Mitchell Court

Green Infrastructure Statement

21/11/24

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Contents

1. Introduction and Background

This Green Infrastructure (GI) Statement is prepared by The Urbanists Ltd, on behalf of Trivallis. It accompanies the application for the proposed redevelopment of Mitchell Court, Tonypandy.

The purpose of a GI Statement ('the Statement') is to demonstrate how GI has been incorporated to provide a positive multi-functional outcome, which is appropriate to the site in question, and must also demonstrate how the Step-wise approach has been applied to ecological considerations.

This GI demonstration of those 'outcomes', 'appropriateness', and required processes means that this statement will illustrate how GI has been effectively considered throughout the design of the scheme. As required, this consideration, and statement to provide evidence of it, will be "*proportionate to the scale and nature of the development proposed*".

Planning Policy Wales Edition 12 provides the key legislative and national planning policy context for GI Statements. Local planning policy and guidance for Tonypandy would be the Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council Local Development Plan and associated Supplementary Policy Guidance. Those local policies and guidance provide information on the key outcomes expected from GI, of which the Statement should regard and appraise.

The key outcomes of the GI considerations are to be reviewed with regard to three main areas of concern, relating to the ecosystem concepts of: biodiversity value, ecosystem resilience, and ecosystem services.

As PPW Edition 12 sets out:

> *"With careful planning and design, informed by an appropriate level of assessment, green infrastructure can embed the benefits of biodiversity and ecosystem services into new development and places, help to overcome the*

potential for conflicting objectives, and contribute to health and well-being outcomes."

The Statement is informed by the other reports, statements, and plans which accompany this planning application, including:

- Ecological Appraisal
- Design and Access Statement
- Arboricultural Impact Assessment
- Proposed Landscape Plan
- Drainage Strategy

2. Policy and Legislative Context

This section sets out the key legislative, planning policy and guidance which inform the requirements and the approach to Green Infrastructure Statements.

2.1. Legislation

2.1.1. Environment (Wales) Act 2016

The act introduced an enhanced duty for public authorities in the exercise of their functions - the biodiversity and resilience of ecosystems duty (referred to as the section 6 duty).

Section 6 sets out the biodiversity and resilience of ecosystems duty of all public authorities in Wales, to seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity in their functions, and so promote resilience of ecosystems. Section 7 (Part 1) species and habitats of 'principal importance' for the purpose of maintaining and enhancing biodiversity, and which Welsh Ministers must encourage others to do.

2.2. National and Local Policy

2.2.1. Planning Policy Wales, Edition 12

Planning Policy Wales (PPW) is the principal planning policy document of the Welsh Government and informs all planning decisions and appeals. The current version of which is PPW Edition 12.

Chapter 6 of PPW 12 explains that a GI Statement should be submitted with all planning applications, and also explains the general standards that any statement should seek to meet.

It explains that GI comprises the:

"*network of natural and semi-natural features, green spaces, rivers and lakes that intersperse and connect places…*"

"…At the landscape scale green infrastructure can comprise entire ecosystems such as wetlands, waterways, peatlands and mountain ranges or be connected networks of mosaic habitats, including grasslands. At a local scale, it might comprise parks, fields, ponds, natural green spaces, public rights of way, allotments, cemeteries and gardens or may be designed or managed features such as sustainable drainage systems. At smaller scales, individual urban interventions such as street trees, hedgerows, roadside verges, and green roofs/walls can all contribute to green infrastructure networks" (par.6.2.1).

It further advises that:

"*proposals should be informed by the priorities identified in green infrastructure assessments and locally based planning guidance*" (par.6.2.5).

It also sets out how proposed development should be assessed within, or potentially impacting upon, designated sites, including non-statutory designated sites. It introduces the 'Step-wise approach' which is expected to be applied to such consideration and

therefore should be evidenced in any GI statement. This approach regards the resilience of ecosystems (ER) and therefore their ability to continue to deliver value from GI, when under pressure or differing demand.

It explains that, in terms of protection for non-statutory designated sites, which includes Site of Nature Conservation Interest (SINCs), development can be appropriate where adherence to the Step-wise approach is demonstrated (including a net benefit for biodiversity) and there is no reduction in overall conservation value of the designated area or feature.

The PPW Chapter 6 update also covers trees, woodland, and hedgerows, and sets out the expectations to retain and protect such assets, where they are capable of making a significant contribution to an area. Where loss occurs, replacement will be required in line with the standards and ratios set out, and any permanent removal is only appropriate where there would be significant and clearly defined public benefit. Compensatory planting is required to be proportionate to the proposed loss as identified through an assessment of green infrastructure value by way of three specific aspects of biodiversity, landscape (amenity) and carbon capture values.

2.2.2. Future Wales: The National Plan 2040

Future Wales (FW) - The National Plan 2040 was adopted in February 2021 as the national development framework (NDF) setting the direction of development in Wales to 2040. The NDF provides a strategy to address key national priorities through the planning system, including developing a vibrant economy, developing strong ecosystems, achieving decarbonisation and climate resilience and improving the health and wellbeing of communities.

Policy 9 of FW focuses on ‘Resilient Ecological Networks and Green Infrastructure’, and sets out that planning authorities should identify areas of importance and opportunities for Green Infrastructure, for safeguarding and enhancement.

Given that FW strategy and national priorities can be in part addressed through Green Infrastructure, any GI Statement would be expected to align with those and support the delivery of it, where possible.

