

Proposed Welsh Medium Primary School & Childcare

Design and Access Statement



January 2022

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council • Community Services

Floor 1 • Municipal Offices • Civic Centre • Ebbw Vale • NP23 6XB

Ysgolion yr 21ain Ganrif
21st Century Schools



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1. Introduction

This Planning Application relates to the erection of a new build 210 place Welsh Medium Primary School and a Childcare and Nurse Facilities in Tredegar.

1.1. Background

The site is a plateau situated west of Chartist's Way and currently vacant grazing land, with a small child's playground to its north east end. It is a former reclaimed industrial site, separated and obscured by approximately 20m of woodland is the scheduled ancient monument at the lower banks on Graham's Yard and the Sirhowy River westwards. The site enjoys good accessibility to the Tredegar and Ebbw Fawr Valley's. To the South is a continuation of the reclaimed land and housing to the north and northwest of the proposed site.

Following the Councils Welsh in Education Strategic Plan 2017-20 which advocates and sets out key targets and outcomes aligned to the growth and development of Welsh-medium education, childcare, and ultimately the Welsh language locally.

A Welsh School Seeding Site Assessment study was carried out at the beginning of 2019 to identify a suitable location for a new Welsh Medium Primary School. The study looked at 4 locations with sites of a minimum of 2ha to accommodate the requirement for a suitable school design, the following criteria were used to determine the best viability for use as a primary school:

- Current use and availability of the land
- Current planning status and policy issues
- Accessibility
- Site Constraints

The studied sites include Chartist Way; Deighton Ground, Stockton Way; Tredegar Business Park and the playing fields at Tredegar Comprehension School.

Chartist Way was favourably selected for having less onerous constraints to deal with than the other 3 sites.



Image 1: Showing Mineral railway line through site boundary, Google Earth 1945

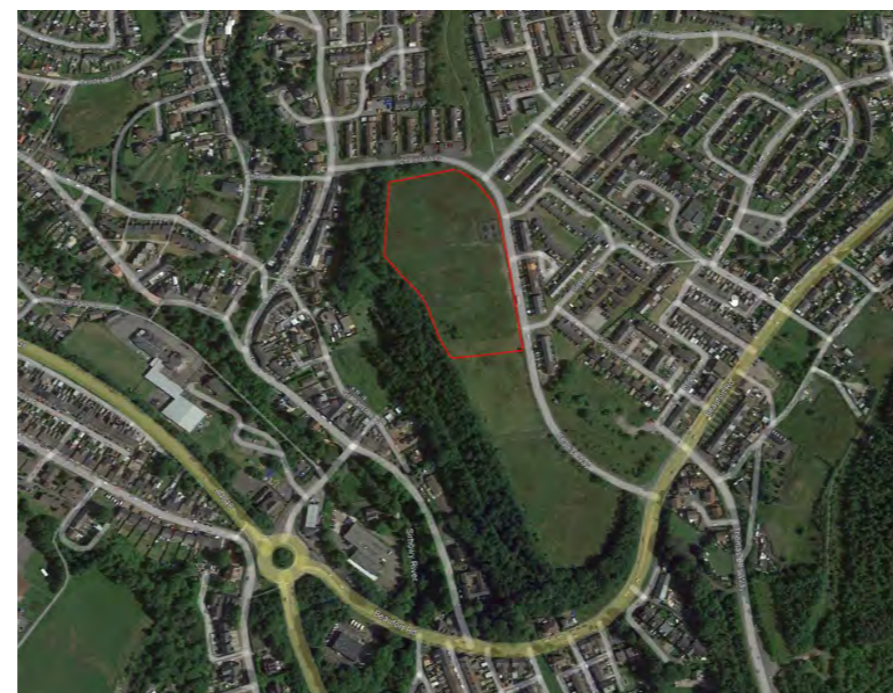


Image 2: Google Earth 2021

Welsh Medium Full Day Care:

The Blaenau Gwent Wellbeing Plan 2018 – 2023 acknowledges that 'early childhood is a critical stage in life that can determine much of a person's future well-being' and one of its priorities is that everyone has the best start in life.

Excellent quality childcare provision contributes to this and Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council places a high priority on the availability of sufficient

high-quality childcare places for its citizens as it benefits children, parents and the wider community.

The vision for childcare in Blaenau Gwent is that;

- It is of the highest quality in terms of environment with an indoors and outdoors that offers the best potential for opportunities for all types of play.
- The environment is warm, welcoming and nurturing
- The child is at the heart of everything
- Children make good progress in desirable learning outcomes from pre-school age.
- It has staff who are well qualified, well trained, committed to continued professional development and who actively enjoy working with children
- Children of all ages attending have lots of opportunity for learning through play, language acquisition, developing healthy habits and enhancing well-being
- It embraces the most up-to-date evidence-based practice.

The development of the full day care centre at Chartist Way will offer the children attending a modern, well-equipped facility that encourages the highest quality childcare practice.

These proposals will lead to the provision of a high quality, sustainable, efficient and cost-effective educational facility and ultimately the achievement of improved educational standards and outcomes for pupils.

It is anticipated that these developments would provide an opportunity for a significant boost to education provision in the Sirhowy Valley and in turn have a positive effect on the socio-economic situation within the immediate area and wider context of Blaenau Gwent.

