

Pontllanfraith House Site

Development Brief



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Planning. Design. Economics.



Approved 8th March 2016

Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg, ac mewn ieithoedd a fformatau eraill ar gais.
This document is available in Welsh, and in other languages and formats on request.

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This Development Brief outlines the aspirations for the redevelopment of the former Pontllanfraith House site, and will guide the preparation of detailed plans that will help applicants deliver high quality redevelopment of the site in a way that benefits the local community.
- 1.2 The principles contained within this document build upon the requirements set out within the adopted Local Development Plan, address objectives set out within Planning Policy Wales (PPW) Edition 7, and adhere to current best practice design guidance.
- 1.3 CCBC commissioned a development brief to minimise uncertainty for prospective developers, improve the efficiency of the planning system and encourage a high quality proposal for the site.
- 1.4 The brief is the result of collaborative work between Caerphilly County Borough Council (CCBC) and Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners (NLP), in conjunction with Vectos and Baker Consultants.
- 1.5 The scope and content of the brief has been informed by feedback received from local residents and stakeholders. Public consultation was held during the first week of September 2015, providing valuable feedback which has helped to shape the scope and content of this draft brief.
- 1.6 Further to formal approval by Council in March 2016, this Brief forms Supplementary Planning Guidance to CCBC's Local Development Plan (LDP) and will be a material consideration in the determination of future planning applications on the site.
- 1.7 Whilst this brief addresses the issues and development principles of relevance to the Pontllanfraith House site, developers should be aware of the Council's aspirations with regard to the redevelopment of the Pontllanfraith Comprehensive School site, located to the western side of Blackwood Road. CCBC consider that a comprehensive development proposal for both sites would provide not only the opportunity to rationalise requirements such as outdoor sport provision, but also provide a degree of reassurance to both CCBC and the local community as to the quality and phasing of development of both sites.

2.0 Vision and Key Objectives



2.1 **'Create high quality residential development that contributes to the wider townscape and provides a diversity of housing to meet the needs of local residents, whilst integrating the existing historic assets, landscape and biodiversity of both the site and its surrounding environment.'**

2.2 In order to deliver this vision the following key objectives will inform the design response set out in this document:

1. Promote a form of development that is sensitive to the existing environment by responding to the site's physical characteristics and constraints, and the area's history and culture;
2. Identify a realistic approach to development, through the efficient use of land and mix of property types, and the incorporation of high quality public realm and open space;
3. Provide a layout that reflects sustainable transport and accessibility principles and provides full easy and safe access for all;
4. Encourage a development approach based on sustainability principles to create an attractive, safe environment, and inclusive, vibrant community;
5. Reflect best practice in terms of urban design, encouraging legibility, incorporating sustainable drainage systems wherever possible, and fostering a clear sense of place.

3.0 The Site

- 3.1 The site (Figure 1) is located approximately 1.0 km (0.6 miles) to the south of Blackwood town centre, within the settlement of Pontllanfraith. Newbridge lies 3.4 km (2.1 miles) to the east, whilst Ystrad Mynach is some 3.4 km (2.1 miles) to the south west.
- 3.2 Pontllanfraith House is a three storey concrete framed office block constructed in 1977 and characterised by its uninterrupted horizontal bands of glazing, flat roof and stepped entrance.
- 3.3 The development site covers approximately 6.62 hectares (ha) (16.3 acres) and lies within the wider Sir Harold Finch Park boundary, as indicated on the large memorial stone near the site entrance. It currently includes CCBC's local offices and associated infrastructure, a Grade II listed War Memorial, public rights of way (PRoW), children's play area, several watercourses and woodland planting, together with an area of open space and access to the Avicenna and Pontllanfraith Health Centres. An electricity sub-station and gas governor also lie within the site boundary, adjacent to Blackwood Road and the southern footpath through the site, respectively.



Pontllanfraith House



Figure 1: Development Site Boundary

4.0 Policy Context

4.1 This section summarises the main planning policy documentation pertaining to the Pontllanfraith House development site.

Planning Policy Wales (PPW) (Edition 7)

4.2 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.

4.3 PPW outlines that planning can help to reduce the need to travel, especially by private car, and enhance the access to new development locations by public transport, bicycle and foot. PPW also encourages the creation of sustainable residential environments and encourages local authorities to promote:

- a. Mixed tenure communities;
- b. Easily accessible developments;
- c. Mixed use developments;
- d. Attractive landscapes around dwellings;
- e. An emphasis upon quality and designing places for people;
- f. An efficient use of land; and
- g. The creation of well designed residential environments at an appropriate density.

Technical Advice Notes (TANs)

4.4 Planning Policy Wales is supplemented by a series of Technical Advice Notes (TANs). Those of relevance to this brief can be viewed online at www.wales.gov.uk, and include:

- TAN1: Joint Housing Land Availability Studies (2015)
- TAN2: Planning and Affordable Housing (2006)
- TAN5: Nature Conservation and Planning (2009)
- TAN10: Tree Preservation Orders (1997)
- TAN12: Design (2014)
- TAN16: Sport, Recreation and Open Space (2009)
- TAN18: Transport (2007)

4.5 TAN12: Design (2014) considers design issues and sets out the Government's objectives for new development, and how it can be delivered. The following objectives are set out in order to achieve good design:

- a. Access – Ensuring ease of access for all;
- b. Character – Sustaining or enhancing local character; promoting legible development; promoting a successful relationship between public and private space; promoting quality, choice and diversity; and promoting innovative design;
- c. Community Safety – Ensuring attractive, safe public spaces; and security through natural surveillance;
- d. Environmental Sustainability – Achieving efficient use and protection of natural resources; enhancing biodiversity; and designing for change; and
- e. Movement – Promoting sustainable means of travel.

The Caerphilly County Borough Local Development Plan up to 2021 (Adopted 2010)

4.6 The Caerphilly County Borough Local Development Plan (LDP) provides the framework for all future development within the County Borough until 2021.

4.7 The Pontllanfraith House development site is located within the defined settlement boundary of Greater Blackwood (LDP Policy SP5) and lies within Strategy Area 2, which comprises the Northern Connections Corridor.

4.8 The area currently developed on the site is not subject to any allocation within the LDP. The non-developed area is allocated for leisure use, and is covered by LDP policy LE1.9 which provides protection of formal open spaces.

4.9 Whilst the site is not currently allocated for residential development it is understood that both the development site at Pontllanfraith House and Pontllanfraith Comprehensive School are being promoted for re-development through the review of the LDP. The adoption of the Replacement LDP is anticipated to be Autumn 2017.

4.10 The Pontllanfraith House site also contains part of a designated network link from Blackwood town centre/ Pontllanfraith to National Cycle Network Route 47 (LDP

Policy TR1.9).

4.11 Other relevant policies include:

- SP2 Development Strategy in the Northern Connections Corridor
- SP6 Place Making
- SP14 Total housing Requirements
- SP15 Affordable Housing Target
- SP18 Protection of Strategic Leisure Network
- CW1 Sustainable Transport, Accessibility and Social Inclusion
- CW2 Amenity
- CW3 Design considerations – Highways
- CW4 Natural Heritage Protection
- CW6 Trees, Woodlands and Hedgerow Protection
- CW7 Protection of Open Space
- CW8 Protection of Community and Leisure Facilities
- CW10 Leisure and Open Space Provision
- CW11 Affordable Housing Planning Obligation
- CW15 General Locational Constraints

4.12 All of the above policies can be viewed at: www.caerphilly.gov.uk

Supplementary Planning Guidance

4.13 The LDP is supported by a series of Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) notes that have been prepared and adopted by the Council, namely:

- LDP1 – Affordable Housing Obligations SPG (Adopted 1 February 2011, updated June 2015)
- LDP4 – Trees and Development SPG (Adopted January 2012)
- LDP5 – Parking Standards SPG (Adopted November 2010)
- LDP6 – Building Better Places to Live SPG (Adopted November 2010)
- LDP8 – Protection of Open Space SPG (Approved April 2011)

5.0 Contextual Analysis

5.1 The following chapter presents a brief history of the development site and the wider area; provides an account of the local character; together with a detailed description of the site, including its constraints and opportunities.

