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Elan Valley Visitor Centre Re-development

Design and Access Statement

August 2024

ray**hole**architects



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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Elan Valley is an iconic visitor attraction with a unique heritage, surrounded by an epic landscape including spectacular dams and majestic lakes. It is a haven for wildlife and provides recreational opportunities to the public in the immediate area, regionally and beyond.

1.2 Elan Valley covers approximately 1% of the land area of Wales, has a host of nature and landscape assets including sites of strategic scientific interest (SSSI's), International Dark Skies Park and Celtic Rainforest. Many visitors are drawn to see the magnificent dams overspilling in the autumn/winter months.

1.3 *Deleted*

1.4 The Mid Wales Growth Deal plays a key role in catalysing economic recovery and growth in the Mid Wales economy, with the aim of supporting job creation

and increasing productivity and wider societal and environmental ambitions.

1.5 The Growth Deal is set within the broader vision for growing Mid Wales and will play a key role alongside a range of other strategies and investments from the public and private sector to bring prosperity to the communities and businesses of the region.

1.6 It is expected to create significant numbers of new jobs and generate millions of pounds of economic value added over the next decade.

1.7 The Elan Valley proposals will contribute to the Mid Wales Growth Deal delivering a flagship visitor destination, including; the upgrading of the existing facilities and infrastructure, providing new amenities, services and experiences for public enjoyment.

1.8 It also provides the administration and management centre for the Elan Valley.

1.9 Therefore, it is key to delivering the 'sustainable tourism' strand of the Mid Wales Growth Deal.



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1.0 Introduction

1.10 Deleted

1.12 A critical project within the wider EVL Programme is the redevelopment of the Visitor Centre facility (which is the subject of this Planning Application).

1.13 This Elan Valley Visitor Centre Re-development Study tracks the design development from Appraisal, through Strategic Briefing into Concept Design – which will culminate in a Full Planning Application.

Overall Project Objectives

1.14 The current Visitor Centre has a number of challenges; *under-capacity at peak, stressed infrastructure and services, non-compliance (in terms of legislation and regulation), maintenance and operational efficiency issues, limited visitor content program and amenities.*

1.15 The Client intends to deliver a comprehensive and ambitious redevelopment of the existing Visitor Centre at Elan Valley to enhance the visitor experience and provide an iconic, fit for purpose exemplar tourism facility and gateway to the wider Elan Valley and the Cambrian Mountains beyond with facilities to develop key skills for Mid Wales in the tourism / Hospitality industry.



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1.0 Introduction

Site Context

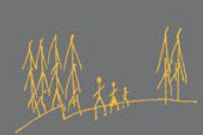
1.16 The Elan Valley is a river valley situated to the west of Rhayader in Powys, Wales. It covers 70 square miles of lake and countryside. The valley contains the Elan Valley Reservoirs and Elan Village with over 80% of the valley designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

1.17 In 2015 it was designated as an International Dark Sky Park. The Elan Valley is owned by Dwr Cymru Welsh Water, who established the Elan Valley Trust in 1989, vesting the management of a greater part of the estate on a 999 year lease.

1.18 The site includes a visitor centre which was converted in 1985/ extended in the 1990's – extending the original building which is of historic interest within its setting. The current provision at the centre includes; *a café and shop, bike hub with bike hire, exhibition, meeting rooms and conferencing hire, picnic sites, toilets, parking for cars, coaches and bikes, adventure playground, walking and bike trails.*

- The exhibition space is currently very small and inadequate for a significant visitor attraction to the region, failing to tell the story of Elan Valley in a compelling way.

- This could be remodelled, creating a multimedia exhibition – to become a key tourism attraction in its own right and able to accommodate larger numbers of people in the winter or during periods of inclement weather.
- Retail and the front-end Visitor Reception is undersized and requires enlargement to create additional capacity – particularly, during periods of inclement weather.
- Elan Valley is also an International Dark Skies Park and therefore, provides an opportunity to include a year-round planetarium experience with a presentation to tell the story of the night sky – at any time of day and when weather compromises external night sky viewing.
- There is also insufficient capacity in the visitor centre café and associated infrastructure to meet visitor demand, especially at peak times.
- A new expanded Café could also incorporate a training kitchen and include an external 'grab and go' area and external servery hatch to improve the visitor experience and range of offer (internal and external).



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Introduction



Craig Goch



Garreg Ddu



Pen y Garreg



Caban Coch



Claerwen Dam

The Elan Valley Estate comprises 70 square miles of dams, reservoirs and rugged Welsh landscapes.

The Estate is owned by Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water, although a greater part of it is vested in the Elan Valley Trust on a 999 year lease.

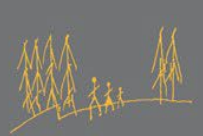
A principal function of the Estate is the provision of a clean water supply – this means that the whole area is managed in an environmentally friendly way to protect the water quality.

This means that the valley has a rich abundance of wildlife (flora and fauna) including Ancient Celtic Rainforest.



Site Location

Visitor Centre Grid Reference:
SN 928 646 (N52.2694 W3.5724)
Satnav: LD6 5HP



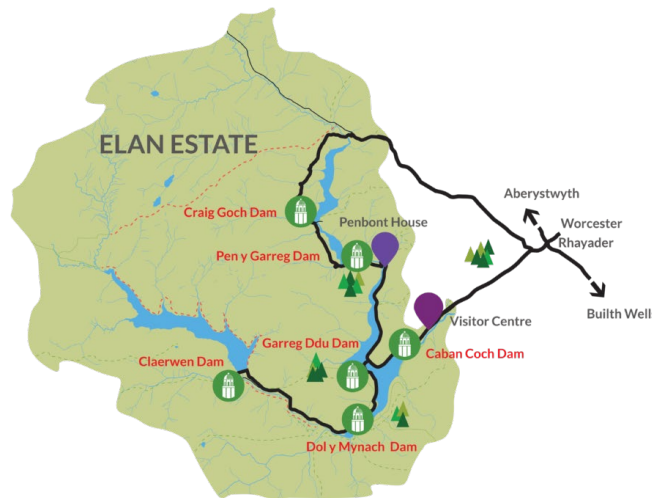
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Introduction



Each year the Elan Valley Lakes welcomes around half a million visitors.

The dams are undoubtedly the biggest draw, offering a wonderful year-round backdrop for cyclists, photographers and walkers. With the exception of Dol y Mynach, all the dams are also accessible by car.



There are four dams on the river Elan; *Craig Goch*, *Pen y Garreg*, *Garreg Ddu*, and *Caban Coch*.

The Claerwen dam is the newest and largest in addition to the unfinished Dol y Mynach dam.

In 2015, the Elan Valley Estate achieved International Dark Sky Park status becoming the first publicly accessible, privately owned park - globally.

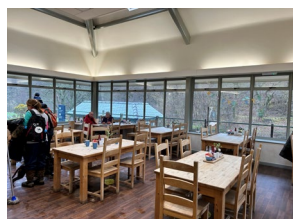
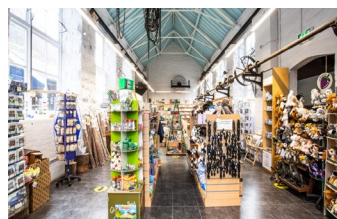


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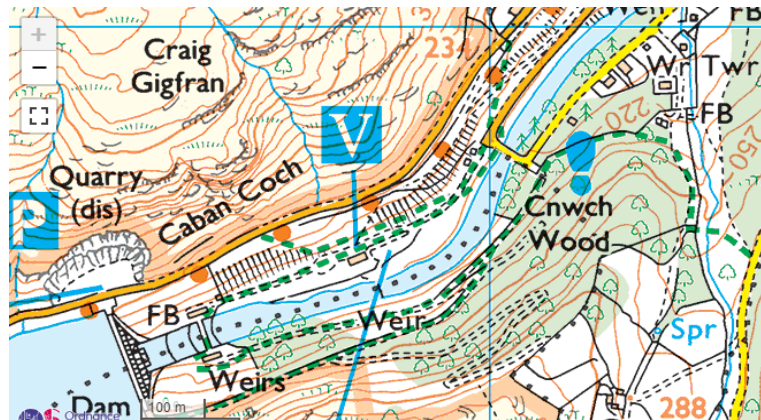
Introduction



The Elan Valley Visitor Centre provides the primary orientation facility for visitors exploring on foot, by bike or by car/coach.



Numerous trails emanate from the site for short walks or journeys to and from the other scenic locations.



For cyclists, the Elan Valley Estate has many options (road, hill or challenging tracks). The Visitor Centre also has a dedicated Bike Hub.

For a scenic drive there is nowhere more beautiful than the Elan Valley to enjoy the views of the dams, reservoirs and unique landscapes.

For Electric Car Drivers, the Visitor Centre provides Electric Car Charging Points.



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2.0 Statement of Need

2.1 Deliver a comprehensive and ambitious redevelopment of the existing Visitor Centre at Elan Valley to enhance the visitor experience and provide an iconic, fit for purpose exemplar tourism facility and gateway to the wider destination called - Elan Valley - and the Cambrian Mountains beyond.

2.2 Deliver a low carbon development (capital and operational) which is one of the projects objectives, that is Sustainable (Economically and Environmentally) and complies with the Equality Act 2010, CDM 2015, Building Regulations and other relevant Legislation, Regulations, DCWW Policies and good practice.

2.3 Deliver a Visitor Centre with the capability to maximise Commercial Opportunities and Revenue Generation - principally through (but not restricted to); Visitor Experience(s), Catering, Conferencing, Hospitality, Outdoor Activities, Education Programs and associated Retail, etc.

2.4 Deliver a Visitor Centre that Optimises Capital Expenditure in its implementation; Reduces Operational and Maintenance Costs through its lifetime.



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Project Team

Client

Dwr Cymru Welsh Water

Client Team

Vicky Martin
Michael Booth
Glenn Cooper
Gareth Davies

Project Manager

Chandler KBS
Jason Mears

Design Team

Architect and Principal Designer (CDM)

ray hole architects
Ray Hole Project Director
Veljko Buncic Project Architect
Natalia Nowak Project Admin

Advisory Team

Catering Consultant

Peppercorn Food Solutions
Lee Edwards

Retail Consultant

Tonik Associates
Gary Marshall

Exhibition Design Consultant

Codsteaks/ PyrahDesign
Mark Pyrah
Jacqueline Pyrah

Play and Playground Consultants

Timberplay
Charlie Russell
Beth Cooper

Planning Consultants

Asbri Planning
Pete Sulley
Dylan Green

MEP Engineering Consultants

Arup

Civil/Structural Engineering Consultants

Arup

Landscape Architects

Arup

Cost Consultants

Chandler KBS
Matthew Meredith
Henry Burton

**Planetarium Advisor (informal)*

**Dark Sky Wales
Alan Trow



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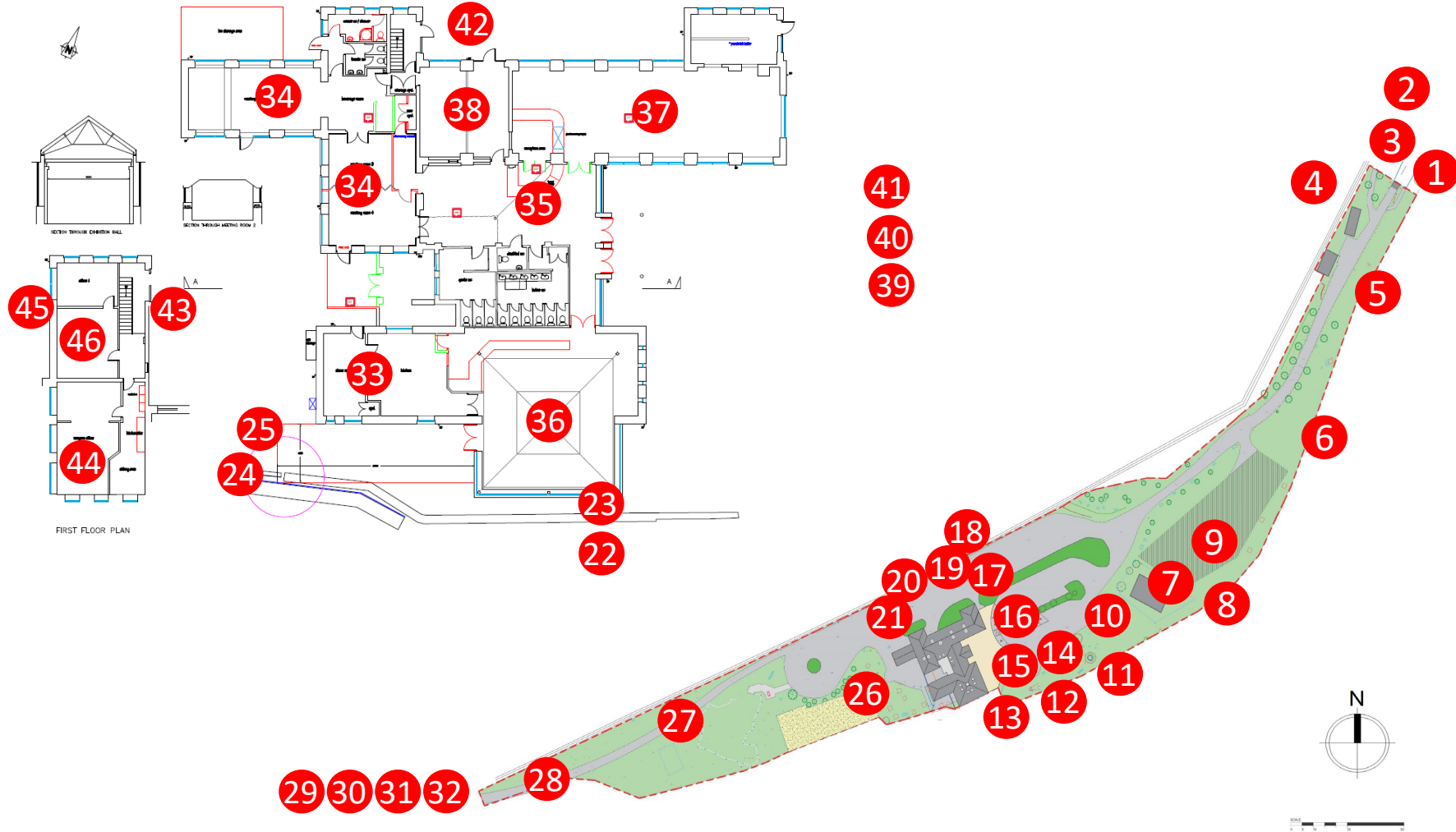
Elan Valley Visitor Centre Re-development

Appraisal and Strategic Definition



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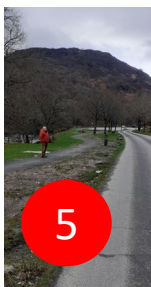
Appraisal – Site Visit Record (February 2024)

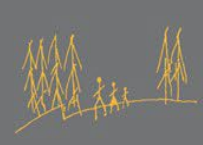




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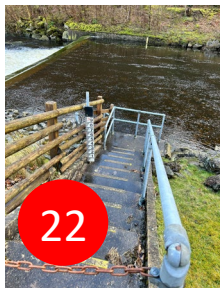
Appraisal – Site Visit Record (February 2024)





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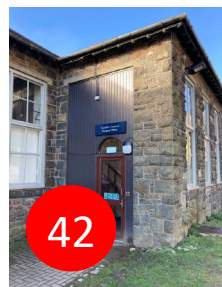
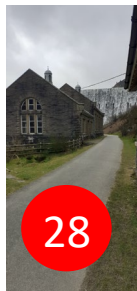
Appraisal – Site Visit Record (February 2024)





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Appraisal – Site Visit Record (February 2024)





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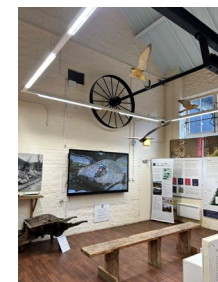
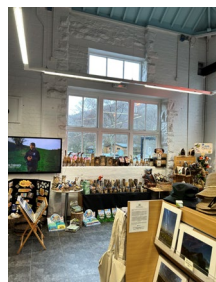
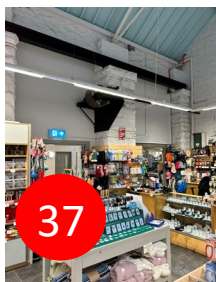
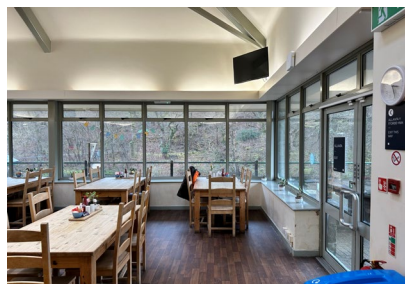
Appraisal – Site Visit Record (February 2024)





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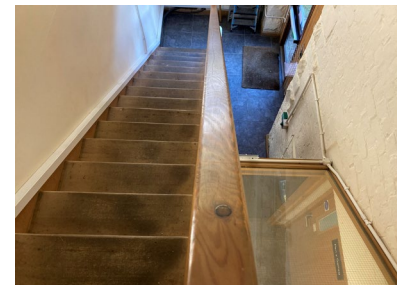
Appraisal – Site Visit Record (February 2024)





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Appraisal – Site Visit Record (February 2024)



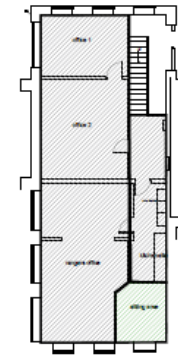


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Appraisal – Existing Floor Plans



1 PLAN
GROUND FLOOR SCALE 1:100



2 PLAN
FIRST FLOOR SCALE 1:100





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Appraisal – Existing Floor Plans

Elan Valley Visitor Centre

Preliminary Gross Internal Area (GIA) Schedule

rev: C

rev. date: 29/07/2024

Existing Building

	Function / Use	Total Area (m2)	Circulation Space (m2)	Note
Ground Floor	Entrance Foyer	79		demolished for redevelopment
	Shop	130	20	Current store area shown as "Circulation Space"
	Exhibit	41		
	WC Block	46		demolished for redevelopment
	Meeting Rooms	108	6	
	Staff WC/Change	16		
	Meeting Rooms Exit Lobby	11		
	Kitchen Zone	52		
	F&B Zone (Incl. Servery)	119	20	Servery area shown as "Circulation Space"
	Total:	602	m2	
1. Floor	Office Zone	80	6	Stair landing area shown as "Circulation Space"
	WCs	7		
	Stair well/Staircase	9		
	Total:	96	m2	

TOTAL EXISTING GIA: 698 m2

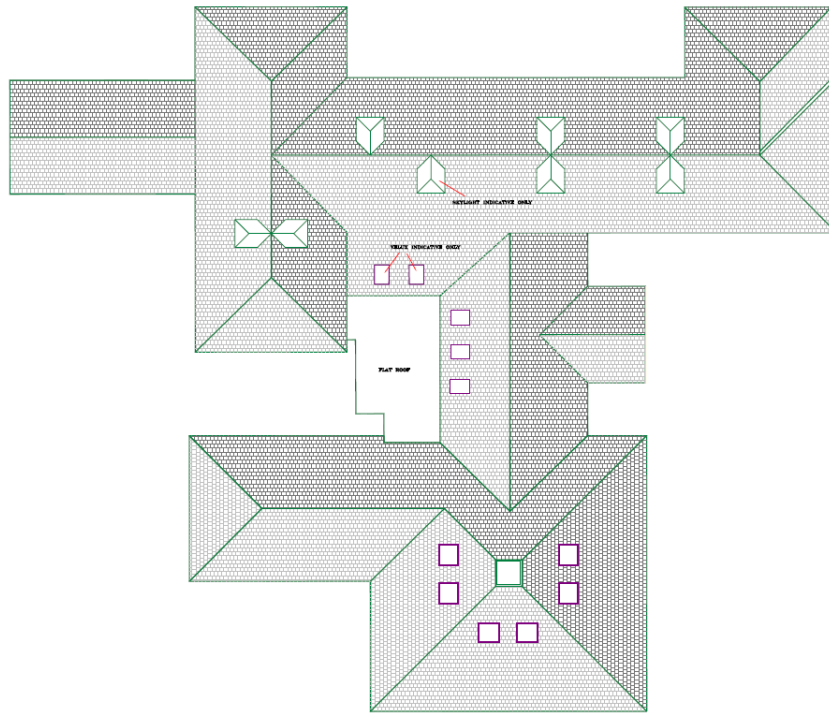
TOTAL EXISTING DEMOLISHED GIA: 0 m2

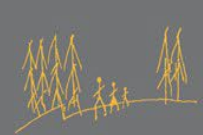
N.B. Existing external mass structure wall pier internal projections excluded from GIA calculations



