

PLANNING STATEMENT

Gnoll Estate Country Park Pond Cottage Application

September 2023



Summary

Proposal:

Full planning permission for proposed development comprising:

1. Demolition and rebuilding of existing visitor centre,
2. Proposed conversion and extension of Pond Cottage into a tea room,
3. Creation of visitor accommodation within kitchen garden area,
4. Proposed consolidation and repair works to Gnoll House ruins and creation of education interpretation centre in Gnoll House cellars,
5. Installation of temporary café, temporary public WC facilities and temporary storage facilities, and
6. Proposed other works to country park including extension and increase to existing car parking area and associated infrastructure and landscape works

APPLICATION 2 – PROPOSED CONVERSION AND EXTENSION OF POND COTTAGE INTO A TEA ROOM

Location:

Gnoll Estate Country Park, Fairyland, Neath, SA11 3BS

Date:

September 2023

Project Reference:

S23.117

Client:

Head of Property and Regeneration for Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council

Product of:

Asbri Planning Limited
Suite D, 1st Floor
220 High Street
Swansea
SA1 1NW

Prepared by:

Iwan Rowlands – Graduate Planner

Approved by:

Richard Bowen - Director

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Introduction

- 1.1 This planning application has been prepared on behalf of The Head of Property and Regeneration at Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council (NPTCBC) for the proposed development comprising [REDACTED]
2. Proposed conversion and extension of Pond Cottage into a tea room,
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
- 1.2 This Planning Statement discusses Application 2 which concerns the proposed conversion and extension of Pond Cottage into a tea room.
- 1.3 The entire proposal has been supported by Levelling Up Funding (LUF) from Welsh Government which *"is especially intended to support investment in places where it can make the biggest difference to everyday life, including ex-industrial areas, deprived towns and coastal communities."* It has been introduced to help local areas identify real local priorities for investment. The scheme aims to utilise the LUF to create an attractive environment, heritage and tourism proposition that will benefit the Country Park along with the wider area, making it a highly desirable destination with many economic benefits.
- 1.4 The aim of this Planning Statement is to offer a clear and logical document to outline the planning considerations and planning policies pertinent to the application. The document also acts as a method of representing the details of the planning application in a way that can be read both by professionals and the public.
- 1.5 This Planning Statement acts as a supporting document for the accompanying planning application and should be read in conjunction with all other elements of the application which include the following documents:

Drawing name	Drawing reference
Existing Location Plan	2080-03-HIR-A-DR-00001-S2-P1
Existing Site Plan	2080-03-HIR-A-DR-00020-S2-P3
Existing Site Analysis	2080-03-HIR-A-DR-00021-S2-p1
Existing Ground Floor Plan	2080-03-HIR-A-DR-01031-S2-P3
Existing First Floor Plan	2080-03-HIR-A-DR-01032-S2-P3
Existing Roof Plan	2080-03-HIR-A-DR-01039-S2-P2
Existing North and East Elevations	2080-03-HIR-A-DR-03041-S2-P3
Existing South and West Elevations	2080-03-HIR-A-DR-03042-S2-P2
Proposed Site Plan	2080-03-HIR-A-DR-00201-S2-P4
Proposed Ground Floor Plan	2080-03-HIR-A-DR-01310-S2-P6
Proposed First Floor Plan	2080-03-HIR-A-DR-01320-S2-P5
Proposed Roof Plan	2080-03-HIR-A-DR-01390-S2-P4
Proposed Drainage Plan	2080-03-HIR-A-DR-01391-S2-P2
Proposed North and East Elevations	2080-03-HIR-A-DR-02401-S2-P5
Proposed South and West Elevations	2080-03-HIR-A-DR-02402-S2-P5
Proposed Section Abutment Detail	2080-03-HIR-A-DR-03780-S2-P1
Ground Floor Repairs Plan	2080-03-HIR-A-DR-01131-S2-P2
First Floor Repairs Plan	2080-03-HIR-A-DR-01132-S2-P2
Ground Floor Demolitions Plan	2080-03-HIR-A-DR-01133-S2-P1
Site and First Floor Demolitions Plan	2080-03-HIR-A-DR-01134-S2-P1
Roof Repairs Plan	2080-03-HIR-A-DR-01139-S2-P2
South and West Elevations Repairs Plan	2080-03-HIR-A-DR-03140-S2-P2

North and East Elevations Repairs Plan	2080-03-HIR-A-DR-03141-S2-P2
South and West Elevations Demolitions Plan	2080-03-HIR-A-DR-03142-S2-P1
North and East Elevations Demolitions Plan	2080-03-HIR-A-DR-03143-S2-P1
Landscaping Plan	2080-03-DLA-L-DR-10002-S2-P03
Topographical Survey	6588 - 1
Measured Building Survey	6588 - MBS
Drainage Layout	2080-00-JUB-C-DR-00502-S2-P4
Vehicle Tracking	2080-03-JUB-C-DR-00902-S2-P1
Lighting Plan	2080-03-MCP-E-DR-9300

- 1.6 In addition, the following supporting documents have been submitted.

Document	Prepared by
Planning application forms (1APP)	Asbri Planning
Planning Statement	Asbri Planning
PAC Report	Asbri Planning
Gnoll Park Context Statement	Hiraeth Architecture
Design and Access Statement (Including Heritage Impact Assessment)	Hiraeth Architecture
Historic Environment Desk Based Assessment	DAT
Written Scheme of Investigation	DAT
Drainage Strategy Report	Jubb
Non-Mains Drainage Assessment	Jubb
Coal Mining Risk Assessment	Earth Science Partnership
Ground Condition Assessment Report	Jubb
Bat Survey and Preliminary Ecological Appraisal	NPTCBC Ecology
Tree Survey and Arboricultural Impact Assessment	NPTCBC
Construction Environmental Management Plan	Andrew Scott

- 1.7 In terms of the content of this Planning Statement, this chapter is followed by a site description and its features which includes a contextual analysis regarding the local character and nearby land

uses and review of planning history. Next, Chapter 3 offers an outline of the proposed development. Subsequently, Chapter 4 provides a summary of the relevant national and local planning policies which provide the framework for appraising the proposed development. Meanwhile, Chapter 5 pulls together the vital points and conclusions from the supporting technical documents to demonstrate the overall suitability of the proposal in planning terms. To conclude, Chapter 6 states why the proposal should be granted planning permission.

Site Description and Context

General Location

- 2.1 The application site comprises the Gnoll Estate Country Park in Neath. The Country Park is a Grade II* Registered Historic Park and Garden which sits on a steep sided hill at the eastern end of Neath. The Park has retained its rich history by telling the story of the Mackworth family through the existing features still situated within the park that include four large duck ponds, two 18th century cascades and the Gnoll House ruins.
- 2.2 Figure 1 below demonstrates the Country Park's location (identified by red circle) within the wider surrounding area. A site location plan has been produced for each application, showing both a red line plan and blue line showing the land which is in the applicant's ownership.

Figure 1: Site Location (Source: OS Map online)



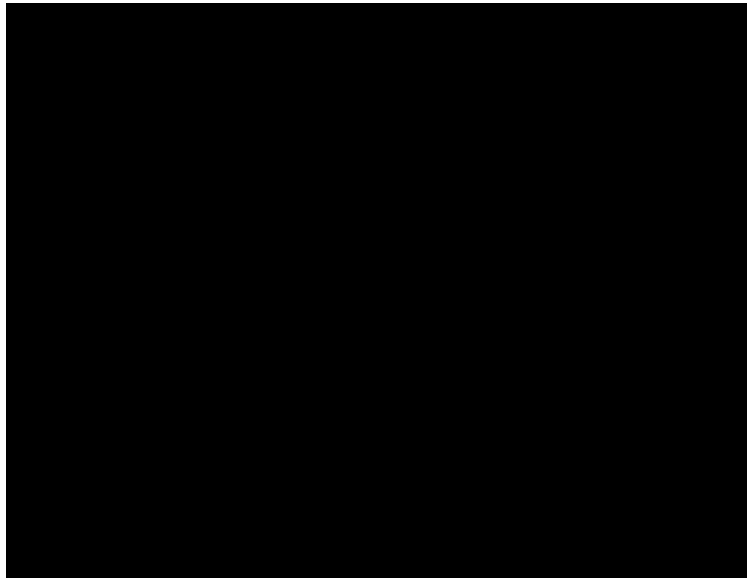
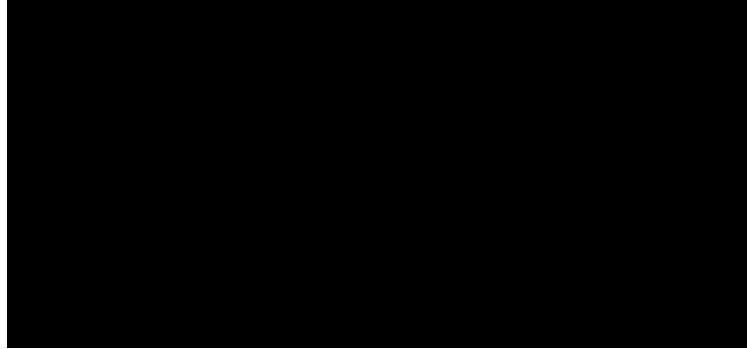
Site Features

