

Design Statement

Bridgehill, Michaelston-y-Fedw

Proposed domestic extension

May 2022



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1.0 Project Outline

- 1.1 Arden Kitt associates have been appointed prepare designs for a new extension to the side and rear of the existing property.
- 1.2 The brief for the project is to provide a simple, considered and well designed addition to the building that is suitable for the property owner's needs going forward. The applicant is keen to maintain the character of the existing property and, being mindful of the wider character of the locality, seeks a design response that complements both the existing house and its setting. Designs have been developed in response to the existing site & buildings therefore, with a view to minimising the physical footprint and impacts of the extension on the host dwelling, its setting, and the environment more broadly.
- 1.3 This Design Statement is written in support of a planning application for the extension, including a summary of the design rationale for the proposal as presented.

2.0 Site Analysis/ Topography

- 2.1 The application property sits above a bend in the Rhymney River, approximately 1.2km north of Michaelston-y-Fedw, and adjacent to Bridge Farm & Bridgefield House. A row of domestic properties, Minorca Cottages, is located 200m north of the application property. 240m to the south are two substantial residential properties (just outside the CCBC boundary), marked as Mill House on Ordnance Survey records.
- 2.2 Whilst the site is elevated above the Rhymney River it is screened by a substantial and mature wooded river bank to the south and west. Views to the site from the north are obscured by Bridgefield House, trees and boundary hedgerows. In long views from the east the property reads as part of the cluster of buildings in and around Bridge Farm.
- 2.3 Neighbouring building forms are generally large agricultural types, link houses and large detached properties. The area lacks any dominant architectural character, and includes a mix of styles and materials which are neither rural in appearance or of any special architectural merit that warrants particular attention in terms of an appropriate contextual response. Interventions at the site will therefore remain open to subjective judgement regarding the aesthetic and potential impact of any proposed changes.
- 2.4 Bridgehill is a 1960's/70's styled property that originally included generous fenestration and first floor balconies sheltered by deep roof soffits to the front and rear of the property. A double garage and sun-room to the side of the property are original to the main house. The property has been subject to previous internal alterations and a front infill extension of the original balcony and entrance porch, resulting in a poor quality frontage that isn't commensurate with the property or its wider setting. Presently the house is characterised by white rendered walls, uPVC fenestration, and red/brown clay pan-tile roofs. There is parking for 3 vehicles on the drive, and a further 2 spaces in the garage.



Figure 1 - property frontage



Figure 3 - long view from private farm lane



Figure 2 - front from private lane



Figure 4 - view from public road



Figure 5 - Minorca Cottages



Figure 7 - Bridgefield House



Figure 6 - Bridge Farm



Figure 8 - Bridgefield House & Bridgehill from farm yard



Figure 9 - property obscured from north approach



Figure 11 - property obscured from public road



Figure 10 - property obscured by Bridgefield House landscaping



Figure 12 - property obscured by woodland to south (& west)

3.0 Constraints & Opportunities

- 3.1 The proposed extension presents a clear opportunity to update an existing dwelling for contemporary lifestyles, and together with other improvements to the building it can positively contribute to the locality and help contribute to the mix of available housing types in the borough. The property is well placed in terms of the wider geographic area, being relatively close to Caerphilly, Newport and Cardiff as centres for employment, leisure and entertainment.
- 3.2 Local policies relevant to development in this area are listed in a following section. It is considered that continued use of the house will conform to LDP aims & objectives and have a lasting positive impact resulting from the renewed investment in the property.
- 3.3 Constraints to development include policy requirements relating to countryside development and householder projects. Planning guidance LDP7 for homeowner development acknowledges that good design can enhance a local area, and includes considerations about reducing natural resources. A proposal that balances policy requirements and minimises use of natural resources/ embodied energy is considered appropriate in this case, and the design demonstrates how this balance has been achieved.
- 3.4 Guidance note 2 of LDP7 has been consulted, with the overall height of the extension being lower than the main house, and the materials, fenestration and pitch match the host dwelling & locality. Guidance note 9 has informed the decision to build directly over the garage, reusing existing walls and foundations to support the new works, and including roof trusses that span side to side; all of which help to reduce the embodied energy and natural resources being used. Fewer supporting steels, metal flashings, cavity trays and such like, will all contribute to a more sustainable build therefore. Whilst this approach presents a conflict with guidance note 2 in terms of the extension set-back and roof profile, it is considered more appropriate to offer a solution that prioritises resource efficiency in accordance with guidance