1.2. Scope of Application

This application establishes the development principles for the appearance and materials of the build, the site, especially in defining vehicle and pedestrian access, highways improvements, flood risk, ecology strategy, and approximate location and scale of building.

The development of this site as part of the authority's wider Education Transformation Strategy will support and promote the continued development and regeneration of the Borough providing a 21st century learning environment for school pupils. The purpose of this Design & Access Statement is to demonstrate how the design process has evolved through the analysis of the site, concept development and evolution of a design solution.

A Design and Access Statement is a mandatory requirement to accompany major planning applications. This document is based on the guidance for Design and Access Statements contained in appendix 1 of TAN 12 as well as the CABE publication entitled 'Design and Access Statements: How to write, read and use them'. As the basis of a Planning Application, this document presents the principles for use, access and location, and guidance for the Major Development application.

2. Context

2.1. Background to Education and Childcare Provisions

The School Project is a part of the 21st Century Schools Band B Programme, with the aim of achieving and contributing to the overall investment objects for Blaenau Gwent:

Investment Objective 1:

to raise standards and achievement in line with localised targets at Foundation Phase, KS2, KS3 and KS4; and secure improved transition into post 16 learning - improved standards of education and associated delivery, along with improved facilities which enable increased opportunities for transition between educational stages and provision.

Investment Objective 2:

to create a sustainable model for the 21st Century school estate in consideration of both capital and revenue investment, along with the condition and suitability of buildings – address condition D and C buildings throughout the school estate, decreasing backlog maintenance costs, improving suitability and use; as a consequence, creating sustainable school estate.

Investment Objective 3:

to establish effective management and provision of school places, by having the right schools of the right size in the right place—developing schools with the flexibility to support a reduction in surplus places, whilst also creating sufficiency of places in the medium to long-term, aligned to live birth and trend-based projection data. Facilitating improved opportunities and facilities which support co-location of integrated services; enhancing the delivery of education, training and supporting effective community engagement activities via a hub-based approach.

Investment Objective 4:

to implement the 21st Century Schools Programme in-line with local, regional and national school organisation policy; ensuring a synergy between progression, development and implementation – the proposals would support the implementation of key strategic and policy developments in relation to curriculum delivery, wellbeing, the environment, digital competency, and supporting ALN reform.

Investment Objective 5:

meeting the needs of vulnerable learners – the proposals will address current and projected needs of pupils presenting with ALN from both a learning and recreational/ play perspective. Additionally, the proposal will increase provision for vulnerable pupils and families who require on-going support in order to ensure consistent attendance and improved standards of learning and attainment.

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council seeks to use the former grazing site to develop a 210-place new build Welsh Medium Primary school and childcare facility.

The new school will start off small, with early-years and reception classes only, then gradually expand year-by-year as the children get older and they have a new intake, as a seeding school.

The new school will upon its opening (2023), will complete the Welsh Medium Learning Community. The aim of the learning community is to facilitate a continuum of learning, effective phase-to-phase transition, improved standards of education and achievement (Precedents shown in images 3 and 4)

Blaenau Gwent’s Strategic Outline Programme priority aims are as follows:

- Raising standards, particularly at KS4;
- Improving suitability and condition of the school estate;
- Programme deliverability-match-funding and affordability;
- Sustainability and reducing revenue costs; and,
- Increasing Welsh medium learning opportunities.

Blaenau Gwent School Organisation Policy (2015) sets out the vision of the Council in terms of school organisation proposals, which is:

‘To improve pupil attainment, achievement and wellbeing through the transformation of schools and learning environments to meet modern 21st Century School expectations. Our vision to secure and sustain the delivery of high-quality education for all pupils across the agree range from 3-16 is underpinned by two objectives:

- *to be the best performing Local Authority within the family of Local Authorities (Caerphilly, RCT, Merthyr Tydfil and Neath Port Talbot) by 2017/2018; and,*
- *to exceed the Welsh average for all key indicators by 2018’.*

The Policy also outlines key considerations in line with assessing and informing the need for change. The project has received Full Business Case approval from Welsh Government and is monitored via the 21st Century Schools Programme Board.

For the Childcare, The Blaenau Gwent Wellbeing Plan 2018 – 2023 acknowledges that ‘early childhood is a critical stage in life that can determine much of a person’s future well-being’ and one of its priorities is that everyone has the best start in life.

Excellent quality childcare provision contributes to this and Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council places a high priority on the availability of sufficient high quality childcare places for its citizens as it benefits children, parents and the wider community.



Image 3: Abertillery Primary School



Image 4: Six Bells Primary School

2.2. Development Brief

A new **210 place 3 to 11 Primary School** incorporating a **30 place nursery** and a **Full Child Day Care setting** (for up to 28 children 0-3 years). The design will require flexibility within the existing footprint, should future demand for pupil places warrant it.

The building should be flexible in its use and allow different styles of teaching and learning, in line with the curriculum for Wales's guidance. Also, be able to cope with changing demands and needs of pupils with additional learning needs special. The design and construction process should look to create a structure that is highly efficient, with low running costs in terms of energy usage and maintenance.

The use of local labour, building materials, products and suppliers should be utilised in the construction and long-term maintenance of the school wherever possible in order to help build a strong local economy.

