



Heritage Impact Assessment
Ysgol Plas Brondyffryn, Denbigh
Denbighshire County Council

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Burgess Gate; Goblin Tower and View of Denbigh Castle and Coed Cwningaer from the application site boundary

Executive Summary

This report is submitted in support of a full planning application for a new Ysgol Plas Brondyffryn Special Educational Needs (SEN) School for ages 3-19 at land west of Ystrad Road, Denbigh.

This Heritage Impact Assessment has been written to identify the impact of the proposed development on the significance and setting of heritage assets. This is in accordance with national and local planning guidance contained in the Welsh planning guidance on the historic environment and the local plan. It should be read alongside supporting documents associated with the proposal.

The site is a playing field with pedestrian access from Ystrad Road. It has a public footpath running around its perimeter to the south and west. It lies between two fingers of housing – Clwyd Avenue to the northwest and housing on the east side of Ystrad Road to the east. The southwest of the site is paddock, the west is a football /rugby pitch. Denbigh Leisure Centre lies to the north and Denbigh Castle, some distance away, on a premonitory to the southwest. The proposed development site is 2.35 ha.

The site has no intrinsic significance, but it does form part of the wider setting to the west of Denbigh Castle and may have had historic associative significance associated with a former Deer Park associated with the medieval settlement. The land was truncated following the introduction of the Denbigh, Ruthin Corwen railway line in 1858, which now forms the public footpath and southern perimeter of the site.

The significance and setting of Denbigh Castle, a Grade I listed building and Scheduled Ancient Monument, has been carefully considered as part of the development proposal. The proposals are not considered to adversely impact upon the setting of Denbigh Castle.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This heritage impact assessment has been prepared on behalf of Denbighshire County Council, to accompany a full planning application to facilitate the erection of a new Ysgol Plas Brondyffryn Special Educational Needs (SEN) School for ages 3-19 at land west of Ystrad Road, Denbigh.
- 1.2 The proposal includes, and is described in more detail in Section 6: -
- A new school building
 - The formation of Multi Use Games Areas (2no.),
 - External plant / services area,
 - new 118 space car parking area (including 14 electric charging bays) and minibus parking (4no.), cycle parking (60no.),
 - a new vehicular access off Ystrad Road,
 - community café,
 - landscaping works and all other associated works.
- 1.3 The purpose of the assessment is to identify the significance and settings of the heritage assets that may be affected, and to consider and describe the effects of the proposals to them. It identifies mitigating measures, where necessary, to address this impact.
- 1.4 Under Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, there is a statutory duty of the local planning authority to “have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses” when considering development proposals.

- 1.5 Policies in Chapter 6 of Planning Policy Wales Edition 11 (PPW) (2021), Technical Advice Note 24: The Historic Environment and local development plans, set out national and local planning policy in respect to the conservation of the historic environment, set out national planning policy in respect to the conservation of the historic environment. It states that the planning system should look “to protect, conserve and enhance the significance of historic assets”. The impact of any planning decisions that change the historic environment in terms of its significance and heritage values where they contribute to the character of place must be fully considered by the decision maker.
- 1.6 Historic assets are described within PPW as historic buildings, parks, gardens, landscapes, townscapes, and archaeological sites.
- 1.7 The historic environment is in described in Wales Technical Advice Note 24: Historic Environment, (October 2017) as “All aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time, including all surviving physical remains of past human activity, whether visible, buried or submerged, and deliberately planted or managed.” A historic asset is: “An identifiable component of the historic environment. It may consist or be a combination of an archaeological site, a historic building or area, historic park and garden or a parcel of historic landscape. Nationally important historic assets will normally be designated.”
- 1.8 Setting is not a heritage designation. However, “the setting of an historic asset includes the surroundings in which it is understood, experienced, and appreciated embracing present and past relationships to the surrounding landscape. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral. Setting is not a historic asset but has value derived from how different elements may contribute to the significance of a historic asset”. TAN 24 (paragraph 1.25)
- 1.9 The definition of significance in relation to heritage policy is defined in Conservation Principles for the sustainable management of the historic environment in Wales (Cadw, 2011). “To identify the heritage values of an asset, its history, fabric, and character must first be understood. The relative significance of the different values then needs to be considered. It will be necessary to compare the values of the asset under consideration with others in the locality, region or even nationally, depending on its importance.”
- 1.10 This document has been prepared following several site visits, the most recent in June 2022. It is to be read in conjunction with other associated documents in relation to the planning application.

2.0 The application site and identified heritage assets

- 2.1 The application site is located on land west of Ystrad Road, which is on relatively flat land to the south of, and directly behind Denbigh Leisure Centre and south-east of Denbigh High School.
- 2.2 The site is in proximity to Denbigh Conservation Area, approximately 0.5 mile north and west of the site. The conservation area includes many listed buildings and structures within the boundary, the most significant being Denbigh Castle and Medieval Town, Denbigh Town Walls, Denbigh Friary and Leicester's Church all of which are listed and are also Scheduled Ancient Monuments.
- 2.3 The site chosen is located to the northeast of Denbigh Castle. It is on a flat of grassland presently used as a sports pitch. The Application site extends to 2.55 ha. It is adjacent to an existing public footpath, which links to a network of others, including that through Coed Cwningaer, past the Town Walls and Goblin Tower up to Denbigh Castle.
- 2.4 The designated heritage assets that are most relevant in considering the proposed development are identified below:
- Scheduled Ancient Monument: Denbigh Castle (also listed Grade I)
 - Scheduled Ancient Monument: Town Wall, including North-East, Countess and Goblin Towers (also listed Grade I)
 - Listed Buildings: Numerous, but of most relevance, the Main Building at Howell's School (now Myddleton College – Grade II)
 - Conservation Area: Denbigh
- 2.5 Sites or buildings that are in proximity but are not considered to be affected by the proposal because of their location, such as Plas Pigot, on Ruthin Road have not been discussed in any further detail.