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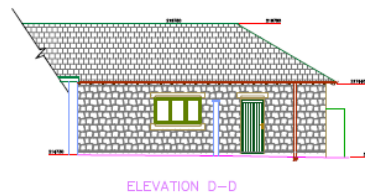
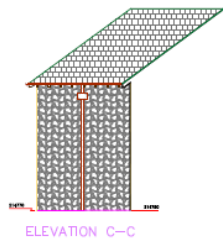
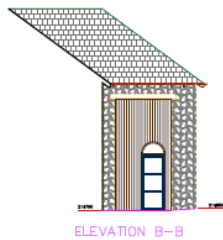
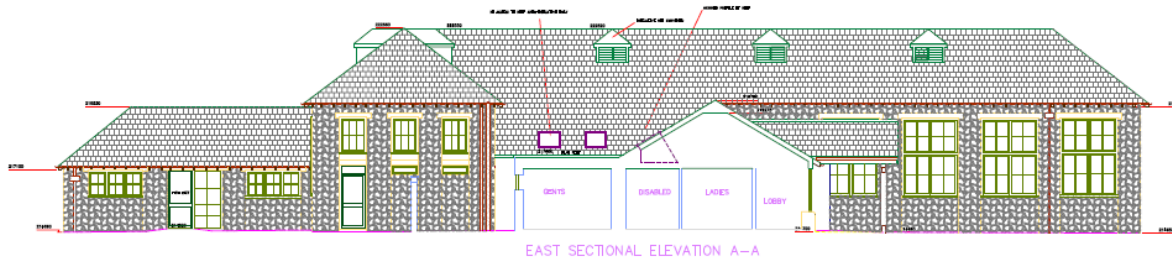
Appraisal – Existing Roof Plan





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Appraisal – Existing Elevations and Sections



Rev	Date	Description	Drawn	Checked
WAYNE EVANS SURVEYING LTD				
14 Oak St, Caerphilly		The Elan Valley		
01495 25252		Wales, CF83 1YD		
www.waysurveying.com		Email: info@waysurveying.com		
Client: DWR CYMRU WELSH WATER				
Project: ELAN VALLEY RESORT CENTRE				
Title: ELEVATIONS AND SECTIONS				
Designer	CMW	Drawn	CMW	Checked
Scale	1:50	Date	26/07/2016	Revised
Drawing No	ELAN/16/WW/S03			



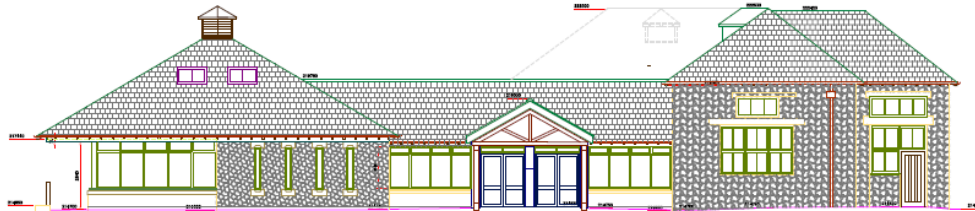


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Appraisal – Existing Elevations and Sections



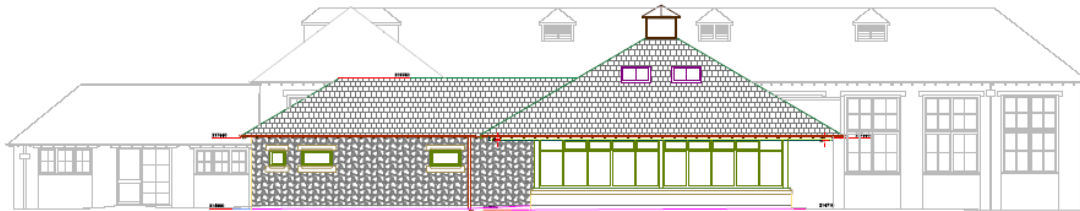
WEST (SIDE) ELEVATION



SOUTH (FRONT) ELEVATION



NORTH (REAR) ELEVATION



EAST (SIDE) ELEVATION ON KITCHEN /RESTURANT

A	REV/DATE	REVISIONS UPDATED	CMW
Rev	Date	Description	Drawn
WAYNE EVANS SURVEYING LTD			
14 Oak To Court Llanidloes WELSH		30 STANTON ROAD WELSH WELSH	
Client: DWR CYMRU WELSH WATER			
Project: ELAN VALLEY RESORT CENTRE			
Title: ELEVATIONS			
Designed	CMW	Drawn	CMW
Scale	1:50	Date	26/07/2016
Drawing No	ELAN/16/WW/S02		Revision
			A



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Appraisal – Visitor Statistics (Related to Car Park Arrivals/Departures)

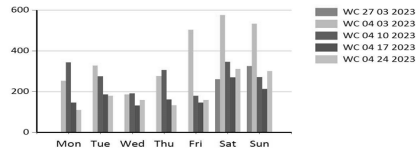
Elan Valley Visitor Centre LD6 (126 spaces)

April 2023

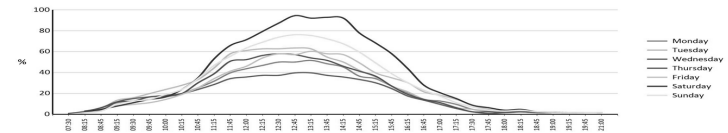
	2023	2022	YTD 2022	YTD 2023
Total visits	7,751	7,058	20,254	21,358
Total staff visits	606	739		
Average visits per day	258	235		
Average visits per day - staff	20	23		
Average dwell time	01:45:00	01:44:00		
Average dwell time - staff	05:30:00	05:27:00		

VEHICLE VISIT COUNT

Day	27/03	03/04	10/04	17/04	24/04
Mon	253	343	146	110	
Tue	328	275	186	179	
Wed	185	191	131	159	
Thu	276	306	161	132	
Fri	503	179	146	158	
Sat	260	575	946	269	311
Sun	325	533	271	213	301
Total	585	2653	1911	1252	1350



OCCUPANCY LEVEL



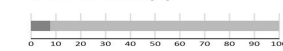
AVERAGE DWELL TIME

Day	2023	2022	Change
Mon	01:44:43	01:48:25	-3.53%
Tue	01:50:33	01:58:04	-6.80%
Wed	01:58:11	01:55:36	2.18%
Thu	01:53:55	01:54:59	-0.94%
Fri	01:46:53	01:40:37	5.88%
Sat	01:47:02	01:38:12	8.25%
Sun	01:39:23	01:31:22	2.16%

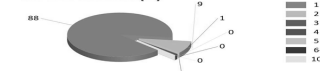
DWELL TIME DURATIONS

Mins	Staff	Mins	Visitor	Mins	Totals
0-60	162	0-15	1,440	0-15	1,526
60-120	49	15-30	773	15-30	803
120-180	20	30-60	1,686	30-60	1,732
180-240	35	60-90	900	60-90	926
240-300	31	90-120	642	90-120	665
300-360	36	120-240	1,163	120-240	1,218
360+	273	240+	541	240+	881

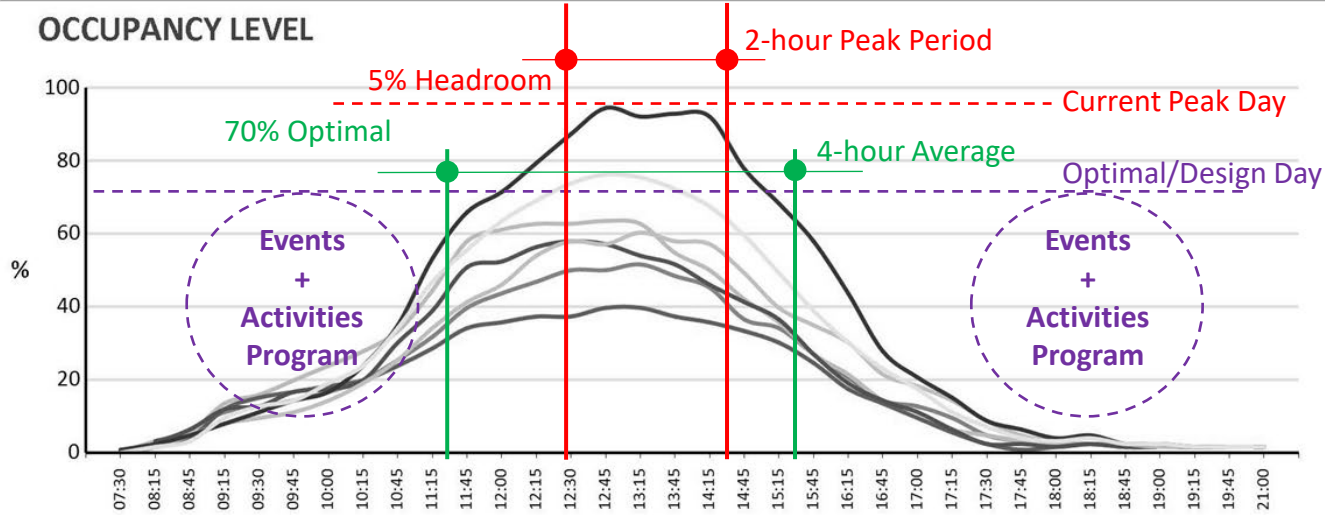
CAR PARK USAGE(%)



REPEAT VISITORS(%)



OCCUPANCY LEVEL



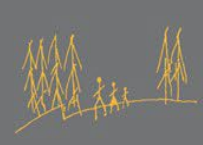
- Monday
- Tuesday
- Wednesday
- Thursday
- Friday
- Saturday
- Sunday



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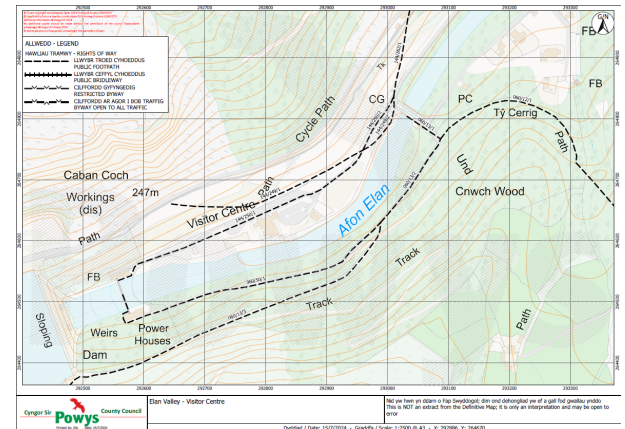
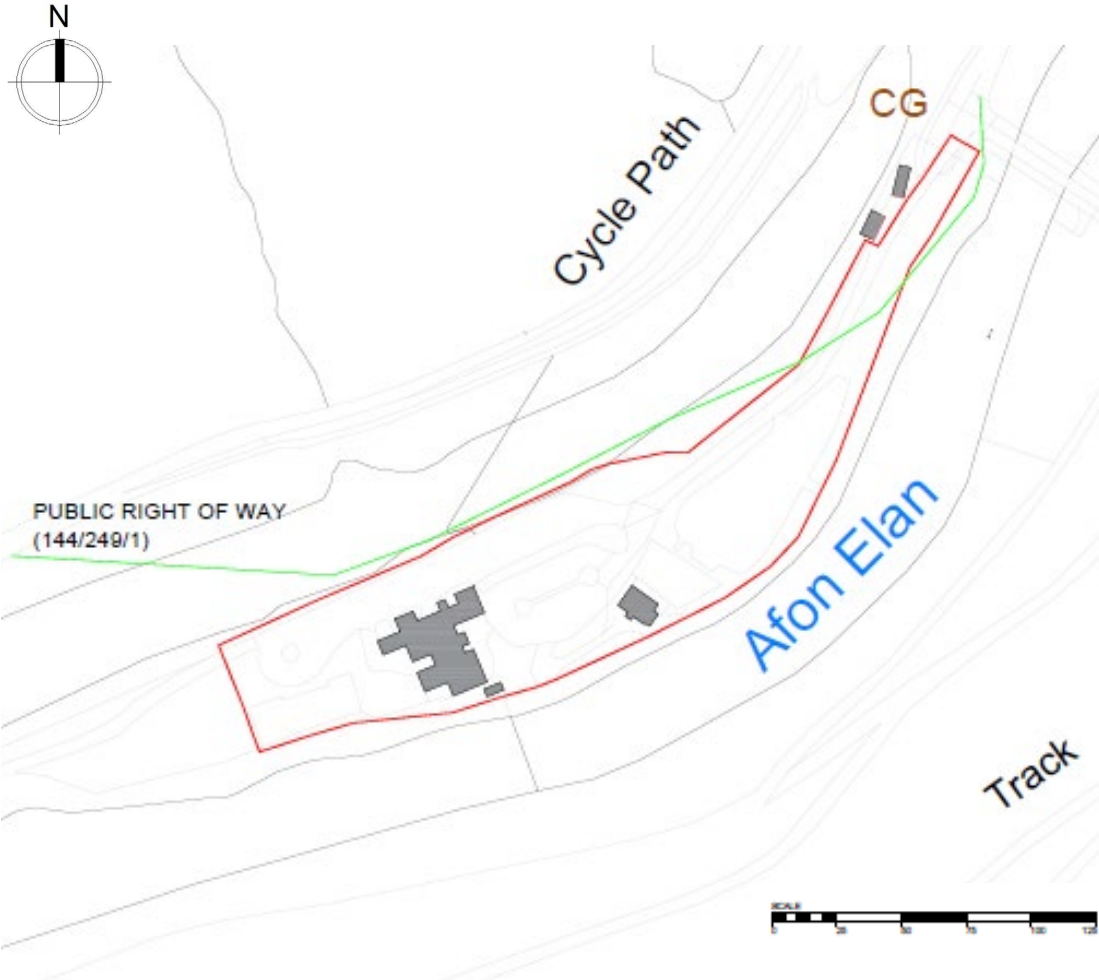
Appraisal – Existing Site Plan





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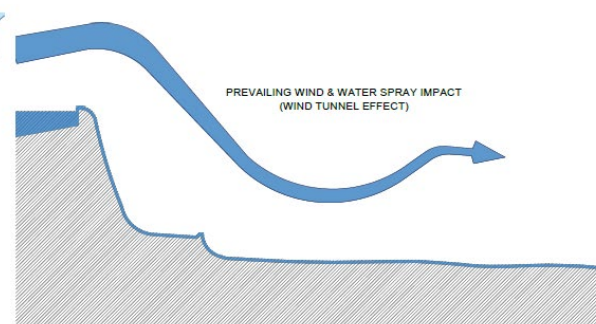
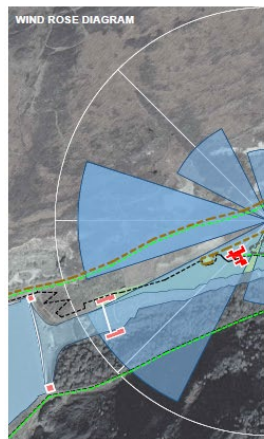
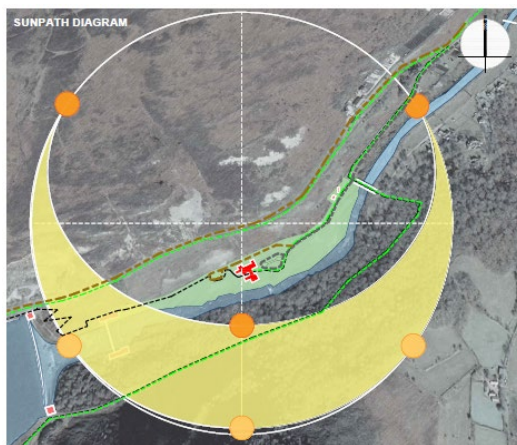
Appraisal - Considerations (PROW and Access : Vehicle, Foot and Cycle)





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Appraisal - Considerations (Rainfall, Sun-path and Wind-rose)



	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	
		2015		2016		2017		2018		2019		2020		2021		2022		2023		2024		Averages			
		Rainfall (mm)	Days	Rainfall (mm)	Days	Rainfall (mm)	Days	Rainfall (mm)	Days	Rainfall (mm)	Days	Rainfall (mm)	Days	Rainfall (mm)	Days	Rainfall (mm)	Days	Rainfall (mm)	Days	Rainfall (mm)	Days	Rainfall (mm)	Days		
3	January	204.0	17	302.4	19	98.9	16	258.3	21	93.1	16	156.2	19	249.8	21	79.6	11	268.9	12	97.9	13			180.9	16.5
4	February	124.8	10	202.2	15	184.9	17	74.9	13	108.3	13	374.1	19	217.2	15	319.7	20	15.8	13	215.2	19			183.7	15.4
5	March	118.7	16	129.5	9	194.1	17	145.2	14	259.2	13	156.1	13	133.2	12	60	11	252.4	20					160.9	13.9
6	April	33.5	8	93.2	15	31.7	6	155.7	17	124.7	13	53.9	9	16.2	6	38.5	12	128.4	13					75.1	11.0
7	May	166.1	15	97.9	10	65.2	12	48.6	9	36.8	11	15.3	5	275.3	17	67.2	18	29.6	8					89.1	11.7
8	June	73.1	9	148.7	14	93.6	13	13.3	5	143.9	17	118.0	16	19.8	10	58.1	12	41.8	11					78.9	11.9
9	July	120.6	19	129.1	11	74.3	17	47.3	6	53.5	12	93.0	21	78.6	11	75.3	8	182.8	17					94.9	13.6
10	August	124.5	17	94.1	13	104.4	19	76.1	12	139.6	16	186.1	16	87.2	13	17.4	11	148.2	16					108.6	14.8
11	September	51.1	11	116.4	15	164.5	19	172.0	14	185.4	19	70.8	16	129.6	12	95	12	153.9	17					126.5	15.0
12	October	64.8	10	121.0	10	136.8	19	155.5	12	219.5	19	217.1	22	217.3	16	183.2	17	202.5	19					168.6	16.0
13	November	306.0	21	116.3	13	190.7	17	224.0	16	240.9	17	116.8	19	72.2	20	203.8	20	208.5	19					186.6	18.0
14	December	424.4	20	66.8	14	215.3	13	218.4	13	267.5	15	288.3	20	273.5	17	137.5	10	251.4	16					238.1	15.3
15		1811.6	173	1617.6	158	1554.4	185	1589.3	152	1872.4	181	1845.7	195	1769.9	170	1335.3	162	1884.2	181	313.1	32			1692.1	173.0

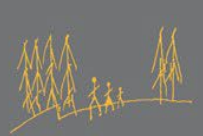
Rainfall is measured on weekdays only, readings on Mondays include the weekend rainfall. Number of days is based on rainfall readings being >0mm (EG. A reading of 0.1mm counts as a day in this data)

