

Devonshire Place, Port Talbot

Design & Access Statement



This document has been
prepared on the behalf of:

Linc Cymru

387 Newport Road
Cardiff
CF24 1GG

0800 072 0966
linc-cymru.co.uk



This Document has been
prepared by:

Roberts Limbrick

Gloucester office:
The Carriage Building
Bruton Way
Gloucester
GL1 1DG

Newport office:
The Estates Office
26 Gold Tops
Newport
NP20 4PG

03333 405 500
mail@robertslimbrick.com
robertslimbrick.com



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1 Introduction

Project Background

Roberts Limbrick have been appointed by Linc Cymru to prepare a design proposal for a residential scheme on the site of the former Dyffryn Lower School in Port Talbot.

It is a square site, with an extended corner, the overall area is 0.74ha/1.82 acre.

The site is currently occupied by several vacant school buildings, consisting of a number of older stone 1-2 storey buildings and some more recent 2 storey brick buildings with flat roofs.

The approach to the development of this site has been to carry out varied analysis to determine the best outcome for the site and set up design strategies that will guide the site and detailed design of the project.

This document initially highlights the policy that has been used to inform this proposal and how this has guided the approach to the development. It then sets out the project brief and vision, the intrinsic ideals of the project which inform the design decisions at the various stages of the design as it progresses.

Part two of the document brings together the different analysis that has been undertaken and highlights how the findings of this analysis have been implemented.

Part three provides information on the design of the proposal, setting out the principles that have informed the design development and providing detail on how the architecture and landscaping will ground the project within its setting and provide an enjoyable home for future residents.



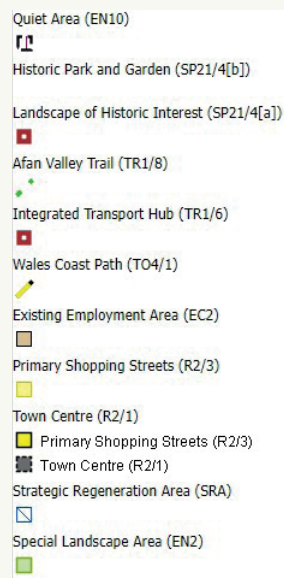
Policy Context

Policy documents referred to in the development of the proposal include:

- Site & Context Analysis Guide: Capturing the value of a site (March 2016)
- Practice Guidance: Planning for Sustainable Buildings (July 2014)
- Planning Policy Wales
- Technical Advice Note (TAN) 12: Design
- Neath Port Talbot Local Development Plan (2011-2026)
- Summary of Local Housing Market for Neath Port Talbot 2019 (2020)
- Design Supplementary

Planning Guidance (July 2017)

- Secured by Design Homes 2019 (March 2019)



Local Development Plan (LDP) Proposals Map



The site is in a well-established area of Port Talbot, with predominantly Victorian terraced housing on adjacent streets.

It is in close proximity to the Strategic Regeneration Area (SRA) 2 - Habourside, which will provide residential, leisure and retail development, making it a prime location to support this regeneration programme through the provision of additional housing.

As well as benefitting from the opportunities SRA 2 will bring to the area, the site is well located, in proximity to

the town centre, transport hub, employment areas and various amenities to make it an attractive location for future residents.

As the proposal is small (>50 units) it will not overwhelm existing services such as schools and medical practices.

The site has a low flood risk of 1 in 1000. The existing school development has limited open space, with several buildings and hard landscaping between. Developing the site provides an opportunity to enhance the landscaping, ecology and drainage of

the site, reducing the risk of flooding and improving the environment.

As part of the Vibrant and Viable Places (2013) framework, the Welsh Government has set out an agenda to achieve prosperous, learning and healthier communities. The proposal will contribute to this agenda through the provision of good quality, affordable housing in a setting that aids community cohesion and encourages active travel choices.

One of the Strategic Goals within the LDP is to physically

regenerate the town, removing vacant buildings and providing quality new housing will help with this ambition, as well as meeting Strategic Goal 5, making Port Talbot an attractive place to live, work and invest.

