

**GAER PRIMARY SCHOOL:
ROOF LANTERN
HERITAGE IMPACT STATEMENT**

Incorporating Design & Access Statement

Newport City Council

19/03/26

Issue 02

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1.0. Introduction

1.1. Site Address:

Gaer Primary School
Gaer Road
Newport
Gwent
NP20 3GY

1.2. Context: Constructed between 1949 to 1953, Gaer County Primary School is a grade II listed building (a copy of Cadw's Listing description is attached to this statement at Appendix 'A'). It was designed by Johnson Blackett FRIBA, architect to Newport Borough Council and is home to Gaer Primary School, established in 2014 with the amalgamation of the former Gaer Infant and Gaer Junior schools. A new foundation phase teaching block was built within the site between 2016 and 2017 to merge foundation phase and key stage 2 pupils.

1.3. This document sets out a revised proposal to remove a deteriorated roof lantern (above the stage in the assembly hall) and sensitively infill the redundant aperture with new timber decking and a matching felt roof covering.

Please refer to the attached site plan [Appendix 'B'], which shows the location of the main building and its context with the foundation phase teaching block and the rest of the site.

1.4. It is the applicant's intention to address an ongoing health and safety concern and prevent further water-ingress into the building.

1.5. The applicant understands that a material change on an historic building is a major intervention but has decided to proceed for the following reasons:

- a. To address an ongoing health and safety concern;
- b. To arrest water-ingress;
- c. To protect historic fabric below; and
- d. To improve air tightness and reduce heat loss by removing a thermal weak point.

2.0. The Site: Brief Description, History and Significance

2.1. The site is nestled within a residential area (the Gaer Estate) to the immediate east, south and west. Ysgol Bryn Derw bounds the site to the north and Gaer Community Centre to the north-west.

2.2. The main building:

Gaer Primary School is of medium significance. According to Cadw, the school's heritage significance relates to it being *"....an exceptionally well-preserved primary school, the centrepiece of the contemporary Gaer Estate, the whole ensemble being among the best post-War residential developments in Britain. Gaer school is an important example of early post-War school design, being a clear example of corridor-based planning, and is highly expressive of the architectural ideals of its time, recognised by its gaining prizes, including the festival of Britain award of merit."*

As such, the school was designated Grade II listed in 1999. Cadw consider Grade II listed buildings to be *"...of special interest which justify every effort being made to preserve them. These make up approximately 91 per cent of the total number of listed buildings in Wales."*

2.3. Foundation Phase Teaching Block (no work currently proposed):

Constructed in 2016-2017 upon the garden to the north of the existing junior school, this newer addition is of low intrinsic heritage significance due to its age. However, it could be considered a complimentary addition to the site since its form and fabric pay due regard to the existing building's character whilst remaining identifiably modern.

2.4. Significance:

According to Alwyn Jones Architects (Heritage Impact Statement for improved disability access – Reference 21/1252), the most important aesthetic features of Gaer Primary School are the:

- Overall form the building takes in responding to its steep sloping site with its parallel corridor based planning.
- Roofline and the way the building nestles into the hillside.
- Large south facing glazing with deep overhanging 'anti-glare' eaves.
- Double height central hall with square clock tower.
- Porthole windows.

Significance Values

- Evidential value: **HIGH**
Gaer Primary School provides a rich documentary and architectural record of post-war school design. The building records (drawings, written plans) clearly reflect its evolution — the "finger-plan" corridor layout, the use of steel framing and precast concrete, and the original classroom and assembly hall configuration. Furthermore, its construction is legible in the fabric of the building — the hand-made brown brickwork, the full-length corridor windows illuminating classrooms and top-lighting features. These elements let us read how the school was conceived and used, making it a highly valuable

source of evidence for educational architecture in the early post-war period.

- Historical value: **MEDIUM/HIGH**

The school is historically significant in several intertwined ways. It was built between 1949–1953, at a time of rapid post-war expansion and reform in education. Importantly, Gaer School formed part of a broader civic and residential vision: it was integrated into the Gaer Estate, also designed by the same architect (Johnson Blackett) and both the school and the estate were awarded a Festival of Britain Award of Merit (1951) and a Ministry of Housing and Local Government Medal. This association ties it to larger national post-war rebuilding efforts, not just local education — giving it significance beyond its immediate function. However, while its connections are important, they are not nationally famous, so the historical value can reasonably be assessed as medium-high rather than exceptional.