note 9. Consequently, the design seeks to reconcile this by developing a proposal that remains sympathetic to the property and setting, using forms and materials similar to the host dwelling, and taking into account long and short views of the property to ensure minimal visual impact – both in terms of the location of the extension and its aesthetic.

3.5 It is considered that the proposal will enable continued use of the dwelling, and is designed in a manner which will have no adverse impacts on the wider character and visual amenity of the locality.



Figure 13 - site analysis

4.0 Design Development

- 4.1 The proposed design has been prepared with the applicant to ensure it meets their needs for an extended home that respects the character of the locality and the existing building, taking into account local adopted policy guidance.
- 4.2 Several sketch ideas were tested, and reduced to two options for further development: a front gable that provides for a more straightforward structural solution (resource efficient), and a continuation of the main roof (long-house style) that would maintain satisfactory window head heights but require additional steel support. Comparison of the additional volume and visual silhouette for each option was undertaken, and being less additional volume and visual area together with fewer materials required, the gable fronted option was considered an appropriate balance between LDP7 guidance notes 2 & 9.
- 4.3 The design approach is to utilise the “air-space” above the existing garage and minimise the extent of excavations, foundations and ground floor walls – reducing the use of natural resources, and placing the extension in a position of lowest visual impact in the wider landscape setting. This resource efficient response has also informed the decision to extend the front elevation directly over the existing garage walls, and to then span side to side with standard timber roof trusses to minimise use of steel in supporting the roof. In addition a lowering of the roof is then possible, avoiding a conflict between roof eaves and first floor fenestration, and the addition of dormers and similar contrivances (LDP7: note 4) which then become necessary to achieve reasonable head heights about windows.
- 4.4 Due consideration has also been given to the overall composition, taking into account the existing set-back and how changes to the frontage need to balance the asymmetry of the present condition. The proposal therefore takes a holistic view of the property, in order to balance the elevation and to actively improve the aesthetic of the property as seen from the front.

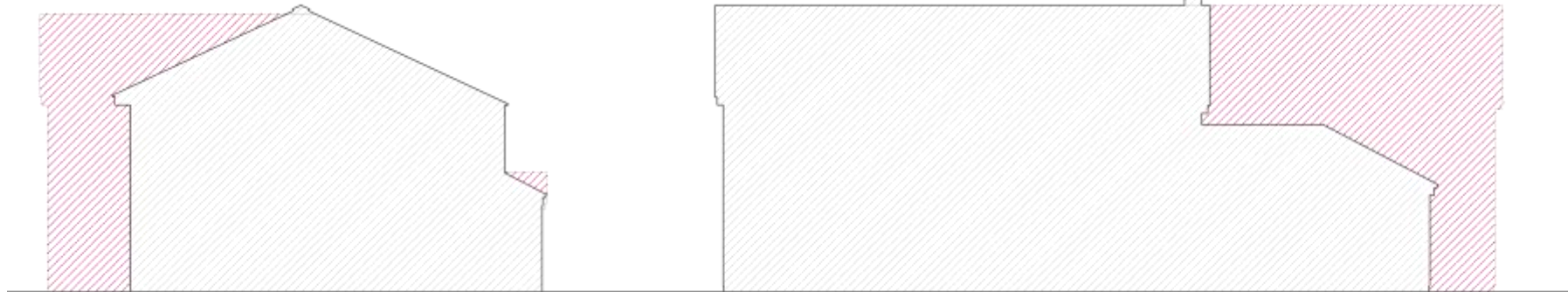
48.8% original volume



FRONT elevation

alterations = 31.5% addition to visual field

alterations = 28.0% addition to visual field



EAST elevation

FRONT elevation

Figure 14 - developed option 1 (+48% existing volume & +28% area of front elevation)