Site History

5.2 The 1879-1880 Ordnance Survey map (Figure 2) shows the development site as fields, with a small dwelling Pen-llwynbach Cottage sitting adjacent to Blackwood Road and a branch railway line. A narrow track runs through the site to a small area of woodland on the north eastern boundary, where it joins another track which links Commercial Street, to the south, to a footbridge over the river, to the north. The south eastern boundary is dominated by a railway embankment. To the north of the site boundary the five fields which currently comprise the larger part of Sir Harold Finch Memorial Park are clearly discernible. The River Sirhowy is shown on its original course and the village of Pontllanfraith is focussed to the eastern side of the site and railway line.

5.3 Little has changed on the 1961-1962 Ordnance Survey map (Figure 3) with regard to the development site, except that the property is now called Pen-llwyn Villa. The alignment of what formerly appeared to be a track is now annotated as a watercourse, whilst a more formal footpath has been drawn across the site from south west to north east. A drain is also shown running east to west across the centre of the site. By the 1960's the village of Pontllanfraith has grown, developing around the original settlement core and expanding to the west of Blackwood Road. The river remains on its original course.

5.4 The current Council offices were constructed on the site in 1975 and now provide approximately 6100m² of office floorspace over three floors.

5.5 The site and fields to the north were designated as the Sir Harold Finch Memorial Park in 1982, in memory of the Welsh Labour Politician and first Freeman of Islwyn Borough Council. A plaque on the stone to the western side of the War Memorial attests to this and marks the position of a time capsule which was buried at the time of its unveiling.