* 7 Snow days in Feb 2018, no rainfall reading

* 4 storms in February - each weekend

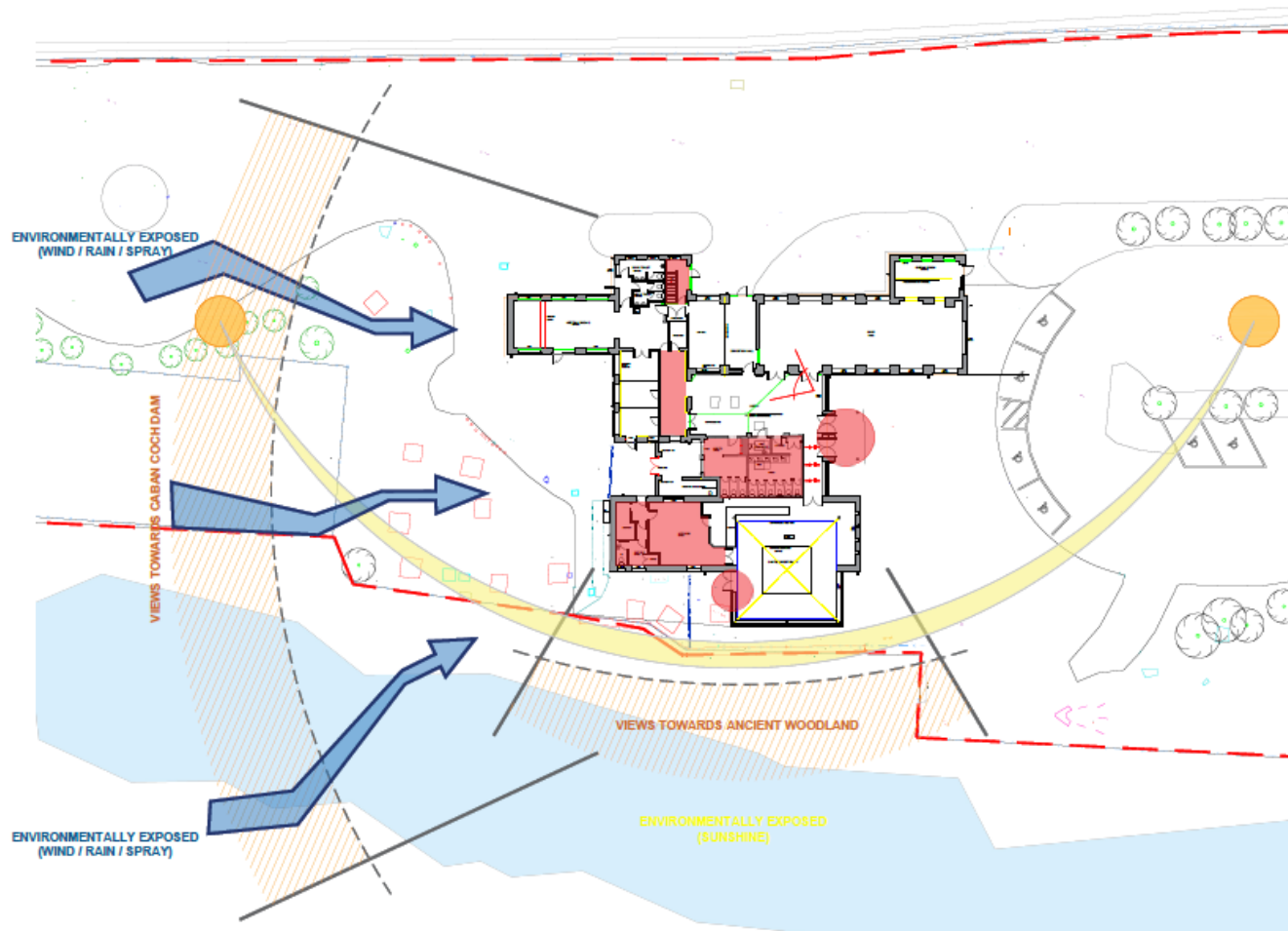
Listed yearly average is 1830mm

Rain gauge located just below Nantgwyllt church



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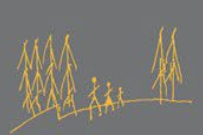
Appraisal - Considerations (Weather Exposure, Sun-path and Views)



1 PLAN
SITE PLAN

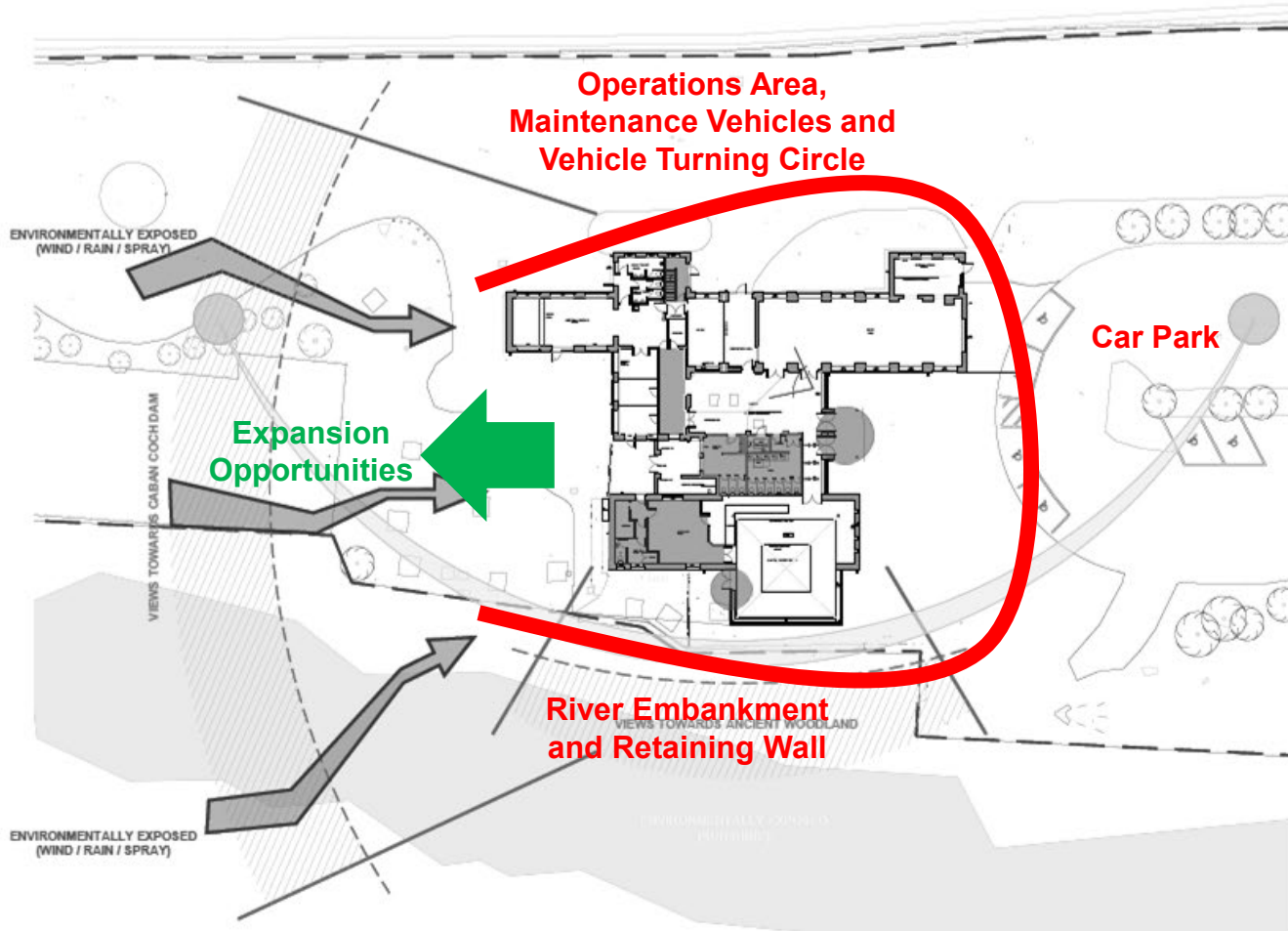
SCALE 1:200





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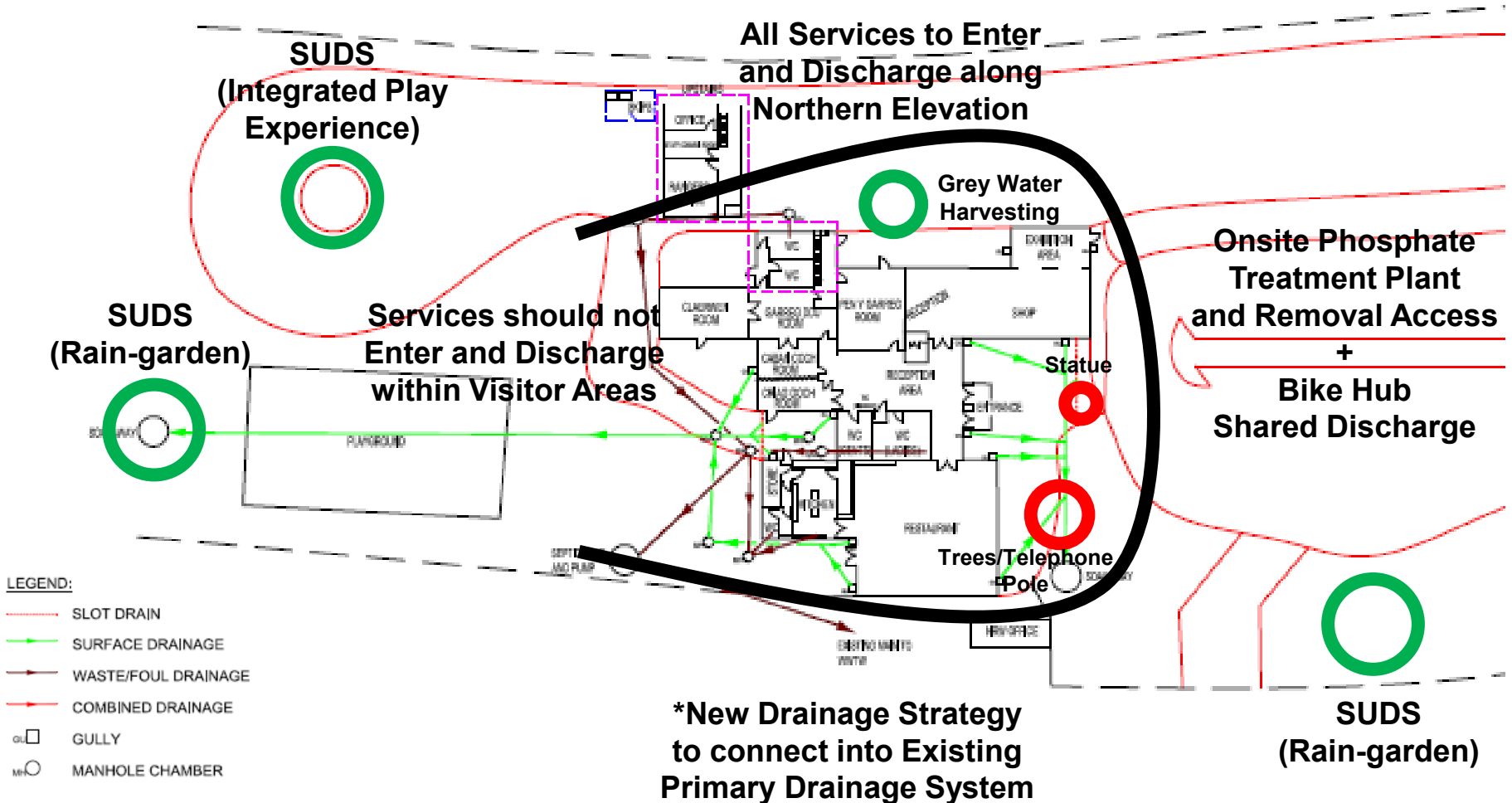
Appraisal - Considerations (Additional External Floor Area Constraints)





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Appraisal - Observations and Considerations (Existing Services MEP and Drainage Strategy)





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Elan Valley Visitor Centre Re-development

Preparation and Briefing



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Strategic Brief

SB 1

General

SB 1.1

Upgrade and expand the existing facilities (built environment, landscape and infrastructure) to mitigate issues of congestion, potential environmental stress and damage, whilst bringing historic buildings into full and active use.

SB 1.2

Create a facility that can be maintained safely and serviced efficiently without compromising the experience of the visitor or the delivery of the daily operations.

SB 1.3

Create facilities that can deliver a program of key activities, events and training throughout the year and at various times of the day/night with appropriate accommodation and amenities that enhances the visitor experience.

SB 1.4

Create facilities that enables safe and efficient operations, promotes increased revenue streams, elevates visitor engagement - whilst building awareness of and sustaining the natural beauty, environment and industrial heritage around the Elan Valley Visitor Centre.

SB 1.5

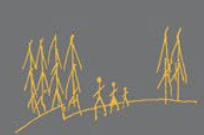
Create facilities that supports and enables staff to carry out; the management of the surrounding natural/heritage environment, the operation and administration of the Visitor Centre and the delivery of the range of visitor activities, events and experiences inside, outside and around the Visitor Centre.



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Strategic Brief

- SB 1.1.6 Design a distinctive “place” that attracts a diverse and inclusive audience to visit, dwell and leave with positive lasting memories - specific to the Visitor Centre’s location, setting and context.
- SB 1.1.7 Design an infrastructured built environment and landscape for public use that is environmentally sustainable (Carbon, Ecology, Climate Change, etc) and Equality Act compliant (including changing places) - and based on a clear understanding of the visitor experience and the operational needs to deliver it.
- SB 1.1.8 Create a facility that satisfies the primary use types - yet can adapt (aggregate/disaggregate) efficiently for a range of secondary/complementary uses when required to accommodate other potential use types and capacities.
- SB 1.1.9 Create a facility that is predicated on a strategy of; Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Generate, Harvest and Manage Waste – and that demands less energy and water, and powered by renewables - predominantly hydro (when available) and augmented by others (when not).
- SB 1.1.10 Maximise the useable time of space and installations (internal and external).
- SB 1.1.11 Create a facility that adopts Weather Enhanced Visitor Attraction (W.E.V.A.) philosophy.
- SB 1.1.12 Provide an environment with good; Acoustics, Lighting and Overall High-quality (particularly Kitchen, Café, WCs, Room to Room).
- SB 1.1.13 Provide adequate storage (type, scale, location, etc.).



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Strategic Brief

SB 2 Visitor Experience (General)

- SB 2.1.1 Design a unified and consistent visitor experience that comprises a mix of (internal and external) singular experiences that can (when required) aggregate together as a coherent and seamless collection of experiences.
- SB 2.1.2 Each individual experience should have the capacity and frequency of occupation (pulse-rate) to respond to the demand anticipated or rapidly adaptable if variations are occurring unexpectedly (this includes typology of use repurposing ie. dining to meeting space) .
- SB 2.1.3 The design of each experience should have both robustness and resilience supported by an appropriate maintenance regime.
- SB 2.1.4 Each experience should amplify the authenticity of the “place”.



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Strategic Brief

SB 3

Café/Kitchen

- SB 3.1.1 Increase the Café capacity to 100no. covers (currently 60no.). Could be split over a number of aggregated / disaggregated spaces)
- SB 3.1.2 The Café should be able to accommodate general seating, group seating (coach parties, etc.) and separate areas (reserved/private dining).
- SB 3.1.3 Location of the Café to provide visitors with views of the River and the Forest on the opposite riverbank, Dam and relocated Playground.
- SB 3.1.4 The Café should have direct access to the external terrace(s) – Dam view lawn and River terrace.
- SB 3.1.5 Terrace(s) to provide additional external seating capacity – some of which will need to be covered/shielded from rain, sun, wind and wind-blown misting.
- SB 3.1.6 Adjacent internal spaces should be able to “aggregate” when required to increase the overall seating capacity.
- SB 3.1.7 Café arrangement and management to meet visitor demand, especially at peak times.
- SB 3.1.8 Main Kitchen arrangement to match the anticipated menu/dining event type regimes anticipated (using fresh, local produce where available).
- SB 3.1.9 Main Kitchen should incorporate a Training Kitchen.
- SB 3.1.10 Kitchen to have direct access to operations areas to mitigate interface with visitors (deliveries, waste management, etc.).
- SB 3.1.11 Kitchen location to enable servicing and maintenance to be carried out without compromising the visitor experience.



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Strategic Brief

SB 4

Staff Facilities

- SB 4.1.1 Provide Staff parking (number and location) and/or off-site arrangements.
- SB 4.1.2 Provide dedicated access to mitigate interface with visitors - allowing Staff to be able to enter and leave without passing through visitor spaces.
- SB 4.1.3 Staff areas to provide (dedicated/combined) changing facilities, lockers and WC's/Showers, mini-kitchen, etc. (Employment Act compliant).
- SB 4.1.4 Provide dedicated WC's and shower/washing facilities.
- SB 4.1.5 Staff facilities to support the range of requirements for coincident on-site staffing capacity; Admin. team, Rangers, Front of House, Catering, etc.
- SB 4.1.6 Provide Office spaces (permanent and hot desk) for; Operations Staff (4), Rangers (6), Managers (4), Dam Safety (2), Business Support (2), Sales and Marketing (2). Dedicated office space could be located in the immediate area (ie. Retail, Kitchen, etc.).
- SB 4.1.7 Provide secure location for safe and other sensitive items.
- SB 4.1.8 Provide Drying Room for Staff clothing/equipment.
- SB 4.1.9 Provide adequate storage (type, scale, location, etc.).
- SB 4.1.10 Provide a staff rest room for all staff with access to IT facilities (multi-user PC for HR & email access for seasonals) accommodating staff and volunteers on a rotational basis.



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Strategic Brief

SB 5 WC's, Changing and Amenities

- SB 5.1.1 Provide adequate numbers and types of high-quality visitor WC's and changing facilities; unisex, disabled/assisted including provision for Changing Places facilities, baby change/feeding.
- SB 5.1.2 Location of WC's and changing facilities to allow servicing and maintenance without compromising visitor use or experience.
- SB 5.1.3 Provide externally accessed WC's including disabled/assisted and changing facilities.
- SB 5.1.4 Provide adequate storage (type, scale, location, etc.) plus staff storage, archive and changing space, shower facilities, drying room for kit, washing machine and drier.



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Strategic Brief

SB 6 Landscape and the Natural Environment

- SB 6.1.1 Develop a design that respects and enhances the landscape and surrounding environment.
- SB 6.1.2 Adopt best practice in terms of integrating the built environment and infrastructure into the landscapes (natural and man-made).
- SB 6.1.3 Develop a strategy to increase biodiversity aligned with regulations/legislation and DCWW policies – and informed by the Ecological Appraisal.
- SB 6.1.4 Develop a landscape that is safe, effective and encourages increased engagement and enjoyment of the “place” through the arrangement of hard and soft landscape.

SB 7 External Terraces/Experiences (Phase 2)

- SB 7.1.1 Create possibilities to engage with; River (elevated, river-edge, etc.), Woodland, Dam, Playground, Lawn, etc.
- SB 7.1.2 Provide Terraces to allow Café capacity to expand.
- SB 7.1.3 Terraces to provide a degree of shelter and protection from; wind, rain, sun and wind-blown misting, etc.
- SB 7.1.4 Terraces to provide a different visitor experience from that provided internally (and with greater capacity); Dam Lawn (simple vista and light projections), River view, Stone art display, Scree-slope, Topographical Relief Installation, Open-air events, High-water level events, etc.
- SB 7.1.5 Provide support facilities for external activities and events (F+B, Retail event management kiosks) with associated infrastructure.



