north.



**Plate 3. View of the ironworks from the southern end of Graham's Yard and Dukestown Road.
View to the north.**



**Plate 4. View to the south looking down the slope of the Ebbw Vale Private Line Later Tramroad
(PRN 09410.1g).**



Plate 5. View to northeast from the tramroad (PRN 09410.1g) up to the development area. Note the difficulty in viewing anything through the woodland.



Plate 6. Views to south along the row of workers' housing on Picton Road (NPRN 286427).



Plate 7. Views to south looking from the workers' housing on Picton Road (NPRN 286427) towards the ironworks.



Plate 8. The Carmel Baptist Chapel (NPRN 12375), which lies 211m to the north-northwest of the ironworks.



Plate 9. Ebenezer Independent Chapel (NPRN 12837), which lies 204m to the north-northwest of the ironworks.



Plate 10. View to the south of the development area from the car park of King George Terrace, which is part of the Four Rows workers' housing. Note the difference in height between the footpath and top of the development area.



Plate 11. View from the development area in the direction of the ironworks (MM185). Note the dense mixed woodland along the western edge. View to the northeast.



Plate 12. View to the south across the development area from the corner of Chartist Way and Yscubor Wen.



Plate 13. View to the development area from southernmost development area edge.



Plate 14. Sirhowy House (PRN 09053g), which lies 288m to the south-southeast of the ironworks.

Appendix III: Gazetteer of archaeological interests

GLAMORGAN GWENT ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRUST HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT RECORD ENQUIRY REPORT - CORE RECORDS