Figure 15 - Developed option 2 (+46% existing volume & 22.5% area of front elevation)

- 4.5 Given the poor quality of the existing front facade it is expected that a re-imagined frontage to the property would therefore be a welcome improvement to the property and the wider setting. The detached nature of the house, being at distance from neighbouring properties, and the mix of styles evident in the locality, are all sound reasons in support of this rationale; being a positive addition with no adverse impacts on neighbours or wider landscape views toward the property.
- 4.6 Wall finishing material will be a rendered finish to match the main house with red/brown clay tiles to match the existing roof. Large windows to match the original property build on the existing character at the rear of the property, and a more traditional approach is adopted at the front elevation to make sense of previous alterations and provide an aesthetic suited to the countryside setting.
- 4.7 The position of the proposed extension and the site topography/ landscape features all ensure that the addition will be hidden from view in terms of the wider setting. Distance from neighbouring properties is such that overbearing/ overshadowing will not be an issue and the height of the extension, being lower than the house, minimises the visual impact of the proposal as viewed from the front.



Figure 16 - view from Bridge Farm (Bridgefield House left, proposed Bridgehill right)

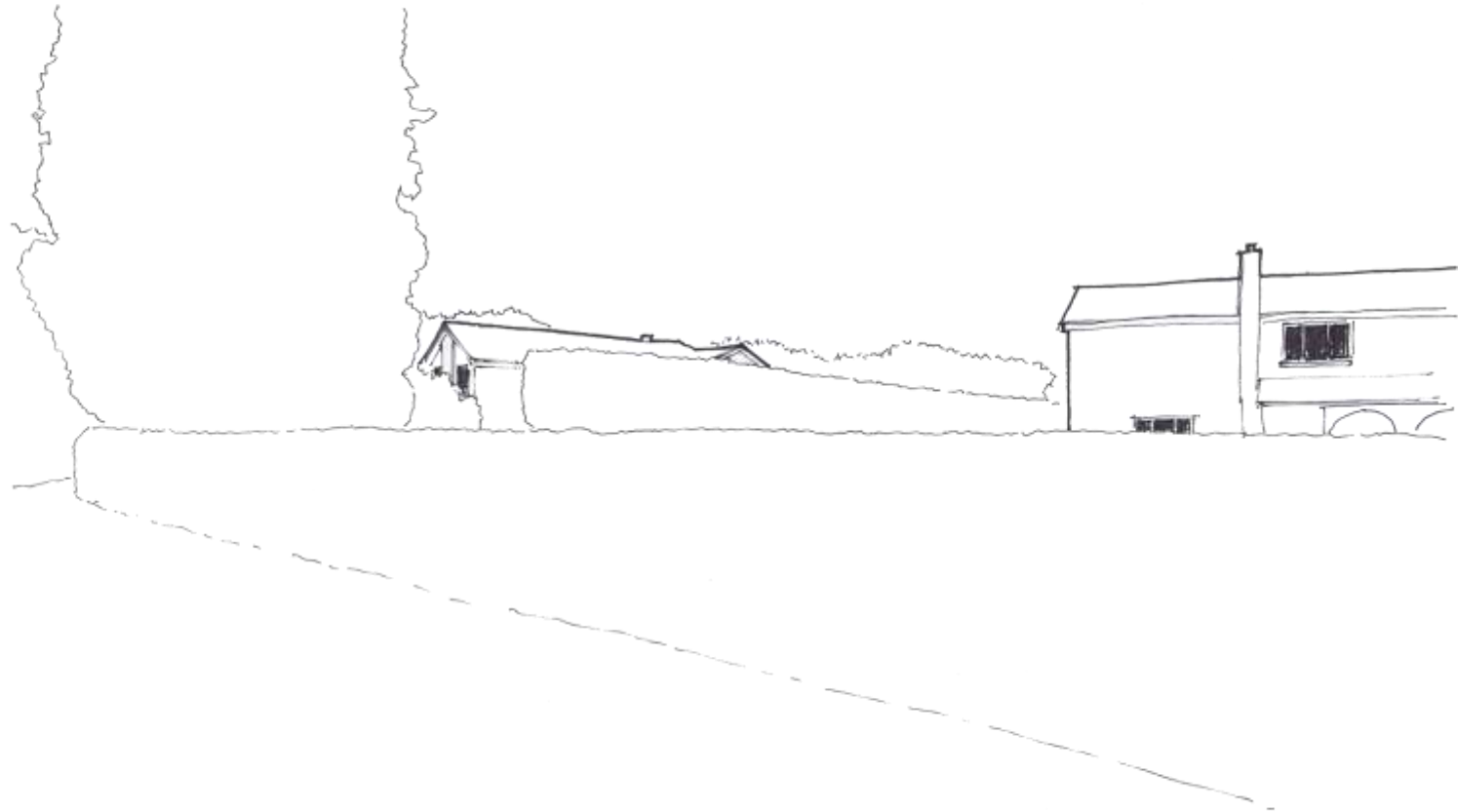


Figure 17 - view from public road (proposed hidden, Bridgefield House visible)