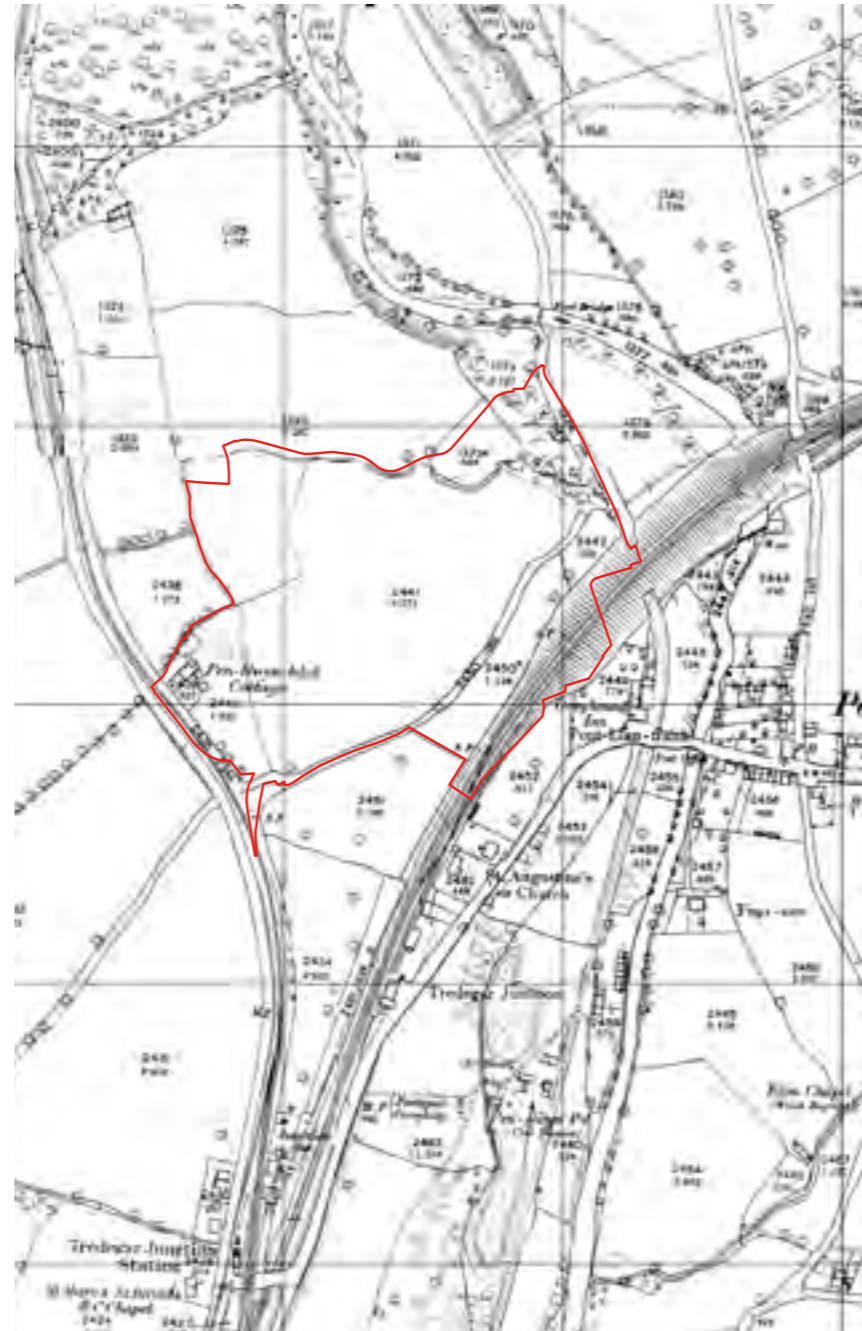


Figure 2: Ordnance 1879-1880

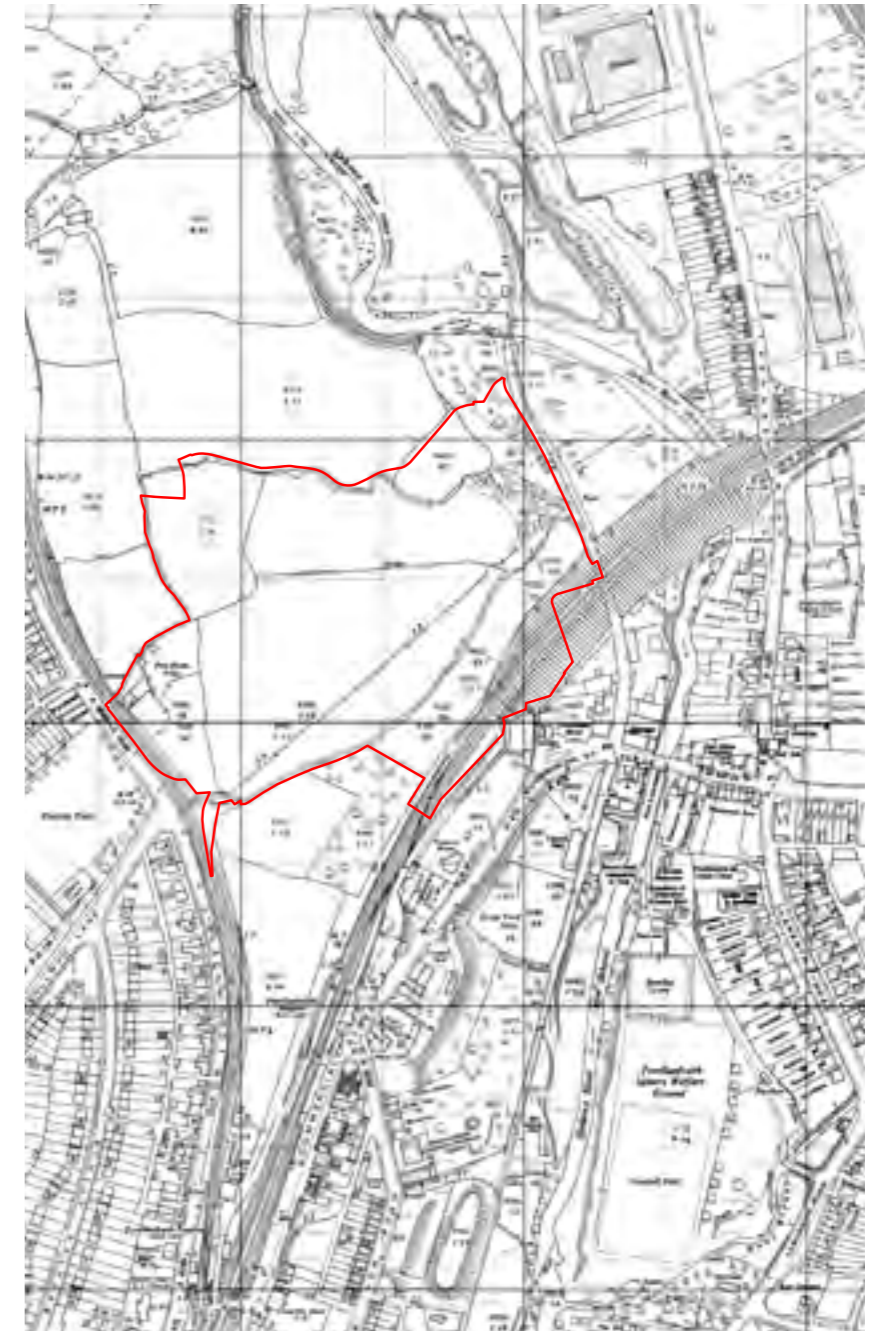


Figure 3: Ordnance 1961-1962

Local Character

- 5.6 Pontllanfraith House is an unremarkable concrete framed office block typical of 1970's municipal architecture.
- 5.7 The adjacent medical centres are of light coloured brickwork. Pontllanfraith Medical Centre is single storey whilst Avicenna is arranged over two storeys. Both buildings are simply designed, providing a functional architectural approach, set within car parking.
- 5.8 Properties to the west of Blackwood Road are characterised by being relatively large detached and semi-detached dwellings set within substantial plots. Further south there are many semi-detached properties of varying age, architectural style and detailing. Stone, brick and rendered houses with a variety of hipped, pitched and gabled roofs address Blackwood Road, and are generally raised behind brick walls and hedges.
- 5.9 Brynhyfryd Street, accessed off Blackwood Road, is characterised by its two storey terraces, sitting to the back of the pavement and ridge line parallel to the road. The majority of the stone fronted terraced properties have contrasting red brick detailing to windows and doors, and many of the original chimney stacks remain providing regular punctuation of the roofscape.
- 5.10 To the east of the site, within the original settlement of Pontllanfraith properties on Commercial Street are a mix of traditional stone and rendered two/ three storey properties with elements of new build brick dwellings. St. Augustine's Church provides an attractive focus, set amongst lawned grounds. As the road falls towards the river it becomes enclosed on both sides by mature trees before opening up adjacent to the petrol filling station, veterinary practice, car sales and Pontllanfraith RFC, on land adjacent to the old tram way. Architecturally the village is unremarkable yet typical of valleys development. Openings are often highlighted with contrasting brick or stonework quoins, roofs are generally of slate or have been replaced by tiles, and chimneys are commonplace.

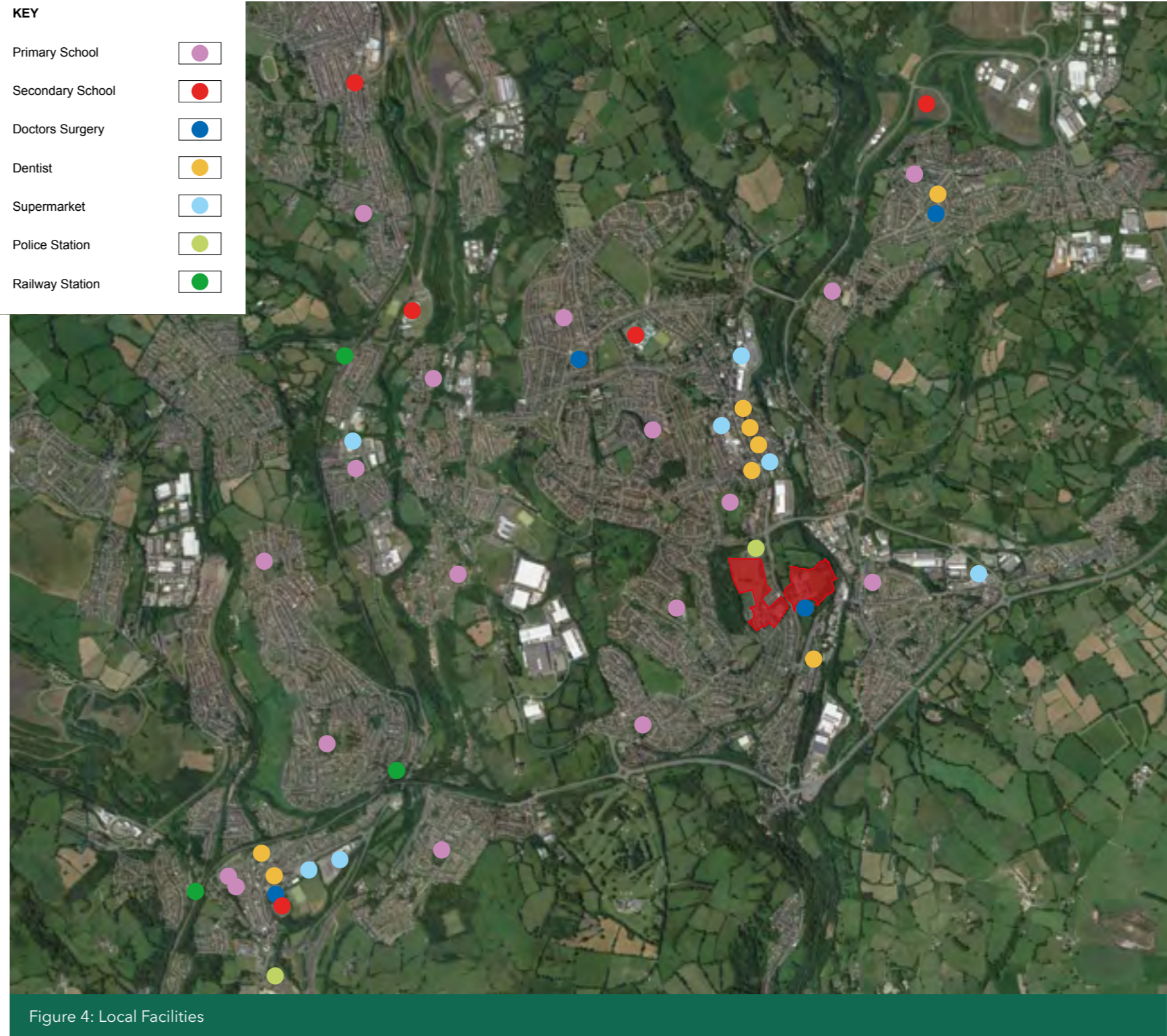


Accessibility

- 5.11 The B4251 Blackwood Road lies immediately to the west of the site, running north-south, towards Blackwood and Crosskeys respectively.
- 5.12 Several existing bus routes operate adjacent to the site, with northbound and southbound bus stops located within close proximity on Blackwood Road. There are currently 11 services operating between Pontllanfraith and Blackwood.
- 5.13 Blackwood bus station lies 1 km (0.62 mile) from the site, serving Cardiff, Newport and other local destinations in the south east valleys.
- 5.14 The nearest railway station is at Hengoed 3.8km (2.4 miles) to the south west. It provides regular services to Cardiff to the south and Rhymney to the north.
- 5.15 Policy TR1.9 of the adopted LDP highlights a designated cycle network link from Blackwood town centre/ Pontllanfraith to the National Cycle Network Route 47, which runs from Newport to Fishguard.
- 5.16 Blackwood town centre, to the north, is within a 5 minute walk of the site. The route into the town centre has footways to both sides of the road, is overlooked and is well lit. The Blackwood Gate Retail Park lies between the site and the town centre, and is less than a 3 minute walk from the site.
- 5.17 There are numerous footpaths running adjacent to the site, providing links to the wider pedestrian movement network and accessing Sir Harold Finch Memorial Park to the north, River Sirhowy to the east, and Pontllanfraith to the south.

Local Services

- 5.18 Figure 4 illustrates the location and range of facilities within close proximity to the development site.
- 5.19 Blackwood town centre includes a choice of independent retailers interspersed with more familiar household names such as Boots, Superdrug, Argos and Poundland, together with an outdoor market.



Site Access

- 5.21 The site is currently accessed via a four arm roundabout junction on Blackwood Road (B4251). The existing site access arm also provides access to two health centres which sit outside of the current development area, to the south of the site.
- 5.22 A number of public footpaths provide pedestrian access to the site, linking;
- Blackwood Road to the Memorial Park to the north of the development site boundary
 - Blackwood Road to the riverside path which, in turn links to Commercial Street in the south and, via a pedestrian footbridge, to Penmaen Industrial Estate to the east.
- 5.23 The footpaths along the river, whilst apparently well used, are not overlooked and as such do not benefit from any degree of natural surveillance.

