

Access Points

Access into Pond Cottage is principally from the northern side through a gate in the metal fencing. There is a further gate to the immediate east that accesses the garden to the side on this elevation.

At the rear of the property there is a secondary access into the grounds via a painted timber ledged fence.

Site Features

Features of the grounds to Pond Cottage include the aforementioned garden structures, together with the general garden layout. These include concrete paved pathways and a significant specimen tree to the east of the property. The addition of later structures have further served to impact the coherence of the arrangement to the gardens.

Topography

The site is generally level in the main, however, it falls away to the east side towards the access road below. A retaining wall further determines a more significant drop to this boundary. To the north and west elevations access is fairly level, whilst to the south the ground similarly falls away, but this is predominantly beyond the boundary of the site.

Views

The principal view both from and to the site is across the Fishpond to the north. There are several locations around the pond where Pond Cottage forms part of and enhances, a composed vista. To the rear of the building there are views out to the surrounding landscape due to the general openness of this area. This means equally there are views to the site, but these are not particularly in the public domain. East and west elevations are well screened, with limited views.



Access into the ground at Pond Cottage is predominantly via the railings to the frontage. This borders the principal pathway that loops around the fishpond

Architectural Overview

Pond Cottage takes its aesthetic lead from the Arts and Crafts movement. Arts and Crafts is one of the most picturesque and charming architectural styles of the last 150 years and sits comfortably within the setting of the Gnoll Estate Country Park.

The movement began gaining influence in the late 1800s, inspired by the ideas of architect Augustus Pugin, William Morris and writer John Ruskin. William Morris is perhaps the best known exponent of the Arts and Crafts style and is famously quoted as saying,

'Have nothing in your house which you do not know to be useful or believe to be beautiful'.

The style was sparked by a ground movement towards the revival of traditional craftsmanship in simple forms. The Arts and Crafts pioneers felt that the rapid rise of industrial methods and factory production had not only led to a reduction in quality, but also a tendency to place excessive ornamentation over the principles of design, construction and quality.

The movement was also concerned with social reform. Taking its lead from John Ruskin's social criticism, the proponents of Arts and Crafts believed that the Industrial Revolution had led to 'servile labour' and the de-skilling of the workforce. The architectural style which developed from Arts and Crafts consequently has at its heart five main principles:

- clarity of form or structure
- variety of materials
- asymmetry

- traditional construction and
- craftsmanship.

All of which can be seen in the designs for Pond Cottage. The building has been constructed within the local vernacular, with Welsh slate roofs and pennant stone rubble walls. Whilst the interior of the building is perhaps not to the standards of the exterior, thanks to the utilisation of skilled, traditional construction methods, the building has stood the test of time and remains as a significant part the parks' history.

Archaeological Overview

An Archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation and Historic Environment Desk-Based Assessment have been undertaken by Dyfed Archaeological Trust and accompany this application. This has highlighted that works to create a café area to Pond Cottage would need to pay due respect to the existing fabric and potential alterations to it. Externally, the potential for groundworks to affect the general background archaeological potential is considered to be relatively minimal.

Consequently no below ground archaeological investigations have been commissioned for the purpose of the project. It is not deemed that this is necessary to inform the works at this stage, with works predominantly being undertaken above ground.

HISTORY OF THE HISTORIC ASSET AND HISTORIC FABRIC

Research undertaken as part of the Conservation Management Plan by CFP has established that Pond Cottage, ‘...was used as a residence for the Bailiff, who was responsible for the upkeep and protection of (the) fishpond. At this time, the pond was stoked with carp for the Gnoll house as part of a wider programme of self sufficiency that included resources from the Kitchen Garden. The Bailiffs would have been responsible for policing the various bodies of water on the site. His role is also likely to have included:

- Examining the reservoir structures and associated apparatus involved in their functioning
- Inspecting whether unlicensed fishing was being carried out on the bodies of water, and
- Using enforcement to ensure that any unlicensed fishing was prevented

