



**Elan Valley Visitors  
Centre**

**FINAL DRAFT**

**Heritage Assessment**

Prepared by:  
**The Environmental Dimension  
Partnership Ltd**

On behalf of:  
**Dwr Cymru**

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(edp8869\_d001c 28 August 2024 DJo/RSk)

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(edp8869\_d008a 28 August 2024 PDr/RSk)

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(edp8869\_d011a 28 August 2024 PDr/RSk)

## Executive Summary

- S1 This report has been prepared by The Environmental Dimension Partnership Ltd (EDP), on behalf of Dwr Cymru, and presents the results of a Heritage Assessment (HA) to provide information in relation to a planning application to redevelop the Elan Valley Visitor Centre and its grounds (hereafter referred to as ‘the site’).
- S2 This assessment has considered the potential for impacts upon historic assets from the Proposed Development of the site.
- S3 The assessment concludes only a single direct impact upon the non-designated heritage asset comprising the original, workshop part of the Visitor Centre building, which is assessed as being of low significance and would be subject to a low degree of harm to its significance. In accordance with Paragraph 6.1.9 of Planning Policy Wales (PPW) 12 this impact on the significance of a historic asset should be fully considered in planning decision making.
- S4 The assessment has assessed the potential impact upon the significance of historic assets in the Site’s wider vicinity with reference to the 2017 Cadw guidance *The Setting of Historic Assets in Wales*. In this regard, it has not assessed any negative effects to any of the designated heritage assets that have been considered.
- S5 The assessment has also considered the potential for effects on the historic character of the Elan Valley Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest (EVLOHI). In this regard the Proposed Development would only result in a highly localised effect to a single Historic Landscape Character Area (HLCA) 1131, Elan Valley Reservoirs. This would result in only a very slight negative deduction of the historic character of HLCA 1131, translating as an extremely small and highly localised effect on the overall historic character of the EVLOHI.
- S6 The adverse effect assessed to the historic part of the Visitor Centre building is potentially in conflict with Objective LDP 13 of the Powys Local Development Plan 2011-2026 (LDP) such that the significance of a ‘local asset’ would not be preserved. However, in accordance with Paragraph 6.1.27 of PPW 12 the adverse effect on the historic part of the Visitor Centre building, if deemed acceptable by the decision maker, could be addressed through recourse to a programme of historic building recording in order to secure and archive a record of the building ahead of its modification.
- S7 As such, given the lack of impacts upon designated historic assets, and with the potential for mitigation for the loss of significance at the non-designated building through recording, the assessment concludes that there is no reason in national planning policy why the presence of historic assets should hinder the positive determination of the planning application.

## Section 1 Introduction

- 1.1 This report has been prepared by The Environmental Dimension Partnership Ltd (EDP), on behalf of Dwr Cymru, and presents the results of a Heritage Assessment (HA) in relation to the Elan Valley Visitor Centre and its grounds (hereafter referred to as 'the site').
- 1.2 This document has been commissioned and produced to inform a detailed planning application for the redevelopment of the visitor centre and its associated surrounding infrastructure (hereafter referred to as 'the Proposed Development').
- 1.3 The aim of this assessment is to identify those historic assets which have the potential to be affected by the proposals, either through direct changes or indirect changes as a result of alteration to their settings, such that contribute to their heritage significance.
- 1.4 In accordance with good practice and guidance, desktop sources have been augmented by the completion of a site visit and walkover survey in July 2024.
- 1.5 This report is focused only on above ground historic assets and does not identify or assess the Site's archaeological interest or potential.

### LOCATION, BOUNDARIES AND TOPOGRAPHY

- 1.6 The site comprises the Elan Valley Visitor Centre building, as well as surrounding spaces, with a total area of c.1 hectare (ha).
- 1.7 The site is centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 292822, 264637 and its location is shown on **Plan EDP 1**.
- 1.8 The Visitor Centre building is described in detail in **Section 4** of this report. Other parts of the site include an access road from the north-east which passes the Visitor Centre building to the north to a turning circle to the west, a landscaped car park to the east of the building, a children's play area to the west of the building, a small, modern timber building used for cycle hire, located to the south-east of the Visitor Centre building and open grassed spaces populated by numerous trees.
- 1.9 Site boundaries, where defined, comprise post and wire fences.
- 1.10 Topographically, the site is located on a valley-bottom plateau immediately adjacent to the Afon Elan which flows eastwards and lies to the south. The land rises steeply with rocky crags above, to the north and south of the site. Steep upland slopes define the north side of the valley and there is dense deciduous woodland to the south. To the immediate north of the site is a large spoil tip associated with a substantial quarry located to the north-west. At the top is a road traversing the valley from north-east to south-west.
- 1.11 To the west (c.160 – 310m from the site) is a complex of buildings, a weir and large dam wall that comprise the structures of the Caban Coch dam. These are described in further

detail in **Section 4**. To the east, the valley broadens out slightly and curves to the north-east with the settlement of Elan Village located on the southern side of the river c.170m to the east of the site boundary's furthest eastern extent.

#### **PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT**

- 1.12 The proposal is illustrated in a Pre-Application Design and Access Statement which is appended at **Appendix EDP 2**. The proposals are described in **Section 5** of this report.
- 1.13 It is noteworthy that the proposals have been revised since the original pre-application to present a scheme that responds more fully to the heritage significance of the Visitor Centre building.

## Section 2

### Legislation and Planning Guidance

- 2.1 This section summarises the key legislative and planning policy context relating to the Proposed Development of the site at both national and local levels.

#### LEGISLATION

- 2.2 In March 2016, the *Historic Environment (Wales) Act* came into force. Whilst providing a number of new provisions to existing legislation, the changes do not specifically affect the planning process, or the way archaeology and heritage is assessed.

#### Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas

- 2.3 *The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990* is the primary legislative instrument addressing the treatment of listed buildings and conservation areas through the planning process in Wales.

- 2.4 Section 66(1) of the 1990 Act concerns listed buildings and states that:

*“...in considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.”*

- 2.5 The ‘special regard’ duty of the 1990 Act has been tested in the Court of Appeal and confirmed to require that “*considerable importance and weight*” should be afforded by the decision maker to the desirability of preserving a listed building along with its setting. The relevant judgement is referenced as *Barnwell Manor Wind Energy Ltd v East Northants DC, English Heritage and National Trust* (2014) EWCA Civ 137.

- 2.6 However, it must be recognised that Section 66(1) of the 1990 Act does not identify that the local authority or the Secretary of State must preserve a listed building or its setting; and neither does it indicate that a Proposed Development that does not preserve them is unacceptable and should therefore be refused.

- 2.7 Although expressed in relation to setting, the discussion of “harm” is of relevance in the judgement in respect of *R (Forge Field Society) v Sevenoaks District Council* [2014] EWHC 1895 (Admin) which also makes this clear at paragraph 49 when it states that:

*“This does not mean that an authority’s assessment of likely harm to the setting of a listed building or to [the character or appearance of] a conservation area is other than a matter for its own planning judgement. It does not mean that the weight the authority should give to harm which it considers would be limited or less than substantial must be the same as the weight it might give to harm which would be substantial. But it is to recognise, as the Court of Appeal emphasised in Barnwell, that a finding of harm to the setting of a listed building or to [the character or appearance] of a conservation area gives rises to a strong*

*presumption against planning permission being granted. The presumption is a statutory one. It is not irrebuttable. It can be outweighed by material considerations powerful enough to do so. But an authority can only properly strike the balance between harm to a heritage asset on the one hand and planning benefits on the other if it is conscious of the statutory presumption in favour of preservation and if it demonstrably applies that presumption to the proposal it is considering.”*

- 2.8 This key point is also made in paragraph 54 of *Forest of Dean DC v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government* [2013] EWHC 4052, i.e:

*“Section 66(1) did not oblige the inspector to reject the proposal because he found it would cause some harm to the setting of the listed buildings. The duty is directed to ‘the desirability of preserving’ the setting of listed buildings. One sees there the basic purpose of the ‘special regard’ duty. It does not rule out acceptable change. It gives the decision-maker an extra task to perform, which is to judge whether the change proposed is acceptable. But it does not prescribe the outcome. It does not dictate the refusal of planning permission if the Proposed Development is found likely to alter or even to harm the setting of a listed building.”*

- 2.9 In other words, it is up to the decision maker (such as the local authority) to assess whether the proposal that is before them would result in ‘acceptable change’.

- 2.10 Furthermore, insofar as conservation areas are concerned, Section 72(1) of the 1990 Act identifies the following:

*“In the exercise, with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area...special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.”*

- 2.11 In addition to the case law discussed above, it must be recognised that, as established by the Courts (*South Lakeland DC v Secretary of State for the Environment*, (1992) 2 WLR 204): (1) there is no statutory duty to enhance the character or appearance of a conservation area - the Courts have confirmed that development that ‘preserves’ them is acceptable; and (2) the statutory duty only covers development that is within a conservation area - the ‘setting’ of a conservation area is addressed by planning policy.

### **Archaeology**

- 2.12 The *Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979* addresses the designation and management of scheduled monuments, providing for the maintenance of a schedule of monuments (and archaeological remains) which are protected.

- 2.13 The designation of archaeological and historic sites as ‘scheduled monuments’ applies only to those that are deemed to be of national importance and is generally adopted only if it represents the best means of protection.

- 2.14 The 1979 Act does not address the concept of ‘setting’ for scheduled monuments, just their physical remains. Therefore, for scheduled monuments, the protection of ‘setting’ is a matter of policy only.

- 2.15 In Wales, the written consent of the Welsh Minister is required for development that would directly impact upon a scheduled monument, and applications for Scheduled Monument Consent are submitted to Cadw, the Welsh Government's (WG's) Historic Environment Service.

### **NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY**

- 2.16 The Welsh Government published *Future Wales: The National Plan 2040* on 24 February 2021 and highlights in the foreword from the Minister for Housing and local government that it forms a “*framework for planning the change and development our country will need over the next two decades.*”
- 2.17 In terms of the WG's objectives, number 6 of 'Future Wales Outcome' on page 55 states that:
- “Development plans will have a forward thinking, positive attitude towards enabling economic development, investment and innovation. Increased prosperity and productivity will be pursued across all parts of Wales, building on current activity and promoting a culture of innovation, social partnership, entrepreneurialism and skills-development in sustainable industries and sectors. The culture, heritage and environment of Wales will play a positive, modern role in the economy by attracting the interest and expenditure of tourists and providing a distinctive and trusted brand for Welsh businesses.”*
- 2.18 National planning guidance concerning the treatment of the historic environment across Wales, is detailed in Section 6.1 of *Chapter 6 Distinctive and Natural Places* of PPW 12, which was published on 07 February 2024.
- 2.19 At paragraph 6.1.2, it identifies the historic environment as comprising individual historic features, such as archaeological sites, historic buildings and historic parks and gardens, townscapes, and landscapes, collectively known as 'historic assets'.
- 2.20 At paragraph 6.1.6, the WG's objectives for the historic environment are outlined. Of these, the following are of relevance to the current assessment. These seek to: “*safeguard the character of historic buildings and manage change so that their special architectural and historic interest is preserved*”, “*preserve or enhance the character or appearance of conservation area, whilst the same time helping them remain vibrant and prosperous*” and, “*Protect areas on the register of historic landscapes in Wales.*”
- 2.21 At paragraph 6.1.7, it is stated that:
- “It is important that the planning system looks to protect, conserve and enhance the significance of historic assets. This will include consideration of the setting of an historic asset which might extend beyond its curtilage. Any change that impacts on an historic asset or its setting should be managed in a sensitive and sustainable way.”*

- 2.22 As such, with regard to decision making, it is stated that: *“Any decisions made through the planning system must fully consider the impact on the historic environment and on the significance and heritage values of individual historic assets and their contribution to the character of place.”*
- 2.23 Regarding listed buildings, PPW states, at paragraph 6.1.10, that:  
*“...there should be a general presumption in favour of the preservation of a listed building and its setting, which might extend beyond its curtilage”* and then adds that *“For any development proposal affecting a listed building or its setting, the primary material consideration is the statutory requirement to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building, or its setting, or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.”*
- 2.24 It then adds that: *“The aim should be to find the best way to protect and enhance the special qualities of listed buildings, retaining them in sustainable use.”*
- 2.25 Paragraph 6.1.14 of PPW (2024) states that: *“There should be a general presumption in favour of the preservation or enhancement of the character or appearance of conservation areas or their settings”*.
- 2.26 Paragraph 6.1.15 then adds that:  
*“There is a strong presumption against the granting of planning permission for developments, including advertisements, which damage the character or appearance of a conservation area or its setting to an unacceptable level. In exceptional cases, the presumption may be overridden in favour of development considered desirable on public interest grounds”*.
- 2.27 This is picked up in paragraph 6.1.16 of PPW (2024), which advises that:  
*“Preservation or enhancement of a conservation area can be achieved by a development which either makes a positive contribution to an area’s character or appearance or leaves them unharmed. Mitigation measures can also be considered which could result in an overall neutral or positive impact of a Proposed Development in a conservation area”*.
- 2.28 Paragraph 6.1.20 states that the Welsh Government seeks to protect areas of the register of historic landscapes in Wales. Specifically, in accordance with Paragraph 6.1.21:  
*“The register should be taken into account in decision making when considering the implications of developments which meet the criteria for Environmental Impact Assessment or, if on call in, in the opinion of the Welsh Ministers, the development is of a sufficient scale to have more than a local impact on the historic landscape. An assessment of development on a historic landscape may be required if it is proposed within a registered historic landscape or its setting and there is potential for conflict with development plan policy”*.



## **TECHNICAL ADVICE NOTE 24 (TAN 24)**

- 2.29 Additional heritage guidance in Wales is set out in *Technical Advice Note 24: The Historic Environment* (TAN 24) (Welsh Government, 2017).
- 2.30 TAN 24 sets out that it provides “*guidance on how the planning system considers the historic environment during development plan preparation and decision making on planning applications.*”
- 2.31 It clarifies the policies and distinctions made in PPW (2024). A definition for a ‘historic asset’ is given as:
- “An identifiable component of the historic environment. It may consist or be a combination of an archaeological site, a historic building or area, historic park and garden or a parcel of historic landscape. Nationally important historic assets will normally be designated.”*
- 2.32 Effects through changes within the setting of a designated historic asset are covered in TAN 24 at paragraphs 1.23 to 1.29. These paragraphs define the setting of an historic asset as comprising:
- “...the surroundings in which it is understood, experienced, and appreciated embracing present and past relationships to the surrounding landscape. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral. Setting is not a historic asset in its own right but has value derived from how different elements may contribute to the significance of a historic asset.”*
- 2.33 TAN 24 also identifies factors to consider when assessing effects on the setting of historic assets. Paragraph 1.26 states it is:
- “...for the applicant to provide the local planning authority with sufficient information to allow the assessment of their proposals in respect of scheduled monuments, listed buildings, conservation areas, registered historic parks and gardens, World Heritage Sites, or other sites of national importance and their settings.”*
- 2.34 Paragraph 1.29 goes on to state that:
- “The local planning authority will need to make its own assessment of the impact within the setting of a historic asset, having considered the responses received from consultees as part of this process. A judgement has to be made by the consenting authority, on a case-by-case basis, over whether a Proposed Development may be damaging to the setting of the historic asset, or may enhance or have a neutral impact on the setting by the removal of existing inappropriate development or land use.”*

## **LOCAL PLANNING POLICY**

- 2.1 Local Planning Policy is given in the *Powys Local Development Plan 2011-2026* (LDP) which was adopted in April 2018.

2.2 The LDP outlines its 'Vision and Objectives'. Objective LDP 13 is concerned with Landscape and the Historic Environment. This states that an objective of the LDP is to:

*"...protect, preserve and/or enhance the distinctive historic environment, heritage and cultural assets of Powys, in particular local assets that are not statutorily protected or designated under national legislation, and to ensure that development respects local distinctiveness".*

2.3 The historic environment is also referenced under *Strategic Policy SP7- Safeguarding of Strategic Resources and Assets*. The policy states that: *"To safeguard strategic resources and assets in the County, development proposals must not have an unacceptable adverse impact on the resource or asset and its operation."*

2.4 With regard to the above, the following are noted as 'strategic resources and assets':

*"Historic environment designations, including:*

- i. Registered Historic Landscapes.*
- ii. Registered Historic Parks and Gardens.*
- iii. Scheduled Ancient Monuments and other archaeological remains.*
- iv. Listed Buildings and their curtilages.*
- v. Conservation Areas.*
- vi. AND the setting of designations i.-v."*

2.5 The LDP does not contain any topic-specific policies which are concerned with the historic environment, although the need for development to be sensitive to the 'historic quality' of landscapes is referenced in *Policy DM4 - Landscape*, as is the need to have regard to Registered Historic Landscapes.

2.6 These adopted planning policies, at the national and local levels, have been taken into account in the preparation of this assessment.

## Section 3 Methodology

### ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 This report has been produced in accordance with the *Standard and Guidance for Historic Environment Desk-Based Assessment* which has been issued by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA, 2020). This provides a national standard for the completion of desk-based assessments.
- 3.2 The assessment involved consultation of information from the following sources:
- Information on Designated Historic Assets derived from Cadw's online database;
  - Heneb Historic Environment Record (HER) data;
  - Data, images, and documentary sources obtained from the National Monuments Record of Wales (NMRW) as curated by the Royal Commission for the Historical and Ancient Monuments of Wales (RCHAMW);
  - Historic maps acquired from Envirocheck; and
  - Documents acquired from the Elan Valley Trust.
- 3.3 The assessment process has been supported by a site walkover survey which took place in July 2024 during a period of fine, dry, and bright weather, with good visibility which was suitable for the purpose.

### ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

- 3.4 Where relevant, the assessment of significance for historic assets makes reference to the four 'heritage values' which are defined by Cadw in its Conservation Principles document referenced as Cadw (2011). These comprise:
- The asset's evidential value, which is defined as those elements of the historic asset that can provide evidence about past human activity, including its physical remains or historic fabric;
  - The asset's historical value, which is defined as those elements of an asset which might illustrate a particular aspect of past life or might be associated with a notable family, person, event or movement;
  - The asset's aesthetic value, which is defined as deriving from the way in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from the historic asset; and
  - The asset's communal value, which is defined as deriving from the meanings that a historic asset has for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory.

## **CURTILAGE LISTING**

- 3.5 The Visitor Centre Building has been assessed to ascertain whether it forms part of the curtilage of any of the listed buildings located in its vicinity. Due to the lack of any equivalent guidance issued by Cadw, this assessment utilised the Historic England guidance *Listed Buildings and Curtilage* (Historic England Advice Note 10: 2018) as well as making reference to section 1(5) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. This assessment is set out in **Section 4**.

## **SETTING OF HERITAGE ASSETS**

- 3.6 In addition to the potential for direct impacts on the fabric of an asset, when assessing the impact of proposals on historic assets, it is important to ascertain whether change within their 'setting' would lead to a loss of 'significance'. This assessment of potential indirect effects (in terms of 'setting') is made according to Cadw's guidance *Setting of Historic Assets in Wales* which was published in May 2017.
- 3.7 In simple terms, the guidance states that setting "*includes the surroundings in which it is understood, experienced and appreciated, embracing present and past relationships to the surrounding landscape*". It must be recognised from the outset that 'setting' is not a historic asset and cannot itself be harmed. The guidance states that the importance of setting "*lies in what it contributes to the significance of a historic asset*".
- 3.8 As such, when assessing the indirect impact of proposals on historic assets, it is not a question of whether their setting would be affected, but rather a question of whether change within the asset's 'setting' would lead to a loss of 'significance'.
- 3.9 Set within this context, where the objective is to determine the potential for development to have an indirect effect on historic assets beyond the boundary of a development site, it is necessary to first define the significance of the asset in question - and the contribution made to that significance by its 'setting', in order to establish whether there would be a loss, and therefore harm.
- 3.10 The guidance identifies that change within a historic asset's setting need not necessarily cause 'harm' and that it can be positive, or in fact neutral.
- 3.11 Cadw's guidance (Cadw, 2017b) sets out a four-stage approach to the identification and assessment of setting effects; i.e:
- Stage 1: Identify the historic assets which might be affected;
  - Stage 2: Define and analyse the setting, to understand how it contributes to the asset's heritage significance;
  - Stage 3: Evaluate the potential impact of development; and
  - Stage 4: Consider options to mitigate or improve that potential impact.

- 3.12 This assessment considers Stages 1 and 2 of this four-stage process in **Section 4**. In respect of Stage 1, the report assesses designated historic assets within a search area extending up to 1km from the Site boundary, hereafter known as the ‘study area’, for its consideration of potential physical effects on historic assets and their settings. This radius was considered sufficient due to the topography, whereby the site is only experienced in conjunction with nearby heritage assets within the river valley bottom location where it is set. Those assets which might be affected by the site’s development are then considered in greater detail as per Stage 2 of the process.
- 3.13 Stages 3 and 4 are considered at **Section 5**, in so much as the potential effects of the site’s development are assessed regarding the present development proposal options, including options to mitigate any assessed impact, which are also discussed.

## Section 4 Baseline Assessment

### DESIGNATED HERITAGE ASSETS

- 4.1 The site does not contain any designated historic assets, such as scheduled monuments or listed buildings and neither does it form part of an area designation such as a Historic Park and garden or Conservation Area.
- 4.2 The site does lie within a non-statutory registered historic landscape, The Elan Valley Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest. This is discussed in a separate section below.
- 4.3 The section below details and contextualises the known designated historic assets within a 1km study area from the site boundary. In doing so, it covers Stages 1 and 2 of the Cadw assessment process set out in *The Setting of Historic Assets in Wales* (2017).
- 4.4 Designated heritage assets in the 1km study area are shown on **Plan EDP 1** and it should be read in conjunction with the following paragraphs.