The site is currently occupied by unused school buildings and represents an opportunity to create an infill development that will help integrate and connect with the surrounding established urban fabric and provide high quality but affordable accommodation.

Vision & Brief

The vision for the site is to create a high quality, sustainable development which compliments the surrounding area whilst establishing its own identity. The housing will provide efficient, much-needed housing for residents of this area and offer a fulfilling living environment with well thought out landscaping.

The development will have excellent connections to the wider area through local and national road and rail links, easy access to public transport and pedestrian/cycle links to key local destinations.



A development which helps the local area prosper through job creation during construction and homes provided near key employment areas



Pedestrian, cycle and road connections that link to the local public transport and active travel routes



Maximise energy efficiency and minimise carbon footprint to create a sustainable, robust and responsible development



A high quality development providing a diversity of accommodation and enjoyable public open space



Retain existing landscape features and improve biodiversity through enhanced green spaces



Integrate the development into the local context by meeting the needs of the community and responding to the architectural vernacular of the area

2 Analysis

Settlement Analysis

The proposed site is located to the South-East of the town centre, close to Port Talbot Parkway train station. The wider context of the area has been explored to see how this proposal can help contribute to the enhancement and sustainability of Port Talbot:

- More people travel out of the County Borough to access work than travel inwards, therefore housing with good transport links to other areas will be desirable to residents.
- The area has a range of historical, archaeological

and architectural assets, many relating to the industrial history of the town, these add to the local distinctiveness. The new proposal will be mindful of how it relates to its setting and contribute to the quality of the urban setting it inhabits.

- As well as connecting to the history of the area, the proposal will be future-proof. This will be ensured through the creation of energy efficient and low maintenance homes that will help ensure the cost of living remains affordable

for residents now and in the future.

- The majority of employment is in the manufacturing and public sectors, providing houses with space for home working can help encourage a diversity of work, as well as providing space for children and adults to study at home.
- Neath Port Talbot is facing an aging population, the provision of homes for life, with accessibility built in will help meet this demand as it grows.

- The size of households in Neath Port Talbot is reducing, providing a mix of accommodation, including smaller one bedroom apartments will provide for this.

The proposal is aligned to the objectives set out in the LDP and although a small development, responds to several of the key issues identified in the LDP, particularly KI5, KI6, KI8 & KI14.



Context Analysis

The area is urban residential in nature, with terraced housing on surrounding streets. The site is well located to a range of amenities that are accessible by foot, bike or public transport.

This context makes the site suitable for residential development as it will form a cohesive part of the fabric and provide accommodation that allows people to travel to work, school and other key facilities without the use of private transport.

The surrounding terraced streets provide a relatively

high density of dwellings. For example the urban block formed by George Street, Talcennau Road, Gower Street and Abbey Road provides 49 dwellings per hectare (dph).

This, and the support within the LDP for higher density development (40+ dph) in sustainable locations, indicate that the site can support a higher density development.

The site has been assessed in line with Neath Port Talbot's SPG: Parking Standards Sustainability Criteria. Given it's proximity to local facilities and public transport, it is viable

for the site to have reduced parking levels.

Creating a low car, high density development will help create a vibrant and active infill urban block.



Local housing density

Sustainability		
Sustainability Criteria	Maximum Walking Distance	Single Sustainability Points
Local Facilities		
Foodstore	<800m	
Post office	<800m	
Medical practice	-	
Primary/Secondary school	<200m	
Access to 2+		2
Public Transport		
Bus stop/railway station	<300m	3
Cycle Route		
Segregated cycle route linked to local facilities and employment areas	<200m	1
Frequency of Public Transport		
Bus/train 7am-	<20 minutes	2
Total		8
Parking Reduction = 1 space per dwelling		

Sustainability Criteria

Whilst there is a good range of local amenities available for residents in this area, there is limited public open space within walking distance.

The nearest open space is Talbot Memorial Park, a 10 minute walk from Devonshire Place. This provides a good range of facilities, with play equipment, sports fields and courts.