The projects must deliver a **"Very Good' with 'Excellent' for Energy Credits (ENE01)"** rating under the BREEAM assessment methodology. The project must satisfy a minimum standard for recycled content, requiring at least 15% of the total value of materials used to be derived from recycled and reused content in the products and materials selected.

The overall aim of the project is to ensure that pupils leave school with clear progression routes available to them, facilitated by an effective learning environment that promotes high standards of achievement.

The design aims for the project are as follows:

- flexible internal learning environments which are easily adapted to facilitate active, investigative and exploratory learning;
- school provision that is fully accessible and caters for pupils with wide ranging ability levels;
- internal space which links directly to external spaces to maximize outdoor learning and play potential;
- a school large enough to accommodate current and future needs of pupils.

The school should:

- Be Innovative and flexible to change;
- Affordable and deliverable in line with the project spend profile;
- Provide a safe and healthy environment for staff, pupils and parents/users;

- Provide a low maintenance and robust environment;
- Be sustainable and built to function as low energy use and maintenance;
- Be integral to developing a sense of the place and incorporating its surroundings;
- The building should be fit for purpose and built to last, but also raise the aspiration levels of everyone using the building.

Projects such as this must fully recognize the views of stakeholder groups which represent the whole community. Community and school requirements should be identified through the stakeholder process and via the client during the detailed design and build phase.

The Full Day Care Centre will be at the heart of the community and will offer children exciting opportunities to learn, develop and play in preparation for their transition to primary school and in accessing high quality wraparound/out of school provision for older children. By accessing community resources regularly and inviting partners into the setting to offer enhanced and enriched experiences the children attending will develop a strong sense of place and community.

Working with parents, carers and the local community the new Day Care centre will provide the setting to help children fulfil their hopes, aspirations and dreams. The new Childcare will be designed to enrich their interest, encouraging enjoyment whilst learning through play.

The aim is to build, facilitate and sustain positive relationships with the children, their parents, extended family and the local community, and to provide a strong link with the new Primary school.

The building should:

- Be Innovative and flexible to change;
- Affordable and deliverable in line with the project spend profile;
- Provide a safe and healthy environment for staff, pupils and parents/users;
- Provide a low maintenance and robust environment;
- Be sustainable and built to function as low energy use and maintenance;
- Be integral to developing a sense of the place and incorporating its surroundings, and to be sympathetic to the new primary school;
- The building should be fit for purpose and built to last, but also raise the aspiration levels of everyone using the building;
- Provide a clear linkage to the Primary School.

In order to achieve the Authority's aims and objectives, the design of the new school and childcare development must provide an attractive and sustainable environment conducive to learning, which allows both buildings to raise attainment and achievement levels; and must be developed in a manner which represents a sensitive response to the character of the landscape of the site.

2.3. Site Appraisal

The site was formerly used as pasturing land and a play park. The grazing animals have now been moved to the southern end of the site and the play park will be located immediately south of the new school boundary, shown in red on Image 5, orange square indicates existing playground.

The site is currently clear and is generally flat and primed for re-development (Image 6)



Image 5: Existing Site Plan



Image 6: Photograph of the site, taken December 2021



Image 7: Site Zoning Plan

The overall site owned by Blaenau-Gwent CBC comprises two zones refer to image 7.

Zone 1: Currently vacant with the playground, designated for L1.1 Formal Leisure Facilities in the Local Development Plan up to 2021 (LDP).

Zone 2: Currently grazing pastures and designated for H1.4 Housing in the LDP.

There are gradients surrounding the site. The south area is on a lower plateau with Chartist Way having a potential for a drop-off area. The gradient runs upwards to the site in the north, the site is currently split into several parcels of land by several post and rails fences.

There is a Public Right of Way through the site from Chartist Way to Graham's Yard, this is currently not in use, the site is too boggy and there is no clean path through the site and woodland to connect with Graham's Yard, evidence of fences prevent the public from use and the overgrown and well established woodland is a trap for litter and mud slides due to the steepness of the hill.

The majority of the residential settlements are located directly across Chartist Way, north and east. Allowing the development to be the heart of the community.

The overall site ownership by Blaenau-Gwent County Borough Council is 3.86 hectares including the playground.

The overall development site area defined by the red line boundary is 2.28 hectares.

Although subject to a number of difficult constraints the **Zone 2** site is a narrow and sloping zone. Zone 1 a wider and more accommodating on a level plateau within the Authority's ownership, will allow for a smoother transition for the new school and associated playgrounds, service roads and parking. There are no other suitable alternative sites for the school in the Dukestown and Sirhowy area.

Despite the difficulties, the site possesses many qualities which make it an ideal location for a school. It is within easy access of both the Sirhowy and Ebbw Farw Valleys and benefits from excellent views North and South of the valley, surrounding a local community, which provides perfect opportunities for pupils to development and progress.

Appendix F contains several site photographs indexed to the indicative layout.

Although constrained by several features around the site, and limited in area, the location and outlook are excellent, and offers excellent opportunities to develop.

A Ground Investigation Report (attached in Appendix D) was carried out, and it identified asbestos contamination on the site due to the previous demolition of the Comprehensive School. This report also contains the Coal Mining Risk Assessment (CMRA) and Radon Report due to the site location and relevant risks.