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Strategic Brief

SB 8 Visitor Centre - MEP Services (internal and external areas)

- | | | | |
|----------|---|-----------|--|
| SB 8.1.1 | Investigate ALL existing services (internal and external) for adequacy, compliance, capacity, environmental damage mitigation, etc. | SB 8.1.9 | Develop a new strategy and installations (if required) to ensure future robustness and resilience. |
| SB 8.1.2 | Develop a strategy for ALL services that informs the building's spatial and room type arrangement. | SB 8.1.10 | Inform design strategy from the outputs of the Carbon Cost/Benefit Study. |
| SB 8.1.3 | Locate main Plantroom – easily accessed from operations area. | SB 8.1.11 | Develop a SUDS Strategy that is integrated into the landscape proposals which also responds to the Ecological Appraisal. |
| SB 8.1.4 | Locate server/comms, secondary control rooms and panels. | SB 8.1.12 | Provide dedicated server room and battery backup in case of power outage. Ventilation and temperature control (sound transference) – located on Ground floor alongside the plant room area. |
| SB 8.1.5 | Mitigate compromising the visitor use/experience during maintenance and/or in the event of a partial/full closure, etc. | SB 8.1.13 | Incorporate building security (inc. controlled access zones), fire and emergency , CCTV (internal / external) DCWW and public wi-fi, Internal / external comms, induction loops for hard of hearing. |
| SB 8.1.6 | Develop a strategy that anticipates future needs and requirements. | SB 8.1.14 | Provide adequate external power supplies for events, activities and operational requirements, adequate external lighting (eg paths to car park areas) appropriate for operations within a Dark Skies area. |
| SB 8.1.7 | Eliminate current weaknesses in; Wastewater management systems (combined storm and foul drainage, etc.). | | |
| SB 8.1.8 | Incorporate adequate/mandatory provisions (ie. pumping systems with phosphate stripping and septic tank capacity. | | |



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Strategic Brief

SB 9

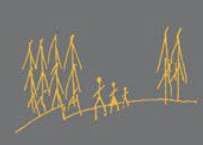
Consultation

- SB 9.1.1 Conduct Client consultation to ascertain needs, vision and ambition.
- SB 9.1.2 Engage with stakeholders including Local Planning Authority, Councillors, local community groups – with the aim to receive positive feedback and minimal objections.
- SB 9.1.3 Align proposals with the requirements of the Welsh Government Building Regulations and Local Authority Planning Policy, Supplementary Planning Guidance and relevant Technical Advice Notes and DCWW Policies.

SB 10

Business Model

- SB 10.1.1 Design a Visitor Centre to maximise the commercial opportunities (principally through (but not restricted to); Catering, Conferencing, Hospitality, Outdoor Activities, Education and associated Retail, etc.).
- SB 10.1.2 Create a facility that can Generate Revenue streams – directly driven by the visitor experience and excellence in customer service aligned with DCWW values.
- SB 10.1.3 Optimise Operational Costs
- SB 10.1.4 Minimise Maintenance Costs.
- SB 10.1.5 Optimise the Capital Expenditure.



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Strategic Analysis

The Schedule below refers to the original Client Strategic Brief (not the current adopted/submitted proposals)

Schedule of Accommodation Area

**for expanded explanation refer to Client Strategic Brief (SB1 – SB10).*

***for Client Statement of Need refer to section 2.*

- **Foyer** 140m² (assume 2m² per person including furniture, structure and interpretation).
- **Shop** 165m² (area to be similar to existing but with improved aspect ratio and organisation).
- **Exhibition** 190m² (increased from 35m² with new interpretation mediums including AV booth).
- **Planetarium** 135m² (comprising 8m dia. presentation dome for 45 specialist seats – plus sound entrance lobbies, associated retractable seating, IT support/green room and equipment/furniture storage). Requires a height of minimum 6m.
**Planetarium room doubles as 70no. person meeting.*
- **Conference Suite** 175m² (comprising a range of room sizes – increased from 114m² with greater adaptability). **see Planetarium above.*
- **Restaurant** 215m² (comprising 100 covers and servery/drinks zone – increased from 119m² for 60 covers).
- **Kitchen (75m²) + Training Kitchen (40m²) = 115m²**
**Including Grab and Go/External servery).*
- **Staff Office and Support** 125m² (comprising 5no. Workspaces, Printing/Stationery, Staff Room, WCs, Showers, Lockers and Changing/Drying).
- **WCs** 100m² (comprising separate gender spaces, Accessible and Changing Places compliant and external WCs)
- **Services** 40m² (comprising general and specific services provision and lift compartment).
- **Storage** 70m² (assuming 5% of GIA – including general and specific support storage).
- **Circulation** 100m² (assuming 7% of GIA – including main circulation, link and evacuation corridors and storm lobbies).
- **External**
**Comprising hard landscape immediately adjacent to the building Landscape Architects proposals will determine the extent of the Strategic Brief*

TOTAL GIA = 1570m²



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Elan Valley Visitor Centre Re-development

Strategic Analysis

ray**hole**architects



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Strategic Analysis

Possible Strategies

- a) Repurpose Existing Building
- b) Increase Existing Building Internally
- c) Extend Existing Building Externally
- d) Demolish Existing and Build New Visitor Centre
- e) Preferred Strategy – Extend Existing Building using the full Accommodation Schedule
- f) Preferred Strategy – *Hybrid New Build and Refurbished Existing Building*



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Strategic Analysis

a) Repurpose Existing Building

Considerations

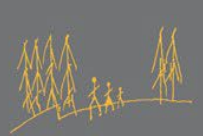
- Foyer under capacity
- WC's – under capacity, services not adequate/failing and disabled facilities not compliant for “Changing Places”
- Building fabric not to current standards (1900's and 1990's elements)
- Building services not to current standards (1900's and 1990's elements)
- Suspect drainage (combined), capacity and current standards compliance (phosphates)
- 1900's building impacted by previous adaptation/extension/repair (not Listed – general)
- Surface Area to Internal Area Ratio inefficient (energy loss)
- External building facades subject to extreme weather (on-going maintenance)
- Exhibition needs upgrading (exhibitory, story-telling and AV)
- Shop aspect ratio inefficient and support areas inadequate
- New Planetarium required (requires height)
- New Training Kitchen required
- Conference Suite under provided (room size range, adaptability and larger assembly)
- Equality Act compliance (upper floor lift access)
- Employment Act compliance (staff facilities general and specific to end-users)
- Restaurant under capacity and supporting facilities (Kitchen, Storage, Prep, Waste Management) require upgrading
- External areas servery provision required
- Visitor access route to the south to augment the access through the building (limiting visitor access to the north – intuitively/physically)
- Operations (general servicing, deliveries and maintenance activities) compromise the visitor experience and separation of visitor : operations (safety)

Test to Fit Exercise

Strategic Brief Accommodation Area = **1570m²**

Existing Building Area (Ground and First Floor) = **698m²**

Shortfall = **872m²**



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Strategic Analysis

b) Increase Existing Building Internally

Considerations

Exploit locations of possible useable area/volume without affecting the external appearance;

- Expand the existing upper-level accommodation into the remainder of the 1900's building
- Requires Equality Act provision – but would amortise the mandatory enabling works CapEx for the lifts/stairs which will be required anyway
- Evacuation strategy would need incorporating (stairs and refuge)
- New structural implications to support floor (existing building structural integrity and foundation impacts)
- Visual expression of new floor level through the windows (similar to the existing upper floor zone visibility)
- Cellularisation of double height space would improve environmental control
- Could compromise the character of the original double height workshop space

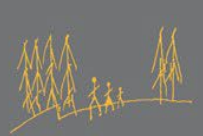


Strategic Brief Accommodation Area = **1570m²**

Existing Building Area (Ground and First Floor) = **698m²**

Additional upper-level = **128m²**

Shortfall = **744m²**



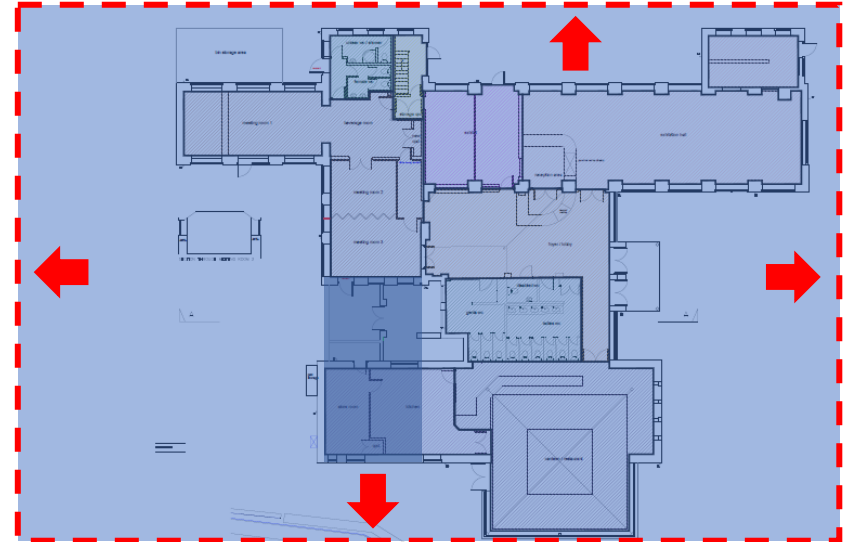
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Strategic Analysis

c) Extend Existing Building Externally

Considerations

- Visitor Entrance(s) located to the east (main), south and west
- Accommodation requiring services and servicing should be located to the north
- Limited opportunities to develop extensions to the north (restrictive vehicular/operations activities) and south (river embankment)
- Opportunities to develop extensions to the east (but impacts to muster plaza and carparking to be considered – and impacts to the existing areas of planting (biodiversity degradation)
- Opportunities to develop extensions to the west **preferable** (impacts to current inadequate and compromising services locations/operations)
- Creating superior internal vantage points to the Dam, River and Celtic Rainforest
- Opportunities to develop extensions on the upper level (extending the 1900's roofline to meet the 1990's roofline and floor to extend over the existing kitchen and partial foyer area)



**Strategic Diagram illustrating the possible expansion locations North, South, East and West.*

Test to Fit Exercise

Strategic Brief Accommodation Area = **1570m²**

Existing Building Area (Ground and First Floor) = **698m²**

Extended upper-level = **50m²**

Shortfall = **822m²**



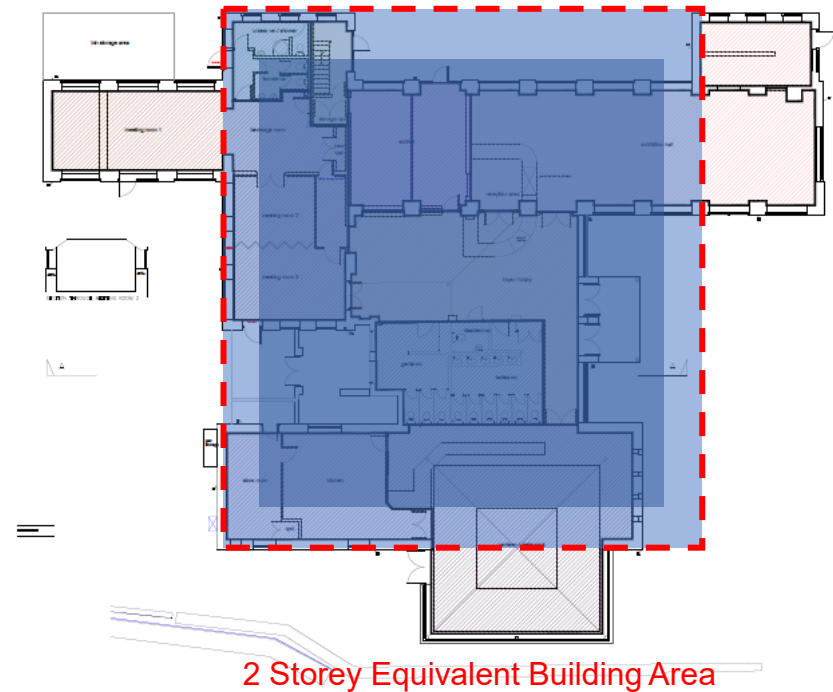
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Strategic Analysis

d) Demolish Existing and Build New Visitor Centre

Considerations

- Sustainability issues with demolishing buildings with possible extended life possibilities
- Although not Listed the 1900's building has an important part in the Elan Valley Lakes story to tell (Railway Workshop)
- Local familiarity could inform/influence the Planning consultation and public comments
- Does the needed Accommodation materially improve by demolition of the existing building and re-building?
- Does the Visitor Experience improve by demolition of the existing building and re-building?
- Does the Capex, OpsCosts and RevGen economics improve by demolition of the existing building and re-building?
- Potentially a new building could provide a more compact building over the 2no. levels
- Most likely a more expensive new building as the whole structure is new (from the foundations to the roof) - whereas the extension strategy "borrows" from the existing building (ie. One external wall, floor and a roof around the existing structure)



Test to Fit Exercise

Strategic Brief Accommodation Area = **1570m²**

Existing Building Area (Ground and First Floor) = **698m²**

2 Storey Equivalent Building Area Footprint = **785m²**



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Strategic Analysis

e) Preferred Strategy – Extend Existing Building using the full Accommodation Schedule

Considerations

**This proposal formed the Pre-Application submission at the end of June 2024. The Design and Access Statement which formed part of that submission explained and illustrated the design rationale.*



Test to Fit Exercise

Strategic Brief Accommodation Area = **1570m²**

Design Brief Accommodation Area = **1563m²**

Existing Building Area (Ground and First Floor) = **698m²**

Extended Ground Floor Footprint = **787m²**

Extended Upper-Floor Area = **85m²**



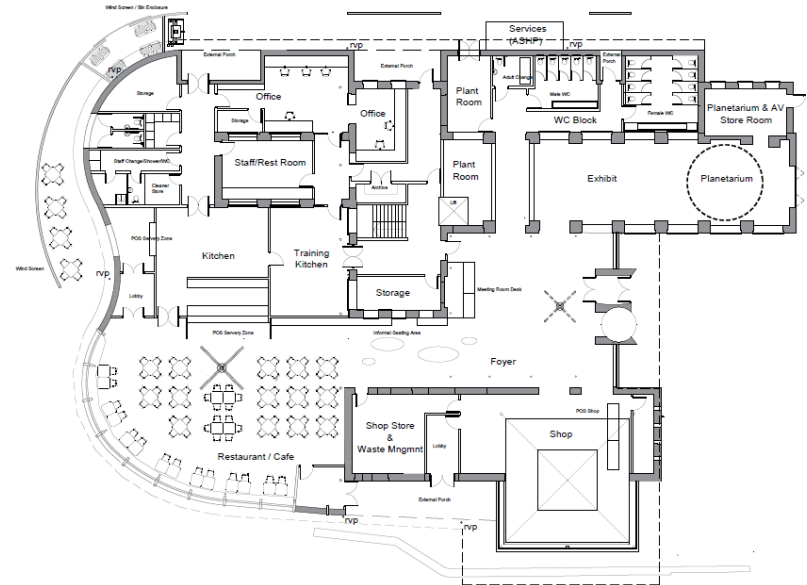
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Strategic Analysis

f) Preferred Strategy – Hybrid New Build and Refurbished Existing Building

Considerations

- In response to the Pre-App comments the Proposals have been reduced in order to reveal/express the east elevation.
- The north elevation has been articulated by indenting the door opening locations to create external storm porches
- The reduction in floor area on the east elevation has required the Foyer to be reduced in area and the entrance cluster to be pulled back to approximately the existing entrance building line
- The removal of the externalised Planetarium and Exhibition AV Booth has contracted both facilities into a combined installation
- The double height workshop – allows the additional height of the Planetarium to be accommodated – although the footprint/scale of the Planetarium is reduced in order to sit within the constraints of the workshop footprint
- The externally extended upper floor area has been removed



Test to Fit Exercise

Strategic Brief Accommodation Area = **1570m²**

Design Brief Accommodation Area = **1391m²**

Existing Building Area (Ground and First Floor) = **698m²**

Net Additional GIA **693m²**

Extended Ground Floor GIA = **658m²**

Extended Upper-Floor Area = **35m²**



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Elan Valley Visitor Centre Re-development

Pre-Application Design and Access Statement

Hybrid New Build and Refurbished Existing Building

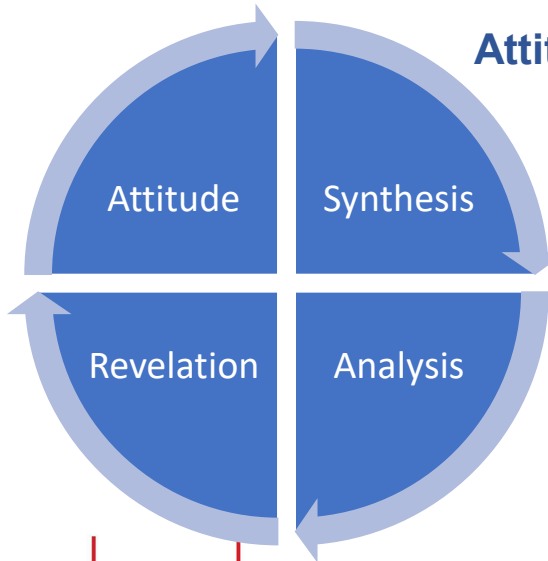
****the following information to be read in conjunction
with the comprehensive Pre-Application Document*



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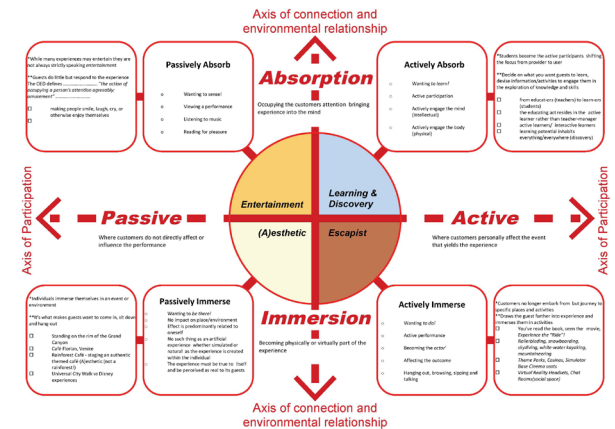
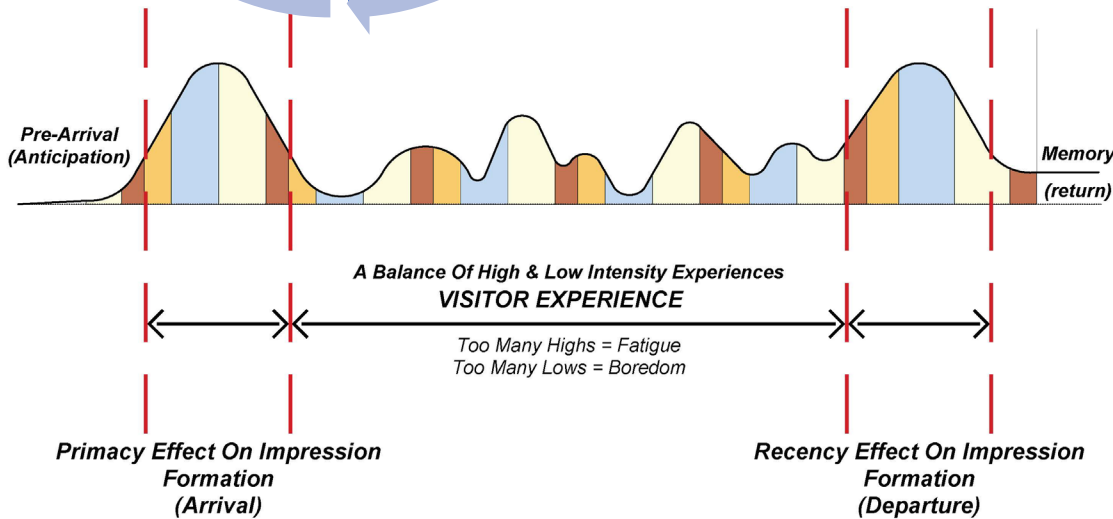
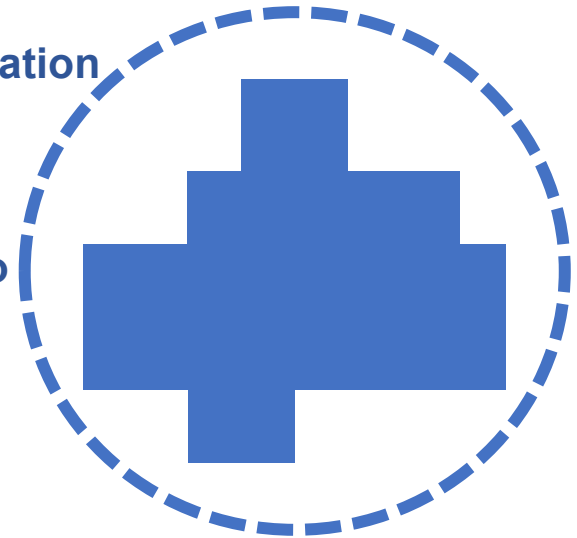
Design Process