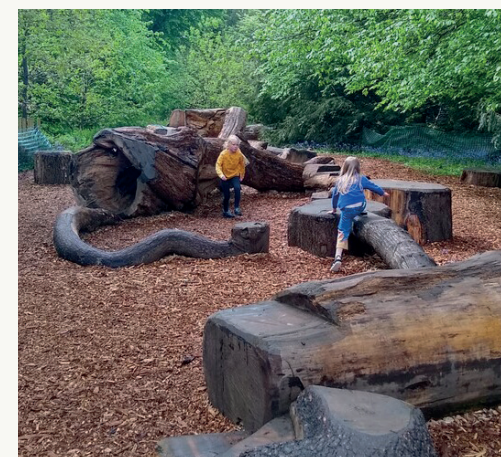
Therefore there is no need to duplicate the provision of facilities, but an opportunity to provide a more informal and natural open space.

The site already has several substantial and mature trees, that will frame a new open green space, with generous footways, wildflower planting and seating utilising the large timber benches already on site. This will be overlooked by residents of the scheme, providing passive surveillance.

This public open space will serve the residents of the proposed development, and the wider area, it's proximity to Central Infants School and Central Junior School, and the footways through the site will encourage its regular use.



Talbot Memorial Park



Log trail within a wooded park



Planting to aid drainage and biodiversity



Wide footway through an urban park

Transport & Connectivity

In addition to local facilities the site is connected to wider transport networks, with bus stops and Port Talbot train station a 5 minute walk away. The bus links provide easy access to local attractions such as Aberavon beach and the countryside around Goytre.

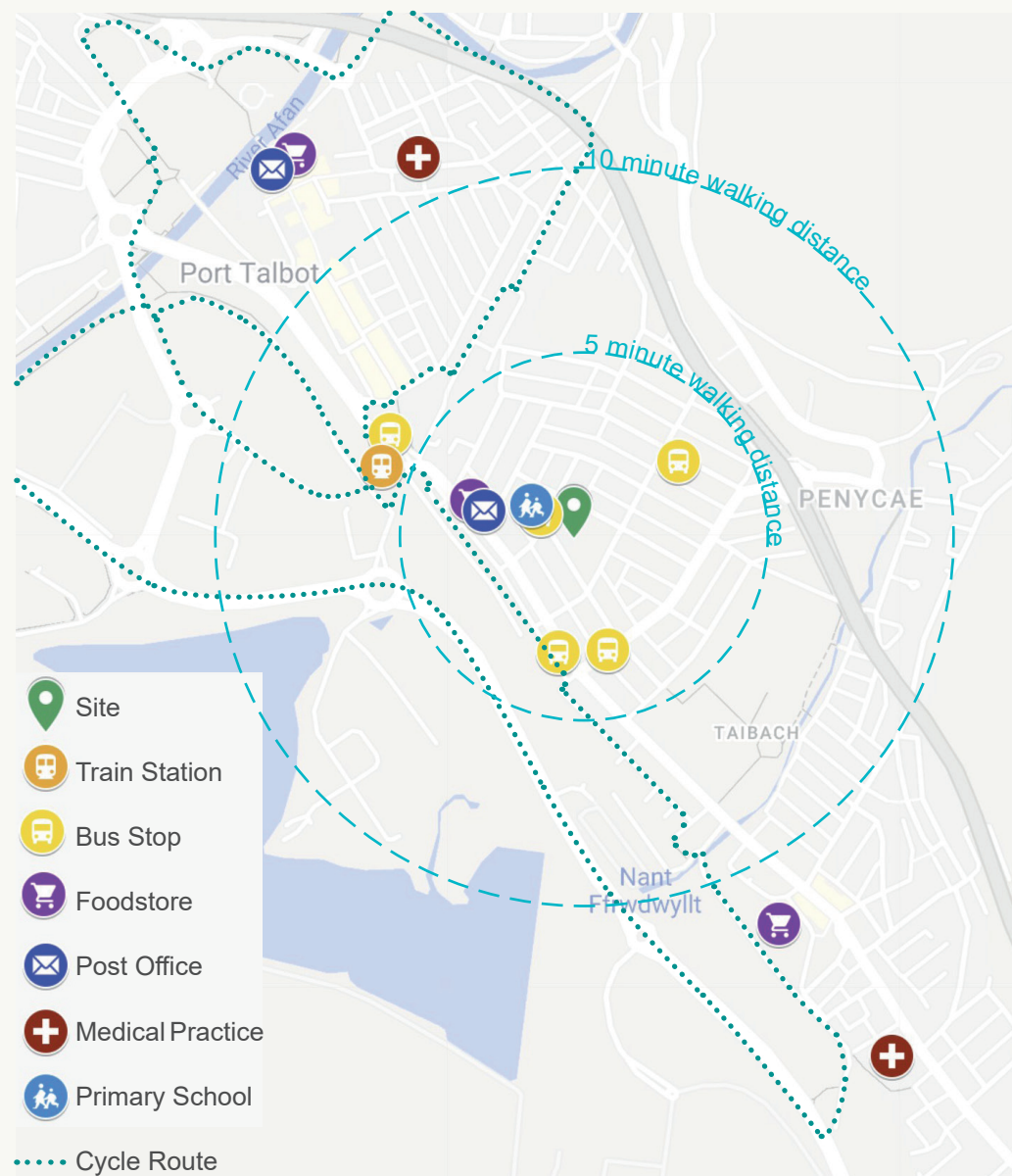
Port Talbot train station provides regular and direct services to Swansea (15mins), Cardiff (35mins), Manchester (2hrs) and London (2hr30mins), allowing people to access larger towns and cities with the jobs and amenities they offer.