Fig 1. Location plan (Google Maps) - red arrow denotes site; yellow Denbigh Castle; and site location plan (Copyright@ Cassidy and Ashton)

3.0 Historical context

- 3.1 There are many established historical references and authoritative studies on the history and development of Denbigh. A brief chronology of the town is outlined below.
- 3.2 Denbigh was originally a Welsh township, but the castle originated in 1282 on a rocky hilltop following the cessation of the town to Edward I. The castle was constructed under licence from Edward I by Henry de Lacy, Earl of Lincoln. It was constructed in several phases, the first the enclosure of the castle's southern and western boundaries, completed by 1294. The castle and town walls were completed in the early 14th century. This included the Countess and Goblin Tower, the latter a substantial and imposing polygonal tower built over a spring on rock foundations to the west of the castle and to the west of the site.
- 3.3 Burgage plots were established both within and outside the Town Walls. Initially the burgages outside the town walls were on the north slopes, but had expanded beyond the walls, to the north and west, in Tower Lane and Castle Hill. By the early fourteenth century High Street was well established to the north of the castle, with the majority of burgages there including part of what became Vale Street, and an equal, smaller number in Bridge Street to the north, Love Lane to the west, and Park Street to the east.
- 3.4 By the 16th century, the town became one of four administrative capitals in Wales following the Act of Union in 1536. The town expanded in a more formal fashion under the lordship of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, who was bestowed the castle in 1563 by Elizabeth I. At this time several buildings survive from this period of prosperity and building – some attributed to Dudley, including Shire Hall and Leicester's Church, a cathedral that was never completed – and others, such as The Plough, Bridge Street, Plas Clough House, Bryn y Ffynnon and Galch Hill House. The marketplace was positioned at the top of the hill, under the old medieval town, with a linear straight road, Vale Street, and Park Street running parallel to this to its south with Middle Lane connecting them. This is shown in John Speed's map of 1610. The castle was abandoned following the Civil War in the mid-17th century, with pistol and musket ball, plus fragments of lead shot found around Goblin Tower in 2001.

3.5 The 17th and 18th centuries saw further investment of high-quality houses, outside the castle walls such as Grove House, Vale Street – and industries such as leather production and printing -Gwasg Gee - were of high quality. The 19th century saw a period of public buildings and structures erected – the North Wales Asylum to the west of the town, chapels, schools, including Howell’s School, to the east of the castle, Denbigh Infirmary on Ruthin Road, and the railway. It was during the 19th century that ordinary domestic buildings survived in greater numbers and were erected within the walls of the castle.

3.6 The RCAHMW described Denbigh as ‘one of the most complete townscapes in North Wales’ in the early 20th century. It saw further expansion of the town to outer perimeters of the historic core. This included interwar housing to the west of the castle and to the east of the town along Ruthin Road. Relevant to the application site is Clwyd Avenue and modern housing along Ystrad Road.

3.7 Historical context relevant to the site

3.7.1 Denbigh’s Lordship under Henry de Lacy allowed for buildings in the castle and town to be erected. De Lacy owned a demesne manor, with granges, a dovecote, byre, three parks and a deer park in 1284 of over 75 acres.

3.7.1 Park Street was laid out as part of a grid iron street pattern with Vale Street and on former parkland. A smaller deer park is recorded to the southeast of Park Street, on John Speed’s map of 1610.

3.7.2 The tithe map of the 19th century describes most of the land to the west of the castle as Denbigh Parks. This includes the application site. It was owned by Henry Meredith Mostyn Esq. and described as pasture. It may have formed part of the medieval parkland associated originally with De Lacy and later with Robert Dudley, Earl of Lancaster, whose earldoms, and those subsequently owned several such parks in England. Medieval parks included a pale, which was a wide or broad high earth bank and typically on the edge of manors. Parks were originally associated with sporting use, such as hunting, but also for pastoral use.

- 3.7.3 The First Edition six inch to a mile Ordnance Survey Map of 1878 shows Denbigh Infirmary built on Ruthin Road (1813) and the railway cutting for the Denbigh, Ruthin and Corwen line through the land (1858). This now forms part of the southwestern public footpath of the site. By this time, Howell's School has been erected to the west of the site to the northeast and below Goblin Tower and the medieval walls. The fields including that of the application site is described as 'Parc'.
- 3.7.4 The situation remains largely unchanged in Ordnance Survey mapping of 1898, but by 1914, pockets of development exist of the corner of Ystrad Road and Ruthin Road, and the site to the east of the railway line known as Parc, rather than the application site. The map of 1948 shows further development along Ruthin Road and by 1953 the school had been built. Clwyd Avenue had been laid out but not built. The former parkland was further encroached in the 20th century along St, David's Lane. By 1971 a tennis court and playing field is denoted on the site. The railway cutting is still evident, and houses on Clwyd Avenue have been erected.

To conclude: -

- The site may have formed part of an historic landscape, once forming part of a medieval parkland to the east of Denbigh Castle.
- The former parkland has been incrementally built upon in the 16th, 17th, 19th, and 20th century, but its overall open nature is still evident beyond the former railway cutting, although part of it is in use for unlit football and rugby grass pitches.
- The site was described as pasture but undeveloped when recorded on the tithe map.
- The site was truncated by the railway line in the mid-19th century (1858), around the same time that the Chapel of St David and Howell's School was erected to the west of Denbigh Castle. Despite this, there was little urban expansion around it until the 20th century.
- The truncation of this part of the parkland on the perimeter of the application site by the railway has meant that the site had a physical boundary from the former parkland, meaning that the site aligned itself more naturally with the built form along Ruthin Road and it is notable that the site was no longer annotated as Parc by 1914.
- The site is used as playing fields associated with the school, with 20th century development on three sides of its perimeter.