- Aesthetic value: **MEDIUM/HIGH**

Architecturally, the school is a striking example of early post-war modernist design in Wales. The building's terraced form on a sloping site takes advantage of the topography in a considered way. The deep overhangs, steel-framed structure and flat rooves give it a clean, functionalist look. Its use of continuous glazing in corridors to maximise natural light also shows design ambition. Internally, features like the lobby, stage in the assembly hall, and simple geometric metal balustrades reflect mid-century aesthetics. That said, there have been some changes — for instance, some of the original steel windows have been replaced with uPVC ones. These changes may dilute some of the purity of the original design. But overall, it retains enough of its original architectural character to merit medium-high aesthetic value.

- Communal value: **MEDIUM**

Gaer Primary School holds local importance. it's a central institution within the Gaer estate, serving generations of children in the community. Positioned on Gaer Road within expansive grounds, the building is physically prominent. As a school, it's not just a relic — it continues to function (now as Gaer Primary, after the merger of infants and junior schools around 2014). Since it continues to serve the local population, its value to the community remains strong. However, its communal significance is probably not nationally symbolic and its listing is more about architectural and educational heritage than tourism or civic ceremony. Therefore, a rating of medium seems appropriate; it's very meaningful locally, even if not iconic beyond the area.

3.0. Schedule of Proposed Works and Justification

[Proposed works in black text, justification in blue]

Summary of Works:

- Removal of the existing defective rooflight;
- Temporary opening-up to allow for roof and upstand repairs;
- Infill of the redundant opening with new timber decking and matching felt roof covering;
- Localised repairs to surrounding roof finish; and
- Internal and external making-good to perimeter junctions.

3.1. Removal of existing rooflight:

3.1.1. Existing rooflight to be carefully removed and carted away from site.

This work is necessary as the existing rooflight is at the end of its serviceable life and permitting water-ingress. Unfortunately, it is beyond economic repair. Controlled removal will allow the underlying defects to be addressed without causing collateral damage to adjacent historic material. The impact will be low as the works relate solely to an existing opening in the roof.

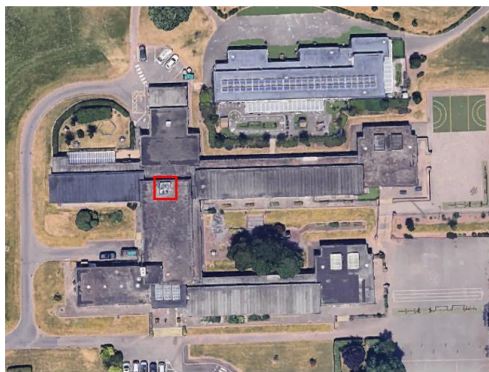


Left: Typical image of the lantern's poor condition (2024)

3.2. Infilling of redundant roof lantern opening:

- 3.2.1. The existing roof lantern – approximate size 2470 x 2470mm – will be carefully removed and the redundant opening infilled with new timber decking and a matching felt roof covering.

Recent archival research suggests that the school was constructed in two phases, with Phase 1 completed in 1950. A photograph from that year (see below) depicts the main block with a finished roof and no rooflight at this location, confirming that a lantern did not form part of the original scheme. The rear extension is also absent in this image, indicating that the photograph captures only the Phase 1 structure, before any lantern was ever proposed.



Above (left): 'Google Maps' image of Gaer Primary School. Position of rooflight in question shown by red box.