2.2.3. Technical Advice Note 5 - Nature Conservation and Planning (1996)

TAN5 provides national guidance on how the land use planning system should contribute to protecting and enhancing biodiversity and geological conservation. The guidance indicates that biodiversity conservation and enhancement is an integral part of planning for sustainable development. The guidance advocates a collaborative approach where LPAs, developers and key stakeholders in conservation should work together to deliver sustainable development.

2.2.4. Rhondda Cynon Taff Local Development Plan up to 2021 Adopted March 2011

Local Development Plan policies and Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG's) considered as potentially relevant to the proposed development are the following:

LDP Policies

- Policy AW 8 - Protection And Enhancement Of The Natural Environment

SPG

- Nature Conservation

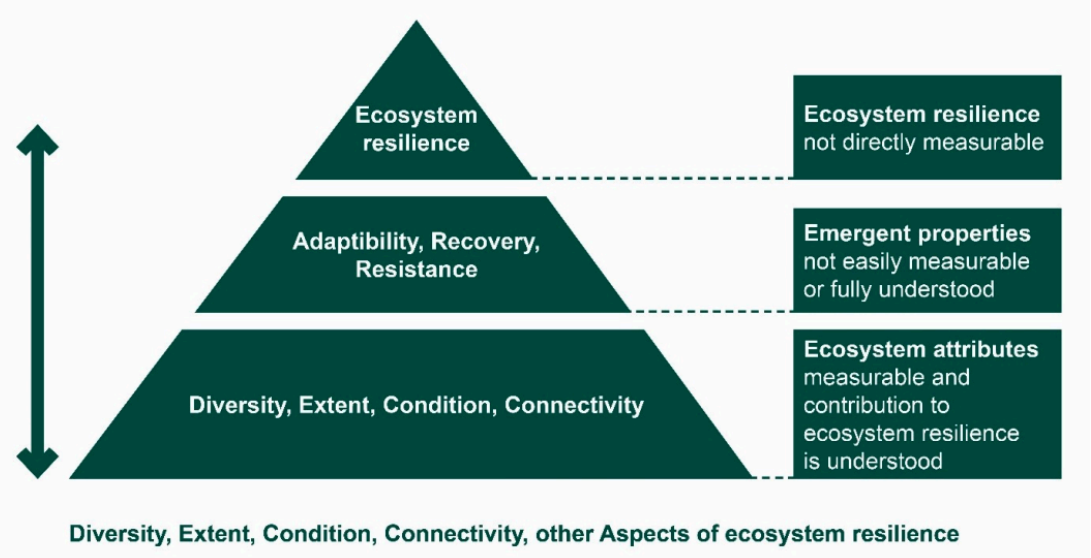
2.3. Frameworks, Approaches, and Best Practice Guidance

2.3.1. DECCA Framework and Ecosystem Resilience

This DECCA framework (see Figure 3 below) sets out 5 key considerations of habitats and species which lead to Ecosystem Resilience (ER). The first four are the attributes of Diversity, Extent, Condition and Connectivity of species (genetics and populations) and/or habitats. There is also the fifth combined aspect of Adaptability, recovery and

resistance, which is an emergent combined property resulting from the other four attributes (see Figure 1 below), and which together (DECC & A) decide the level of ER.

Figure 1: Extract from Natural Resource Wales - *Ecosystem Resilience in a Nutshell 1: What is ecosystem resilience?* [1]



ER is not itself directly measurable because of the extremely large number of influencing factors. The DECCA framework is a useful 'proxy method', providing a feasible and viable assessment of ER, using just a few measurable attributes, to enable the approximate consideration of ER more easily; so it may be used in practice.