Attitude/Synthesis/Analysis/Revelation



Envelope : Internal Area Ratio

Visitor Experience Journey



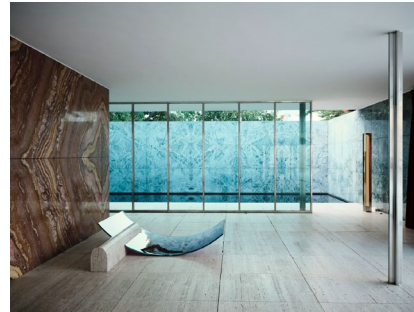


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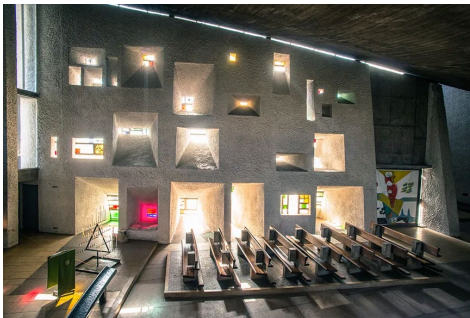
Design Process – Attitude (Primary Precedent Studies)



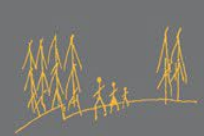
Falling Water, Frank Lloyd Wright



Barcelona Pavilion, Mies van der Rohe

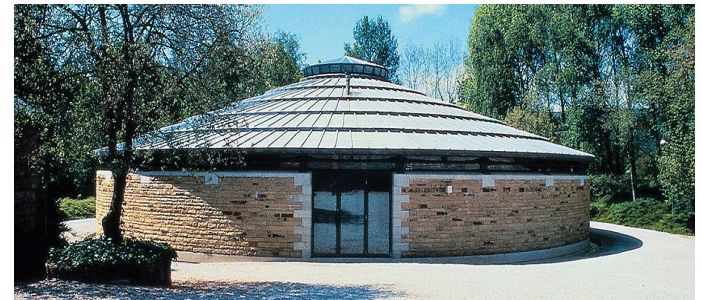
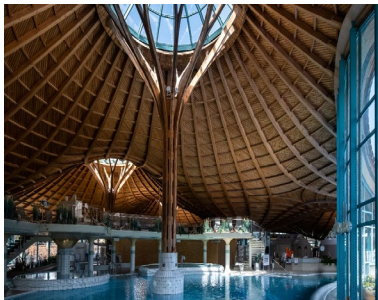


Ronchamp Chapel, Le Corbusier



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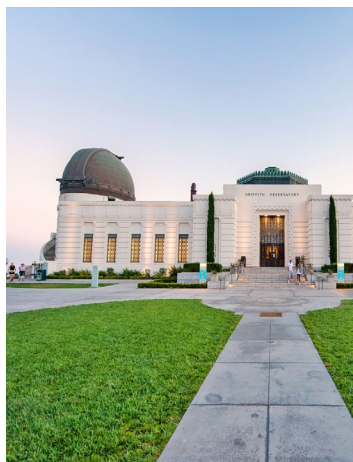
Design Process – Attitude (Supplementary Precedent Studies) (Architectural Experiences)





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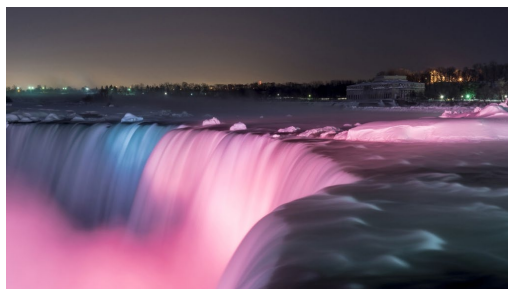
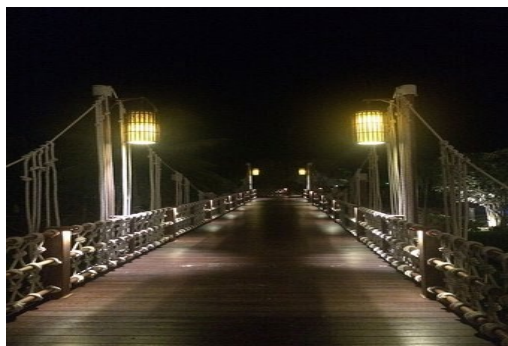
Design Process – Attitude (Supplementary Precedent Studies) (Planetarium/AV)

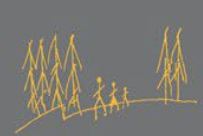




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Design Process – Attitude (Supplementary Precedent Studies) (External Experiences)

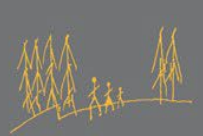




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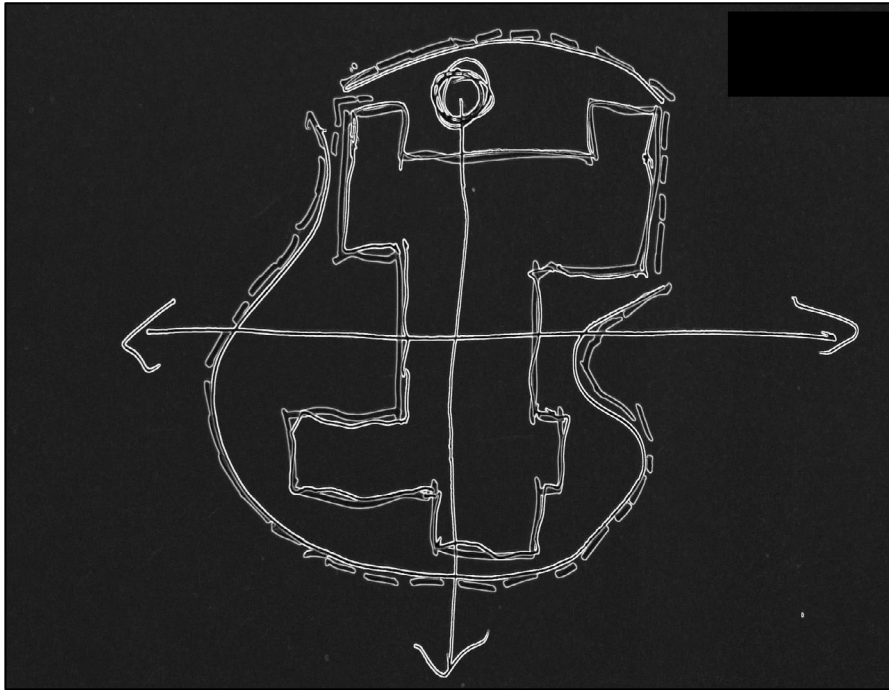
Design Process – Attitude (Supplementary Precedent Studies) (Terraced Experiences)





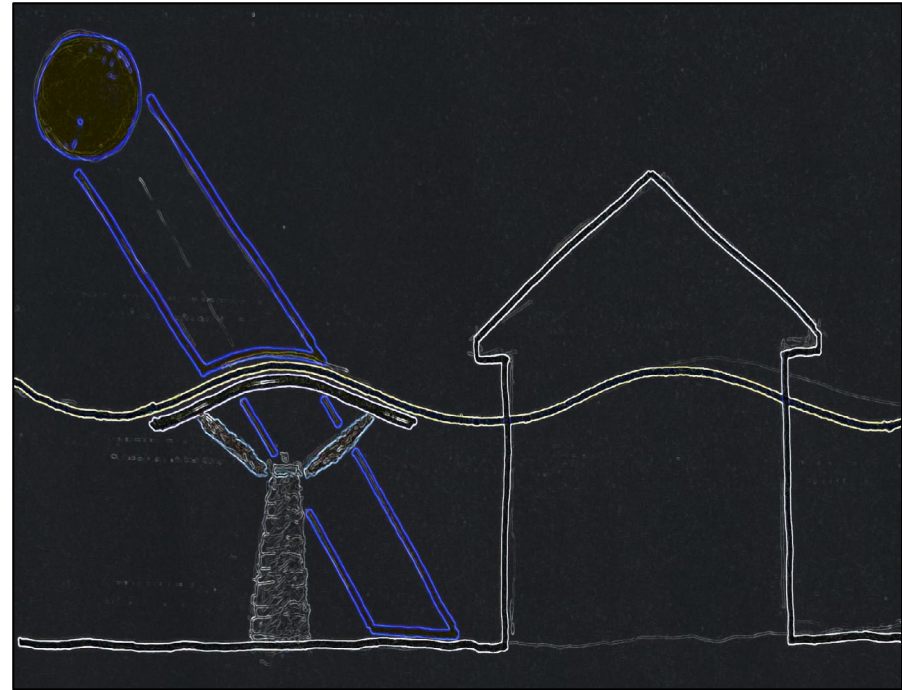
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Design Process – Concept Approach



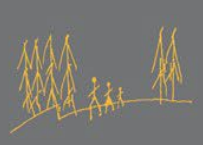
Strategy

- Optimal Expansion
- Environmental/Weather Protection
- Building/Energy Performance (Improve)
- Heritage Sensitivity
- Exploit Site Assets (views)



Materials/Experience

- Local Stone and Timber (Craftsmanship)
- Water Associated Metaphor (Place)
- Natural Light and Renewables
- Maximise Vistas
- Weather Enhanced Experience (Internal/External)



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Design Process – Synthesis (Visitor Flow/Experience and Operations)





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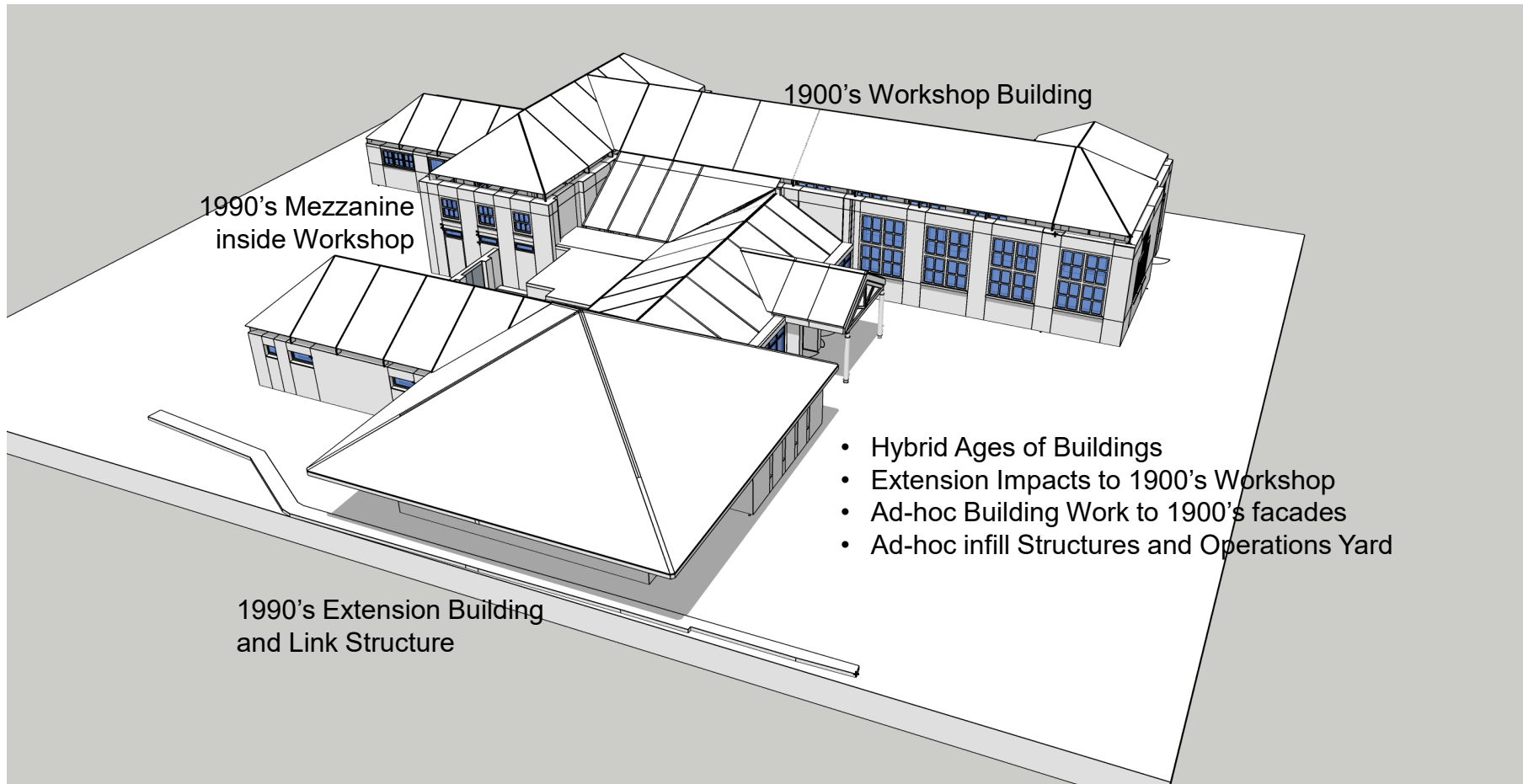
Design Process - Site Proposals and Landscape Setting





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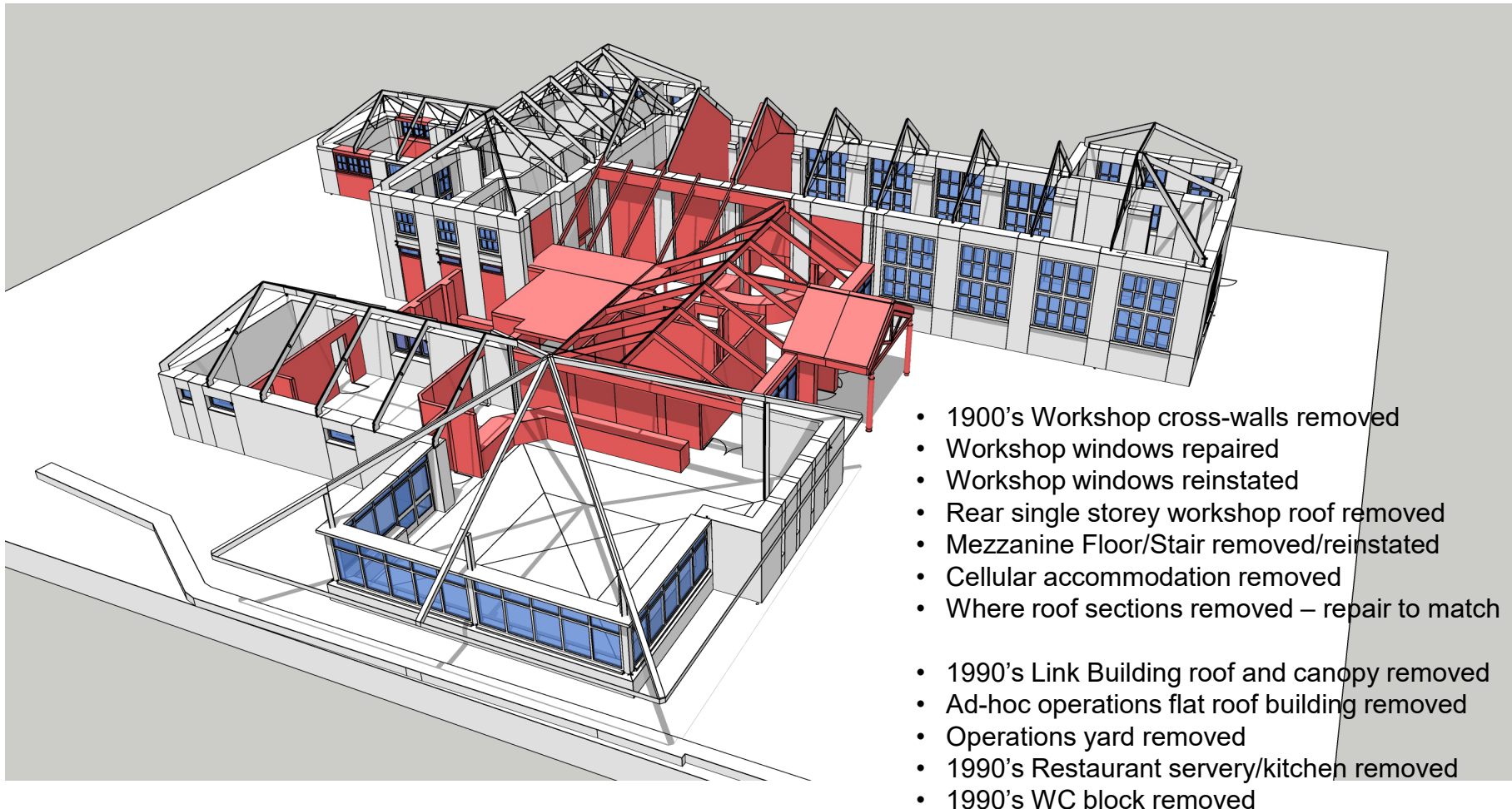
Design Process - Existing Visitor Centre Building

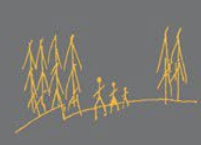




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Design Process - Existing Visitor Centre Building (Remove/Repair Elements)

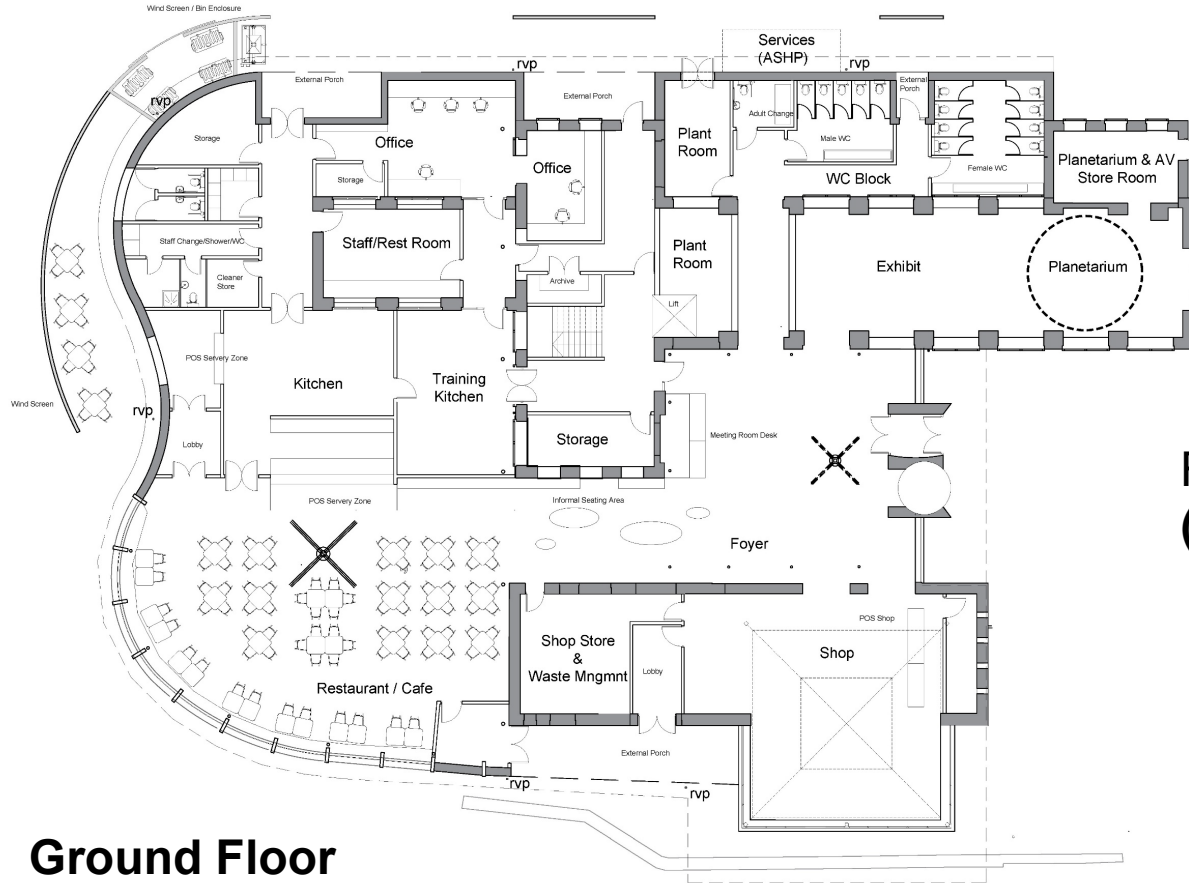




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Design Process – Proposals

(Ground Floor Plan)



