

SITE AND CONTEXT ANALYSIS

Site Location and Context

The village of Pontneddfechan is situated across the Neath Port Talbot and Powys county boundaries, at the edge of the Brecon Beacons National Park. It is approximately 1km northeast of Glynneath at the confluence of the rivers Neath and Mellte, and approximately 0.2km north of the A465 Heads of the Valleys Road. The name Pontneddfechan or 'Pontneathvaughan' means 'bridge over the Little Neath', alluding the origins of the settlement, which now has a local population of approximately 350.

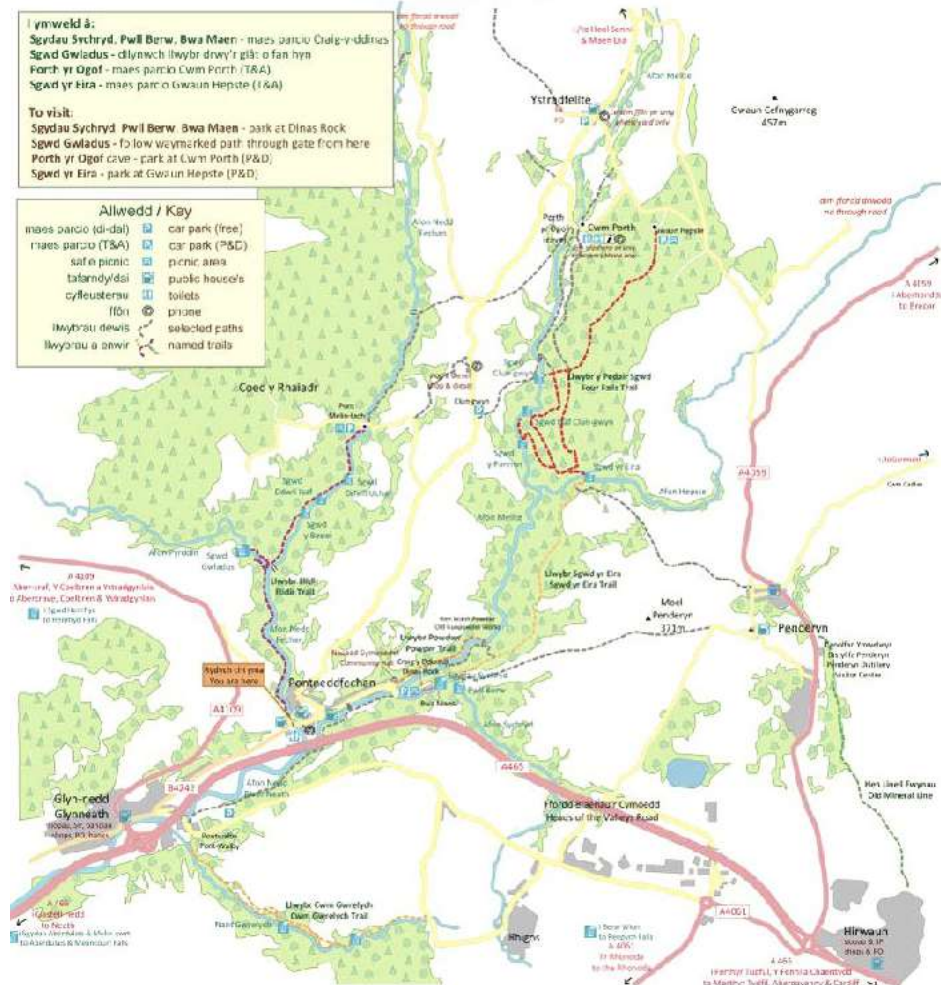
Pontneddfechan provides a gateway for visitors to Wales' *Waterfall Country* and a very popular access point to the various Waterfalls Trails. 'Waterfall Country' has a rich diversity of significant waterfalls, the greatest concentration in the UK. The wider area is characterised by dramatic wooded gorges carved out of a limestone Karst landscape by numerous cascading watercourses including the rivers Mellte, Hepste, Pyrddin, Nedd Fechan and Sychryd that all converge on the river Neath.

The immediate context is rural with undulating open pasture land in the valley basin on the approach to the village. Landscape views are bounded by dense deciduous woodland that gives a unifying sheltered scenic quality to the area that is also a dynamic backdrop with colours rotating through lush greens to autumnal hues and more subdued winter tones.

The valley was historically important as a communications corridor for roads, tram-roads, railways and canals supporting extractive industry that was a driver for development in the region. Most evidence of this activity is now hidden within the dense ancient woodland which is identified as being an important and diverse natural habitat.

Croeso i Fro'r Sgydau Welcome to Waterfall Country

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Description of the Site - Topography and Boundaries

The proposed development area in Lower Pontneddfechan comprises:

- A portion of Pontneathvaughan Road as it enters the village from the west, including adjacent narrow pavements between the Sgwd Gwladys bistro and The Angel public house;
- an area of public realm at the heart of the old village, north of Pontneathvaughan Road and to the west of the river Neath. This area includes paved parking associated with the Sgwd Gwladys bistro, paved pedestrian areas and a small public conveniences building;
- A small portion of the land and buildings occupied by Sgwd Gwladys, which is NPTCBC owned but leased for private enterprise;
- Privately owned agricultural land, including agricultural buildings and stables to the south of Pontneathvaughan Road, and paddock land extending to the south of the village.