4.0 The significance of the heritage assets

4.1 Heritage values that contribute to a greater understanding of significance are Assessing significance is embedded in national planning policy. Heritage values that contribute to a greater understanding of significance are identified by Cadw's Conservation Principles for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment in Wales (2011) as being: -

- Evidential
- Historical
- Aesthetic
- Communal

4.2 There are six commonly accepted levels of significance. These are as follows: -

- | | |
|----------------------|--|
| • Outstanding | Highest level of importance, SAMs, WHS, Grade I / II* listed buildings, Historic Parks & Gardens |
| • High (significant) | Grade II listed buildings, Historic Parks and Gardens and conservation areas |
| • Medium (moderate) | Locally listed buildings, and those buildings that contribute to a listed building's setting |
| • Low (limited) | Limited heritage value |
| • Neutral | Neither positive nor negative features |
| • No significance | Features that detract from the heritage values |

4.3 Denbigh Castle is of outstanding significance for its high evidential and historical value, associated and described as an "exceptionally-fine and important example of late C13/early C14 military architecture associated with Edward I's famous master mason/architect James of St. George". It has high aesthetic value, despite and because of its ruinous condition, planned as a single entity by Edward I as a walled medieval borough, on top of a steep hill. It has high communal value, first as a fortress, later as a Romantic picturesque ruin, and now as a visitor attraction, and key cultural landmark of

Denbigh. It is closely associated with Goblin Tower and the medieval town walls, which form part of its defensive setting. There are also considered to be of outstanding significance for the same reasons.

- 4.4 The topography of Denbigh defines its sense of place, with the castle built on top of a limestone outcrop. The medieval town within the castle walls step down the slopes around it, and the medieval town to the west and north is tightly grained. Development is highly concentrated to the north, and northwest, of the castle and largely undeveloped to the south and east. The application site lies to the northeast of the castle, used as playing fields associated with the school, with 20th century development on three sides of its perimeter. The land is largely undeveloped beyond the public footpath perimeter.
- 4.5 The change in topography is distinct and is closely aligned with the geology, which is very prominent to the castle area; it descends north to Smithfield Road and Lenton Pool, and northeast to Park Street and Vale Street. The application site sits on a generally flat plateau, with the land rising gently west from Middle Parc, and steeply from the top of Park Street west to the castle. Compared with contemporary castles, (such as Caernarfon and Rhuddlan which were also part of the Edward I castle borough), Denbigh Castle sits imposingly on the hilltop, making use of the whole elevated, levelled area and dominating the landscape.
- 4.6 The castle is accessed by its northern triple towered entrance gate. This is the principal gatehouse, leading to the medieval town, and seen from the main east-west road running Denbighshire, this elevation was, and still is, highly defensive and foreboding in character
- 4.7 There is a secondary access to the castle, the Postern Gate (or back gate) to the southeast. This was protected by an outer layer of defence known as a mantlet. These structures are mostly ruinous but still give some indication of the approach from this direction was, even though it was a secondary entrance. It was used to defend this clifftop approach. The postern gate led directly into the countryside. It also allowed for easy access to the countryside for hunting.

- 4.8 Below that is the town walls; the majority of which survive, with the stretch which includes the Countess Tower and Goblin Tower particularly well preserved. The SAM description states that “The monument is of national importance for its potential to enhance our knowledge of medieval defensive organisation and the growth of towns. The Countess Tower consists of two angular turrets with two rooms, including a fireplace and a dovecote with a doorway with a portcullis groove providing access to the well in the Goblin Tower.
- 4.9 The Goblin Tower is a large, irregular, hexagonal bastion projecting from the face of the limestone cliff. It is of two main storeys with a narrow stairway descending from the lower floor to a deep well. Despite the imposing 15 metre height of Goblin Tower to the southwest of the application site, linked to the limestone rubble Town Walls they are largely hidden by the dense tree coverage of Coed Cwningaer in the summer. Goblin Tower was defensive in nature, built in the second phase of the castle building in the 13 / 14th century with impressive curtain walls, thicker walls, and hexagonal and octagonal towers.
- 4.10 There is no evidence that the tower was used as anything else after falling out of use after the Civil War of the 1640's. There seems to be no evidence to support the insertion of a viewing platform, for viewing far-reaching views across the nearby countryside over the deer park and surrounding hills. It always seemed to remain defensive and protective in nature enclosing a well for the castle.
- 4.11 The aesthetic significance of Denbigh Castle is to a large extent related to its topography within the surrounding landscape. The aesthetic relationship of castle within its landscape setting includes both the built-up area to the north and east, and the largely pastoral and undeveloped nature to the south and west, with the castle set on a promontory. The application site sits on a natural plateau of land, with farmstead development beyond the former railway line to the southeast. There are few views historically associated with this aspect.
- 4.12 The artistic significance of Denbigh Castle includes many historic painted, drawn, and engraved views including Joseph M W Turner (1787 - 1801), Edward Dayes (1763 – 1804), Frances Towne (1739 – 1816), Thomas Girtin (1775 – 1802), William Gilpin (1724 – 1804) where its Romantic and picturesque appearance as a ruin set within the landscape formed part of its aesthetic significance. Most of the subject of the recorded view is of Burgess Gate. although there is an engraving by Newman and Co., showing Park Street and St. David's Church, built on the former parkland. It was drawn also from the east by Alphonse Dousseau. (1796 - 1876) in the middle of the 19th century, which clearly shows the defensive walls and topography. Etchings were produced by George Cuiitt (1779-1854) and engraving by Samuel Buck (1696-1779) and his brother Nathaniel (active 1724-59) and John Boydell (1720 - 1804).