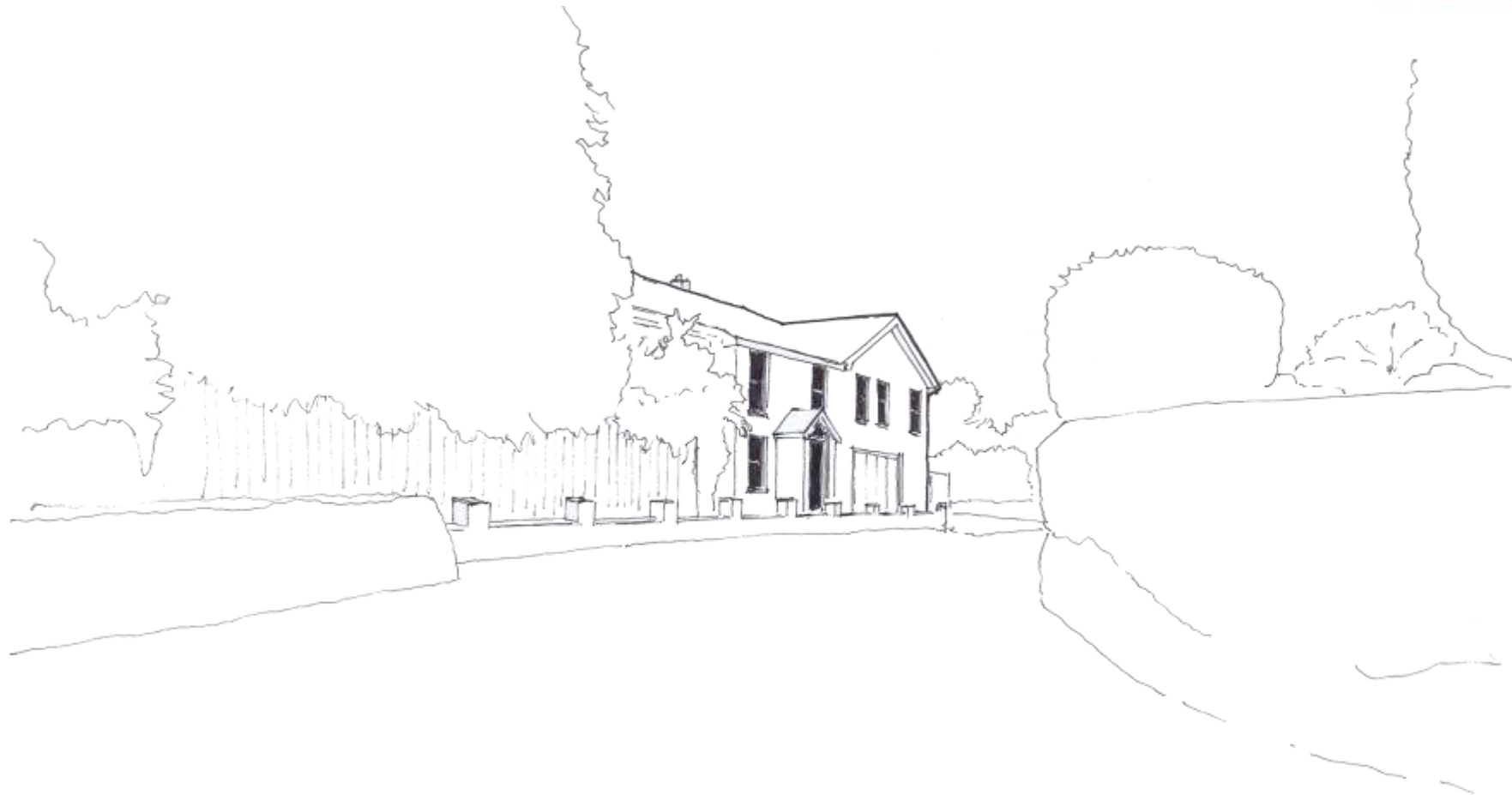


Figure 18 - glancing view from public road toward Bridgehill (as proposed)