Boundaries

- 5.24 Much of the northern boundary is formed by a well established belt of trees which loosely follows the line of a stream running eastwards - the only exception being where the boundary reverts to following a footpath which skirts a small glade to the north eastern end. To the north of this lies an area within Sir Harold Finch Park designated as a local nature reserve. The eastern edge of the site is defined by planting and a public footpath, beyond which lies the River Sirhowy. The site's southern boundary is formed in part by a significant area of woodland and the northern extent of the medical centre site. Blackwood Road forms part of the western boundary before it returns in to the park, where the edge is firstly defined by the southern extent of the Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and then the existing footpath alignment which access the pond, play area and parkland beyond.

Topography and Orientation

- 5.25 The site falls from west to east, with a change in height of approximately 15m. Land rises towards Blackwood Road from Pontllanfraith House, which sits some way below the site access. The Council offices were built on a development plateau, which results in a stepped landform to its western side. Remodelling at the time of its construction also provided a series of parking areas surrounding the building.



Pontllanfraith House entrance from Blackwood Road



Pedestrian route to southern side of Council office's car park



Pedestrian link from Harold Finch Memorial Park into development site



Pontllanfraith House as viewed from eastern side of site

Historic Environment

- 5.26 The Grade II listed War Memorial was originally sited outside the former Mynydd Islwyn District Council Offices until it was relocated to the terraced enclosure in front of Pontllanfraith House in 1983.
- 5.27 The listing description states that the memorial is a 'Monument of grey granite comprises 2 steps, a tiered battered plinth supporting a tapering rectangular pillar bearing the names in applied lettering of those fallen in the First World War on the front panel within a moulded surround; to sides are the names from the Second World War. Above a moulded cornice is a wreath, with further cornice surmounted by an acanthus leaf finial on a scroll.'
- 5.28 The War Memorial was listed in March 1999, mainly for its historic interest.



Figure 5: Development Advice Map

Flood Extent

- 5.29 The Development Advice Map (DAM) which accompanies TAN15: Development and Flood Risk is based upon NRW's extreme flood outlines (Zone C) and the British Geological Survey (BGS) drift data (Zone B).
- 5.30 The DAM indicates that a small area of the eastern side of the development site lies within Zones B and C2. Zone B comprises areas known to have flooded in the past. Zone C2 comprises areas of floodplain without significant flood defence infrastructure. (Figure 5)
- 5.31 Any proposals submitted for built development within these areas of higher risk of flooding, would need to be justified and satisfy the requirements of TAN15.

Drainage

- 5.32 There are a number of watercourses running along and within the site boundaries. Limited lengths of which have been culverted to allow for pedestrian access to the land to the north and vehicular access into the medical centre(s) site to the south. (Figure 6)
- 5.33 The small pond which lies beyond the north western boundary appears to be fed by the watercourse which runs along the western site boundary. This in turn feeds into the watercourse along the northern boundary and ultimately, via a culvert, into the River Sirhowy.
- 5.34 The 1961-62 Ordnance Survey map indicates a drain running west east across the centre of the site. This is no longer in evidence on current plans.

Service Infrastructure

- 5.35 Dwr Cymru Welsh Water have confirmed that a 150mm diameter water main and 225mm diameter sewer run adjacent to the site entrance.
- 5.36 Western Power Distribution have apparatus within the site, namely an 11kv supply running from Blackwood Road into an electricity sub-station within the landscaped western boundary of the site. This serves a low voltage (LV) underground cable which provides a supply to the northern end of Pontllanfraith House.
- 5.37 CCBC has provided a plan indicating the approximate position of a gas main running across the site from the gas governor adjacent to the footpath, accessing the northern end of Pontllanfraith House.
- 5.38 Detailed dialogue with utility providers will be necessary to establish service capacity, as part of the development process. Initial enquires indicate that Dwr Cymru Welsh Water has advised that a water supply could be made available to serve the site but there would be a requirement for new off-site water mains and associated infrastructure. No problems are envisaged with the public sewerage system for domestic foul discharge, or the receipt of such waste at the Cardiff Bay Waste Water Treatment Works.



Figure 6: Culvert Plan (indicative culverted watercourses shown in bold) as provided by CCBC

Ecology

- 5.39 Baker Consultants have undertaken a preliminary ecological appraisal (PEA) of the site comprising a desk based study, Phase 1 habitat survey and badger survey. A full copy of this report is available from CCBC.
- 5.40 The desk based study concluded within 1km of the site that there are/is:
- No internationally designated sites present
 - Two nationally designated sites (Memorial Park Meadows SSSI and Penllwyn Grassland SSSI)
 - One statutory designated local site (Memorial Park Meadows Local Nature Reserve)
 - Twelve Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation
- 5.41 In addition to the designations a number of habitats and species (ecological receptors) were identified on, or within close proximity to the site:
- Mature and semi-mature trees, semi-improved grassland, drainage ditches, mature woodland, dense scrub and pond.
 - Suitable potential foraging and roosting habitat for bats.
 - Potential for commuting otters using the nearby River Sirhowy.
 - Suitable potential foraging habitat for badgers.
 - Suitable habitat for breeding birds.
 - Suitable habitat for common reptile species
 - Good potential for invertebrates within woodland/ mature trees
 - Semi-improved grassland

- 5.42 The PEA also highlighted that the pond located just outside the north western site boundary may have the potential to support great crested newts and, as such should be the subject of an amphibian study to inform future development proposals.
- 5.43 The habitat of the highest value on the site is the lowland mixed deciduous woodland which, together with areas of dense scrub and mature trees more or less encircles the northern, eastern and southern boundaries. The woodland is listed as a Habitat of Principle Importance for Conservation (HPI).
- 5.44 The PEA recommends that the following additional surveys are undertaken to inform future development proposals on the site:
- Arboricultural survey
 - Bat surveys, including transects and static detector surveys
 - Breeding bird surveys
 - Grassland fungi survey



Pond adjacent to site boundary

Landscape

- 5.45 The western part of the site is brownfield, having already been developed for the Council's office building, associated access and car parking. A variety of trees have been planted to the west of the offices, filtering views from Blackwood Road through to the War Memorial which sits within a paved and planted setting. To the northern end of the car park lies a small pond (outside but adjacent to the site boundary) and children's play area.
- 5.46 A number of mature oak trees, subject to Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs), lie within the northern car parking area. These are an extension of a linear band of TPOs running along much of the site's northern boundary. Similarly there is a group TPO covering the trees alongside the southern footpath.
- 5.47 Since 2008 the eastern part of the site which forms the setting of the offices has been managed as a grassland to enhance its biodiversity. This area has recently been mowed as part of the management regime. There is a small block of trees to the south eastern edge of the open space.
- 5.48 Two watercourses/streams flow from the north western and south western corners of the site boundary, meeting at a point approximately half way along the eastern boundary. The corridor to the northern stream consists of mature trees and scrubland, with an attractive opening formed to its northern side. The southern stream is likewise characterised by a landscaped corridor, and two further watercourses flow into it from within the south eastern most part of the site. Land to the south of this stream contains numerous mature trees interspersed with pockets of open space.
- 5.49 Sir Harold Finch Memorial Park provides the setting to the site's northern boundary, comprising five fields - three smaller ones along Blackwood Road and a further two larger ones to the east, adjacent to the river. The field parcels are generally delineated by strong, mature planted boundaries comprising both hedgerow and trees. The Memorial Park Meadows SSSI runs along the eastern side of Blackwood Road and adjoins the north western site boundary. Much of the remainder of the northern site boundary is immediately adjacent to the Memorial Park Meadows Local Nature Reserve (LNR). The River Sirhowy SINC runs along the site's eastern border.

6.0 SWOT Analysis

- 6.1 The comprehensive redevelopment of the Pontllanfraith House site offers the opportunity to make effective use of previously developed land to deliver high quality new homes, including much needed affordable housing. There is the opportunity to improve access to open space, address existing transport issues, and enhance the local environment.
- 6.2 This chapter identifies the principal opportunities and constraints that will need to be taken into account in determining the form, scale and location of future development. A number of the issues are analysed as both constraints and opportunities. This analysis should be read in conjunction with Figure 7.