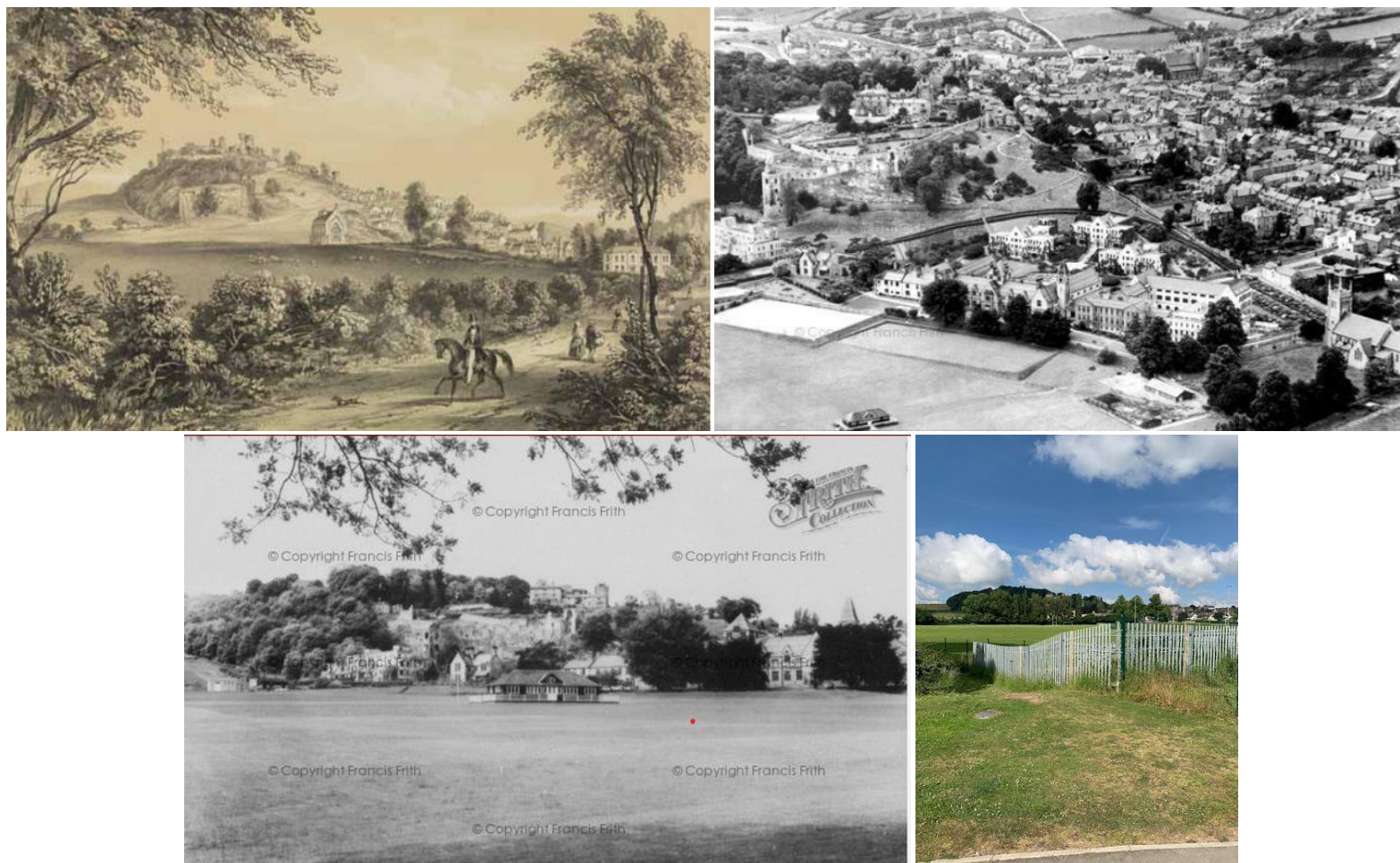


Fig 3. Engraving by Newman and Co.; Howell's school with the castle in the background, c1955; and with a cricket pavilion in the foreground c1960. The view June 2022

To conclude: -

- Denbigh Castle and its medieval walls and towers are of outstanding significance.
- The setting of the castle changes from where the castle is experienced. The built-up area of the medieval town and later town to the north is quite distinct from the south and east, with separate gates used to provide entry and exit. The south includes the wider countryside and cliff edge of the castle, the Postern Gate, and beyond that the landscape setting of The Former North Wales Hospital, the east the site of the former Howell's School, and beyond that, the former parkland of the castle, for the most part pastoral in character, with some playing fields on its periphery, including the application site behind the former railway cutting public footpath.
- The scale of the castle and walls is also very important in this landscape, and is appreciated from most directions, but due to tree cover, less so from the application site.
- There are dramatic views of the castle, where it is clearly a dominant landmark in the landscape, but less so from the application site, where it is almost wholly screened by Coed Cwningaer around the base of the medieval walls, influenced by the topography.
- Views from the castle do not show the application site within the view, this is because of tree cover at Coed Cwningaer. However, this may change because of winter leaf drop and future management and maintenance of trees.
- Long distance views from public footpaths below the castle walls are of the Vale of Clwyd. It is difficult to see the application site in isolation. It is always viewed against a backdrop of the buildings on Ruthin Road, Ystrad Road and Clwyd Avenue.
- The importance of the assumed former parkland to the setting of the castle is of historic interest, which is still evident to some degree, with little development to interrupt the relationship.
- Consequently, there is a sequencing of buildings evident from the application site. These vary in terms of their character and spatial attributes, the most visible being the former Howell's School (Myddleton College), situated to the northeast and below the castle walls which encroaches obliquely on the former parkland.
- Goblin Tower is not accessible, and therefore the views cannot be captured. However, there are windows within the tower overlooking this part of the landscape.