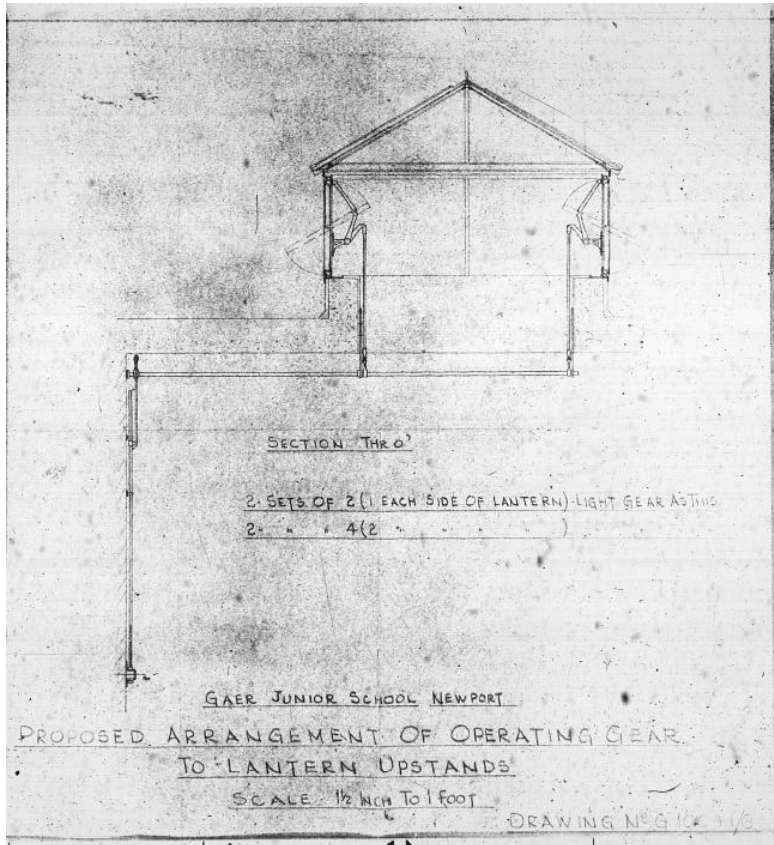
Above (right): 'Britain from Above' aerial image of the school soon after completion (1950). Note absence of rooflight in question.

Drawings prepared in 1951 for the second phase extension include details for a proposed "haystack"-type lantern above the stage; however, these designs vary – some showing a flat-topped form, others a more traditional haystack profile with ventilation – and none correspond to the lantern currently in place. This indicates that either the 1951 proposal was altered before construction, or that the lantern was replaced sometime later in the twentieth-century with the present, non-matching unit. The existing lantern therefore represents neither the original 1950 roof form nor the proposed 1951 design but a later and incongruous addition.

Its removal will restore the legibility of the historic roofscape, whilst the retention of the internal reveals will ensure that the former intervention remains readable as part of the building's evolution. This approach preserves the overall character of the interior and avoids erasing the building's later history; externally, it also reinstates the intended roof continuity.

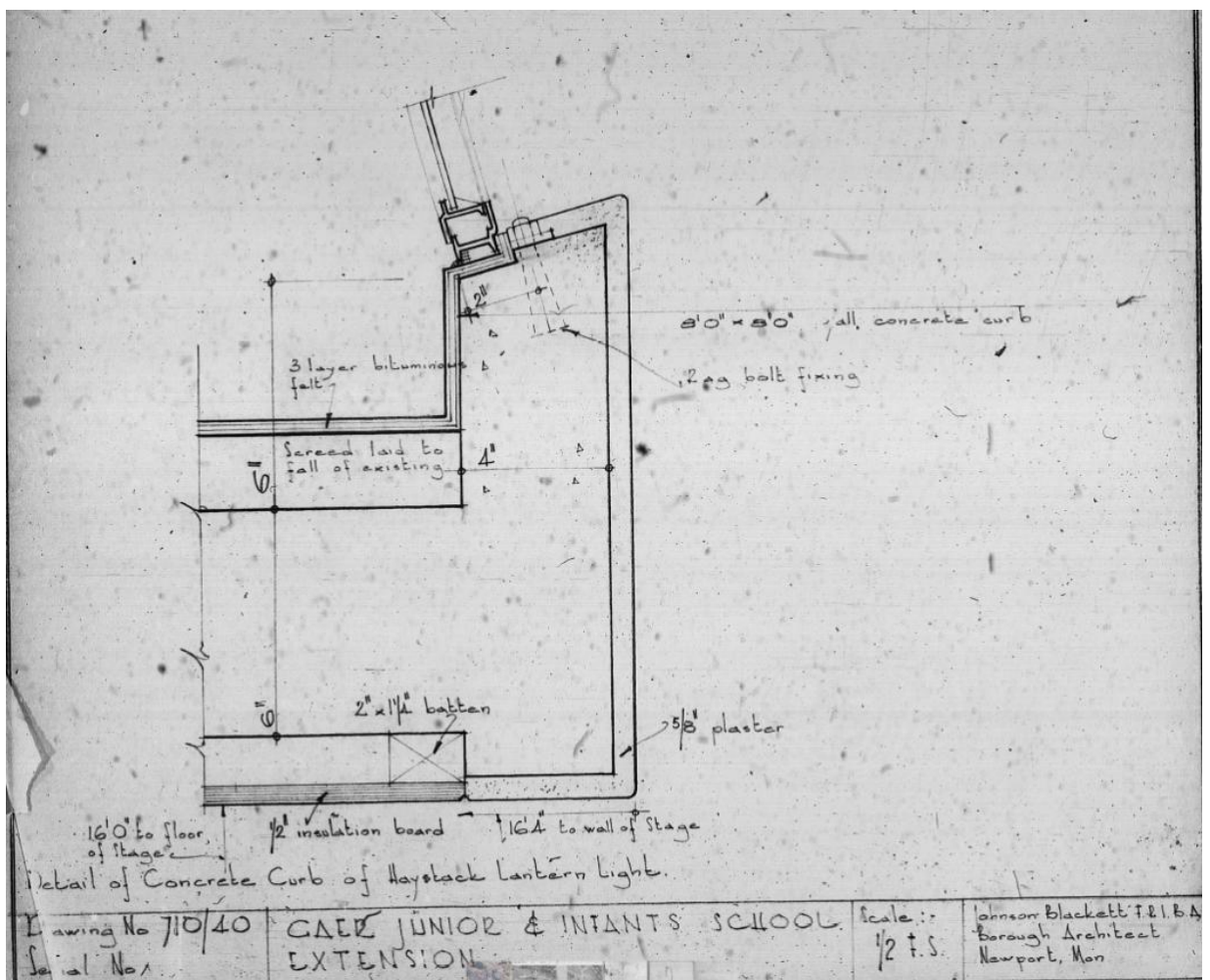
Weather-resistance will be significantly improved through removing a defective element that has been a persistent source of water-ingress. In combination with improved air-tightness and the removal of a pronounced

