



PLANNING, DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT
PROPOSED 10 RESIDENTIAL DWELLINGS AT FORMER TONMAWR
PRIMARY SCHOOL SITE, TONMAWR.

on behalf of
Mr D John

Our Ref: 1130.a
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Prepared by: JDE

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Evans Banks Planning Ltd has been instructed by Mr D John (the Applicant) to prepare a full planning application for the demolition of former school buildings and construction of 10 new residential dwellings at the former Tonmawr Primary School site, Tonmawr.
- 1.2 This Planning, Design and Access Statement therefore forms part of the submissions of the application to be considered by the Authority, and provides information on the following points:
- A brief description of the site and surrounding area
 - A description of the proposed development
 - Consideration of relevant local planning policy
 - Accessibility
 - Character
 - Community Safety
 - Environmental Sustainability
 - Movement to, from and within the development
- 1.3 The following information should also be read in conjunction with the accompanying drawings and supporting information.

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 THE SITE

2.1.1 The application site relates to the buildings and grounds of the former Tonmawr Primary School site, circled red on the aerial photograph below.



Photograph 1

2.1.2 Although the site closed as a school in August 2015, the former school buildings and associated hard surfaces remain on site, some of which are pictured below.



Photograph 2



Photograph 3



Photograph 4



Photograph 5

2.1.3 As illustrated from Photograph 1, the site also has small areas of grass, with these being predominantly located in the western half of the site. Beyond these further to the west is a large collection of trees of varying species and scale.

2.1.4 The site has several 'plateau' areas, although it is generally sloping downwards in a north to south direction towards the adopted highway (Tonmawr Road). Notwithstanding this, the application site is at a noticeable higher ground level than the adjoining highway, as illustrated below.



Photograph 6

2.1.5 Vehicular access into the site is gained via an existing point off Tonmawr Road, via a sloping ramp as illustrated below, although informal pedestrian access is also evident via the northern boundary.



Photograph 7

2.2 THE SURROUNDING AREA

2.2.1 The settlement of Tonmawr consists of 3 'arms' with the application site positioned at their centre. In the immediate sense therefore, the application site has existing residential development located to its east (Photograph 8) and west (Photograph 9), with the photographs below indicative of the wide range of dwelling design and styles present throughout the settlement.



Photograph 8



Photograph 9

2.2.2 In the wider sense, the remainder of the settlement (positioned to the north, east and west of the application site) also includes a range of dwelling types and design. In addition, the settlement includes a number of local businesses, places of worship, a rugby club and a Post Office. The settlement also includes a number of bus stops, with the nearest to the application site less than 100m to the east. All are regularly served by the No. 59 Service providing regular access to Pontrhydfen, Neath and the intervening settlements.

2.3 PROJECT DESIGN PARAMETERS AND PRINCIPLES

2.3.1 As a result of the local context and the aspirations of the Applicant for the property, the following design principles and parameters have influenced the design of the proposal subject of this planning application:-

- **Scale** – To reflect the mix of house types present in the existing settlement, whilst working with the site's topographical attributes.
- **Design** – To reflect and draw from the existing local housing stock.
- **Access** – To utilise a new means of access that provides a greater level of visibility and general highway safety than the existing access used by the former school.
- **Drainage** – To ensure all surface water generated by the site is drained in a sustainable manner.

3.0 THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

3.1 The proposal is for the construction of 10 residential dwellings. The following information should therefore be read in conjunction with the accompanying plans, drawings and associated supporting information.

Project Overview

3.2 The proposal is to redevelop the former Tonmawr Primary School, which has remained vacant since its closure in 2015. The site contains a number of existing buildings, many of which are now in a poor state of repair. The site also contains developed areas at a mix of levels, representative of how the site evolved over the passage of time for the purposes of its former education related use.

3.3 Notwithstanding the above, the site is now deteriorating and in its present form difficult to utilise. This current application therefore seeks to redevelop the site and remove what could become an eyesore in the community. The proposed scheme therefore seeks to introduce a source of much needed housing for the locality, in a manner that gives full consideration for the site's setting and topographical form.

Housing Mix

3.4 As detailed in Section 2 of this Statement, the existing settlement contains a mix and variety of house types and styles. As a result the application development subject of this application has drawn on this, with the proposed mix being as follows:

- Two Detached 4 Bed Houses
- Two Detached 3 Bed Bungalows
- Six Semi-Detached 3 Bed Houses

External Finishes

- 3.5 The proposed dwellings will have the following external finishes:

Walls – Coursed stonework detailing with smooth white render

Roof – Slate

Fenestration – Grey upvc double glazed units

Weatherboards – Grey upvc

Rainwater Goods – Grey upvc

Drainage

- 3.6 All surface water will be disposed of via a new site-wide SUDS system, as detailed on the accompanying drawings.
- 3.7 All foul water will continue to be disposed of as existing, via connections to the public sewer.