### Assessment of curtilage listing

- 4.5 The Visitor Centre building has been assessed to ascertain whether it forms part of the curtilage of any of the listed buildings located in its vicinity. Due to the lack of any equivalent guidance issued by Cadw, this assessment utilises the Historic England guidance Listed Buildings and Curtilage (Historic England Advice Note 10: 2018) as well as making reference to section 1(5) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.
- 4.6 Quoting Historic England guidance (2018), the law (section 1(5) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990) says that a listed building also includes any ancillary object or structure within the curtilage of the building, which forms part of the land and has done so since before 1st July 1948.
- 4.7 However, due to the complexities of definition, case law has determined that curtilage should be defined on a case-by-case basis. Indeed, curtilage is typically defined in relation to the domestic curtilage of a house and its associated enclosure rather than being applied to a structure such as a dam, where its ancillary associations are less well defined.
- 4.8 The Historic England guidance describes how the courts have determined that three factors should be taken into account when assessing whether a structure or object is within the curtilage of a listed building:
  - The physical layout of the listed building and the structure;
  - Their ownership, both historically and at the date of listing; and
  - The use or function of the relevant buildings, again both historically and at the date of listing (these tests were first proposed in the Attorney-General ex rel. Sutcliffe and

Others v. Calderdale BC, 1982, as accepted by Debenhams plc v. Westminster CC, 1987).

- 4.9 The nearest listed buildings to the Visitor Centre are the Grade II listed hydroelectric station and bridge located c. 210m to the west. Beyond these, c. 330m west of the site is the Grade II\* Caban Coch Dam. The listed buildings at Elan Village are also located c. 450m to the north-east of the Visitor Centre building.

### **Physical layout**

- 4.10 In terms of physical layout, the Visitor Centre is distinct from the hydroelectric station and bridge which were constructed with a layout that reflects a clear functional association with the adjacent watercourse and the dam. The bridge allowed access between the two buildings. The Visitor Centre building, which was built after the dam and hydroelectric station were completed, is not part of this group and instead represents the remnants of an entirely separate group of buildings. Likewise, the buildings of Elan Village form a distinct group representing the domestic settlement of Elan Village where it is clear that the Visitor Centre building is distinct from that group and was not a part of the settlement, and notably it is not within the conservation area that defines the village.
- 4.11 The dam itself is a large imposing structure laid out to block the river valley and control its water flow. As a structure with a specific purpose and of great size it has no physical relationship with the Visitor Centre building, which, as above, represents the remnant of a separate group of buildings that functioned as a workshop.

### **Ownership**

- 4.12 The dam, Elan Village houses and the hydroelectric stations were listed on 31st July 1995. At this time the Visitor Centre building had ceased to function as a workshop and was in its present use. At this time and prior to this date both were under the same ownership of Dwr Cymru Welsh Water (DCWW) in common with the wider estate which extends to c.18,000ha across the surrounding landscape. Given the large size of the DCWW landholding it is considered that being under the same shared ownership is of little relevance to any assessment of whether the building is part of the curtilage of the listed buildings, as many different and entirely unrelated historic assets would therefore fall into this category.

### **Use or function**

- 4.13 In terms of use, historically the Visitor Centre building was a workshop associated with the repair of engines working on the Elan Valley Railway amongst other likely uses. Whilst the railway was instrumental in facilitating the construction of the dam and many other structures and buildings in the wider valley, it no longer exists, and the Visitor Centre building has ceased to function as a workshop, becoming a tourist Visitor Centre in the 1980s.
- 4.14 The timeline below sets out the relative dates of construction of the buildings and structures in question as noted by Cadw, Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust (CPAT) and the Royal Commission for the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales (RCAHMW):

- Caban Coch dam - built between 1893 and 1904;

- Elan Valley Railway - Constructed between 1893 and 1896 and closed in 1916;
- Hydroelectric power stations and bridge - Early 20th century, the RCAHMW state c. 1900;
- Visitor centre building - Early 20th century (the building is post-1905 due to it not being depicted on an Ordnance Survey map of 1905); and
- Elan Village houses - c. 1910.

4.15 The Visitor Centre building's functional association with the dam and hydro-electric power station is now entirely historic and, via the link with the Elan Valley Railway, was ancillary to the railway, its ongoing maintenance and function rather than to the buildings themselves and their use, purpose and function. It was most likely constructed after the Caban Coch dam and Hydroelectric stations to replace earlier timber buildings and so was built at a different time and not directly in conjunction with their construction.

4.16 Similarly, with the buildings at Elan Village, whilst evidently the workshop does have a historic association with them it is not ancillary to their function, as the houses and other buildings there form a settlement. If it had been it might have been expected to have been constructed in the village itself.

4.17 As noted above at the time of listing the building had ceased function as a workshop and was in use as a visitor centre. The modern use as a Visitor Centre is evidentially closely related to the dam as it is a location for presenting the general history of the valley and its works to the public. However, this use is not ancillary to the function of the dam or hydroelectric stations, as structures and buildings with a practical purpose. The Visitor Centre does not serve them, such that the definition of an 'ancillary' building is a structure 'providing necessary support to the primary activities or operation of an organization or system' (Oxford Languages accessed online August 2024). In this regard, as structures and buildings constructed with a specific functional purpose (control of water and electricity production), they do not require a tourist Visitor Centre to support their definitive functions.

4.18 Furthermore, it is noteworthy that the building was not considered by Cadw for listing in its own right in 1995 when the other structures in the valley were themselves listed.

#### ***Conclusion on curtilage listing***

4.19 As such, although there is clearly a relationship between the Visitor Centre building and the listed structures to the west, this is based on a historical, functional link via the former Elan Valley Railway which was in turn linked to their construction phase, with the Visitor Centre building constructed later, after their completion. The building is not directly 'ancillary' to the function of the dam or hydroelectric station either in its historic use or in its modern use as a Visitor Centre.

4.20 Whilst the building and listed structures sit within the same ownership, this area is vast and contains many different historic assets across a wider landscape. As such it is argued that this aspect should be disregarded as it makes no sense to define any building or structure within it as comprising part of the curtilage of its other components where there is little physical relationship.



- 4.21 In defining the curtilage of structures such as the Caban Coch dam and the hydroelectric stations it is argued that the curtilage of such functional structures should only comprise obvious ancillary structures or buildings related to their direct function - in this case, the control of water and the generation of electricity. It is argued that a secondary link, such as that between the Visitor Centre building and the listed structures via the Elan Valley railway, which no longer exists, whilst related to their history is not close enough for the association to be considered 'ancillary'.
- 4.22 This approach would reflect that in case law such as the 'Jews Farm' ruling (Egerton v Taunton Deane, 2008) which differentiated between the domestic function of a listed farmhouse and the agricultural function of outbuildings that were not located within the farm enclosure. In that case the outbuildings were not determined to be part of the curtilage even though there was a historical relationship. In the same way, the Visitor Centre building, whilst representing an element of the wider early 20th century industrial development of the Elan Valley and its history (in common with the dam and hydroelectric station), had and has a different function to these structures within the wider scheme, one that is not related directly to their purpose and function.
- 4.23 Likewise, the building is quite distinct both physically and in terms of its use from the houses and other buildings that comprise the Elan Village.
- 4.24 In summary, due to the factors discussed above, it is not considered that the Visitor Centre building meets all of the tests as defined by the Calderdale case and set out by Historic England. As such, it should not be treated as part of the listed curtilage of any of the listed buildings and structures that lie within the wider valley. Instead, it is assessed in this report in terms of its role as part of the setting of the listed assets and as a feature of the wider Elan Valley Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest.

### **Setting Assessment: Stage 1**

- 4.25 **Plan EDP 1** shows the designated historic assets within a 1km radius of the visitors' centre. An explanation for why this was deemed appropriate is given below. These comprise the following:
- One scheduled monument Carreg Bica Round Cairn located c. 900m north of the site (Cadw Ref. **3927**);
  - Two Grade II\* listings that relate to Caban Coch Dam (Cadw Refs. **16202** and **24389**) located c.290m to the west of the site;
  - Four Grade II listings that relate to the buildings and a bridge at the hydro-electric station below the Caban Coch Dam (Cadw Refs. **24391**, **16203**, **16205** and **24390**) located c.160m to the west of the site; and
  - The Elan Village Conservation Area, which additionally contains 16 Grade II listed buildings (Cadw Refs. **16206** – **16221**) located c.33m to the north-east of the site.
- 4.26 Located within a steep-sided valley, it is not possible to visually experience, from or in conjunction with the site, any historic assets other than those which are situated in the more

immediate confines of the valley. As such, the site's development could not be experienced in conjunction with any assets from beyond this local area.

- 4.27 The Visitor Centre building was a former workshop associated with the repair of railway engines used in the construction of the dams that characterise the Elan Valley. In this regard it is historically associated with historic assets that lie further afield, which have a functional relationship with it. However, this association is now entirely historical, and the experience of the building is as a feature of the immediate valley environment.
- 4.28 Any historical association would be no less apparent than it is now, and certainly no less appreciable at a landscape scale and through consultation of historic maps, regardless of any subsequent change brought about by the building's redevelopment. Consequently, historic assets located beyond a 1km radius of the site have been scoped out for any further consideration in the setting assessment.
- 4.29 The scheduled monument Carreg Bica Round Cairn (Cadw Ref. 3927) is a Bronze Age burial cairn situated on the summit of Carreg Bica c.900m north of the site. The monument is significant for its archaeological remains and deposits, although the Cadw listing citation also notes views to the east over Rhayader and the Wye Valley which may have been of some significance to its builders.
- 4.30 Situated on a high summit, the cairn is well removed from the valley bottom and cannot be seen or appreciated from the site or its vicinity. As such, it is not possible to experience the monument, and neither is there any aspect of the site that has any sort of association with it. As such, the site does not form part of the setting of the scheduled monument and this designated historic asset would not be affected by the Proposed Development. Hence, it is not considered any further within the assessment.

## **Setting Assessment: Stage 2**

### ***Grade II\* Listed Building Caban Coch Dam (Cadw Refs. 16202 and 24389)***

#### *Description of the Asset and its Significance*

- 4.31 The two reference numbers for the dam relate to the fact that it is partially situated within the parish of Rhayader and partially within Llanwrthwl. Otherwise, the two records both relate to the same feature which is described in the citation associated with **16202**.
- 4.32 The Caban Coch Dam (located c.290m west of the site) was the first and lowest dam to be constructed in the Elan Valley and was built by the City of Birmingham between 1893 and 1904. It was designed by the engineer James Mansergh along with three other dams. The system was designed to supply Birmingham with water which was able to reach the city using gravity alone.
- 4.33 The dam (**Images EDP A1.1 - A1.4**) was constructed in stone, mainly quarried from the quarry that lies directly adjacent and above to the north, although its facing of Red Sandstone was imported from South Wales. The dam is made up of massive rock-faced blocks. In addition to its spillways and massive circular outlets, its inner, east side has two rows of protruding blocks that were used to support scaffolding for a railway platform during construction.

- 4.34 At each end of the dam are two towers supporting platforms, walled with gigantic capstones that have been worked to resemble natural rock. From these spaces internal access can be gained. The dam's architecture is in common with other features of the wider engineering project and was dubbed at the time as 'Birmingham Baroque'.
- 4.35 Cadw state that the dam is listed at Grade II\* due to it being 'one of the greatest civil engineering projects of the 19<sup>th</sup> century'.
- 4.36 Clearly the dam has a considerable degree of heritage significance, both in terms of the evidential, architectural value inherent in its construction, function and design and in the historical value in relation to its relevance to the history of the Elan Valley, the City of Birmingham and more widely the story of Victorian engineering and innovation. The dam also has a substantial degree of aesthetic value in its stonework and general appearance, whereby it is a large and highly visible feature that dominates the adjacent valley and lake to the west. The dam also has a lesser degree of communal value because it is a popular tourist attraction and functioning part of the landscape that relates to Britain's water provision and electricity generation.

*The Setting of the Asset and its Contribution to its Significance.*

- 4.37 The asset's setting also makes a substantial contribution to its significance, although less than that made by its physical fabric.
- 4.38 A key aspect of its setting is its associative relationships with both features of the landscape and other built heritage assets. As a functional structure, the asset has a key relationship with the adjacent lake to the west and the Afon Elan to the east. Furthermore, the dam can be experienced in views across the lake (**Image EDP A1.1**) where its walls and towers, with their rock-faced finish contrast well with the adjacent cliffs and crags.
- 4.39 The river is an integral part of the functional operation of the Victorian dam and its eastern face (**Image EDP A1.2**) is dominated by the water emerging from outflows, or, at period of high water, cascading into the valley. These features represent elements of the asset's setting that contribute highly to its significance.
- 4.40 The dam is also closely associated with the other structures in the valley, the two hydro-electric station buildings which lie c.90m to the east, the bridge that links them crossing the river and the series of weirs in the river below the dam. These structures all have a key functional association with the dam and, in their similar use of rock-faced stone blocks, adopt a similar appearance which gives them a sense of cohesion and visual integrity with the dam. The group is seen readily from many vantage points in the landscape including from the dam itself (**Image EDP A1.3**) and so this group association is easily appreciated. As such these buildings and structures represent important elements of the setting of the dam which make a moderate contribution to its significance.
- 4.41 More widely the dam is a prominent feature of the valley landscape to the east and can be seen from c.400m to the east rising above lower intervening features (**Image EDP A1.4**). The valley landscape has a historical association with the dam, being the former location of related railway lines and of the workshop building that has become the visitor centre. Moreover, the dam can be seen and appreciated from this landscape both in respect of

appreciating its function and its size and dramatic appearance. As such, the wider valley to the east is a part of the asset's setting that makes a low contribution to its significance.

- 4.42 Due to the curve of the valley, the dam cannot be seen from Elan Village, however, the houses and other buildings there have a key historical functional association with the dam, having been built to house the workers who constructed it and the other dams in the wider valley. As such Elan Village is also a part of the asset's setting that makes a low contribution to its significance.

*The Site and its Relationship to the Asset's Setting.*

- 4.43 The site is located entirely within the dam's valley setting and the dam can be seen and appreciated from throughout much of it, particularly at the west end (**Images EDP A1.5 and A1.6**). The Visitor Centre building is partially a former workshop that was used to service the railway engines that were instrumental in the dam's construction. Whilst the building has had modern extensions and lost its historic function, it still retains an external appearance on its northern wing that reflects its original purpose and, internally, has retained equipment which is displayed in some of its rooms (**Images EDP A1.27 – A21.27**). As such the historical association between the building and the dam is readily appreciated and the dam is clearly visible from it.
- 4.44 Furthermore, although not as heavily decorative and embellished as the listed hydro-electric buildings and having been subject to considerable modern extension and modification, the building also possesses a rock-faced stone finish and slate roof which reflect the appearance of the buildings to the east and the dam. In this regard, this material finish contributes to lesser degree to the architectural cohesion of the group and, in views from the dam, this similarity in materials can be appreciated (**Image EDP A1.3**).
- 4.45 However, it is the rear of the Visitor Centre building that faces towards the dam and at this end of the building a modern flat roofed extension and adjacent modern features, such as a fenced bin store, are elements of the view from the dam which detract from the character of the historic part of the Visitor Centre building. As such, whilst the original part of the building is an element of the setting of the dam it only makes a very low contribution to its significance both in terms of its historical association and in terms of its presence in views out from or towards the dam within the valley.
- 4.46 The modern elements of the site such as the children's play equipment to the west of the Visitor Centre building and the proliferation of cars in its car park, contrast with the appearance of the dam and introduce elements into the view to the east that do not accord visually with the naturalistic stone of the valley's buildings. As such, these elements, whilst quite minor features of the valley setting, detract from the significance of the dam to a very low degree.

***Grade II Listed Pair of Hydro-Electric Stations Below Caban-Coch Dam and Footbridge (Cadw Refs. 24391, 16203, 16205 and 24390)***

*Description of the Asset and its Significance*

- 4.47 These historic assets (located c.160m west of the site) are identified as four separate Grade II listed buildings. One is provided for each building, a separate one for the footbridge

and a fourth for the southern building as it is partially in the parish of Rhayader and partially within Llanwrthwl.

- 4.48 However, the Cadw citations repeat the same description that refers to all three assets and they share the same setting. As such, for the purpose of this assessment they are considered together.
- 4.49 The power station buildings (**Image EDP A1.8 – A1.9**) are a symmetrical pair, each with two ranges, one higher than the other and finished in dressed, rock-faced stone and with pitched slate roofs with stone parapets at the end of each range. On both, each range has a central lantern ventilator and both buildings possess the same symmetrical arrangement of windows and entrances with heavy, rock faced surrounds and round headed doorways. The listing citation describes how both buildings contain their original machinery.
- 4.50 The bridge (**Images EDP A1.3 and A1.10**) connects the entrances to both buildings, presumably having had a practical purpose in allowing easy access for engineers to the two turbines. It is of stone construction with a rock-faced finish and is formed of three elliptical arches. Its stonework connects directly with revetment walls at the edge of the river which adjoins the dam to the west and a series of weirs in the river (**Images EDP A1.2 and A1.10**).
- 4.51 Cadw describe the group as listed “*as part of one of the greatest civil engineering projects of the 19<sup>th</sup> century*” and due to their ‘*group value with the adjacent dam.*’
- 4.52 The group has a notable degree of heritage significance both in terms of the evidential, architectural value inherent in their construction, function and design and in their historical value in relation to their relevance to the history of the Elan Valley, the City of Birmingham and more widely the story of Victorian engineering and innovation. The hydroelectric stations have a further degree of evidential value in their preserved internal machinery and their relationships to their former use for power generation.
- 4.53 All three assets also have a substantial degree of aesthetic value expressed in their stonework and the decorative nature of their design, following the ‘Birmingham Baroque’, which accords well with the rock-faced stone finish of the closely related dam. Like the dam, they also have a lesser degree of communal value as they form components of a popular tourist attraction whereby their historic function is readily appreciated as part of a well-known and well used walking route.

*The Setting of the Asset and its Contribution to its Significance.*

- 4.54 The setting of the assets also makes a substantial contribution to their significance, although less than that made by their physical fabric.
- 4.55 The group is situated at the edge of the Afon Elan, with the two buildings set on levelled platforms at the riverside, supported by stone revetment walls. The bridge spans the river between the two buildings. In this regard, much like the dam, the river itself forms a key aspect of their setting, both in terms of its functional association with the working of the power station and its consistent presence, both visually and in terms of its noise, in the experience of the structures from adjacent spaces. As such the river is a part of the setting of the assets that make a high contribution to their significance.

- 4.56 The group also has a strong association with the dam, being physically connected to it via the revetment wall and directly associated with it in terms of function. Furthermore, the dam is a large and imposing presence in any view west from the bridge or by the buildings. Together the dam and the three assets form a strongly integrated group of heritage assets and the dam makes a high contribution to the significance of the three assets.
- 4.57 More widely, the three assets sit within the steep sided Elan Valley. To the south and north of the buildings the land rises steeply up to rough, rocky slopes. The south side of the valley is densely wooded and the southern building is situated partially within woodland. As such, it is slightly less visually prominent than that on the north bank which has a more open setting.
- 4.58 Whilst not as noticeable as the dam, the collection of assets is a prominent feature of the west end of the valley, especially the bridge which is prominent as it spans the river. In this regard the group of designated assets can be experienced and appreciated from the slopes above (**Images EDP A1.3** and **A1.10**) to the north and from any elevated vantage point on the north side of the valley up to c.400m to the east (**Image EDP A1.11**).
- 4.59 From the valley bottom, the bridge and northernmost building can be experienced in views westwards from the Visitor Centre building c.230m away (**Image EDP A1.5**). However, such views are partially screened by intervening features of the landscape such as trees, signage and the structures associated with the children's play area. From further to the east, the Visitor Centre building and its associated landscaping, comprising trees, signage and parked cars, generally screen views and the asset cannot be readily experienced.
- 4.60 As such, the assets, with their stone and slate finish, complement the appearance of the rocky slopes of the wider valley landscape in which they are set, and, in this regard the valley, inasmuch as the assets can be seen, forms a part of their setting that makes a low positive contribution to their significance. The valley bottom offers less of an extensive perspective on the assets and the experience of them diminishes visually from around the western end of the Visitor Centre building. In this regard, the spaces in the valley bottom around the western end of the Visitor Centre building make only a very low positive contribution to their significance. Beyond the Visitor Centre building to the east the assets cannot be experienced, and this part of the valley does not form a part of their setting.

*The Site and its Relationship to the Assets Setting.*

- 4.61 The western edge of the site is located c.180m to the east of the assets, with the Visitor Centre building c.230m from them. Only the western part of the site is within the setting of the listed group, being a location from where they can be experienced. The Visitor Centre building is also experienced in conjunction with the group, notably from elevated vantage points in views eastwards from the dam (**Image EDP A1.3**), or otherwise in views looking west (**Image EDP A1.11**), from further east along the valley. It is also experienced from the group in views from the bridge (**Image EDP A1.12**).
- 4.62 The architecture of the Visitor Centre building is less decorative and, unlike the power station buildings, has been subject to modern extension and modification which is particularly notable on its western side, facing towards the buildings. As for the dam, it shares a degree of visual cohesion with the listed group through its use of rock-faced stone



in its construction and its slate roof. It also has a historical functional association with the power station buildings, with the group having a shared industrial purpose.

- 4.63 However, as for the dam, it is the rear of the Visitor Centre building that faces towards the buildings and at this end of the building a modern flat roofed extension and adjacent modern features, such as a fenced bin store, are elements of the view from the dam, which detract from the character of the historic part of the Visitor Centre building. As such, whilst the original part of the building is an element of the setting of the three assets it only makes a very low positive contribution to their significance.
- 4.64 Also, and in common with the dam, the overly modern structures in the valley around the Visitor Centre, such as the children's play area and the car parks, serve to distract from an appreciation of the integrity of the group of buildings in the valley and, in the case of the playground, screen views between the Visitor Centre building and the three assets further west. As such, these modern elements of the valley scene represent negative aspects of the setting of the group which detract from its significance to a very low degree.