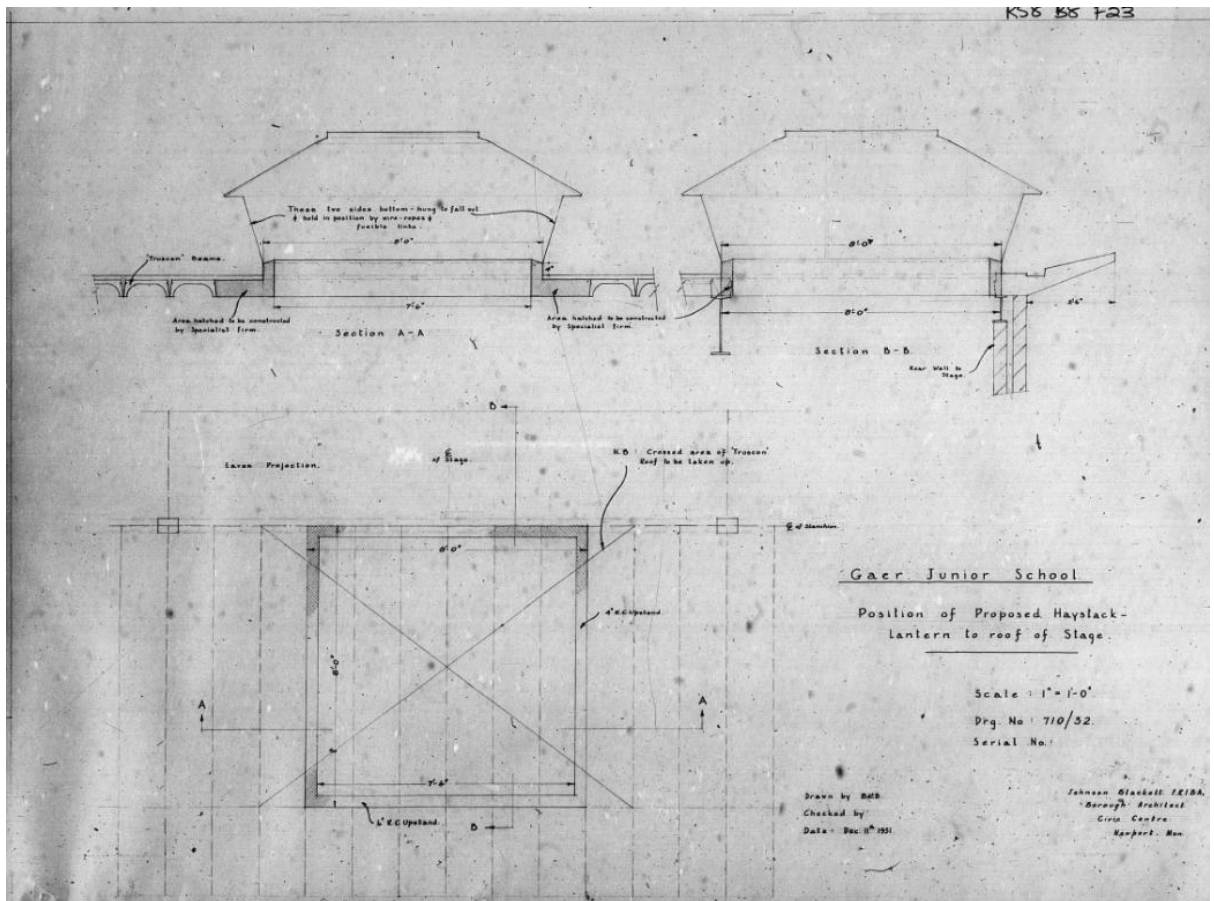
thermal weak point, the works will enhance the building's environmental performance without introducing intrusive new fabric.



