TECHNICAL SUMMARY FOR PLANNING

NEW ADDITIONAL LEARNING NEEDS SCHOOL (3-19 YEARS), CLYDACH

SUBJECT
Technical Summary for Planning

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TECHNICAL
NOTE

1. Introduction

1. This technical summary has been prepared by AtkinsRéalis, The Urbanists, and Morgan Sindall on behalf of Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council. Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council is proposing to develop an existing council owned site to provide 176 places for 3-19 years olds with additional learning needs.

2. The report provides a summary of the conclusions of the following documents:
   - Planning Statement by The Urbanists
   - Planning, Design & Access Statement by AtkinsRéalis
   - Landscape Design Summary by The Urbanists
   - Other Strategies by Morgan Sindall

2. Planning Summary by The Urbanists

1. **Planning Application Content**

   The planning application includes a series of design drawings and technical reports. These are summarised below.
   - Site location plan
   - Existing site layout plan
   - Topographical Survey
   - Proposed site layout plans
   - Proposed building elevations
   - Proposed floor plans and roof plan
   - Hard and soft landscape plans
   - Landscape strategy plan
   - Boundary treatment plans
   - Drainage design and proposed site levels plan (including drainage strategy)
   - Lighting design and LUX mapping
   - Tree removal/protection plan
   - Design and Access Statement
   - Planning Statement
   - PAC Report
   - Preliminary Ecological Appraisal
   - Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment
   - Targeted Ecology Survey Reports (TBC by Preliminary Ecological Appraisal)
   - Green Infrastructure Statement

- Tree Survey, Tree Protection Plan, and Arboricultural Impact Assessment
- Transport Statement
- Travel plan
- Archaeology Desktop Report
- Phase 1 Desktop Ground Investigation Report
- Phase 2 Site Investigation Report
- Coal Mining Risk Assessment
- Noise Survey
- Planning application forms, statutory notices, and certificates

2. Legislation and Planning Policy

The planning context to the planning application is set by relevant national legislation and planning policy. This is summarised below.

2.1 The Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act places a requirement on statutory bodies to safeguard the wellbeing of future generations against those of current generations when public decisions are being made; meaning development proposals must be demonstrated to meet the needs of current generations, whilst safeguarding the needs of future generations.

2.2 Planning Policy Wales (Ed.12) and Future Wales: The National Plan 2040

The key national planning policy that provides material context to the proposed development is comprised of:

- Planning Policy Wales (Ed. 12)
- Future Wales: The National Plan 2040

These policy documents place a presumption on sustainable development and identify placemaking as the statutory process to achieve such development. **Planning Policy Wales** (PPW) identifies a series of placemaking themes that developments are expected to meet. Recent amendments to Planning Policy Wales place stronger emphasis on a proactive approach to delivering green infrastructure and enabling biodiversity net gain through new development. This includes a requirement for green infrastructure statements to be included in planning applications. **Future Wales: The National Plan 2040** established a series of key development policies to guide development; it also established growth areas across Wales. Tonypandy and the development site are located in the south-east region, which is a National Growth Area, allocated within Future Wales. Well planned and sustainable development is encouraged within the Growth Area.

2.3 Technical Advice Notes

In addition to the above overarching development policy a series of Technical Advice Notes provide design guidance to development proposals. Those relevant to the development are identified below. These documents provide practical guidance that the school scheme will need to consider and apply as the design progresses.

- TAN 10: Trees Preservation Orders
- TAN 12: Design

- TAN 15: Development and Flood Risk
- TAN 16: Sport, recreation and open space
- TAN 18: Transport
- TAN 20: Planning and the Welsh Language
- TAN 21: Waste

TAN 15 is a particularly important document that is currently in the process of being updated. The extracts of the flood maps that support the TAN shows that the campus site does not fall within a fluvial flood risk zone (in neither the Development Advice Map nor the Flood Maps for Planning). The maps show that parts of the site are susceptible to surface water flooding. This will be dealt with via the surface water design of the development.

2.4 Rhondda Cynon Taff Local Development Plan 2006-2021

Local planning policy is set out in the Local Development Plan for the Authority area. The Development is used to guide and control development providing the foundation for consistent and rational decision making. In doing so, it provides a measure of certainty about what kind of development would, and would not, be permitted in particular locations during the Plan period. The relevant plan for this development is the RCT Local Development Plan 2006-2021. The plan is in the process of replacement, the Preferred Strategy was placed out to consultation between February 2024 and April 2024. The Revised LDP 2022-2037 Preferred Strategy is available on RCTCBC website.

The Development Plan shows that a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation wraps around the entire site. It also shows the site lies outside of the settlement boundary. There are no other constraints identified in the Plan.