A further soil test is being undertaken in December 2021 to establish the extent of concealed structures / foundations from the demolition and any ACMs present in the ground. The results from this report will determine the extent of enabling works required to ensure the site is safe and ready for the actual development.

3. Design

3.1. Site Design Review

The development site is located within the heart of the Dukestown and Sirhowy Community and with this the development presents an opportunity to begin the process of re-establishing a strong sense of identity and place for the Primary School and Childcare Facility (Image 8)

The primary objective for the design of the site are as follows:

- Compliance with Building Bulletin 99: Building Framework for Primary School Projects;
- Create a high quality and contemporary educational facility;
- Create a Sustainable Environment;
- Create buildings of high architectural excellence which enhances the surroundings and sense of place;
- Create buildings which are sympathetic to a sensitive streetscape and site context;
- Create a safe and secure environment;
- Design to limit the impact that the new development has on the site and the surroundings.

In order to achieve the design objectives described a design of the highest architectural excellence, a number of design principles will need to be adopted, namely:

- Single-storey development;
- A bold and contemporary form of architecture;
- Orientation to determine large and well-proportioned windows to enhance natural light into the internal spaces;
- A high quality but limited palette of external materials;
- Crisp and simple external façade detailing;
- Robust and sustainable materials, finishes and detailing;
- A calm, sober form of architecture to enhance the surroundings and context.



Image 8 Aerial Photograph of the Site

3.2. Layout

The proposed site layout developed for this application has been attached in Appendix A and can be seen in image 9 above. Following extensive consultation within the Authority, with the school and the community regarding the location and planned form of the proposed school and childcare the following principles have been derived:



Image 9 Proposed Overall Site Plan

- Create a strong relationship between the building that is sympathetic to the site;
- Maximise the site area and efficiency for formal and informal play;
- Provide parking facilities with sufficient capacity for both the School and Childcare;
- Provide new strong pedestrian/community access paths to the School and Childcare;
- Minimise the effect of traffic congestion along Chartist Way by introducing a drop-off facility.

The following design principles need to be incorporated in response to the development brief and some existing site constraints.

Point of arrival

The proposed vehicular access point will be off Chartist Way slightly north of Green Meadow which will lead southwards to the bus drop off and northwards to the proposed staff car park and services drive.

As part of this application, a new 10 space drop-off facility running parallel to Chartist Way will help reduce the traffic congestion during the school's peak times.

Pedestrian access routes off Chartist Way will be added to extend beyond the drop-off facility and connect with the existing path and bus stops.

A Transport Assessment Report has been produced, and is included in Appendix C.

External areas

From the site analysis study, the site area includes the building footprint, hard / soft play areas and parking. In order to complete the BB99 compliance the school will require use of the adjacent grass playing pitches.

All Drawings are included in Appendix A.

3.3. Scale

The client brief, the schedule of accommodations and site constraints for both the School and Childcare has determined how the scale, shape and form of both buildings have evolved through the design stages.

The Childcare building is located close to Chartist Way and on the northern site of the plateau for ease of access. To prevent the building being too over imposing to the streetscape and the neighbouring buildings, it is set back from the drop-off area and is single storey in height with a tree lined screening along Chartist Way.

By positioning the primary school central to the site has allowed the external play spaces to run freely and cohesively around the school, and creates a link to the Childcare. The School building will have a maximum overall height of 4.6m approx. and a maximum height of 7m for the raised element of the skylights to the hall above ground level.

The scale of the building and its location have been examined in a number of sections in comparison to the streetscapes of both Chartist Way and Graham's yard. This drawing is included in Appendix A.

3.4. Landscaping and Ecology

The current levelled plateau, and location for the building is effectively an open brownfield site which has been made up with extensive earthworks overlying bedrock of the Lower and Middle Coal Measures.

The site has been used for pasturing with nature with shrubs and vegetation freshly growing in parts of the site together with some young trees. These small section of trees and shrubs, whose size is outside the scope of BS5387, will be required to be removed to accommodate the construction of a new ForestPlay/school, an informal setting and structure with logs, bug hotels, tires etc..

Clearance of this area will be undertaken in the month of September to minimise disruption to birds and reptiles. Replacement of any area of landscaping removed will be mitigated.

A Preliminary Ecology Assessment (PEA) was undertaken in April 2021 (Celtic Ecology and Conservation Ltd) which makes the following recommendations:

- Set aside specific parts of the school grounds as wildlife resource, to incorporate a variety of habitats (trees, pond, log piles, wild flower patch, butterfly garden etc.;
- Ensure that any fences or walls at the site boundaries are not barriers to movement of wildlife such as Hedgehogs or amphibians;
- Site clearance in respect of reptiles should be undertaken in accordance with an appropriate method statement;
- Include new wildlife-friendly shrubs and flower planting beds around the new building;
- If any tree removal or other site clearance is scheduled between March and August;
- A Pre-Works ecological supervision should be carried out before the site clearance work commences.

Appendix B contains the Preliminary Ecology Assessment upon the request of BGCBC Ecologist to outline measures to be undertaken to safeguard any fauna and/or floral of value that might be present on the site.

3.5. Material & Appearance

The external treatment and material selection for the building will be in timber clad with special selected cladding panels to the entrance that should be sensitive to the character of the immediate surroundings and surrounding landscape, and also attempt to enhance the site.