Left: 1951 drawing for a proposed lantern, which is different to the existing.

Below: 1951 drawing showing proposed detail of concrete curb for haystack lantern light.





Above: 1951 drawing of proposed haystack lantern. Note, this is a design for a flat-topped lantern which does not match the existing.

3.3. Making-good roof finishes:

- 3.3.1. The infilled opening will be finished with new timber decking and a matching felt roof covering. All junctions between the new works and the existing roof will be dressed and detailed in accordance with BS 8217:2005 best practice to ensure a durable, watertight connection.

These works are necessary to reinstate the continuity of the roof covering and ensure correct integration of the new felted infill with the surrounding fabric. The visual impact will be minimal as only matching materials and traditional techniques will be used.

3.4. Internal making-good:

- 3.4.1. The internal reveals of the former lantern opening will be retained and carefully made good to provide a clean, stable finish and preserve evidence of the earlier intervention.

These repairs are required to restore the interface between the historic ceiling finishes and the edges of the former opening, ensuring a neat and coherent appearance. The works are entirely localised and will not alter the spatial or architectural character of the interior.

4.0. Impact

- 4.1. The proposed works will make a modest but positive contribution in sustaining the heritage values and overall significance of Gaer Primary School. The proposed works have been considered carefully in accordance with relevant heritage guidance and the established legislative framework, ensuring that any change is proportionate, justified and sensitive to the character of the listed building.
- 4.2. The removal of the existing lantern will result in a visual change; however, this is considered neutral. A later, non-original addition of limited architectural or historic merit, the current lantern does not reflect either the 1950 Phase 1 roof form or the 1951 proposed lantern design. Therefore, its removal will remedy an incongruous feature and reinstate the intended continuity of the roof plane. This will reduce visual clutter and better reveal the building's significant architectural character.
- 4.3. Collectively, the removal of the deteriorating lantern and the reinstatement of a simple, continuous felted roof surface will have a neutral-to-positive effect. It will address accumulated maintenance issues and ensure the continued safe and functional use of the assembly hall below. In addition, the intervention significantly enhances the building's weather-resistance, improves air-tightness and removes a pronounced thermal weak point, all without the need for unnecessary conjectural reconstruction.
- 4.4. The physical impact of the proposals on the historic fabric will be minimal, being confined to the footprint of the later twentieth-century lantern. The infill utilises the existing roof opening with only limited localised adjustments, ensuring the original 1950s roof structure is preserved as far as possible. Internally, the retention and careful making-good of the lantern reveals will retain evidence of the building's evolution whilst avoiding alterations to its spatial or architectural character.
- 4.5. The impact on significance values (*Section 2.0*) is as follows:
 - Evidential value: There will be a negligible effect on evidential value as the works affect only later-period fabric of limited heritage significance. The reinstated roof plane and retention of the structural fabric ensure evidential value remains intact.
 - Historical value: Historical value will be preserved and modestly strengthened by removing a non-original element and avoiding a misleading reconstruction. The building's development sequence – from Phase 1 to Phase 2, to later alterations – remains clearly legible, aided by the retention of the internal reveals.
 - Aesthetic value: Aesthetic value will be retained and marginally enhanced. Removing the visually intrusive modern lantern improves the clarity of the original 1950s roof form and reduces visual clutter, resulting in a quieter and more coherent roofscape.
 - Communal value: Communal value will be retained and supported through improving building performance, ensuring that the school can continue to serve its community in a safe, functional and sustainable manner.