The following written policies from the Development Plan are relevant to the determination of a planning application for the proposed development:

- CS1: Development in the North
- CS9: Waste Management
- CS10: Minerals
- AW2: Sustainable Locations
- AW4: Community Infrastructure & Planning Obligations
- AW5: New Development
- AW6: Design and Placemaking
- AW7: Protection and Enhancement of the Built Environment
- AW8: Protection and Enhancement of the Natural Environment
- AW10: Environmental Protection and Public Health
- AW14: Safeguarding of Minerals
- NSA16: Redevelopment of Vacant/ Redundant Industrial Sites

3. Planning History

The site is previously developed brownfield land, like the adjacent area. The site and the and the adjacent area thus have a prior record of development proposals and planning permissions. Noticeable planning records are summarised below. The permission for the provision of the Council offices is not held on the online database due to time constraints

- 24/0231/DEM: Prior notification of proposed demolition of all buildings on site (former RCTCBC head office- 3 no. two storey offices, 2 no. single storey offices, training suite, security lodge and 2 no. garages). Granted (09.04.24)
- 12/1200/FUL: Land to the side of unit 2 to be converted to car parking for use by Royal Mail unit adjacent to the site. Granted (15.02.13)
- 05/0726/GREG: Installation of air conditioning units to the rear of Pavillion B. Granted (07.06.05)

4. Planning Appraisal

The application site is located outside of the settlement boundary, as defined in the LDP, but is brownfield in character and previously developed land. It is also located within a National Growth Area in national policy. The location of the development is therefore deemed to be sustainable, represent a good use of land and meet planning policy, including local policy NSA16.

The site has already been cleared of the previous Council buildings that were located there. As part of this an ecological assessment was undertaken an appropriate priority species surveys (bats) were completed. Combined this work identified limited ecological sensitivity on the site and that the buildings were suitable for demolition. As the design of the scheme has progressed the ecological assessment has been updated to ensure the proposed design of the new school is appropriate. This includes protecting the SINC designation around the site, retaining the woodland boundaries and ensuring that light levels are minimised. As part of the development new green infrastructure is to be provided on the site. This will be multi-purpose, having amenity benefits for staff and pupils, helping to manage surface water sustainably and delivering biodiversity value. On this basis it is deemed the development would be sustainable on nature conservation and biodiversity grounds.

The architectural design of the new school building would be modern and of a high visual quality that is befitting of an outstanding education premises that will serve current and future generations. The scale and massing of the building is appropriate to the site, with existing woodland planting screening views and ensuring that it does not detract from key views in the wider landscape. The school building will be energy efficient and be Net Zero Carbon in operation. In light of these design approaches, it is deemed the development would represent high quality placemaking as required in national policy and policy AW6 of the Development Plan.

As the site is previously developed land, contamination and remediation is a key consideration. To understand the ground conditions a comprehensive programme of site investigation has been undertaken to frame the design and had helped to shape an appropriate programme of remediation that will be undertaken as part of the site. This will ensure that prior contamination is fully remediated so that the site is fully safe on human health and environmental grounds. This work and approach shall ensure that the development meets local policies AW7, 8 and 10.

Given the nature of the development, where staff and students will arrive from across the County Borough, the development will need suitable means of vehicle access and parking. A suitable parking number has been

accommodated on the site and the site benefits from strategic highway connections that are able to support the new school without undue impact on the wider operation of the highway network. Sustainable travel will also be supported as part of the development; appropriate active travel infrastructure will be provided in the development site to encourage active travel and the site will be served by high quality and well-lit footpaths. Organised school transport will be used to minimise private car journeys and car sharing will be encouraged amongst staff. A Travel Plan will be prepared for the site to promote sustainable travel when the school is in operation. To facilitate the development, a stopping up order will be required, and this will be pursued following the grant of planning permission with the Highway Authority.

5. Planning Summary

The principle of developing the proposed education use at the former Council premises in Clydach Vale is considered sound on planning policy grounds. While the site is located outside of the settlement boundary, it is previously developed land and will provide a much-needed education use that will meet the needs of both current and future generations. The planning appraisal demonstrates the credentials of the scheme and sets the case for it meeting relevant planning policy. It is therefore highly recommended for the grant of planning permission.

3. Architecture Design & Access Statement Summary by AtkinsRéalis

1. Introduction

A planning, design & access statement has been prepared by AtkinsRéalis. The purpose of the document is to set out the background information of the project, the functional requirements of the brief together with the architects' interpretation of the site context and the response to it.