The chosen materiality will give both the school and childcare a shared identity, but the form, shape and scale will differentiate between both functions. As shown in image 10 below.

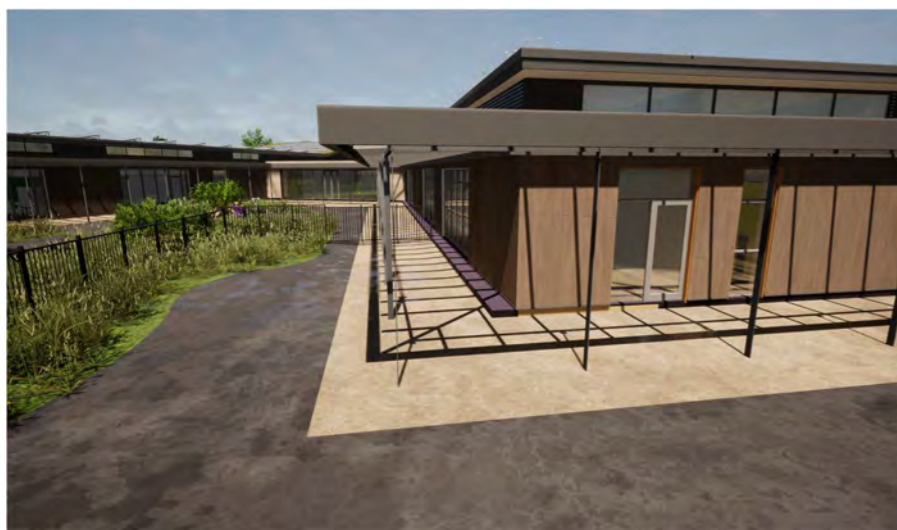


Image 10: Proposed view from the Community Plaza looking at both buildings

The preferred approach to the design is to have a continuous cladding predominantly but a change in pattern to both the main entrance and the link. The building is split into 2 elements joined by the link within the site to maximise the use of the playing areas.

As the site is overlooked from the residents off Chartist Way, the massing and roofscape of both buildings has been carefully designed in order to minimise the visual impact. A green roof with no visible plant equipment is to be installed across the building which will help soften the building into the natural landscape and reduce the hardness from Chartist Way, in addition a tree buffer is to be planted along Chartist Way to further screen the building from the local residents..

3.6. Safeguarding Children & Community Safety

These aspects of both proposals have been carefully considered. There is a direct conflict between the requirement to separate the children from the vehicular use, and the importance of maintaining access for the Childcare facility. Barriers and gates with access control will be provided to prevent unrestricted access to the site.

The school site area is sufficient to accommodate the key external play area as recommended by BB99. The inclusion of the playing field and AstroTurf pitch will ensure complete compliance with BB99.

Formal Certification under Secured by Design is not a specific client requirement, however the requirement to achieve the BREEAM Very Good accreditation may mean that this is a natural consequence and has been adopted in this application.

The perimeter fence to the school will be required to be a 2.2m high SBD-compliant black weldmesh fence with a number of secure full height gates which are only open during the key arrival and collection times.

The layout of building is divided into 3 blocks; the eastern block, including the entrance, admin and early years, consisting of the childcare, nursery, reception, years 1 and 2; the western block which is made up of years 3, 4, 5 and 6, the kitchen plant and Hall; these are divided by the Link including an open learning/library zone.

3.7. Sustainability

The design and material specifications will require sustainability as a key consideration. Sustainable materials which have maximum durability, minimum maintenance requirements and low toxicity, making use of recyclable or recycled content where appropriate are proposed.

The design approach is to significantly minimise heat loss and energy consumption while ensuring durability, environmental sensitivity, affordability for maintenance, economical and easy to repair.

The landscaping design is submitted in this application (**Appendix A**) and will make use of native tree and shrub planting to encourage and enhance biodiversity.

Welsh Government funding requirements are that the building achieves BREEAM 'Very Good' with 'Excellent' for Energy Credits (ENE01) accreditation. Sustainable Construction Services have been engaged by the Authority to undertake the assessment. The initial client engagement stages are complete, and the credits have been awarded. The predicted score is currently indicated at **61.4%** (baseline) however as there are no detailed design proposals, it is expected that the score will increase sufficiently so as to provide a suitable buffer against losing credits during the construction process, so that the final building will comfortably meet the 55% requirement for Very Good.

3.8. Use

The site will be providing two buildings; the Primary School and Childcare.

The primary use of the school is to provide education facilities for children aged 3-11. It is anticipated that this facility will form part of a sustainable education system as part of the 21st Century Schools Programme, benefitting not only pupils and parents but also local residents and members of the wider community.

The proposal will seek to reinforce and contribute towards the local social value of the area by continuing the provision of high quality education within the Dukestown and Sirhowy community with appropriate standards.

In addition to the primary school, the site will provide a day care facility which is run by a separate organisation from the school. The day care facility will require a direct link in the landscape connecting the wrap-around area with the school's reception. (as shown in image 11 below).



Image 11 Proposed Site Plan, showing Childcare in yellow

4. Design Policy Context

4.1. National – Planning Policy Wales

Planning Policy Wales (PPW) sets out the land use planning policies of the Welsh Government. Its central objective is to promote and provide a framework for sustainable development within Wales.