Landscaping and Boundary Treatment

- 3.8 As the accompanying drawings show, each unit will be served by a private rear garden, with Plots 9 and 10 including existing trees that are to be retained as part of the proposed development. From a site perspective then, the proposed scheme also includes open elements in its southern element, to accommodate the aforementioned SUDS scheme.
- 3.9 Each property will then have the side and rear boundaries of its private elements of its amenity space defined by new solid timber fencing at the positions indicated on the accompanying drawings.

Parking and Access

- 3.10 As detailed above, to provide a safer and more acceptable means of access to serve the site, a new access forms part of the application scheme. This will provide a significant improvement in visibility, together with a more satisfactory gradient for the

access road that serves the site, improving the level of highway safety for all road users.

- 3.11 Taking into account the requirements and standards of the Authority, each dwelling will be provided with dedicated car parking spaces on a '1 bedroom-1 space' basis. In addition, the proposal also makes provision for 6 visitor parking spaces.

4.0 LOCAL PLANNING POLICY

4.0.1 In terms of Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the adopted development plan for the area within which the application site is positioned is the *Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council Local Development Plan (LDP)*. The LDP contains a range of policies relating to a variety of development types and topic areas, with amongst others, the following having been given full consideration in the preparation of this planning application:

- Policy SP1 – Climate Change
- Policy SP7 – Housing Requirement
- Policy SP10 – Open Space
- Policy SP15 – Biodiversity and Geodiversity
- Policy SP16 – Environmental Protection
- Policy SC1 – Settlement Limits
- Policy TR2 – Design and Access of New Development
- Policy BE1 - Design

4.0.2 With the application site lying within the defined Settlement Limits for Tonmawr, it is clear that the principle of residential development at the location in question is acceptable in local planning policy terms and it will also assist in meeting the Plan's overall housing targets. As a result, the following provides a consideration and assessment of the proposal against the overarching policy requirements contained in Policy BE1, dealing with the more detailed aspects of the proposed scheme.

4.1 POLICY BE1 – DESIGN

4.1.1 Policy BE1 represents the overarching policy of the LDP, the requirements of which apply to all development proposals. The Policy consists of ten criteria, with the requirements of all relevant criterion to a development having to be met if a proposal is to be deemed acceptable. In terms of the application proposal, it is considered that

all ten are of relevance and so the following provides an assessment of the proposal against their requirements.

- 4.1.2 Criterion 1 requires that a proposal “... *compliments and enhances the character and appearance of the site, building or area in terms of siting, appearance, scale, height, massing and elevation treatment.*”. As has been detailed previously in this Statement, the existing urban form of the settlement of which the application site forms part of contains significant variation in terms of dwelling types and designs. However, it is clear that there are common elements in terms of the external finishes palette. As a result, the proposal has struck a respective balance between including a variety of dwelling types, but all drawing from the common finishes palette of the area. The proposal therefore adheres to the requirements of Criterion 1 and through a mix of landscaping also Criterion 3.
- 4.1.3 The second criterion then deals with the matter of a site’s topography and how it relates to the immediate and wider landscape. As can be seen from the photographs in this Statement, the application site is a sloping site at a higher level than the adjoining public highway. The proposed scheme has therefore respected these current arrangements to ensure that the role of the site in the local landscape context remains largely the same, but without detriment to occupiers of adjoining land uses. This has then ensured that the proposal adheres to the requirements of Criterion 2 and respective elements of Criterion 4.
- 4.1.4 As detailed previously and shown by the accompanying drawings, the proposal includes provision for a new vehicular and pedestrian access to serve the site. This will be based on a more suitable gradient to ensure safe and easy access for all users. In addition, the point at which the new access road is to connect to the adjoining public highway will secure an appropriate and acceptable level of visibility. The proposal therefore adheres to all aspects of Criterion 4, Criterion 7 and in turn those of PolicyTR2.

- 4.1.5 Criterion 5 then deals with important local features – natural or built – that a site may contain. The application site does not contain any Listed Buildings, nor does it form part of a designated Conservation Area. In addition, the site does not include or form part of any nature conservation designation, nor does it contain any key biodiversity interests. As a result, it is considered that the requirements of Criterion 5 are satisfied.
- 4.1.6 In terms then of the layout, the proposal has been steered in particular by the site's topography and its alignment with the adjoining public highway. Taking both these factors into account, the resultant layout is one that works with the site's general topography and key natural features. The net result therefore then is a development that delivers a good level of natural surveillance, as well as ensuring all parts of the development are accessible to all. The requirements of Criterion 6 and indeed Criterion 10 in turn are therefore satisfied by the proposal.
- 4.1.7 The penultimate criterion then for consideration – Criterion 8 – deals with the matter of securing the efficient use of land. The principle of the development of the site due to its brownfield nature is wholeheartedly supported by the Criterion. Furthermore, the delivery of 10 units on a site, which when taking into account the topography of the site, is a density that is supported by Criterion 8. As a result, the requirements of the Criterion are satisfied by the proposal.
- 4.1.8 The final criterion then deals with the matter of surface water drainage. At present we understand that all surface water is channelled into the existing public sewer system. However and in line with current sustainable drainage regulations, the proposed development will be served by a new on-site SUDS scheme, as illustrated on the accompanying drawings. Through these measures the proposal therefore adheres to the requirements of Criterion 9 and Policy BE1 as a whole.