5.0. Consultation

- 5.1. This application has been prepared with great care and has been submitted following pre-application consultations with Laura Smith (former Principal Heritage Officer to Newport City Council (NCC)) and Guy Arnall (current Principal Heritage Officer to NCC).
- 5.2. A further informal discussion was held with Guy Arnall upon discovery that this lantern was not an original feature. Mr Arnall reiterated that listed building consent would be required but suggested that it would be acceptable in principle to remove this rooflight given that it is unoriginal and in very poor condition.
- 5.3. The original proposal involved replacing the existing lantern with a modern unit. However, after considering comments from the Twentieth Century Society (see below), the scheme has since been refined to remove the lantern altogether and infill the redundant opening.

"Although the removal of the rooflight will cause the loss of heritage fabric, in this case it seems to be justified as the existing rooflight is in poor condition and causing water ingress and damage to the historic building fabric below. However, we object to the rooflight that has been proposed. Any new rooflight should match the existing one being removed like for like. The proposed rooflight shown in the Design and Access Statement, is too modern in character. We would like to see any new rooflight match the profile of the existing and the articulation of the glass should be as similar as possible."

6.0. Policy

[Policy extracts in black text, *commentary / response / justification in blue*]

The proposals have been developed in accordance with Cadw's Conservation Principles and

. An assessment has been made of the significance of the building in terms of Evidential, Historical, Aesthetic and Communal Value (see section 2 above).

Managing Change to Listed Buildings in Wales

'You should avoid speculative reconstruction and the reinstatement of features that were deliberately superseded by later historical additions...' [P.10, Para 4.4]. *The proposals do not seek to recreate the 1951 lantern design or introduce a conjectural new feature. Instead, the later, non-original lantern will be removed and the roof plane reinstated in a simple, authentic manner that preserves the building's historic character and avoids speculative reconstruction.*

'New work or alteration may sometimes be necessary or appropriate to keep a historic building in long-term viable use or to give it a new lease of life. *As shown, the existing lantern is at the end of its serviceable life. It is leaking and has become a health and safety concern.* You must be able to explain why the work is needed and provide sufficient information to explain the impact of your proposal on the significance of the building. *This has been addressed in the preceding document.* The quality of design and execution should enhance the aesthetic value of the building and its setting, and additions should not dominate. *The proposals avoid introducing a new or visually assertive feature. Instead, the removal of the later, incongruous lantern and the reinstatement of the continuous roof plane will produce a quieter and more coherent appearance. The simplified felted infill sits unobtrusively within the existing roofscape, ensuring that the building's historic form remains visually dominant and its mid-century architectural character more clearly expressed.* Any new work should also respect the performance characteristics of the building. The choice of appropriate materials and craftsmanship is crucial. The need for quality in new work applies at every level, from small interventions in a historic room to major new buildings or developments.' [P.11, Para 4.5]. *The proposals respect the building's performance characteristics by improving weather-resistance, enhancing air-tightness and removing a known thermal weak point. High quality materials and workmanship, following recognised conservation best practice, will ensure long-term durability and visual compatibility with the historic roof fabric. The approach represents a carefully considered and proportionate intervention that supports the ongoing preservation of the listed building.*

'...there is also growing recognition of the need to improve the thermal efficiency of buildings and to mitigate the adverse impact of climate change in line with Part L of the Building Regulations. Where these measures are undertaken correctly, there is a real opportunity to have a positive effect on the building, provided that two key principles are observed: firstly, that the materials used are appropriate to the building, and in most cases water-vapour permeable, and secondly, that adequate ventilation is maintained.'

[P.12, Para 4.8]. *The proposal supports improved environmental performance through the removal of a defective lantern that has been a persistent source of heat loss, air leakage and moisture ingress. Reinstating a continuous felted roof plane enhances weather-tightness and reduces thermal weakness at roof level, contributing modestly to the building's overall energy performance. The materials and detailing proposed are compatible with the existing roof construction and follow recognised conservation best practice. This will ensure safe moisture behaviour within the roof fabric without altering the building's established ventilation strategy.*

Tan 24

'When determining a listed building consent application, the local planning authority should consider the following issues:

- The importance and grade of the building and its intrinsic architectural or historic interest.
- The physical features of the building which justify its listing and contribute to its significance...
- The contribution of curtilage and setting to the significance of the building, as well as its contribution to its local scene.
- The impact of the proposed works on the significance of the building. *As shown, the proposed works sustain the significance of the building.*
- The extent to which the proposed works would bring substantial community benefits for example, by contributing to the area's economy or the enhancement of its local environment.' [P.22, Para 5.13]. *As shown, the proposed works will enable the school to safely continue in their role as an education provider for the local community.*

Planning Policy Wales (PPW)

'There should be a general presumption in favour of the preservation or enhancement of a listed building and its setting, which might extend beyond its curtilage.' [P.130, Para 6.1.10].