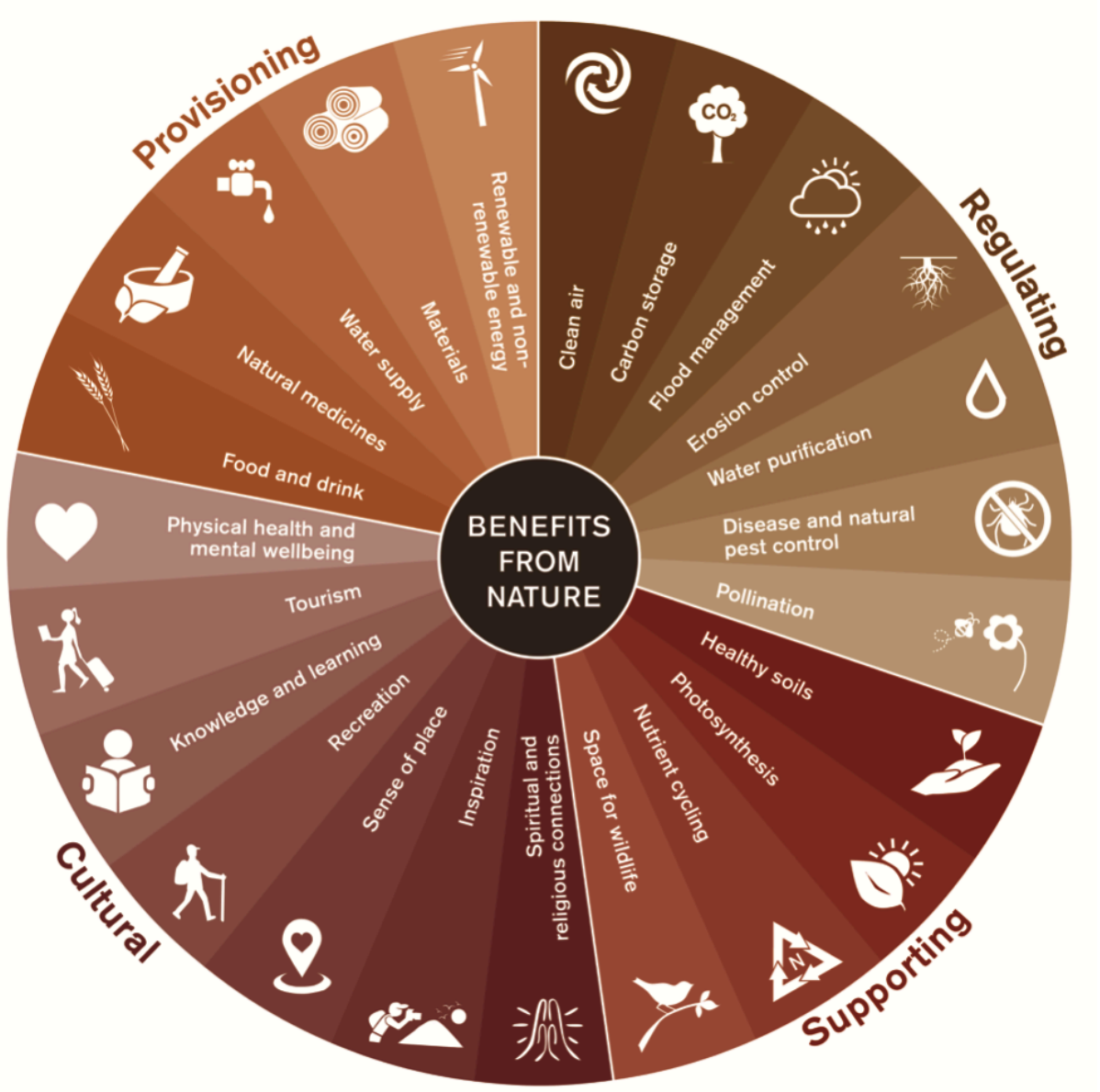
2.3.2. Ecosystem Services Framework

Ecosystem Services (ES) is a framework which can be utilised as an effective means by which to understand the flow of benefits from Green Infrastructure to humans, and therefore more directly consider what is valuable to people and communities. They add a human layer to the understanding of the multi-functionality of GI, which allows a greater consideration of how this can be maximised and for who.

[1]https://cdn.cyfoethnaturiol.cymru/media/696279/ecosystem-resilience-in-a-nutshell-1-what-is-ecosystem-resilience.pdf

We experience ES as Cultural, Regulating, Provisioning, and Supporting services; as a common, and widely accepted, standard of division (see Figure 4 below). Cultural services are non-material benefits to society that help deliver cultural advancement. Regulating services are those that help moderate natural phenomena to the benefit of people. Provisioning services are those that deliver a material benefit to people, via the extraction of resources. Finally, Supporting services are those that ensure the continued production and maintenance of those other services; these can be thought of as those services which deliver ER.

Figure 2: Ecosystem Services (source: Nature Scot)



2.3.3. Biodiversity, Ecosystems, Ecosystem Resilience, and Ecosystem Services

As the Natural Resource Wales 'State of Natural Resources Report (SoNRR)'[2] sets out, ER is important for the sustainability of ES. Both concepts are inherently linked to the structure of an ecosystem (its 'Processes' and resultant 'Functions'). ER being an important emergent property of an ecosystem's physical and biological structure, and ES being a resultant beneficial outcome for people.

Ecosystems are fundamentally formed of biotic (animals and plants, etc.) and abiotic components (soil, rock, rivers, climate, etc.). Both of these influence the processes and functions of ecosystems, and these in turn influence resultant ER and realised ES benefits. The biotic-diversity (biodiversity) of a single or multiple habitat in an ecosystem, is largely more fragile (less resilient) and therefore at risk of development impacts than the abiotic components; although abiotic components are also important, and can also be at risk.

Under the Environment (Wales) Act, public bodies should seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity and the resilience of ecosystems. Multifunctional GI is set out as a means to maximise benefits from those aims, and therefore ES is additionally important. Within the Planning Policy Wales Ed. 12 Chapter 6 content, the specifics of a GI approach are further prescribed, and the components of a nature-based approach are established. Together these aims, considerations of frameworks, and requirements of policy contribute to a need to deliver good-quality design that incorporates GI.