- 2.3 The site itself is circa 5 hectares, and contains a visitor centre with café and toilet facilities inside, a children's playground, a fishpond, formal cascades and bridge, and waterfall and stream. There are several footpaths lying within the site which are used by visitors, and there are also three Grade II listed buildings within the site boundary:
- The Mosshouse Wood Cascades;
 - The Grotto; and
 - The War Memorial.

- 2.4 The site's immediate surroundings to the north, south and west are mostly residential, whereas east lie several fields of grassland and trees. To the west of the site lies Neath town centre, where there are a range of facilities and services:
- Gnoll Country Park;
 - Neath Leisure Centre,
 - Neath Train Station;
 - Gwyn Hall;
 - Supermarkets;
 - Public House;
 - Pharmacy;
 - Dentist; and
 - Victoria Gardens
- 2.5 The entire application site lies within Zone A in the Natural Resources Wales (NRW) Development Advice Map. The Flood Map for Planning places some parts of the site within Flood Zones 2 and 3 for surface water and small watercourses.
- 2.6 A review of CADW's shows there are three grade II listed buildings within the site curtilage as outlined in Paragraph 2.3. As previously noted, the Country Park is a Grade II* listed designated parkland, with it registered due to the survival of its largely eighteenth-century landscape park, which has significant historic interest, in its original rural setting above the town of Neath.
- 2.7 The Coal Authority's Interactive Map reveals some of the land to the west of the fishpond is within a Coal Mining Development High Risk Area.
- 2.8 Within the Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council Local Development Plan (2011-2026) Proposals Map, the following policies are applicable to the site:
- Policy SP5 – Coastal Corridor Strategy Area;
 - Policy EN3 – Green Wedge;
 - Policy SP21 – Built Environment and Historic Heritage;
 - Policy M1 – Development in Mineral Safeguarding Area; and
 - Policy M2 – Surface Coal Operations

Individual Application Site

- 2.9 [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]



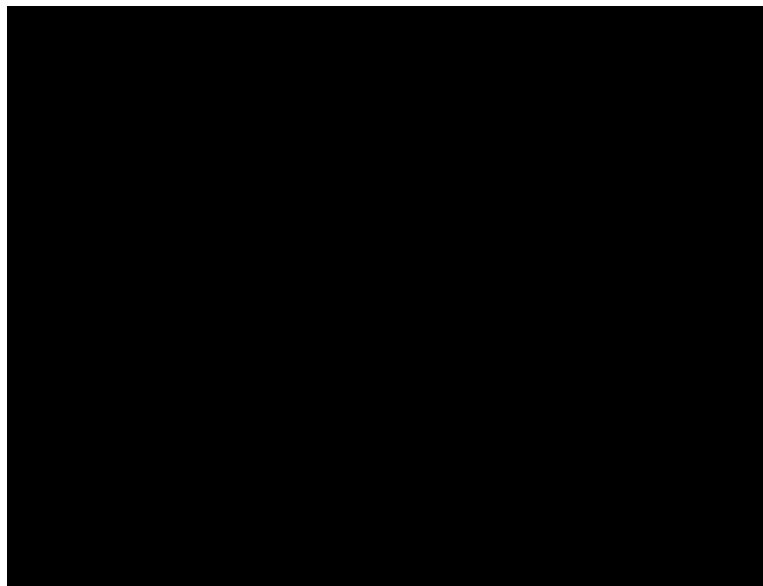
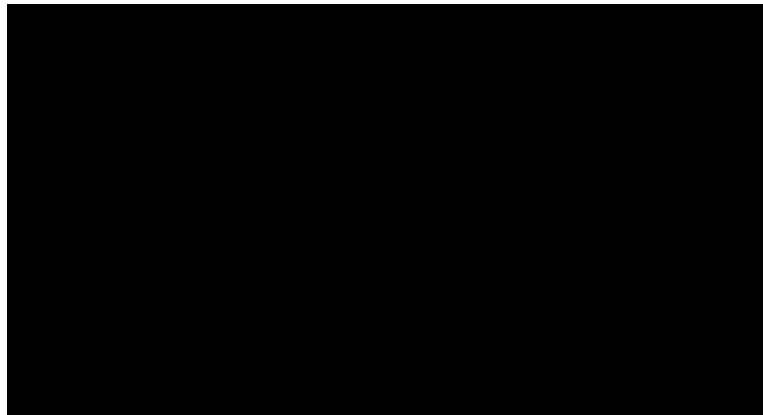
2.10 Application 2 – Pond Cottage:

Pond Cottage in Figure 3 is a two storey structure to the south of the fish pond, which was previously used as a home for the bailiff. The last couple of years has seen the cottage remain empty. The southern elevation overlooks a back garden that is sealed off from the rest of the park to allow an element of privacy on the southern and western ends of the property. The former dwelling contains a dining room, kitchen and living space on the ground floor, whereas there are three bedrooms and bathroom on the first floor.

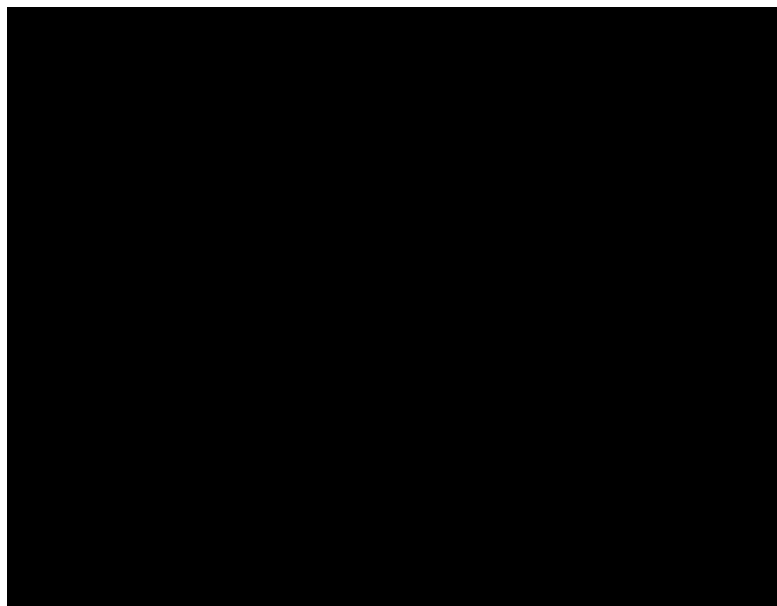
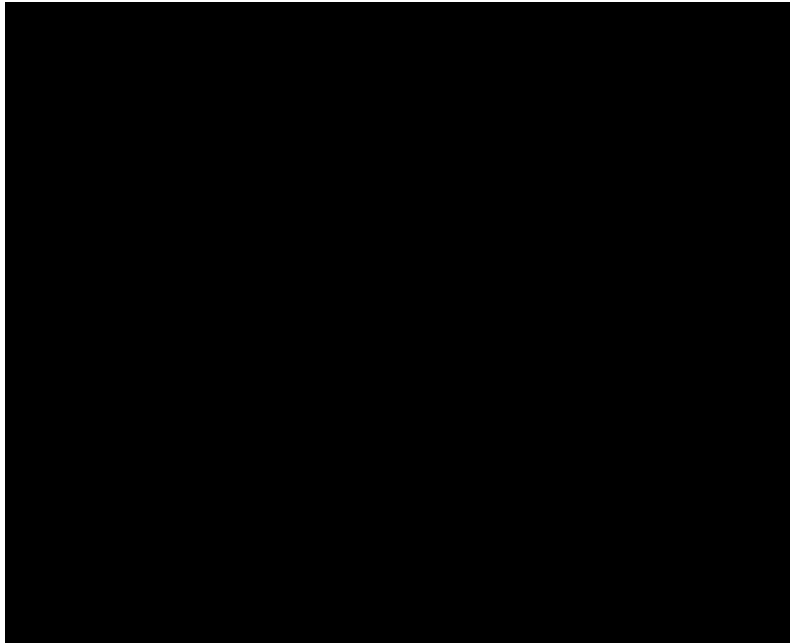
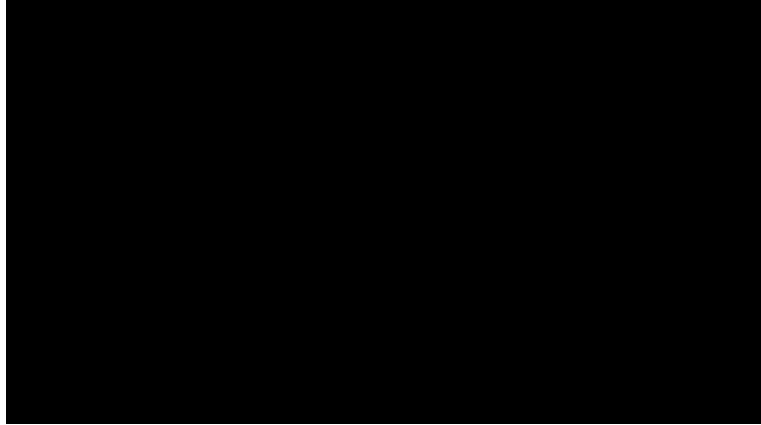
Figure 3: Pond Cottage