Weaknesses and Threats

The analysis has highlighted a number of constraints to development, including:

























- Sensitivity of adjacent ecology designations SINC, LNR and SSSI
- Potentially ecologically sensitive areas within site boundary
- Protected trees within and adjacent to site
- Flood risk to eastern boundary
- Grade II listed War Memorial and setting
- Existing access through site to medical centre
- Barriers created by on-site watercourses
- Potential impact upon existing character of site
- Perception of office building as a barrier to movement through and beyond the site

Strengths and Opportunities

The analysis has highlighted a number of development opportunities within the site, namely:

- Proximity to Blackwood town centre
- Strong existing landscape character
- Proximity of Harold Finch Memorial Park
- Potential to increase awareness/ usage of Harold Finch Memorial Park
- Equipped play area
- Pond providing wildlife and visual interest in close proximity
- Excellent pedestrian links to wider area
- Good vehicular access
- Varied local amenity provision
- Existing regular bus service adjacent to site
- Potential for links to Pontllanfraith School site
- Potential to incorporate SuDS

KEY

- Development site boundary 
- Buildings to be demolished 
- Existing vehicular access 
- Existing road 
- Existing footpath 
- Pontllanfraith Health Centre 
- Pontllanfraith Leisure Centre - visual detractor 
- Western Power services 
- Blackwood Police Headquarters 
- Existing housing next to site 
- Flood Zones (B and C2) 
- Tree Preservation Order (TPO) 
- Ancient Woodland 
- Local Nature Reserve (LNR) 
- Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) 
- Dwyr Cymru Services 
- Listed building/ structure 
- Change in level/ bank 
- Existing pond 
- Existing play area 
- River Sirhowy (inc. SINC) 
- Key non-designated trees within development site boundary 
- Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) 
- Wales & West Utilities services 

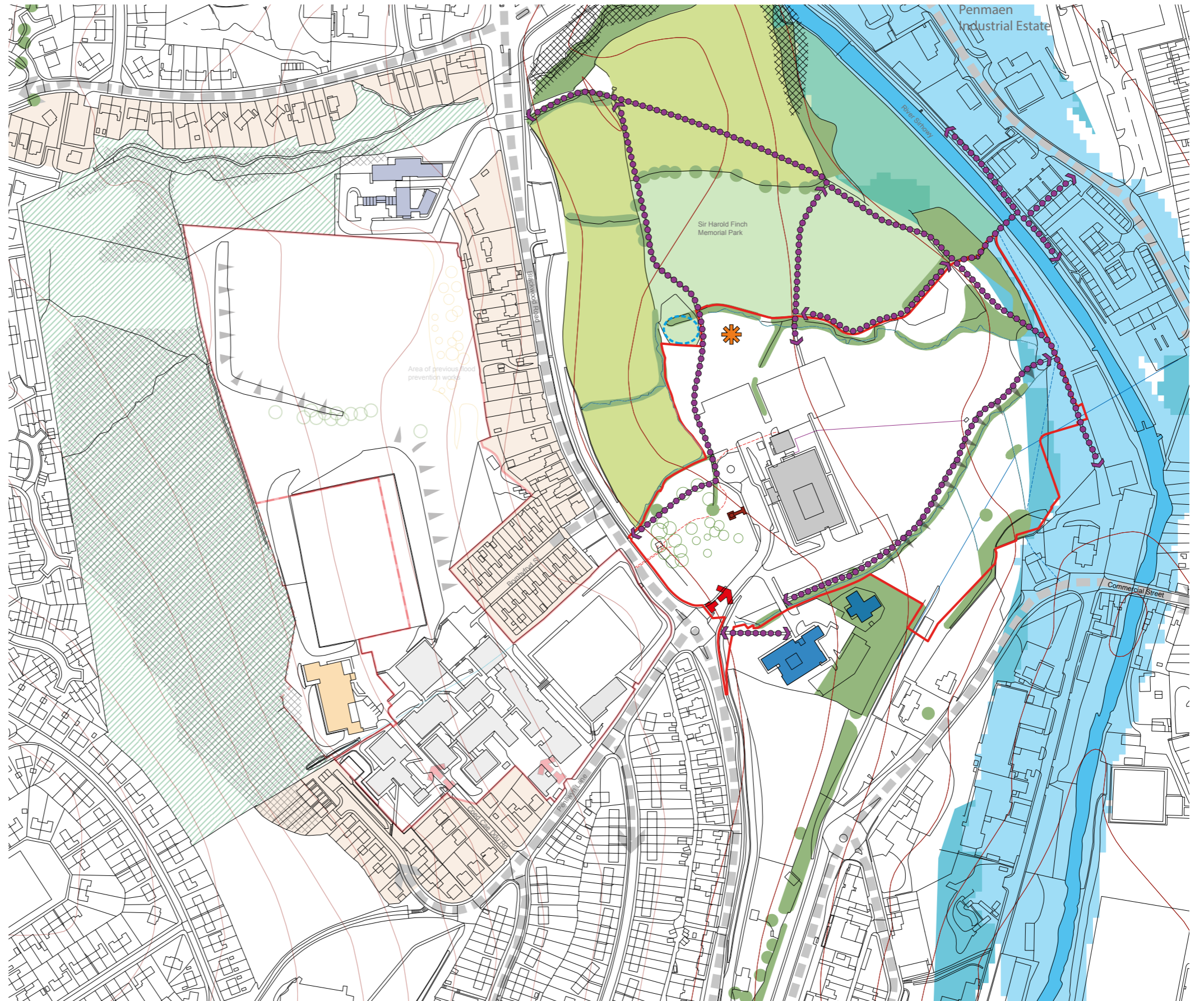


Figure 7: Constraints and Opportunities

7.0 Development Principles

7.1 The following four key development principles will guide the future development of this site, in accordance with the vision:

Principle 1: Access and movement

7.2 Establishing a permeable, legible and safe movement network which provides a pedestrian friendly environment and provides opportunities for access for all both within and through the site.

Principle 3: Urban design and built environment

7.4 Creating a high quality, attractive and legible built environment that contributes towards the local distinctiveness and sense of place by responding to the site's characteristics and local context, to provide a consistent and unified design approach.

Principle 2: Landscaping

7.3 Developing a landscape strategy which respects and enhances the site's natural environment, through the integration of natural features and safeguarding of areas of ecological and landscape interest.

Principle 4: Sustainability

7.5 Encouraging a development which enhances the existing community and promotes the principles of sustainable design through choice of materials, orientation of layout and integration of sustainable urban drainage wherever possible.



8.0 Development Framework

8.1 The following development framework has been based upon the previous site analysis, discussions with the Client group and relevant CCBC departments, as well as taking into account issues raised during the public consultation events. It should be used to guide the preparation of a masterplan for the site.

Access and Movement

Vehicular

8.2 The existing site is currently accessed via a four arm roundabout junction on Blackwood Road (B4251). Initial discussions with CCBC highway officers have indicated that this junction could form the primary point of access to any future development on the site. Realignment may allow for the rationalisation of the site entrance, with the potential to release additional developable land. The final detail of the access arrangements will be subject to future detailed design which may result in an alternative junction format or realignment of the existing access.

8.3 Initial analysis has indicated that the existing roundabout junction does not provide a good level of service for pedestrians crossing Blackwood Road and therefore any future development of the site should endeavour to improve pedestrian crossing facilities.

8.4 Provision of an access to the neighbouring health centre site will need to be retained in any future access arrangement.

8.5 Currently vehicular access for habitat management works within the Memorial Park Meadow Site of Special Scientific Interest/Local Nature Reserve is via the former law courts car park and, as such will be unaffected by the development of the Pontllanfraith House site. However any proposals should allow vehicular access for habitat management works which may be required within the development site.

8.6 CCBC Highways has stated that vehicular movement within the development should follow the principles as set out within the Department for Transport's 'Manual for Streets 1 & 2'. The Manual aims to reduce the impact of vehicles and give a higher priority to the needs of pedestrians and cyclists, with direct, attractive, safe, well connected, permeable street networks.

8.7 LDP Policy CW3 'Design Considerations - Highways' requires that:

- Development proposals have regard for the safe, effective and efficient use of the transportation network;
- New access roads promote the interests of pedestrians, cyclists and public transport before the private car;
- New access roads can safely accommodate the scale and nature of traffic they are intended to serve; and
- Parking is provided in accordance with the County Surveyors Society (CSS) Wales Parking Standards 2008.

8.8 The Car Parking Standards SPG provides further guidance on LDP Policy SP21 'Parking Standards'. The SPG sets out the parking requirements for all new development based upon land use type and its location within the County Borough. Parking provision must accord with the requirements of LDP5 as related to Zone 3, within which the development site is located.

Pedestrian and Cycle Routes

8.9 The development site is currently well served by a network of public footpaths and cycleways. Existing pedestrian access between the development site and the park to the north should be retained, as should the PRow running between Blackwood Road and the riverside.

