

DESIGN EVOLUTION

Previous Studies & Collaborations

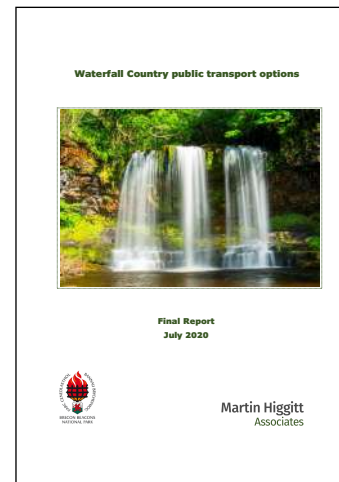
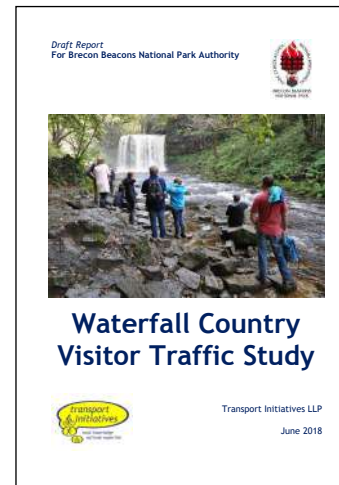
The proposals form part of a wider 'Waterfall Country' strategy, which is an ongoing collaboration looking at visitor management and environmental and socio-economic regeneration, involving Brecon Beacons National Park Authority, Powys County Council, Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council, Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council, Natural Resources Wales, the National Trust and local Community Councils.

Various studies have been undertaken over the last decade which have sought to understand and find solutions to the influx of tourists to small village sites in the Waterfall Country. Proposals that underpin the The Lower Pontneddfechan Visitor Strategy and influenced the successful Levelling-Up Funding proposal built upon these previous studies and associated consultations.

In 2021 the Lower Pontneddfechan Spatial Planning Project was commissioned by Brecon Beacons National Park Authority. The scope of this study was to consider proposals covering:

- Traffic calming and management
- Additional visitor parking to address current issues
- Additional toilet facilities
- Potential retail outlets
- 'Gateway' enhancements to sense of place
- Costs and Phasing of outline proposals

The study also drew upon previous public consultation carried out with Pontneddfechan residents and visitors by Transport Initiatives LLP in preparation for the Waterfall Country Visitor Traffic Study commissioned by BBNPA.



In the 2021 Lower Pontneddfechan Spatial Planning Project, TACP and WSP prepared outline proposals for discussion with local planners and stakeholders.

Initial strategic consideration was given to the potential location of additional parking and visitor facilities to establish the acceptability of proposals in principal. Key extracts from the study are included here as the first step in the development of the proposals which form part of this application



Early visitor hub and public realm concepts developed by TACP and WSP

Car Park: Compact Option

The objectives of the parking design are to provide additional parking capacity of 79 spaces on hard standing with overflow capacity of 160 spaces.

This option would contain the parking spaces within a compact area in the first field adjacent to the village.

This would mean a shorter walk to the core area for those parking.

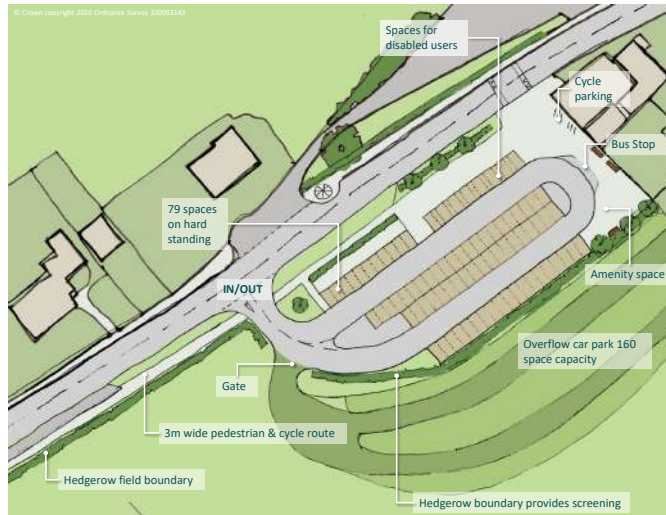
79 permanent spaces including 8 for disabled users are provided on a permeable hard standing treatment that would comply with SuDS requirements.

6 of the car park spaces can be allocated for the use of Sgw Gwladys.

The area is softened and screened with planting that would also provide biodiversity value and amenity.

Overflow parking would be controlled with gated access to the field during summer months.

Access and egress would be through a single new junction.



16

Lower Pontneddfechan Spatial Planning Project
Waterfall Country Partnership

Car Park: Linear Option

This option extends the overflow parking into the field to the south west along a single one-way road layout. Separate access and egress points simplify the junction arrangements and reduce impacts on the wider road network.