The proposed works support both the preservation and enhancement of Gaer Primary School. Removing the later, deteriorated lantern will address the long-standing source of water-ingress affecting the assembly hall and will better protect the historic fabric below. Aesthetically, the reinstatement of the continuous roof plane will remove a visually intrusive and bulky addition, resulting in a calmer and more coherent roofscape. The intervention is discreet, visually recessive and sensitive to the school's mid-century architectural character, ensuring that the building's significance is preserved and subtly enhanced.

7.0. Summary

- 7.1. We believe that the proposed works are proportional to address ongoing issues of water-ingress, fabric deterioration and thermal weakness associated with the existing lantern. The scheme has been carefully developed with due regard to national and local planning, heritage policy and guidance relevant to the Grade II listed Gaer Primary School.
- 7.2. The overall aim of the proposals is to deliver a discreet and sensitively designed intervention that preserves the architectural character of the school whilst improving its long-term performance. By reinstating the continuity of the roof plane and retaining the internal reveals as evidence of the building's evolution, the works will support the continued safe, functional and sustainable use of the school as an educational facility for the community.

8.0. Design and Access Statement

8.1. Layout

The overall layout of the property is not affected by the proposals. The extent and impact of the proposed works – limited to the removal of the existing lantern, the infilling of the roof opening and associated making-good – are set out in the preceding sections of this Heritage Impact Statement.

8.2. Character & Appearance

The proposed works will have a limited impact upon the character and appearance of Gaer Primary School. Removing the later, non-original lantern will eliminate an incongruous feature and reinstate the intended continuity of the roof plane, resulting in a quieter and more coherent roofscape. Retaining and making-good the internal reveals ensures that evidence of the building's evolution remains readable. Overall, the intervention constitutes a modest but sympathetic enhancement to the building's architectural character.

8.3. Scale

No alterations to the scale of Gaer Primary School are proposed. The works are confined to the footprint of the existing lantern and involve no change to the building's volume or massing.

8.4. Environmental Sustainability

The proposed scheme improves environmental performance in several ways:

- **Weather-tightness** – Reinstating a continuous felted roof plane removes a defective element that has been a persistent source of water-ingress, significantly enhancing the building's weather resistance.
- **Air-tightness and thermal performance** – Removing the lantern will extricate a pronounced thermal weak point and reduce air leakage, offering a modest improvement in energy efficiency appropriate to the existing uninsulated roof construction.
- **Durability** – The proposed materials and detailing follow BS 8217:2005 best practice and provide a robust, low-maintenance solution suited to the long-term conservation of the building fabric.

8.5. Community Safety

The proposed works have no impact on community safety.

8.6. Community Involvement

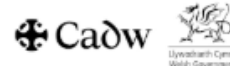
The proposed works will have no impact on community involvement.

8.7. Access

The proposed works will have no impact on access.

Appendix A – Cadw's Listing Description

Full Report for Listed Buildings



The list description is not intended to be a complete inventory of what is listed: it is principally intended to aid identification. By law, the definition of a listed building includes the entire building (i) and any structure or object that is fixed to the said building and ancillary to it and (ii) any other structure or object that forms part of the land and has done so since before 1 July 1948, and was within the curtilage of the building, and ancillary to it, on the date on which said building was first included in the list, or on 1 January 1969, whichever was later.

Summary Description

Reference Number	Building Number	Grade	Status	Date of Designation	Date of Amendment
22667		II	Designated	15/11/1999	
Name of Property		Address			
Gaer County Primary School					

Location

Unitary Authority	Community	Town	Locality	Easting	Northing
Newport	Gaer		Gaer	329651	186896
Street Side		Location			
E		Prominently located on the E side of Gaer Road, opposite the junction with Lansdowne Road. Set within expansive grounds.			