8.10 Development of the site should not preclude the inclusion of the designated cycle network link from Blackwood town centre/ Pontllanfraith to the National Cycle Network Route 47, as laid out within LDP Policy TR1.9.

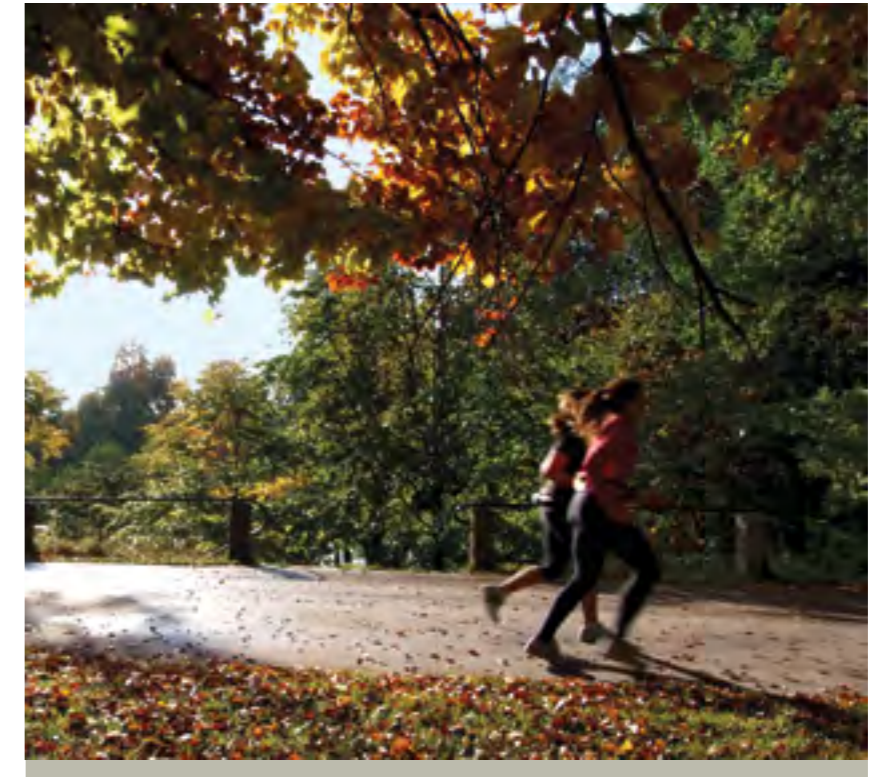
8.11 The following principles should be applied to links through the development site:

- Footpaths and cycle routes should be direct and reflect desire lines;
- They should be overlooked and avoid the rear of houses;
- They should be located in relatively wide, open areas and be designed to ensure good, forward visibility with no hiding places; and
- They should be well lit with good quality signage where necessary.



Amenity Space and Recreational Provision

- 8.12 LDP Policy CW10 'Leisure and Open Space Provision' requires that all new housing sites capable of accommodating 10 or more dwellings or exceeding 0.3ha (gross) makes adequate provision for well-designed usable open space as an integral part of the development; appropriate formal children's play facilities either on or off site; and makes adequate outdoor sport provision either on or off site, to meet the needs of residents of the proposed development.
- 8.13 The amount of land required for children's play and outdoor sport provision should be based upon the National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) 'Fields in Trust' (FiT) standards, which recommends a minimum provision of 2.4ha per 1000 population. Of this 1/3 should be children's play space (designated and informal), and 2/3 outdoor sport (including playing pitches).
- 8.14 Whilst the development proposals on the Pontllanfraith House site will not result in a loss of sports provision, the additional population resulting from its development has the potential to increase usage of existing local facilities. It will be necessary to demonstrate that the development of the site is policy compliant in this regard, providing appropriate open space of all types.
- 8.15 Enhancement opportunities for off-site facilities have been identified at the following existing sites:
- Bryn Playing Fields - potential for investment in enhancement to drainage of existing rugby pitch (consideration will need to be given to parking issues)
 - Libanus School - potential to enhance the durability of the pitch by contributing towards the installation of an artificial pitch (consideration will need to be given to parking issues)
 - Woodfieldside Playing Fields - potential to contribute towards drainage improvements and/or replacement with an artificial Third Generation pitch
- 8.16 Developers will need to undertake discussions with officers of CCBC to agree a way forward with regard to the provision of off-site sports facilities.
- 8.17 The Illustrative Development Framework Plan (Figure 8) indicates a developable area capable of accommodating approximately 96 dwellings (at a density of circa 30dw/ha), which would result in a requirement for approximately 0.176 hectares of children's play space - both formal and informal. The exact location and form of play provision will be determined as part of a detailed planning application in due course. The open space provision also includes natural and semi-natural greenspaces and amenity greenspace accessible to residents and the wider community.
- 8.18 Designated children's play facilities should be included as part of the open space provision, and will include:
- **Local Areas for Play (LAP)** which should be integrated into the development, providing opportunities for young children to play close to where they live. The 100m² activity zone should be designed in such a way that it only encourages use by young children, with appropriately chosen equipment. The area should be fenced and gated, with a minimum 5m buffer to the nearest residential property;
 - **Local Equipped Areas for Play (LEAP)** for children aged 4-8, comprise a 400m² activity zone with five types of play equipment surrounded by a grassed area with seating and a litter bin. The area should be fenced and gated. A buffer of least 20m should be provided between the activity area in the LEAPs and habitable rooms within the nearest residential property; and
- 8.19 The requirement for designated children's play facilities should be met by the enhancement of the existing facility within the Pontllanfraith House site, either in-situ or relocated to an appropriate position elsewhere within the development.
- 8.20 The on-site playground provision should be a wider community resource. Given that the playground currently serves the wider area and is often visited by car, an element of parking should be provided on site to serve both it and the War Memorial, to ensure no adverse effects of parking on future residents.
- 8.21 The existing stream/valley feature to the southern side of the site is one of the site's key natural resources and provides an opportunity for informal recreational usage and ecological enhancement.



Drainage

- 8.22 Any development should seek to incorporate Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) to reduce any increases in surface water drainage. The standard of construction and placement of SuDS should be agreed with CCBC.
- 8.23 LDP Policy CW5 'Protection of the Water Environment' requires that new development proposals should 'not have an adverse impact upon the water environment', neither should such development 'pose an unacceptable risk to the quality of controlled waters (including ground and surface water).'
- 8.24 Advice from CCBC has highlighted that site drainage will need to comply with Part H of the Building Regulations and initially the option of discharging the surface water run off to soakaways must be explored. Due to some of the land being boggy in places the use of soakaways may not be suitable. Should this be the case the next option is to discharge to either culverted or open watercourses. In respect of the watercourse any land drainage flows may discharge freely with no restriction applied to the flow rate. However in respect of surface water run off, the discharge rate would have to mimic a Greenfield run off rate with a betterment. This will help to ensure that the existing greenfield rate is not exceeded for all storm events up to and including the 100 year return period +30% (Climate change).
- 8.25 Appropriate measures should be put into place to ensure that no run-off from future construction works goes into any drainage ditches, in particular those that are linked to the River Sirhowy and its associated SINC.

Design

- 8.26 Development proposals should reflect best practice guidance in relation to urban design and sustainable development, respecting both the site and wider area's landscape context.
- 8.27 Development proposals will need to accord with PPW (Edition 7) Technical Advice Note (TAN) 12: Design (2014), which lays out the objectives of good design as being:
- **Access** - Ensuring ease of access for all;
 - **Character** - Sustaining or enhancing local character; promoting legible development; promoting a successful relationship between public and private space; promoting quality, choice and diversity; and promoting innovative design;
 - **Community Safety** - Ensuring attractive, safe public spaces; and security through natural surveillance;
 - **Environmental Sustainability** - Achieving efficient use and protection of natural resources; enhancing biodiversity; and designing for change; and
 - **Movement** - Promoting sustainable means of travel.
- 8.28 LDP Policy SP6 Place Making requires development proposals to contribute to creating sustainable places by having full regard to the context of the local, natural, historic and built environment and its features.
- 8.29 LDP6 - Building Better Places to Live SPG (Adopted November 2010) builds upon the design objectives set out in PPW and outlines CCBC's objectives for good design.
- 8.30 Whilst the structure and layout of development will be a matter for consideration at the detailed application stage, the following should be taken into account when design proposals are being prepared.