- 4.13 Denbigh Conservation Area was designated in 1975, and a Conservation Area Appraisal written in 1997. It is a rapid assessment and descriptive document identifying important space, views and building types and densities. The site lies outside the designated conservation area and is unlikely to be included, as it is sufficiently distant from the historic core that makes up the special architectural and historic interest that contributes to the conservation area's character or appearance. The conservation area was extended following a boundary review sometime after 1998 to include the bottom of Vale Street, Denbigh Friary and Plas Pigot and the Infirmary on Ruthin Road.
- 4.14 Perhaps of more relevance to the application site is the detailed appraisal of the whole of Denbigh, written by Cadw in 2010. The document is Denbigh: Understanding local character (2010). It is extremely comprehensive and describes in detail the history and development of Denbigh. It also includes the identification of 9-character sub-areas and identifies “unenclosed grazing to the west, common meadows to the north (at Denbigh Green), plough lands to the east, and the lord’s hunting park to the south” which formed a coherent economic unit. This has been mapped and for ease of reference is include in this report. It should be noted that the possible extent of castle park of the medieval period excludes the application site.

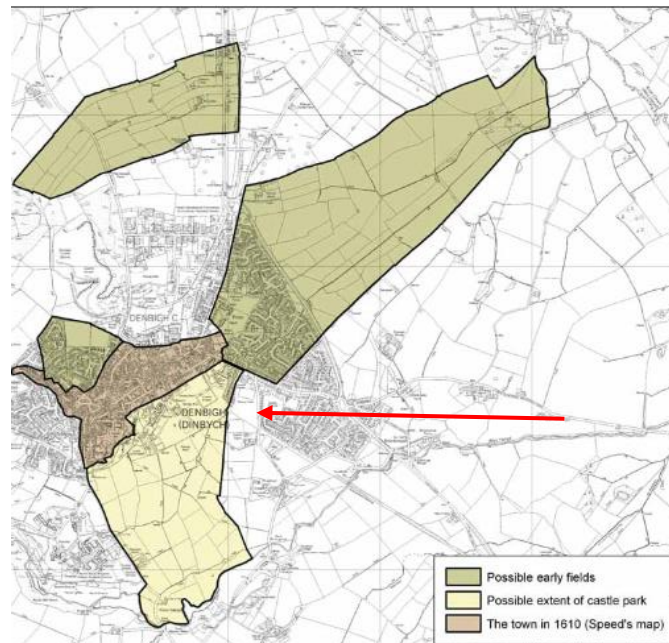


Fig 3. Extract from Cadw: Denbigh: Understanding local character (2010). Map 2 – Medieval Town and Landscape (Copyright: Cadw). Site - Red arrow.

4.1.5 Of relevance to the application site is Character Area 8: Ruthin Road. It describes development as sporadic along Ruthin Road during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with the Infirmary, school, and domestic villa housing. Development remained largely linear, until 1938 when farmland was sold to accommodate new private and public housing estates. It describes the predominating and dominant character on Ruthin Road as interwar speculative housing. It identifies the application as site as mid-20th century in chronology.