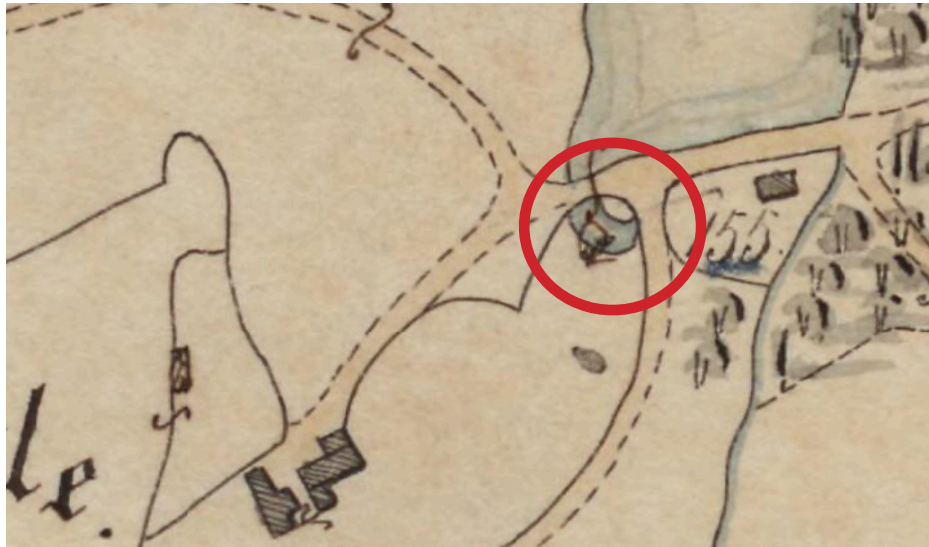
The kitchen garden was introduced at The Gnoll to provide food for the manor house, together with fish from the ponds the aim was true self-sufficiency, and the success of the estate would have to some degree depended on the success. Fishing in the pond was an activity that had gone on long before Pond Cottage was built. The map progression on the following page shows that the Cottage appears to have been built on a fish trap located just South-West of the Great Pond. Historic maps suggest that Pond Cottage was a much later addition to the estate, built around the 1890s whilst under the ownership of Charles Evans Thomas.

An estate sale catalogue from 1921 describes that the ponds were ‘stocked with Trout and coarse fish, the exclusive right of fishing therein

being reserved to the Owners of the Gnoll Estate.’ Thus providing a valuable asset within the property of The Gnoll. In addition, it labels the cottage as the ‘Head Gardener’s House’, declaring it as ‘a modern and attractive building of dressed stone and brick’. This demonstrates how closely connected the cottage was to the kitchen garden, despite being a much newer addition to the parkland.

Following the general deterioration of the house and its subsequent fall from use, the requirement for the Bailiffs job would have been lost. In more recent years, the cottage has been occupied by a Park Ranger who used the property as a house. However, in the last couple of years it has remained vacant. The associated structures that formed the Kitchen Garden, apart from the walls, have similarly been largely lost, whilst any formal layout of the planted areas are indecipherable. However the importance of the site as the bread-basket for the estate, its families and its workers should not be underestimated. Pond Cottage consequently retains a significance to the development and operation of the estate that should be respected and enhanced in any future developments.

In this context, whilst changes have indeed been made to the building during the intervening years - largely using incongruous materials - the essence of the property is still retained. Details externally including fascia, window detailing and the prominent overhanging eaves remain. The Conservation Management Plan notes however that the condition of the property is ‘Poor’, and this has not changed in the intervening years since the report was undertaken.



Tithe map of the Parish of Neath in the County of Glamorgan 1845 by A.R. Wallace



Glamorgan Sheet XVI, surveyed 1876-77, published 1884.



Glamorgan Sheet XVI.SW, revised 1897, published 1900.



Glamorgan Sheet XVI.9, revised 1913-14, published 1919.

Summary of Condition

Prior to any refurbishment works being undertaken or alterations being proposed to Pond Cottage, it is essential that there is an understanding of its existing condition and that proposals for intervention to arrest further deterioration of retained fabric are developed.

There is currently no information detailing any maintenance procedures for the elements of fabric in question, whilst all evidence points to minimal maintenance being carried out in the recent past, as part of a reactive strategy to try to address the immediate needs of the building. These often ill-considered alterations have been undertaken with inappropriate materials in the context of a traditionally constructed building. As a consequence there has been a detrimental outcome on the historic fabric, albeit with a mild to medium cumulative effect.

In order to address this, a feasibility cost report was developed for Neath Port Talbot Council by their Environment, Property and Regeneration department in August 2019. The associated schedule of works is attached and has subsequently been used to develop the basis of the necessary repairs required to the cottage going forwards. Following a further reviews of the survey by Hiraeth Architecture, the approach to the repairs has subsequently looked at reintroducing historic materials in lieu of modern materials. This is included in the Overview of Proposals and Justification section, later in this document.

Neath Port Talbot Council Schedule of Works for Pond Cottage - August 2019

EXTERNAL REPAIRS & ALTERATIONS

- 1.0 **Roof**
 - 1.1 Scaffolding to external elevations
- 2.0 **Removals**
 - 2.1 Take down existing rainwater goods
- 3.0 **Structure**
 - 3.1 Allow for A number of hours for carrying out repairs to the roof structure
 - 3.2 Paint fascia's, barge boards and soffits
- 4.0 **Rainwater Disposal**
 - 4.1 Cast aluminium rainwater goods, polyester powder coated
- 5.0 **External Walls**
 - 5.1 Repoint open joints of in lime mortar
 - 5.2 Render rear elevation lime render
 - 5.3 Coat stonework with Belzona clear cladding.
- 6.0 **External Windows and Doors**
 - 6.1 Paint to windows and cills
 - 6.3 Take out and replace with traditional painted hardwood including frames

