



DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

10th Feb. 2026

**PROPOSED PORTA CABIN REPLACEMENT
SOMERTON PRIMARY SCHOOL
HAWTHORNE AVENUE,
NEWPORT.
NP19 9AB**

Mr. Gareth Draper,
Newport City Council,
Civic Centre,
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NP20 4UR

February 2026

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CONTENTS PAGE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

2.0 SITE & CONTEXT ANALYSIS

- 2.1 Site Description**
- 2.2 Context Analysis**
- 2.3 Site Analysis**

3.0 PLANNING

- 3.1 Pre-planning Advice**
- 3.2 Relevant Planning History**
- 3.3 Relevant Planning Policies**

4.0 DESIGN PROPOSALS

- 4.1 Vision**
- 4.2 The Proposal**
- 4.3 Proposed Design**
- 4.4 Visual Impact**
- 4.5 Accommodation**
- 4.6 Materials**
- 4.7 Parking**
- 4.8 Landscape**
- 4.9 Noise**
- 4.10 Flooding**
- 4.11 Drainage**

5.0 ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

6.0 ACCESSIBILITY

- 6.1 Movement to, from & within the Development**
- 6.2 Accessibility**

7.0 COMMUNITY SAFETY

8.0 CONCLUSION

DESIGN STATEMENT

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The proposed works to which this Design Statement are to replace an existing demountable Unit with a new purpose-built classroom. Demolishing the current badly decayed block and constructing a new timber frame and clad unit. The new accommodation will be of similar dimensions to the existing and will provide space for the activities currently provided.

The existing accommodation is a detached annexe located between the two main Somerton Primary school blocks and on the edge of the school playing field. The Unit is in a very poor state of repair, no longer suitable as a building within in which to 'house' children and fails to provide an environment appropriate teaching or learning. Furthermore, the building is visible from the site entrance and is overlooked by the two adjoining buildings. Including half of the classrooms within the main school building.

Amongst the activities provided within the building are classes and meetings linking the school with the local community – and in its current state does little to encourage confidence or any positivity.

The new purpose-built block will offer a similar amount of floor space but with a new DDA compliant toilet / baby changing room, a cleaner's cupboard / store and kitchen area. The new building will be timber frame, with timber clad walls and a weathertight flat roof. It will be well insulated and fitted with energy efficient appliances, fittings etc. Using Items and arrangements that ensure a level of comfort conducive to learning, using sustainable materials and in line with the Welsh Government moves towards a carbon neutral building stock.

The physical impact on the school and neighbour hood will not differ from the current arrangement. The new building will be of very similar dimensions and proportions. It will be positioned in the same location, orientation and occupy the same footprint. It will be fabricated off site and erected on a new insulated concrete slab, without the steel frame which supports the current porta cabin and as such will have a lower roof level. The proposed finishes will provide a significantly improved aspect for the school and encourage users to participate in the activities offered.

2.0 SITE & CONTEXT ANALYSIS

2.1 SITE DESCRIPTION

The site on which the current and new building is located sits between the arms of two of the school buildings on gently sloping ground. The building is a linear arrangement running Northwest to Southeast with the long elevations facing the school entrance and backing onto the school playing field. The school site being located within the residential area of Somerton and its catchment area includes the surrounding streets and houses.

The proposed block and the lesser of adjoining school buildings are single storey, but the main school building and adjoining residential properties are two storey. The area is well established with a mix of what would have been Council and Private properties either side of wide roadways and footpaths and Somerton School sits within space created by these streets and housing. Soft landscaping within the site and within the adjoining areas is limited but does include some mature trees at plot boundaries and along verges.

2.2 CONTEXT ANALYSIS

Somerton is a residential area East of Newport Centre. In the centre of an area bound by the M4, Southern Distributor Road and the River Usk. Primarily a former Council estate the area features short terraces of two storey rendered dwellings with dual pitched and hipped roofs. Private properties are similar but tend to be detached or semidetached units. Both types of housing benefit from front and rear gardens with public footpaths separating the residential plots from the circulation and estate roads.

The area is served by a number of local separate shops rather than an identifiable shopping centre. Takeaways, hairdressers, car repair shops and local convenience stores are distributed across the area. The area is served by local bus routes and the main South Wales to London rail line crosses the district, although there appear to be no stations or stops.

