



## **Planning Application Reference: 2020/00874/RG3**

### **St. Nicholas Church In Wales Primary School**

**The Community Council continues to **object** to the proposals set out in this planning application.**

The purpose of Pre-Application Consultation is to involve and empower communities in shaping the places that they live and to tackle issues ahead of the planning stage to avoid, or minimise, objections to significant developments.

St Nicholas has no community building. No pub. No village hall. The proposal for a “Community School”, offering facilities such as a hall and sports courts, should have huge support from residents.

However, **there is significant community opposition to the current proposal**, with residents continuing to voice objections that must be considered carefully and addressed. The decision regarding the new school will shape the village of St Nicholas for eternity.

Key points of objections are:

1. Building into the countryside
2. Inappropriate design & materials by the Conservation Area
3. Loss of Public Open (Sports) Space
4. Disruption of teaching/learning during construction
5. Loss of mature trees
6. Failure to tackle traffic issues – with a concern for safety and access for emergency service vehicles to nearby homes

These issues should have been addressed before we reached this late stage of the planning process.

## 1. Building into the countryside

The proposed school is sited behind the existing school building with open countryside on three sides, which is considered to conflict with LDP Policy MD1-1. The school, higher than most of the buildings around it, would be a prominent feature of the Ely Valley & Ridge Slopes Special Landscape Area. The applicant has failed to provide evidence to show that the development will not harm the Special Landscape Area – LDP policy MD8-3.

## 2. Inappropriate design & materials by the Conservation Area

It's proposed that the school will be faced by brick walls, just like all other schools of this type. The facings of surrounding buildings are either rendered or of stone. Peter Thomas (Conservation and Design) of the Vale of Glamorgan Council (VOGC) has suggested that a more sensitive material than brick should be used to face the building. The proposed building is a good fit for Barry and Llantwit Major where near identical buildings have already been built. The school was designed predominantly for urban areas.

We think that this is a public building in a prominent and sensitive location and that the design must be appropriate for the Conservation Area of a minor rural settlement. The new school in Pendoylan shows how good design can enhance a place for the benefit of all. The design and finish of this “off-the-shelf” design is not appropriate in this location.

The Community Council does not believe that the design positively contributes to the context and character of the surrounding natural and built environment – LDP Policy MD2-1 – in fact, the proposed building will detract from the character of the village.

## 3. Loss of Public Open (Sports) Space

In August 2020, there were 451 electors in St Nicholas and 346 in Bonvilston. This puts the total population of St Nicholas at about 500 people when children are considered. LDP policy MD3 seeks outdoor sports provision of 1.6 hectares per 1,000 population.

The only outdoor sports provision (excluding the golf course) for the communities of St Nicholas and Bonvilston, are the two sports pitches on the village field behind the school (Confirmed by Victoria Robinson (VOGC) at a Planning Committee Meeting in July 2020). Yet, according to the applicant, this 1.1 hectares of outdoor sport provision results in St Nicholas having an overprovision of outdoor sport facilities of 1.89 ha.

Most of the outdoor sports space the applicant refers to in the application is in the village of Wenvoe, a 3.5-mile drive away, via Culverhouse Cross.



The proposal will provide in the village of St Nicholas:

- A sports pitch 80x45m = 0.36 hectares
- A Multi-Use Game Area (MUGA) 37x18.5m = 0.068 hectares

This is a total area of 0.428 hectares of outdoor sports space, with informal play space. LDP policy MD3 suggests that the 500 inhabitants of St Nicholas require 0.8 hectares of outdoor sports provision and 0.28 hectares of informal play space.

The applicant has met the minimum requirement for outdoor space around a school by counting the Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) twice – once as a sports area, and then as a social area. This is not desirable.

Due to a lack of engagement by the applicant/developer, we are unable to comment on what the Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) might offer the community. Will it be offering the community a facility for sports like tennis, & basketball? The proximity to a residential boundary and potential for noise nuisance is a concern (LDP Policy MD5-6).

#### 4. Disruption of teaching/learning during construction

We agree with Richard Romero (Technical Officer – VOGC) that there needs to be a **Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP)** due to the proximity of the development to residential boundaries, and also to the school where children will continue to be taught. Following the 2020 closure of the school due to Covid 19, any further **disruption of the education of pupils at the school must be avoided**. We would like this to be available before the planning application is determined.

#### 5. Loss of mature trees

The loss of two mature trees at the front of the site now appears to be simply for the provision of a footway that will link the two pedestrian entrances to the school. As pedestrians will take the first entrance they reach, this section of footway linking the two pedestrian entrances is unnecessary, and will not be used. The applicant has duties in under the Environment (Wales) Act, and healthy, mature trees must be preserved.

#### 6. Failure to tackle traffic issues – with a concern for safety and access for emergency service vehicles to nearby homes

The development and related transport proposals would result in the intensification of the use by vehicles of a substandard access with inadequate visibility splays onto the public highway, to the detriment of highway safety. The development would, therefore, be contrary to policies MD2-6 Design of New Developments of the Vale of Glamorgan Adopted Local Development Plan 2011. This states that development proposals should:



*Have no unacceptable impact on highway safety nor cause or exacerbate existing traffic congestion to an unacceptable degree*

The applicant has failed to resolve the parking issues around the school, or ensure that Emergency Service vehicles can negotiate the narrow streets at “peak times”.

The proposed footways on Community Council owned land and the adopted highway are inappropriate for the Conservation Area. Access to the cottage, Ty-to-Gwelt, may be compromised as a consequence. No detail is available on the possible materials that might be used in their construction.

The proposals by the applicant in regards to addressing the issues around the highway network and parking are top-down impositions and have been presented with no input from the community.

The highways proposals fail to make any consideration of larger vehicles, including the agricultural machinery that travels through the narrow streets of the village. The transport documents demonstrate the problems associated with remote consultants making plans for communities without engaging with those communities for essential local knowledge.

The Community Council awaits a credible proposal that ensures the enlarged school, and the traffic it will generate, has no negative impact on the amenity and character of the locality by way of noise, traffic congestion and parking (LDP MD5-6).

If residents had been engaged, and the Community Council been involved as a partner in the decision-making process, we would have a proposal for a new school that resolved the issues associated with the school and had community support rather than opposition. Whilst there may be political and financial pressures to develop a new school quickly and dismiss the valid objections, there is a need to go back in the process to correct the many mistakes so that the applicant and planning authority is not held in disrepute.

How will children access coaches for school trips? Will they continue to be walked to the bus stop on the A48, or will a better, safer alternative be available?

The Community Council also seeks assurances that access to community facilities cannot be revoked in the future.

Cllr Ian Perry

For and on behalf of St Nicholas with Bonvilston Community Council