INTERNAL REPAIRS & ALTERATIONS

- 1.0 **Removals**
 - 1.1 Strip out fittings and furnishings
 - 1.2 Remove doors
 - 1.3 Take down aertex ceilings
 - 1.4 Remove anaglypta paper
- 2.0 **Attic**
 - 2.1 200mm thick insulation quilt
- 3.0 **Internals**
 - 3.1 Renew internal doors Framed ledged and braced painted
 - 3.2 Renew architrave and skirting
 - 3.3 Skim ceilings
 - 3.4 Skim internal walls
 - 3.5 New kitchen spec tbc
 - 3.6 New bathroom
 - 3.7 New floorcoverings quarry tile kitchen
 - 3.8 New floorcoverings carpet elsewhere
 - 3.9 Decoration to walls and ceilings
- 4.0 **Landscaping**
 - 4.1 Form new foot paths
 - 4.2 Fencing and new gate
 - 4.3 General landscaping
- 5.0 **M&E**
 - 5.1 Replacing the heating system
 - 5.2 Full rewire – cables, switches, lights, TV Ariel and cabling etc
 - 5.3 Intruder Alarm

OVERVIEW OF SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY VALUE

Pond Cottage's social value derives largely from its association with Gnoll House and with regards to its contribution to the setting of Gnoll Estate Country Park. Whilst the demolition of Gnoll House has without doubt compromised the link between the Cottage and its *raison d'être*, the Cottage still contributes to the source of identity local people feel towards the site, both as a historic site of beautiful parkland, and also as an accessible semi wild landscape that allows people to connect with nature. It is a significant place for leisure and interaction, and the focus of the immediate community. It is also much appreciated by its visitors as an active centre within Neath, and also as a place of cultural and historical importance.

It is noted that the house and planting aside, most of the structural elements to the parkland - including Pond Cottage - remain intact or have been restored or rebuilt. The Gnoll Country Estate therefore continues to capture the imagination of and remains important to the local public. The landscape that the Cottage contributes positively to nowadays, fulfils various further roles within the wider community, as a location for objects of cultural, historical and environmental importance to the town, set amongst its numerous walks and trails. It is furthermore regularly visited by local children and caters specifically for all abilities.

The parks' social values are perhaps exemplified by the way that many of the people of Neath, together with visitors from outside the area, come to spend their leisure time within its boundaries. The tranquility of the landscape is clearly much appreciated and Pond Cottage contributes to this to some degree.

Local Facilities

The Gnoll Estate Country Park is well connected to the surrounding area with good transport links including:

By Car

Access from the M4 at junction 43 to the A465 where is well signposted. There are 209 formal car parking spaces which are served by three pay and display car parking machines. The main display and pay car parking area is located adjacent to the visitor centre building and at the southern entrance there are further car parking spaces which are currently not covered by a pay and display policy.

By Rail

Neath train station which is centrally located in the town, with Gnoll Estate Country Park being a short bus ride away. All regions of the UK have frequent links either direct or with one easy interchange onto the local line.

By Bus

There are three principal bus routes as follows that stop at the site:

- From Neath: First Cymru 153 to Fairyland
- From Port Talbot: First Cymru X4 to Neath, First Cymru 153 to Fairyland
- From Swansea: First Cymru X5 to Neath, First Cymru 153 to Fairyland

Physical Issues

In addition to this key visitor facilities are being developed as part of the wider proposals for Gnoll Park that build on the existing accessible facilities. It is currently underperforming and not maximising the opportunities of its location within the parkland. The building however is the sole location for providing visitor facilities such as a café and toilets, within the park. Recognising this, the provision of an alternative opportunity to provide additional facilities that result in them being more evenly distributed around the parkland, is a clear and demonstrably beneficial development to the function of the park.

Gnoll Estate Country Park is generally accessible to all; the visitor centre and cafe are wheelchair friendly and there are disabled toilet facilities on site. The grounds around the Fishpond and the adventure playground have recently been renovated providing easy access to prams, wheelchairs and beamer tramper scooters as well as other paths and walkways around the park which are mainly flat and have a gravel surface.

Pond Cottage is well located in terms of readily available and existing access within the parkland, with the principal pathway around the fishpond being located immediately to its north side. To the wider site, the principal walks of Gnoll Estate Country Park are generally accessible, but present the typical problems of accessibility that accompany such historic parks and gardens when these are not followed.

With specific regards to the building, it is noted that relatively minor improvements will be required to overcome level changes externally to access the building. Internally, it is highlighted that toilet facilities are currently located at first floor level with the only access being by stair.