2. Site Context

The site address is:
The Pavilions,
Cambrian Park,
Clydach Vale,
Tonypandy
CF40 2XX

The site was formally used by Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council (RCTCBC) for council offices. The office accommodation was made up of six pavilions ranging from one to two storeys. Demolition work of the former buildings, agreed via prior notification, has now been completed. There is also parking to the North-East and West of the pavilions. The parking is currently served by an access road running along the northern boundary. The eastern end of the site is an industrial park. The Western end of the site is part of an area designated as Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC). North of the site is Nant Clydach (Clydach

Vale Country Park) with a lake which is separated from the site by woodland and a significant level change, however access between the two is provided by a sloped/stepped path just outside of the site entrance.

3. Design & Access

Building Uses:

The new school will provide 176 places for 3-19 year olds with additional learning needs and will accommodate learners with a wide range of needs, including but not limited to; Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD), Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD), Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), and Social and Emotional Mental Health needs (SEMH).

Site Zoning and building position:

The design utilitises the eastern end of the site, which is closest to the industrial park, as a zone for parking, drop-off and external plant areas. This approach aims to use this zone as a noise buffer and consequently pushing the building further away from the industrial park.

Naturally, a key development zone for the school building and external school area starts to form between the parking and SINC area to the west.

The development of the site plan is prioritised by the design of the drop-off/pick-up strategy that works for the school. This is a key and sensitive function of any Additional Learning Needs (ALN) school which includes creating dedicated drop-off zones for minibuses and private cars/taxis.

Main Building:

The building form is developed in response to the site constraints and opportunities and create connections between internal and external spaces with the surrounding natural environment.

The building consists of two storeys with a secured outdoor terrace at first floor of the south elevation. The design concept is based on a central block acting as the heart space of the school, connecting two blocks, one to the east and another to the west.

The central block houses the shared spaces while the east and west blocks contain the main teaching spaces for the school. The lengths of the teaching blocks are adjusted based on the distribution and number of classrooms at each wing.

Ground floor classrooms to have direct access to a sheltered external classroom spaces.

Building Form and Architecture:

The architecture consists of three distinctive blocks with the central block being the main focal point of the school. The central block will feature large windows, designed to celebrate and reveal key spaces such as the main

entrance and wellbeing suite. The openings also provide an opportunity to connect the internal spaces to the outdoors.

The façade design explores the use of brick within the design for a sense of familiarity, robustness and sustainability. Colours are introduced through bricks and/or window frames.

Cladding is also introduced at the high-level external wall, above the hall and roof access staircase. This area is not accessible by the students and is shielded by the parapets of the main roof.

4. Landscape Design Summary by The Urbanists

The current landscape design proposal aims to connect the pupils and the teachers with the surrounding nature and has been informed by the site's constraints and opportunities.

Site zoning:

As mentioned earlier, the site has been divided into three zones. The eastern one closest to the industrial park will be used as a buffer for the school and as a parking and external plant area. The western part which falls into the SINC area will be left untouched and the middle part will be used as the main school area.

Landscape zoning/ activities:

Different areas have been proposed throughout the site to address the school's needs. The main ones are external classrooms, sensory, food-growing habitat exploration areas and shared playgrounds. The main drop-off/pick-up road has informed our design in the northern part of the site as it retains as much as possible of the existing road structure. Even though this will be utilised as a drop-off area during student arrival, we intend for this to feel more like a playground. This has been achieved with the creative use of colourful lining on the grounds and an "organic" shaped road. Additionally, the main entrance to the school has been designed with the feel of arriving through "the woods" into the school with the existence of SuDS vegetation and proposed tree planting.

Green/ Blue strategies:

Our proposed design aims to create "green" links throughout the site and bring the surrounding vegetation's beauty closer to the school and the pupils. Due to the location of the site, the proposed vegetation will reflect the local ecology and will adjust to its needs, for example, shade. To address the specific requirements of the ALN school the selected vegetation will be non-toxic, and trees will be of single stem and away from or behind fencing. Furthermore, rain gardens and permeable paving have been proposed to address the site's flooding and SuDS requirements.

Boundary strategies:

Due to Secure by Design aspirations on the project, anti-climb external boundaries are needed. However, where possible the proposed boundaries have been pushed to the front and vegetation planted behind creating a green backdrop for the students and connecting them with the adjacent creek.

5. Other Strategies by Morgan Sindall

1. **Transport Assessment**
   - A Transport Assessment has been prepared by Acstro Ltd in support of a planning application for a new 3 – 19 school in Tonypandy for pupils with Additional Learning Needs.
   - The TA has been produced to provide the necessary information for the local highway and planning authorities to consider the merits of the development in terms of accessibility, highway safety and the impact of the development traffic on the local highway network.
   - The Transport Assessment is supported by a School Travel Plan which is submitted as a separate document.
   - The school is a new provision, as such is it not currently defined how users will travel to school. The assessment uses ratios form an existing RCT ALN school at Ysgol Hen Felin.

