

**Application Number:** DM/2019/00997

**Proposal:** Proposed new demountable unit to form two classrooms, toilets, kitchen and cloak room

**Address:** Ysgol Gymraeg Y Fenni, St David's Road, Abergavenny, NP7 6HF

**Applicant:** Mr Will McLean

**Plans:** Location Plan - , All Existing Plans A9477/01 - , All Proposed Plans A9477/02 - ,

## **RECOMMENDATION: APPROVE**

Case Officer: Ms Lowri Hughson-Smith

Date Valid: 25.06.2019

**This application is presented to Planning Committee due to the site being owned by Monmouthshire County Council**

### **1.0 APPLICATION DETAILS**

1.1 The application site is Ysgol Y Fenni Primary School located off St. David's Road in the Mardy area of Abergavenny.

This application seeks permission for 1no. demountable building to be located on the playground of the school, adjacent to an existing demountable. The demountable will provide 2no. classrooms, toilet facilities and a small kitchen area. The proposed demountable measures as follows:

- Width: 9.83m
- Depth: 16.77m
- Height: 3.5m

1.2 The materials will be grey cladding, white uPVC windows and a dark roof covering to match the existing demountable buildings on site and main school building.

1.3 The demountable building is required to provide additional Welsh Medium School places within the Abergavenny area.

1.4 The proposed development in terms of its impact on the school capacity can be summarised as follows:

#### **1.5 Existing Capacity**

- The existing school capacity is: 257 according to the Welsh Government calculations. The current number on roll is: 243, therefore the school technically has capacity for an additional 14 pupils;
- The school also has capacity for 60 nursery pupils (30 pupils in the morning session and 30 pupils in the afternoon session). The nursery school operates part time only between the hours of 9.30am to 11am and 1.30pm to 3pm;
- Overall the school has capacity for 287no. pupils (school and 30no. nursery pupils since this is the maximum number of nursery pupils on site at one time).

#### **1.6 Proposed Capacity**

- The demountable building has capacity for up to 60no. pupils

- The increased maximum capacity would be 347no. pupils (increased school capacity and 30no. nursery pupils since this is maximum number of nursery pupils on site at one time).

1.7 The demountable building will be funded through Section 106 monies received from the Deri Farm development, located in north Abergavenny. The Section 106 monies were secured to increase Welsh Medium Primary education capacity in Abergavenny.

## **2.0 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY (if any)**

None.

## **3.0 LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICIES**

### **Strategic Policies**

S17 LDP Place Making and Design

### **Development Management Policies**

DES2 LDP Areas of Amenity Importance

DES1 LDP General Design Considerations

EP1 LDP Amenity and Environmental Protection

MV1 LDP Proposed Developments and Highway Considerations

NE1 LDP Nature Conservation and Development

## **4.0 NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY**

### **Planning Policy Wales (PPW) Edition 10**

4.1 The primary objective of PPW is to ensure that the planning system contributes towards the delivery of sustainable development and improves the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being as required by the Planning (Wales) Act 2015, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and other key legislation. A well-functioning planning system is fundamental for sustainable development and achieving sustainable places.

4.2 The planning system should create sustainable places which are attractive, sociable, accessible, active, secure, welcoming, healthy and friendly. Development proposals should create the conditions to bring people together, making them want to live, work and play in areas with a sense of place and well-being, creating prosperity for all.

## **5.0 REPRESENTATIONS**

### 5.1 Consultation Replies

**Llantilio Pertholey Community Council:** The community council objects to the application on road safety grounds.

**MCC Highways:** The Highways Authority has objected on the basis the increase in traffic to and from the school would have an adverse impact on highway safety.

**MCC Environmental Health:** No objections, subject to a condition for a Construction Method Statement.

### 5.2 Neighbour Notification

1no. neighbour response was received objecting to the proposal on the following grounds:

- Unacceptable increase in traffic which is dangerous;
- Loss of amenity to neighbours (resulting from traffic increase); and
- Car pull-in area should be provided.

## 6.0 EVALUATION

### 6.1 Principle of Development

6.1.1 The site is in the settlement of Abergavenny where the principle of development is established. The demountable building is therefore acceptable in principle subject to the proposal being in accordance with detailed planning considerations. In this case, the material planning considerations are:

- Loss of Area of Amenity Importance
- Highway Safety
- Residential Amenity
- Design and Visual Impact
- Biodiversity

### 6.2 Area of Amenity Importance

6.2.1 The playground of the school is a designated Area of Amenity Importance (AAI) under Policy DES2 of the Local Development Plan. Policy DES2 seeks to protect the built environment by retaining open spaces. The AAI designation covers the whole playground which measures approximately 1700m<sup>2</sup>. The proposed development will take up an area of approximately 165m<sup>2</sup> which is just under 10% of the overall designation. Despite the modest size of the development, it must accord with the requirements of Policy DES2 which states that development should only be supported where there is no unacceptable impact on the following as set out in Policy DES2:

- a) the visual and environmental amenity of the area, including important strategic gaps, vistas, frontages and open spaces;
- b) the relationship of the area of amenity importance to adjacent or linked areas of green infrastructure in terms of its contribution to the character of the locality and / or its ability to relieve the monotony of the built form;
- c) the role of the area as a venue for formal and informal sport, general recreation and as community space, expressed in terms of actual usage and facilities available, as well as its relationship to general open space requirements as set out in Policy CRF2;
- d) the cultural amenity of the area, including places and features of archaeological, historic, geological and landscape importance; and
- e) the nature conservation interest of the area, through damage to, or the loss of, important habitats or natural features (Policy NE1 applies).

6.2.2 The proposal will be assessed against each criterion below.

- a) the visual and environmental amenity of the area, including important strategic gaps, vistas, frontages and open spaces;

6.2.3 The site is a small part of the AAI designation and is not highly visible from wider views offering little contribution to the overall townscape in visual terms. The introduction of the demountable will not detract from the openness of the wider designation given its modest scale and positioning adjacent to existing buildings.

The proposal has no unacceptable impact in the context of criterion a).

- b) the relationship of the area of amenity importance to adjacent or linked areas of green infrastructure in terms of its contribution to the character of the locality and / or its ability to relieve the monotony of the built form;

6.2.4 The site is a concrete playground and, therefore, visually does not offer a significant contribution to the character of the area aside from its openness in an otherwise built up area. The proposed development, as discussed above, is minor in scale and footprint and does not reduce the openness of the playground to an extent that could be considered harmful.

The proposal has no unacceptable impact in the context of criterion b).

c) the role of the area as a venue for formal and informal sport, general recreation and as community space, expressed in terms of actual usage and facilities available, as well as its relationship to general open space requirements as set out in policy CRF2;

6.2.5 The AAI at the site serves the school only and is not available for public access. The demountable will take up a small area of the playground with ample play space remaining to serve the school. In planning terms, the overall area can still serve its function as a playground. The proposal has no unacceptable impact in the context of criterion c).

d) the cultural amenity of the area, including places and features of archaeological, historic, geological and landscape importance; and e) the nature conservation interest of the area, through damage to, or the loss of, important habitats or natural features (policy NE1 applies)

6.2.6 Given the nature of the site, a concrete playground, it has limited features in terms of landscape, geological and biodiversity which could be affected. The site is not in an area of archaeological sensitivity and, therefore, harm to potential resource is unlikely. The proposal has no unacceptable impact in the context of criterion d) or e).

6.2.7 In conclusion, the loss of 165m<sup>2</sup> of the playground would not have an unacceptable impact on overall AAI designation in accordance with the requirements of Policy DES2. The proposal is acceptable in this regard.

### 6.3 Access / Highway Safety

6.3.1 The proposed demountable will provide two additional classrooms which can accommodate a maximum of 60 pupils and 2no. staff members. The proposals do not include any additional parking provision or drop-off facilities.

6.3.2 The Highways Authority has objected to the application since it considers the site has an existing lack of on-site parking provision to accommodate staff, ancillary staff and visitor parking and parental drop off and pick up. It is advised that the increase in traffic generated by the proposed development will also increase the demand on the existing substandard on-site infrastructure and school transport services. There will also be additional pressure on the on-street parking stress on the adjacent highways which will increase risks to road users and pedestrians during school opening and closing times.

6.3.3 The Council's Transport Unit, that provides school transport for pupils, has also expressed concern regarding the possible increase in traffic at the site and implications on highway safety.

6.3.4 Following the concerns raised by the Highway Authority and the Transport Unit the Education Department has provided further information to alleviate the concerns raised. In summary the Education Department confirmed the following:

- The demountable building is a temporary measure whilst the 21st Century Schools Programme is progressed and it is predicted that the school will have moved to a new site by 2023;
- It is unlikely the full capacity of the demountable building will be realised since the current trends of growth for the school over the last 5 years is 5% increase in pupils each year.
- The increase in pupils over the next 5 years is considered likely to be reduced based on the current birth rates recorded and on the prediction that a new Welsh Medium School is due to be opened in the north of the County for which funding has already been secured. A new Welsh Medium School in the north of the county will reduce the intake at Ysgol Y Fenni. Based on these predictions, the increase over the next 5 years is a total of 40 pupils (approximately 3% increase per year). The likely capacity of the school in 5 years' time would be 327no. pupils.
- Existing patterns of pupils travelling to and from school confirm that currently 42% of pupils travel to Ysgol Y Fenni Gymraeg via the school via bus

6.3.5 In planning terms, applications should be considered based on the maximum capacity created at the school by the development, which is 60no. pupils and 2no. staff members. In this case, given additional information provided by the Education Department, it is reasonable to assess all the evidence supplied and consider what the realistic implications of the development is likely to be in this context. The evidence is discussed in more detail below.