PPW outlines that to create sustainable development, design must go beyond aesthetics and include the social, environmental and economic aspects of the development, including its construction, operation and management and its relationship to its surrounding. Good design can protect and enhance environmental quality, consider the impact of climate change on generations to come, help to attract business and investment, promote social inclusion and improve the quality of life.

The Welsh Government’s objectives for design are:

- Ensuring ease of access for all;
- Promoting sustainable means of travel ;
- Achieving efficient use and protection of travel ;
- Ensuring attractive, safe public spaces;
- Security through natural surveillance;
- Sustaining or enhancing local character;
- Promoting legible development;
- Promoting a successful relationship between public and private space;
- Promoting quality, choice and variety;
- Promoting Innovative Design.

4.2. National – Technical Advice Notes

Planning Policy Wales is supplemented by a series of Technical Advice Notes (TAN’s). The following TAN’s are considered relevant to the design of this development and have been taken into account in the preparation of the final proposal.

TAN12: Design (2016)

This document considers design issues and sets out the Welsh Government’s objectives for new development. TAN 12 summarises the objectives of good design diagrammatically in Figure 12 right.



Figure 12 - Objectives of Good Design (Source: TAN12: Design)

TAN16: Sport Recreation & Open Space (2009)

The guidance recommends that open spaces for community sport and recreation activities be provided in new developments. Preservation of the existing access to the Bowls Club and protection of facilities for the community have been important considerations for the scheme. Consultation has taken place in conjunction with BGCBC Landscape and Planning officers to ensure that existing footpaths and access to the wider site area by the community are maintained, together with the use of the playing field and Astro turf pitch.

TAN18: Transport (2007)

This document deals with implementation of sustainable transport strategies. The development site is directly adjacent to Chartist Way and remains at the heart of both Dukestown and Sirhowy. Due to the close proximity to the current movement routes the transition will be minimal, and the vehicular movement and congestion should be minimal. A Transport Assessment and Travel Plan have been produced (see Appendix D) which assess the transport issues and implications of the development.

Extensive discussions have taken place with BGCBC Highways Authority to propose the implementation of drop-off area to ensure that the impact of

the proposed development on Chartist Way and local infrastructure is minimised and safe.

The Travel Plan incorporates the measures (listed in Section 5) and the works must be completed before the new building is brought into use.

In addition, the proposal includes measures to safeguard pedestrian use between the community and the school. The level of parking provision and site access have been designed in accordance with BGCBC Highways requirement, following consultation.

4.3. Local Policy Context – Blaenau Gwent Local Development Plan (adopted 2018-2021)

The plateau is allocated in the LDP for Leisure L1.1 and housing H1.4 under policy. As part of the preparation of the Replacement Local Development Plan review, Planning Policy Wales 11 requires that “the de-allocation of under-used and underperforming sites must be considered through the development plan process (paragraph 4.2.17). This is also further emphasised in the Development Plans Manual 3, March 2020 (page 9) where it states that “sites unlikely to be delivered should be de-allocated and not ‘rolled forward’ from the previous plan.”. (Shown in figure 13 below).

Planning Policy put forward this site to be considered for an alternative use from leisure/residential to education use, based on the above rationale and the fact that there had been no interest in the development of the site during the LDP plan period. The site had also not been put forward as a candidate site as part of the replacement Local Development Plan process indicating the limited intention of the site to be developed for residential use.

A thorough site assessment process was undertaken exploring a number of sites in Tredegar (refer to Appendix G). The Land at Chartist Way was considered the most suitable on the basis of its location to serve both Tredegar and Ebbw Vale and the associated constraints could be overcome due to its size.

With this in mind the following policies are considered relevant to the proposed development:

ED1 Education Provision

This site allocation for the development of a new primary school will require a change of land allocation by BGCBC Planning Policy in the new Adopted Local Development Plan.

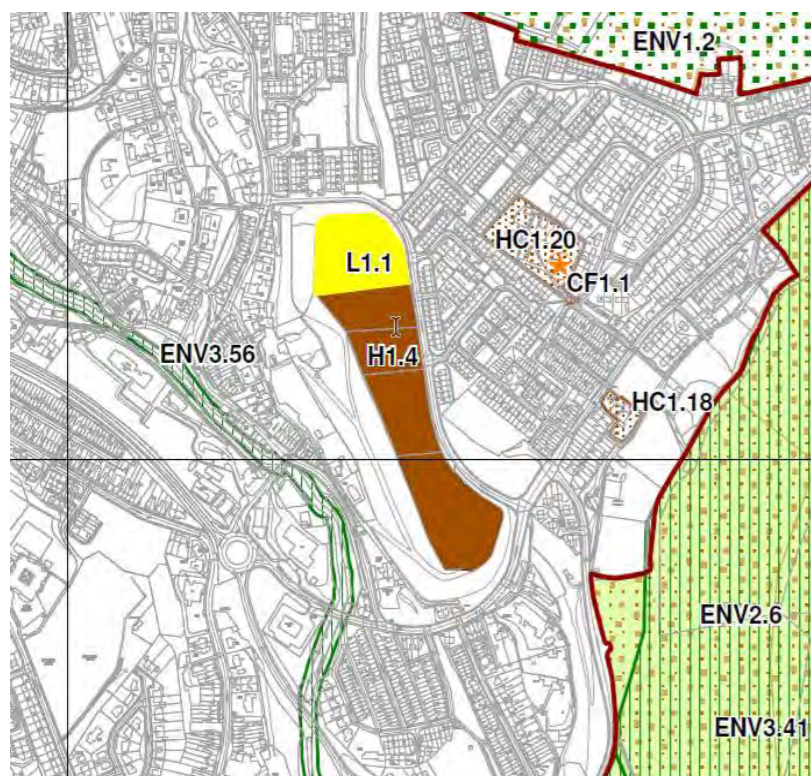


Figure 13 – Extract from Adopted LDP Proposals Map, page 11.