Additionally the site is served

by generous footways along the surrounding streets and a cycle network that connects Port Talbot to Swansea and Kidwelly to the West, to Afan Forest to the North and as far as London to the East, along the National Cycle Network's Route 4.

The site is further served by a good road network, with the M4 less than 0.5miles from the site.

The amenities and connectedness of the site make it a prime location for a range of residential accommodation, allowing people to easily access job and facilities.



The strategic approach to the site is to prioritise pedestrians and encourage active travel. This has been implemented using the following strategies:

1. Locate site access and through paths in key locations that align with the desire lines of residents to encourage everyday use.
2. Provide wide paths with passive surveillance from adjacent dwellings, clear site lines, low landscaping and good lighting, to create safe access routes.
3. Use durable, attractive materials and integrated, manageable landscaping, to establish pleasant places that people enjoy using.

As well as encouraging active travel and providing easy access to public transport, this strategy helps integrate the site

into the urban fabric, creating a level of permeability through it that has not been available as it's use as a school.

Vehicular use and access is also well considered, providing a clear and simple road layout with good visibility. Parking spaces will be overlooked and aligned with properties to give a clear sense of ownership. Shared spaces are used to encourage low speeds and accommodate a range of users.

Analysis of the street hierarchy indicates providing routes through the site on a North-South and East-West axis will provide access to key destinations and provide permeability through the site creating smaller urban blocks more in line with those of the surrounding streets.