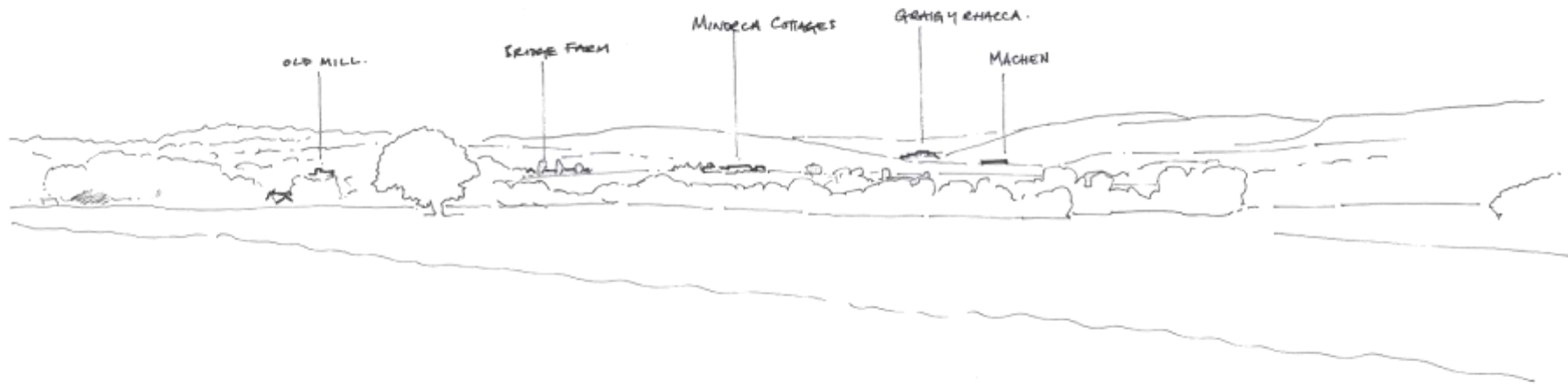


Figure 19 - Wider landscape view from Nant-yr-Ochain (looking west toward Rudry)