### **Elan Village Conservation Area**

#### *Description and Special Interest*

- 4.65 The conservation area (located c.33m to the north-east of the site at its nearest point) was designated in 1968 and covers the historic extent of Elan Village. There is no Appraisal or Management Plan for the conservation area, although information on the village and its history is available via the HER, Heneb's web pages and the Powys Digital History Project.
- 4.66 The conservation area incorporates the extent of the planned settlement at Elan Village and contains 16 Grade II listed buildings, as well as a number of other historic assets identified on the HER.
- 4.67 The conservation area has notable historical interest. The village was established as a temporary 'navvies' settlement in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to provide accommodation for workers engaged in the damming of the Elan Valley, such that the site of the dams was fairly remote from existing settlements. The original village comprised rows of wooden huts and also included an accident hospital, public hall, school, shop and other facilities. The village was sited on the south bank of the valley c.700-800m north-east of the Caban Coch Dam, deliberately positioned away from the road, which ran along the north side, so as to allow restricted access to the village, which was for workers only.
- 4.68 Access was via a suspension bridge. The present bridge (**Image EDP A1.13**) which crosses the river at the western edge of the conservation area is not original and instead it is the third replacement. The older bridge is entirely closed off with access via a modern bridge located immediately adjacent to it. A doss house was located adjacent to the bridge by the road (which is no longer extant) where new workers had to be quarantined for a week before being allowed to settle in the village, a precaution in respect of avoiding outbreaks of disease within the community.
- 4.69 In the late 1910s the workers' huts were demolished and replaced with permanent buildings, which are those present today (**Images EDP A1.14** and **A1.15**). These were designed to accommodate a workforce concerned with the maintenance of the dam, power

stations and other facilities. The buildings were built in an Arts and Craft style utilising local stone and slate and included an estate office, school and shop as well as houses. Heneb describe how the architecture is not in respect of local tradition, with the village instead reflecting a picturesque approach which was carefully composed and integrated open spaces and planting as part of its overall design. In this way its domestic, artful approach contrasted with the robust and heavy architecture of the dams and their related buildings to the west.

4.70 As such the special interest of the conservation area is defined by:

- The history of the village, which relates to the wider history of development in the Elan Valley and the dams;
- The built heritage comprising 16 listed buildings, built as an integrated group in an Arts and Crafts style using local materials; and
- The spacious layout of the settlement on the south bank of the river and integration of open, riverside spaces, trees and shrubs into the experience of the buildings.

*The Conservation Area's Setting and its Contribution to its Character and Appearance Including that Made by the Site*

4.71 The conservation area includes open spaces around the village buildings, as well as a stream course that runs from the south through a steep sided valley that cuts through the steep slopes of the wider Elan Valley. Woodland proliferates on the southern slopes, which are partially within the conservation area, and further woodland lies to the immediate west. To the north is the Elan River, which is also lined by trees, beyond which on the northern side of the valley are modern houses, which are also part of Elan Village albeit not part of the planned settlement of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

4.72 The proliferation of trees encloses the open spaces and buildings within the village. The core of the settlement, although spacious and open, feels somewhat isolated from the wider landscape, emphasised by the conformity and integrity of its architecture.

4.73 On the western edge of the conservation area are the two bridges described above and, on the opposite side of the river, outside of the conservation area, are three small buildings (**Image EDP A1.16**) all which are of an early 20<sup>th</sup> century date and sit adjacent to the gated entrance to the Visitor Centre complex, which represents the far eastern extent of the site (approximately 33m from the edge of the conservation area).

4.74 The buildings have a historical association with the village and form a part of its setting that makes a low positive contribution to its character and appearance. However, the village is very distinctly separated from the roadside and modern entrance to the Visitor Centre, both by the river and bridges and by mature trees which form a barrier that delineates and entirely screens the village. As such, from the edge of the conservation area, views (**Image EDP A1.17**) out towards the site are screened by trees and, in summer months it is not possible to see the site or Visitor Centre building.

4.75 In winter it is likely that a limited view might be possible through the trees towards the site, however, the eastern parts of the site area are distinctly modern, with a visitor car park



being the predominant feature on its eastern side. The Visitor Centre building, which is located c.260m south-west of the conservation area, would be set back behind the car parks as well as further trees, fences and signage and so would be at most heavily screened and distant in the view. Furthermore, there is an extent of c.180m of open grassed spaces and trees (the former location of the timber hospital) in the western part of the conservation area which separates its historic buildings from the edge.

- 4.76 Consequently, views from the western edge of the conservation area are not from part of it that contains any listed building, which represent the most notable features that contribute to its special interest. Further to the north-east, from the historic buildings, the view to the south-west (**Image EDP A1.18**) towards the site, given the distance and proliferation of trees in between, does not allow for any appreciation of the site, in conjunction with the listed buildings and their setting, even in the winter months.
- 4.77 It is concluded that the site and Visitor Centre building, whilst forming part of the wider setting of the conservation area, are not part of the experience of its key areas of special interest and have no relevance to an appreciation of the aesthetic quality of its buildings. The Visitor Centre building, as a former workshop, does have a historical, functional association with the village. However, this is now entirely historical, due to the modern use of the Visitor Centre building, and, as described, cannot easily be appreciated in the landscape due to the enclosed nature of the village and distance between it and the building. As such the Visitor Centre building does relate to the historical interest of the conservation area but, on account of its lack of presence in its setting, makes only a very low contribution to its significance.

### **THE ELAN VALLEY LANDSCAPE OF OUTSTANDING HISTORIC INTEREST**

- 4.78 The site is located within the Elan Valley Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest (EVLOHI). Specifically, it is located entirely within Historic Landscape Character Area (HLCA) Elan Valley Reservoirs (HLCA 1131). The extent of the EVLOHI and the HLCA that it comprises are shown on **Plan EDP 2**.
- 4.79 Overall Heneb characterise the ‘essential historic landscape themes’ of the EVLOHI as:
- An extensive area of upland plateau heavily dissected by the deeply incised valleys of the Elan and Claerwen rivers;
  - A landscape that shows ‘human endeavour on a grand scale’ through the major water management engineering projects in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries that created large reservoirs;
  - The preservation through ongoing management of the elements of the water management system including dams, bridges, revetment walls, roads and buildings including the planned settlement at Elan Village.
  - Due to the focus on water management, the lack of large-scale upland agriculture such as forestry;

- The preservation, on the upland areas around the reservoirs, of archaeological features including prehistoric cairns and standing stones, a Roman marching camp, remains of medieval granges of the Cistercian Abbey at Strata Florida and post-medieval farmsteads and mining sites; and
- An association with the poet Percy Shelley who wrote about the area.

4.80 The Elan Valley Reservoirs HLCA (1131) is described by Heneb as comprising:

*“Diverse landscape within, around and below the Victorian and Edwardian reservoir scheme, including dams, reservoirs and ancillary structures, remains of features associated with construction, the flooded landscape in the valley bottoms exposed periodically when the water level is low, together with conifer plantations, remnant natural and semi-natural broadleaved woodland, fields and farms around the valley sides.”*

4.81 The ‘key historic landscape characteristics’ are described by Heneb and summarised below as:

- The reservoir scheme and built elements associated with the construction of the reservoirs;
- The distinct civic architecture of the dams and other features related to the reservoirs which has unifying effect on the scheme;
- The picturesque quality of views across the reservoirs enhanced by the architecture and by woodlands planted around the edge of the reservoirs;
- The focal point of the scheme at the confluence of the Elan and Claerwen valleys where several notable architectural features are located;
- Remnants in the landscape related to construction, including the quarry above Caban Coch dam; and
- Archaeological remains of the prehistoric and medieval eras in the valley bottoms including in submerged areas.

#### **The Site in Relation to the Characteristics of the HLCA and Wider EVLOHI**

4.82 The site represents only a very small part of HLCA 1131, as is apparent on **Plan EDP 2**. It includes the Visitor Centre building, which (as described) is partially a former workshop used for railway engine maintenance associated with the construction of the dams. As such the Visitor Centre building does partially represent one of the built elements associated with the construction of the dams.

4.83 The building also, in its material finish using rock-faced stone and slate, is coherent with the grander architecture of the hydroelectric power station buildings to the west and the Caban Coch Dam. However, it is much more simplistic and lacks the grandeur and aesthetic detailing that characterises the larger structures and which defines the look of the ‘Birmingham Baroque’.

- 4.84 In this regard the building represents a very minor element related to the construction of the reservoir scheme in the wider HLCA. Its contribution to the HLCA's historic character is diminished by its modern treatment, with modern extensions, changes to doors, entrances and windows having reduced the degree to which the building's historic character is preserved. In this regard the contribution made by the building to the HLCA's historic character is very low. When assessed in relation to the entirety of the EVLOHI taken altogether as a whole, this contribution is extremely low indeed.
- 4.85 The wider site is largely modern in respect of its roads, car park, landscaped open spaces and play areas. Due to this modern character, the wider site makes no contribution to the historic character of the HLCA. In fact, as described above, the presence of the play area to the west of the Visitor Centre building and the roads and car parks which surround it, reduces the degree to which the architectural cohesion of the built elements in the adjacent valley can be seen and thus also diminishes slightly the integrity of the historic landscape in this small part of the HLCA.

### **NON-DESIGNATED HERITAGE ASSETS**

- 4.86 The site contains a single recorded non-designated historic asset; the Visitor Centre building. This asset is described below and also marked on **Plan EDP 3**.
- 4.87 The site also contains a piece of machinery (**Image EDP A1.19**), a hydro-electric turbine which was one of two installed in the power station buildings between 1952 and 1995. The turbine is no longer *in situ* and is displayed for public appreciation close to the front entrance of the Visitor Centre building. The turbine is a heritage asset of low significance mainly on account of its historical value in relation to the history of electricity generation in the Elan Valley.

### **Elan Valley Visitor Centre building**

- 4.88 Cadw (Pers. Comm. June 2024) have confirmed that the visitor centre building is not a listed building. Cadw did have the building identified on their online access Cof Cymru as a listed building, but an enquiry established that this was erroneous and in fact a duplication of the record associated with the hydroelectric power stations.
- 4.89 The building is described by both the HER and the RCAHMW. The HER description reads thus, with the RCAHMW description being of identical wording:
- “Stone built complex, built post 1905. Formerly workshops, including smithies. Now used as Elan Valley Visitor Centre and Elan Valley Rangers offices (RSJ 2000) On the floor of the Elan Valley, below the Caban Coch dam.”*
- 4.90 The relevant dates of the different sections of building are shown on **Plan EDP 3** and it should be consulted alongside the following paragraphs.
- 4.91 The building (**Images EDP A1.20 – A1.29**) was closely related to the operation of the Elan Valley Railway, which was one of the earliest endeavours of the reservoir project. Heneb describe how the railway was constructed by the Birmingham Corporation and with the first section a three mile spur from Rhayader Junction to a depot below the site of the

Caban-Coch Dam that included “a cement cooling shed, general stores, coal depot, workshops for carpenters, smiths, fitters and waggon builders, and sawmills”.

- 4.92 Whilst the building originally functioned as a workshop, it is not shown on a historic map dated 1905 (**Plan EDP 5**) which shows the Caban Coch Dam under construction and railway infrastructure in place. This suggests that either the building post-dates the survey for this map or that it was mistakenly not depicted. It may be that the building replaced temporary wooden structures which were initially used for the functions described above during the construction period. In this way the building would have become a permanent workshop for the railway in its operational phase following the same pattern as at Elan Village, where wooden workers’ huts utilised during construction were replaced with more permanent stone buildings built for the maintenance workers.
- 4.93 A copy of a building plan was seen (**Image EDP A1.32** and transcribed at **Plan EDP 4:** courtesy of Michael Booth Elan Valley Visitor Centre Manager). The plan is undated but is assumed to have been commissioned and prepared in the late 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- 4.94 The plan shows a building comprising a single main, east-west range with a perpendicular cross wing at the western end. Several small extensions include a storeroom to the west, a separate housing for a motor at the eastern end of the north elevation and a building housing coal shed and toilets to the south.
- 4.95 Functions shown on the plan accord with the use of the building as a workshop. The main range housed a large hall named as a fitting shop with a second room named as an engine house. These are the best-preserved parts of the building and are presently used as a gift shop and exhibition room (**Images EDP A1.26 – A1.27**). The original walls and roof are visible within these spaces and it can be seen that the layout closely mirrors that shown on the plan. The dividing brick wall between the two rooms is present, as is another between the main hall and ‘motor house’.
- 4.96 Entrances are also shown as per the present building. An original entrance on the north elevation of the engine house is still in use but with those on the eastern wall of the room now infilled. Two large entrances (presumably to accommodate railway engines or other large machines) were present on the eastern elevation of the building (**Image EDP A1.20**) which are also shown on the plan. These are now infilled and converted to windows although the outline of the entrances and their sandstone lintels are still evident.
- 4.97 The gift shop and exhibition room also contain remnants of the machinery that was once housed in them. These include shafts, drive wheels and pulleys that would have been used to power equipment and, in the gift shop, a set of rails with a movable set of pulleys and chains that would have been used to lift heavy parts.
- 4.98 Other parts of the building area now internally entirely modernised (**Image EDP A1.28**). The present entrance hall and restaurant were built in the 1990s and would have overbuilt the stores and toilets, although the modern toilets are in roughly the same location so may have been situated to utilise the existing plumbing. However, the original cross wing and store are still intact and adjoined to the modern building albeit with their interiors now fitted out as modern offices. Additionally, in the 1990s a mezzanine floor was added into the cross

wing, taking advantage of the height of the workshops. This floor now contains a series of offices.

- 4.99 The exterior of the building has been preserved to reflect its original appearance. The original part of the building can be seen to have been constructed as a series of stone piers built up with dressed stone blocks laid in random courses. This arrangement can also be seen as quoins at the building's corners. The piers can be seen to support the building's iron roof trusses (see **Image EDP A1.26**) and the iron rails that the movable pulleys run on. Brackets set into these structures can also be seen to have supported the shafts used to drive machinery.
- 4.100 Between the piers, in the bays formed by them, are set large windows, evidently designed to maximise light and air within the large workshop rooms (**Images EDP A1.21** and **A1.22**), with lower and upper walls constructed in rubble stone which is also rock-faced. The single-storey store-room extension at the western end of the building is also in rubble stone. The windows are underpinned by rows of dressed blocks with plain sandstone lintels above and they are set in multi-pane timber frames and have pivot openings. Whilst they reflect the original configuration and materials, the frames are modern although on some the ironmongery of the pivot mechanism (**Image EDP A1.29**) is probably original.
- 4.101 All of the doorways, where retained, have modern doors inserted into them and include timber panelled doors and uPVC units (**Image EDP A1.22**). In common with the windows, the doorways are all headed with plain sandstone lintels.
- 4.102 The roof has overhanging eaves and is hipped with a finish in Welsh slate. The original workshop rooms have ceiling vents which protrude in small dormers with louvered vents.
- 4.103 The southern part of the Visitor Centre building dates from the 1990s. The main entrance facing east (**Image EDP A1.25**) has a scale and finish that reflects that of the older part of the building. It utilises local stone and has a hipped slate roof but with brick and modern materials employed at the entrance. From the west, whilst the southern restaurant block retains the same complementary look, the gap between the older building and the newer part is infilled with a flat roofed section with an external wall (**Image EDP A1.24**). This rear elevation has a modern look contributing to a proliferation of modern structures to the west of the building at its rear (**Image EDP A1.23**).
- 4.104 The building has a sturdy, functional design, with its large fenestration and ventilation designed to let light and air into the workshops. As noted above, its large, former entrances were intended to facilitate access for large machines such as railway engines.
- 4.105 Aesthetically, the building's architecture reflects less the 'Birmingham Baroque' of the Caban Coch Dam and its associated power stations and more a plain, functional late Victorian style that has neo-Georgian influences, which is common to many industrial buildings of this era. It does accord with the appearance of the buildings to the west and those of Elan Village to the east, but only due to its similar height and massing and its use of local stone, with a rock-faced finish and Welsh slate as building materials.

### ***The Significance of the Visitor Centre Building***

- 4.106 As indicated above, the building is not statutorily listed and is therefore, in accordance with TAN 24, not 'nationally important'.
- 4.107 The building possesses a low degree of evidential value which is all concentrated in its original parts. This value is mainly related to its:
- Preserved external walls, roof and roof trusses;
  - Preserved layout in its former fitting shop and engine house; and
  - Preserved machinery in its former fitting shop and engine house.
- 4.108 These elements of the building demonstrate its original appearance and function, providing information on the logic that underpinned its construction, such that it was designed to function as a workshop.
- 4.109 The building also possesses a low degree of historical value in its association with the construction of the dams and other related elements in the Elan Valley, as well as with the Elan Railway and its function during the 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- 4.110 The building possesses a very low degree of aesthetic value in its use of rock-faced local stone and Welsh slate which present a robust and functional building with Neo-Georgian influences.
- 4.111 The building also as a low degree of communal value through its ongoing use as a Visitor centre which serves to present its history to the general public.
- 4.112 In conclusion, the building represents a historic asset of low significance.

### *The Setting of the Visitor Centre Building and its Contribution to its Significance.*

- 4.113 The setting of the Visitor Centre building also contributes to its significance but to a lesser degree than its physical fabric, i.e. to a very low degree.
- 4.114 The building's eastern elevations represent its frontage, and it is from this direction that it is best experienced (**Image EDP A1.31**). In a general sense the building is surrounded by modern landscaped elements including a large car park to the east, additional parking on its northern side and a turning circle to the west. The modern landscaping includes numerous small trees which filter views of the building from all directions.
- 4.115 To the west (**Image EDP A1.30**) the building is adjacent to a children's play area and a landscaped area with standing stones. The western end is the rear of the building with modern extensions and fencing experienced immediately adjacent to it and so the building's historic character is not as evident in the experience of it from the west.
- 4.116 More widely the building is set adjacent to the river and as described above, has a functional relationship with the other built elements the valley to the west. In this respect the dam and one of the hydroelectric buildings can be seen from the western end of the building albeit partially screened by the intervening play area.

- 4.117 In terms of its significance, the building is experienced as part of a modern landscaped area dominated by the presence of parked cars and moving traffic. Cars are present against the edge of its older elevations on its north side and to the east. The play area to the west partially screens the visual connection between the Visitor Centre building and the listed buildings to the west. Additionally, the fenced bin store and flat roofed modern extensions that are visible on the western side of the building detract from its material character and aesthetic value. As such, these elements of its setting are negative and detract from its significance to a very low degree.
- 4.118 A more positive experience is had from the east where the building is seen with trees in the foreground, the blue hydroelectric turbine and a modern statue dedicated to the dam builders. This general area and these features are a positive aspect of its setting that makes a very low positive contribution to its significance.
- 4.119 Also positive is the presence of the listed buildings to the west which are historically and functionally related to the Visitor Centre building and also make a very low positive contribution to its significance.



## Section 5 Impact Assessment

- 5.1 This part of the report assesses the potential impact of the Proposed Development on the significance of the historic assets discussed in **Section 4** above.
- 5.2 In this regard it either assesses direct physical effects or effects through change within the settings of the historic assets in accordance with Stage 3 of Cadw's guidance *Setting of Historic Assets in Wales* (Cadw, 2017).

### PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 5.3 As noted previously the proposed development has been revised since the pre-application submission with a development scheme that responds more holistically to the Visitor Centre building's heritage significance.
- 5.4 The Proposed Development is illustrated on the plans and drawings in the Pre-Application Design and Access Statement at **Appendix EDP 2** and in summary they comprise:
- Retention of existing roofs on the original parts of the workshop building;
  - Removal of the roof of the single-storey storeroom extension to the west;
  - Retention of the machinery exhibited within the workshop building;
  - Removal of the 1990s extensions other than the restaurant block;
  - Opening up of the original entrance to the building on its eastern elevation;
  - Construction of a modern single storey building to the west of the existing structure and entrance hall to the south, finished with timber and stone facades and with a patinated standing seam roof and external glass screens;
  - Construction of a single storey extension on the north side of the building;
  - Construction of an external glazed wall around the western end of the building;
  - Re-working of internal spaces but retention of the main workshop hall (gift shop) as an exhibition room and planetarium;
  - Use of a simple, stripped back internal architectural finish using materials that reflect those of the original building and emulating its functional, industrial style;
  - Externally, removal of the existing children play area to the west and construction of a new play area further to the north; and
  - Re-working of the road layout and parking arrangement including removal of the turning circle located to the north-west of the building.



- 5.5 Any impact(s) arising from the implementation of the Proposed Development on the historic assets described above will be identified and assessed in the paragraphs below.

### **DESIGNATED HISTORIC ASSETS**

- 5.6 There would be no direct effects on the significance of designated historic assets from the Proposed Development of the site.
- 5.7 Effects caused by change within the settings of designated historic assets are described below for each asset.