SP7 Climate Change

Policy SP7 seeks to address the causes of climate change through encouraging more of the County Borough’s electricity and heat requirements to be generated by renewable and low/zero carbon technologies. It also seeks to address climate change through adapting to direct and indirect impacts of climate change.

SP8 Sustainable Economic Growth

Policy SP8 relates to development of skills and enterprise in the Borough to stimulate economic development. The proposals meet the requirements of paragraphs d relating to the encouragement of tourism (maintaining access to the Guardian) and f relating to the development of a first class educational infrastructure.

Policy SP9 Active and Healthy Communities

Policy SP9 seeks to create active and healthy communities through protecting and enhancing accessibility to natural greenspaces for all members of the community.

Policy DM1 New Development

Policy DM1 is a general development management policy, which seeks to ensure that developments meet sustainability, amenity and accessibility requirements.

Policy DM2 Design and Place making

Policy DM2 is a design policy setting out criteria for development proposal.

Policy DM3 Infrastructure Provision

Policy DM3 requires new development to meet the infrastructure needs that it generates and that the impact of new development is mitigated to ensure that it contributes to the regeneration of local communities in Blaenau Gwent.

Policy DM4 Low and Zero Carbon Energy

Policy DM4 encourages major development proposals to incorporate schemes which generate energy from low and zero carbon energy from renewable and low/zero carbon technologies.

DM14 Biodiversity Protection and Enhancement

Development proposals will only be permitted within, or in close proximity to sites designated as SINCs or that affect ecological corridors and Priority Habitats and Species, where either: it maintains or enhances the ecological or geological importance of the designation and species, or; the need for the development outweighs the nature conservation importance of the site/species and it can be demonstrated that the development cannot reasonably be located elsewhere and compensatory provision will be made equivalent to that lost as a result of the development.

Policy DM17 Buildings and Structures of Local Importance

Policy DM17 states that development proposals affecting buildings or structures which make an important contribution to the character and or interest of the local area will only be permitted where the building’s distinctive appearance and architectural setting would not be significantly adversely affected or the benefits of the proposals would outweigh any adverse effects.

4.4. Future Wales The National Plan up to 2040

Green spaces and COVID-19; the site is currently leased to grazing animals with no public access, deemed to boggy for public use to be enjoyed. The existing tired looking play area will be demolished but relocated further south along Chartist Way with a new pedestrian crossing, therefore no loss of outdoor space is intended but the provision of a much improved facility to local children and parents alike.

The existing woodland is outside the proposed school boundary and therefore not affect by the development, although enhanced by the development of the new soft play green planting zones which will improve the resilience of the woodland.

Renewable Energy; the building will use clean energy with heat and power generated by solar panels and air source heat pumps, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and built as close as possible to a net zero carbon model.

Welsh Language; the Welsh Government aim is to have a million Welsh speakers by 2050. The new primary school will provide a springboard to embed the spatial strategy of the development, encouraging the creation of an education and social infrastructure to enable the language to develop naturally within the community.

5. Access

Chartist Way provides a link between a quiet Dukestown Road to the north and the busy Beaufort Road to the south. Beaufort road provides an important access to the residential areas that extend from these roads.

The A4048 to the North West provides a direct link to A465 (Head of the Valleys network) and Beaufort Road to the south east connects to Ebbw Vale town centre south eastwards.

A Travel Plan and Transport Assessment have been undertaken for the site, and are attached in Appendix C.

The proposed development will be seeking to introduce congestion reduction measures such as staff designated parking and a new drop-off area. This data, along with detailed consultation from Blaenau Gwent Highways Planners has determined that the parents / guardians are to only access the drop-off area for school, bus transport will be provided to children further into the Ebbw and Sirhowy Vales, whilst walking will be encouraged majority of the time for those within walking distance.

5.1. Pedestrian Access

Pedestrian access to the school will be achieved via a single point off Chartist Way. A new pedestrian footpath will be added along the extent of the site boundary with pedestrian crossing linking both sides of Chartist Way. The school site will be cordon-off from the footpath by the installation of high security fences with one entry point. Figure 13 right indicates the extent of the new and existing footpath.

In order to maximise the school site usable area, a new tarmacked area for the parking, bus drop off area and the service yard will be created in addition to the access road, with access off Chartist Way along with the new pedestrian entry point into the school grounds.

Both pupils arriving by bus and on foot will enter the grounds onto a piazza, from here they will have direct access to their designated classrooms.

5.2. Cycle Access

Cycle requirements within the proposed development have been considered to ensure compliance with BREEAM requirements.