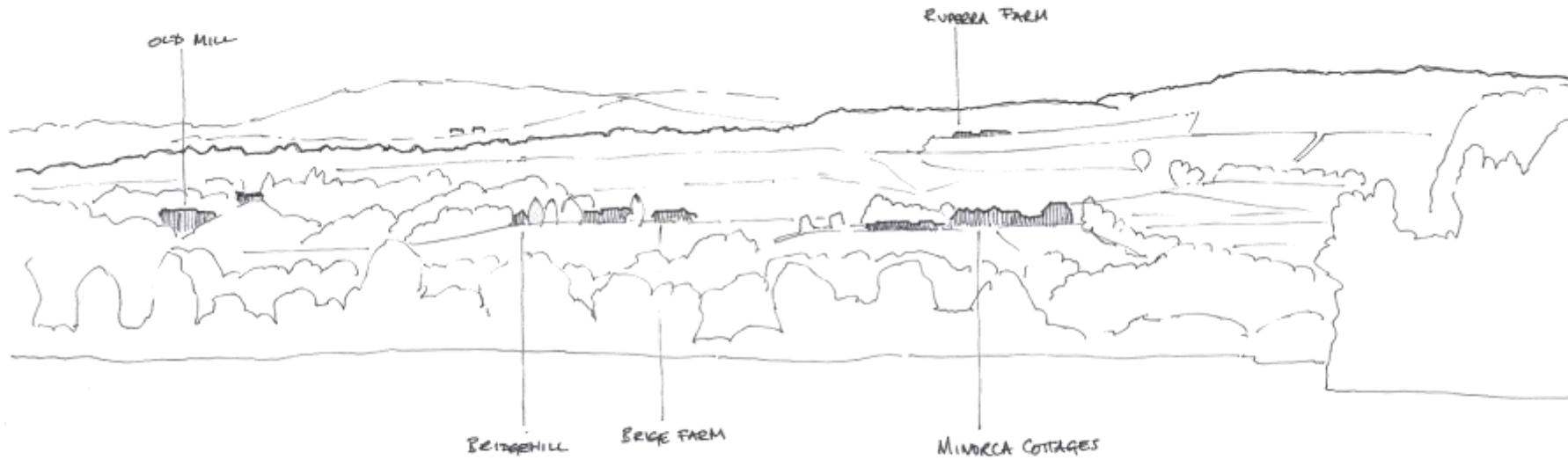


Figure 20 - landscape view from The Hollies (crest of hill opposite Bridgehill)



Figure 21 - CGI of proposal viewed from public road

5.0 Relevant Local Policy: Adopted LDP

5.1 The following local authority LDP guidance and policies are considered appropriate to and are specifically supported by the proposals.

- LDP7: 1,2,4,7,9
- LDP10: 1,3,7,
- SP6: B
- CW2: A, B, C
- CW3: A, C
- CW15: C ii
- CW20: A, C - i, ii, iii

5.2 CW3 & SP21 are met as the maximum number of parking spaces permitted by the policy is 3 + 1 additional visitor space. The retention of the double garage and parking for up to 3 cars at the front of the property therefore complies with the requirements.

5.3 The proposal complies with LDP10 as follows:

- i. Increase in volume is less than 50% original building
- ii. Extension is to the side and rear (located in consideration of visual impact in the landscape)
- iii. Extension roof is set lower than the original
- iv. Extension is to be finished in materials matching the existing property
- v. New walls would be constructed as the originals
- vi. Fenestration, doors, walls and roof all in a style commensurate with that of the host dwelling; the exception being the front elevation which takes into account previous alterations and the context and character of the property's setting – having due regard to LDP7 note 9 regarding resource efficiency.

5.4 Conditions of policy CW20 are met thus:

- A. The proposed use, scale, form, siting, design & materials is commensurate with the established use and character of the existing building; having due regard to neighbouring properties and the wider landscape setting. A minor departure from LDP7 guidance note 2 is considered appropriate set against guidance note 9, and taken together with the improved appearance of the property as a whole when viewed at close quarters.
- C. -
 - i. The scale, form and design of the extension respects the scale and character of the original building
 - ii. The extension does not result in the loss of undeveloped countryside
 - iii. The extension does not result in [any further] domestication or urbanisation of the rural setting

6.0 Character - Proposals

6.1 Objectives:

Sustaining or enhancing local character; promoting legible development that has a clear and understandable layout; promoting a successful relationship between public and private space; promoting quality, choice and variety; promoting innovative design.

6.2 Scheme Specifics:

The proposed extension seeks to sustain the character of the existing building, by utilising similar features, materials and scale to the host dwelling. A roof set down of near 0.5 metres ensures that the addition remains smaller than the original property, and analysis of the silhouette shows it to be less dominant than the considered alternative.