Safe and pleasant pedestrian routes, with passive surveillance and planting

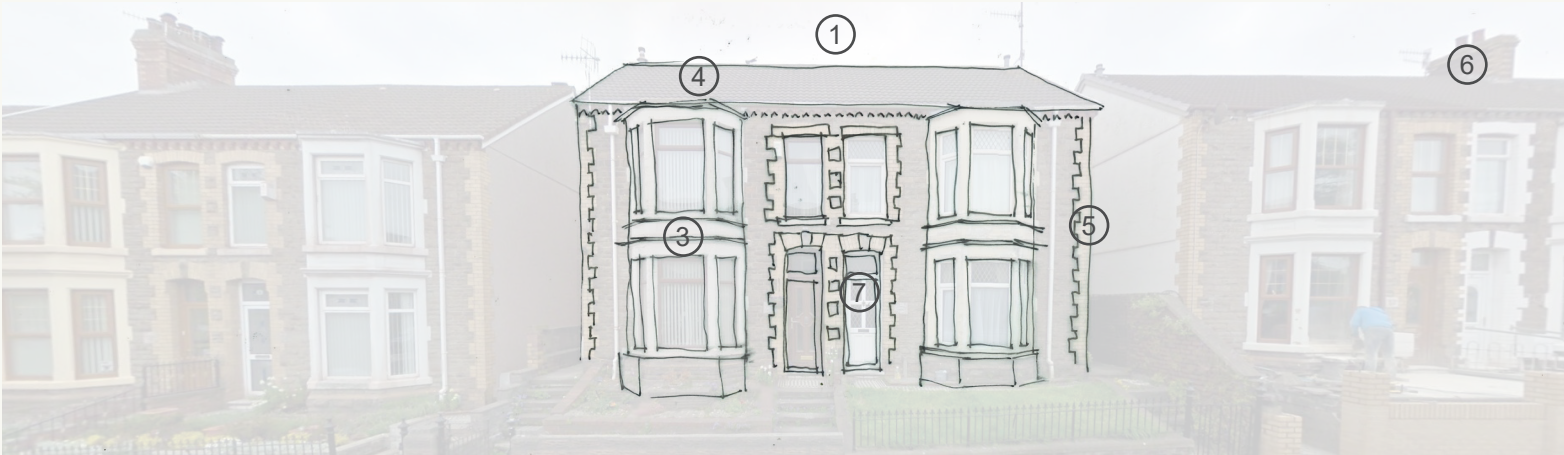


Shared spaces that prioritise pedestrians and cyclists

History & Character



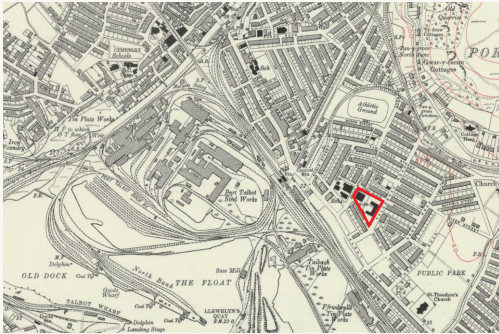
Talcennau Road



York Place



1897



1914



1947

The site formed part of the Westward development of Port Talbot in the 1900s. The local architecture is Victorian and Edwardian in style, with several distinguishing features defining the local vernacular:

Street formation

- Roads are laid out in a grid format with some angled roads to accommodate changes in direction.
- Generous width road with modest front gardens, on-street parking and occasional street trees.
- Narrow rear access roads, often lined with garages, this is also where bins are collected from.

Building form

- Two-storey houses set out

either as handed pairs (1), or rows of terraced replicating units, with a handed end unit (2).

- Splayed bay windows at ground and first floor, most often with a flat roof (3).
- Roofs tend to pitch from front to rear, with some gabled roofs over bay windows (4).

Architectural Details

- A material palette of brick and stone, with render / painted brick elements.
- Slate and ridged cement roof tiles.
- Brick quoins to building corners and around doors/windows, often buff brick or painted (5).
- Red brick chimneys (6).
- Recessed entrances with tall openings, with a fanlight above the door (7).

There are several key strategies that have been employed to integrate the scheme into its setting:

- A layout that establishes street hierarchy and corresponds to the existing street frontages.
- Low-rise development of two-storey houses with some three-storey apartments set back into the site.
- Semi-detached and short rows of terraced houses, either handed or replicating units.
- Modern interpretation of key architectural details, such as bay windows and framing details.
- Shared material palette of stone, brick and render.
- Retention of materials where possible



George Street - Front



George Street - Rear

Site Analysis

The site is currently occupied by several school buildings, with tarmac between and a landscaped buffer of mature trees and hedgerow to the Southern boundary.

The surrounding terraced streets are predominantly residential in use, with the Central Junior School on the opposite side of Broad Street from the site.

Stone from the existing school buildings will be reused, retaining some of the site's heritage and strengthening the development's sense of place.