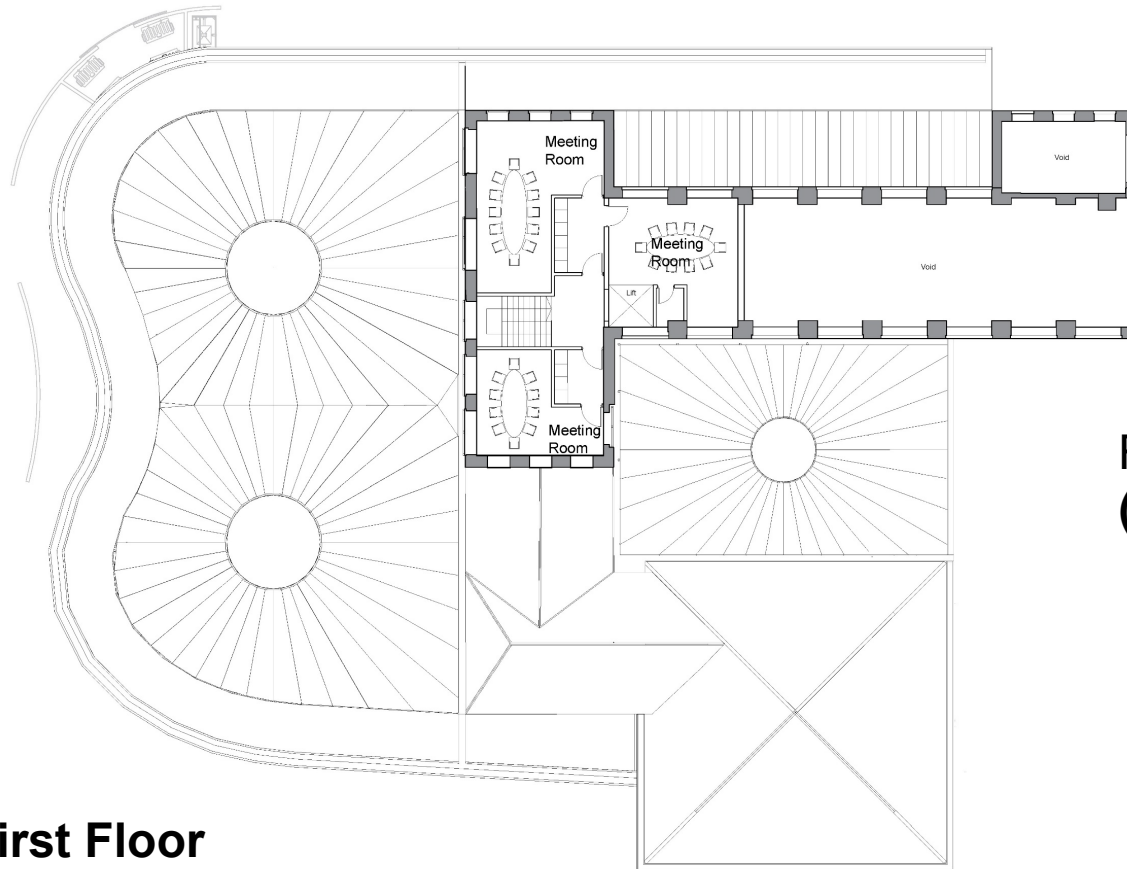
**Finish Ground Floor Level
(+214.870)**

Ground Floor



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Design Process – Proposals (First Floor Plan)



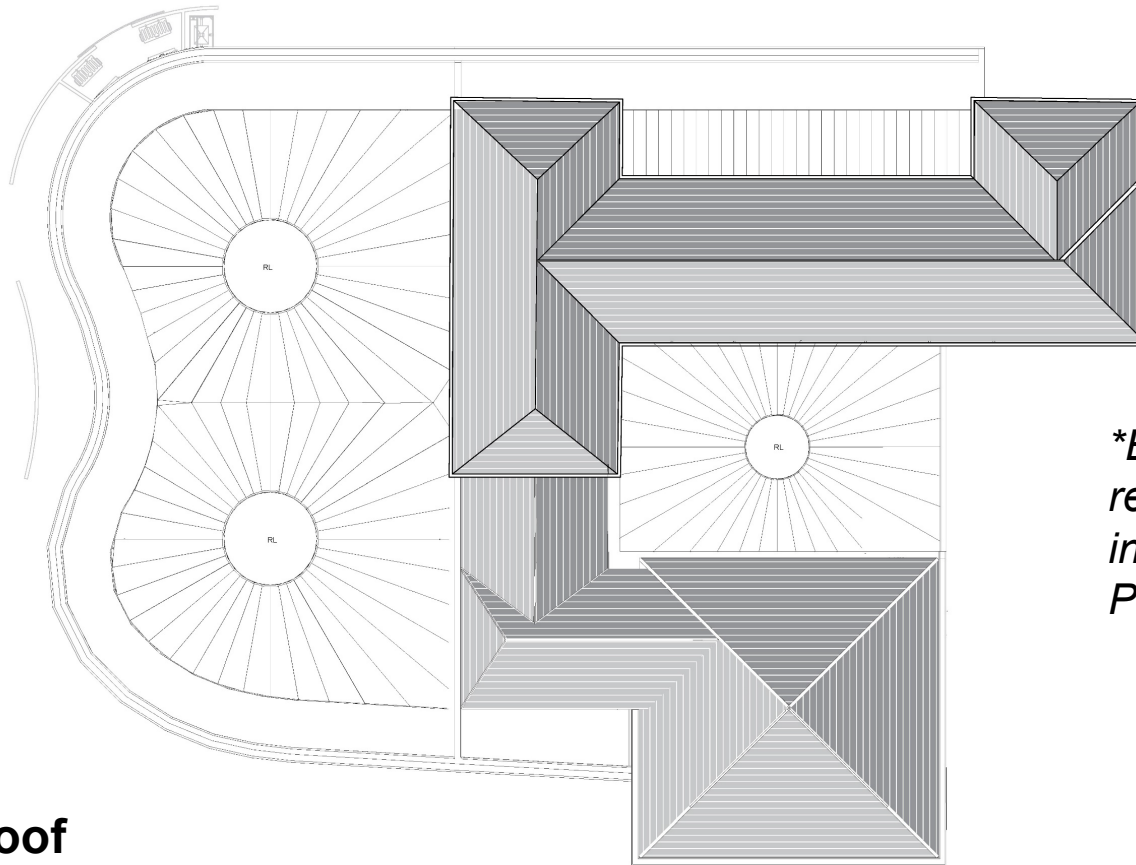
**Finish First Floor Level
(+217.520)**

First Floor



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Design Process – Proposals (Roof Plan)



**Existing Roof Vents to be retained, repaired and incorporated into the MEP Proposals where relevant*

Roof



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Design Process – Proposals (Elevations – Eastern and Northern)



2

ELEVATION (FRONT)
NE PROPOSED

SCALE 1:100



1

ELEVATION (NORTHERN SIDE)
NW PROPOSED

SCALE 1:100



- Finish Ground Floor Level (+214.870)
- Finish First Floor Level (+217.520)
- Existing Roof Vents to be retained, repaired and incorporated into the MEP Proposals where relevant



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Design Process – Proposals (Elevations – Southern and Western)



4 ELEVATION (SOUTHERN SIDE)
SE PROPOSED SCALE 1:100



3 ELEVATION (REAR)
SW PROPOSED SCALE 1:100



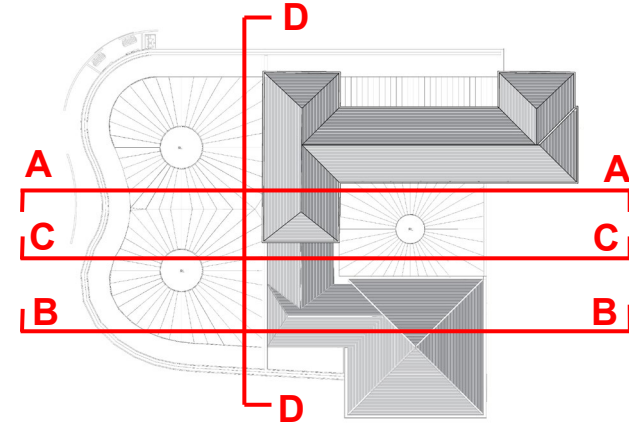
- Finish Ground Floor Level (+214.870)
- Finish First Floor Level (+217.520)
- Existing Roof Vents to be retained, repaired and incorporated into the MEP Proposals where relevant



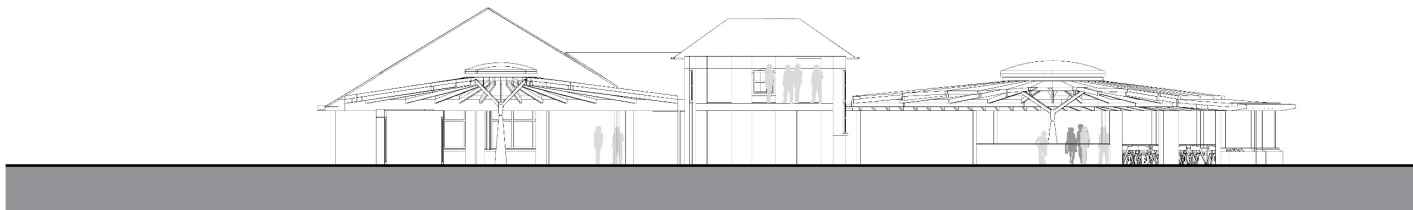
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Design Process – Proposals (Sections)

- Finish Ground Floor Level (+214.870)
- Finish First Floor Level (+217.520)
- Existing Roof Vents to be retained, repaired and incorporated into the MEP Proposals where relevant



2 SECTION
BB PROPOSED SCALE 1:100



1 SECTION
AA PROPOSED SCALE 1:100

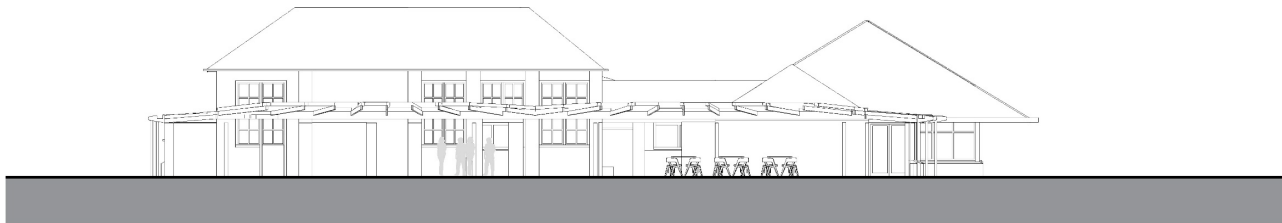
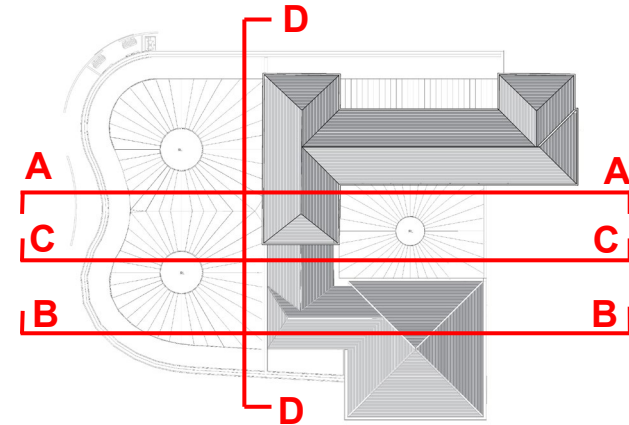




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Design Process – Proposals (Sections)

- Finish Ground Floor Level (+214.870)
- Finish First Floor Level (+217.520)
- Existing Roof Vents to be retained, repaired and incorporated into the MEP Proposals where relevant



4 SECTION
DD PROPOSED SCALE 1:100



3 SECTION
CC PROPOSED SCALE 1:100





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Design Process – Proposals (Aerial View – Ground Floor)





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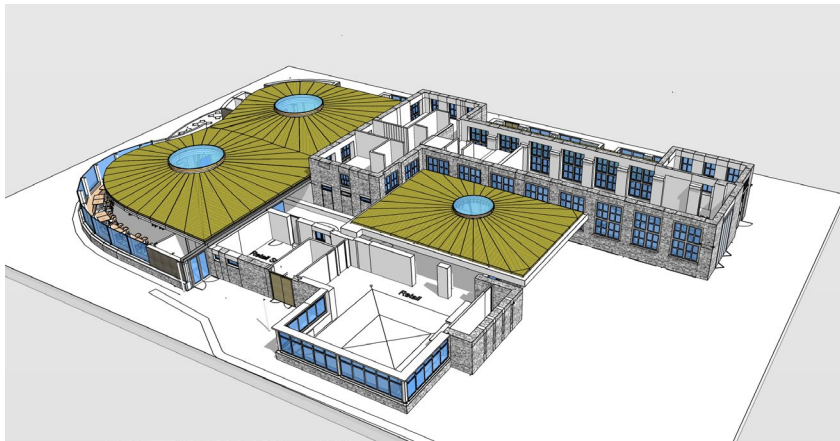
Design Process – Proposals (Aerial View - Roof Sequence)



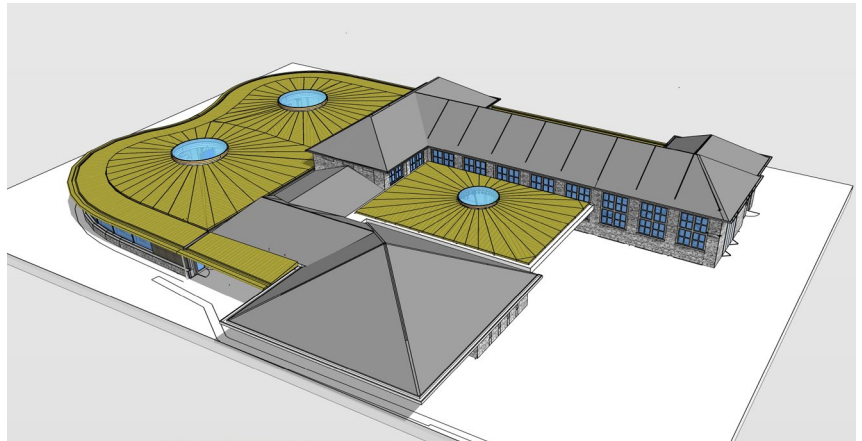
Ground Floor and Roof Support Trees



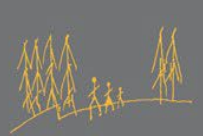
First Floor Added



Proposed Roof Added



Existing Retained Roofs and Link Roof Added

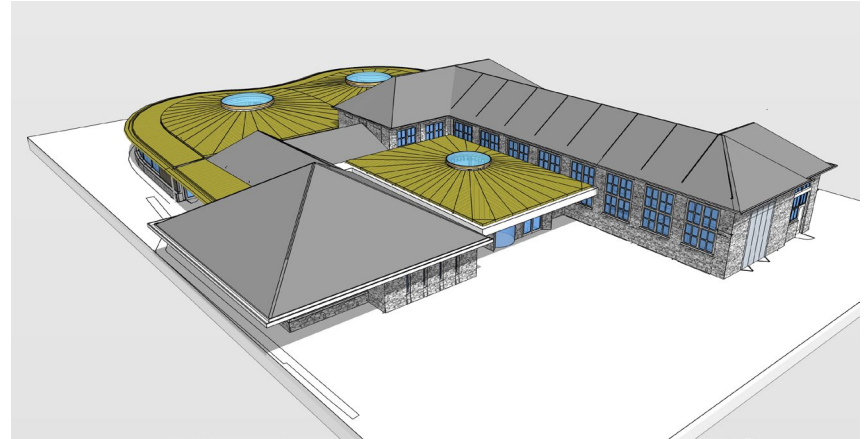


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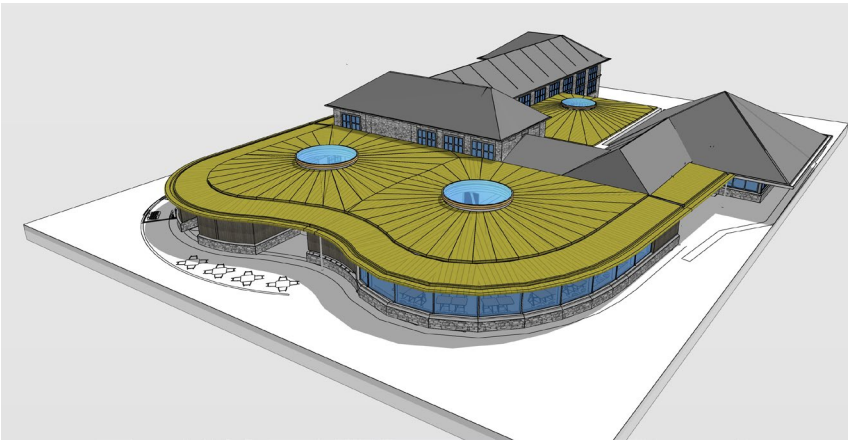
Design Process – Proposals (Aerial View from Primary Vantage Points)