Enquiry reference number: 6334

PRN	Name	Summary	NGR	Period	Type	Broadclass	Condition
GGAT02220g	Sirhowy Iron Works	Remains of ironworks established in 1778. From 1794 operated by William Borrow, Rev Matthew Monkhouse and Richard Fothergill. In 1818 acquired by James Harford (Harford, Partridge & Co) of Ebbw Vale. Closed down in 1882.	SO14301010	Post Medieval	Iron works	Industrial	Near intact
GGAT02308g	16-18 BEAUFORT:1 YELLOW ROW	Row of industrial houses.	SO14550970	Post Medieval	House	Domestic	Destroyed
GGAT02314g	CHARLES STREET, SIRHOWY	Several houses in Charles Street were inspected and measured. No31 is typical with 2 rooms downstairs and 2 upstairs. The whole street is an interesting example of piecemeal building. Houses of the same type, but of different sizes, are also common	SO140100	Post Medieval	House	Domestic	Not known
GGAT02499.0m	Merthyr, Tredegar and Abergavenny Railway	Railway that ran from the Abergavenny Junction to the Merthyr Morlais Tunnel Junction. Originally built as a single-line track in 1862, it was the first rail link in the area to Eastern England and later to the Midlands. Finally closing on 6th Jan 1958 (Williams, 1994)	SO06000990	Post Medieval	Railway	Transport	Near intact
GGAT02499.1m	TREFIL VIADUCT	TREFIL VIADUCT	SO13291092	Post Medieval	Railway viaduct	Transport	Not known
GGAT04735g	LIMEKILN ROW, CARPENTERS YARD	Example of the 'dual' type introduced to the region in 1794 at Nantyglo. 1807-9 given as the date of construction. Originally consisted of 7 or 8 houses, either single-storeyed or at most provided with a sleeping loft. Similar to larger houses at Bowens Terrace	SO142093	Post Medieval	Row house	Domestic	Destroyed
GGAT05265.0g	Rassau Railroad	Construction of the Rassau Railroad was authorised by the Monmouthshire Canal Act and was completed in 1796. This formed a connection with the Beaufort Railroad at Beaufort and allowed a link to be maintained between the Sirhowy, Beaufort and Ebbw Vale Ironworks. The Rassau Railroad was also connected to Trevil Railroad (xxx) at Trevil Machine and three of its branches which served the aforementioned ironworks with limestone from Trevil quarries.	SO1689110968	Post Medieval	Tramway	Transport	Near Destroyed.
GGAT05266.0g	A185 DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT L16	A185 DESK-BASED ASSESSMENT A465 ABERGAVENNY TO HIRWAUN DUALLING Ebbw Vale Mineral Railway (Fig. 9). Two branch lines lead off the LNWR, the first is the Mineral Railway (L16 [Fig. 9]) that starts at the junction of Bryn-Serth Road and Rassa Road, and the se	SO14901140	Post Medieval	Railway	Transport	Not known
GGAT05975g	145 CAST-IRON WEIR, DUKESTOWN	A weir built of cast-iron plates crosses the Afon Sirhowy, close to the line of the present A465. An area between the upper and lower plates have been filled with course stone rubble. The top part of the weir has been finished with squared masonry. On t	SO13421077	Post Medieval	Weir	Industrial	Near intact
GGAT05987g	141 Old Hargan Fach and Drystone Walled Landscape	A small, one-storey building with brick lintels over windows and door. Internally, the front room has a blocked fireplace, and externally there is a window into the loft-space above. To the rear there is an outshut with catslide roof. To the east is a tw	SO13721099	Post Medieval	Building	Unassigned	Near destroyed
GGAT05995.0g	Tredegar Tramroad	Opened c.1804, the Tredegar Tramroad was built to convey limestone from Trevil quarries to the ironworks at Tredegar. A branch west from Dukestown to Rhymney was also constructed although this fell out of use by the 1830s, the main Tredegar route continued in operation and was converted to run locomotives around this time. The tramroad remained in use until the early twentieth century.	SO1204212695	Post Medieval	Tramway	Transport	Near Destroyed/ Damaged
GGAT05996g	142 Merthyr, Tredegar and Abergavenny Railway, Dukestown	Between Nantybwh and Dukestown, the A465 deviates from the line of the LNWR branch which it otherwise follows from Dowlais to Rassau, leaving an isolated stretch of railway track-bed to the north. This section crosses the River Sirhowy on a curved emban	SO13631083	Post Medieval	Railway	Transport	Near destroyed
GGAT06034g	132 Drystone Walled Landscape, Nant Y Croft	An extensive drystone walled landscape south and north of the A465 and probably associated with the two farmsteads to the south of the road (No.140).	SO14001100	Unknown	Field boundary	Agriculture and Subsistence	Near destroyed
GGAT06825g	Stone Level	Post medieval stone level.	SO15080939	Post Medieval	Adit	Industrial	Not known
GGAT06826g	Coal Shaft	Coal Shaft?	SO148092	Post Medieval	Colliery	Industrial	Destroyed
GGAT06827g	Reservoir	Reservoir	SO14940925	Post Medieval	Reservoir	Water Supply and Drainage	Near intact
GGAT06828g	Air shaft	Post medieval airshaft.	SO14850932	Post Medieval	Ventilatio n shaft	Industrial	Near intact
GGAT06829g	Rifle range and targets	Rifle range and targets	SO15180981	Post Medieval	Firing range	Recreational	Destroyed
GGAT06830g	Stone Level	Post medieval stone level.	SO148096	Post Medieval	Adit	Industrial	Destroyed
GGAT07967m	Merthyr, Tredegar and Abergavenny Railway Dukestown	The Merthyr ,Tredegar and Abergavenny Railway was completed between Abergavenny and Merthyr during the period 1862-1879.	SO13631083	Post Medieval	railway	transport	EXCAVATED