Strengths

- Relatively level site
- Visual prominence at the confluence of several roads
- Good accessibility to key amenities and transport links
- Pedestrian access from all four bounding roads
- Vehicle access from Devonshire Place
- Views to surrounding countryside and hills
- Existing mature trees and landscaping along Southern boundary
- Shielded from prevailing wind by neighbouring houses

Weaknesses

- Limited landscaping and biodiversity
- Existing buildings not suitable for conversion to residential use due to arrangement creating overlooking/shadowing and inability to create family homes

Opportunities

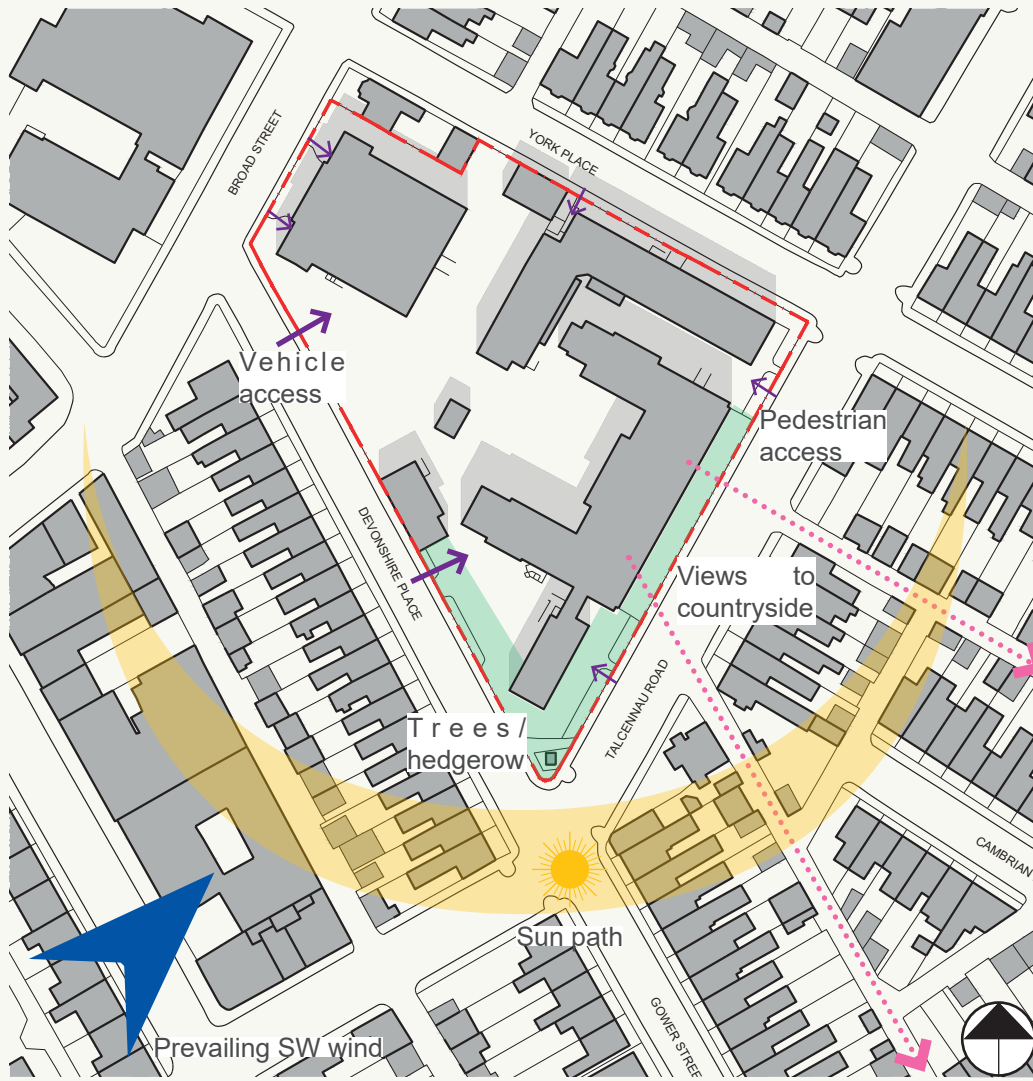
- Provide mix of housing for families and individuals
- Retain some built elements and/or materials and strengthen sense of place
- Increase biodiversity and landscaped areas
- Provide South facing public

open space anchored around existing mature trees

- Reduce surface water and improve drainage
- Provide pedestrian/cycle routes that align with desire lines to nearby destinations