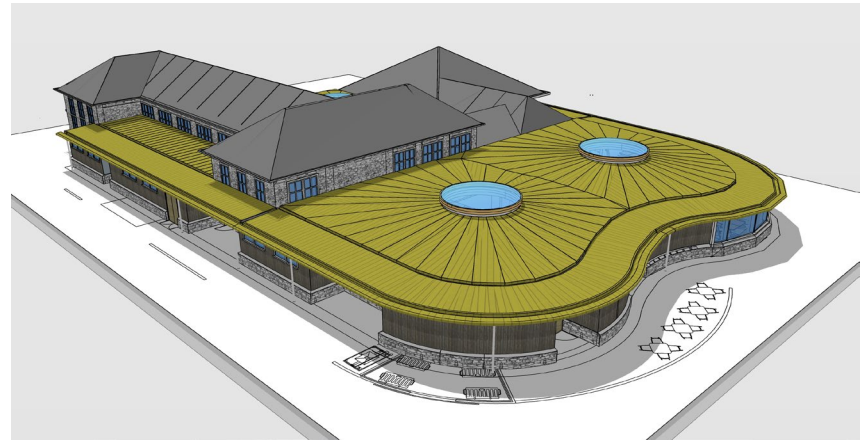
View from North-East



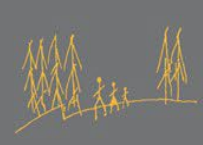
View from South-East



View from South-West

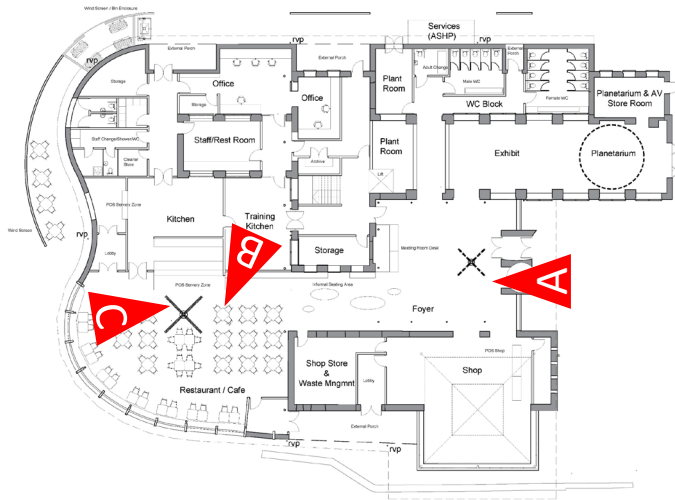


View from North-West

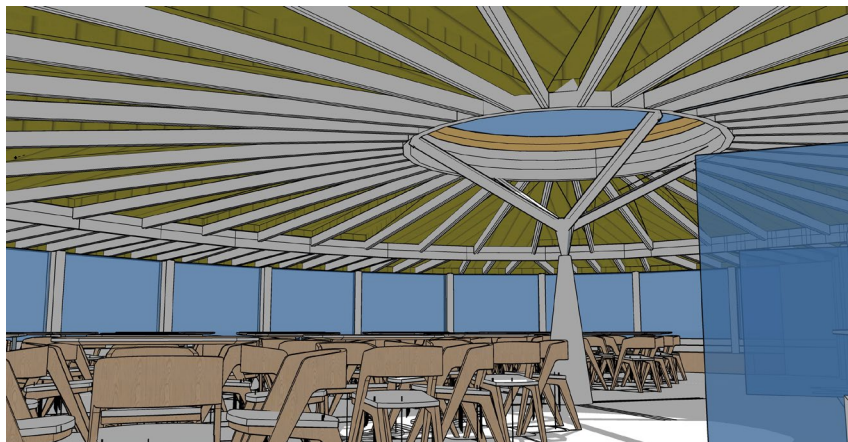


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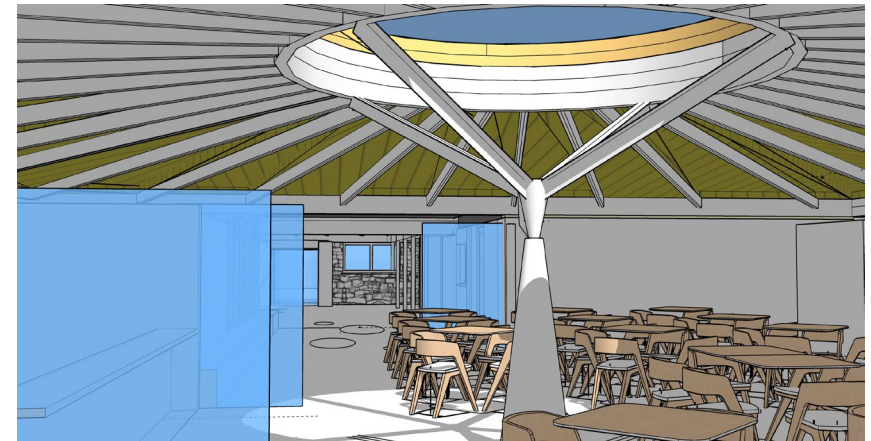
Design Process – Proposals (Primary Internal Views)



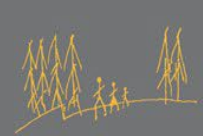
View A - Foyer towards Restaurant



View B – Restaurant (Panoramic Window)

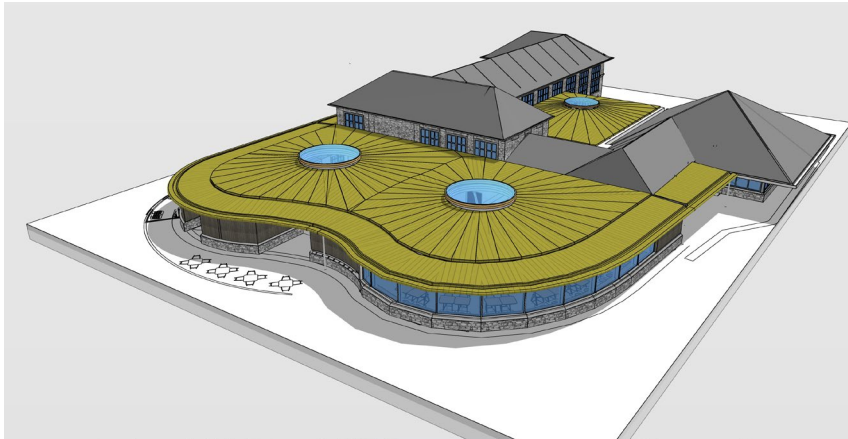


View C – Restaurant towards Foyer



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Design Process – Proposals (External Materials Palette)



View from South-West



David Mellor Factory Roof
(Standing Seam Metal Roof)



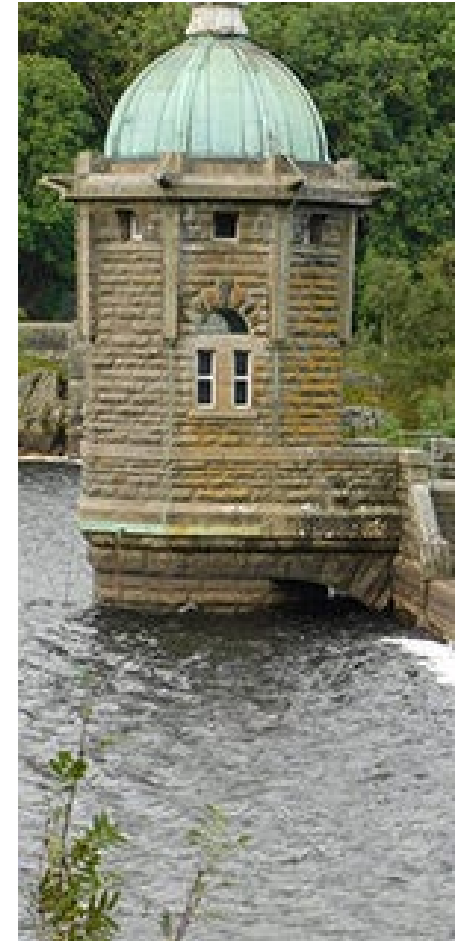
David Mellor Factory Skylight /Ceiling



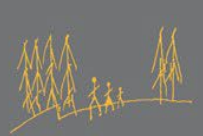
Existing Restaurant Windows, Low Wall/Sill and Eaves Overhangs



Skylight Camera Shutter Blinds

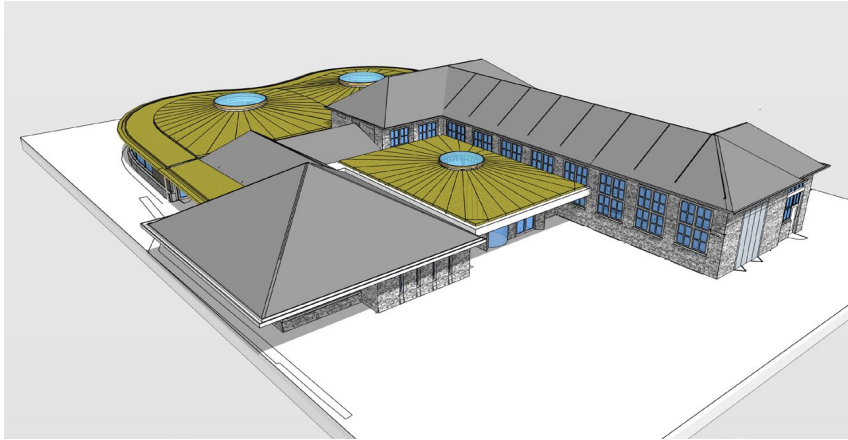


Elan Valley Dams Kiosk Roof
(Standing Seam Patinated Metal Roof)



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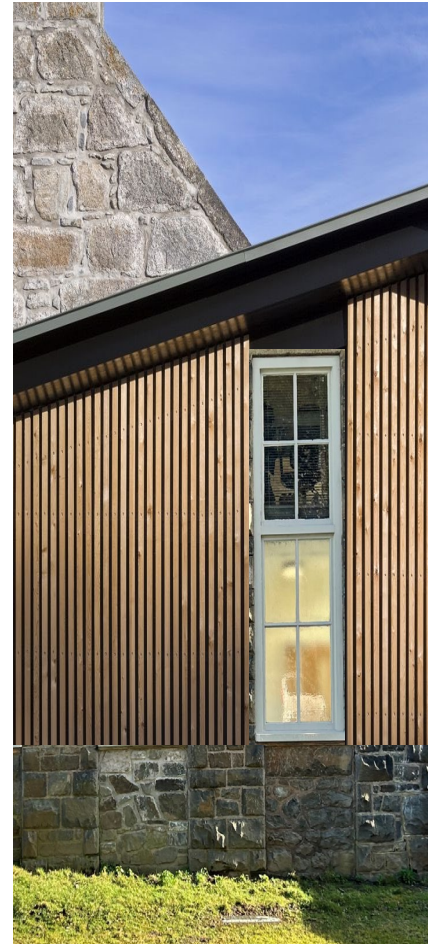
Design Process – Proposals (External Materials Palette)



View from South-East



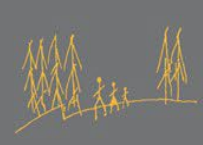
View from North-East



Stone/Timber Façade



Existing Stone/Window Detailing



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3.0 Design and Access Statement

Vision

3.1 The Elan Valley Visitor Centre (EVVC) should be a Nexus to introduce, connect and act as the **place** which visitors journey to and/or return from exploring the 70 square miles of Dams, Reservoirs, Dark Skies and unique Welsh Landscapes that comprise the Elan Valley Lakes.

3.2 Metaphorically, the EVVC could be defined as the “*unifying clasp of a beautiful string of pearls*” – elevating a separate collection of individual objects of beauty into a greater unified asset of wonder.

3.3 The EVVC’s primary function aims to provide a **place** to; Attract, Welcome, Shelter, Orientate, Share local stories about Elan Valley’s past, present, future and importantly - its Community, whilst creating new Memories before bidding a fond Farewell to its Visitors departing, either to travel home or to explore further around the Elan Valley Lakes.

3.4 The EVVC also aims to become an inclusive place for all to; *Learn and Discover, Relax, Play, Eat and Drink,*

Formally Meet or Informally Gather, Obtain Local Information, Purchase Local Products and Memorabilia - effectively, offering a very special **place** to spend time individually, with friends and family or as a group - and if required “*spend a penny*”. The EVVC also functions as a work**place** for the Staff who operate at and around the EVVC, in addition to the surrounding Elan Valley Lakes built environment, landscape and infrastructure.

3.5 The EVVC’s principal objective is to attract local, regional or far travelling, first-time and repeat visitors – transforming everyone that visits, whether they dwell for a short period or linger for an extended visit, through compelling experiences and the warm hospitality delivered with authentic community pride, whilst explaining the regionally vital function of the Elan Valley Lakes and their National/Global environmental role and responsibilities.

3.6 The Elan Valley has itself been transformed over time through its; *natural, social and industrial history, lineage and legacy of community habitation and activities, and relatively recent custodianship by Welsh Water and the Elan Valley Trust.*



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3.0 Design and Access Statement

Strategic Needs

3.7 Likewise, the EVVC has also developed incrementally over time – through the combination of a repurposed early 20th century industrial building, 1980's adaptation and 1990's extension. But the current facility is now experiencing challenges – most significantly from the sporadic periods of operational peak-time stress imposed upon the available space, services, operations and infrastructure – and conversely the seasonal or daily periods of under-utilisation impacting the business model.

3.8 These stresses express themselves in a variety of ways;

- Capacity (defined Peak on site)
- Carpark arrangement/management
- Under provision and wrong location of Amenities - WC, disabled/changing places (internal/external)
- Undersized Cafe/Restaurant
- Lacking External Servery
- Limited external visitor facilities
- Playground location blocks the iconic view
- Play experience (place related active/passive)
- Meeting rooms hire - supply/demand/types/size
- Dark Skies - requires complementary experiences

- Shop location, visitor interface and aspect ratio
- Interpretation story needs updating and enlarging
- Staff workspace and support facilities require optimisation, improvement and vertical circulation
- Operations spaces internal/external located/sized
- Building Services to be upgraded and operationally located to avoid compromising visitor experience
- Building environmental performance outdated

Design Strategy

3.9 So how can the EVVC mitigate its current weaknesses, enhance the range and quality of the visitor experience and sustainably satisfy anticipated future demands ?

We have adopted 3no. Primary Strategies;

- Space/Use Relationships
- Building Envelope
- Visitor Experience Journey

Visitor Experience Journey

3.10 The Visitor Experience starts way before Arrival (Welcome) – anticipation should be heightened by an enhanced website and multi-social media channels which would build greater awareness and promote the program of events and activities.



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3.11 Equally, post-Departure (Farewell) - the relationship between Visitor and Elan Valley Lakes should be further developed and deepened.

3.12 The Visitor Experience Journey between Arrival and Departure should be carefully managed and orchestrated to create an overall Sweet-Spot sensorial experience comprising; *Learning and Discovery, Aesthetic, Escapism and Entertainment – connecting emotionally through Immersion and Absorption and through Active or Passive Participation.*

3.13 These experiences should be staged, delivered and facilitated by the Built Environment, Landscape and Infrastructure (Architecture) and the multi-sensory interpretive mediums deployed/employed – stimulating; *sight, sound, smell, taste and touch.*

3.14 High quality visitor attractions are characterised by the enjoyment also experienced by the staff. This spirit naturally conveys to the visitors creating an authentic sense of wanting to be there – but equally, a vital criteria for attracting, retaining and inspiring a loyal and committed local workforce.

3.15 The current activities and spatial requirements will need to be enhanced and expanded to fulfil the new Visitor Experience Vision and supporting Business Model, comprising;

3.16 Foyer/Entrance, Café/Restaurant, Shop, Meeting/Conference Suite, Museum/Interpretation Experience, Playground, Dam View Lawn and Riverside Terraces – in addition to a new Planetarium/Audio-Visual Experience.

3.17 Collectively, these should provide the diversity, choice and dwell time to satisfy both the Visitor Experience Vision and Economic Sustainability.

Design Concept

3.18 Design Development has been informed by **place**, history, climate (change) and biodiversity (status), materiality, construction methodology and supply chain sourcing, local architectural influences (particularly early to mid-20th Century influences), sustainability (environmental and economic) and the satisfying of the needs of a contemporary visitor attraction (visitor experience and operations) – effectively a blurring of ALL influences to create a “Sweet-Spot” design solution.



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Approach Road, Car Park and Pathways

3.19 Vehicular access into the site is currently provided by a narrow track road and cattle-gridded entrance gate. This will require a number of additional passing places and waiting lay-bys to create adequate flow (particularly at peak-times) for arriving/departing vehicles.

3.20 Walking/Cycling visitors use a bypass gate to enter the site. The current pathway needs to be fully joined up to provide a continuous safe and separated route - which would run alongside the river edge directly to the EVVC and Bike Hub. Communicating the number of free spaces available in the car park is critical in managing the number of vehicles within the site and avoid the circulation of excess vehicles. A digital sign is normal practice with sensors to count vehicles in/out.

Parking

3.21 The number of visitors on site is primarily determined by the available capacity of the car park, coach spaces and walking/cycling visitors. Using industry and actual operator statistics an instantaneous number of Visitors on site has been adopted. This comprises an average of 3no. visitors per vehicle, 3no. 50 seat coincident coach arrivals – plus an assumption of walking/cycling visitors

In addition, an average dwell time of 2 hours has been adopted. These assumptions have also been informed by the actual recorded visitor arrival/departure data/statistics – demonstrating where internal capacity stress and general under-utilisation occurs throughout the year and each day.

3.22 An optimal arrangement and organisation of spaces is essential to creating an efficient and safe environment for vehicles and visitors, therefore a management strategy of car and coach arrivals/departures is fundamental to mitigating potential ad-hoc entering and circulation of vehicles when no spaces are available.

3.23 This will require good communication of real-time, essential information from the operator to prospective visitors so that they can deter surplus arrivals from approaching/entering the site – allowing visitors to re-route to other locations around the Estate.

3.24 Equally, creating a program of activities, experiences and events that encourages an optimal spread of visitor arrival/departure times and alternative days is critical to both optimisation of parking infrastructure and the future business model.



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Entrance/Foyer

3.25 Entrances/Foyers should engender a sense of a welcoming embrace on arrival and a farewell wave as visitors depart.

3.26 It is also an important transition zone from Anticipation into “WOW” – I’ve arrived.... Look-up, down and all-around – smells and sounds – wanting to touch and taste....

3.27 It should also orientate and assist in choosing which experience to try (intuitive and prompted); *Entertainment, Learning and Discovery, Aesthetic, Escapist – Active or Passive, Absorptive or Immersive?*

3.28 It should shelter BUT not separate visitors from the weather outside; *Sun, Wind, Rain, Cloud, Snow, Hailstones....*

3.29 Integrating intuitive and multi-Lingual Wayfinding and Graphic signage – the EVVC will adopt Bi-Lingual and other international languages to engage with international visitors. Sub-Naming of spaces could take inspiration from the EVVC Primary Name (as we adopted for the Snowdon Summit VC which is now known as Hafod Eryri). This could be evocative or literal.....

3.30 Streamed information could be introduced (even live feed from the satellite places around the Elan Valley - to visit later), encouraging deeper engagement at the EVVC or across the whole Lakes Estate, thereby Marketing experiences today (within and outside the EVVC) and “coming soon”...

3.31 The opportunity to Analogue/Digitally Register/Record “Your Discovery” (Birds, Insects, Plants, etc, etc...) would provide scientific and experiential benefits.

The existing elevation that greets the Visitors will be maintained but improved by repairing the original stone façade that incorporated the original railway entrance doors. The existing entrance arrangement is improved to create an effective storm lobby whilst maintaining visitor flow in/out and disabled/assisted entry. Equally, arriving visitors will once again see the original windows without the ad-hoc interface impacts of the 1990s extension.



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Museum/Interpretation Experience

3.32 The Museum/Interpretation Experience has a vital role at the EVVC as it should provide a centralised, fully inclusive story-telling environment expressing the local and industrial history of the Elan Valley Lakes, employing a full range of content/mediums including; *graphics, images, narrative, physical objects and interactives in addition to an audio-visual presentation area*. However, the Interpretation strategy should create a broader site-wide network of curated installations and experiences to engage with visitors as they enter and/or move around the site during their visit - encouraging visitors to explore the full extent of the site (and beyond) and complement the existing external art installations.

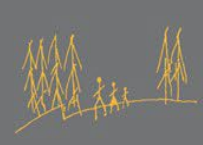
3.33 The Museum/Interpretation Experience would be well suited to be located within the oldest part of the EVVC in order to add authenticity to the story being told - including presenting a number of large scale industrial props positioned/hung within the full volume of the double height space.

3.34 The aspect ratio of the room would lend itself to a natural circulation route with a purpose equipped AV suite (housed in a new extension) located at the half-way point - with the loop duration helping to pace the dwell time within the whole experience. If for any reason the AV suite is not operating, the route is easily adapted to prevent flow disruption.

3.34 The aspect ratio of the room would lend itself to a natural circulation route with a purpose equipped AV suite (shared within the new Planetarium) located at the end of the double height space - with the loop duration helping to pace the dwell time within the whole experience. If for any reason the AV suite is not operating, the route is easily adapted to prevent flow disruption.

3.35 Refurbished original full height windows would line the room, providing controlled natural light at high level into the space and drawing the eye up towards the original roof trusses soaring above.

3.36 Importantly, visitors should enter from the Foyer and exit in proximity to the Shop, thereby promoting the opportunity to purchase a memento of a visit.



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3.0 Design and Access Statement

Planetarium/Audio-Visual Experience

3.37 The Planetarium/Audio-Visual Experience would be a specialist black-box environment which can deliver presentations related to the; *Universe, Solar System, Astronomy, Space Travel and Cosmic events* with a capacity of approximately 30no. visitors at each session - with overall capacity dependent on the frequency and pulse-rate of sessions being offered.

3.38 In addition to a general range of Planetarium content presentations - special events could be staged to coincide with Eclipses, Cosmic phenomena, moon landings and explorations, etc. in addition to hosting supplementary pre/post-Dark Skies Experiences viewed at other locations around the Elan Valley Lakes. It goes without saying that when weather hinders/denies a programmed Dark Skies event - the Planetarium could deliver high quality associated content regardless of the weather.