2.11



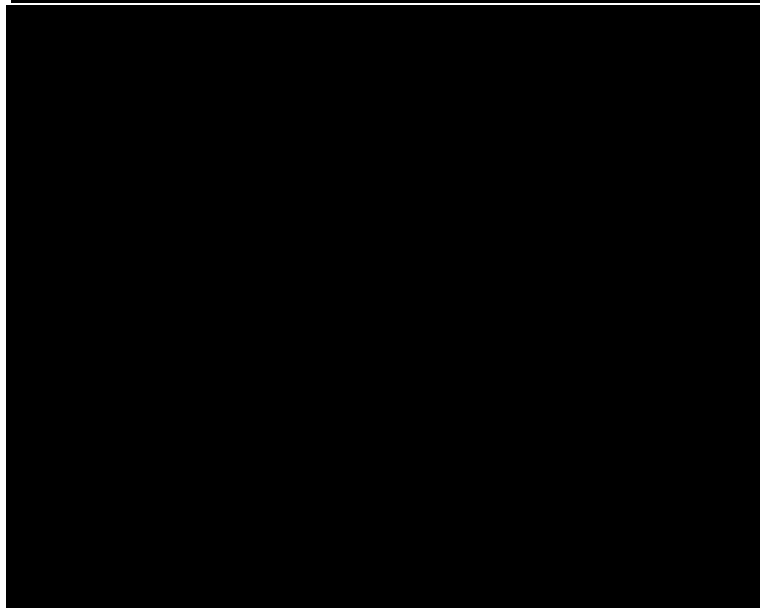
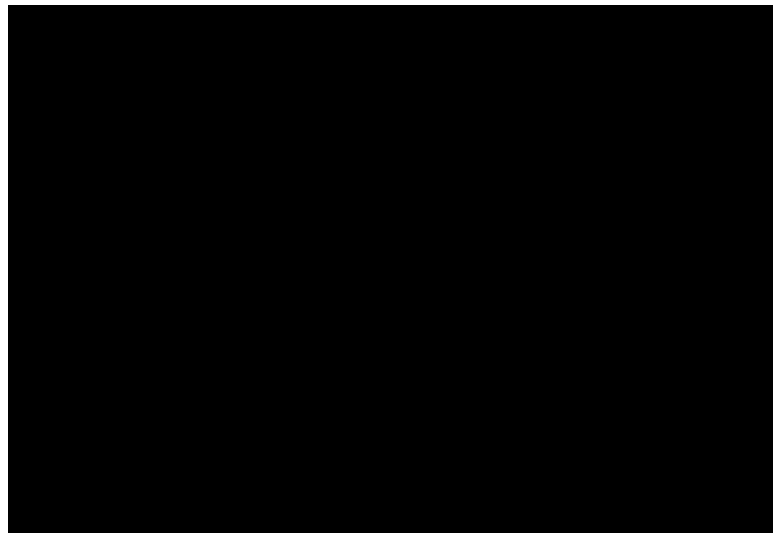
2.12



2.13



2.14



Access

- 2.14 The site is less than two miles away from the Heads of the Valleys Road (A465), a trunk road that runs from Junction 43 of the M4 at Llandarcy to Bromyard in Herefordshire. It is 66 miles in total and connects settlements including Neath, Abergavenny, Merthyr Tydfil and Hereford. Junction 43 of the M4 is only a 10 minute drive away, which offers access to several destinations within South Wales and across the border in England.

- 2.15 The site is positioned in a highly sustainable location, with several bus stops in close proximity to the site. The nearest bus stop lies just before the main entry to the site along Fairyland. This stop is serviced by the 153 on a two hour basis, terminating at Neath bus station. Neath bus station is in the town centre, and has services heading to several destinations including Swansea, Skewen, Margam, Pontardawe and Brecon.
- 2.16 Neath Train Station is less than ten minutes away from the application site. Hourly services are operated by Great Western Railway travel between Swansea and London Paddington in both directions. Transport for Wales services also call at the station, with their services terminating at destinations including Manchester Piccadilly, Cardiff Central, Carmarthen and Milford Haven.
- 2.17 Running to the north of the site is national cycle route 47 which goes from Newport to Fishguard and forms part of the Celtic Trail West. The route itself is 121 miles long and over half of it lies in traffic free paths.

Planning History

- 2.18 A review of Neath Port Talbot's online planning history identifies the following planning history of importance relating to the site which dates back to 1993.

LPA Reference	Proposal	Decision
N1993/0394	De-siting first, fish and guinea ponds, and watercourse. New road and car park, visitor centre, playground, golf course	Approved 25/10/2023
N1993/0416	Visitor Centre for information and leisure purposes	Approved 25/10/2023
N1993/0535	Visitor Centre	Approved 06/12/1993
N1993/0537	General refurbishments including new access steps	Approved 20/12/1993
N1994/0012	Removal of condition 4 and 5 application no. 93/394 and construction of footpath from Fairyland to car park	Approved 07/03/1994
N1994/0436	Modification to car parking area adjacent to first pond as approved on 2/3/93/0394/11	Approved 19/09/1994
P1997/0491	Renovations and improvements to Pond Cottage	Permitted Development 13/06/1997

<i>P2014/0598</i>	<i>Prior notification for demolition of classroom building.</i>	<i>Prior Notifica- tion Approval Not Required 18/07/2014</i>
<i>P2017/0312</i>	<i>Extension to existing children`s playground</i>	<i>Approved 20/06/2017</i>
<i>P2022/1055</i>	<i>Installation of 8m high multi play tower/equipment (to replace existing play apparatus/thick climbing unit)</i>	<i>Approved 01/02/2023</i>