### **Grade II\* Listed Building Caban Coch Dam (Cadw Refs. 16202 and 24389)**

- 5.8 The Proposed Development would result in the adoption of a more modern look, particularly to the western end of the Visitor Centre building, with lower-level modern extension adjacent to its elevations. The resulting building would retain the original workshop within it, which, within the revised scheme would continue to be appreciable at its eastern end, at its entrance. The change would be greater than that caused by the extension of the 1990s on the southern side of the building, with the building moving further away from its original appearance.
- 5.9 As such, the historical and functional relationship between the building and the dam would be harder to appreciate in views from the dam along the valley, with the western side of the building becoming fronted by a projecting single storey extension with glass walls and external glass screens.
- 5.10 However, an appreciation of the older part of the building would not be entirely lost, as its upper parts at the western end of the building would be visible rising above the single storey extension, where their material finish would still be apparent. Furthermore, the modern extension would reference the older building in its use of stone and timber in its elevations.
- 5.11 It is also noteworthy that, at present, the western part of the building and the western part of the site are already characterised by modern development in the form of the flat roofed part of the modern extension and the restaurant building to the south, the fenced bin store and the presence of the children's play area and vehicle turning circle. As such the building is already compromised to a degree by modern development on the side that faces the dam.
- 5.12 Additionally, the proposed treatment of the wider site would involve the removal of the turning circle and the shifting and downsizing of the children's play area to the north-west. This would open up the area immediately south-west of the Visitor Centre building and facilitate a greater appreciation of the dam and the adjacent listed building in views to them. Conversely it would also mean that the modern form of the building would be clearly appreciable from the dam.
- 5.13 In conclusion, by reducing the legibility of the former workshop building in the landscape, there would be a very slight loss of the integrity of the historical association between the dam, the listed buildings and the Visitor Centre building. However, the existing Visitor Centre building as a structure that has already been modernised contributes to the dam's

significance to only a very low degree and it, and its material finish, would remain as a visible part of the landscape.

- 5.14 Combined with the demonstrable improvement to the presentation of the western end of the site; which would become more open and less cluttered with modern features and, importantly, devoid of traffic and parked cars; overall the positive aspects of the proposals in respect of the setting of the dam and its contribution to its significance would counterbalance the negative effect from the change to the building.
- 5.15 As such, overall, the Proposed Development would not result in any adverse impact on the significance of the dam.

**Grade II Listed Pair of Hydro-Electric Stations Below Caban-Coch Dam and Footbridge (Cadw Refs. 24391, 16203, 16205 and 24390)**

- 5.16 The assessment for the listed structures is similar to that for the dam above. The Visitor Centre building and the western part of the site are the only elements that lie within the setting of these buildings. As with the dam, the modernisation of the western end of the Visitor Centre building would result in it losing a degree of its legibility as an element of the historic environment and thus its historical association with the listed buildings will be harder to appreciate. However, it will not be entirely lost, with the older building still present and appreciable in the new configuration and the coherent material finish between the listed buildings and bridge and the former workshop will still be appreciable, albeit to a lesser degree than at present.
- 5.17 As with the dam, the proposed change to the western part of the site will make the area more open and remove the presence of vehicles. This will enable a greater appreciation of the listed buildings from the western part of the site and, in views eastwards along the valley, motor vehicles will have a lessened presence.
- 5.18 As such, the Proposed Development would result in a negative effect from the change proposed to the Visitor Centre building, however this would be counterbalanced by improvement to the open spaces between the listed structures and the Visitor Centre building. In conclusion, the Proposed Development would not result in any adverse impact on the significance of the three listed buildings.

**Elan Village Conservation Area**

- 5.19 As described in **Section 4**, there is no visual appreciation of the site or Visitor Centre building from the parts of the conservation area that retain its special interest. Its relevance to the historic interest of the conservation area is entirely based on a historical, functional association. Following development, this historical association would remain, and it would still be possible to understand that the Visitor Centre building once comprised a workshop that had an association with Elan Village and the lives of its residents.
- 5.20 The plans at **Appendix EDP 2** illustrate how development proposed along the access road which lies closest to the edge of the conservation area would result in only change to the layout of the existing access routes, with the adjacent small buildings retained outside of

the new scheme. As such, any experience of the site from the edge of the conservation area, such as in the winter months, would remain as it is at present.

- 5.21 Consequently, the Proposed Development would not result in any change to the setting of the conservation area that would affect its character or appearance and so therefore its special interest would be preserved.

### **THE ELAN VALLEY LANDSCAPE OF OUTSTANDING HISTORIC INTEREST**

- 5.22 Change to the EVLOHI resulting from the Proposed Development would be very localised. As such, it is not anticipated that any reference to the ASIDHOL2 assessment process should be required in order to assess what affect it might have.
- 5.23 In a general sense, the modernisation of the building would serve to reduce the degree to which it illustrates the historic character of the local landscape, with its legibility as a historic workshop building further reduced. However, as described in **Section 4**, the building has already been modernised to a degree and the site with its car parks and children's play area also has a modern character. Although some modifications to the layout of the site would occur, it would retain its modern character within the HLCA and so the previously assessed negative influence of this would remain.
- 5.24 As such, overall, the Proposed Development would result in a very slight negative detraction of the historic character of HLCA 1131 Elan Valley Reservoirs, translating as an extremely small and highly localised effect on the overall historic character of the EVLOHI.

### **NON-DESIGNATED HERITAGE ASSETS**

- 5.25 Effects on non-designated historic assets would include direct effects on their physical fabric. In this regard, effects are assessed against the blue hydro-electric turbine and the Visitor Centre building.
- 5.26 As described, the blue hydro-electric turbine is not *in situ*, being positioned at the entrance to the Visitor Centre building on public display.
- 5.27 The Proposed Development would result in its current location being built over. The structure would be moved to a new location where it would continue to be displayed to the public, although this is not presently referred to in the current iteration of the proposals.

#### **The Visitor Centre building**

- 5.28 The original part of the Visitor Centre building would be incorporated into the new building and so would the 1990s restaurant block. All other modern extensions would be removed and replaced with redesigned spaces.
- 5.29 Whilst the building would undoubtedly be changed by the new extensions the revised proposal has responded to its character, appearance and function. The original building will be retained in its entirety and thus will continue to be legible within the building. The

distinctly modern appearance of the proposed extensions to the west, north and south is such that the original part of the building will be easily determinable within the complex.

- 5.30 Furthermore, the eastern end of the original building would still face outwards, so that the approach to it from the east via the access routes from that direction would enable the original structure to still be prominent. An original engine entrance on the eastern elevation would be restored to its original appearance which would become an additional entrance to the building to access the planetarium.
- 5.31 The external walls of the original workshop building would be retained, becoming (in some locations) internal walls within the building. In this regard some of its windows (aside from to the east) would become split, with their upper parts protruding above the new roof and their lower parts forming part of the interior. The north-south cross wing, which is already of a modern design internally, would be entirely re-developed internally with new partitions.
- 5.32 The original storeroom extension to the west would be retained, but its roof would be removed, and it would be incorporated into the new single storey extensions that would surround the building to the west.
- 5.33 The east-west range would be largely kept to its existing design, with the current gift shop converted into an exhibition hall but with the current exhibition room divided into a room and a corridor. The eastern end of this hall would house the planetarium. The exhibition room would retain the machinery that is presently housed within it as part of the exhibition so the significance embodied in this would be retained.
- 5.34 The lower parts of some of its external walls would cease to be external, changing the way in which the building is understood when adjacent to them within the modern structure. However, the internal spaces in the new extensions would utilise a palette of materials that would reflect the industrial character of the original building, with a simple stripped back finish. As such the internal experience of the original building would be from spaces that complement its character and appearance.
- 5.35 The building's loss of features that contain evidential value would be minimal, comprising only the roof of the storeroom building. However, its architectural aesthetics would change, as would the ability to appreciate its historical interest.
- 5.36 Its original, historic form would become less readily distinguished in the new, proposed building, particularly when seen from the west. However, its upper parts would protrude above the new extensions, allowing an appreciation of the older building within the complex. Additionally, the split of some of the windows would result in a loss of the ability to appreciate their full extent and thus that the building had tall windows that functioned to let light and air into the workshops. As such, whilst the original building would remain legible in the complex, the ability to appreciate the building's original function would be obscured, to a minor degree. This effect is counteracted to a degree by the presentation of the eastern end of the building whereby its external appearance and function of its tall windows would still be appreciable and, the restoration of its external entrance would allow for a greater appreciation of its original function as a workshop for engine repairs.

- 5.37 Located in front of the original building, the new extensions to the north and west would be experienced in the foreground becoming the more prominent aspect of the visual experience from these directions such that the building would be seen as increasingly modern. However, it is highly apparent that the building is already modernised to a degree particularly when viewed from the west so the extensions would not introduce an entirely new form of change to the building.
- 5.38 As such, whilst the original historic part of the building would become partially obscured and less legible than it is at present, it would not be completely lost, continuing to be interpretable as historic workshop, particularly in views from the east where its original engine entrance would be reinstated. This consideration, which is informed by an appreciation and understanding of the building's heritage significance, would mitigate the loss of legibility from the development to a degree and ensures that the proposed design would only result in a low adverse effect to the building's heritage significance.

#### ***Change to the Setting of the Visitor Centre Building***

- 5.39 The original workshop building would be partially separated from its setting. In views from the west and north, the experience of the building would be as an upper part protruding from a lower height modern structure. However, the fenced bin store and flat roofed modern extensions would be removed to the west of the building which presently exert a very low negative influence on the building's significance.
- 5.40 The experience of the building from the east would be largely retained as it is at present with the eastern part of the original buildings still prominent. The modern foyer would be replaced by a revised modern building, thus resulting in little overall change.
- 5.41 Otherwise, the building would continue to be surrounded by modern landscaping, with cars present to the east and north as well as public open spaces and small trees. The area to the west would become more open, allowing for a greater ability to look out to the west towards the Caban Coch dam and hydroelectric power station buildings.
- 5.42 In all, although the building itself would become increasingly surrounded by modern structures, those that exert a negative influence on its significance would be removed and the experience of the building from the east would be retained as it is at present. The treatment of the wider site would result in a similar situation as at present, with updated modern landscaping replacing the existing modern environment.
- 5.43 The overall effect of change to setting on the asset's significance has been considered in conjunction with the direct assessment above such that it represents part of the assessed low negative effect on its significance.
- 5.44 The only exception would be the positive contribution identified from the historical association with the listed buildings and dam to the west, which would be retained as it does not rely on a visual experience.

## Section 6 Conclusion

- 6.1 This assessment has sought to identify the nature and magnitude of any impacts upon historic assets arising from the Proposed Development of the Elan Valley Visitor centre and the surrounding site.
- 6.2 The assessment concludes only a single direct impact upon the non-designated heritage asset comprising the original workshop part of the Visitor Centre building, which is assessed as being of low significance. The building would be subject to a low degree of harm to its low significance mainly on account of how it would become experienced partially, but increasingly within a modern building that would partially obscure its appreciation and historic function to a degree. In accordance with paragraph 6.1.9 of PPW 12, this impact on the significance of a historic asset should be fully considered in planning decision making.
- 6.3 The potential impact upon the significance of historic assets in the Site's wider vicinity has been assessed with reference to the 2017 Cadw guidance *The Setting of Historic Assets in Wales*. In this regard, it has considered the Proposed Development both of the Visitor Centre building and wider site holistically and, resultingly, has not assessed any negative effects to any of the designated heritage assets that have been considered.
- 6.4 The assessment has also considered the nature and magnitude of potential effects on the historic character of the EVLOHI, concluding that the Proposed Development would only result in a highly localised effect to HLCA 1131, Elan Valley Reservoirs. This would cause only a very slight negative detraction from the historic character of HLCA 1131 and thus translate into an extremely small and highly localised effect on the overall historic character of the EVLOHI.
- 6.5 The adverse effect assessed to the historic part of the Visitor Centre building is potentially in conflict with Objective LDP 13 of the Powys Local Development Plan 2011-2026 (LDP) which seeks to:
- “Protect, preserve and/or enhance the distinctive historic environment, heritage and cultural assets of Powys, in particular local assets that are not statutorily protected or designated under national legislation.”*
- 6.6 In this regard the significance of a 'local asset' of low significance would only partially be preserved. However, in accordance with Paragraph 6.1.27 of PPW 12 the adverse effect on the historic part of the Visitor Centre building, if deemed acceptable by the decision maker, could be addressed through recourse to a programme of historic building recording in order to secure and archive a record of the building ahead of its modification.
- 6.7 As such, given the lack of impacts upon designated historic assets, and with the potential for mitigation for the loss of significance at the non-designated building through recording, the assessment concludes that there is no reason in national planning policy why the presence of historic assets should hinder the positive determination of the planning application.

## **Section 7**

### **References**

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<https://www.cpat.org.uk/projects/longer/histland/elan/1139.htm>

Powys Digital History Project - <http://history.powys.org.uk/>

#### **HISTORIC PLANS AND MAPS**

Proposed Building plan for Elan Valley Workshop c. early 20<sup>th</sup> century

2<sup>nd</sup> Edition 1905 Ordnance Survey Map 1:2500

1953 Edition Ordnance Survey Map 10:560



## Appendix EDP 1 Images



**Image EDP A1.1:** View of Caban Coch Dam from the south-west and illustrating its appearance from the reservoir.



**Image EDP A1.2:** View of Caban Coch Dam from the bridge to the east and illustrating its appearance from the river valley bottom.





**Image EDP A1.3:** View to the east along the Elan Valley from the northern tower of the Caban Coch Dam. The view shows the hydro-electric power station buildings and bridge with the Visitor Centre building and its related infrastructure beyond. The similar use of materials between the buildings can be seen as can the contrast between the well-preserved historic buildings in the foreground and the modern development around the Visitor centre.



**Image EDP A1.4:** View towards Caban Coch Dam from c.400m to the east illustrating how it can be seen above intervening features due to its large size.





**Image EDP A1.5:** View towards Caban Coch Dam from the western part of the site illustrating how an appreciation of the dam is obscured by intervening trees and play equipment and how the vehicle turning circle is a prominent modern feature of the space.



**Image EDP A1.6:** View towards Caban Coch Dam from the western part of the site and illustrating how the view is heavily obscured by the intervening children's play area.





**Image EDP A1.7:** View of the Visitor Centre building from the top of the large spoil tip on the valley slopes to the north-west. This illustrates the appearance and plan of the building as well as the proliferation of modern structures and modern road layout in its close vicinity.



**Image EDP A1.8:** View from the bridge of the southernmost power station building illustrating its appearance.





**Image EDP A1.9:** View from the bridge of the northernmost power station building illustrating its appearance.



**Image EDP A1.10:** View from the top of the spoil tip to the north-east illustrating the close association between the power station buildings, the bridge and the Caban Coch Dam





**Image EDP A1.11:** View from the slopes to the north-east of the Visitor Centre building looking west down the valley and illustrating the setting of the Visitor Centre building in relation to that of the power station buildings, bridge and dam.



**Image EDP A1.12:** View towards the Visitor Centre building from the bridge between the power station buildings. This view illustrates how the material finish of the building accords with that of the listed elements and also how the modern features set around the Visitor Centre building are also prominent elements of the view.





**Image EDP A1.13:** View from the east illustrating the appearance of the two bridges that provide access to Elan Village at the western edge of the conservation area.



**Image EDP A1.14:** General view looking south-west within Elan Village illustrating some of its typical Arts and Crafts houses which are listed at Grade II as well as their setting.





**Image EDP A1.15:** General view looking north-east within Elan Village and illustrating the spacious nature of the conservation area as well as its enclosure with trees.



**Image EDP A1.16:** Two of the three small buildings located at the entrance to the enclosed Visitor Centre area.





**Image EDP A1.17:** View south-west looking towards the site illustrating how the extent of the view is curtailed by intervening mature trees.



**Image EDP A1.18:** View looking south-west towards the site from adjacent to the southernmost listed buildings in Elan Village illustrating how the view beyond the confines of the village is heavily screened by adjacent trees.





**Image EDP A1.19:** View illustrating the appearance of the hydro-electric turbine displayed outside the entrance to the Visitor Centre building



**Image EDP A1.20:** View of the eastern elevation of the Visitor Centre building showing where two original large entrances were located.





**Image EDP A1.21:** View of the south-east corner of the Visitor Centre building illustrating the large windows and roof vents.



**Image EDP A1.22:** View of part of the north elevation of the Visitor Centre building illustrating the fenestration and modern inserted door.





**Image EDP A1.23:** View of the western end of the Visitor Centre building illustrating its general appearance and the presence of modern fencing.

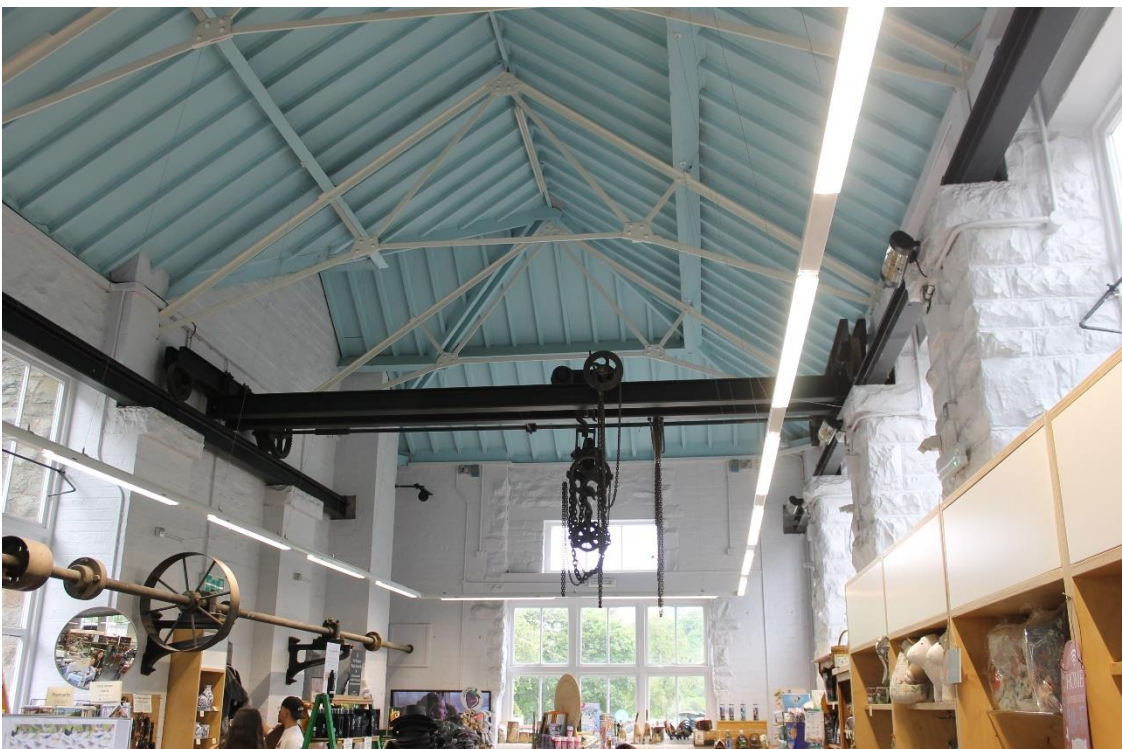


**Image EDP A1.24:** View of part of the western end of the Visitor Centre building illustrating the contrast between the older building to the left and modern extension to the right.





**Image EDP A1.25:** View of the eastern end of the Visitor Centre building, illustrating the frontage of the modern entrance hall and restaurant extension of the 1980s.



**Image EDP A1.26:** General view of the interior of the gift shop at the Visitor Centre, illustrating the preservation of machinery and the roof trusses.



**Image EDP A1.27:** General view of the interior of the museum at the Visitor Centre, illustrating the preservation of machinery.



**Image EDP A1.28:** General view of part of the interior in the western end of the building illustrating its modern internal division into offices.





**Image EDP A1.29:** Internal view of one of the windows showing the preserved ironmongery of the pivot mechanism.



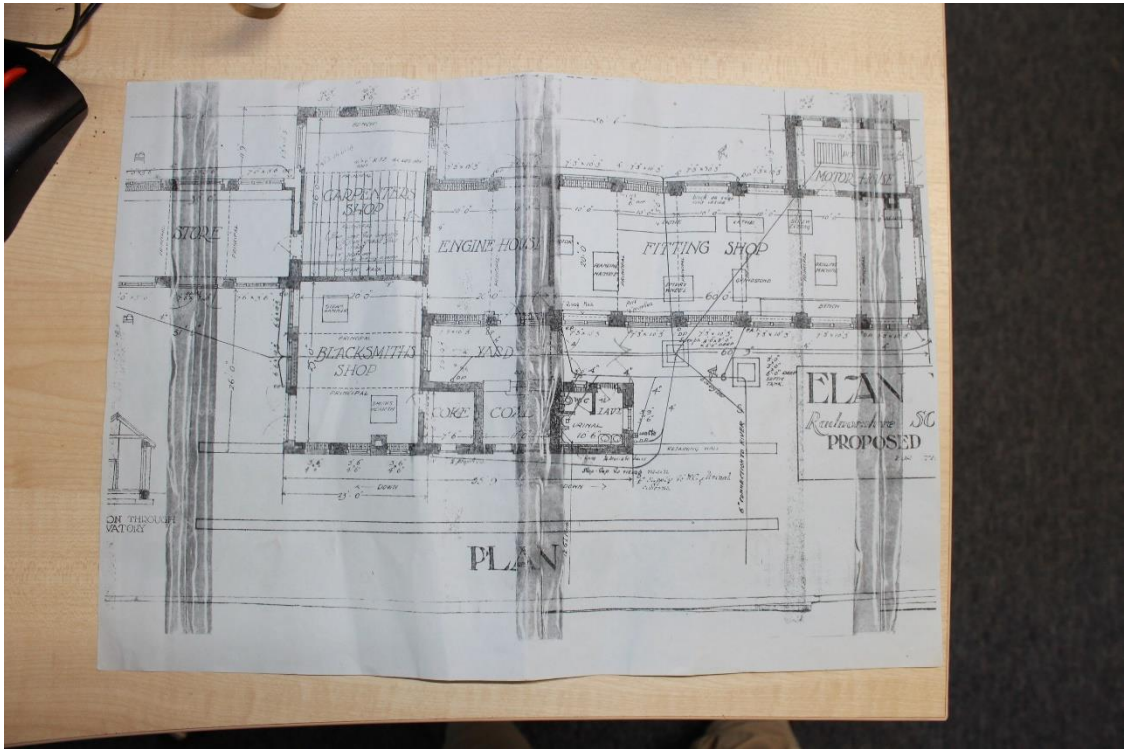


**Image EDP A1.30:** View of the Visitor Centre building from on top of the higher ground to the north-west illustrating its setting to the west.