2.3.4. Step-wise approach

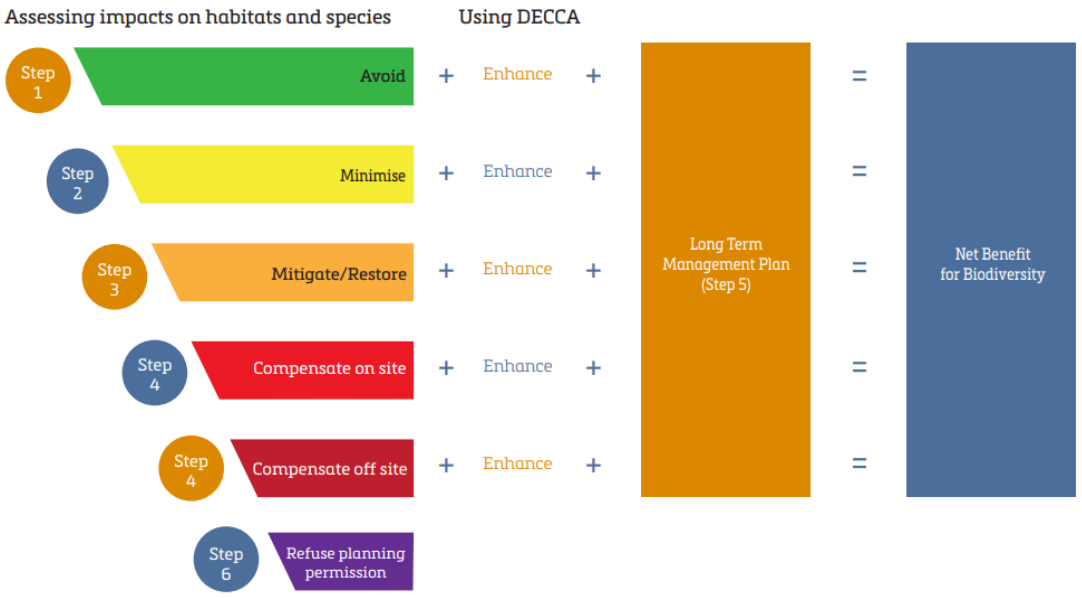
PPW Ed. 12 Chapter 6 requires the Step-wise approach to be demonstrated within proposed development designs. This approach sets out the procedure of initially following the 'Mitigation hierarchy' stages, to sequentially (as required): avoid, minimise, or mitigate/restore impact to habitats and species, or compensate on-site and as a last resort compensate off-site. At each of these stages, a proportional enhancement must be proposed that demonstrates the DECC[A] attributes. A long-term management strategy is additionally required, that would ensure those measures proposed are

[2] https://naturalresources.wales/media/679405/chapter-4-resilience-final-for-publication.pdf

deliverable; and would actually result in the level of Net Benefit for Biodiversity (NBB) and ER attributes that are described; as well as any resultant ES benefits gained.

Should the Mitigation hierarchy not be possible to follow (i.e. no stages of the hierarchy are possible) then planning permission should be refused. Should suitable enhancements relative to each stage of the hierarchy, and/or no suitable long-term management plan be possible, then a NBB is consequently unlikely to be possible and planning permission is, again, likely to be refused.

Figure 3: Step-Wise Approach - Extract from PPW Chapter 6.



3. Site Baselines

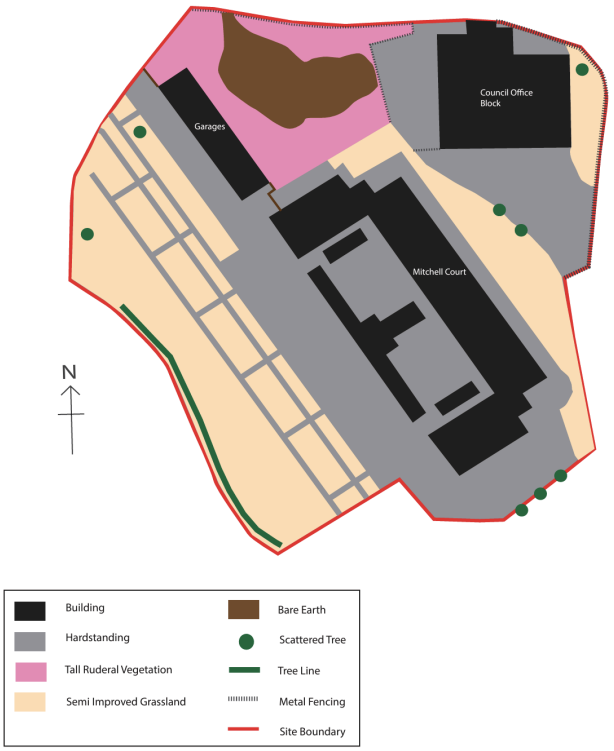
This baseline consideration sets out a summary of the existing conditions of the proposed development site and wider relevant context, based on survey efforts and desk study. This regards habitats and species, Ecological and GI features, and their varying values and spatial scales of these (site importance up to larger areas importance). It also considers other information available, and summarises their influence on the design and overall consideration in later sections of this statement.

3.1. Ecological Baseline Summary

An accompanying Preliminary Ecological Appraisal has considered the proposed development site's existing ecological context, the potential for supporting any protected or otherwise important species, potential connectivity with the wider landscape and potential connections to designated sites, and the proposed development scheme in reflection of those aspects.

This reporting summarised that the site was in the majority hardstanding and buildings. To the north were some bare earth and tall rudural vegetation, where areas have been subject to Japanese Knotweed removal and repair work to walls. Areas of semi-improved grassland were also present to the east, and west of the site. A number of mature trees were scattered across the site and in a tree line along the south-western boundary. Understorey in the tree line was predominantly scrub and ruderal species, with little diversity.

Extract of JNCC Phase 1 habitat mapping



3.2. Landscape GI Baseline Summary

There is little landscape amenity value currently within the site with the exception of the place-setting tree belt which is a landmark within the site, and the softening effect of the grassed areas of the site.

Figure 4: Extract of DAS Existing GI and Ecology Plan

The Green Infrastructure onsite currently provides little in the way of ecosystem services, beyond the Regulating Services of trees and green cover to reduce erosion, slow water flows allowing infiltration, as well as filter rainfall and run-off. There are also some Regulating Services provided by trees shade and evapo-transpiration cooling effects.