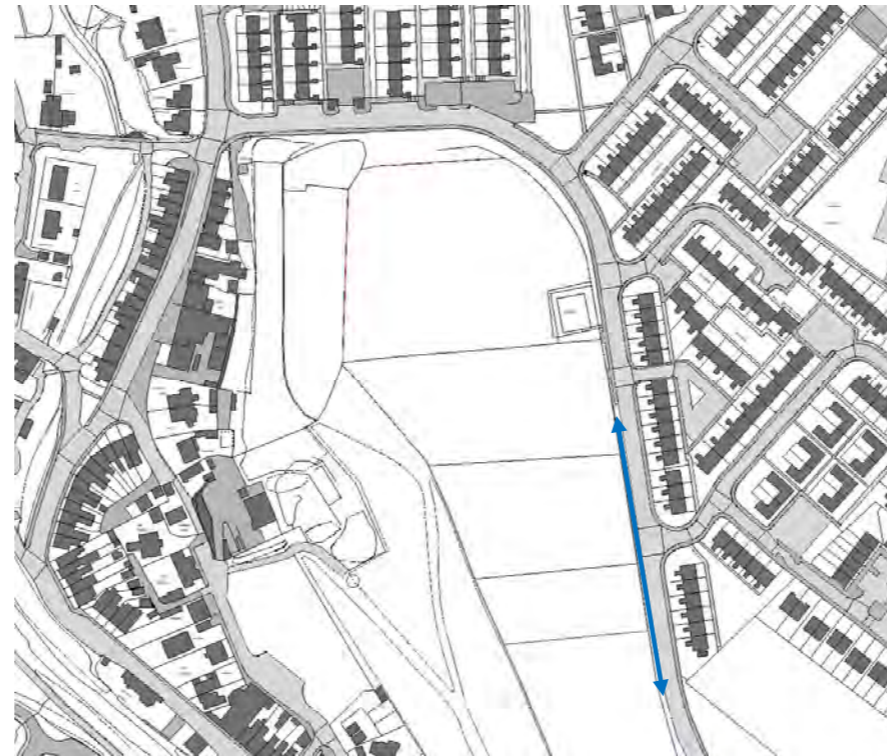


Image 13: Pedestrian Access Routes to Site

On the site within the entrance point a designated cycle bay / shelter will be provided. The cycle routes are immediately adjacent to the site providing connectivity to the school from nearby residential areas.

5.3. Public Transport Access

The current proposals do not affect accessibility of the school by public transport. The nearest Bus stops are located on Chartist Way, which is less than 100 metres of the school gate.

5.4. Highway Access

Currently there is a grassed vehicle access point into the site, situated south of the play park, this would fall on the north end of the new school with a substantial drop in levels and therefore not deemed suitable.

The new vehicular access will provide a visibility splay of 3.5x43m into the site via its single entry point, providing 40 car parking spaces, consisting of 31 staff car parking spaces and 3 visitors' spaces. The proposals also include the provision of 2 disabled parking spaces and 4 electric parking spaces.

A drop-off area for the school with the intention to complete the works in readiness for the opening of the school. The intention is to help reduce people parking outside the resident's homes on Chartist Way during the school peak times.

The introduction of a bus turning and drop off zone within the site, will aid congestion at peak times on Chartist Way.

Works to be undertaken to the local highways infrastructure to ensure safe pedestrian access to the school by pupils, parents and visitors, and must be completed prior to the opening of the school.

The proposed parking zones for the whole site have been carefully considered with a view to balancing the requirements of all the stakeholders.

Full details of all highways improvements works are contained within the final Transport Assessment in Appendix C.

6. Conclusion

Blaenau Gwent CBC will be establishing the Welsh Medium Primary School and Full Day Care Centre in. The new school will provide a nursery, reception and KS1 and KS2 teaching facility.

The principal objective of the new development is to improve attainment and welsh medium educational standards across the Borough in support of the Welsh Government's policy Cymraeg 2050: A million Welsh speakers speaking Welsh by 2050.

This Design and Access Statement establishes the principles of the development of the Primary School and Full Day Care Centre and finalises the boundaries, access, layout, relationship of the fundamental principles for the detailed development (final 3D view of the proposal shown in image 14 right)

These proposals will lead to the provision of a high quality sustainable, efficient and cost-effective education facility that will enable successful implementation of strategies by which pupils can reach their potential, resulting in better educational outcomes, while simultaneously addressing the requirements of the community and providing enhanced facilities for the whole of Sirhowy and Ebbw Valley and in turn have a positive effect to boost the socio-economic situation within the immediate area and wider context of Blaenau Gwent.

The design proposal has involved extensive consultation with the stakeholders including BGCBC Education Department, the school leadership, and ward counsellors. Feedback from this process will be incorporated into the PAC report prior to full planning permission.

This document has set out the design and access considerations for the physical characteristics of the proposed development and has provided the Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council LDP design policies which apply and have informed the design. The careful attention to layout, design and access arrangements outlined above would enhance the visual impact of the proposed development, protect and enhance the existing landscape and ensure that the proposal falls in line with local planning policy.



Image 14: Proposed Birdseye View of the Site

Appendix A - Drawings

Appendix B – Ecological Appraisal

Appendix C – Transport Assessment & Travel Plan

Appendix D – Ground Investigation
Report including Coal Mining Risk
Assessment

Appendix E – Glamorgan Gwent
Archaeological Trust

Appendix F – Photographs

