

Malpas Park Primary

Response to Residents' Concerns – 2.4m Close Mesh Boundary Fence Installation

Following extensive planning and consultation, involving the Designing Out Crime Officer from Gwent Police, the Education Department at Newport City Council, and representatives from Malpas Park Primary School, a decision was taken to submit a planning application for the installation of a 2.4-metre close mesh security fence around the school boundary.

As detailed within the planning application, the proposed fencing is intended to provide a secure and robust perimeter to safeguard pupils, staff, and visitors. This type of fencing is widely used across school sites in Newport, where a height of 2.4 metres is recommended by the Designing Out Crime Officer at Gwent Police. The officer has been an active member of the working group supporting this proposal, in response to significant and ongoing security concerns raised by the school.

An example of the proposed fencing, identical in specification, has been successfully installed at Tredegar Park Primary School. The close mesh design provides a high level of security while maintaining clear, unrestricted visibility into and out of the site. The proposed black finish offers improved visual clarity when compared to the traditional Newport green. This fencing solution is also considered preferable to vertical bar fencing, which would have a greater visual impact while offering inferior security performance. See image of Tredegar Park fencing, below.



The current boundary fencing presents several safeguarding concerns:

- The existing fencing incorporates footholds within its design, making it easy to climb and therefore presenting a safeguarding risk to pupils and vulnerable adults, particularly during periods of reduced supervision.
- Objects located adjacent to the boundary, including a grit box, a telecommunications cabinet, and a bus stop, further facilitate unauthorised access to the school grounds.
- The school site has been repeatedly subjected to antisocial behaviour, with both youths and adults accessing the grounds to engage in illegal activities out of public view. During the summer term, the Designing Out Crime Officer from Gwent Police identified the school as being highly likely used as a “drop-off and pick-up” point for the distribution of illegal substances.

The school has worked closely with Gwent Police to implement all reasonable mitigation measures within its control. However, it has become evident that the only effective and sustainable solution to address these ongoing security risks is the installation of a purpose-designed fence that cannot be climbed.

Statement from the Headteacher, Malpas Park Primary School

‘My priority has to be the safeguarding of pupils and staff during the school day and unfortunately, society is a very different place now to when the residents purchased their homes, even in Malpas. Some highly concerning incidents involving potential intruders and trespassers with intent to cause damage or harm on the premises of some of Newport schools in recent years, are proof that the risk exists and must be addressed. I would doubt that the resident objectors are aware of the extent to which the premises have been accessed and used as a drop-off and pick-up site for the distribution of illegal substances and the serious hazard this presents to the safety of our youngest pupils on a regular basis. The impact of this is that the Nursery and Reception Garden cannot be used for learning by pupils until it has been checked every day by two adults who, although they ‘sign it off’ as ‘checked and clear’ could well have missed that one small item that could potentially be discovered and consumed by a child.’

Response to Objections Regarding Proposed Boundary Planting

Objections were received during the planning consultation in relation to the proposed planting of hawthorn, primarily due to concerns that it can become overgrown and difficult to manage over time. These concerns have been carefully considered.

In response, the proposal has been revised and the decision taken to replace hawthorn with holly planting. This amendment reflects our commitment to listening to residents’ feedback and ensuring that the development remains appropriate, well managed, and sensitive to its surroundings.

Holly has been selected as a more suitable and stable alternative for the following reasons:

- **Controlled Growth:** Holly has a slower and more predictable growth habit than hawthorn, making it easier to maintain and less likely to become invasive or unmanaged.

- Long-Term Manageability: With routine maintenance, holly retains a neat and structured form, reducing the risk of excessive height or spread.
- Visual Amenity: Holly provides year-round greenery, contributing positively to the appearance of the boundary throughout all seasons.
- Security and Boundary Definition: The dense nature of holly enhances boundary definition and supports the overall security objectives of the scheme without becoming visually dominant.
- Biodiversity Benefits: Holly offers ecological value, providing shelter for birds and other wildlife, while remaining compatible with an urban school environment.

This change demonstrates a proactive and considered approach to addressing local concerns, while still meeting the safeguarding, security, and visual amenity requirements of the site. The revised planting proposal is therefore considered an improvement on the original scheme and one that balances community feedback with practical, long-term site management.

Very Best wishes,

Callum Balfry