This would need to be addressed in any proposals. In addition to this it is clear that the rear and side gardens, were they to be open to the public, would require re-landscaping to ensure they were accessible to all.

Economic Issues

The UK government's flagship Levelling Up Fund aims to back projects across the UK to help communities Level Up. Levelling Up means creating opportunities for everyone across the UK, with the project to develop Pond Cottage being part of a wider Levelling Up Funded scheme aiming to deliver £12 million of investment over the next two years at Gnoll Estate Country Park. This will

- Improve visitor facilities including the visitor centre, play offer and pathways
- Restore heritage structures such as the Gnoll House Cellars, Pond Cottage and the formal cascades
- Make enhancements to the natural environment of the wider country park.

Pond Cottage is currently an unsustainable amenity set within its historic landscape. With no direct income streams being generated by the building, its maintenance is contingent on income generated elsewhere in the park. This has without doubt contributed to its generally poor condition and lack of maintenance, contributing to the general deterioration of its built fabric. Through this project and in parallel with other developments, the proposal aims to improve the economic and environmental sustainability of Pond Cottage, and to establish a secure financial basis for its coherent management through increasing returns from enhanced economic opportunities.



Elevated view of Pond Cottage (left of shot), with the tree line of the former Service Yard and Kitchen garden rising to the right of it

THE IMPORTANCE OF POND COTTAGE

The previous sections and associated reference documents have developed a sound basis for identifying how the Pond Cottage came to be located at The Gnoll Estate Country Park, and how it has contributed to its cultural value. The Cottage is recognised as being integral to the evolution of the parkland and illustrates the following qualities that demonstrate its heritage significance and which must be protected in any future development of the building and its environs:

- It has a wider group value with the immediate context of the Fishpond, and the Kitchen Garden that largely supplied Gnoll House with the majority of its food requirements as part of a sustainable landscape;
- For its historical interest as a Arts and Crafts building using traditional building techniques in the Neath Area at the end of the 19th century;
- It is a reflection of the historic significance of Gnoll Estate Country Park as an 18th century designed landscape which later additions have largely respected;
- For its social and community significance in contributing the local community green space in the heart of Neath;
- For the high standard of design of the building that has largely been retained despite the sometimes unsympathetic changes that have occurred over time to its fabric and environs.

THE BRIEF

The History of the Tea Room

Tea rooms first appeared in the UK in the 18th century, with the first tea room, Twinings, having stood in the same spot on the Strand in London for over 300 years. Once the reserve of the rich, tea was popularised by Catherine of Braganza, the Queen Consort of Charles II. It had previously been used as a medicinal drink, but she made it her beverage of choice and it soon became popularised throughout the Court.

Initially, due to the high tax on tea, only the richest could afford it, and its exclusivity was enhanced when the addition of sugar was introduced. However, as the drink became more prevalent, it soon trickled down to the lower classes with availability being sort through the smuggling trade. This ended in 1783, when William Pitt the Younger became Prime Minister and slashed the tea tax.

In 1840, afternoon tea was dreamed up by Anna, Duchess of Bedford, to get her through the long hours between lunch and dinner. Due to increasing urbanisation and the rise in industrialisation (including the spread of gas lighting), the evening meal was becoming later and later. Whereas in rural farming communities the day had an early start and finished when the sun went down, wealthier classes, unhindered by such practicalities, were now having dinner closer to 9pm – with lunch many hours earlier at midday. The Duchess therefore requested that some tea, bread and butter and cake was brought to her room in the late afternoon thereby introducing the ritual. And while it began as a personal indulgence, she started inviting friends to join her for tea, cake, and bread and butter, and the custom's popularity grew. This led to the opening of tea rooms across the country, serving similar items.

By the Victorian era, tea drinking had become heavily engrained in the British home. It was a beverage enjoyed by all echelons of society, however, one way in which the tea experience differed was in the material culture of the table. Tea drinking for the wealthy came with a whole host of accessories – fine porcelain teacups, bowls and saucers, decorative teapots, mahogany tea caddies, silver tea urns, exquisite table linens and personalised tea blends. For them, the afternoon tea table was one of great opulence and refinement, a place to express your identity, interests and taste.

By the early 20th century, women were moving around cities more freely, however, they still lacked a space where they could retire from the bustle of the streets to take refreshment. Indeed, while coffee occupied a more masculine external world in 19th-century London, the interior realms of tea were a more feminine affair. Afternoon tea allowed women to entertain mixed company at home without their husbands and was therefore liberating, both socially and practically. In filling that gap, and subsequently providing a sheltering space for suffragettes, it can be said the sedate Edwardian tearoom facilitated women's fight for freedom.