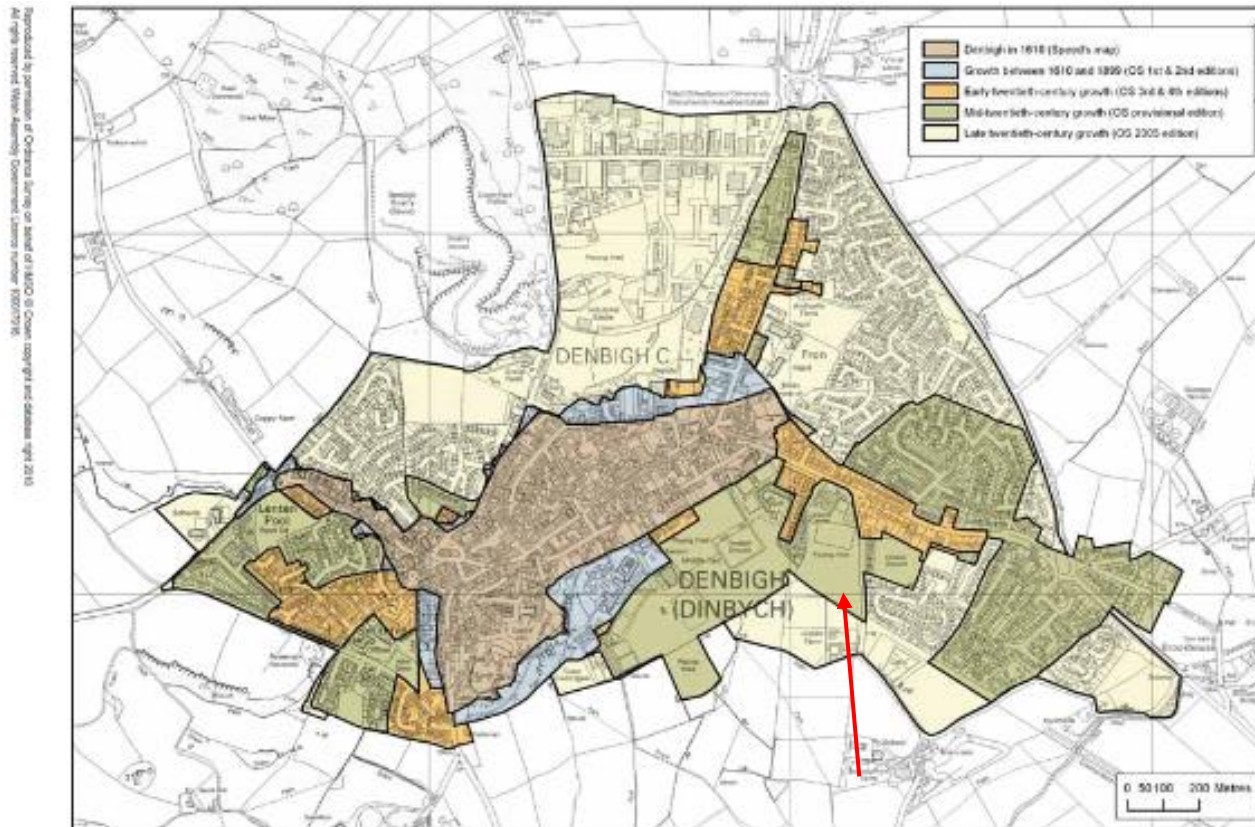


Fig 4. Extract from Cadw: Denbigh: Understanding local character (2010). Map 3 – The Growth of Denbigh (Copyright: Cadw). Site - Red arrow.

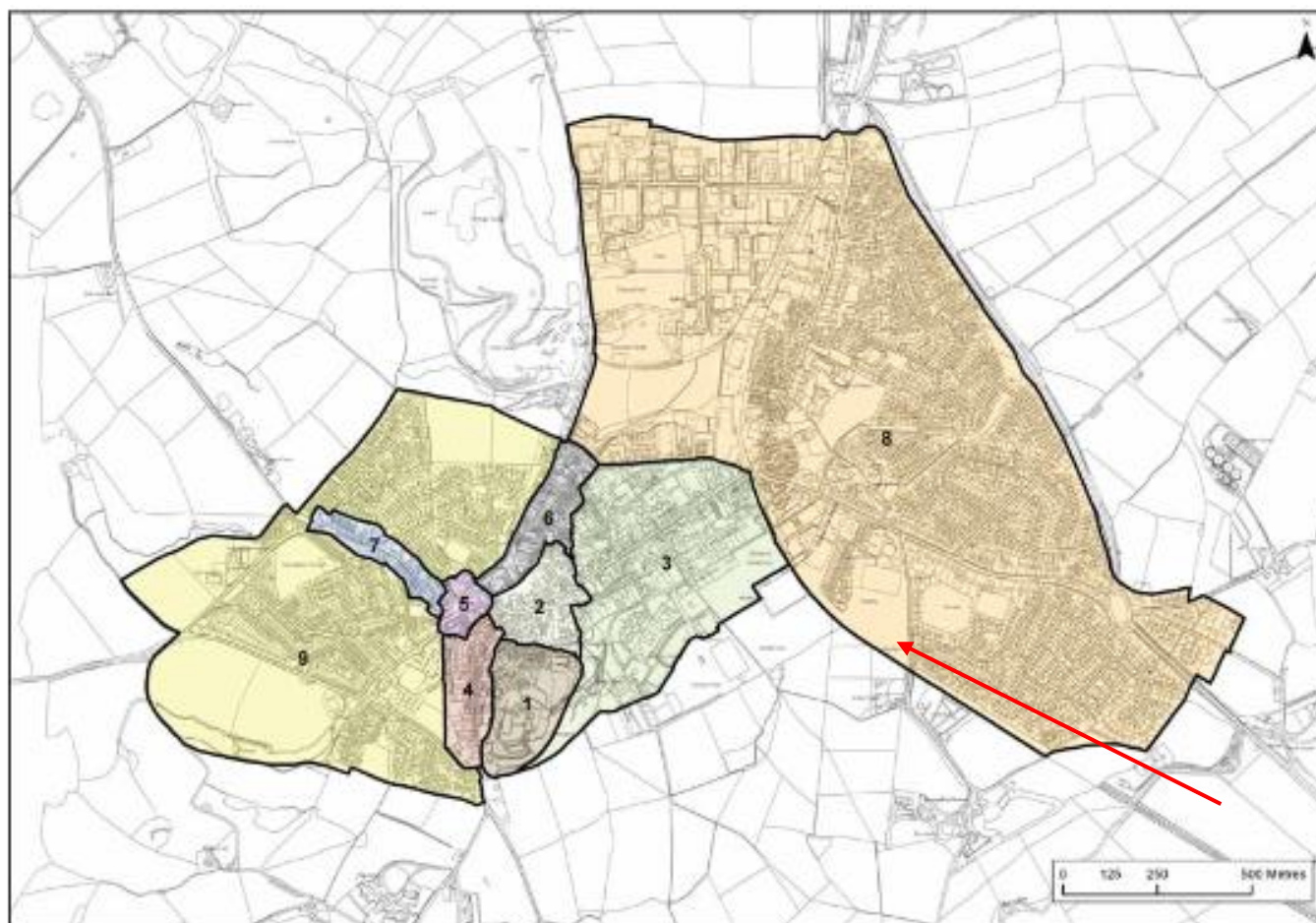


Fig 5. Extract from Cadw: Denbig: Understanding local character (2010). Map 4- All Character Areas (Copyright: Cadw). Site - Red arrow.