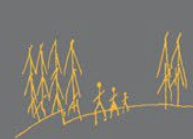
**Image EDP A1.31:** View looking north to the eastern end of the Visitor Centre building illustrating its setting.





**Image EDP A1.32:** Original copy of the proposed building plan for the workshop that became the Visitor Centre building.

## **Appendix EDP 2 Pre-Application Design and Access Statement**



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# Elan Valley Visitor Centre Re-development

## Pre-Application Design and Access Statement

*Hybrid New Build and Refurbished Existing Building*

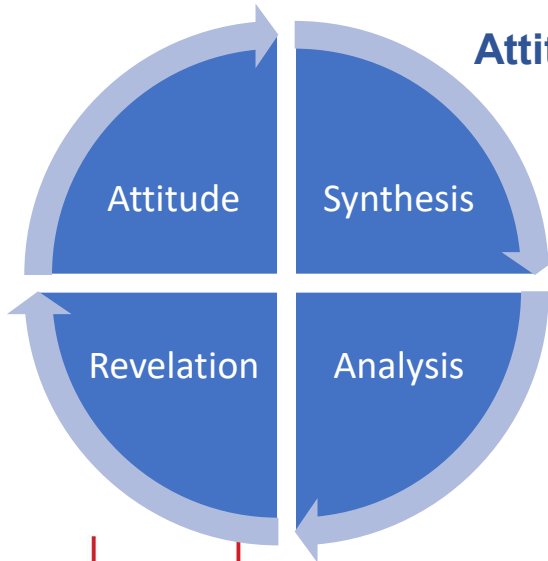
*\*\*\*the following information to be read in conjunction  
with the comprehensive Pre-Application Document*



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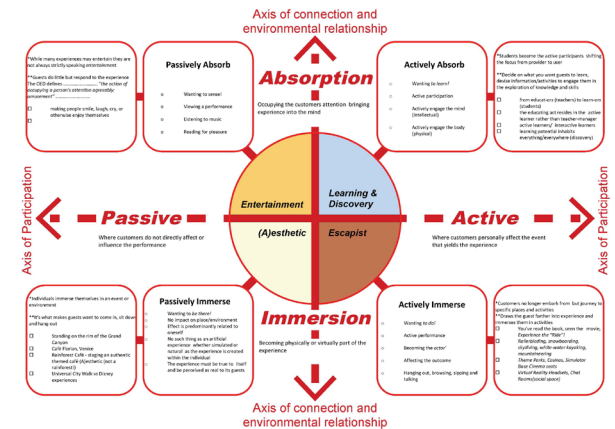
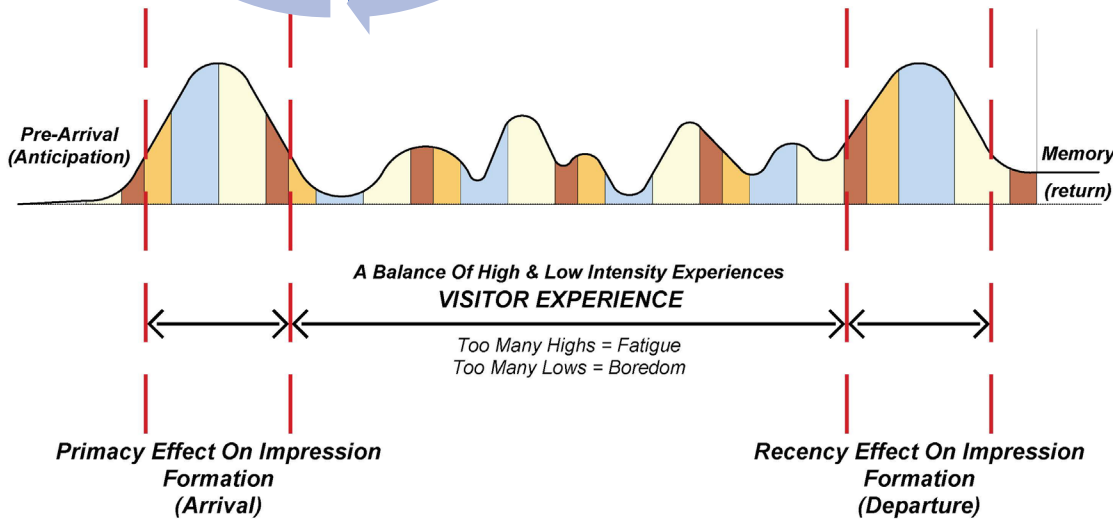
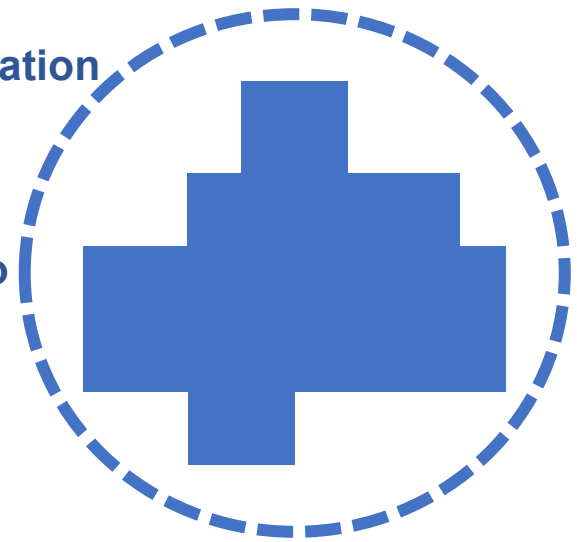
# Design Process

Attitude/Synthesis/Analysis/Revelation



Envelope : Internal Area Ratio

Visitor Experience Journey





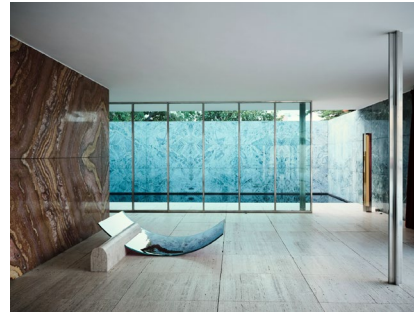


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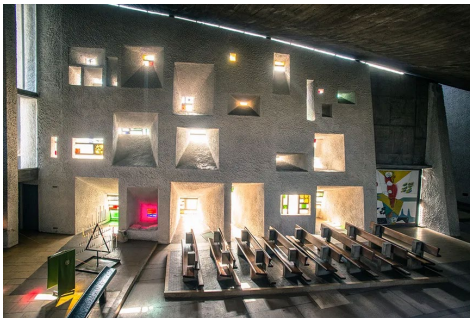
## Design Process – Attitude (Primary Precedent Studies)



Falling Water, Frank Lloyd Wright

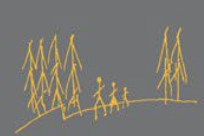


Barcelona Pavilion, Mies van der Rohe



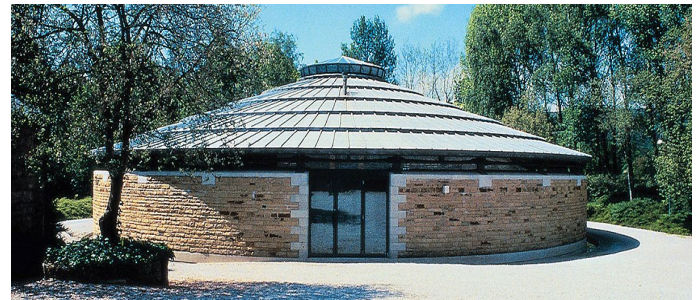
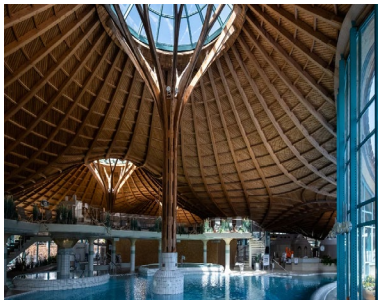
Ronchamp Chapel, Le Corbusier





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

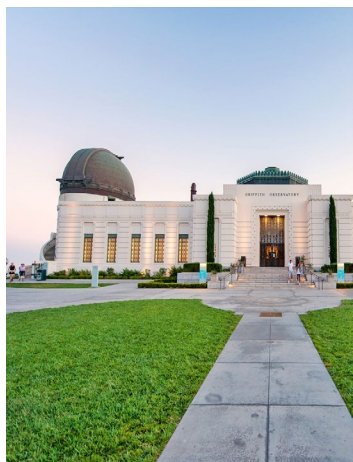






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## Design Process – Attitude (Supplementary Precedent Studies) (Planetarium/AV)

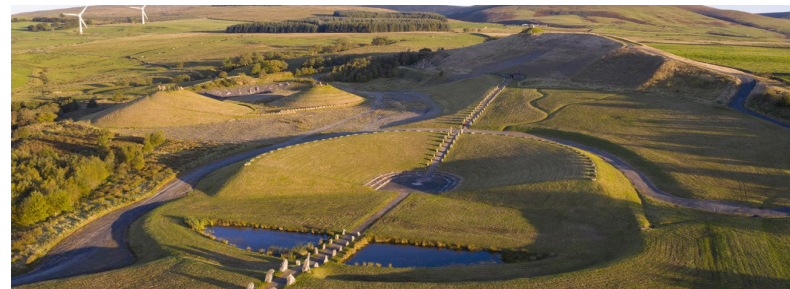
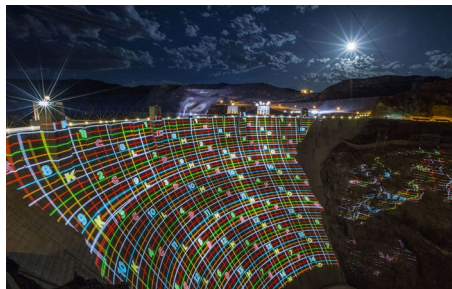
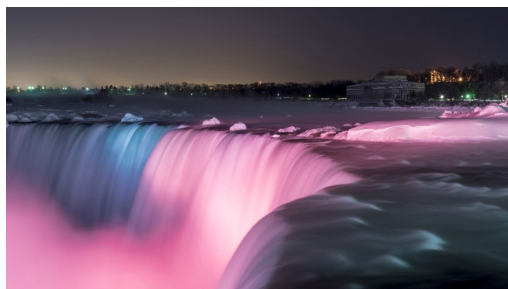
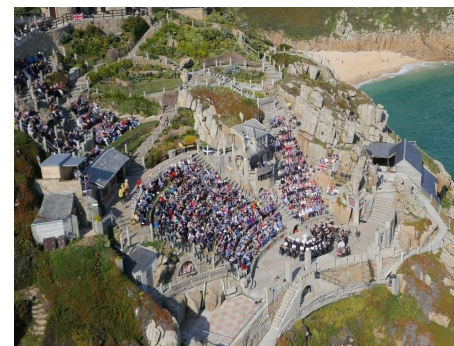
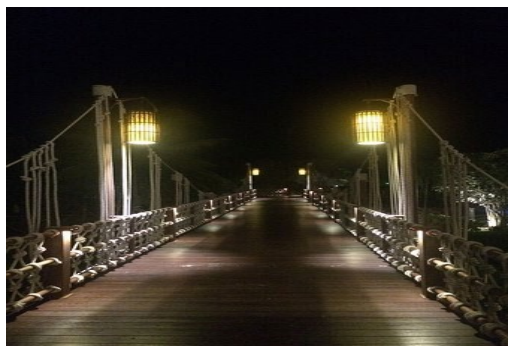




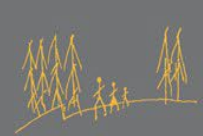


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## Design Process – Attitude (Supplementary Precedent Studies) (External Experiences)







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

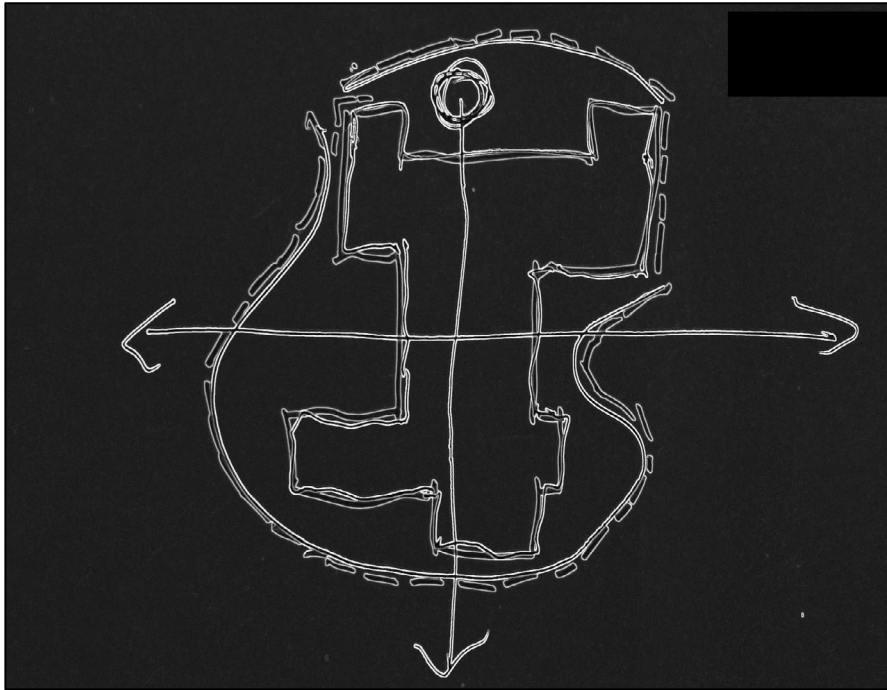






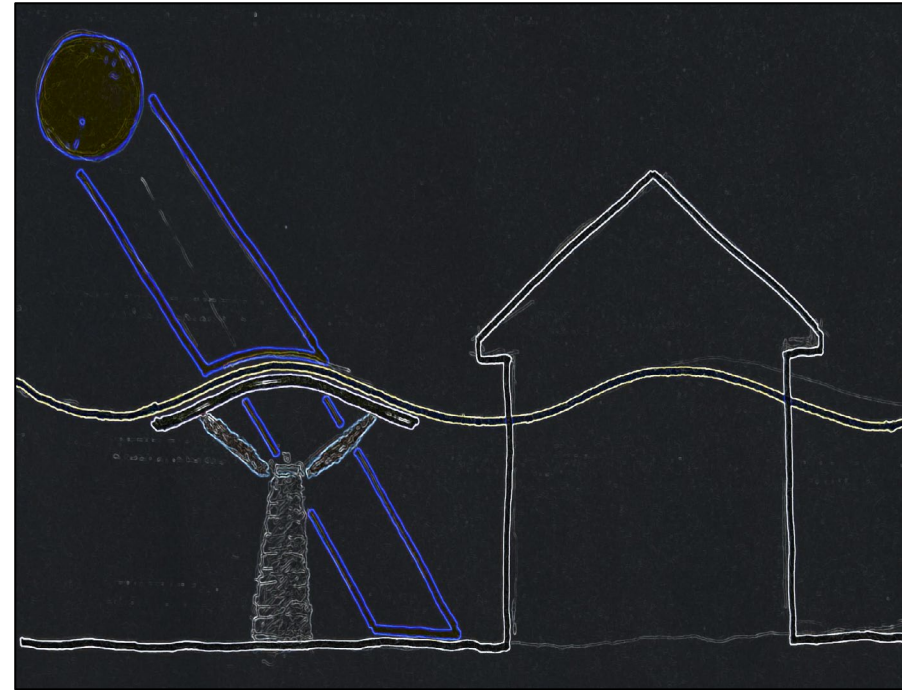
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## Design Process – Concept Approach



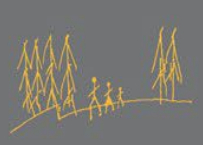
### Strategy

- 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)

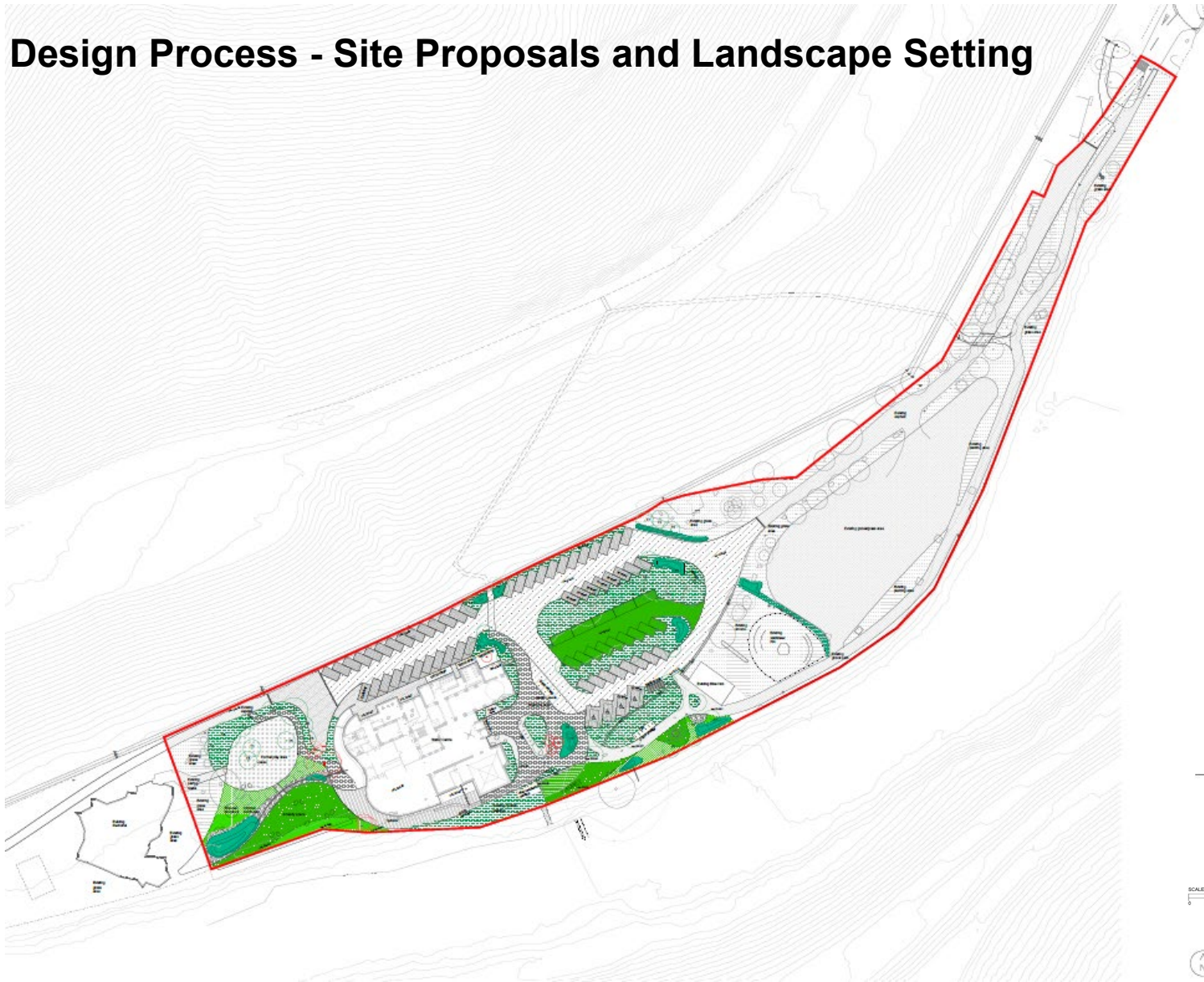






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## Design Process - Site Proposals and Landscape Setting