Proposal

- 3.1 The proposal seeks full planning permission to convert and extend Pond Cottage into a tea room within Gnoll Country Park. To facilitate this, repairs will be made to the current fabric of the building, the ground floor will be reconfigured internally, one of the former bedrooms will be subdivided, the lean-to store contained at the rear of Pond Cottage will be demolished, along with associated landscaping.
- 3.2 Pond Cottage is located in a prominent position within the Park, however it has no positive economic impact upon the site and the building is in a rather poor condition and is not well maintained. Having received the LUF from the UK Government, it has been decided that an attempt should be made to bring back Pond Cottage into beneficial use and enable it to positively contribute to the range of facilities the Park has to offer.
- 3.3 Initially, consideration was given to turning Pond Cottage into self-catering accommodation or into a tea room. An appraisal of both options concluded that developing Pond Cottage into a tea room would offer greater benefit to visitors.
- 3.4 By converting Pond Cottage, there are several key benefits including offering a space that can be utilised by the local community, provided an improved experience of Pond Cottage and increase use of the building to provide it with a viable use to secure its long-term future.
- 3.5 On the ground floor (Drawing Ref: 2080-03-HIR-A-DR-01310-S2-P6), there are three proposed seating areas, a kitchen food preparation area, two serveries and three WC facilities. Within the first floor (Drawing Ref: 2080-03-HIR-A-DR-01320-S2-P5) there will be two further seating areas, storage facility and two WC facilities. The first floor can be accessed via a set of stairs, whilst additional seating is provided outside within the garden area. A small extension is proposed to the rear of the building, which will be of a contemporary design featuring a green roof containing wildflower native species.
- 3.6 The following finishes are proposed for the extension to the building:
- Windows – PCC aluminium;
 - Roof – Wildflower native species to be planted;
 - Copings – PCC aluminium;
 - Walls – Black, heat enhanced architectural timber with PCC metal trim.

Please refer to the proposed set of drawings which identify the position of each of the proposed materials for the extension to the building.

- 3.7 Repair works will be undertaken on the existing roof, external walls, windows and doors of the building. In terms of demolition, this will take place at the rear of the building in order to enable the proposed extension. Further information concerning the repairs, demolition, internal and external works can be found within the submitted set of drawings and Design and Access Statement produced by Hiraeth Architecture.

Design

- 3.8 This section addresses the five objectives of good design which include access, character, environmental sustainability, movement and community safety. This is expanded upon further in the Design and Access Statement produced by Hiraeth Architecture.

Access

- 3.9 Firstly, the proposal is permitting access to the building for the general public by using as a tea room. The ground floor new extension will be DDA compliant access to permit access for all, including wheelchair users. Three WC facilities are located on the ground floor, including an accessible one. In terms of first floor access, this has been constrained by the existing structure consequently, only a stair access is provided to and from the first floor.

Character

- 3.10 Pond Cottage is a building of character within the park designed with an arts and crafts-esque approach, the building is an example of the estate style of lodge that was once prevalent throughout the Gnoll estate and its conversion and extension will elevate its status as a key visitor facility. The proposed design of the extension is deliberately contemporary in design to emphasise the character of the main building.
- 3.11 The extension will respect the existing historic landscape, and will not be of detriment to the existing structure. As noted in the Design and Access Statement, *"The approach to the appearance of the developed extension has therefore been to work towards enhancing the character of the existing building, whilst introducing a new layer of considered development to the site in a style that is both contextual and appropriate to today's society".*

Environmental Sustainability

- 3.12 The proposed scheme has attempted to address sustainable principles from the outset by adopting a general approach that reduces the buildings' carbon footprint by seeking to reduce the amount of energy that the building uses. The new extension will be constructed to modern and up to date building regulations standards to ensure that it is as energy efficient as possible, adopting a fabric first approach to construction. The utilisation of locally sourced materials will contribute towards the reduction in the carbon footprint of the entire proposal.

Movement

- 3.13 A key aspect of any development is for the site to be accessed by numerous types of transport. Throughout this document, it has been emphasised that the site is well situated for public transport and active travel needs which permit access to nearby facilities and settlements, and wider areas of NPTCBC. The site is positioned in a highly sustainable location, with several bus stops in close proximity to the site. The nearest bus stop lies just before the main entry to the site along Fairyland whereas Neath Train Station is less than a ten minute drive from the application site. Running to the north of the site is national cycle route 47 which goes from Newport to Fishguard and forms part of the Celtic Trail West.

Community Safety

- 3.14 Community safety will be improved as a result of the proposal. There will be increased use of this area of the Park which will offer natural surveillance of this area which is not currently in place. In addition to this, the lines of visibility provided from the servery will allow employees to keep an eye on people entering and leaving the premises.

Pre-Application Consultation

- 3.15 Hiraeth Architects and NPTCBC undertook a public consultation event at Gnoll Estate Country Park Visitor Centre, which displayed all information included in the Stage 1 Levelling Up Funding document. A formal pre-application consultation took place between 18th May 2023 and June 15th 2023, with site notices displayed on site, letters sent to statutory, other and community consultees, along with adjoining residents. In addition to this, a response desk was set up in the visitor centre. Further information concerning the pre-application process and the responses gathered can be found in the submitted PAC Report.

Planning Policy Context

Introduction

- 4.1 The planning policy framework for the determination of this application is provided by the content and scope of national planning guidance, together with the adopted Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council Local Development Plan. National Planning Policy is largely contained within Planning Policy Wales (PPW) – 11th Edition, published by the Welsh Assembly Government on February 2021. PPW is supplemented by 19 Technical Advice Notes (TANs), the relevant TANs will also be discussed within this chapter.
- 4.2 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that planning applications be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The Development Plan for the purposes of this Planning Application comprises the following:
- National Development Framework: Future Wales – The National Plan 2040 (February, 2021);
 - Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council Local Development Plan (January, 2016)
- 4.3 In addition to the Development Plan, the Planning Application has been informed by policy and guidance set out in the following:
- Planning Policy Wales Edition 11 (February, 2021), informed by The Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, and supplemented by Technical Advice Notes;
 - Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council Supplementary Planning Guidance; and
 - Managing Change to Registered Historic Parks and Gardens in Wales (Cadw Guidance published in 2017)

National Level

The Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

- 4.4 The Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (which came into force on 1st April 2016) requires *“public bodies to do things in pursuit of the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales in a way that accords with the sustainable development principle”*. The Act sets out seven ‘well-being’ goals as follows:
- A prosperous Wales: An innovative, productive and low carbon society which recognises the limits of the global environment and therefore uses resources efficiently and proportionately (including acting on climate change); and which develops a skilled and well-educated population in an economy which generates wealth and provides employment opportunities, allowing people to take advantage of the

wealth generated through securing decent work.

- A resilient Wales: A nation which maintains and enhances a biodiverse natural environment with healthy functioning ecosystems that support social, economic and ecological resilience and the capacity to adapt to change (for example climate change).
- A healthier Wales: A society in which people's physical and mental well-being is maximised and in which choices and behaviours that benefit future health are understood.
- A more equal Wales: A society that enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances (including their socio-economic background and circumstances).
- A Wales of cohesive communities: Attractive, viable, safe and well-connected communities.
- A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language: A society that promotes and protects culture, heritage and the Welsh language, and which encourages people to participate in the arts, and sports and recreation.
- A globally responsive Wales: A nation which, when doing anything to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, takes account of whether doing such a thing may make a positive contribution to global wellbeing.

- 4.5 Within the Act, sustainable development is defined as follows: *"the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the well-being goals"*. The Act sets out that when making decisions, public bodies need to take into account the impact they could have on people living in Wales in the future and must apply the sustainable development principle in all decisions.

National Development Framework: Future Wales – The National Plan 2040

- 4.6 The National Development Framework: Future Wales – the National Plan 2040 was published on 24th February 2021. 'Future Wales' sets out the Welsh Government's strategy for addressing key national priorities through the planning system, including sustaining and developing a vibrant economy; achieving decarbonisation and climate-resilience; developing strong ecosystems; and improving the health and well-being of our communities. As stated above, the National Development Framework has Development Plan status.

- 4.7 Future Wales sets out its overarching ambitions based on the na-

tional planning principles and national sustainable placemaking outcomes set out in Planning Policy Wales by means of 11 Outcomes.