To conclude:

- The character of the settlement is dominated by the castle and historic streets including Vale Street and High Street, where dispersed clusters of historic buildings front the street. Character Areas 1 – 7 of the Cadw document broadly encompass the conservation area character of Denbigh.
- Ruthin Road is at the foot of the valley on a broadly northwest and southeast axis. The road is straight, with Ffordd Ystrad undulating and curving with evolving views.
- Development along Ruthin Road is generally larger communal structures on its south-eastern boundary, with a generally more open character to the rear. From long distances when viewed from the west, the development forms a dominant pattern along Ruthin Road.
- Buildings on Ruthin Road are largely excluded from the conservation area, including the application site. The settlement pattern and land associated with the frontages here does not form part of its special historic interest nor the essential setting of the castle.
- The site is not identified as part of the medieval parkland in the Cadw document, although perhaps it was once; it is in a character area that is predominantly 20th century.
- Overall, the site is of low significance in its contribution to the setting of Denbigh Castle.
- However, glimpses of the castle and wider countryside are seen from Ruthin Road / Ystrad Road junction. These will change because of the new development.

5.0 Relevant Conservation Planning Policy and Guidance

- 5.1 Under Section 66 (1) of the **Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990** local authorities must give special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest. The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Wales) Regulations 2012 as amended by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Wales) (Amendment no 2) Regulations 2017 introduced the obligation to submit a Heritage Impact Assessment with all applications for listed building consent.
- 5.2 The Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2016 enables Welsh authorities to give more effective protection to the historic environment by further improve procedures for its sustainable management and to provide further transparency on decision making. This is read in conjunction with Planning Policy Wales and Technical Advice Note 24: The Historic Environment. Other relevant Cadw guidance is contained in the 'Setting of Historic Assets in Wales, Cadw (May 2017), 'Heritage Impact Assessment in Wales, Cadw (May 2017). Managing Change to Listed Building in Wales
- 5.3 National guidance is within Planning Policy Wales (edition 11, 2021): Chapter 6: Distinctive and Natural Places. This places great emphasis on protecting the natural and built environment for historic, scenic aesthetic and nature reasons, recognising that they give places their unique identity and distinctiveness. This includes the protection of historic buildings, preserving sites on the register of historic parks and gardens and the character and appearance of conservation areas and setting, based on their significance and the impact of changes.
- 5.4 Wales Technical Advice Note 24: Historic Environment, (October 2017), Section 7 states in 1.7 that "In policy terms, the historic environment is defined as 6: "All aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time, including all surviving physical remains of past human activity, whether visible, buried or submerged, and deliberately planted or managed." A historic asset is: "An identifiable component of the historic environment. It may consist or be a combination of an archaeological site, a historic building or area, historic park and garden or a parcel of historic landscape. Nationally important historic assets will normally be designated."

- 5.5 In the 'Setting of Historic Assets in Wales, Cadw (May 2017), setting is quantified in 1.25 which states that "The setting of an historic asset includes the surroundings in which it is understood, experienced, and appreciated embracing present and past relationships to the surrounding landscape. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.
- 5.6 Setting is not a historic asset but has value derived from how different elements may contribute to the significance of a historic asset. The document also goes on to state that for any development within the setting of a historic asset, some of the factors to consider and weigh in the assessment include:
- The significance of the asset and the contribution the setting makes to that significance
 - the prominence of the historic asset
 - the expected lifespan of the proposed development
 - the extent of tree cover and its likely longevity
 - non-visual factors affecting the setting of the historic asset such as noise. "
- 5.7 Relevant local plan policies are in the Denbighshire Local Development Plan 2006 – 2021

6.0 Impact of the development proposal on the setting of Denbigh Castle

6.1. The proposal is for a new Ysgol Plas Brondyffryn Special Educational Needs (SEN) School for ages 3-19 at land west of Ystrad Road, Denbigh.

6.2 The proposal includes the following: -

- A new school building
- The formation of Multi Use Games Areas (2no.),
- External plant / services area,
- new 118 space car parking area (including 14 electric charging bays) and minibus parking (4no.), cycle parking (60no.),
- a new vehicular access off Ystrad Road,
- community café,
- landscaping works and all other associated works.

6.3 The new school building is a reversed E shaped, two storey flat roof building, with a single storey, facing east to Ystrad Road. The materials are a simple palette of grey brick and green cladding, with vertically aligned windows. The response to the local context allows for a contemporary flat roof which will reduce the height of the building behind the single storey leisure centre building. It has a contextual architectural vocabulary with other large communal buildings of the late 20th century erected in the town, such as the Council office at Caledfryn. and the Hwb, both on Smithfield Road. The massing of the building is well articulated to break up the long east facing façade. The size and scale of the building will be read within the present backdrop of large communal buildings including the school on Ruthin Road; however, it will bring development closer to the castle. This is mitigated by the established spines of late 20th century development to either side.

6.4 Two MUGA's are proposed to the rear of the school, which are on the north-western corner of the site. These areas will be of tarmac and thus some change in its appearance is obvious. The acoustic fencing will have some visual impact on the northern and western perimeter but in terms of heritage sensitivity, this will be seen in the context of existing buildings. The colour and detailing of this will be important to ensure that it remains a dormant visual feature within the site. Bunding with soft landscaping may be an appropriate way to address this.