Threats

- Existing substation needs to be retained and integrated into design
- Sensitive design approach needed to respect heritage of site



Site analysis



Existing school buildings - Exterior



Existing school buildings - Interior



Building forming part of boundary wall



Stone walls and railings to boundary



Mature trees to Southern boundary



Substation and access

3 Design

Site Strategy

The site strategy is informed by the analysis undertaken, therefore responding to the local context and site specific conditions:

1. Vehicle access is from York Place, creating minimal disruption to existing traffic.
2. The internal road terminates at the retained building, connecting the site to its history and providing a key focal point
3. Pedestrian access is provided from all four bounding roads, giving permeability to the site
4. Routes through the site align with desire lines and provide clear visibility and legibility
5. Internal road hierarchy is in line with the context, with a wider central road and smaller rear access roads/paths, this also delineates the public and private realms.
6. Houses along the perimeter of the site front onto the existing roads, replicating and responding to the terraced streetscape conditions of the area.
7. Within the site houses front onto the internal road, with a generous frontage for planting, parking and a footpath.
8. A substantial south-facing area provides a bright and sunny public open space (POS) for the locality, as well as accommodating drainage features and ecological habitats
9. Existing mature trees are retained, providing shade to the POS in summer and creating a focal point for the Southern corner of the site.
10. Apartments front onto the public open space providing a pleasant outlook and passive surveillance, this setback within the site also reduces their sense of scale
11. Buildings are used to turn corners creating a focal point and aiding street legibility



Site strategy

Proposed Site Layout

The site layout responds to its site and provides a mix of high quality accommodation.

Houses are designed to connect to the local context and meets the needs of residents now and in the future.

There is sufficient, well located parking for both residents and visitors. Houses are provided with well sized gardens and apartments with balconies.

The public realm has high quality landscaping, uses robust materials and aids legibility, making it a valuable contribution to the area.





Site Character

The site character has been developed through an understanding of the heritage of the site and the local vernacular balanced with the drive to provide high quality, comfortable and modern homes.

The viability of retaining the existing buildings has been assessed and is not feasible for the larger school buildings, due to their location within the site and internal layout. However, the building along Devonshire Place will be retained and converted into residential accommodation.

This is a key building to retain as it forms part of the boundary wall, a defining aspect of the site, and will provide the focal point upon entry to the site.

Maintaining this building will immediately anchor the development in its setting and link it to its heritage, giving the development a strong sense of place.

The existing stone boundary wall is a key characteristic of the site that defines its identity. Therefore it will be retained, either in its current location, or where necessary relocated to accommodate additional

landscaping and entrance paths. Retaining this element of the site will ensure that its identity is maintained.

Whilst retaining the existing buildings is not feasible, the viability of reusing some of the stone will be examined thoroughly. This will embed the new dwellings in their setting.

In addition to any reclaimed stone, the houses will use brick and render for the façades with clay and slate tiles. This corresponds with the materiality of the surrounding houses.

The materials help integrate the development into its setting, however the scheme also delivers contemporary living. This is achieved through a modern interpretation of some of the traditional features, such as bay windows and framed openings.

Using simple framing around openings, full height glazing elements, square bays and crisp clean detailing the proposal represents a modern development of the local vernacular, integrating into the context, whilst being innovative and contemporary.

Indicative view of site entrance



Landscape & Ecology

The ambition for the external spaces of the Devonshire Place Development is to create a welcoming and accessible environment that supports the SUD's proposal and mitigation of trees felled, offering biodiversity improvements as possible. The proposed landscape design addresses the following main points:

Access

Pedestrian connections to the main building entrances and definition of a pedestrian shortcut along the Southern side of the development. Allowance for cycle parking and bin storage as shown on the plan.