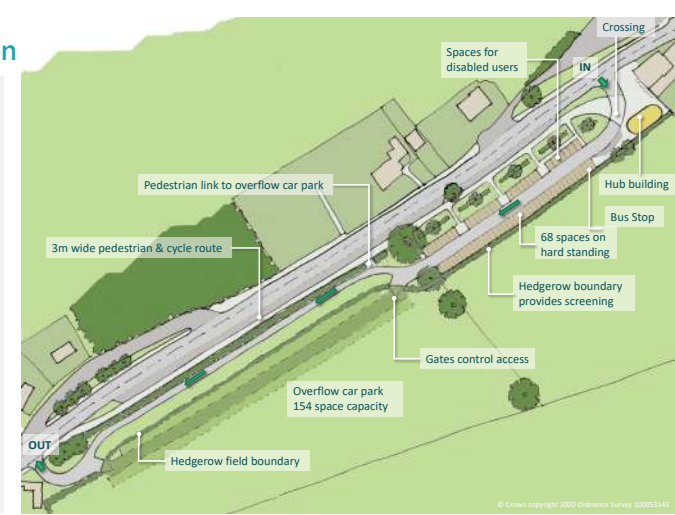
68 permanent spaces including 6 for disabled users are provided on a permeable hard standing treatment that would comply with SuDS requirements.

It could incorporate a hub building providing toilets and tourist information or other facilities such as cycle hire and retail.

Overflow parking surface treatment would be reinforced grass. New hedgerow and tree planting would soften and screen the parking areas.

This design would control access to the overflow areas with gates. A smaller through road would then run adjacent to the parking area, bounded by hedgerows.

This would reduce the visual and physical impact of the overflow parking and potentially release the field for alternative uses outside peak times.



18

Lower Pontneddfechan Spatial Planning Project
Waterfall Country Partnership

Car Park Option Selection

Two car park layout options have been identified, each with their own advantages and disadvantages. These are set out below, summarised as pros and cons.

Linear option

Pros:

- Layout largely retains the existing field and hedgerow boundary pattern
- Minimises pedestrian movements through the car park
- Clear vehicular movements, with one way circulation
- Exit location away from village core
- Existing layby parking capacity retained

Cons:

- Both eastern and western fields impacted by car park layout
- Overflow parking distant from village core
- Car park exit brings vehicles into village core
- Retained layby parking continues pedestrian/vehicle conflict

Compact option

Pros:

- Impact restricted to eastern field only
- Parking provision close to village core
- Vehicle entrance/ exit separate from village core
- Reduces extent of layby parking reducing pedestrian/ vehicle conflict
- Direct access into overflow car park

Cons:

- Car park layout intrudes into eastern field pattern
- Layout requires pedestrians to cross vehicle lanes
- Car park vehicle entrance and exit movements focused in one location
- More parking provision required to offset layby reduction

Exploration of Car Parking Location

Building upon the aforementioned studies, initial design exploration focussed on the car park and how to address:

- the demand for visitor parking that overwhelms Pontneddfechan at peak times, causing a nuisance and danger in the village;
- road safety concerns, including the lack of pavement.

This first included an appraisal of the previous body of work to explore whether all potential options had been fully explored. Through discussions with NPTCBC and BBNPA, it was agreed that both the Compact and Linear parking options would have an unacceptable impact on the open countryside context on the approach to Pontneddfechan. Explorations have included considering land areas for parking to the north of the B4242 thereby removing the need to cross the road however due to topography and access, the scale of potential development would not fulfil the project aspirations.

This led to the development of a third option, in consultation with representatives of NPT Highways department, which formed the basis of the LUF bid. This looked to locate additional parking in the land adjacent to the river and south of the village centre. This enabled a scheme to be developed that minimised the visual impact of the Carpark:

- The car parking and turning heads for large vehicles can be provided outside of the village rather than traffic encroaching on residential areas;
- Car parking is located on topography that slopes downwards to the south and is thus less visually intrusive;
- Access can be achieved from Pontneathvaughan Road in accordance with vision splay requirements adjacent to Sgwd Gwladys;

- The southwest edge of the parking area can be screened with deciduous vegetation to match that which lies beyond along the banks of the river Neath. In bringing the tree line forward, the visual impact of the parking area can be reduced in long distance views across the valley basin;



View from the west towards the development site, across broad open fields



Early iterations of the proposed alternative parking layout



Above:

View from the village centre towards the proposed car parking site on paddock land that falls away to the south.

View across the existing farm yard towards the proposed car parking site

New car parking will be screened in both the above views by the proposed visitor hub buildings.

Left: View towards the proposed car parking site from the proposed access