- Likely decanting of the site by 2023

6.3.6 It is predicted the school will decant to a new site by 2023. There are no formal plans for relocating the school and no planning application is currently under consideration. Funding has, however, been secured and it is understood plans for the new school are underway.

- Level of Pupil Intake

6.3.7 Evidence provided by the Education Department shows that pupil intake trends is approximately 5% each year which equates to around additional 12 pupils per year. The Education Department, based on birth records and funding secured towards another Welsh Medium School, indicate the intake will reduce to approximately 3% which is around 8 pupils per year. Given these figures inform the future planning of the Education Department it is considered reasonable to assume they are accurate and reflect the likely growth at Ysgol Y Fenni year-on-year. It is considered reasonable to consider this in this application.

- Incremental Growth of Pupil Intake

6.3.8 The Education Department has indicated the intake would happen gradually year-on-year. It is reasonable and realistic to assume this would be the case since school intake typically happens on a yearly basis and that the school would be enlarged in anticipation of the future growth

- Existing travel patterns of pupils.

6.3.9 The Education Department has provided information relating to the existing travel patterns of pupils travelling to and from school which confirmed that currently 42% of pupils travel to Ysgol Y Fenni Gymraeg via the school bus. They have also confirmed that the current bus services have capacity to accommodate 14no. additional pupils. Given the current pattern of travel, it is likely that approximately 42% of new pupils will use the school transport which amounts to 25no. pupils who would use the transport service.

6.3.10 The Education Department has confirmed that currently the ten vehicles are used for school transport and comprise a mix of 4 seaters (2no.), 8 seaters (4no.), 12 seaters (1no.), 16-seater (1no.) and a 33-seater (1no.). It has been suggested that the currently used smaller vehicles could change to larger vehicles to enable additional pupils to use the service without an increase in additional traffic i.e. additional 8 and 16 seaters. The Education Department has advised that the re-organisation of transport is possible. Based on this evidence and the assurance from the Education Department, it can reasonably be concluded that 42% of the additional pupils would have a neutral impact on the highways and be accommodated in vehicles already travelling to and from the school.

6.3.11 The maximum of 35no. pupils will likely make their way to school via a range of transport modes including private car, taxi or walking. This results in a maximum of 24% increase in pupils travelling to school themselves (i.e. not using school transport service). It is reasonable to assume that some of the pupils will walk to school since the site is excellently located for local pedestrian links. The 24% increase, therefore, is the maximum increase that would occur as a result of the development.

6.3.12 Based on the evidence provided, it is not considered reasonable to assess the impact on the highway in terms of the worst-case scenario in isolation of the information provided from the Education Department which indicates that the worst-case scenario is unlikely to be realised at the current school site. The relevant evidence provided has been fully assessed and it is reasonable to conclude that the increase in pupils will be a small number per year and gradually over several years. It is also reasonable to assume that 42% of the increase will be absorbed within the existing school transport without an increase in traffic levels. There would, therefore, not be a sudden increase which would result in a significant increase in traffic over a short period of time

which is unpredictable and, thus, unmanageable. Moreover, it is likely that prior to the school capacity being reached the current school will decant to a new site.

6.3.13 Given the level of traffic increase and the period over which it would be realised, it is considered possible that a carefully devised traffic management plan would be effective in managing traffic to and from the site to ensure there is no adverse impact on highway safety in relation to pupils and parents associated with the school and other users of the local highway network. Discussions with the Education Department have confirmed they are willing to provide a management plan to minimise the impact of the increased capacity at the school in the context of highway safety and that this is to be agreed with the Local Planning Authority in consultation with the Highway Authority.

6.3.14 In terms of parking, the proposals do not include any additional parking. When at capacity the additional classrooms would require a maximum of two additional members of staff, generating a need for two further spaces. The Education Department has advised that it is not possible to provide additional parking spaces. Given the need for staff would not be instant and would be dependent on the intake of pupils together with the minimal level of staff the development would generate, it would not be reasonable to refuse the application based on the lack of parking provision. It is, however, recommended that measures to encourage car sharing amongst staff should be a requirement of the Traffic Management Plan.

6.3.15 On balance, based on the school intake trends the increased capacity will be on a small scale each year and the maximum capacity would not be realised for several years. The increase in traffic could, therefore, be successfully managed via a Traffic Management Plan which can be agreed with the Local Planning Authority via a planning condition. Additionally, 42% of pupils can likely be accommodated on the existing transport service further reducing the impact of the development.