The Modern Tea Room

More recently the modern tea room, with its often opulent interior and food and drink offerings, is experiencing a resurgence. There are many successful examples throughout South Wales including:

- Pettigrew Tea Rooms set in the Victorian Gatehouse at the entrance to Bute Park, Cardiff

- Llanerch Vineyard overlooking the grapevines of the Vale of Glamorgan countryside
- Cobbles Kitchen + Deli in the setting of a Grade II listed barn in Ogmore
- The Buttery Café located in the National Museum of Wales at St Fagans

In an 'instagrammable' society in search of experiences, afternoon tea is a growing entity and one that can be enjoyed by all people of all abilities. It allows people to take some time out of their day to day lives with an affordable, yet indulgent, often shared experience. As such, successful tea rooms and their associated accommodation requirements, provide a common thread of a high quality tea offering and serene setting, often set in a historic context. Pond Cottage and the surrounding Gnoll Estate and Country Park is therefore seen as fulfilling these criteria, with the building providing the opportunity to accommodate the required accommodation schedule of:

- Internal and external seating areas
- Kitchen and servery
- Toilets for the wider park
- Storage
- Space to facilitate deliveries

All in contrast to the more modern offering being put forward by the newly proposed visitor centre. In addition to this, the proximity of the proposed accommodation pods to the adjacent Kitchen garden affords the opportunity to enhance the offering to this area through the direct sale of food and drink offerings.



Pettigrew Tea Rooms operate successfully from within the constrained footprint of the Grade II listed West Lodge, Cardiff

CONSTRAINTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Constraints

- The proposals should not dilute the historic significance of the surrounding landscape and parkland;
- The proposals need to minimise their archaeological impact on the site. Therefore, the proposals should look to work with the existing topography to avoid unnecessarily intrusive interventions into the landscape;
- The proposals should work with the existing tree and vegetation constraints and minimise their impact on these;
- The scheme should avoid any detrimental impact on the natural flora and fauna of the surrounding wildlife habitat;
- Traditional finishes should predominantly be considered with a view to retaining the existing variety of colour and texture of different materials on site;
- The quality of any proposals should be extended into the setting of the existing building, and should avoid a manicured finish;
- The building needs to be large enough to meet the custodial and visitor requirements of the site, but must be reasonably unobtrusive within what is sensitive environment;
- It is noted that Pond Cottage is a visible and identifiable location within the parkland as it is approached on foot from nearly every direction. Consequently any interventions should be considerate of their impact on existing views and vistas;
- The custodians of Pond Cottage need to have views within the existing building and ideally to the wider site in order to provide adequate custodial control over visitors.

Opportunities

- Provide a high-quality multipurpose scheme that engages positively with the existing natural environment;
- Deliver an identifiable design that is an exemplar of its type;
- Improve visitor café facilities and signposting through the adaptation of an existing building of historic value;
- Provide flexible space that can be used by a variety of community groups and initiatives, and that may evolve and change in the future;
- Improve accessibility to the Gnoll Estate Country Park through improved infrastructure such as toilets, together with inclusive design that enables all users to experience Pond Cottage;
- Physically respond to the immediate environment of the Pond Cottage site, considering factors such as siting and orientation, direct solar gain, thermal mass and air tightness;
- To undertake a holistic sustainable approach that minimises the ongoing running and maintenance costs of the final building so that it is economically sustainable in the future;
- Enhance the experience of Pond Cottage by incorporating interpretation of the wider site, together with café facilities that help to increase dwell-time, and repeat visits;
- Importantly, engage with people who may not currently visit the Gnoll Estate Country Park, including potential visitors to the restored kitchen gardens;
- Investigate and consider opportunities to deliver a viable mix of accommodation that will be economically, environmentally and commercially sustainable in both the short and longer term operation of the facility.

DEVELOPMENT CONTROL

This document is supported by Planning Statement/Detailed Covering Letter by Asbri Planning and should be read in conjunction with this information which gives a detailed policy overview in terms of the proposals.

Overview Policy Context

Planning Policy Wales provides the national planning policy context for Wales, supplemented by Technical Advice Note 24 (TAN). Procedural guidance is provided in the Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2016. Chapter 6 of PPW, The Historic Environment sets out the Welsh Government's objectives with regard to the protection and enhancement of Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas and Registered Parks and Gardens in Wales as follows:

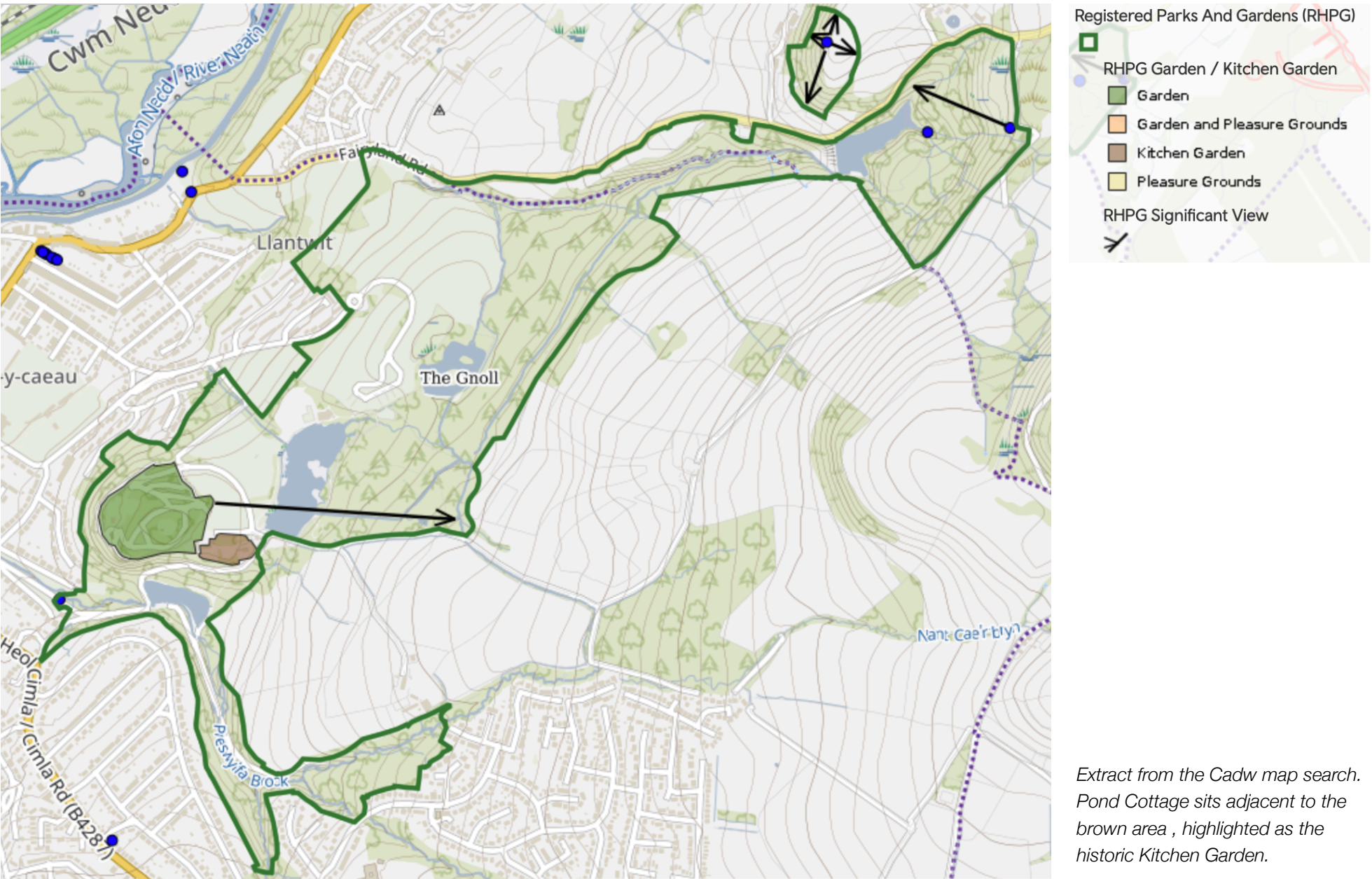
- conserve and enhance the historic environment, which is a finite and non-renewable resource and a vital and integral part of the historical and cultural identity of Wales;
- recognise its contribution to economic vitality and culture, civic pride, local distinctiveness and the quality of Welsh life, and its importance as a resource to be maintained for future generations;
- base decisions on an understanding of the significance of Wales' historic assets;
- contribute to the knowledge and understanding of the past by making an appropriate record when parts of a historic asset are affected by a proposed change, and ensuring that this record or the results of any investigation are securely archived and made publicly available.

Local Development Plan

The Neath Port Talbot Local Development Plan 2011-2026 (Adopted January 2016) provides the local policy framework for the development and conservation needs of the area. In this respect the Council has an important role in securing the conservation of the historic environment while ensuring that it accommodates and remains responsive to present day needs. This is a key aspect of the Council's wider sustainable development responsibilities, which needs to be taken into account in the exercise of development plan policy and development management functions.

Particular designations of note in relation to the site are:

- Green Wedge (Policy EN3): 'In order to prevent the coalescence of settlements and to protect the setting of urban area'
- Safeguarded Minerals (Policy M1) - area highlighted on the Council's interactive map. However, it should be noted that the document notes, 'In most instances, development may proceed within safeguarded areas as long as developers can demonstrate that the resource is of poor quality or quantity, that it can be extracted satisfactorily prior to any development taking place, that there is an overriding need for the development or that the scale and location of the development would not have any significant impact on the possible working of the resource.'
- Built Environment and Historic Heritage (Policy SP21/4 (6)): 'The built environment and historic heritage will, where appropriate, be conserved and enhanced...'