As set out on Page 52 of Future Wales, the 11 Outcomes are collectively a statement of where the Welsh Government aspires Wales to be in 20 years' time, as follows:

A Wales where people live:

- 1. ...and work in connected, inclusive and healthy places*
- 2. ...in vibrant rural places with access to homes, jobs and services*
- 3. ...in distinctive regions that tackle health and socio-economic inequality through sustainable growth*
- 4. ...in places with a thriving Welsh Language*
- 5. ...and work in towns and cities which are a focus and springboard for sustainable growth*
- 6. ...in places where prosperity, innovation and culture are promoted*
- 7. ...in places where travel is sustainable*
- 8. ...in places with world-class digital infrastructure*
- 9. ...in places that sustainably manage their natural resources and reduce pollution*
- 10. ...in places with biodiverse, resilient and connected ecosystems*
- 11. ...in places which are decarbonised and climate-resilient*

- 4.8 The Welsh Government's strategic growth strategy is set out in Policy 1 of Future Wales as follows:

Policy 1 – Where Wales will Grow

The Welsh Government supports sustainable growth in all parts of Wales. In three National Growth Areas there will be growth in employment and housing opportunities and investment in infrastructure. The National Growth Areas are:

- Cardiff, Newport and the Valleys*
- Swansea Bay and Llanelli*
- Wrexham and Deeside*

- 4.9 It is identified at Page 76 that the strategic focus of Future Wales on urban growth requires *"an increased emphasis on biodiversity enhancement (net benefit) in order to ensure that growth is sustainable"* (page 76).

- 4.10 Future Wales identifies that transport in Wales is currently dominated by the car and that *"our reliance on travelling by car is limiting the opportunity for physical activity and social contact to be built into people's everyday lives and is exacerbating air and noise pollution, particularly along major routes and at busy destinations...This has an adverse impact on people's health and well-being, contributing to life-limiting illnesses associated with physical inactivity, loneliness and isolation"* (page 85).

- 4.11 The importance of the implementation of policies which require development to be directed towards sustainable locations and designed to make it possible for everyone to make sustainable and healthy travel choices is highlighted in Future Wales, and it is stated that planning authorities will be required *"to refuse planning permission for car-dependent developments which would otherwise encourage car use and undermine sustainable travel"* (page 85).
- 4.12 Policy 28 (National Growth Areas - Swansea Bay and Llanelli) of Future Wales is also of relevance, as it states that Swansea Bay and Llanelli will be the main focus for growth and investment in the South West region. This national growth area is considered as the hub for economic and housing growth.

Planning Policy Wales (Edition 11)

- 4.13 Planning Policy Wales (PPW) sets out land use planning policies of the Welsh Government which is supplemented by a series of Technical Advice Notes (TANs), Welsh Government Circulars and policy clarification letters, which together with PPW provide the national planning policy framework for Wales.
- 4.14 Its primary objective is to ensure that the planning system contributes towards the delivery of sustainable development and improves the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales as required by the Planning (Wales) Act 2015, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and other key legislation.
- 4.15 Sustainable Development is defined at Page 7 of PPW as follows: *"the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the well-being goals"*.
- 4.16 Paragraph 1.18 sets out that *"Legislation secures a presumption in favour of sustainable development in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise to ensure that social, economic, cultural and environmental issues are balanced and integrated"*.
- 4.17 The significance of good design for development proposals is highlighted in Paragraph 3.3 of PPW where it is noted *"Good design is fundamental to creating sustainable places where people want to live, work and socialise. Design is not just about the architecture of a building but the relationship between all elements of the natural and built environment and between people and places. To achieve sustainable development, design must go beyond aesthetics and include the social, economic, environmental, cultural aspects of the*

development, including how space is used, how buildings and the public realm support this use, as well as its construction, operation, management, and its relationship with the surrounding area".

- 4.18 Paragraph 3.6 notes that development proposals should allow inclusivity and accessibility for everybody. It states *"This includes making provision to meet the needs of people with sensory, memory, learning and mobility impairments, older people and people with young children. There will often be wider benefits to be gained through the sensitive consideration of such provision, for example, whilst the presence of visual cues will be invaluable in assisting those with hearing loss to engage in a noisy environment, a navigable environment will benefit all. Good design can also encourage people to meet and interact with each other, helping to address issues surrounding loneliness. Good design must also involve the provision of measures that help to reduce the inequality of access to essential services, education and employment experienced by people without access to a car. Design measures and features should enable easy access to services by walking, cycling and public transport."*
- 4.19 Design is not only about the architecture of a structure but the relationship amongst every facet of the natural and built environment and between people and places. Furthermore, good design encourages environmental sustainability and contributes towards meeting well-being targets. Paragraph 3.7 states: *"Developments should seek to maximise energy efficiency and the efficient use of other resources (including land), maximise sustainable movement, minimise the use of non-renewable resources, encourage decarbonisation and prevent the generation of waste and pollution. An integrated and flexible approach to design, including early decisions regarding location".*
- 4.20 Paragraph 3.8 discusses good design within an environmental context. It *"can help to ensure high environmental quality. Landscape and green infrastructure considerations are an integral part of the design process. Integrating green infrastructure is not limited to focusing on landscape and ecology, rather, consideration should be given to all features of the natural environment and how these function together to contribute toward the quality of places. This embraces the principles of 'ecosystems services' and sustainable management of natural resources where multiple benefits solution become an integral part of good design. In a similar manner, addressing environmental risks can make a positive contribution to environmental protection and improvement, addressing land contamination, instability and flood risk and providing for biodiversity, climate protection, improved air quality,*

soundscape and water resources benefits".

- 4.21 Paragraph 3.9 focuses on how the special characteristics of an area should be fundamental for development design: *"The layout, form, scale and visual appearance of a proposed development and its relationship to its surroundings are important planning considerations. A clear rationale behind the design decisions made, based on site and context analysis, a strong vision, performance requirements and design principles, should be sought throughout the development process and expressed, when appropriate, in a design and access statement"*.
- 4.22 Paragraph 3.50 notes *"A broad balance between housing, community facilities, services and employment opportunities in both urban and rural areas should be promoted to minimise the need for long distance commuting. Planning authorities should adopt policies to locate major generators of travel demand, such as housing, employment, retailing, leisure and recreation, and community facilities (including libraries, schools, doctor's surgeries and hospitals), within existing urban areas or areas which are, or can be, easily reached by walking or cycling, and are well served by public transport"*. Locating development where there are existing facilities and amenities is a key consideration of any proposal.
- 4.23 Paragraph 3.75 states *"The construction of new buildings in a Green Belt or green wedge is inappropriate development unless it is for the following purposes:*
- *justified rural enterprise needs;*
 - *essential facilities for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation, cemeteries, and other uses of land which maintain the openness of the Green Belt or green wedge and which do not conflict with the purpose of including land within it;*
 - *limited extension, alteration or replacement of existing dwellings; or*
 - *small scale diversification within farm complexes where this is run as part of the farm business."*
- 4.24 Paragraph 4.1.10 highlights that any development should focus on sustainable travel and reduce the reliance on cars, with a particular emphasis on short journeys as these are most frequently made by individuals. *"The planning system has a key role to play in reducing the need to travel, particularly by private car, and supporting sustainable transport, by facilitating developments which:*
- *are sited in the right locations where they can be easily accessed by sustainable modes of travel and without the need for a car;*
 - *are designed in a way which integrates them with existing*

- land uses and neighbourhoods; and
- make it possible for all short journeys within and beyond the development to be easily made by walking and cycling."

- 4.25 Paragraph 4.1.11 supports the above information, by encouraging development of active travel and sustainable transport infrastructure and services. It notes that *"proposals must seek to maximise accessibility by walking, cycling and public transport, by prioritising the provision of appropriate on-site infrastructure and, where necessary, mitigating transport impacts through the provision of off-site measures, such as the development of active travel routes, bus priority infrastructure and financial support for public transport services."*
- 4.26 Paragraph 4.4.1 states *"Community facilities perform various functions which cover a broad range of activities and services that can be delivered by the public, private and third sectors. Community facilities contribute to a sense of place which is important to the health, well-being and amenity of local communities and their existence is often a key element in creating viable and sustainable places."*
- 4.27 Paragraph 5.5.1 notes *"Tourism involves a wide range of activities, facilities and types of development and is vital to economic prosperity and job creation in many parts of Wales. Tourism can be a catalyst for regeneration, improvement of the built environment and environmental protection."*
- 4.28 Paragraph 6.1.2 states *"The historic environment is made up of individual historic features which are collectively known as historic assets. Examples of what can constitute an historic asset include:*
- *Listed buildings;*
 - *Conservation areas;*
 - *Historic assets of special local interest;*
 - *Historic parks and gardens;*
 - *Townscapes;*
 - *Historic Landscapes;*
 - *World Heritage Sites; and*
 - *Archaeological remains (including scheduled monuments)."*
- 4.29 In respect of Historic Park and Gardens, PPW states *"Planning authorities should value, protect, conserve and enhance the special interest of parks and gardens and their settings included on the register of historic parks and gardens in Wales. The register should be taken into account in planning authority decision making. Green Infrastructure Assessments should be used to explore*

the role of historic parks and gardens and the findings of other landscape character assessments should be fed into historical and cultural assessments to ensure consistency of information."