2.3 SITE ANALYSIS

At its largest the site is some 100m x 50m where it includes the playing field. Some 50m x 20m around the school buildings and the plot on which specific block is located is some 20m x 10m. An area which includes a fenced play space.

The ground slopes from Northwest to Southeast and is accessed centrally along its western elevation via a pathway and steps. Whilst a ramp running from the North and along the face of the front elevation provides access for wheelchairs, prams and trolleys.

The new building is to sit on the same footprint and in the same orientation as the existing school room. Access will be along the same pathways although they will be altered to take account of the lower floor level.

3.0 PLANNING

3.1 PRE-PLANNING ADVICE

Whilst the proposed works are well known and have been in discussion for some time no formal approach has been raised with the planning authority.

3.2 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

05/1476:

ERECTION OF A COMMUNITY BUILDING

A Planning Application for the current Community Building appears to have been submitted on 08 Nov. 2005, and a decision issued on 11 April 2008.

However, there are no other records available on the Planning Application portal.

3.3 RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES

The proposed works are to replace an existing building, on an existing plot and for the same use as existing. The new block will be replacing the existing in like for like manner. Nor is the building in any way controversial. The new block will not result in any changes in pupil, staff or visitor numbers, either by vehicle or on foot. And as such will comply with the general and particular requirements of the Planning Policies included within the Planning Policy Wales – Edition 12 published 2024, and the adopted Newport, Local Development Plan.

Principle of Development

As confirmed in the above although the new building is not an exact replacement it is as similar as makes no difference. The footprint, length, breadth and height are substantially the same as the building they are replacing. The elevations of the building are to be vertical timber cladding not an exact copy of the existing but of a similar image and appropriate to the 'temporary' appearance of the block.

Character and Appearance

The new building will be of similar character and appearance to the existing. Notably smaller than the primary school buildings both physically and aesthetically. The building will however be of a high standard with stained vertical timber boarding; polyester powder coated aluminium screens and a matching access door. The flat roof will match the adjoining flat roof blocks, finished with weatherproof membrane.

Amenity

The new building is to provide a replacement for the existing building and ensure that an existing amenity is retained. An amenity for the school and the local neighbourhood; a classroom, meeting space and centre for Somerton.

Highway Safety

The proposed new block will cater to the same users as current and will not result in any increase in vehicle or pedestrian numbers or movements.

The current 9No. car parking spaces will be retained as will the current footpaths.

Ecology

The Ecology Officer Matthew Harris has been consulted about the proposed works and noted that demountable are rarely suitable habitats for bats, being too hot in the summer and too cold in the winter. He has however asked that the following advisory note to be added to the planning notice.

Bat Advisory Note

Bats often roost in houses and other buildings, and work on these buildings may disturb a bat roost. All bats and their roosts are protected against disturbance under UK and European legislation. If works are planned on a building in which bats are known to be roosting, Natural Resources Wales (NRW) must be contacted for advice.

If work has already commenced and bats are found, or if any evidence that bats are using the site as a roost is found, work should cease and NRW should be contacted immediately.

Where there is a likelihood that bats are present, or where bats are found to be present, a suitably qualified and experienced ecological consultant should be contracted to provide an assessment of the impact of the proposed works, and undertake bat surveys if necessary.

Where bats or their roosts are present, no works of site clearance, demolition or construction should take place unless a licence to disturb these species and/or their roosts has been granted in accordance with the relevant legislation. Otherwise, a prosecution may result.

NRW can be contacted at:-

*Natural Resources Wales, Tŷ Cambria, 29 Newport Road, Cardiff CF24 0TP,
0300 065 3000*

Bat Conservation Trust can be contacted at:-

*5th Floor, Quadrant House, 250 Kennington Lane, London, SE11 5DR,
0845 1300228*

The proposed works will also include bird boxes and wildflower seeding in the grassed area fronting the primary elevation of the new block. Locations for two bird boxes are shown on the proposed elevations.

Land Drainage

The hard landscaped area of the new block and the pathways to the main entrance are as existing. As a result there will be no increase in rainwater runoff and no change in demand on the drains.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Liability.

As a community building itself and the proposed building is not creating either residential or commercial floorspace it would not be CIL liable.