6.3.16 It is concluded the proposals, subject to a Traffic Management Plan, would not have an adverse impact on highway safety and accords with Policy MV1.

#### 6.4 Impact on Amenity/ Promoting Healthier Places

6.4.1 The proposed demountable is single storey and at least 23m from the nearest property, which is located at Gwent Place to the north of the site.

6.4.2 Given the ample separation distance, the proposed demountable would not result in an adverse impact on neighbouring residential amenity and the development accords with Policy EP1.

#### 6.5 Good Design/Placemaking

6.5.1 The demountable is designed to match the existing demountable buildings on site in terms of form and appearance. The materials palette includes grey cladding, white uPVC windows and a dark roof covering. The design is considered acceptable given its context within the school grounds and positioned in proximity to similar buildings.

6.5.2 The demountable building is located within the school grounds and, therefore, concealed from public views along St. David's Road by existing buildings on site. Views of the demountable will be possible from the properties at Gwent Place to the north and Dan-y-Deri to the west, but it will be read in conjunction with the existing demountable buildings. Furthermore, the demountable is approximately 23m from the nearest property at Gwent Place and over 60m from the closest property at Dan-y- Deri. The proposal will have an acceptable visual impact and accord with Policy DES1.

#### 6.6 Biodiversity

6.61 Due to the application site being a concrete playground, it has limited ecological features and the proposed development is unlikely to have an adverse impact on biodiversity features in accordance with Policy NE1.

## 6.7 Response to the Representations of Third Parties and/or the Community Council

6.7.1 Responses have been received from a local resident and Llantilio Pertholey Community Council which raised the following matters:

- Unacceptable increase in traffic which is dangerous/ a car pull-in area should be provided; and
- Loss of amenity to neighbours (resulting from traffic increase).

6.7.2 These will be addressed in turn below.

- Unacceptable increase in traffic which is dangerous/ car pull-in area should be provided

6.7.3 It is not possible within existing school grounds to provide a pull-in area. The impact of the development in terms of highway safety has been fully considered. As discussed above, based on the school intake trends the increased capacity will be on a small scale each year and the maximum capacity would not be realised for several years. The increase in traffic could, therefore, be managed via a Traffic Management Plan which can be agreed with the Local Planning Authority via a planning condition. This would be a limit the impact of the development and ensure there is no adverse impact on highway safety. Furthermore, 42% of pupils can likely be accommodated on the existing transport service without an increase in buses accessing the site.

- Loss of amenity to neighbours (resulting from traffic increase)

6.7.4 It is acknowledged that the traffic generated by the start and finish times of schools can be disruptive for residents. This disruption is, however, limited to around 9am in the morning and 3pm in the afternoon and only occurs during term time. The proposed development is not considered to result in a substantial increase in traffic which would result in a loss of amenity to neighbours and which would be significantly more harmful than the existing situation.

## 6.8 Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

6.8.1 The duty to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales has been considered, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, under section 3 of the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (the WBFG Act). In reaching this recommendation, the ways of working set out at section 5 of the WBFG Act have been taken into account and it is considered that this recommendation is in accordance with the sustainable development principle through its contribution towards one or more of the Welsh Ministers' well-being objectives set out in section 8 of the WBFG Act.

## 6.9 Conclusion

6.9.1 The proposal for a new demountable building at Ysgol Y Fenni has been fully considered and it is concluded the development would not result in an unacceptable loss of an Area of Amenity Importance in accordance with Policy DES2. The increase in traffic as a result of the increased capacity of the school can be managed to an acceptable level in accordance with Policy MV1. The development also accords with all other Local Development Plan policies including policies DES1, EP1 and NE1.

## **7.0 RECOMMENDATION: APPROVE**

### **Conditions:**

- 1 This development shall be begun within 5 years from the date of this permission.

REASON: To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

2 The development shall be carried out in accordance with the list of approved plans set out in the table below.

REASON: To ensure the development is carried out in accordance with the approved drawings, for the avoidance of doubt.

3 No development hereby permitted be commenced until a traffic management plan setting out the agreed arrangements for managing student drop off/collection procedures and location, at the start/end of academic year, has been prepared, submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The measures shall thereafter be implemented in accordance with the approved traffic management plan for the lifetime of the development. The Traffic Management should include details of:

1. Traffic management measures during school start times and finish times;
2. Management of staff parking;
3. Means by which a reduction in the number of movements and parking on nearby streets can be achieved (including measures taken to ensure satisfactory access and movement for existing occupiers of neighbouring properties during construction) including:
  - a. Programming of School Transport Services;
  - b. Measures to reduce staff parking where possible;

REASON: To ensure the safe operation of the public highway at the start/end of academic year in accordance with LDP Policy MV1.