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PRN	Name	Summary	NGR	Period	Type	Broadclass	Condition
GGAT09023g	The Goldmine Inn (Sirhowy Inn)	Georgian style Public House known as the Sirhowy Inn and more recently the Goldmine Inn built depicted as the former on 1st Edition OS map 1878.	SO1471510063	Post Medieval	public house	commercial	Destroyed
GGAT09052g	Sirhowy Old Coal Level 1	Old coal level identified on 1920 third edition OS map.	SO1444609870	Post Medieval	Level	Industrial	Not known
GGAT09053g	Sirhowy House	Sirhowy House visible on 1st (1879), 2nd (1901) & 3rd (1920) edition OS maps.	SO1441709854	Post Medieval	House	Domestic	Intact
GGAT09059g	Sirhowy Tunnel	Tunnel visible on the 1879 first and 1901 second edition OS maps.	SO1475009851	Post Medieval	Tunnel	Transport	Not known
GGAT09066g	Sirhowy Old Quarry 1	Old quarry visible on first (1879), second (1901) and third (1920) edition OS maps.	SO1505909905	Post Medieval	Quarry	Industrial	Not known
GGAT09068g	Accommodation Row	Accommodation Row visible on first (1879), second (1901) and third (1920) edition OS maps.	SO1452109137	Post Medieval	workers housing	domestic	Not known
GGAT09088g	Sirhowy Structure 2	Unknown structures visible on 2nd (1901) & 3rd (1920) edition OS maps.	SO1507309652	Post Medieval	Structure	Unassigned	Not known
GGAT09139g	Tredegar Ironworks	The Tredegar Ironworks site is an early 19th century coke fired ironworks which was in production for over 90 years, the latter part of which concerned the export of steel rails. Much of the site has now been redeveloped, however, buried remains may survive.	SO1431609255	Post Medieval	Iron works	industrial	Not known
GGAT09410.0g	Ebbw Vale Private Line Tramroad	Tramroad known as the Ebbw Vale Private Line initially linking the Ironworks at Sirhowy with those at Ebbw Vale. Almost out of use by 1860s but reinstated later on to allow transport to Victoria Ironworks. Eventually connected to Trefil Quarries Tramroad in 1907.	SO1436510187	Post Medieval	Tramway	transport	Near Destroyed
GGAT09410.1g	Ebbw Vale Private Line Later Tramroad	Tramroad branch of the Ebbw Vale Private Line constructed at a later stage when Harfords Tunnel between Ebbw Vale and Sirhowy was opened. This branch ran from the western end of Harford's Tunnel to Sirhowy Ironworks with a smaller branch running to Tredegar Ironworks.	SO1435710090	Post Medieval	Tramway	transport	Near Destroyed
GGAT09410.3g	Tunnel on Ebbw Vale Private Line (Later Addition)	Tramway tunnel beneath Beaufort Road. Roughly coursed, arched stone tunnel now blocked up and only partly exposed above modern ground level. Stone wall survives to East side and filled in cutting to North and South. Raised parapet for the road, approx 1.1m high (Roberts and Jones 2006).	SO1447309781	Post Medieval	Tunnel	transport	Intact
GGAT10656g	Drill Hall, Sirhowy	Rectangular building with an annexe projecting to the north west and a gable end projecting onto Duketown Road, first seen on the Third Edition O.S. map of 1921. The building is still extant although it is heavily rendered in pebbledash concrete and a section of the north east gable end has been re-built to accommodate a modern roller garage door. The structure itself consists of a ground floor building with a single entrance in the gable end fronting Duketown Road and a narrow entrance (now blocked up) offset into the opposite gable end fronting Graham's Yard. Two windows originally flanked the Duketown Road entrance but these are now blocked up. The northern gable end is unrendered revealing a red brick built wall with at least two phases of re-building. A later extension has been constructed to extend the width of the Duketown Road frontage though it is possible this extension is contemporary with the usage of the building as a Drill Hall. It is probable that in 1914 this Drill Hall was home to elements of D Company, 3rd battalion The Monmouthshire Regiment and F Company 3rd Volunteer Battalion The South Wales Borderers (Drill Halls Project).	SO1427510038	Modern	Drill hall	Defence	Damaged
GGAT11549g	St George's Church Tredegar	St George's Church Tredegar. Grade 2 Listed Building LB22490. Built 1835-6 by John Jenkins of London.	SO1422209505	Post Medieval	CHURCH	Religious, ritual and funerary	Intact



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