- 4.30 Paragraph 6.1.20 states *"The effect of a proposed development on a registered park or garden, or its setting, is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications"*.
- 4.31 The importance of green infrastructure is highlighted throughout PPW. It is summarised at Paragraph 6.2.5 that *"The quality of the built environment should be enhanced by integrating green infrastructure into development through appropriate site selection and use of creative design. With careful planning and design, green infrastructure can embed the benefits of biodiversity and ecosystem services into new development and places"*.

Technical Advice Notes

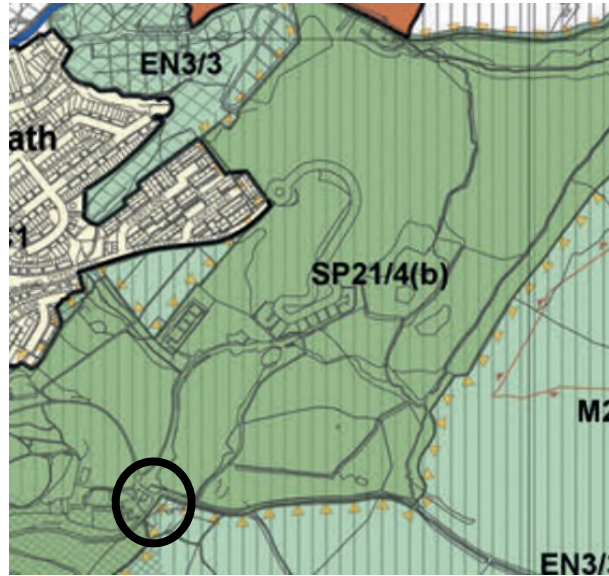
- 4.32 The following Technical Advice Notes (TANS) are of relevance to the development proposal.
- Technical Advice Note 12: Design;
 - Technical Advice Note 13: Tourism;
 - Technical Advice Note 16: Sport, Recreation and Open Space
 - Technical Advice Note 23: Economic Development
 - Technical Advice Note 24: The Historic Environment

Local Level

Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council Local Development Plan

- 4.33 The Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council Local Development Plan (LDP) was adopted in January 2016 and is the prevailing development plan for the County. The application site lies outside the settlement boundary relating to Tonna as shown below in Figure 8. From the map, the following LDP policies are applicable to the site:
- M1 - Development in Mineral Safeguarding Areas
 - EN3/3 - Neath / Tonna / Cimla / Efail Fach Green Wedge
 - SP5 - Coastal Corridor Strategy Area
 - SP21/4(b) - Built Environment and Historic Heritage (Historic Parks and Gardens)
 - M2/1 - Surface Coal Operations

Figure 8: NPTCBC LDP Map



- 4.34 The following LDP policies are considered relevant in the context of the proposed development:

Policy Reference	Relating To...
Policy SP1	Climate Change
Policy SP2	Health
Policy SP3	Sustainable Communities
Policy SC1	Settlement Limits
Policy SP4	Infrastructure
Policy I1	Infrastructure Requirements
Policy SP5	Development in the Coastal Corridor Strategy Area
Policy SP13	Tourism
Policy TO1	Tourism Development in the Countryside
Policy EN3	Green Wedges
Policy SP15	Biodiversity and Geodiversity
Policy EN7	Important Natural Features
Policy M1	Development in Mineral Safeguarding Areas
Policy M2	Surface Coal Operations
Policy RE2	Renewable and Low Carbon Energy in New Development
Policy W3	Waste Management in New Development
Policy SP20	Transport Network
Policy TR2	Design and Access of New Development
Policy SP21	Built Environment and Historic Heritage
Policy BE1	Design

Supplementary Planning Guidance

4.35 The following Supplementary Planning Guidance are considered relevant to the proposal:

- Biodiversity and Geodiversity
- Renewable and Low Carbon Energy
- Design
- The Historic Environment

Cadw Guidance – Managing Change to Registered Historic Parks and Gardens in Wales

4.36 Cadw produced the above best-practice guidance in order to provide general advice when changes are proposed to impact upon a Registered Historic Park and Garden. Under Section 2.2 it states that *"it is important to consider the impact of your proposals for change on the significance of your registered historic park or garden before you begin work. In particular, you should beware of the potential cumulative impact of small-scale changes, which individually may seem insignificant."*

4.37 Within the document, the following advice is provided:

- *Setting – When considering change, you should take a holistic approach to understanding its potential impact on setting. The impact of change on any one element may have unintended consequences for the setting if it is not properly considered.*
- *Views – Over time, views can be lost or compromised. This may result from inappropriate planting, incongruous development, or from lack of maintenance which has allowed vegetation to grow and obscure the intended view. Once you have identified the contribution of views to the significance of your registered historic park or garden, you may be able to open up and manage intended views which will enhance the site's historic character and heritage value, as well as your appreciation of it.*
- *Archaeology – Significant archaeological features may be present in a historic park and garden; they may be undesignated or as yet undiscovered. When considering change that may impact on archaeological features you should contact your local planning authority's archaeological advisors for advice.*
- *Layout – It is important that you understand the significant elements of the historic layout of your registered historic park or garden and interpret their evolution. This will help you to make informed and sympathetic management decisions without compromising its historic significance.*
- *Entrances and Routes – Wherever possible, you should keep historic circulation routes open. Information in the register*

entry and historic map research can help you to understand which routes are significant. If possible, you should avoid creating additional routes which subdivide parkland or alter the historic layout. If a new route is unavoidable or highly desirable, you should give it careful consideration to ensure minimal adverse impact on your registered historic park or garden. If additional routes are required, consider opportunities to open up former historic drives and tracks through the site.

- *Historic Boundary Features – You should retain historic boundary features where possible and your repairs should use traditional materials and methods. Where possible, avoid additional permanent boundaries in open parkland because they fragment the landscape physically and visually, and alter the historic layout. It is also important to consider the function of the boundary.*
- *Garden Building and Ornaments – Built structures are often vulnerable to damage, decay and neglect. Routine management and maintenance are important to ensure longevity. Your repairs should use sympathetic materials and techniques. They need to be informed by an understanding of the historic structure and its condition. It is advisable to seek advice from an appropriately qualified and experienced professional before repairing historic structures.*
- *Water Features – Like other historic features in your registered historic park or garden, it is essential to understand the significance of water features and associated water management structures before making changes to them.*
- *Planting – Registration does not place any restrictions on planting layout and choice of plants; however, understanding the significance of the planting in your registered historic park or garden can help you to manage it and enhance historic character.*

Appraisal

Overview

- 5.1 As stated above, Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that planning applications be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. This section of the statement aims to identify the main issues of relevance to the determination of the planning application, and assess the scheme against the Development Plan.
- 5.2 The key material considerations of relevance in the determination of the application are as follows:
- Principle of Development;
 - Impact on Character and Appearance of the area;
 - Access and Highway Considerations; and,
 - Other Material Considerations.