   Access:
   - 74% of pupils are expected to travel to school in transport provided by the Authority amounting to 11 minibuses and 8 taxis.
   - The remaining 26% travel to school in private vehicles, typically one pupil per vehicle giving 46 vehicles.
   - Based on a staff assessment of Ysgol Hen Felin the Transport Assessment estimates 113 staff will work at the new school with 78 driving to work.
   - Total vehicle movements at the start and end of the school day are estimated as 208.

   Parking:
   - The scheme includes 79 parking spaces of which 74 are standard size and 5 are accessible.
   - Drop off is provided in 9 bays with adequate space for queuing vehicles in the car park circulatory route.

   Traffic:
   - The Transport Assessment defines the Ratio of Flow Against Capacity (RFC) of the junction to Cambrian Industrial Estate, is currently 0.61 increasing to 0.66 once traffic with the new school is included. This analysis indicates the junction will continue to operate with spare capacity and congestion is not likely.

2. **Drainage**
   - Soakaway testing was undertaken by Terra Firma to confirm viability of infiltration drainage. Terra Firma's technical note is included confirming that infiltration drainage is not viable on the site.
   - The NRW Development Advice Map (DAM) shows the site is wholly located within Zone A considered to be at little or no risk of fluvial or tidal / coastal flooding. The Flood Map for Planning mimics the DAM in terms of

fluvial flood risk pattern however, it identifies the site to be of low to high risk of surface water flooding with what appears to be an overland flow path crossing the site.

- Surface water runoff from the site will be collected and conveyed via a series of appropriately sized SuDS & drainage features located as close to source as possible. Due to poor or limited infiltration potential of the site strata, the storm runoff will be collected and conveyed via a series of SuDS & drainage features and ultimately discharged offsite to either the existing connection to the storm water network or into the water course on the site which ultimately discharges into the Nant Clydach.
- The Drainage design is subject to an application to, and approval by the SuDS Approving Body.

3. Ground Conditions

- A Geotechnical and Geo-environmental Desk Study and Coal Mining Risk Assessment has been completed by Terra Firma with a Geotechnical and Geo-environmental Report provided following on site investigation works.
- The Preliminary Conceptual Site Model indicates a low to medium possibility that harm could arise to a designated receptor from the identified hazards from contaminated soils, groundwater and mine gas.
- A high possibility of harm to the designated receptors from Ground gas is identified.
- A Ground and Mine Gas Risk Assessment Report identified the need for gas protection measures to be designed. The mitigation measures should be designed by a Society Brownfield Risk Assessment (SoBRA) certified and suitably insured engineer to protect against the identified gas risk.
- Former mine workings are identified on the site, specifically Mine Adits. A programme of drilling and grouting is proposed in accordance with the Drill and Grouting Specification proved by Terra Firma.

4. Noise

An Acoustic Design Report has been supplied by Formant.

A baseline noise survey has been undertaken on-site to measure ambient and background noise levels, which have been used to set plant noise limits at the nearest identified noise sensitive locations.

New mechanical plant including air handling equipment and Air Source Heat Pumps are positioned on the roof where the impact of plant generated noise is less significant with noise attenuation specified where required to meet the limits specified in the Report.

5. External Light

The proposed external lighting scheme has been designed to cover roads, paths and building perimeters around the site, utilising LED-type fittings.

Building-mounted luminaires have been used to illuminate the building perimeter, with column-mounted fitting provided for the car park areas.

Fittings have been selected to minimise any upward lighting throw, including the car park fittings.

The lighting will be time clock controlled with photocell overrides and manual overrides to reduce energy consumption during daylight hours and low building usage periods.

6. Ecology

A Preliminary Ecological Survey has been completed by Lingard Farrow Styles in December 2023.

Invasive species were identified with eradication of these species by a specialist recommended.

A stream is identified to the Southern boundary that needs protection from run off. An update to the PEA will be required for Planning Consent as the stream requires reinforcement works to alleviate surface water flooding.

Recommendations for demolition of the Pavilion Buildings were made including avoiding the bird nesting season. The Pavillion Buildings have since been demolished under Planning Application 24/0231/DEM.

Reptile / amphibian fencing is recommended to exclude reptiles and amphibians from accessing the site.

The use of low level downlighters is recommended to prevent light spill onto the adjacent woodland areas.

The report recommends a range of ecological enhancements including bird and bat boxes, new planting, creating of refugia and if appropriate, creation of a pond.

7. Trees

A tree survey is provided by Arboricultural Technician Services Ltd. Tree loss and compensatory measures will be detailed in the Green Infrastructure Statement.

An Arboricultural Impact Assessment will be included with the Planning Application.