Similarly, those same habitats would provide some minor Supporting Services for wildlife and soil formation, but this is minimal because of its location and type/quality of

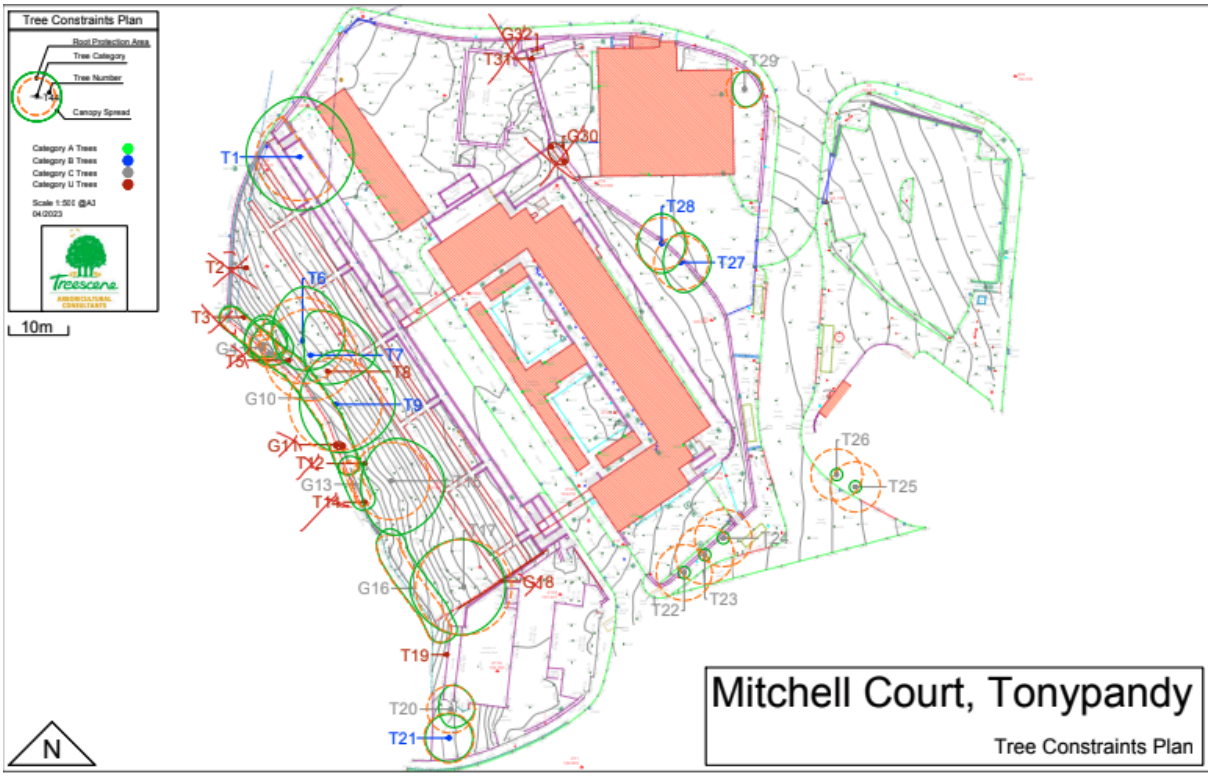
those habitats; being mainly poor quality amenity, and with most value found at or near the site's boundaries with built development adjacent.

There is some more minor provision of Cultural Services by the prominent eastern tree belt, contributing to a sense of place. Overall, it is the trees belt present within the site which provide the majority of the Ecosystem Services within the site currently, with little provided elsewhere.

3.3. Arboricultural GI Baseline Summary

The site contains scattered trees as well as that tree belt. Of these, many of the trees are category U trees, needing to be removed irrespective of any proposed development for reasons of safety. Others include category A and B trees both scattered and in the tree belt.

Figure 5: Extract of Arboricultural Survey plan



3.4. SuDS GI Baseline Summary

The formal sustainable management of water within the site is currently non-existent, with only standard formal combined drainage associated with the buildings and hardstanding only.

4. Proposed Scheme of Development

The proposed scheme includes the demolition of existing buildings within the site, but where possible the vast majority of other built features (walls etc.), are to be retained or sensitively replaced. Areas of existing hardstanding, location of existing buildings and other structures, and areas of disturbed ground are to be lost to the proposal. There would also be the loss of some semi-improved amenity grassland, and ephemeral ruderal habitat associated with disturbed ground. The proposed scheme can be seen illustrated at Figure 6 below.

New landscaping, including shared private and more public social spaces, rainfall retention planting areas, as well as ecological and ecosystem enhancements form a large part of the proposal. Those elements are integrated with the new buildings, gardens, new parking area, pathways, and associated service areas that are needed.

Further below is a consideration of the proposed scheme from the differing specialist and framework aspects; required to illustrate compliance with the Step-wise approach, demonstrate multifunctionality, and review the specialist considerations to ensure that best practice is proposed.

Figure 6: Extract of Illustrative Masterplan - URB-XX-0XX-DR-L-101-S0-P01

4.1. Step-Wise Approach summary

The following is a summary, in relation to the proposed habitats post-development and the opportunities the scheme of proposed development present for species:

a) the proposed scheme's Mitigation - avoidance, minimisation, mitigation or replacement, and compensation off or on site;
b) enhancement - by way of Diversity, Extent, Condition, or Connectivity, and resultant Attributes of adaptability, resilience, and/or resistance to pressures;
c) proposed long-term management principles to secure the above benefits; and
d) multifunctionality of the above, with regard to the Ecosystems Services the proposal is considered to deliver.

This is followed itself by sections providing greater detail and analysis to support these summary. Those following sections are based on the specialist areas of consideration,

to enable a comparison against the baseline conditions and the Step-wise approach be illustrated in more detail.