Landscape and Ecology

- 8.31 Policy CW4 Natural Heritage Protection highlights the need for the conservation and/or enhancement of the ecological importance of the adjacent SINC and LNR - ensuring that 'harm is minimised by mitigation measures and offset as far as practicable by compensation measures designed to ensure that there is no reduction in the overall value of the area or feature.'
- 8.32 Policy CW6 Trees, Woodland and Hedgerow Protection seeks to protect these features and encourages development proposals to 'make reasonable efforts to retain, protect and integrate trees, woodlands or hedgerows within the development site.'
- 8.33 Development proposals should be guided by PPW (Edition 7) Technical Advice Note (TAN) 10: Tree Preservation Orders (1997). Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) contained within LDP4 - Trees and Development (Adopted January 2012) provides further clarification, highlighting that 'every effort should be made to retain trees or groups of trees protected by a Tree Protection Order' (Paragraph 5.27).
- 8.34 It is anticipated that any landscape proposals for the site will seek to integrate the existing landscape features. There are a large number of trees within the site, which afford structure and maturity. The existing trees should be retained wherever possible to provide an attractive focus within the development and reinforce the local landscape character.
- 8.35 The removal of a limited number of TPO trees within the current car park may be considered, dependant upon an arboricultural survey being undertaken, and appropriate approvals being sought.
- 8.36 Planting to the site's boundaries and to the south of the footpath from Blackwood Road to the riverside, should be retained. These edges should be protected by a landscape buffer of an appropriate width (to be agreed with CCBC Ecology/ Arboriculture Team) which may include informal open space and PRow. Light spill into this area should be minimised through the use of directional/ low level lighting.
- 8.37 Trees/ tree groups identified as being protected by TPO's within the site should be retained where possible. If protected trees are identified for removal an application must be made to CCBC, in accordance with the Town and Country Planning Act (1990).

- 8.38 Root protection of all retained trees will be in accordance with BS 5837:2012 'Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction'.
- 8.39 A 15m buffer should be applied to the existing pond which lies beyond the site's northern boundary. There will be no development within this buffer other than informal open space and PRow.
- 8.40 Land to the south of the Blackwood Road to riverside footpath has not been identified as a development area, rather it should provide additional, informal open space provision for the development site and wider community, and provide an opportunity for ecological enhancement.
- 8.41 Ecological surveys will be required, the scope of which should be agreed with CCBC. Surveys will include bat and grassland fungi surveys. The grassland should be resurveyed next June before being cut for hay, to ensure that the value of the grassland is fully assessed. Also a grassland fungi survey should be undertaken between September and November.

Heritage

- 8.42 Proposals will need to take into account the designated Grade II War Memorial and its setting. Development within close proximity will need to be compliant with legislation, national policies and objectives. PPW (Edition 7) Chapter 6: Conservation states that 'Where a development proposal affects a listed building or its setting, the primary material consideration is the statutory requirement to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building, or its setting, or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.'
- 8.43 Should development proposals require the relocation of the existing stone and plaque to the western side of the memorial, regard should be paid to the time capsule which is buried within close proximity. These elements should be treated as a single entity and, if necessary, moved accordingly.



Pedestrian routes adjacent to development and line of trees



Example of development responding to sensitive boundary conditions



Development addressing a woodland boundary



Terraced housing turning a corner

Layout

- 8.44 Development proposals should seek to deliver an attractive mix of homes and open spaces, and create a form that draws from the best of the local context, whilst optimising the use of the site.
- 8.45 The layout should accommodate a significant number of the site's existing trees, and retain and protect ecologically sensitive boundaries.
- 8.46 Proposals will need to work with the existing topography of the site, to ensure a development which sits comfortably within the landscape. Consideration will also need to be given to the potential impact of overshadowing from trees, particularly those to the south of the site.
- 8.47 Development adjacent to, or within close proximity to the Grade II listed War Memorial will need to have regard to the historic asset and potential sensitivity of its setting.
- 8.48 There should be no development within the identified flood zone.
- 8.49 General considerations:
- Impact upon existing sensitive boundaries should be limited through (i) use of landscape buffer zones (ii) design which seeks to limit properties backing onto site boundaries with undeveloped land.
 - Protection of existing tree stock should be ensured through the careful positioning of development outside root protection areas (RPAs).
 - Proposals should provide landmark buildings and features at gateways, junctions and to terminate key views to create a memorable and interesting place that is easy to understand.
 - The layout of the streets and spaces and the way in which the blocks relate to them will convey a strong, positive sense of place, retaining site features such as trees and creating visual links along streets and footpaths, and through open spaces.
 - Properties should either be orientated to face the road or to have at least one habitable room overlooking the street ensuring natural surveillance of publicly accessible routes and spaces through the orientation of habitable rooms.
 - Buildings which turn corners should suitably address both aspects and provide focal points to key junctions.

- There should be clearly definable boundaries between public and private space.
- Proposals should provide a public realm with consistent street furniture of high quality, designed and placed to meet the functional standards of a residential area.
- Appropriate levels of parking should be incorporated within the development in a way that will ensure that parking does not dominate the public realm.
- New development should incorporate the principles of Secured by Design.
- Proposals should promote the use of sustainable materials which have a low impact on the environment.
- The development should incorporate areas of differing density, with a mix of house types to provide visual interest and promote diversity and flexibility.

Appearance

- 8.50 The design of buildings must be appropriate to the sensitive location of the site, with the overall architectural theme respecting the site's setting. A clear design strategy must form part of the proposals at the planning application stage. The strategy should ensure that the appearance of buildings:
- Results from a comprehensive contextual appraisal of the local area, drawing upon locally distinctive characteristics and/or encouraging exemplar design solutions
 - Is derived from a cohesive palette of high quality materials
 - Reflects and enhances the landscape setting of the site.

Density

- 8.51 Densities should be appropriate to the urban context, demonstrate an efficient use of land and be capable of accommodating a meaningful socio-economic mix of residents by providing a range of house types and sizes. However the site must also deliver what the market requirements are - the Council may stipulate a preference for certain typologies but if these are not what housebuilders feel they can best sell, this will impact on values.

Affordable Housing Provision

- 8.52 LDP Policy CW11 'Affordable Housing Planning Obligation' Requires 25% affordable housing in the Northern Connections Corridor (excluding Newbridge). This reflects the guidance contained within the current Affordable Housing Obligations SPG, which includes the following affordable housing requirements:
- 25% affordable housing provision in the Northern Connections Corridor (excluding Newbridge), subject to viability;
 - On sites of more than 20 units affordable homes should be pepper-potted in clusters of a maximum of 6 units;
 - Homes to be transferred to Seren Group; and
 - Homes to be transferred at the values contained within the SPG.
- 8.53 Off-site provision may be appropriate in exceptional circumstances and will be calculated on the basis of the difference between the residual value of providing 100% market housing and the residual value of providing the required levels and mixes of housing.
- 8.54 The LHMA suggests that there is a need for dwellings appropriate to accommodate smaller households, as well as housing suitable for older people.
- 8.55 It is anticipated that the affordable provision would comprise 70% social rented properties and 30% low cost home ownership units.

- 8.56 Discussions with CCBC have indicated a preference for affordable housing to be provided on both the Pontllanfraith House and Pontllanfraith Comprehensive School development sites. However, should the two sites be pursued together as a single planning application, CCBC may consider the provision of affordable housing on either site alone.
- 8.57 Future development within both of the development sites should be policy compliant, and the provision of affordable housing should be a priority, however there is flexibility in provision subject to viability considerations that would need to be evidenced. It will be necessary to ensure that the housing tenures and type reflect local need at the time of delivery/development.