The design pays particular attention to the poor quality of the existing frontage in terms of its relation to the wider setting, neighbouring properties and the manner in which it is viewed from the “public” domain. Spanning the roof sideways as indicated will simplify construction and result in fewer materials being used (particularly large steels and additional supports), thereby helping to maximise resource efficiency. This move also ensures that the roof profile is less dominant when viewed from the adjacent farmyard, thereby reducing the visual impact of the elevation most visible in that direction.

At present the property frontage is also visually imbalanced, with poorly proportioned fenestration and an impermeable façade that detracts from the setting and character of the locality. An improved elevation which balances the existing property features, and using a more traditional aesthetic, is considered appropriate – particularly given the mix of styles in the area that offer no overarching local character which would be advantageous or desirable to use as a precedent. The resulting minor departure from the adopted guidance is considered appropriate in light of the improved aesthetic, minimal landscape impact, and opportunity to minimise embodied energy during construction.

7.0 Environmental Sustainability

7.1 Objectives:

Achieving efficient use and protection of natural resources, enhancing biodiversity, designing for change

7.2 Scheme Specifics:

A suitably insulated building envelop is envisaged for the extension, including details which increase air tightness. The anticipated energy requirement for heating and lighting the proposals will therefore be as low as possible. Renewable technologies can be incorporated at the property where practicable, and (subject to approvals) in a manner which does not detract from the wider area character.

Resource efficiency has also been considered, by designing in a way that minimises additional foundations, supporting steelwork, metal flashings, cavity trays and such like. Smaller, traditionally proportioned windows to the front (north) elevation help minimise winter heat losses, with more generous fenestration to the rear (south) elevation (in keeping with the existing property) accepting more sunlight to reduce energy loads and ensure bright and airy interior spaces.

8.0 Movement

8.1 Objectives:

Promoting sustainable means of travel

8.2 Scheme Specifics:

The property is located near Michaelston-y-Fedw. The nature of the location is such that the use of a private vehicle will be required to access local services, and other modes of transport for onward connections. Existing arrangements at the site will be unaffected by the proposal.

9.0 Community Safety

9.1 Objectives:

Ensuring attractive, safe public spaces and facilitating security through natural surveillance

9.2 Scheme Specifics:

The proposal secures the use of an existing building and ensures continued occupation of the property by owners willing to invest in the locality.

10.0 Access

10.1 Objectives:

- Ensuring ease of access for all
- Adopting inclusive design principles that deliver adequate provision for all people including those with mobility impairments, sensory impairments and learning difficulties.

10.2 Scheme Specifics:

Insofar as the site topography permits, the design does not prejudice access to and from the proposed extension by people with a range of mobility and sensory needs. Level and well lit access, clear way finding features, and accessible fixtures should be achievable to ensure easy access for all users of the buildings.

The proposals do not impede where necessary, the inclusion of fixtures and fittings that meet the needs of people with mobility or sensory impairments. The requirements of Part M of the building regulations should be achievable.

11.0 Conclusions

- 11.1 The addition of the proposed extension as designed will make a significant improvement to the existing dwelling without detriment to the character of the property or its wider setting. Site parameters have been carefully considered and the design responds accordingly, sitting low in the landscape and remaining complementary to the host dwelling.
- 11.2 The proposed extension is considered to be a positive enhancement to existing dwelling, and will maintain a standard of development commensurate with the character of the wider setting and locality. It is hoped that the LPA might therefore look upon the proposals favourably and concur that the proposal as presented is, on merit, a permissible approach for this property.

12.0 Appendix A - Accompanying Information

Information in connection with the application includes.

- This Design Statement
- Design Drawings
- CIL Forms
- Planning Application Forms

13.0 Appendix B – volume calculations

	Volume (m ³)	% original
Original House, Garage & Garden Room	879.3	
Original Porch	15.4	
Total Original Volume	894.7	100%
<i>Prev. 1st Floor Extension front</i>	16.3	1.82%
<i>Current Porch</i>	5.6	0.58%
Proposed works 2022	391.5	43.8%
Total Additions	413.4	46.2%

14.0 Appendix C – considered options of preferred design



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