4.1.1. Mitigation Hierarchy Summary

Avoidance	Impacts to the existing areas of more ecologically valuable green space are mostly avoided by way of retention of these. Most trees are also retained within the site, with the exception of those trees to be removed because of reasons of safety (category U trees) but also some associated grassland areas.
Minimisation	Where possible the loss of trees has been minimised, as has the losses of existing opportunities for species and in particular the low value opportunities for bats commuting, and nesting and roosting for birds. Habitats lost have been minimised by the re-building within existing areas of buildings and hardstanding, and lower value ruderal habitats.
Mitigation	Where there is some loss of potential roosting opportunities for bats and nesting opportunities for birds within the current building, this is mitigated by replacement with similar opportunities by proposed nest boxes. Some mitigation for the low opportunities offered by the existing ruderal habitat areas would be more than mitigated by additional new garden and other planting areas, such as on rooftops.
Compensation on / off site	The loss of some trees and amenity areas is more than compensated for by: a) new planting of a number of trees (over 3:1 ratio), and b) the replacement of amenity and other lost habitats with a much greater variety of planting types and the species present across the site, many being of greater value for wildlife.

4.1.2. DECCA Enhancements Summary

Diversity	The new range of diversity between differing habitat types (by a greater number of different habitat types proposed), is added to by the diversity within the new and existing habitats (which will have a greater range of floral species, including many native). Many of these flowering species, or otherwise important for providing features important to potentially present wildlife. An increased diversity in the wildlife-friendly built features within the site, including green roofs, and bird and bat boxes, opens up a large diversity of opportunities particularly for aerial species (birds, bats, and some invertebrates).
Extent	The extent of high-diversity native planted habitats on-site have been increased. This includes new green roofs and rooftop amenity planting, which increase the extent of GI possible within the site.
Condition	The enhancement of the diversity of species present within the area of the tree belt, and some grassland areas, will help to improve the structure and with it functional condition of those areas ecosystems. New planting and features will by their diversity improve the conditions for invertebrates. With this improvement conditions for other important species such as bats and birds, as well as amphibians and small mammals potentially present. This improvement would be to both the condition of opportunities for foraging as well as shelter, and in some cases breeding opportunities. Suitable species and habitats have been chosen for varying wildlife benefits, but also for areas to be used by people, to ensure good conditions are practical in the context of the high density and publicly accessible development proposed. The overall condition for most habitats has therefore been maximised as appropriate. More amenity habitats would have an improved condition compared to those prior to development.

Connectivity	The existing tree belt within the west of the site is the only strategic connectivity green asset within the site of any significance. This linear area is to be significantly enhanced by new planting creating an improved complexity in the understorey, enabling a much greater variety of movement and periodic shelter opportunities for a range of species. This area will act as a much enhanced green corridor, as well as an island of opportunity beyond the site at the local area level. Other extensive new tree and hedgerow planting would also create some similar, although more limited, green corridor opportunities throughout the site. The more disconnected nature of the grasslands and other habitats that trees and hedgerows are within does somewhat limit the value of their connectivity opportunities. This is considered to be offset by the diversity within those areas, the small distances between them and nearby habitats, and the stepping-stone and island haven opportunities presented by the rooftop planting for some species. The proposal offers, overall, a moderate to high quality stepping-stone, and the has improved a significant connective route within the local area; for more mobile species, such as birds, bats, small mammals, and a range of invertebrates.

4.1.3. Long-term Management Summary

Bio-retention mix	Annual removal of dead vegetation as necessary, and selective removal or other management of any species which become overdominant or spreading. The selective scalping of sediment as required to fulfil those areas functions as bio-retention areas; ideally on no more than a biennial basis (once every 2 years), and not in all parts of any one bio-retention areas in any one year, to allow vegetation to re-establish. The replanting or reseeding of these areas as necessary.

Native seeded / re-seeded biodiverse grassland	In the first year, manage the area in line with supplier's guidance on establishing the seed mix. In all other years, where amenity use allows: ○ To allow flowering and the setting of seed - No mowing or other sward management between April and the end of flowering (approximately early-late August), except hand-pull of any over dominant 'weed' or sown species. ○ To ensure no 'weed' species become established, and no grasses become dominant - In other Autumn and Winter months, mowing of the sward to a height of approximately 30mm, as required. Any woody species spreading or otherwise present should be cut and spot-treated with a systemic herbicide (Glyphosate, or similar) only. ○ To ensure that the species present can set their seed for the next year - The arisings of the first cut post-flowering should ideally be left in place for several days, before removal. ○ To ensure that soil conditions remain suitable - All arisings should raked off, and be removed from the area of cuts, to ensure lower fertility of the soil remains.
Biodiverse green roof seed mix	The annual or other period of maintenance, post-flowering in any year, of all species present and in-line with the suppliers recommendations.