Wider policies of note in relation to design and tourism are:

- SP13 - Policy TO1 (Tourism development in the countryside)
- SP21 - Policy BE1 (Design): 'All development proposals will be expected to demonstrate high quality design which fully takes into account the natural, historic and built environmental context and contributes to the creation of attractive, sustainable places'.

Relevant Designations in Relation to Pond Cottage

Historic Parks and Gardens are part of Wales' national identity. Registration identifies parks and gardens which are of special interest to Wales, and that reflect aspects of Welsh life, including places to live, work and play. The resource is worthy of protection as they provide a connection to the lives and ambitions of past generations. They are valuable and distinct places that should therefore be recognised and safeguarded for the enjoyment of current and future generations.

Inclusion on the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens is not a preservation order. However, such areas are identified in order to help protect their special interest, and, if necessary, manage their change so that they remain viable and sustainable in a changing social context.

The following statutory designation applies to the Gnoll Estate Country Park in which Pond Cottage is located:

Gnoll Estate and Country Park - Registered Historic Park and Garden (Grade II*)

'It is registered for the survival of its largely eighteenth-century landscape park, which is of great historic interest, in its original rural setting above Neath. It lies on the flank of the Vale of Neath, long famed for its

picturesque beauty. The landscape of The Gnoll is exceptional for its combination of industrial and ornamental functions and for its strong visual relationship with the surrounding countryside.'

Pond Cottage (Unlisted)

In addition to this, it is also highlighted that whilst Pond Cottage is not statutorily listed in its own right, a referral has been made to consider listing by Jonathan Green, Inspector of Historic Buildings, Cadw. It is understood that this will be considered subsequent to the submission of this application. In this regard it may therefore be a material consideration for the Planning Authority.

For further listings relating to Gnoll Estate Country Park please refer to the Project Context Document.