3.39 The normally adopted circular domed space would be deliberately versatile and therefore, could be adapted to provide a variety of alternative formats; *45no. person event, large meeting room, corporate launches, 360degree cinema, etc.* with adaptable digital content to suit the event anticipated.

3.40 This would augment the Museum/Interpretation Experience and overall Visitor Experience Strategy.

3.41 Ideally located directly adjacent to the Entrance, the signature domed silhouette viewed through the large existing windows would give visual awareness of the facility within but also would emphasise the Elan Valley Dark Skies accreditation program.

3.42 If the reinstated railway doors were openable, this would also provide not only greater visual awareness but also an alternative queue line/entry into the Planetarium.

3.43 The adaptable space should be self-contained, served by environmental management infrastructure and content delivery systems - with adequate storage for the specialist and general seating and other support equipment. Specialist raked seating could be deployed and stored rapidly into the adjacent space. The sound control within the space would need to be controlled to avoid leakage into and out from the presentation space.

3.44 Pulsed entry and exit should be managed by having separate sound-controlled door lobbies – with visitors exiting into the adjacent exhibition space.



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Shop

3.45 The Shop fulfils an important role as a primary part of delivering the Business Model. The requirements for scale, product presentation, height, aspect ratio, location and dual access for both arriving/departing visitors through either the Foyer or from the Riverside Terrace makes the location of the Shop critical. The repurposing of the current Cafe/Kitchen could be an obvious choice for its location, as the existing large windows create a stunning, framed panoramic backdrop of the River and Ancient Celtic Rainforest beyond - reconnecting the visitor with the place – whilst selecting a physical object as they shop.

3.46 All visitors should have to pass by the Shop (internal/external) - but equally, awareness of the Shop and the range of products should be promoted elsewhere within the EVVC and beyond at the other Elan Valley Lakes sites and of course on-line.

3.47 Storage should be built within the presentation racks in addition to a secure storeroom for certain products and waste management operations. This storeroom should be easily accessible even during operating hours. The sales desk should be located adjacent to the Foyer entry/exit point alongside a Duty Managers Office.

Café/Restaurant

3.48 The Café/Restaurant should be a destination in its own right, offering great local food and drink PLUS an ambience and visual setting connecting place with the culinary experience.

3.49 The overall facility should have the ability to transform from; *day-visitor servery counter-offer into fine-dining table-service into event buffet service, etc....*

Equally, the Menu should have a local connection, with a story about provenance and sourcing. The Menu also should align visitor demographics and affordability. The Menu should differentiate from other local offers.

3.50 The Kitchen could be presented as part of the theatre (visual and acoustic) of the Food and Beverage experience. Whereas, the Training Kitchen (offering key skills training such as apprenticeships) could build local talent capacity, but could also provide an additional visitor experience offer and when required, an integrated in-house, large scale event capability.

3.51 An External Servery would serve the visitors enjoying the outside spaces (Dam View Lawn and Riverside Terrace) and could incorporate a Grab+Go offer.



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Meeting and Conference Rooms

3.52 The Meeting and Conference Rooms should provide valuable facilities for external hirers – but also satisfy in-house requirements to host meetings.

3.53 The range of Rooms distributed across the first floor would require vertical circulation provided by stairs and a centralised lift.

3.54 The Rooms should be able to be fully IT/Media equipped and adapted in size by deploying room dividers to suit.

3.55 The First Floor activities would utilise the toilet facilities at Ground Floor level.

3.56 The upper floor Rooms should benefit from views of the River and Dam and perhaps a Break-out Room with a view over the Foyer and/or Museum/Interpretation Experience.

3.57 The Meeting Rooms should be entered from the Foyer with a Concierge at the entry point and perhaps an adjacent Cafe area for users to wait prior to entering their assigned Room.

Playground

3.58 The space/location identified for a new play provision is smaller than the existing play area. The adjacent steep scree slope is unsafe to utilise for play and is separated by the access route towards the dam. The current turning circle/roundabout takes up a lot of potential play space even after being shifted closer to the building – a hammer-head arrangement would be smaller and more appropriate/adequate.

3.59 The river is fast-flowing and therefore, needs to be separated from the visitor centre (currently by a fence). However, the current playground is penned in and segregated from the rest of the external visitor experience – therefore, any relaxation of a secondary enclosure must ensure safety is maintained with regards to river, vehicles and general security of younger participants.

3.60 The current playground blocks views over the dam and the existing stone sculpture installation, therefore, any new play provision must not block these views but should be visible from within the visitor centre and around the external space. If possible, repurposing of the existing play equipment should be explored.



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3.61 This could be either as part of the new play installation or relocated to other parts of the Visitor Centre site and/or other satellite sites around the Elan Valley Estate.

3.62 Learning through play could be incorporated through; *the site's rich history, natural and man-made environment, water, engineering, etc.* amplifying the uniqueness of the location and linking memory creation with place.

3.63 The Playground should encourage play in all weather types adopting RHA's Weather Enhanced Visitor Attractions (W.E.V.A) Principles: where weather should be considered as a beneficial asset, not a burden exploiting the four distinct seasons, utilising accurate weather forecasts and social media to market flexible programs – particularly, on low attendance days/periods.

3.64 Water (Dwr) and Rain (Glaw) should be celebrated through play - in the same way it is considered a blessing in Welsh Folklore and recognising the profound significance of the natural landscape as well as the industrial and man-made water infrastructure.

3.65 In addition to the information provided in the Introduction, the following information expands upon the Client's Strategic Brief and Statement of Need (aligned with the Site Plans, Plans, Sections, Elevations and Model Visuals) - specifically in the following categories;

- Character
- Access
- Movement
- Environmental Sustainability
- Community Safety
- Response to Planning Policy

Character

3.66 The Character of the EVVC site (landscape, infrastructure and built environment) has been established over time from; the extraordinary natural context, the requirements for an industrial support facility related to the construction of the Dams/Flooding of the Lakes and the subsequent Operational activities (water supply and energy generation)... upto its present day use as a Visitor Centre.



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3.67 Guests will immerse themselves in the setting (natural and manmade), participate in the range of activities (passive/active) and learn about the story of the amazing engineering and experience the dark skies environment, whilst enjoying the local food and beverage and/or purchasing mementos of their visit.

3.68 Therefore, this intrinsic and developed character (setting and facility) through the implemented proposals aim to improve and present these assets to maximise the visitor experience - safely, efficiently, inclusively, experientially and sustainably.

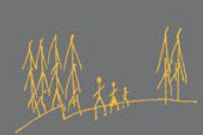
3.69 The EVVC location within the site naturally organises the masterplan, with Arrival/Departure to the East, Riverside engagement to the South, Dam View Lawn to the West and Operational activities to the North. Equally, the landscape character reflects these interfaces also.

3.70 Equally, the proposed new internal organisation also follows this arrangement - with all serviced areas located to the North, Main Entrance to the East, with the primary Experiential opportunities to the South and West.

3.71 As the site can be viewed from an elevated position from the North, West and South - the Roof design (sometimes referred to as the 5th elevation) becomes important.

3.72 Furthermore, night-time character, because of the site's Dark Skies accreditation, means that artificial light must be carefully managed (from inside and externally) requiring all windows to be able to be blacked-out and external lighting limited and highly controlled.

3.73 The scale of this proposed expansion is directly related to the strategic needs of the Visitors, Staff, Business Model and relevant legislation and regulations. However, the expansion is both organic in nature (single storey in the main – retaining a small area at first floor) - and is directly wrapped around part of the existing building(s) - meaning that the sense of expansion is minimised. Exposing the Eastern elevation, the North-East corner and the high-level roofs provides a visual demonstration of the historic sequence of use and adaptation (1900's, 1990's and the new 2020's proposals).



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3.74 The higher elements (upper levels and roofs) of the existing buildings also still retain their visual predominance and therefore any change to the silhouette is minimised also.

3.75 The materials proposed for the new proposals also borrow from the dual ages of the site's/estate's development; Stone walls and structure, Steel Trusses, Framed glazing and Timber, Standing-seam patinated roofing (dam kiosks), etc.

3.76 The detailing at door and window openings also mimic the existing buildings – with high quality timber facades between the stone detailing. The roof finish is a low pitch, standing seam, patinated metal to mimic the standing seam roofs of the dam kiosks. The low-pitched construction avoids obstructing the views to the existing roof silhouettes (1900's and 1990's).

3.77 The proposed setting and landscape proposals (hard/soft) are intended to reinforce the character of the site whilst creating intuitive flow for visitors - entering, exiting and bypassing the building. These visitors arrive by Car, Coach, Foot and Bicycle but importantly create new ways that they experience the site through their activated senses; Visual, Audio, Smell, Taste and Touch from the moment they arrive to when they leave.

3.78 The intended sense of arrival/departure will therefore, be delivered through the landscape design and will “frame the visitor experiences” whilst immersed on site (internally/externally).

3.79 The programmed content in turn will exploit the character of the landscape and built environment.

3.80 The overall intent is therefore, to augment and reinforce the character of the destination - which will engender greater awareness and visitation.

3.81 Landscape character is covered fully elsewhere.

Access

3.82 All attractions strive for a Safe, Efficient and Experiential environment. But all visitors are not the same and have varying needs and desires which if delivered upon, makes their visit a transformational experience.

3.83 Access for all is a fundamental requirement - but should be unnoticeable. The site at Elan has a number of advantages in that the site is relatively flat. Therefore, traversing the external areas requires limited intervention with gradients almost eliminated.



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Internally, the ground floor is set at a single level with level thresholds - and the ability to access the upper level is satisfied with an appropriately sized lift.

3.84 The expanded facilities will incorporate not just disabled WC's but will include Changing Places specification facilities. Likewise, the car parking provision will include a range of spaces with bay sizes to suit vehicles with special needs abilities. Equally, proximity and safe pathways - from vehicle to entrance is provided - separating vehicles and visitors in concert with excellent crossing locations.

3.85 However, access provision is not limited to physical access. Lighting (natural/artificial), Acoustics, Space allocation, Colour contrast and Signage clarity, etc are equally considered to ensure that all visitors (including Neuro-divergent) can be confident of an enjoyable visit.

3.86 From Retail displays to the Restaurant Menu, Exhibition interpretation mediums to Legibility of entrances – the Design will ensure total accessibility.

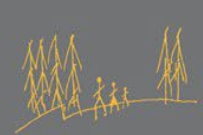
3.87 *Deleted*

3.88 The design also ensures that employees have a similar considered environment with Equality and Employment Acts fully satisfied.

Movement

3.89 The EVVC is remote. Therefore, in order to get the very most out of one's visit - planned journeys are essential.

3.90 But once at the EVVC extending the travel experience around the whole of the Lakes is both encouraged and equally valuable (walking, cycling and driving). Cars will be a predominant feature of any travel plan but as society transitions from carbon fuel to EV – “car spaces” will convert into “charging points”.



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Not only will this provide a valuable revenue stream opportunity but mitigates any visitors fuel anxiety - thereby, extending the visitor market travel distances. In parallel, the need for EV infrastructure and terminals will increase, as demand for such support facilities increases.

3.91 The Landscape Architects Site Plan provides additional information regards the parking strategy and vehicular circulation.

Environmental Sustainability

3.92 The lead input in terms of the overall setting of the site is by the Landscape Architect. This will be informed by the Ecology Study and other influences.

3.93 Environmental considerations for the built environment starts with Orientation. The building sits roughly East/West, North/South and therefore benefits from the Winter Sun. But equally, dramatic sunsets behind the Dam are an experiential wonder.

3.94 The individual room uses/arrangements equally respond to this orientation and benefit from good natural light from the roof lights. Although the new installation has a relatively low profile, the undulations in the new

roof provides natural internal convection assisted by the abundant wind which will assist natural ventilation.

3.95 The shaping of the Western Elevation not only provides an extraordinary panorama of the Dam, River and Ancient Celtic Rainforest but alleviates the wind forces and frequent horizontal misting when the Dam capacity tops over.

3.96 The energy strategy relies on the immediately available renewable sources and therefore adopting an entirely electrically powered building and environmental management system should become an exemplar.

3.97 Allied to a natural light and ventilation strategy - the heating strategy is to adopt an underfloor heating system which will also assist in drying the inevitable ingress of visitor borne wet as they enter the building.

3.98 All external openings are storm lobbied and the main entrance arrangement comprises revolving/lobbied doors to satisfy the high rate of arrivals/departures - thereby limiting energy loss through all external fabric penetrations.



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3.99 The existing building envelope has challenges in maintenance and energy performance. The new high performance envelope “wraps” the existing buildings - creating a thermal buffer and weather protection. The organic form of this envelope also creates a reduced external wall area improving the enclosed volume to external wall ratio which reduces energy loss further.

3.100 The facades and roof will have high performance characteristics which will improve the overall energy targets – and benefit from the internalised thermal mass provided by the existing internalised external masonry walls.

3.101 Many of the existing windows become internalised – but where the existing windows are still externalised - a new high performance jointless glazing system will be installed adding an additional layer which will improve the performance but also internalise the vulnerable and high maintenance windows.

3.102 The overall construction approach aims to reduce embodied carbon impacts through material choice and supply chain criteria.

3.103 The strategically targeted “wrapping” philosophy (even with allowing the East Elevation to be exposed) will provide a robust protection against the extreme weather increasingly experienced in this location (particularly from the West) - thereby, limiting future maintenance demands.

3.104 Water from the roof and external hard landscape will be directed towards a network of SUDS and various water gardens/water play installations - which will add to the on-site biodiversity gain strategy. In the north side, where all the services (entry and discharge) spaces are located - a grey-water retention strategy will be adopted.

3.105 Due to the limiting drainage macro-infrastructure the proposals are adopting an on-site phosphate treatment and removal strategy and methodology.

3.106 Operational waste will be mitigated through considered sourcing and minimising waste accumulation - thereby reducing quantum, type and volume. Equally, local sourcing of products and food/beverage ingredients will mitigate environmental impacts.



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Community Safety

3.107 The site although remote has constant daytime and operational attendance.

3.108 Night-time however creates a degree of vulnerability to the site, buildings and late leaving staff. Allied to the requirement for very low levels of artificial lights means that surveillance will need to cope with low light levels.

3.109 The external openings will have security shutters deployed during non-operational times and sensors monitoring throughout. External sensors monitoring is more challenging due to the attendance of sheep accessing the site.

3.110 The challenge in the landscape design proposals will be to create a safe and secure environment whilst providing an attractive setting for visitors.

3.111 During operational hours the internal spaces have good sight lines within and across/between spaces. Externally, the ability to view out across the River and Dam Lawn Terraces plus towards the Playground means that observation can be maintained for younger visitors.

3.112 The intended increased visitation across the whole day inherently creates a safer environment.

3.113 Visitors are not encouraged to frequent the Operational areas to the north of the building - which will have active vehicles throughout the day. Equally, all servicing takes place on this side - inherently separating operations from visitors.

3.114 The building and setting is designed to inherently create a sense of welcome and farewell incorporating intuitive wayfinding towards, within and around the building using the appropriate routes and pathways.



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Response to Planning Policy

3.115 A full assessment of planning policy is addressed in the Planning Statement that accompanies this submission. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that planning applications be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The Development Plan for the purposes of this Planning Application comprises the following:

- National Development Framework: Future Wales – The National Plan 2040 (February, 2021);
- The Powys Local Development Plan (2011-2026) (Adopted April 2018).

In addition to the Development Plan, the Planning Application has been informed by policy and guidance set out in the following:

- Planning Policy Wales Edition 12 (February, 2024), informed by The Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, and supplemented by Technical Advice Notes;
- Powys County Council Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG)

Future Wales

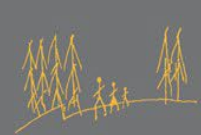
Policy 5 of Future Wales advises:

“The Welsh Government supports sustainable and vibrant rural communities.

Strategic and Local Development Plans must identify their rural communities, assess their needs and set out policies that support them. Policies should consider how age balanced communities can be achieved, where depopulation should be reversed and consider the role of new affordable and market housing, employment opportunities, local services and greater mobility in tackling these challenges.”

On vibrant rural areas, the subtext below Policy 5 states:

“Foundational economic activities remain the backbone of the rural economy. In particular, tourism and leisure is recognised as a major and growing employer and contributor to the Welsh rural economy. Sustainable forms of tourism, including opportunities for active, green, and cultural tourism, should be explored.”



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Planning Policy Wales

Paragraph 5.2.2 of PPW stipulates:

“The planning system encourages tourism where it contributes to economic development, conservation, rural diversification, urban regeneration and social inclusion, while recognising the needs of visitors and those of local communities. The planning system can also assist in enhancing the sense of place of an area which has intrinsic value and interest for tourism. In addition to supporting the continued success of existing tourist areas, appropriate tourism related development in new destinations is encouraged. In some places however there may be a need to limit new development to avoid damage to the environment or the amenity of residents and visitors.”

Regarding tourism development in rural areas, Paragraph 5.5.3 states:

“In rural areas, tourism related development is an essential element in providing for a healthy and diverse economy. In addition to more traditional forms of rural tourism, planning authorities should plan positively for active, green and cultural tourism where they are appropriate. Development should be sympathetic in nature and scale to the local environment.”

Powys County Council Local Development Plan

The Powys County Council Local Development Plan was adopted in April 2018 and is the prevailing development plan for the county of Powys. The Powys County Council Local Development Plan Proposals Map indicates that the site is not located within the defined settlement boundary, and is therefore located within the open countryside.

The settlement hierarchy for Powys is set out in LDP Policy SP5. This confirms that the site is located within the Open Countryside, outside of the settlement defined settlement boundary.

Policy SP6 sets out how growth is to be achieved across the settlement hierarchy within Powys. This states that Powys’s open countryside will be “protected from inappropriate development”, with proposals expected to comply with relevant national planning policy and all relevant LDP Policies, including design, resources, flood risk, transport, and tourism.

As the application site is located within the Registered Historic Landscape, Policy SP7 ‘Safeguarding of Strategic Resources and Assets’ is of relevance.



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Given the proposals put forward within this planning application, Policy TD1 'Tourism Development' of the Powys Local Development Plan is considered highly pertinent. In full, this states:

“Development proposals for tourist accommodation, facilities and attractions, including extensions to existing development, will be permitted as follows:

- 1. Within settlements, where commensurate in scale and size to the settlement.*
- 2. In the open countryside, where compatible in terms of location, siting, design and scale and well integrated into the landscape so that it would not detract from the overall character and appearance of the area and in particular where:
 - i. It is part of a farm diversification scheme; or*
 - ii. It re-uses a suitable rural building in accordance with TAN 6; or*
 - iii. It complements an existing tourist development or asset, without causing unacceptable adverse harm to the enjoyment of that development or asset; or*
 - iv. It is not permanent in its nature.**
- 3. Accommodation shall not be used for permanent residential accommodation.”*

It is considered that criterion 2 (iii) is the most pertinent aspect of Policy TD1 that needs to be complied with. The Visitor Centre is an existing tourist development, and it has been demonstrated in this Design and Access Statement and the other technical documentation that has been submitted by the design team that accompanies this planning application that the proposed development does not cause unacceptable adverse harm to the enjoyment of that development or asset. As Policy TD1 only requires one of the above criteria to be considered acceptable, the proposed development complies with Policy TD1; the pre-application response confirms that this is the most applicable criterion in Policy TD1.



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Technical Advice Notes

A series of Technical Advice Notes (TANs) are also applicable to the scheme, and these are:

- TAN5 Nature Conservation and Planning (2009)
- TAN6 Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities (2010)
- TAN12 Design (2016)
- TAN13 Tourism (1997)
- TAN15 Development and Flood Risk (2004)
- TAN18 Transport (2007)
- TAN23 Economic Development (2014)
- TAN24 Historic Environment (2017)

Supplementary Planning Guidance

The following Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) adopted by Powys County Council is of relevance to the proposed development:

- Biodiversity and Geodiversity SPG (Adopted October 2018)
- Historic Environment SPG (Adopted July 2021)
- Landscape SPG (Adopted April 2019)
- Planning Obligations SPG (Adopted October 2018)