The topography is broadly level, albeit with steep sides to the River Neath gorge at the centre of the village. Levels slope generally down towards the south, with grazing land in the vicinity of the A465 trunk road being less visually prominent than fields that run adjacent to Pontneathvaughan Road on the approach to the village.

Two bridges cross the Neath river. An original historic bridge is on High Street nearer the north end of the proposed development area and a more modern bridge to Pontneathvaughan Road. Broadleaf woodland characterises the valley slopes and dense vegetation follows the edge of the river, largely obscuring it from view in the village.

The proposed development area includes adopted highway, public realm and footpaths in the ownership of NPTCBC and some areas falling within private ownership. Negotiations are ongoing regarding land acquisition.





OS Map view of the Pontneddfechan village centre in the context of the wider landscape - proposed site highlighted with red line boundary

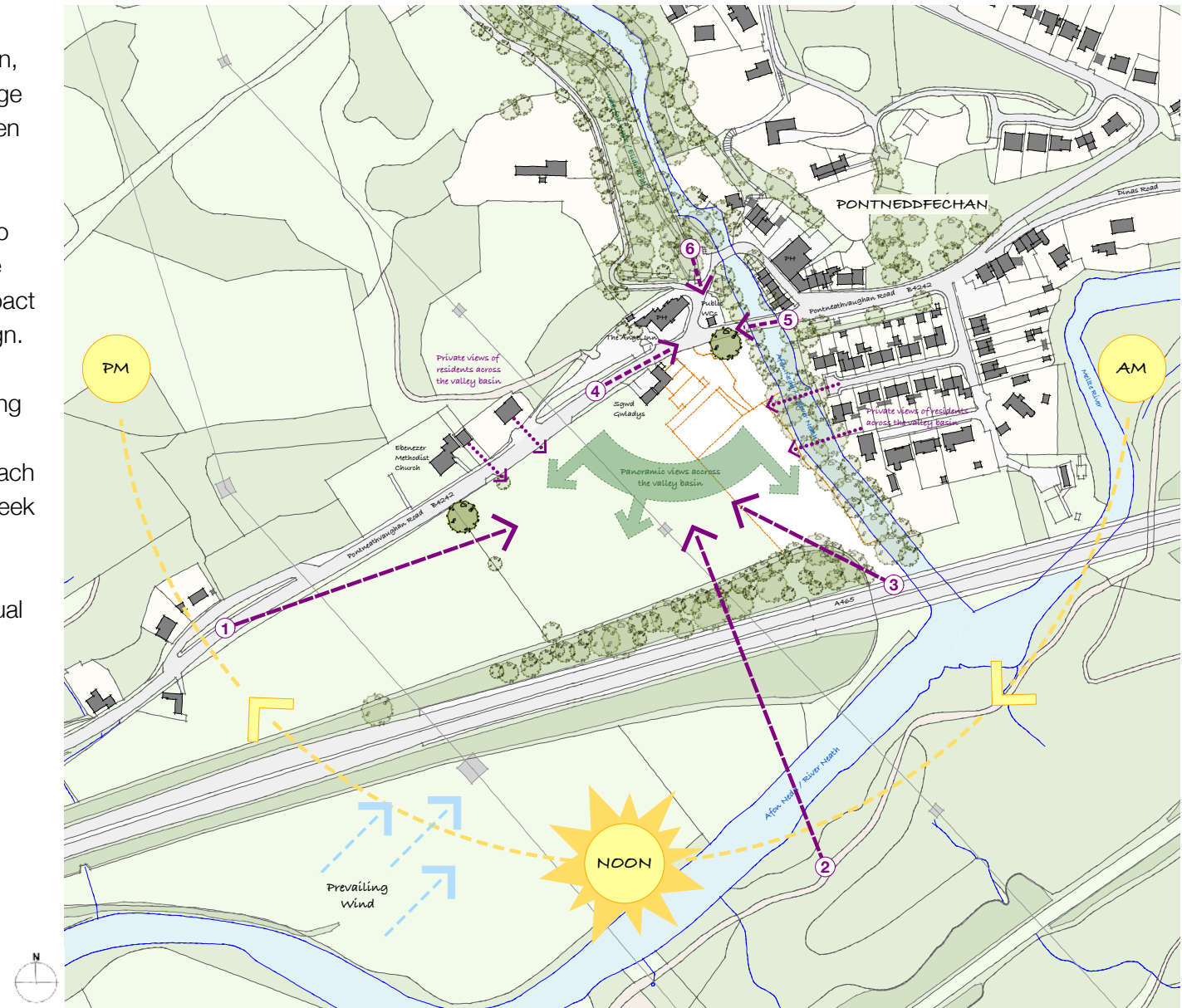
Key Views of the Site

The proposed site is in a prominent location, simultaneously at the centre of the old village of Pontneddfechan and on the edge of open countryside.

It is critical to understand the key views into the site and also the views outwards to the surrounding landscape to appraise the impact of any proposals and to influence the design.

It becomes quickly clear that any car parking proposals can have a significant impact on contextual landscape views and the approach to the village. Proposals should therefore seek to minimise and mitigate this impact.

There is an opportunity to enhance the visual presentation of the village centre with proposals that address car parking, public realm and visitor facilities.



View 1



View on approach to Pontneddfechan with open agricultural land across the valley basin

View 2



Long distance view from higher ground towards the site

View 3



Intermittent long distance views from the A465 trunk road towards the site