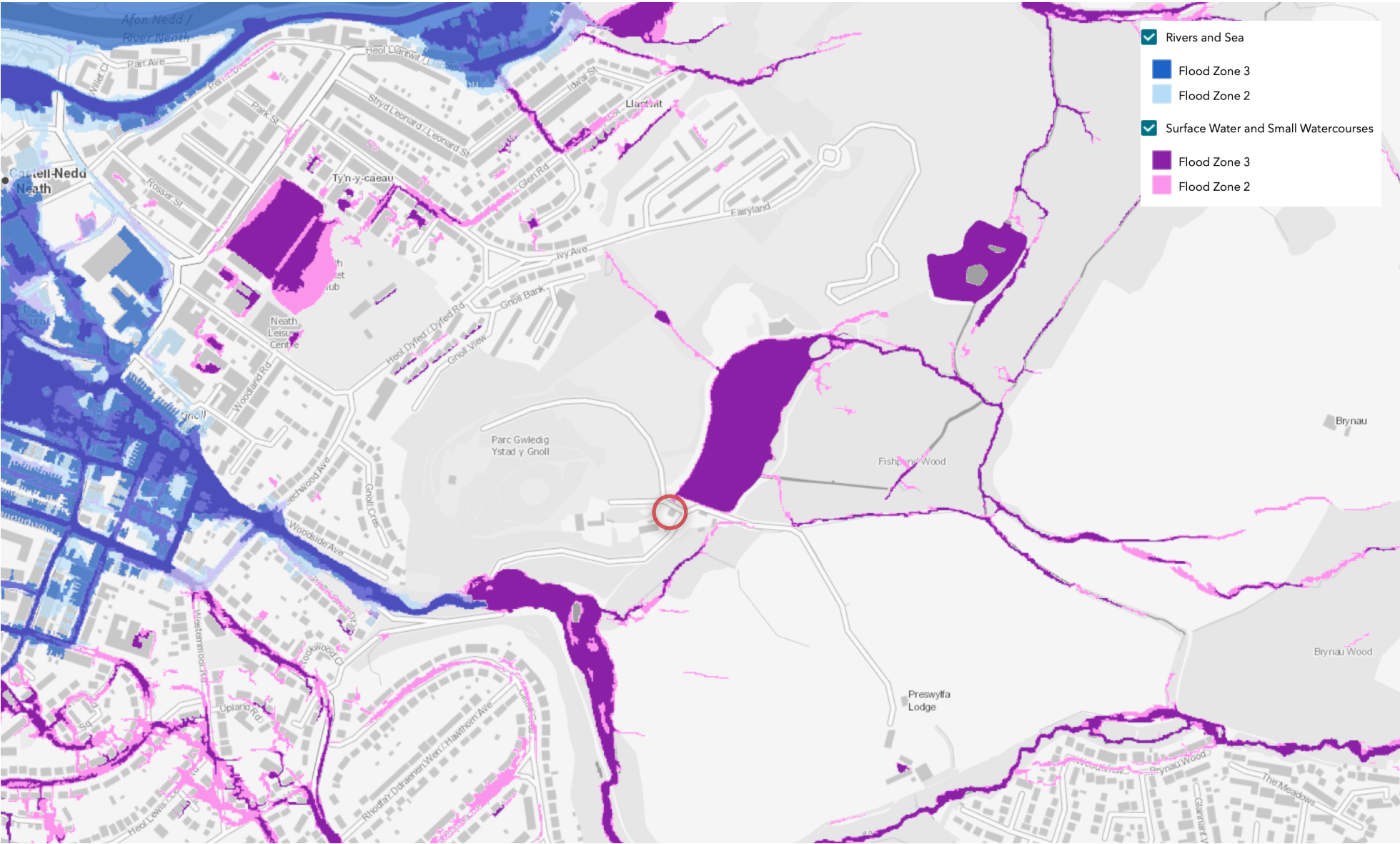
Flood Risk

Flood risk assessments are used to show how the flood risk to a site, or elsewhere as a result of proposed changes to the site, can be managed as part of a development proposal. The red circle locates Pond Cottage. The map demonstrates that the site sits outside any Flood Risk Zone. Therefore a flood risk assessment will not be required going forwards.

Ecology

Gnoll Estate Country Park is a designated Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) (NPTSINC036) by the Local Planning Authority through the Local Development Plan (2011- 2026).

Bat surveys have been carried out by Neath Port Talbot Ecologist (Consultancy + Planning). Bats and their roosts are fully protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), and the



Extract from the Flood Map for Planning, showing sites and flood zones

Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994 (as amended). Under Regulation 3 (4) of the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994 local planning authorities, in exercise of their functions, are to have regard to the provisions of the 1992 *Habitats* Directive (92/43/EEC) in so far that they might be affected by those functions. The report has been included as part of this application and it is noted that bat emergencies to the east and west elevations to the roof of Pond Cottage have been identified.

In terms of wider biodiversity, the ecologists have further input into the development proposals to initially limit any potential damage to existing habitat, and subsequently ensure advantage is taken of opportunities to enhance biodiversity going forwards.

For each element of the project a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) has been produced to cover ecological mitigation measures in relation to the particular habitats, any protected species and the proposed works.

The CEMP report provides details of ecological mitigation measures to be implemented prior to and during construction to protect and mitigate effects on important ecological features within the site. This will include measures to prevent impacts from accidental spillages, dust, sediment inputs, movement of machinery, refuelling etc.

Arboricultural Impact and Tree Protection Orders

An Arboricultural Impact Assessment has also been carried out as part of the development proposals by Neath Port Talbot Arboriculturalist (Consultancy + Planning) and is also attached to the application. The report highlights that no trees of high or medium value that are to be



removed to facilitate the development, however it is noted that there are several low quality trees in the vicinity that would benefit from removal as part of the scheme. It has been deemed that this is an acceptable loss in the context of the extensive new tree planting that is to be undertaken across the wider landscape.

Previous Planning Applications

Please refer to the Project Context Document by Hiraeth Architecture for details of previous planning applications relating to the site.

Building Control

The Building Regulations set standards for how buildings must be constructed to achieve a minimum level of acceptable performance.

The two principal areas of risk when upgrading buildings of traditional construction to meet the requirements are:

- causing unacceptable damage to the character and appearance of historic buildings, and
- causing technical conflicts between existing construction methods and changes to improve energy efficiency.

Part L of the Building Regulations covers the conservation of fuel and power. Sustainability is about overlapping environmental, social and economic requirements and the need to bring them all into harmony. All are relevant to older buildings, but for the purposes of Part L the greatest emphasis must lie on the environmental aspect, and specifically the use of fossil energy. This is closely allied to the generation of carbon dioxide both from the creation of buildings and from their daily use.

For existing buildings energy conservation upgrading is generally only required for elements that are to be substantially replaced or renovated, or where there is a change of use. The requirements do not apply to normal maintenance and repair work. They therefore predominantly apply in the following circumstances:

- Changes or renovations made to thermal elements such as doors or windows;
- When an extension or conservatory is to be added;
- When the building is to be subjected to a change of use or a change of energy status;
- Changes made to controlled fittings or services;
- When consequential improvements are required

When proposing any works to modify an existing traditionally constructed building, it is important that it should first be properly understood. This means understanding its construction, condition and the way it performs. It also means understanding the building's qualities or significance. The significance of a historic building clearly encompasses the more obvious architectural and aesthetic values, but it also includes less tangible elements such as associations with historic people and events, examples of technological innovations, aspects of social history and links with a building's setting and other heritage assets. These will necessarily need to be balanced and aligned with the requirements of modern occupation.