Flowering lawn grassland	To gain maximum ecological benefit - No mowing from between May and late June for approximately 4-6 weeks (as directed by supplier advice). On occasional and non-sequential years, it would be beneficial to desist mowing in April and continue this throughout the flowing season until early-late August, to maximise floristic diversity and more diverse species to set seed. To enable amenity use, but maintain some greater ecological benefit - the regular mowing to no less than 25-40 mm, with sequential relaxing of this in key or all flowering months in varying areas biennially (once every two years). To ensure that soil conditions remain suitable - All arisings should raked off, and be removed from the area of cuts, to ensure low fertility soil remains.
Woodland edge	The establishment of species proposed, and replacement of any that fail within the first 5 years, should be ensured. Replacement of failed species may not be required where the same species is surviving and spreading elsewhere. The thinning or seasonal pulling of any species as necessary, to maintain the diversity proposed. To ensure no disturbance or harm to nesting birds - all works are to take place outside the bird nesting season, or under suitable ecological supervision and where its established no active nests are present. To ensure no hard to hedgehog or other small mammals, if present, any large areas of leaf little or other organic detritus should be left between approximately November and March, relative to cold temperatures. This would ensure no hibernating or sheltering animals become at risk of cold exposure.

Trees	The care and pruning of trees as required, with the replacement of specimens that fail to become established, or which already exist and are prominent or important to ecology in the site and die. To ensure no disturbance or harm to nesting birds - all works are to take place outside the bird nesting season, or under suitable ecological supervision and where its established no active nests are present. To ensure no disturbance or harm to bats - all works to take place only on limbs or trees without suitable features for roosting bats. Where these are present or potentially present, suitable ecological advice should be sought before any works.
Hedgerow	Management as necessary and suitable for the location, to maintain the hedgerow in a good condition, and maintain connectivity, as well as act as an amenity feature. To ensure no disturbance or harm to nesting birds - all works are to take place outside the bird nesting season, or under suitable ecological supervision and where its established no active nests are present.
Bat and Bird Boxes	For bird boxes - the annual cleaning of these, outside of the nesting bird season (approximately March to September). For bat and bird boxes - the maintenance of these or replacement with a similar alternative as necessary.
Amenity areas and gardens	Managed as necessary.

Figure 7: Extract of the softworks and planting general arrangement plan

4.1.4. Ecosystem Services Summary

Cultural	Some landscaped areas are explicitly proposed or have the potential to be used as accessible natural greenspace, as well as being features of wildlife benefit. Those areas will bring people closer to nature, and to a lesser extent those visible on slopes nearby will do the same. There are extensive areas where such multi-functional spaces are present within the site, and other areas where naturalistic or wildlife friendly plating is adjacent to accessible areas. In particular the rooftop planting, as well as views towards the western bank, as well as interspersed areas of greenspace would provide the cultural benefits of setting a largely green 'feel' to the site to the benefit of wellbeing. The sense of place being 'green' would extend those benefits to areas outside the site also, to the enjoyment and benefit of the wider local area community and visitors.

Regulating	bio-retention rain-gardens would better manage and filter rainfall from within the site. The green roofs would also contribute to the SuDS provision, and additionally create a significant regulation of the building temperature below; by providing shade and insulation, as well as removing an area of potentially heat retentive roof material. Trees and other vegetation around the site would also contribute to both the management of rainfall in general (interception slowing, and filtration), and provide evapotranspiration cooling effects where present. Additionally, trees within the site would provide shade, and further cool urban areas, especially where that shade would fall on hardstanding or buildings. The above would all contribute to climate change resilience of the site, and development. The understorey planting of tree belt areas would significantly improve the above qualities, even in areas where trees are existing and retained. New tree planting, and other vegetation, would sequester and store carbon in both their masses and/or in soils. Given the areas where good condition habitats, with permanent ground covering species, are to become established then the benefits would likely be extensive, in the context of the existing site.

Supporting	The significant areas of new native ground flora, and other vegetation, would assist in the formation of improved top soils. Especially on existing or newly uncovered / made ground. This would help secure improved nutrient cycling within the site. All landscaping and proposed features for wildlife would provide a habitat benefit for fauna over the existing baseline condition of the site. The diversity of differing habitats, types of planting, and their conditions, would all help ensure there are significant opportunities for the supporting of fauna; and especially those that may require a range of ecotone habitats, from woody areas to/from grassland, close-by to each other. In particular, the use of native flowering and other grassland need mixes would assist in the development of healthy soils. This is additionally important for, and assisted by, trees in this area. The landscaping strategy has specifically included the consideration retention and enhancement of the tree belt for its potential green-corridor effect. This would likely benefit a variety of highly mobile aerial and terrestrial species of fauna.
Provisioning	No purposeful provisioning services would be provided but, by the establishment of wildflower areas, there is the potential for this site to become a sustainable source of such seed for other areas locally. Some trees which produce edible fruit, most notably cherry species, are proposed, and could be foraged.

4.2. Landscape GI Summary

The landscape strategy is detailed in the planning application accompanying the design and access statement, including considerations of the opportunities and constraints of the site, and wider area, that relate to Ecosystem Resilience.

The proposed scheme includes extensive new native and diverse amenity planting, comprising a range of amenity, grassland, understorey, hedgerow and tree species. This includes those native species green roof areas and areas of bio-retention rain garden, as well as publicly and privately accessible green spaces, acting as multifunctional GI features with a range of additional biodiversity and ecosystem benefits. These are beneficial to rainfall interception, filtration and attenuation, as well as biodiversity benefits a range of potentially present species of fauna. This ensures both Regulating and Supporting Ecosystems service enhancements are delivered. They also ensure that Cultural ecosystem services are better delivered, and a potential enhancement over the existing site be achieved for Provisioning services.

4.3. Arboricultural Summary

The vast majority of trees are to be retained, with the exception of Category U trees with the potential to cause damage or harm which necessitates their removal, separate to any planning application. While not strictly necessary, compensation for the loss of those trees would still be delivered by new tree planting across the site, at a level above the minimum 3 trees for all trees to be removed.