Principle of Development

- 5.3 The proposal seeks full planning permission for the proposed conversion and extension of Pond Cottage into a tea room within Gnoll Country Park. Within the LDP, the site lies outside settlement limit, but is within a designated heritage park, as recognised under Policy SP21.
- 5.4 In considering the principle of development, the key LDP policies for consideration are policies EN3 (Green Wedges), SP13 (Tourism), TO1 (Tourism Development in the Countryside), SP21 (Built Environment and Historic Heritage) and BE1 (Design).
- 5.5 Pond Cottage, is a two-storey traditional building that is an example of the estate type lodge that was popular within the Gnoll Estate. The building's key elevations are the north, east and west which enables the building to be approachable from three separate directions within the Park.
- 5.7 Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council has submitted a successful funding application to the UK Government's Levelling Up Fund to deliver £12 million of investment over the next two years at Gnoll Estate Country Park. The overarching focus of the Gnoll Estate Country Park project is to improve facilities, enable the restoration of the various heritage assets and enhance the natural environment within the Park in order to boost tourism prospects across the Park. Consequently, tourism policies SP13 (Tourism) and TO1 (Tourism Development in the Countryside) are pertinent to this application. Policy SP13

advocates “*high quality, sustainable tour-ism development*”, which is provided in this instance due to an increase in visitor café facilities as a result of the tea room, visitors will get an enhanced experience of Pond Cottage by being able to enter the previously unoccupied building, and the design of the proposal will be of the highest quality to ensure it assimilates with its immediate surroundings.

Policy TO1 states: *Tourism proposals outside of settlement limits will only be permitted where all of the following criteria are satisfied:*

- 1. It is demonstrated that the proposal is viable and contributes towards the quality and economic sustainability of the tourism industry;*
- 2. It is demonstrated that either the proposal requires a countryside location or it could not be accommodated within an existing settlement;*
- 3. The proposal would not have an adverse impact upon the landscape, ecology, and cultural heritage and would not adversely impact upon the social, economic, environmental or residential amenity of the area;*
- 4. The proposal does not create unacceptable levels of vehicular traffic, cause a detriment to highway safety and access can be provided by a range of transport modes.*

- 5.8 An assessment of the proposals against these criteria is offered below:

1. It is demonstrated that the proposal is viable and contributes towards the quality and economic sustainability of the tourism industry

A thorough appraisal of the proposed use was conducted, and in summary a tea room has been pursued as it will provide a service for the general public visiting the Park, and will lessen user pressure on other areas of the Park including the brand new visitor centre. At present, Pond Cottage is not generating any income for the park however the proposed conversion will alter this, and the unique offering proposed is sure to attract visitors as there are very few tea rooms within Neath Port Talbot.

2. It is demonstrated that either the proposal requires a countryside location or it could not be accommodated within an existing settlement

The proposal to develop Pond Cottage into a tea room is befitting of the Country Park’s countryside location. The scale and location of the development is appropriate and due to the site’s green wedge allocation, it is not possible for the proposal to be situated within an existing settlement unless it would be situated outside the grounds of the park.

3. The proposal would not have an adverse impact upon the landscape, ecology, and cultural heritage and would not ad-

versely impact upon the social, economic, environmental or residential amenity of the area

Under subsequent headings, it is confirmed that there will be no impact upon ecology, landscape or cultural heritage. Furthermore, there will be no negative social, economic or environmental impact, it is considered that the change of use and extension to Pond Cottage will further enhance these elements within the Park.

4. The proposal does not create unacceptable levels of vehicular traffic, cause a detriment to highway safety and access can be provided by a range of transport modes.

The proposal is a complimentary facility to that which is already provided within the Park and will not in itself generate any further vehicular traffic demand. In more general terms, vehicular traffic and parking matters will be dealt with as part of planning application 6. As noted previously in this document, a bus stop is situated on entry to the country park which offers services to Neath town centre, whereas running to the north of the site is national cycle route 47.

- 5.9 Policy SP21 (Built Environment and Historic Heritage) seeks to “*encouraging high quality design standards in all development proposals*”. Within Policy SP21, the application site is identified as a Historic Park and Garden, one of six within the Local Authority. Whilst the renovation and conversion work to Pond Cottage will have little impact. The precise design, scale and massing of the minor extension will as set out in the DAS, seeks to ensure a contemporary design of the highest quality which meets the aspirations of the criteria set out in the above policy.
- 5.10 In terms of Policy EN3 (Green Wedges), the site is located within the Neath/Tonna/Cimla/Efail Fach green wedge. The proposal is not supportive of inappropriate development, however given the fact Pond Cottage is an existing building, its change of use and minor extension is not considered to materially conflict with the policy. The policy states that proposals in a green wedge are unacceptable “*other than those for certain justified or essential activities that need to be located in the area and small scale extensions*”. The alterations to Pond Cottage are set to enhance its appearance and only a small scale extension is proposed to the rear of the building. To summarise, it is considered that the redevelopment of Pond Cottage would not in any way prejudice the openness of the green wedge, therefore the proposal accords with Policy EN3 (Green Wedges).
- 5.11 Policy is BE1 (Design) advocates high quality design of proposals that take in the existing environment to create beautiful places and spaces. This policy recognises the importance of the proposed development fitting in with the current character of the site, whilst considering its impact on the surrounding areas. Moreover, the design

should factor in accessibility for all users, create an attractive safe place for visitors and use materials in the build that are locally sourced and match the characteristics of the area.

- 5.12 It can be confirmed that the proposal aligns with spirit of Policy BE1 (Design), with all the following measures proposed as part of the development:
- The design of the building takes into consideration the existing context. The proposed building maintains its two storeys and offers views of both the surrounding landscape to the rear and of the Country Park itself to the front of the building
 - Locally sourced materials will be used during construction of the extension and elements of landscaping will be incorporated into the proposal;
 - There will be no detrimental impact on highway safety;
 - Ecological enhancement is proposed as part of this application, which come in the form of a green roof;
 - Natural surveillance is encouraged through the additional use of this area of the parkland, and the main entrance will be provided at the principal elevation of the building.
 - The ground floor of the building is accessible to all visitors including wheelchair users. Consideration was given to installing a lift however this would dramatically increase the size of the required footprint therefore this option was not pursued further.

Impact on Visual Amenity

- 5.13 The proposed development has been designed to have minimal impact upon visual amenity. The building intends to respond to the parkland environment, whilst maintaining its own prominence within the site. The scale of the proposed extension is subservient to the existing building, and does not have any overbearing impact upon the setting. The materials used for the extension will also need to be appropriate for the setting to allow it to match its surroundings. The proposal complies with Policy BE1 (Design) as careful consideration has been given to the *"siting, design, appearance, massing and scale to minimise any visual intrusion and where appropriate enhance the visual aspects of the area"*.

Highways and Access Considerations

- 5.14 In terms of highway matters, overall parking provision will be dealt with as a separate matter under planning application 6. In respect of the accessibility of Pond Cottage, the ground floor levels have been addressed in order to permit access for all, including wheelchair users. Three public WC facilities are located on the first floor, including an accessible one. In terms of first floor access, this has been con-

strained by the existing structure, as adding a lift would substantially increase the size of the necessary building footprint. Consequently, only a stair access is provided to and from the first floor.

- 5.15 As previously mentioned, the site lies in a sustainable location that can be accessed via bus. The nearest bus stop lies just before the main entry to the site along Fairyland. This stop is serviced by the 153 on a two hour basis, terminating at Neath bus station. Neath Train Station is less than a ten minute drive from the application site and receives a frequent service from both Transport for Wales and Great Western Railway. Running to the north of the site is national cycle route 47 which goes from Newport to Fishguard and forms part of the Celtic Trail West. As a result of the above, the proposal is considered to align with Policies SP1 (Climate Change), SP20 (Transport Network), TR2 (Design and Access of New Development) and BE1 (Design). Further consideration will be given to highway and access matters as part of the kitchen garden accommodation, and proposed extension to existing car park, with a Transport Statement submitted to support these proposals.

Other Material Considerations

Trees

- 5.16 The submitted tree report states there are 4 trees contained within the application site (1 Category A, 2 Category B and 1 Category U). The report advises that only the Category U tree needs to be removed as it is currently dying.
- 5.17 In terms of recommendations within the report, protective fencing needs to be erected around the root protection zones prior to any work on site. The report advises that any form of hard surfacing construction within root protection zones should be avoided. Should all recommendations be carried out from the report, the development is not deemed to have any negative effect on the retained trees. From a policy perspective, LDP Policy EN7 (Important Natural Features) is pertinent to this material consideration. In summary, the development won't adversely affect any trees on site, with only one Category U tree needing removal. Having considered the above, the proposal is compliant with Policy EN7.