5.0 ACCESSIBILITY

5.1 ACCESSIBILITY

5.1.1 The following represents a summary of the access considerations made by the Applicant in relation to the proposal subject of this planning application. The design standards followed in doing so are contained within the following documents:

- Approved Document M – Access to and Use of Buildings
- BS8300 - Design of buildings
- DDA1995

5.2 MOVEMENT TO, FROM AND WITHIN THE DEVELOPMENT

Philosophy and Approach

5.2.1 The Applicant has an aspiration of inclusive design & seeks to promote high quality accessible and welcoming environments as part of the proposed development. This is reflected in the provision of dedicated legible and safe means of access for all residents and visitors, irrespective of their means of travel to the site.

Movement To the Site

5.2.2 The application site forms part of the settlement of Tonmawr, which as detailed above is formed along three 'arms' with the application site broadly at their centre. All roads within the settlement include provision for pedestrians on either or both sides. In addition, bus stops are located in close proximity of the application site. The proposed development is therefore able to promote non-car modes of transport for off-site trips.

5.2.3 In the immediate sense, the application will be accessed directly off the adjoining Tonmawr Road, but via a new point of access, chosen to improve levels of highway safety for all users. All movement from the external areas adjoining the entrances

serving the proposed dwellings will then be on a level basis, ensuring an inclusive form of development, as required by Part M of AD.

6.0 CHARACTER

Landscape Design

- 6.1 The application proposal seeks to include a small area of landscaping to the front of the site, as part of the SUDS scheme that forms part of it. This will incorporate elements of soft landscaping, providing a more sympathetic integration with the adjoining public realm than that previously present on site.

Scale

- 6.2 As detailed previously, the scale of the proposal has been steered by the existing form of development found in the surrounding area, as well as seeking to make efficient use of a brownfield site.

Number

- 6.3 The design objective is to provide 10 residential dwellings.

Layout of Development

- 6.4 As detailed previously, the layout of the proposal has been steered by existing site attributes, its relationship with adjoining land uses and the objective of securing a safe and inclusive environment.

Appearance

- 6.5 As detailed in earlier Sections of this DAS, the application proposal is for a series of dwellings that will utilise materials and design styles that draw on those found in the surrounding area.

7.0 COMMUNITY SAFETY

- 7.1 The proposal will not affect the current level of community safety experienced by the local area. Notwithstanding this, with the proposed dwellings facing the access road, shared parking areas and communal areas, the proposed layout will provide a level of natural surveillance.

8.0 ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Landscaping/Townscape Setting

- 8.1 The application site lies at a within-settlement location and is sustainably positioned in terms of a range of means of access options. In a wider sense, it is adjoined by two contrasting landscape character areas – urban and rural.
- 8.2 As a result of the above and as detailed earlier, the proposal has sought to strike a balance between these two landscape character areas through the retention of existing strong natural boundary treatments and an internal layout that fully incorporates soft landscaping.

Biodiversity and Local Environment

- 8.3 Any trees or hedges used in the landscaping of the proposed development will draw from the indigenous species of the area, as detailed in the accompanying drawings. In addition, existing trees present on site have been retained wherever possible.

Energy Efficiency/Carbon Reduction

- 8.4 The following measures will be undertaken where possible to maximise energy efficiency and carbon reduction of the units themselves and during their construction:
- Maximise use of daylight in key rooms through fenestration
 - Use of local suppliers and labour wherever possible
 - Use local recycled products wherever possible
 - The units will be insulated to current targets
 - Energy efficient internal and external lighting units will be installed.
 - All fenestration units will be double glazed.

Sustainable Materials

- 8.5 We understand that recycled or reclaimed products will be used in the construction of the proposal wherever possible

Water

- 8.6 We understand that the existing mains supply will be utilised. In line with this, we would propose that the domestic water and heating system of the residential units be designed to reduce domestic water wastage, through a range of measures including low water consuming fittings in the bathroom and kitchen.

Waste Management

- 8.7 We understand that the residential units will have access to domestic recycling facilities.
- 8.8 The existing connection to the public sewer will be utilised for the disposal of foul waste.

9.0 CONCLUSION

- 9.1 The proposal is for the demolition of existing former school buildings and their replacement with 10 new residential dwellings.
- 9.2 With over 7 years passing since the site was last in use, this current planning application represents a valuable opportunity to regenerate a brownfield site located at the core of the settlement of Tonmawr. Positioned on the core access route – for both private and public modes of transport – the development is sustainably positioned both in terms of the community facilities and local services the settlement has to offer, as well as those in the surrounding area.
- 9.3 Whilst the site's topography represents a challenge in design terms, the application proposal gives full accord to its existing ecological assets and position in the wider streetscene. The net result is a scheme that is responsive to the application site itself, harmonious in both scale and detailed design to the local building stock, as well as delivering an improved means of access to the benefit of both existing and future road users.
- 9.4 In conclusion therefore, the proposal represents an appropriate and sustainable development that adheres to all relevant current planning policy.