Description

Broad Class	Period
Education	

History

Built 1949-53 by Johnson Blackett FRIBA, architect to Newport Borough Council. Contractors: D.H. Broad Ltd of Worthing and J.H. Herbert & Son of Newport. The school formed part of the extensive surrounding Gaer Estate development, also by Blackett - both estate and school won the 1951 Festival of Britain Award of Merit, and also, in the same year, the Ministry of Housing and Local Government Medal. The foundation stone was laid on 7th April 1949 by Alderman T.F. Mooney. Opened 8th November 1953 by the Right Hon. Florence Horsbrugh M.P., Minister of Education. The school provided accommodation for approximately 480 children within twelve classrooms: originally nine classrooms were intended, but another three were added during construction. The prominent sloping site was strikingly used to advantage, providing classrooms and playgrounds on two levels, with the lobby and assembly hall forming the central spine. Four other schools, all by Blackett were also opened the same day, including Alway (begun 1951), Maesglas (begun 1938), Malpas (begun 1949), and St. Julians (incomplete by 1953); except for Maesglas, the schools all served new housing estates, forming part of the Local Authority's programme for new county primary schools. Gaer School was planned before stringent Government regulations on layout and design were carried out from 1951, retaining the characteristic 'finger-plan' based on corridors to give cross-ventilation and lighting: this echoed Government thinking following the Butler Act of 1944, which gave rise to a huge expansion in school building under constrained post-War economic circumstances.

Exterior

The plan consists of two parallel classroom ranges terraced on sloping site, with taller N-S cross range (assembly hall and dining room) towards W end. E ends of ranges terminate in cloakroom/lavatory blocks. Walls faced in hand-made brown brick: flat roofs with deep anti-glare overhangs. Construction mostly steel-framed with precast concrete roofs made in situ. Steel windows (replaced in plastic to W side of assembly hall). Entrance (S) front has entry well to l. of centre, in line with taller cross range, set behind a broad flight of steps. Triple doors within concrete storm-canopy which has tapering sides. To l. and slightly set back, is lower administration block, which has continuous row of ten 6-pane steel windows. W end of admin. block with central door within storm-canopy and six-pane window each side. To r. of main entry is long classroom range, which has row of thirteen 18-pane windows extending to eaves-height. Range terminated by lower square cloakroom block, slightly set back, which has S front having central paired doors and three oculi each side. E face with central doors and two oculi each side. On W face of range, near entry is a foundation stone: nearby on the S face is a circular Festival of Britain award plaque. Rear elevation of classroom range has full-length flat-roofed corridor range with narrow row of windows above providing top-lighting for the classrooms. Corridor range with continuous fenestration and central door.

Cross-range is taller with low rectangular SW clock tower (simple clock-face to S; hands removed) rising above lobby: three oculi to W arranged vertically, with projecting flue to l. Tall windows in five bays lighting assembly hall to W, replaced in plastic. E elevation has 24-pane tall steel windows in six bays, rising above flat-roofed corridor range, which has continuous glazing. At N end of assembly hall is a large roof-light with tapered sides and pyramidal roof. NW classroom range has S elevation with 18-pane windows in eight bays, rising to eaves height: N elevation has long row of windows for corridor flanked by doorways, that to the l. within a concrete canopy. Continuous top-lighting for classrooms above. Terraced NE classroom range has elevations similar to S classroom range, with E cloakroom block retaining original flat-roofed top-lighting.

Dining hall/ canteen wing projects N, in line with assembly hall. W and E elevations of dining hall has six bays with tall 10-pane windows. Wing narrows to centre forming T-plan; two-bay lower service block to N.

Two small terraced playgrounds to E. Lower playground has small flat-roofed building to the NE, originally used by the gardener.

Interior

Top-lit lobby, present arrangement replacing original small glass oculi. Steps directly from lobby into assembly hall: steps split into three by metal balustrades, which have a simple geometric pattern. Hall has stage at N end. Stage area has natural lighting from a safety lantern, designed to allow the escape of smoke in the event of fire. Axial corridors off lobby serving admin range (W) and classrooms (E). Cloakroom at end of S classroom range, originally top-lit with panels of small glass oculi, which have been roofed over. Lavatories with drying room adjacent. Corridors run along N sides of ranges. N-S link-corridor with two short flights of steps running along E side of assembly hall. Rear range contains classrooms with axial corridor. Dining room projects to N in line with assembly hall: kitchens beyond.

Reason for designation

Listed as an exceptionally well-preserved primary school, the centrepiece of the contemporary Gaer Estate, the whole ensemble being among the best post-War residential developments in Britain. Gaer School is an important example of early post-War school design, being a clear example of corridor-based planning, and is highly expressive of the architectural ideals of its time, recognised by its gaining prizes, including the Festival of Britain award of merit.

Appendix B – Site Plan