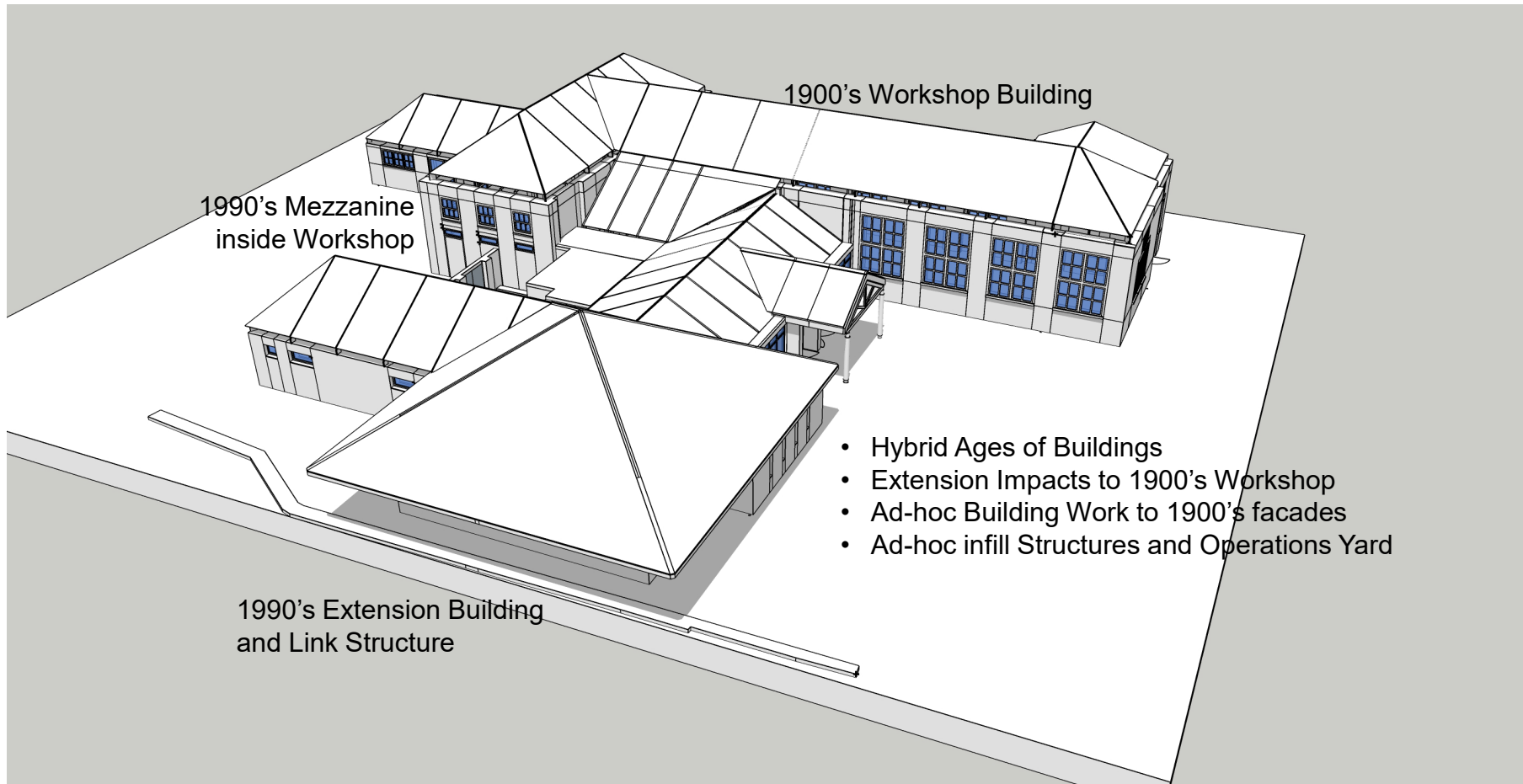






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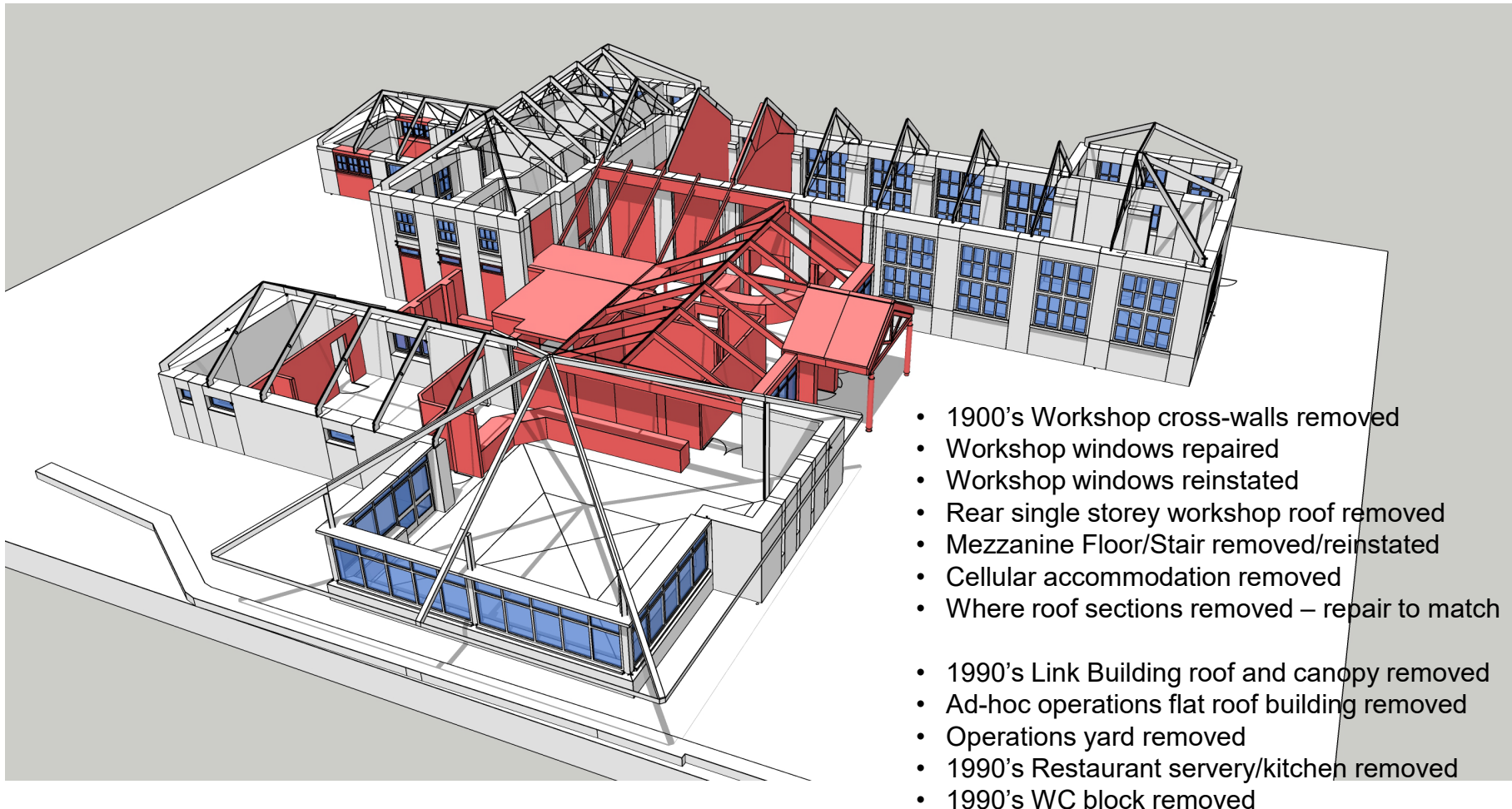
## Design Process - Existing Visitor Centre Building

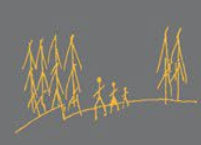




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## Design Process - Existing Visitor Centre Building (Remove/Repair Elements)

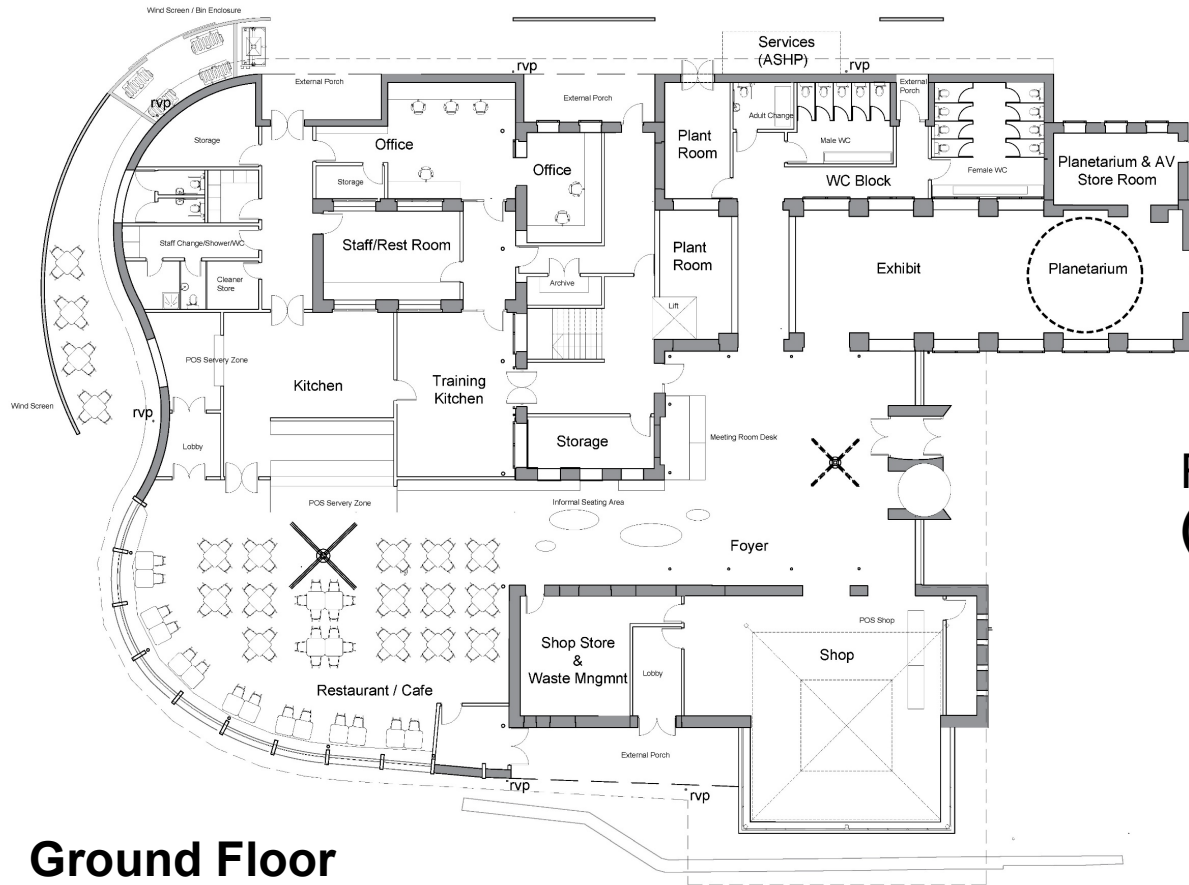




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# Design Process – Proposals

## (Ground Floor Plan)



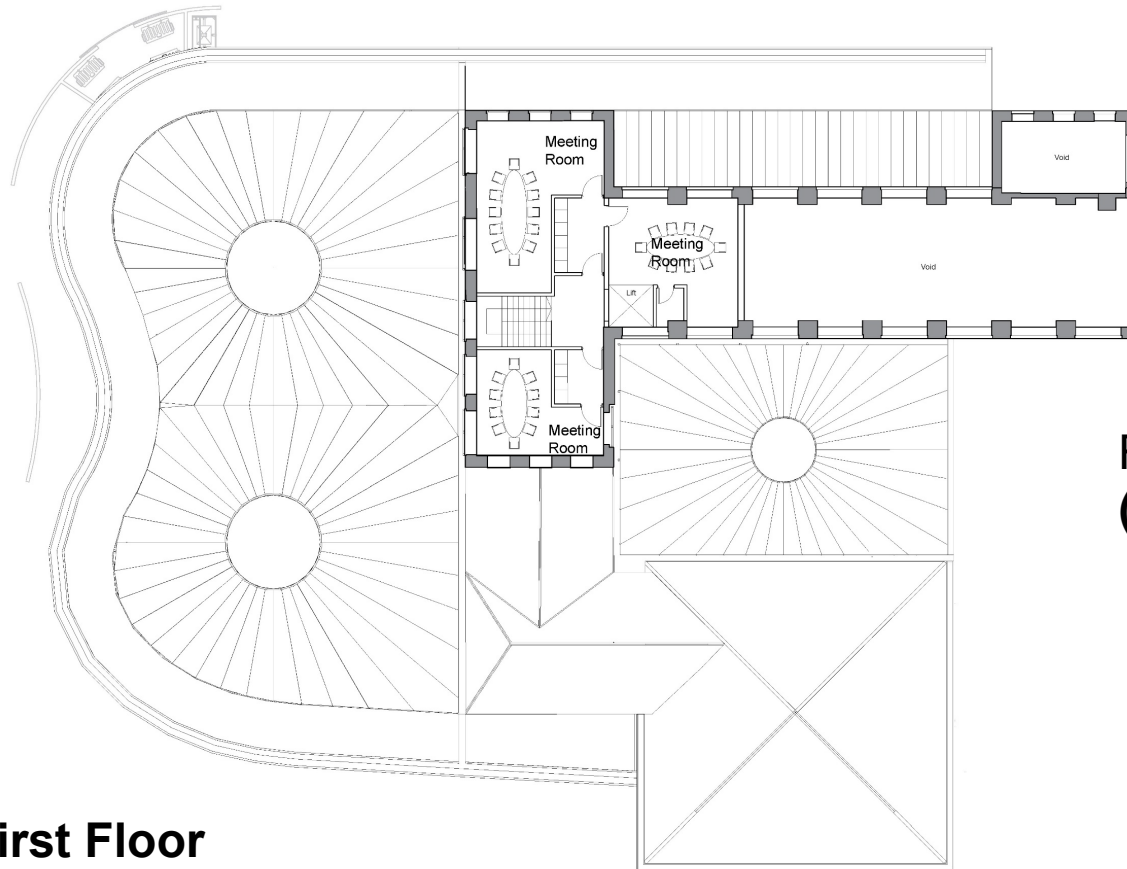
**Finish Ground Floor Level  
(+214.870)**

## Ground Floor



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# Design Process – Proposals (First Floor Plan)



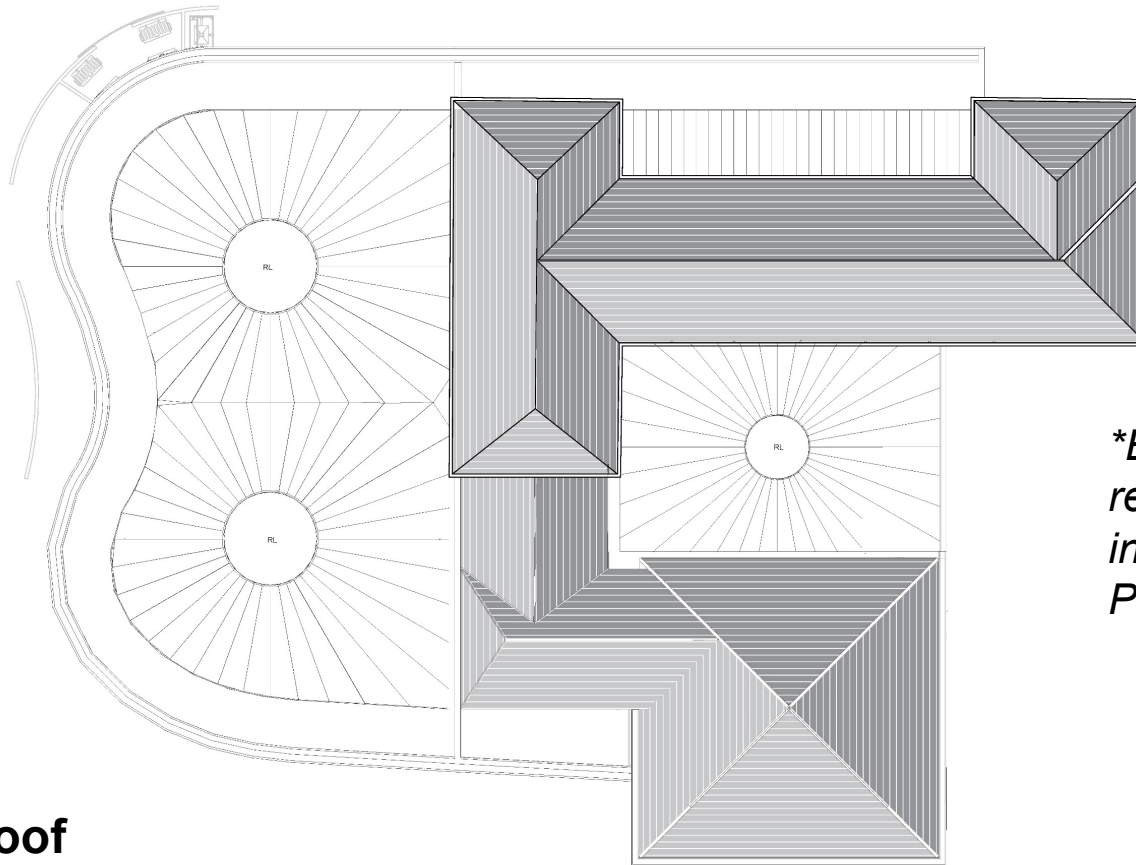
**Finish First Floor Level  
(+217.520)**

**First Floor**



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## Design Process – Proposals (Roof Plan)



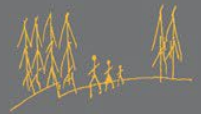
*\*Existing Roof Vents to be retained, repaired and incorporated into the MEP Proposals where relevant*

**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



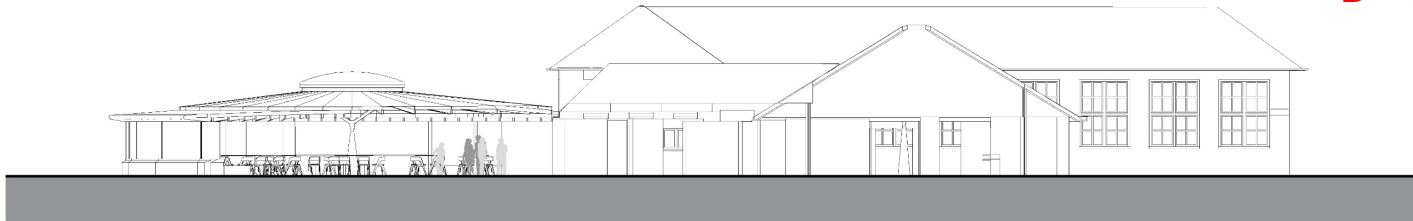
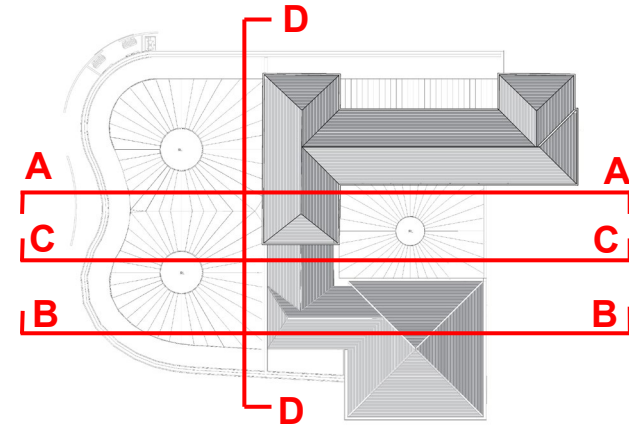
- Finish Ground Floor Level (+214.870)
- Finish First Floor Level (+217.520)
- Existing Roof Vents to be retained, repaired and incorporated into the MEP Proposals where relevant



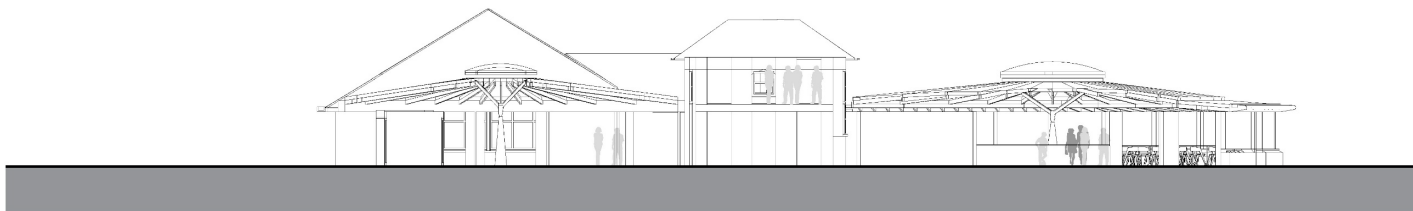
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## Design Process – Proposals (Sections)

- 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



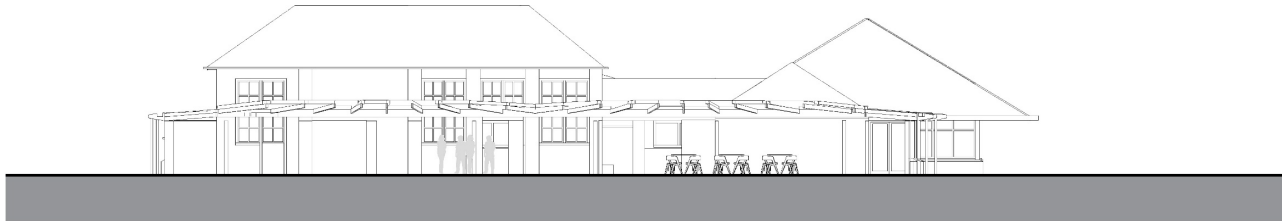
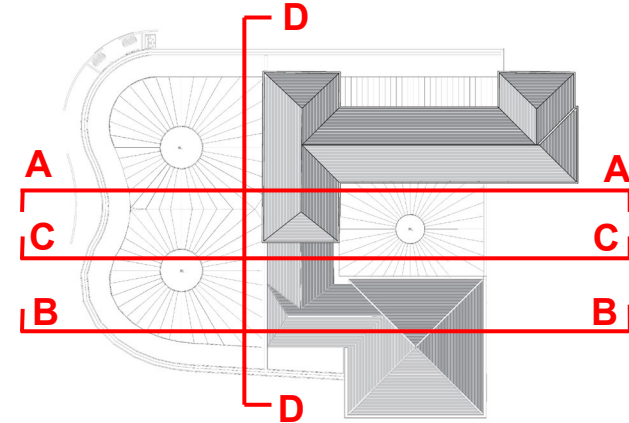




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## Design Process – Proposals (Sections)