- 6.5 Car parking and access is to the front of the site on Ystrad Road. This will clearly have some impact on the longer distance views from the castle, with associated glare from parked cars, potentially; however, because the building is set back it allows views from Ystrad Road to the castle mound to still be appreciated to some degree. The area of car parking will increase the amount of hardstanding; this is mitigated by soft landscaping and trees within the designated parking area and the sit boundaries.
- 6.6 The significance of Denbigh Castle is outstanding. The contribution the setting makes to that significance in the context of the application site relates to its position on a high outcrop within the landscape setting to the north east of the castle and south west of the public footpath, where the land falls steeply away from the cliff on which the castle is on, behind the tree cover of Coed Cwningaer; on the former Denbigh Parks area, which slopes to the lower lying agricultural landscape adjacent to the site to the west.
- 6.7 The setting of the castle on the eastern side of the site is best appreciated approaching the settlement from the west, in several key views, traversing the public footpath to the south of the site. All the way along this footpath, the views change and evolve and the castle, hidden behind trees, is experienced as part of this landscape. These are best described as kinetic views, a series of views of a subject which evolve moving through a space.
- 6.8 The proposed development will not impact on these views to any great degree, nor will it significantly impact on the significance of the castle. Its proximity to other similar buildings means that they will be seen and experienced together. The development will not diminish the understanding of the physical relationship between the castle and settlement. It is not of a scale to draw the eye away from distant views from the castle or walls. Nor would it create an incongruous new focus in the landscape. The castle and the town are not really appreciated or seen together to any great degree from the footpath to the south of the application site. It is not considered one of the obvious and aesthetic locations to see both castle and defensive walls, with the pre 20th century town that makes up the character of the conservation area. Furthermore, the nature of setting and how this affects the castle does not include all the setting - It is plainly clear that the castle is experienced from places which are outside of the site, but where its presence is very dominant.
- 6.9 The increase in tree cover close to the foot of the escarpment of the castle and walls in recent decades must be seen in the context of the life of the monument; trees need managing. In this context, it should be borne in mind that the castle may increase in prominence if the current trees are removed, thinned, or not replaced. A photograph of Howell's School taken in 1961, shows how prominent the site was and could be again.

7.0 Conclusion

- 7.1 Denbigh Castle is a heritage asset of the highest significance, being both a Grade I listed building and a Scheduled Monument. The castle ranges along a promontory and dominates the landscape. The relationship between this building and the landscape setting is key to its significance.
- 7.2 The application site was once part of an historic landscape, known as Denbigh Parks in the 19th century which may be a reference to its former use as part of a medieval park. However, by the mid-19th century the site became a piece of land between the railway, now a public footpath on the perimeter of the site and Ruthin Road.
- 7.3 The site lies outside the medieval parkland identified by Cadw, in a character area described as mid-20th century. The survival of the historic park is acknowledged to some degree as beyond the former railway line cutting and public footpath, but the site is not a very important and defining characteristic, compromised by modern housing to each perimeter west and east.
- 7.4 The proposed development of a new SEN school on the application site would not create an incongruous new edge but would be seen within a backdrop that is similar in scale and density and character.
- 7.5 The development would not be particularly prominent in views both from the castle and walls, nor in views looking towards the castle and in wider panoramic views where the setting of each overlap.
- 7.6 The density of the development within the whole of the depth of the site will create a change to the land, but not overly significant. It will not be viewed as a landmark within the landscape but will be related to the dominant communal form of development on Ruthin Road. The effect of this block of development in a flat landscape, on the wider panoramic views of the castle will not diminish its overwhelming presence, or create an intrusive block in the landscape, nor it will harm the setting of the former Howell's School. It will have no real impact on the setting of the conservation area.
- 7.7 The development would preserve the setting of Denbigh Castle and its medieval town walls and those aspects of its setting which contribute to its significance.
- 7.8 The conservation area holds very high value for its relationship with the Castle and the strong medieval and later grid iron character and pattern of the settlement. The medieval settlement pattern of the conservation area is well preserved and of high significance. Whilst setting is not a designation, the approach taken to assess the setting of Denbigh Castle demonstrates that the wider pastoral landscape to the south and east is of high historic value but not that of the application site, which does not fundamentally, contribute to the significance of each of these designated heritage assets.

- 7.9 There will be some mitigation works required to help assimilate the building into the wider landscape setting, but overall, it is felt that the changes to the application site would not destroy the integrity of the heritage assets, the overall magnitude on the impact on the setting and significance is neutral.
- 7.10 The proposals follow the five principles outlined for 'new work or alteration to a significant place' in Section 28 of Cadw's 'Conservation Principles for the sustainable management of the Historic Environment in Wales', March 2011. These are:
- The need for the work is fully justified - The works are justified in terms of the long-standing efforts to secure a single site for the school, instead of the three sites presently
 - There is sufficient information to understand the significance of the buildings and the proposals upon them.
 - The proposals would not materially harm the values of the buildings.
 - The proposals have a neutral impact on the setting of Denbigh Castle.
 - The quality of the design and execution must add value to the existing asset. The designs and materials chosen are a carefully response to the area's character.
 - The long-term consequences of the proposals are positive and the special interest of setting of the castle will not be affected. It would not affect the ability to appreciate and understand the architectural and historic interest of the castle.

Appendices

Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust Report No 1257 entitled: 'Historic settlements in Denbighshire' prepared by R J Silvester, C H R Martin, and S E Watson 2014.

Denbigh Conservation Area Appraisal 1997

<https://www.british-history.ac.uk/topographical-dict/wales/pp288-304>

https://cadw.gov.wales/sites/default/files/2019-05/Denbigh-%20Understanding%20Urban%20Character_0.pdf

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<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-02/planning-policy-wales-edition-10.pdf> <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-09/tan24-historic-environment.pdf>

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