Community Infrastructure Levy

- 8.58 Development of the Pontllanfraith House site will be subject to a Community Infrastructure Charge (CIL), the finance generated from which will be used to secure infrastructure that is required to support development in accordance with the Local Development Plan.
- 8.59 Appendix A of CCBC's CIL Charging Schedule (1 July 2014) highlights that the Pontllanfraith House site lies within mid-range viability residential charging zone. The chargeable amount will be calculated at the time planning permission first permits the chargeable development in accordance with the formula set out in Regulation 40 of the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 (as amended).
- 8.60 Regulation 123 of the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 (as amended) sets out the requirement for CIL Charging Authorities to publish a list of the infrastructure that can be funded through CIL. CCBC's revised Regulation 123 List of Infrastructure takes effect as from 17 November 2015, and comprises:
1. Physical Infrastructure
 2. Social Infrastructure
 3. Green Infrastructure

9.0 Capacity and Phasing

- 9.1 An Illustrative Development Framework Plan has been prepared as part of the development brief process (see Figure 8). It has been based upon the series of constraints and opportunities arising from both on-site assessment and desk based analysis.
- 9.2 The potential gross developable area for the Pontllanfraith House site has been calculated as approximately 3.23ha (7.98 acres). This has been based upon the developable area as shown.
- 9.3 This area could accommodate 96 dwellings when applying a density of 30dw/ha, or 113 at 35 dw/ha. Resulting in open space requirements of 0.76ha and 0.88ha respectively.
- 9.4 Phasing of the development will be developer led.

KEY

Development site boundary		Main frontage	
Site access (subject to detailed design)		Front or side elevations	
Pedestrian access		Side elevations	
15m buffer to protected trees/ SINC/ Ancient Woodland		Listed building	
TPOs (individual and group)		<i>Note: Existing play provision to be retained either in-situ or relocated within the site boundary. Limited car park provision to be made for play area and War Memorial.</i>	
Potential removal of TPO tree(s)			
Residential development			

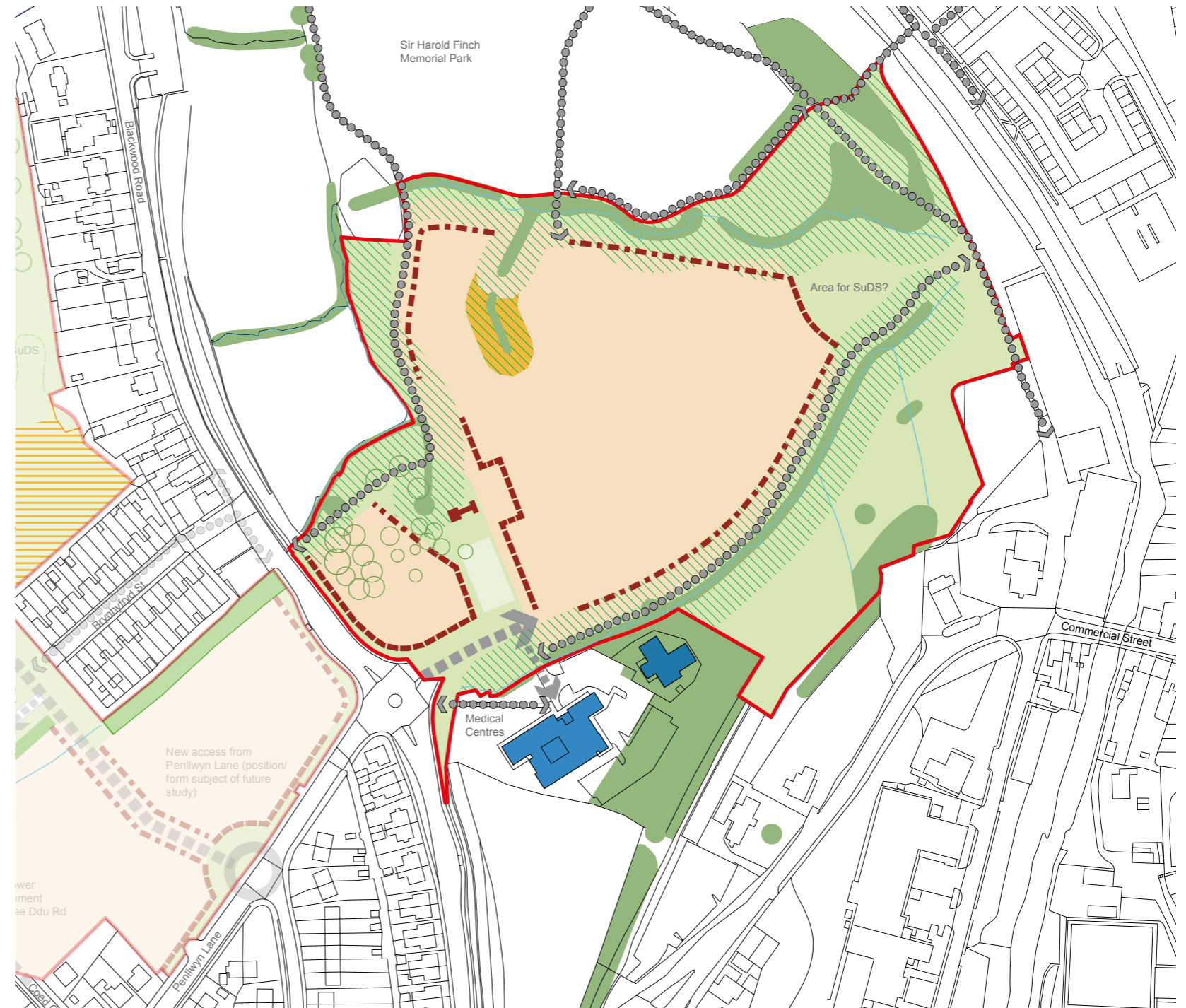


Figure 8: Illustrative Development Framework

10.0 Consultation and Engagement

10.1 As part of our brief and in line with best practice, we were asked by CCBC to undertake public consultation, the results of which would, wherever possible, inform the Planning Briefs.

10.2 Three community engagement sessions were undertaken; two evening events and one on a Saturday morning. These were all held in early September, beyond the school holiday period, so as to maximise potential attendance. Invitations were sent out to local residents and key stakeholders, including:

- Gwent Police Estates Manager
- Blackwood Police
- Royal British Legion
- Blackwood Retail Partnership
- Avicenna Medical Centre
- Rotary Club of Pontllanfraith
- Gwent Wildlife Trust
- Seren Group and United Welsh
- Blackwood Town Council
- Blackwood Chamber of Trade
- Natural Resources Wales

10.2 All three events were well attended and yielded a range of responses from a broad cross section of the community. The consultation events and subsequent correspondence resulted in 99 responses.

10.3 Inevitably not all of the responses to the consultation were supportive, the principal concern being the loss of open space. Whilst most consultees could understand the need for CCBC to consolidate their functions in order to save money, a small minority of attendees felt that this should not result in the Pontllanfraith House site being redeveloped. Rather that it should revert to open space. Whilst, in simple land use terms this might be regarded as a sensible solution, NLP's brief was to maximise a capital return and in the circumstances, we feel that this proposition is commercially unrealistic.

10.3 The majority of those who commented acknowledged the need for both the Pontllanfraith House and School sites to be redeveloped and most comments were about how this should be done, rather than if. The key issues for us to consider therefore, seemed to be concentrated around:

- movement and access;
- the need to protect and enhance protected trees and important nature conservation;
- alternative provision of open space;
- the need to consider and to protect the amenity of existing residents; and
- design quality.

10.4 The potential economic benefits of development was a theme that was not lost on residents who recognised the value that housing developments can have in terms of job creation and support for the local economy. It was clear that the need to increase the supply and range of housing in the area was an important consideration and this was welcomed by many.

10.5 On balance most of the comments received were considered and helpful. In drafting both reports we have considered all the representations, taken on board views and suggestions where possible whilst seeking a balance between appropriate land use and generating value. However when working within CCBC's existing policy framework there are some suggestions which it has not been possible to incorporate.

10.6 A summary of the consultation events, including numbers in attendance and comments submitted is available from CCBC.

Soft Market Testing

10.7 As part of our work NLP has spoken informally to a number of developers and agents. Whilst each of these has their own ideas about phasing, values, densities and typologies, it is undisputed that there is strong market interest in the site(s) and we would expect a healthy response to the marketing of the land when it is advertised for sale.

11.0 The Way forward

11.1 In the interests of comprehensive development it is the preference of Caerphilly County Borough Council that an outline planning application should be submitted which includes both the Pontllanfraith House and Pontllanfraith Comprehensive School sites. Should this be the case there may be the potential for open space provision and affordable housing requirements to be considered together.

Planning Application Requirements

- 11.2 The following documentation may be sought in respect of any planning application submission:
- Planning Statement;
 - Transportation Assessment;
 - Flood Risk Assessment;
 - Environmental Impact Assessment;
 - Design and Access Statement;
 - CIL Forms; and
 - Additional ecological surveys to be agreed with CCBC, and to include bat and grassland fungi surveys.



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