- 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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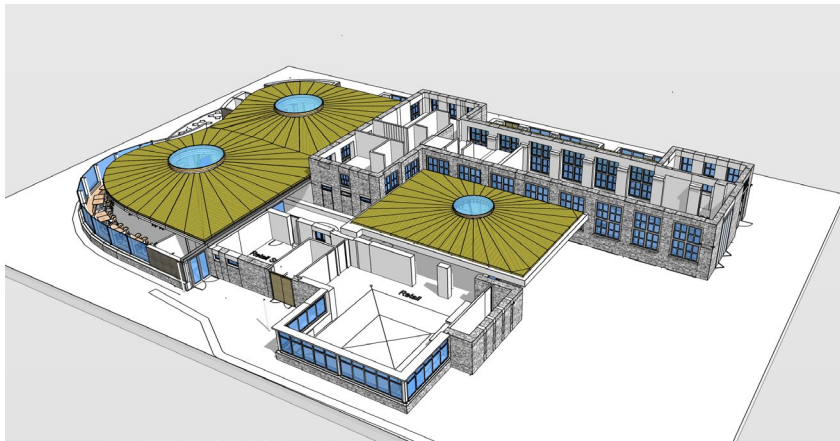
## Design Process – Proposals (Aerial View - Roof Sequence)



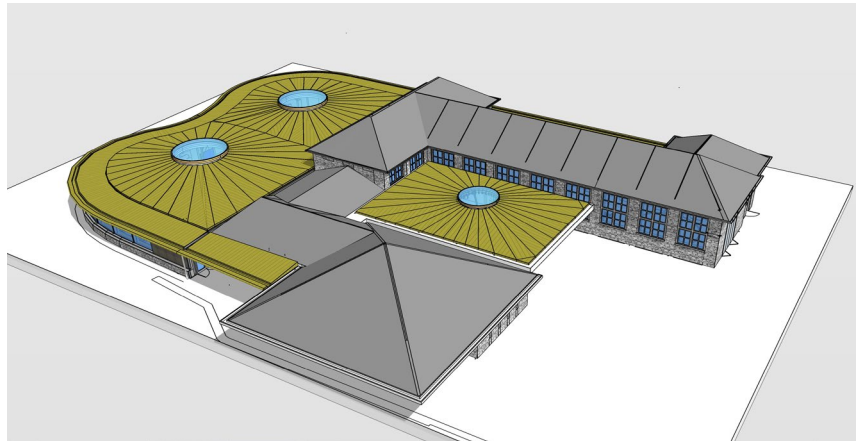
**Ground Floor and Roof Support Trees**



**First Floor Added**

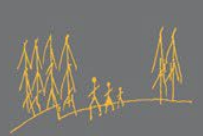


**Proposed Roof Added**



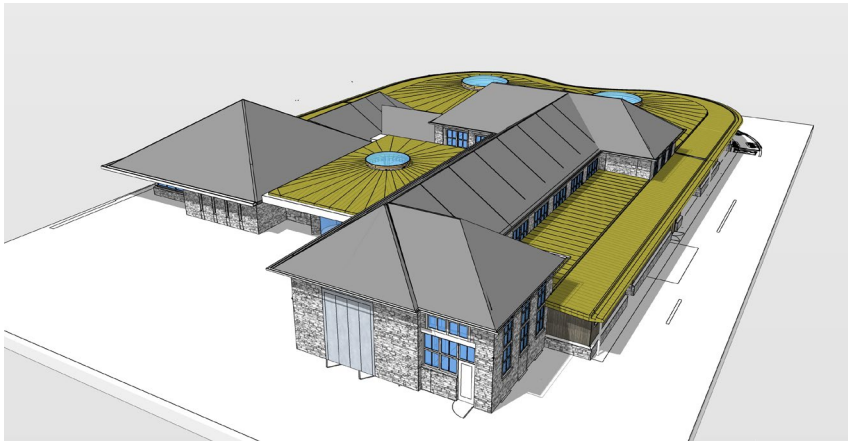
**Existing Retained Roofs and Link Roof Added**



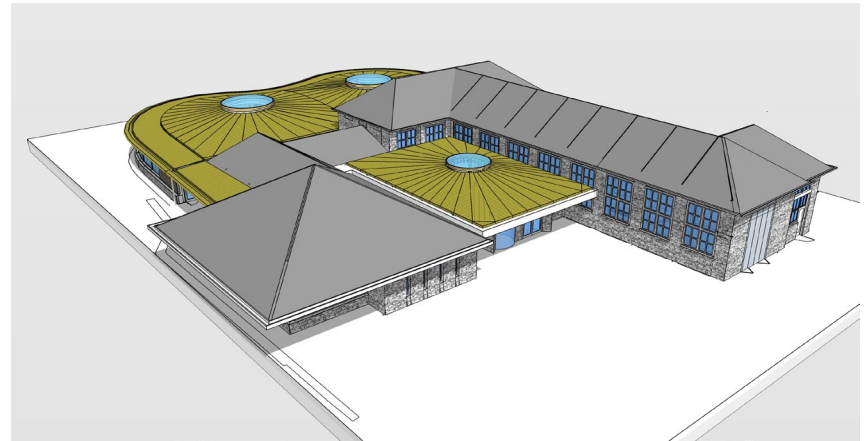


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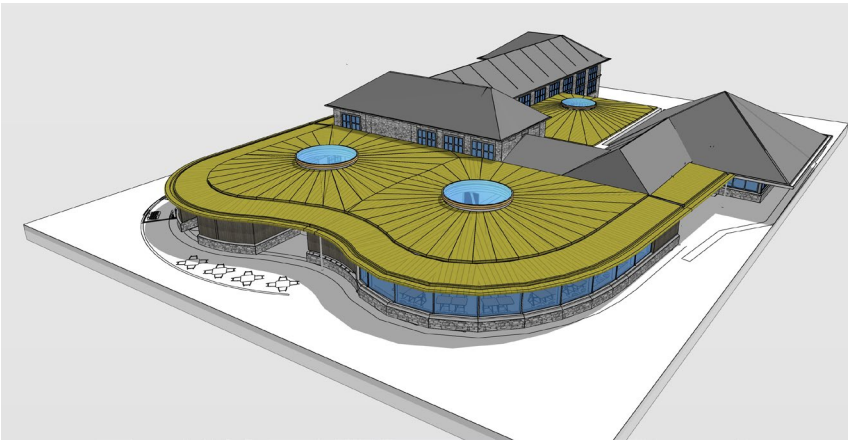
## Design Process – Proposals (Aerial View from Primary Vantage Points)



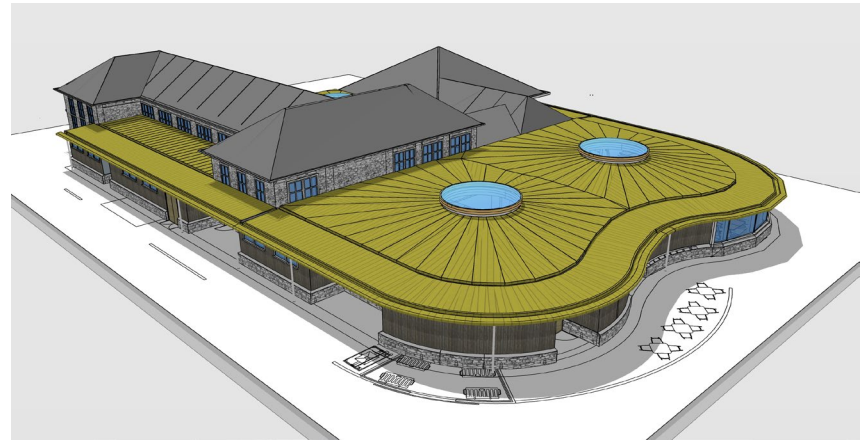
**View from North-East**



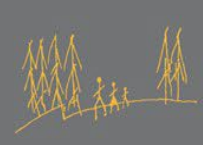
**View from South-East**



**View from South-West**

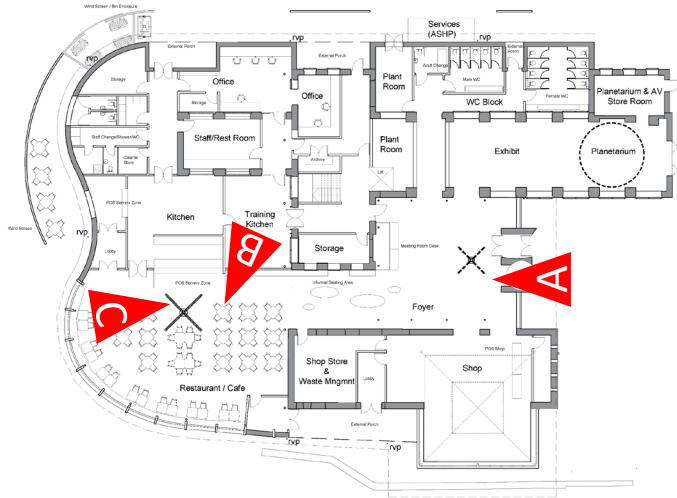


**View from North-West**

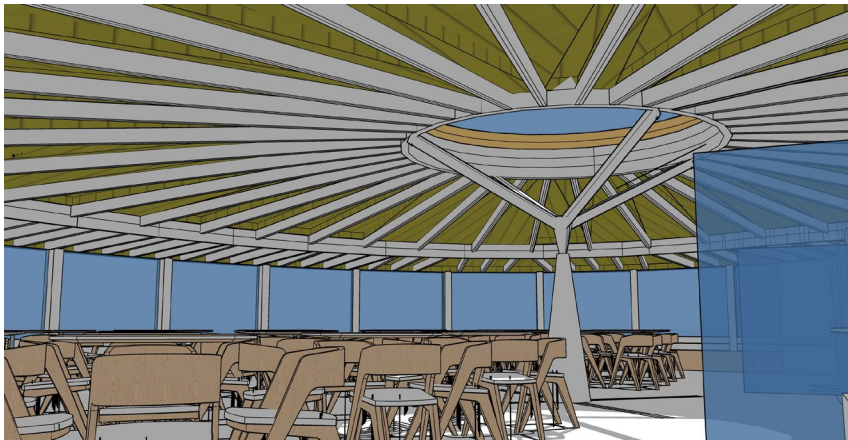


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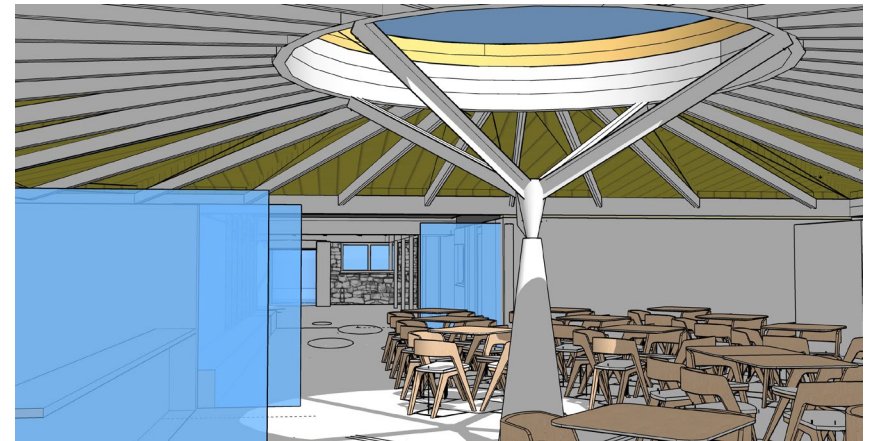
## Design Process – Proposals (Primary Internal Views)



**View A - Foyer towards Restaurant**

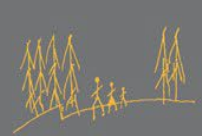


**View B – Restaurant (Panoramic Window)**



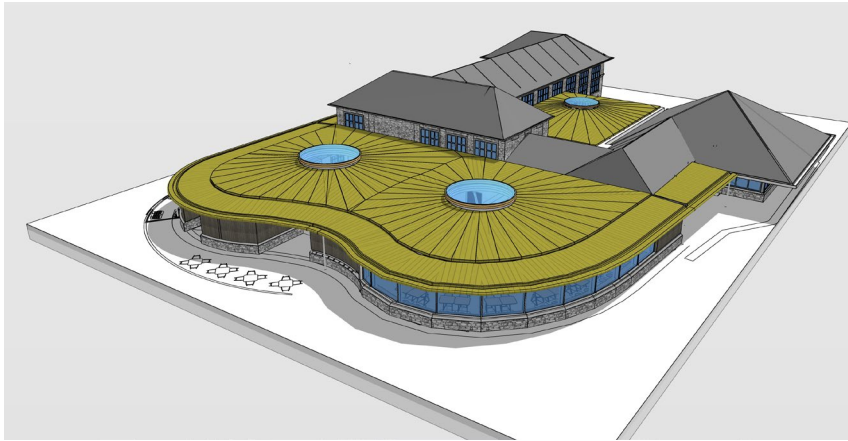
**View C – Restaurant towards Foyer**





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## Design Process – Proposals (External Materials Palette)



View from South-West



David Mellor Factory Roof  
(Standing Seam Metal Roof)



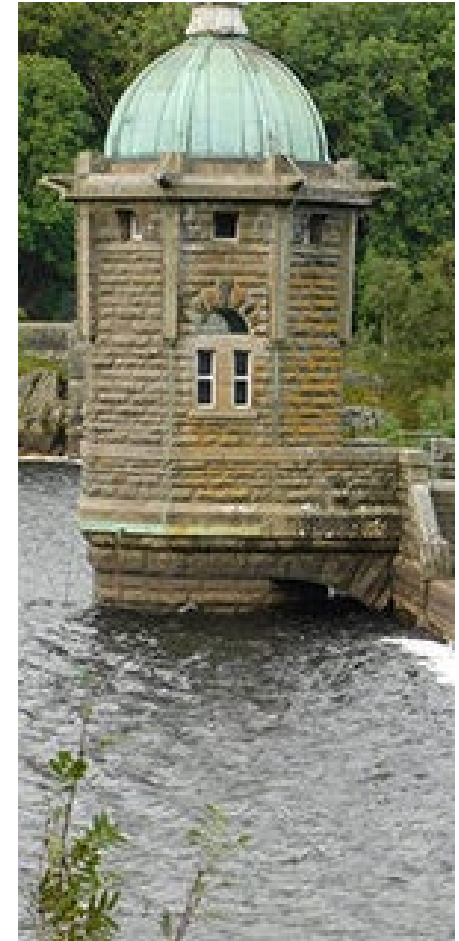
David Mellor Factory Skylight /Ceiling



Existing Restaurant Windows, Low Wall/Sill and Eaves Overhangs



Skylight Camera Shutter Blinds



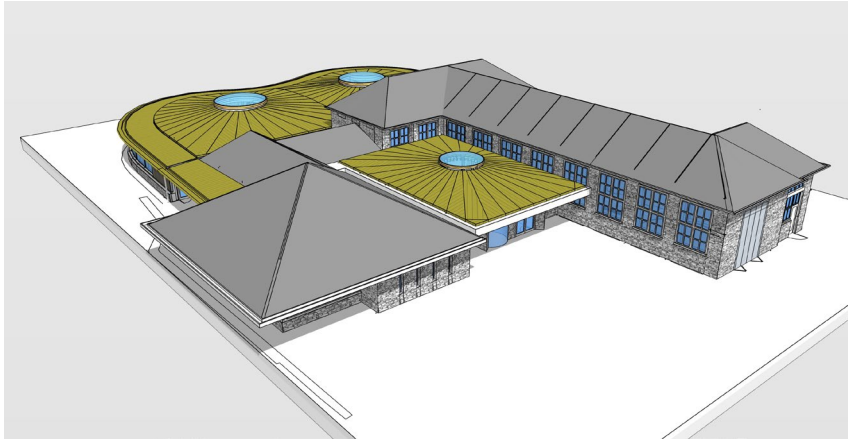
Elan Valley Dams Kiosk Roof  
(Standing Seam Patinated Metal Roof)



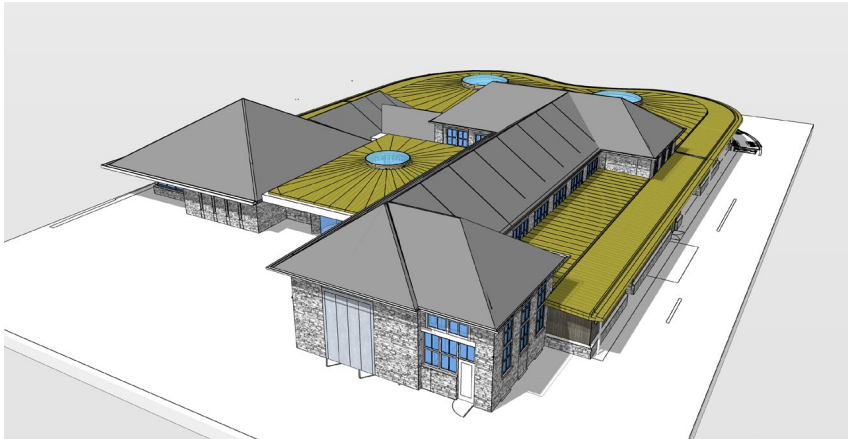


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## Design Process – Proposals (External Materials Palette)



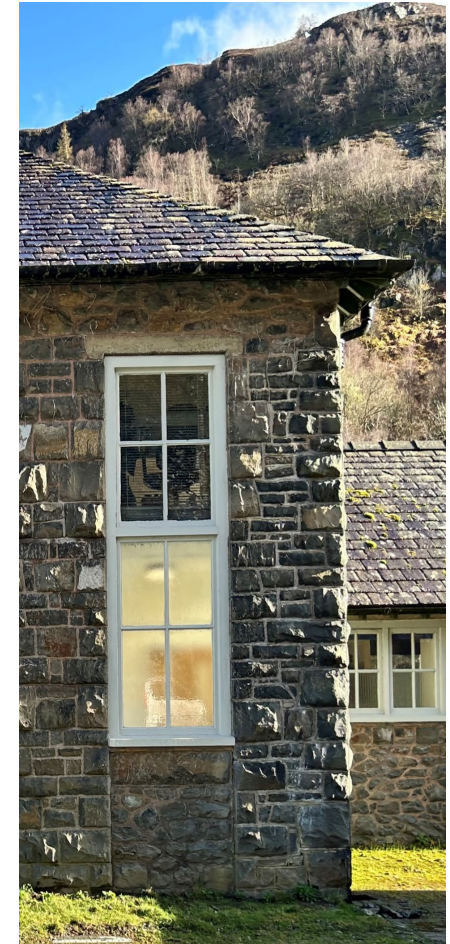
View from South-East



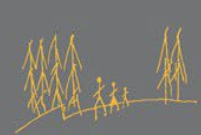
View from North-East



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 20<sup>th</sup> 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 ?

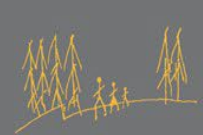
We have adopted 3no. Primary Strategies;

- 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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## 3.0 Design and Access Statement

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.

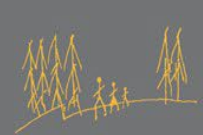
3.15 The current activities and spatial requirements will need to be enhanced and expanded to fulfil the new Visitor Experience Vision and supporting Business Model, comprising;

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-20<sup>th</sup> 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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## 3.0 Design and Access Statement

### 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

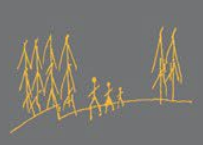
3.21 The number of visitors on site is primarily determined by the available capacity of the car park, coach spaces and walking/cycling visitors. Using industry and actual operator statistics an instantaneous number of 600no. Visitors on site has been adopted. This comprises an average of 3no. visitors per vehicle, 3no. 50 seat coincident coach arrivals – occupying 125no. car spaces and 3no. coach spaces,

plus an assumption of 75no. 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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## 3.0 Design and Access Statement

### 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....*

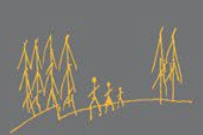
3.29 Integrating intuitive and multi-Lingual Wayfinding and Graphic signage – the EVVC will adopt Bi-Lingual and other international languages to engage with international visitors. Sub-Naming of spaces could take inspiration from the EVVC Primary Name (as we adopted for the Snowdon Summit VC which is 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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## 3.0 Design and Access Statement

### 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.

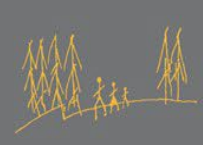
3.33 The Museum/Interpretation Experience would be well suited to be located within the oldest part of the EVVC in order to add authenticity to the story being told - including presenting a number of large scale industrial props positioned/hung within the full volume of the double height space.

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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## 3.0 Design and Access Statement

### 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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## 3.0 Design and Access Statement

### 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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## 3.0 Design and Access Statement

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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## 3.0 Design and Access Statement

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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## 3.0 Design and Access Statement

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.

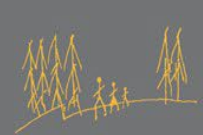
3.80 The overall intent is therefore, to augment and reinforce the character of the destination - which will engender greater awareness and visitation.

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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## 3.0 Design and Access Statement

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 We recognise at this planning stage we cannot claim to be comprehensive in our considerations and design proposals (despite Client and Design Team interaction and consultations) - however in subsequent stages the “gaps” will be answered.