Conclusion

The proposed works are for a like for like replacement, comply with the relevant regulations and guidelines. The new works will enhance the existing facilities and amenity resource. And as such should be granted Planning Approval.

4.0 DESIGN PROPOSALS

4.1 VISION

As a replacement for an existing building there is no great vision for the works. Rather the renewal of an existing vision. A stand-alone extension to the existing school facilities. A multi-use open space for use by the school and the local community. Accessible by arrangement during school hours, as well as before and after. Providing a physical space in which to develop links between the school and surrounding neighbourhood.

4.2 THE PROPOSAL

The client requires a replacement for the existing decayed and decaying demountable unit. A unit that as well as providing dry weather tight accommodation suitable for learning and within an envelope that attracts attention for all the right reasons.

The proposal includes an open classroom / meeting space with DDA WC, kitchen space and store, connected to the existing mains services. Accessible to all comers and where appropriate outside normal school hours.

4.3 PROPOSED DESIGN

The proposed design comprises a timber framed structure with timber clad, walls and a flat roof with single ply weatherproof membrane. A large, glazed screen of polyester powder coated aluminium double glazing creates a feature to the front elevation whilst a matching single door provides regular access. The patio door screen can be opened when the weather allows,

The structure will be well insulated with boards between and across the internal face of the wall and roof structure. The internal partitions are to be of similar construction but with dense mineral fibre insulation between studs for acoustic separation rather than thermal improvement.

Externally access is to be along the current footpaths. Remodelled to suit the new levels. And the existing grassed areas between the block and site entrance are to be scarified and seeded with wildflower mix.

4.4 VISUAL IMPACT

Visually the volume and elevations of the new accommodation will remain as existing but will be significantly improved. Rather than a patchwork pattern of differing shades of blue and green above a blackened skirt and with projecting square windows. The new block will feature vertical timber clad walls set close to the existing ground, with a large feature glazed screen and matching entrance door. Access to and into the new accommodation will be along the current pathways

4.5 ACCOMMODATION

As referenced in the above the new accommodation is limited to a single open classroom area with kitchen to one end and a DDA WC with separate cleaners' cupboard at the other.

4.6 MATERIALS

The new block is to be finished with stained timber cladding, colour coated polyester powder coated aluminium double-glazed doors / screens and a single membrane roof. The pathways to the entrance door are to make use of the existing decorative slabs. And the existing soft finished play space and perimeter fencing is to be re-erected in the existing location.

4.7 PARKING

The schools existing car parking arrangements will be retained and remain as existing. And there will be no change in requirements or provision.

4.8 LANDSCAPING

The existing hard landscaping will remain much the same as existing but remodelled to suit the reduced floor level and the soft landscaped areas are to remain in their current form but seeded with wildflower mix.

4.9 NOISE

The new building is separated from the existing school buildings but located between them in such a way as to create a buffer to any sound coming from the new building. Not that much noise will be generated within a classroom or meeting space.

4.10 FLOODING

The existing school site is and will remain outside of any flood risk and will not increase the flood risk anywhere else.

4.11 DRAINAGE

The new building will make full use of the existing foul and surface water drains. And will not involve any increase in volume or demand.

5.0 ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

The new accommodation is to be built with materials obtained from sustainable sources or capable of being recycled. The accommodation will be better insulated and as such run more efficiently. The building will also be fitted with LED light fittings and point of use water heaters.

All new materials will be selected so as to minimise impact on the environment and be obtained from sustainable sources. All insulation is to be zero Ozone Depletion Potential and timber is to be certified as coming from sustainable forests.

6.0 ACCESSIBILITY

6.1 MOVEMENT TO, FROM AND WITHIN DEVELOPMENT

Movement to and from the school will remain as existing

6.2 ACCESSIBILITY

Access within the school perimeter will remain as existing, as will the pathways to the new block. The only difference being that floor level of the new block will be lower. Less effort be required to reach the building threshold which will provide level access into the accommodation.

7.0 COMMUNITY SAFETY

The condition of the existing building invites the attention of vandals to the building and school site. Its replacement will be an significant improvement and attract the more desirable attention of people making use of the facilities. Working with the school to educate themselves and their children.

8.0 CONCLUSION

The proposed accommodation is an improvement, but in keeping with the existing accommodation. The new building will be an asset to the school and community and as such should be granted planning approval.