Soft Landscaping

Northern-West corner adjacent to the perimeter, planting to enhance biodiversity composed of new trees and native shrub mix planting to mitigate the loss of fallen trees.

New tree planting along the access roads and scattered planting of native shrubs will also support ecological value creation. The Back gardens will be planted with rich species amenity grass and, where possible, wildflower meadow (on top of the infiltration tank).

SUDs

The proposed SUDs strategy's landscape design will focus on the rain garden strips. These

infiltration areas will be planted with a wet meadow species ground cover and appropriate tree species (like *Betula pubescens*) as indicated on the plan (planting plan to be developed in the next stage). Wildflower meadow will be planted on top of the infiltration tank.

Amenity - Play & Social Space

Informal soft and formal hard play areas to accommodate play opportunities and a few adjacent sitting elements are provided on the Southern corner. The vision is to create a natural play area adjacent to existing trees and the proposed footpath. The planted areas

will be specified to offer the natural world's aliveness and to enhance biodiversity by low-maintenance native species.

New Substation

A new substation will be installed in the gap between existing trees. The substation is set 10m away from any existing building and fenced with a palisade type. The existing wall will be taken down as necessary to provide access from Devonshire Place. The existing substation is kept.



Dwelling Design

In keeping with the surrounding context the houses will be two-storey, with a mix of 2 bedroom 4 person and 3 bedroom 5 person homes. To provide a greater diversity of accommodation 2 bedroom 3 person walk-up apartments and 1 bedroom 2 person apartment blocks have also been integrated. The two apartment blocks are the only three-storey element and these are set within the site so as to not overshadow neighbouring properties or alter the scale of the area.

The provision of housing creates a high density proposal

whilst retaining large areas of landscaping, appropriate parking levels and a strong sense of place.

Overall the site will provide 43 units with the following mix:

- 18no. 1B2P
- 6no. 2B3P
- 8no. 2B4P
- 11no.3B5P

Providing a mix of accommodation responds to the needs of the local market and will allow for a diverse community to flourish and move within the local area as required.

Several key design considerations have been implemented in the design of the dwellings:

- Well proportioned windows to provide ample natural light and ventilation
- Dual or triple-aspect dwellings to provide light throughout the day and aid ventilation
- Orientating of buildings and use of planting to minimise overheating
- Thermally efficient building envelope to reduce heating demand
- Use of MMC to minimise the carbon footprint of construction

- Use of technology such as MVHR, GSHP/ASHP and PV panels to reduce energy consumption
- Compliance with WDQR and Lifetime Homes standards to ensure adaptability to changing user needs

These have been used to improve the energy efficiency of the homes, reducing the demand for heating and electricity, as well as ensuring user friendly and future proof accommodation

Indicative view of three bedroom house



Summary

The proposed development in Port Talbot will infill a key part of the urban fabric of the local area, providing connection through the site to nearby streets and corresponding to the scale and arrangement of surrounding terraced houses.

This is a prime opportunity to create a new, high quality and context specific development consisting of 43 homes with a mix of 1,2 & 3 bedrooms that meets local needs.

All aspects of the proposed development have been given careful consideration following comprehensive analysis and assessment of the site's constraints and opportunities as well as the wider context.

The design and development layout responds directly to the site conditions, local context and architectural vernacular. The built aspects are enhanced by a well considered landscape and drainage strategy, which will enhance the ecological value of the site and create a safe and enjoyable public realm.

The materials and architectural language reflect the nature of the surrounding context, using reclaimed materials where possible. This strategy helps embed the scheme within the local context and represents a modern evolution of the local vernacular.

The scheme provides an attractive and high-quality development that is sympathetic to its local context and appropriate to the area delivering sustainable and robust homes.



Roberts Limbrick

Gloucester office:
The Carriage Building
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Gloucester
GL1 1DG

Newport office:
The Estates Office
26 Gold Tops
Newport
NP20 4PG

03333 405 500
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robertslimbrick.com