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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## 3.0 Design and Access Statement

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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## 3.0 Design and Access Statement

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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## 3.0 Design and Access Statement

### 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.

## Plans

**Plan EDP 1:** Designated Heritage Assets  
(edp8869\_d001c 28 August 2024 DJo/RSk)

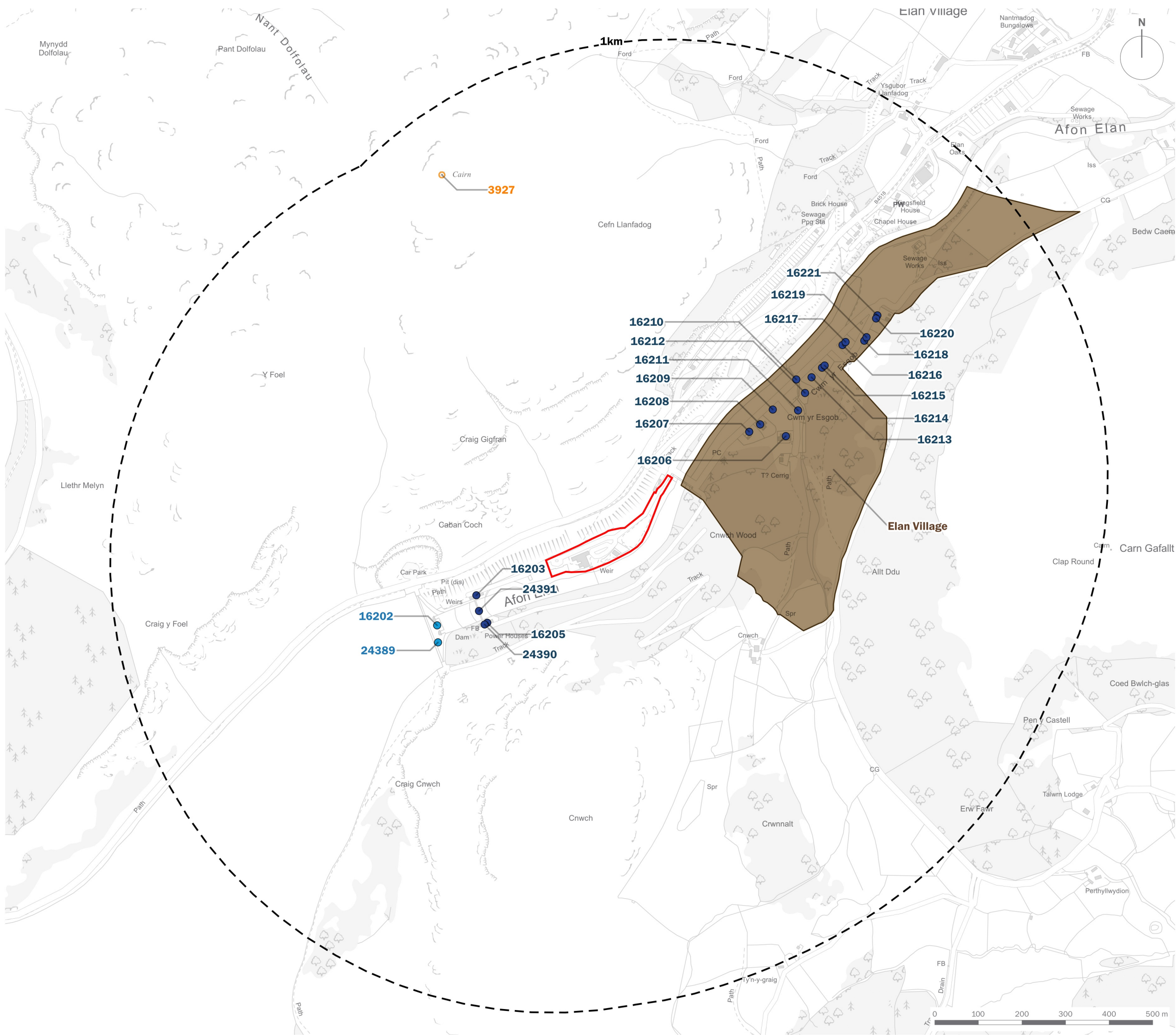
**Plan EDP 2:** Elan Valley Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest  
(edp8869\_d008a 28 August 2024 PDr/RSk)

**Plan EDP 3:** The Visitor Centre building  
(edp8869\_d009a 28 August 2024 PDr/RSk)

**Plan EDP 4:** Excerpt from Proposed Building Plan for Elan Valley Workshop c. Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century  
(edp8869\_d010 29 July 2024 PDr/RSk)

**Plan EDP 5:** Historic Maps  
(edp8869\_d011a 28 August 2024 PDr/RSk)





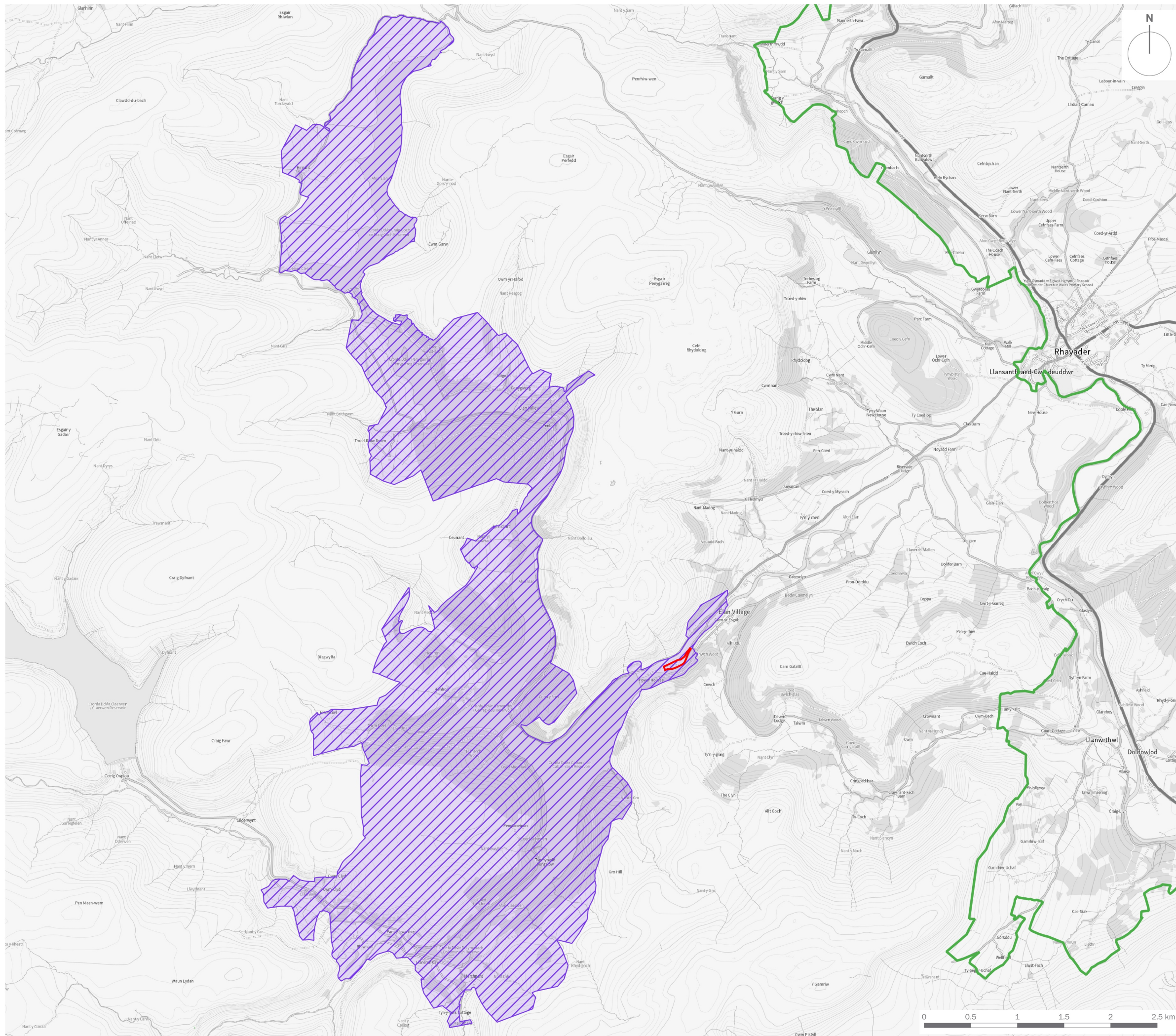
- Site Boundary
- 1km Range Ring
- Grade I Listed Building
- Grade II\* Listed Building
- Grade II Listed Building
- Scheduled Monument
- Conservation Area




client		
<b>Dwr Cymru</b>		
project title		
<b>Elan Valley Visitor Centre</b>		
drawing title		
<b>Designated Heritage Assets</b>		
date	<b>28 AUGUST 2024</b>	drawn by <b>DJo</b>
drawing number	<b>edp8869_d001c</b>	checked <b>RSK</b>
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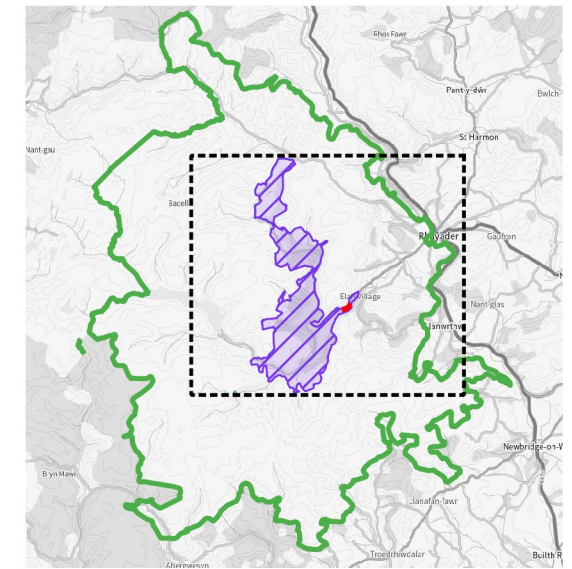


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-  Site Boundary
-  Historic Landscape Character Area - Elan Valley Reservoirs
-  Elan Valley Outstanding Historic Landscape



client

**Dwr Cymru**

project title

**Elan Valley Visitor Centre**

drawing title

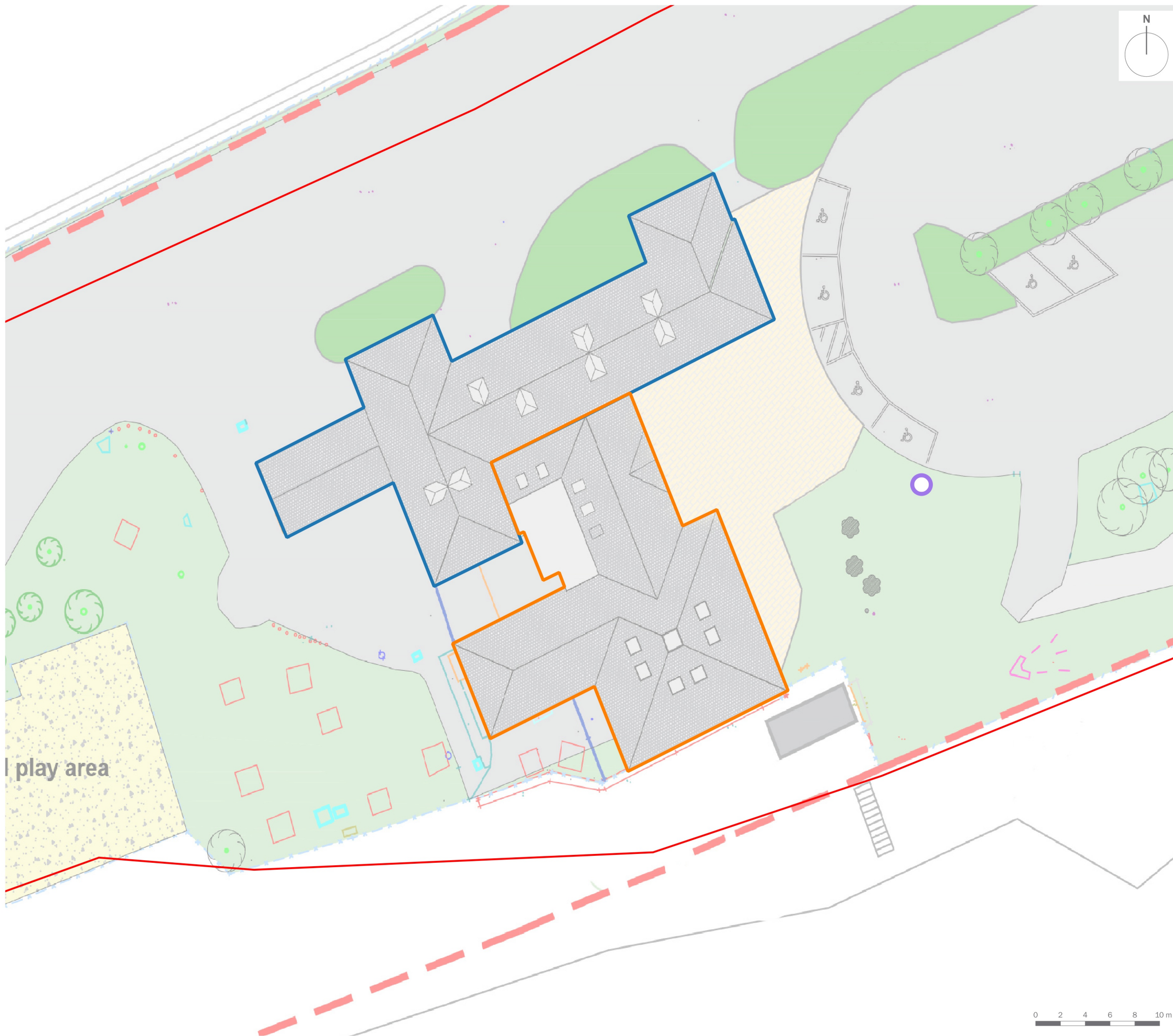
**Elan Valley Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest**

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drawing number	<b>edp8869_d008a</b>	checked	<b>RSK</b>
scale	<b>1:40,000 @ A3</b>	QA	<b>DJo</b>

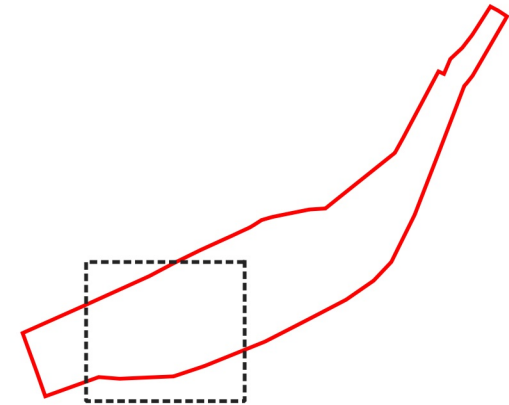


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- Site Boundary
- Hydroelectric Turbine
- Building Phase**
- 1905
- 1990s



play area

client  
**Dwr Cymru**

project title  
**Elan Valley Visitor Centre**

drawing title  
**The Visitor Centre Building**

date	<b>28 AUGUST 2024</b>	drawn by	<b>PDr</b>
drawing number	<b>edp8869_d009a</b>	checked	<b>RSk</b>
scale	<b>1:300 @ A3</b>	QA	<b>DJo</b>



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client

**Dwr Cymru**

project title

**Elan Valley Visitor Centre**

drawing title

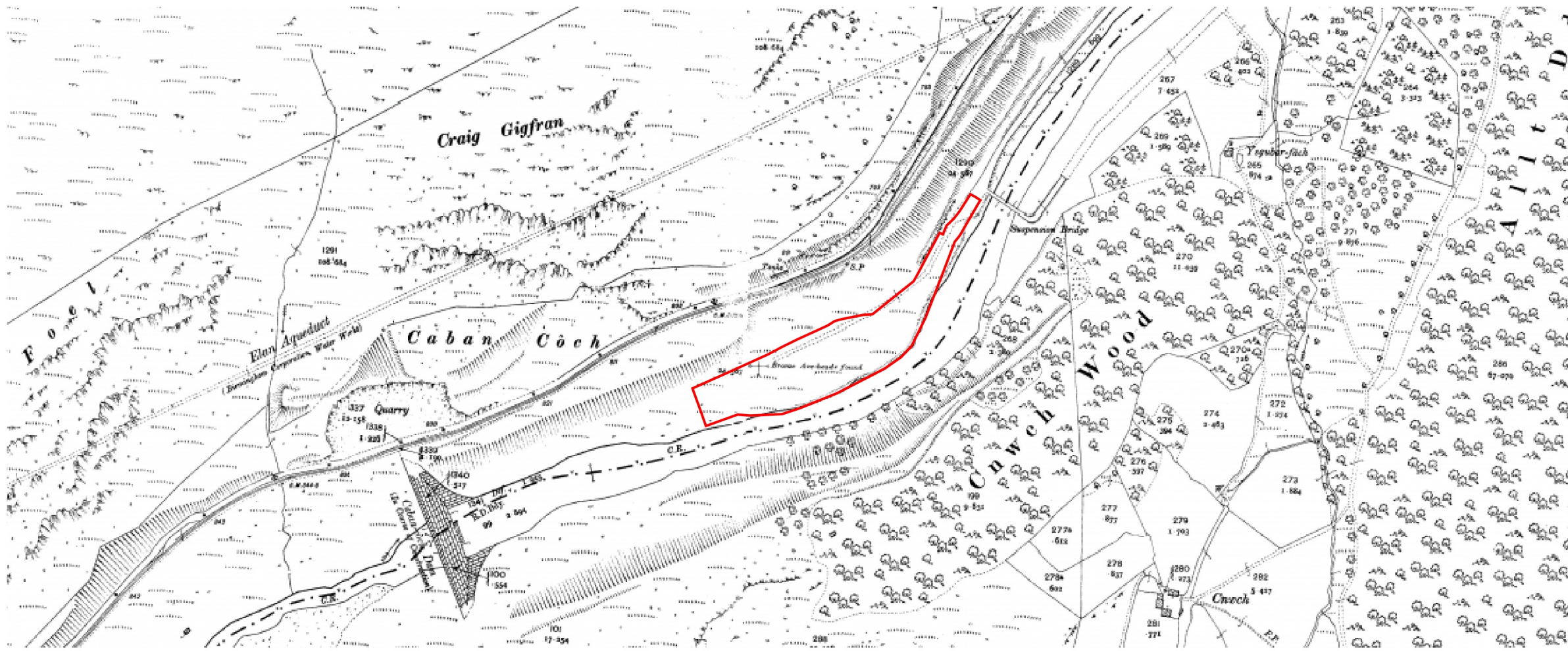
**Excerpt from Proposed Building Plan for Elan Valley Workshop c. Early 20th Century**

date	<b>29 JULY 2024</b>	drawn by	<b>PDr</b>
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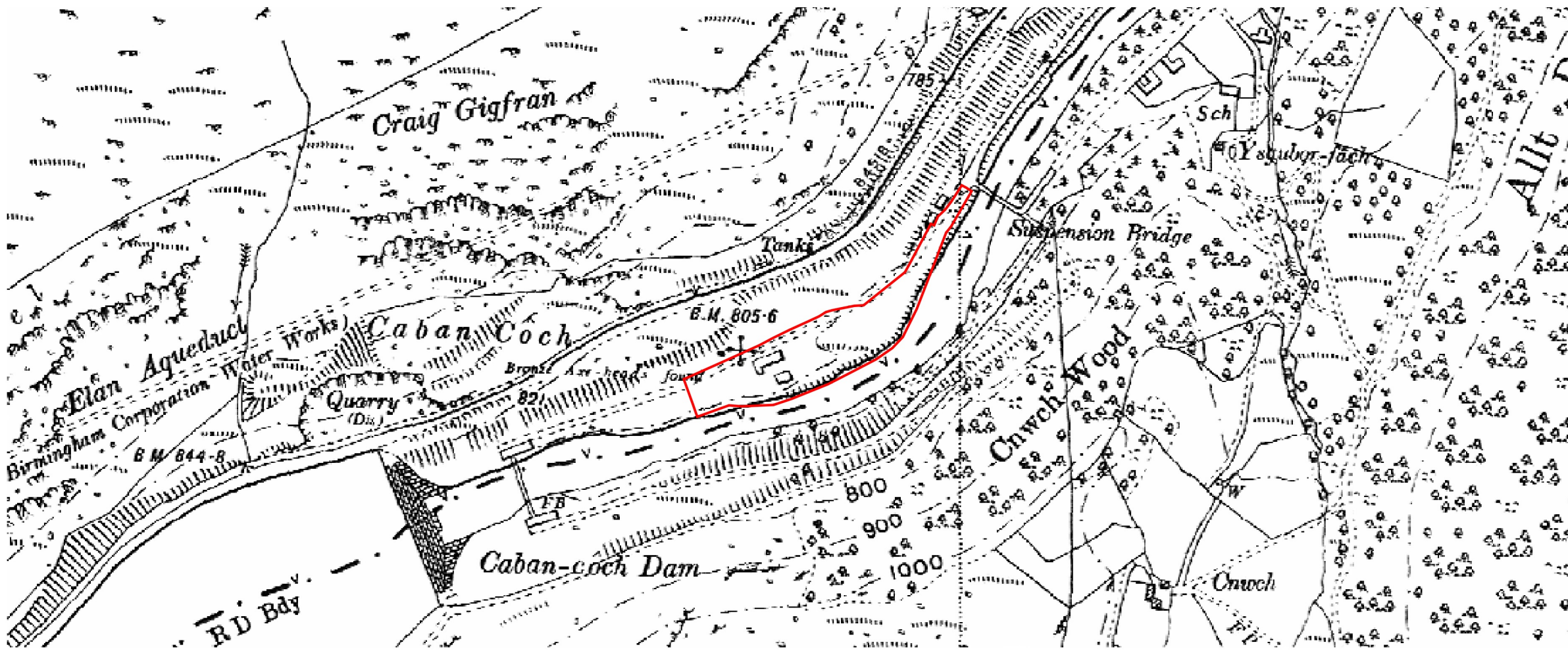


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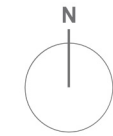


Extract from 2nd Edition 1905 Ordnance Survey Map 1:2500



Extract from 1953 Edition Ordnance Survey Map 10:560

 Approximate Site Boundary



client	Dwr Cymru		
project title	Elan Valley Visitor Centre		
drawing title	Historic Maps		
date	28 AUGUST 2024	drawn by	PDr
drawing number	edp8869_d011a	checked	RSk
scale	1:5,000 @ A3	QA	DJo



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**URBAN  
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**Landscape  
Institute**  
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