

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

Incorporating Design & Access Statement

Newport City Council

15/01/26

Issue 01

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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 the proposed replacement of a roof lantern above the stage in the assembly hall.

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 energy efficiency;

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;
- Installation of new powder-coated aluminium roof lantern;
- 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. Installation of new pyramid roof lantern:

3.2.1. A new pyramid (powder-coated aluminium) roof lantern – approximate size: 2470 x 2470mm – will be installed within the existing opening and finished to RAL 7016 (Anthracite Grey).



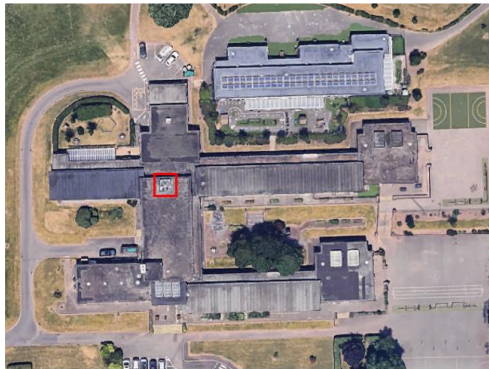
Left: Indicative CGI mock-up of proposed lantern (external)



Left: Indicative CGI mock-up of proposed lantern (internal)

The existing lantern rooflight was not a part of the architect's original designed scheme. It was added a later date – most likely the 1970s – to improve natural light levels on the stage in the assembly hall below. Originally, there was no rooflight in this location. The new rooflight has been chosen so as not to confuse the as-designed scheme, ensuring that it remains an easily readable later addition. A lower profile modern unit has been chosen to blend in more with the surrounding roof finish, thereby preserving the overall character of the building. The specification – particularly the neutral IGU and dark, recessive frame colour – ensures compatibility with the historic aesthetic whilst improving thermal performance and weather-resistance. The

intervention will have a neutral visual impact and significantly enhance the building's ability to remain weathertight.



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 (circa early 1950s). Note absence of rooflight in question.

3.3. Making-good roof finishes:

3.3.1. The interface between the new roof lantern and the existing felt roof covering will be sufficiently dressed in line with BS 8217:2005 best practice.

This work is necessary to reinstate the continuity of the roof covering and ensure the correct integration of the new roof lantern. Their visual impact will be minimal as only matching materials and traditional techniques will be used.

3.4. Internal making-good:

3.4.1. The perimeter of the roof lantern reveal will be made-good to provide a clean and stable finish.

These repairs are necessary to help restore the interface between the roof lantern frame and the historic ceiling finishes, ensuring a neat appearance and preventing further moisture migration into the building fabric. 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. Whilst the introduction of a modern roof lantern will result in a noticeable visual change when compared with the existing (circa 1970s) unit, this impact is mitigated by the fact that the current lantern is not contemporary to the original design and is of limited architectural or historic merit. The proposed replacement has been selected to reduce visual clutter, arrest water-ingress and present a more recessive intervention that avoids competing with the building's significant architectural features.
- 4.3. Collectively, the removal of the deteriorating lantern and its replacement with a simple pyramid roof lantern will have a neutral-to-positive effect in addressing accumulated maintenance issues and ensuring the continued safe and functional use of the assembly hall below. The intervention will help to safeguard the long-term performance of the roof whilst avoiding unnecessary conjectural reconstruction.
- 4.4. The physical impact of the proposals on the historic fabric will be minimal, being largely confined to the footprint of the later twentieth-century lantern. The proposed roof lantern utilises the existing roof opening with only minor adjustments, thereby limiting the need for invasive works and ensuring the original 1950s roof structure is preserved as far as possible.
- 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 no heritage significance. The retention of the historic roof form and structure ensures that evidential value remains intact.
 - Historical value: Historical value will be preserved as the replacement removes a non-original element and avoids introducing a misleading reconstruction. The school's historical narrative and architectural evolution remain clearly legible.
 - Aesthetic value: Aesthetic value will be retained and modestly enhanced. The modern roof lantern presents a visually quieter intervention that reduces the bulk and visual intrusion of the existing unit, helping to better reveal the original 1950s roof profile.
 - 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. Written response from Laura Smith dated 3rd October 2024:

"I visited the school last Thursday and walked through the issues with Natascha. I am happy for this lantern to be removed given it's a safety hazard or for some temporary covering beneath whilst an appropriate way forward is agreed to.

The options are to replace the roof lantern like for like (or with something more durable), replace with maybe a flat skylight, or to remove and cover over the lantern opening. The latter is my least preferable, as this would remove any natural light into the building but also remove any evidence of this feature being there. If this was preferred it is likely we would need the feature recording properly. I would recommend each option is considered, but all would require listed building consent."

5.3. 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 replace this rooflight with a modern alternative given that it is unoriginal and in very poor condition.

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 proposed lantern replacement is clearly modern whilst remaining subservient to building's historical and architectural form.*

'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 new unit has been chosen to enhance the aesthetic value of the school whilst ensuring that it remains visually subordinate. In contrast to the existing, the proposed replacement will adopt a lower-profile form with slimmer framing and a simplified geometry, reducing its visibility when viewed from both ground level and surrounding vantage points.* 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 performance characteristics of the building are respected through improving thermal efficiency and weather resistance whilst retaining appropriate levels of natural daylight. High-quality materials and workmanship will ensure durability, visual compatibility with historic fabric and adherence to conservation best practice.*

'...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 new lantern will improve thermal performance in line with Part L through the use of neutral solar-gain insulating glazing units with a U-value of 1.1W/m²K, reducing heat loss and condensation risk at roof level whilst remaining compatible with the building's established ventilation strategy and the significance of the school.*

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 aim to both preserve and enhance Gaer Primary School. A new rooflight will address the cause of prolonged water-ingress into the assembly hall and protect the historic fabric making-up this space. Aesthetically, the roofscape will be much improved with the removal of the visibly deteriorated and bulky existing lantern. The new low-profile roof lantern is designed to be subservient to the wider building and site.

7.0. Summary

- 7.1. We believe that the proposed works are proportional to address ongoing issues of water-ingress, energy inefficiency and maintenance associated with the existing rooflight lantern. The works have 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 provide a discreet and sensitively designed intervention which preserves the architectural character of the school whilst improving its long-term performance. This will help ensure that the building can continue to function safely and effectively 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 have been addressed in the preceding parts of the Heritage Impact Statement.

8.2. Character & Appearance

The proposed works have a limited impact upon the character and appearance of Gaer Primary School. The new unit is lower-profile and more discreet than the existing rooflight, reducing visual prominence whilst retaining the established position and form. Overall, it provides a modest, sympathetic improvement to the roofscape.

8.3. Scale

No alterations to the scale of Newport Civic Centre are proposed.

8.4. Environmental Sustainability

The new roof lantern offers an improvement on the environmental performance of the existing unit:

- **Thermal efficiency** – a 'Neutral Solargain' Insulated Glass Unit (IGU) with a 1.1W/m²K U-value is a high-performance double-glazed unit that offers both excellent thermal insulation (low U-value) and effective solar control.
- **Durability** – Robust materials have been selected to provide long-term resilience and low maintenance.

8.5. Community Safety

The proposed works have no impact on community safety.

8.6. Community Involvement

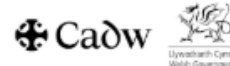
The proposed works will have no impact on community involvement.

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