Ecology

- 5.18 During 2022 and 2023, a bat survey was conducted of Pond Cottage which revealed that bats were utilising the soffits of the structure, in addition to several house sparrow nests. Notwithstanding this, the report states that there are no limitations to the development from bats/nesting birds on the basis that the works are conducted outside the bird nesting season, and work to bat roosts takes place during transitional periods.

- 5.19 The repair works to the foot and gutters/soffits will impact bat utilisation of this area, and therefore this work should be conducted in accordance with a Continued Ecological Function methodology which is in line with statutory permissions from Natural Resource Wales, in order to ensure the use of the site by bats is unchanged. In terms of ecological enhancement, this will come in the form of a green roof provided as part of the building inspection, consisting of native species.
- 5.20 Having discussed with an ecologist from NPTCBC, the precise details of the ecological enhancement can be conditioned to be agreed with the LPA prior to completion of the development. As no further survey work is necessary, site work is to be undertaken with roosting bats in mind, and an ecological enhancement is proposed, the scheme is compliant with Policies SP15 (Biodiversity and Geodiversity) and EN7 (Important Natural Features). The proposal will protect, conserve, enhance and manage *“Important habitats, species”* as noted in Policy SP15, whereas the development won’t *“adversely affect ecologically or visually important natural features such as trees, woodlands, hedgerows / field boundaries, watercourses or ponds”* which is requested as part of Policy EN7. 3 of the 4 existing trees on site will be retained, with only a Category U requiring felling. Furthermore, a green roof will be installed as part of the development that will contain native and wildlife friendly species.

Landscaping

- 5.21 The Landscaping Plan (Drawing Ref: 2080-03-DLA-L-DR-10002-S2-P01) shows some elements of landscaping are proposed to Pond Cottage. A new tree will be planted to the rear of the building, whilst a mixture of ornamental shrub and herbaceous planting is proposed across the site. The full planting schedule is available within the aforementioned drawing. In summary, the landscaping additions preserve and enhance biodiversity, encourage the use of locally sourced plants/materials and enable the scheme to pursue biodiversity net gain.
- 5.22 In terms of Policy BE1 (Design), the proposal adheres to the following point *“4. It utilises materials appropriate to its surroundings and incorporates hard and soft landscaping and screening where appropriate”*. As previously mentioned, the materials proposed for the build will be locally sourced, with elements of landscaping incorporated into the development in order to enhance the development.

Drainage

- 5.23 For Pond Cottage, it is not feasible to connect to the public sewer, therefore a package treatment plant is required to treat foul water flows from the building. The treatment plant serving the building will

discharge into a nearby stream which then discharges into a lower pond. The Non-Mains Drainage Assessment submitted confirms the treatment plant will be installed correctly and it is accepted that it will be strictly controlled by permitting from Natural Resource Wales. Foul water flows were calculated at 6.69 l/s for pond cottage.

- 5.24 The submitted drainage plan (Drawing Ref: 2080-3-HIR-A-DR-01391-S2-P2) shows that ten rainwater downpipes will be installed on the building which will discharge onto the porch green roof. In addition to this, a threshold drain will be located in the area of the building that is to be extended.
- 5.25 Having considered the above, the proposal aligns with the following point of Policy BE1 (Design): *"9. Its drainage systems are designed to limit surface water run-of and food risk and prevent pollution"*. The proposal does not involve a new impermeable construction area above 100sqm as such SAB does not apply.

Archaeology

- 5.26 A Written Scheme of Investigation and Historic Environment Desk Based Assessment (DBA) has been produced by Dyfed Archaeological Trust to accompany the proposed set of works at Gnoll Park. The DBA summarises that there are Roman to medieval archaeological potential along with post-medieval archaeological potential associated with the application site. The possibility for groundworks to impact the background archaeological potential at Pond Cottage is deemed to be negligible.
- 5.27 In terms of mitigation, as there is a potential slight impact identified in respect of the site, additional archaeological mitigation may be needed which would be provided by the archaeological advisor to NPTCBC. Proposed works will affect the material remains of buildings within the curtilage of the application site. The report implies that Pond Cottage may benefit from some form of historic building record in order to take into account their structure prior to modification. Any development would need to consider the potential need for additional archaeological works should substantial remains be discovered during the archaeological watching brief. From a policy perspective, the proposal intends to align with Policy SP21 (Built Environment and Historic Heritage) by safeguarding the existing historic significance of the site, and will notify the relevant parties if any further archaeological findings are made on the site.

Ground Investigation and Coal Mining Risk

- 5.28 The Coal Mining Risk Assessment produced by Earth Science Partnership revealed that the site is positioned within a Development High Risk Area in the Coal Authority Interactive Map. There are no rec-

ordered mine entries on site, however as the Swansea Five Feet seam is indicated to crop out over the site, the subsidence hazard associated with shallow mine workings below the site is deemed potentially high. As a result of the Swansea Five Feet seam over the site, the risk of mine entries is considered potentially high.

- 5.29 In terms of further investigative work, the report advises the following:
- Minimum of five boreholes to 30m required due to mining hazard below site;
 - Full site reconnaissance should be conducted by experienced engineering geologist;
 - Assessment of subsidence risk to development and options considered for risk mitigation measures
 - Mine Gas Risk Assessment may also be required.
- 5.30 Following the results of the Coal Mining Risk Assessment, Jubb produced a Ground Conditions Assessment Report which revealed the following:
- Low risk contamination associated with site;
 - Basic radon protection methods are needed for construction of new buildings
 - No substantial source of ground gas identified;
 - In terms of foundations, these should extend to roughly 1.1m into the cohesive deposit which are least firm in strength.
 - No substantial earthworks will be needed;
 - One soakaway was conducted at the application site to depth of 1.10m below ground level at the base of the trial pits. The test conducted three repeat fills for an infiltration rate to be determined as 4.74×10^{-5} m/s, with the majority of infiltration likely via the sides of the pit within the more granular deposits.
 - Site is in Geotechnical Risk Category 2.
- 5.31 Having considered the above, it is considered that the current ground conditions do not provide any constraint to the new extension to be provided as part of the site redevelopment and as such the proposal accords with LDP Policy M1 (Development in Mineral Safeguarding Areas).

Conclusion

- 6.1 This planning statement has been prepared on behalf of The Head of Property and Regeneration at Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council (NPTCBC) for the proposed conversion and extension of Pond Cottage into a tea room at Gnoll Estate Country Park, Fairyland, Neath, SA11 3BS. This application forms part of a series of works proposed at Gnoll Park as part of a Levelling Up Funding programme.
- 6.2 The application site encompassing Pond Cottage lies within the Grade II* Gnoll Estate Country Park. As shown in the Design and Access Statement submitted by Hiraeth Architecture, an extensive appraisal of the building was done to determine its future use. It was decided that it should be turned into a tea room, as this would substantially increase the use of the building and its enjoyment for all visitors to the Park.
- 6.3 The impact upon the registered park and garden has been considered as part of the application. The impact is set to be minimal as a result of the existing building only being extended to the south elevation. The extension is only a single storey in height, with its scale taking into consideration the existing building and not causing any impact upon visual amenity.
- 6.4 This document has demonstrated that the development, as proposed, is compliant with relevant policies contained within the adopted NPTCBC LDP, in particular Policies EN3 (Green Wedges), SP13 (Tourism), TO1 (Tourism Development in the Countryside), SP21 (Built Environment and Historic Heritage) and BE1 (Design). In addition to this, the proposal accords with relevant Technical Advice Notes and policies noted within Future Wales and Planning Policy Wales.
- 6.5 Notwithstanding the above, a comprehensive assessment is provided in Section 5 of this statement. Separate supporting documents in respect of material considerations are also included in the application package and highlight the proposal as acceptable in all regards.
- 6.6 As such, it is concluded that the proposal accords with both national and local policies. Furthermore, there are no material considerations which would prevent the planning application from being determined in accordance with the relevant planning policy framework. In this respect, it is respectfully requested that Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council consider this planning application favourably and grant planning permission for the proposed development.