4.4. SuDS Summary

The proposed attenuation features would provide a benefit for the site, and enhancement over the existing provision of sustainable drainage. All this would be achieved while also producing a benefit to wildlife, and new planting additionally contributing to the stabilisation of slopes, as well as the interception and treatment of rainfall.

4.5. Ecology Summary and Analysis

The proposed scheme has had a high consideration for the existing assets of potential biodiversity and ecological resilience significance within the site, retaining them where possible. The scheme proposes planting and new features of benefit to wildlife, of a type and scale to enhance the overall biodiversity of the site. Those enhancements also target opportunities to improve ecosystem resilience. Throughout the design process, the Step-wise approach to ecology has been followed and ensured.

The proposed landscaping and other features would introduce a range of higher-quality habitats by their composition and strategic placement, than are existing. There would be an improved number of differing habitat types, and therefore diversity between them, within the site; increased diversity of species within each habitat type (the majority of which will be native species); and, consequential enhancement of opportunities for a larger range of fauna, and the quality for those already potentially present within the site.

The positioning of the landscape elements has had a particularly high regard for the green corridors already present within the site, and the opportunities for island effects. This has culminated in the reinforcement of what is potentially a strategically visible, accessible, and larger ‘green area’ in the context of the local area.

All planting is proposed to be of a size, composition, and (relatively quickly) a condition whereby it can make an almost instant impact to the site, or at least minimise harm in the short-term from the minimal habitat losses.

The overall package of the scheme would lead to a net benefit for biodiversity, an enhancement of ecosystem resilience, and be able to deliver that improvement in a reasonable range of time. The maintenance of such a scheme would be by fairly standard and versatile approaches, which can adapt and change without a significant impact on the value to be delivered, in the short term.

5. Assessment

The site's relatively limited ecological (baseline) value at present makes the adherence to the Step-wise approach's requirement more simple to satisfy. As such, the scheme has looked to provide a highly considered and significant enhancement, in response to the relative ease of this. The Mitigation hierarchy to be considered and enhancement demonstrated at each 'stage', is demonstrated by the design journey illustrated in the Design and Access statement. This is further explored, and the multifunctional aspects of that approach illustrated, specifically in regard to the different areas of contribution, as set out above in Section 4 of this statement. The conclusion is that the proposed scheme would produce a significantly integrated enhancement of different habitats and the relative opportunities they present, and therefore a biodiversity and ecosystem resilience enhancement; while also producing some additional ecosystem service benefits which are themselves a betterment over the current site.

The accompanying Ecological Appraisal has set out a formal consideration of: the site's baseline; how the potential impacts from the proposed development have been avoided, mimised, mitigated, or compensated for; and what enhancements are proposed / are recommended for inclusion. It therefore illustrates how a net benefit for biodiversity (NBB), with increases in ER within the site and wider area, should be achieved.

The accompanying Design and Access Statement has set out the process by which the above NBB and ER have been conceived, would be achieved, and therefore the degree to which best practice has been followed and the GI multi-functionality maximised. A wider evaluation of the ES considered in design, and produced as part of the same

landscape scheme, is considered in summary in this document. This usefully demonstrated the focus on NBB and ER gains, as part of the design process, and which the proposed development would achieve.

The proposed scheme is illustrated in Figure 6, which shows the large natural habitat areas to be created, and the built/semi-natural habitats specifically proposed for the development site.

Given the proposed developments' alignment with national and local policy GI requirements, the proposed development also accords with the UN Global Biodiversity Framework (2022). It meets key target areas: especially relating to reducing threats to biodiversity; but also sustains use and benefits sharing (to meet people's needs), especially in an urban context; and utilises tools and solutions for implementation and mainstreaming an ecocentric approach to proposed development.

5.1. Rhondda Cynon Taff Local Development Plan and SPG

Regarding the priorities of the local policies and SPG, the focus on protecting natural environments, of varying significance, is ensured throughout the proposed-development's scheme of design. The scheme is considered to align with both the policy AW8 and the Nature Conservation SPG.

5.2. Legislative and policy consideration

A suitable NBB, and ER enhancement, have been demonstrated through the application of the step-wise approach. Additionally, as part of the review of the site, and proposed design conception, suitable multi-functional benefits for both wildlife and people have also been considered by the framework of Ecosystem Services (ES). The proposed development has therefore adequately provided an enhancement of ES as part of the proposal; and adhered to good practice as part of this.

A general regard has been given as part of the design process to Section 6 duties of local authorities, and Section 7 habitats that may be near the site, and have the potential to be impacted by the proposed development.

The scheme is therefore evidenced as complying with not only the requirement of PPW Chapter 6 but also other PPW chapters and the FW national policy, Local Policy as well as relevant legislation regarding or associated with aspects of Green Infrastructure. The proposed development also accords with the statutory duties of a local planning authority, with regard to Environment (Wales) Act 2016. A planning decision can therefore be positively made with regard to these considerations.

6. Conclusion

This GI Statement is considered to be proportionate to the scale and type of development proposed, and the comprehensive scheme of overall enhancement which is proposed. The statement sets out the measured baseline, the predicted impacts from the proposal and how these are managed within the design, and examines these via the mechanism of the step-wise approach, DECCA and ES frameworks. It also shows how the scheme complies with the relevant local policy context and any other aspects of PPW 12 beyond the GI Statement requirement. The scheme is considered to be an appropriate design, regarding GI, in the context of the site and local context or nearby/adjacent habitats of importance, and wider GI networks.