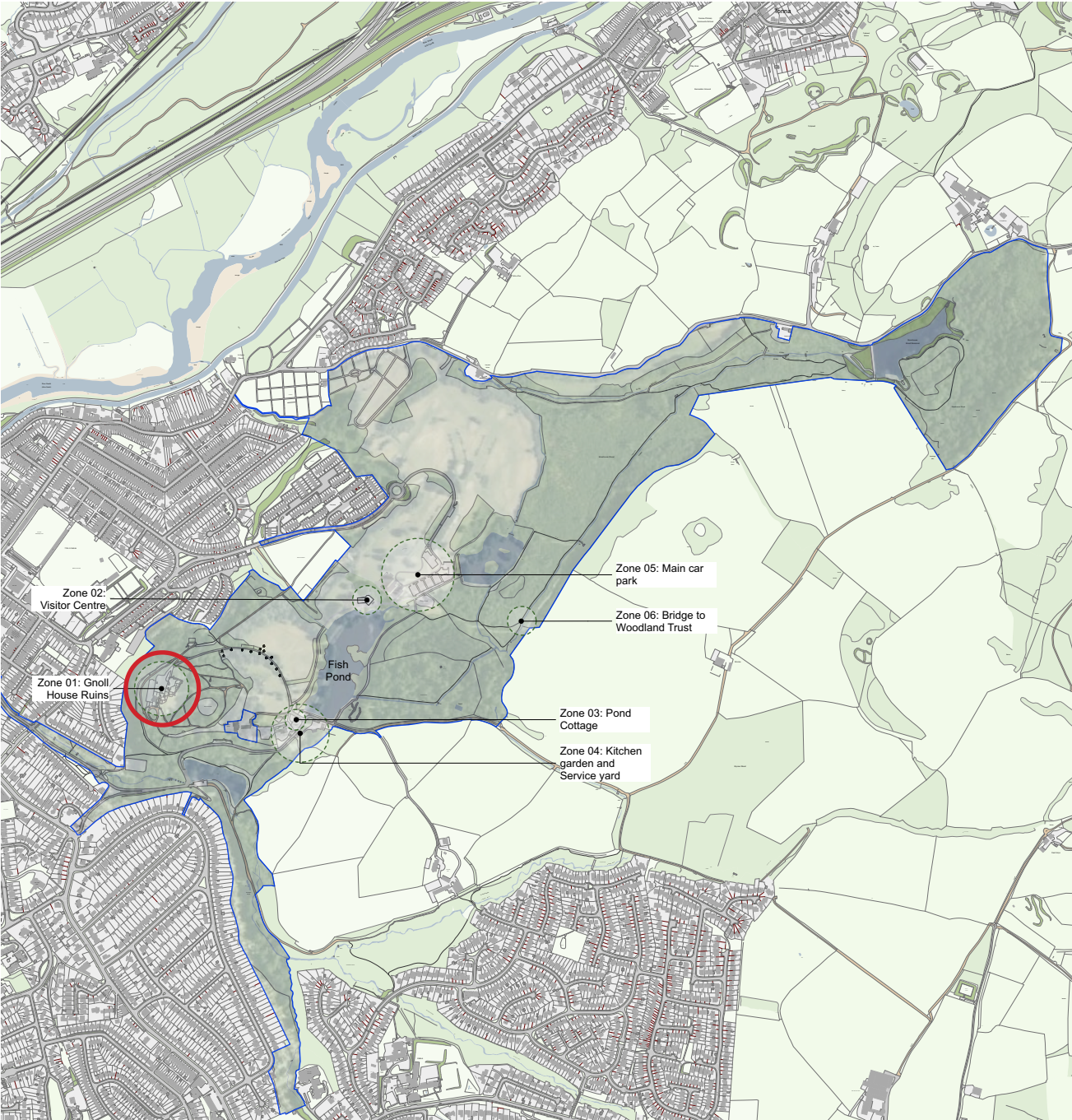




Hiraeth.

**ZONE 01 GNOLL HOUSE RUINS -
DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT AND HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT**
Gnoll Estate Country Park | Neath | Neath Port Talbot | SA11 3BS



00004.1 SITE PLAN ZONES
SCALE 1:5000 @ A1, 1:10,000 @ A3

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SERIES		EXISTING
SUITABILITY		S2 - ISSUED FOR INFORMATION
REV	DATE	NOTE

Hiraeth.

232500

Neath Port Talbot CBC

GNOLL PARK

Site Plan Zones



Scale
1:5000 @ A1, 1:10000 @ A3
Date
08/23

02920 025814 | office@hiraetharchitecture.co.uk
The Maltings | East Tyndall St | Cardiff | CF24 5EA

UPRN	Zone	Originator	Role	Type	Sheet number	S Code	Rev
2080	00	HIR	A	DR	00004	S2	

do not scale from this drawing | all dimensions to be verified on site | notify architect of all discrepancies | copyright Hiraeth Architecture

FOREWORD

Address:

Gnoll Estate Country Park
Neath
Neath Port Talbot
SA11 3BS

Unitary (Local) Authority:

Neath Port Talbot

Community:

Tonna

Grid Reference:

SS760972
E 276028
N 197267



tapes.artist.agree

Listing:

The ruins are not listed or scheduled

Location:

Gnoll House ruins are located in Gnoll Estate Country Park. A grade II* designated parkland.

This document has been produced to support a planning application to Neath Port Talbot Council for repairs to the ruins of Gnoll House and opening up of the cellars as educational and interpretation spaces. It is to be read in conjunction with the associated information and drawings produced by the consultant team, and in particular the Gnoll Park Context Statement by Hiraeth Architecture and Conservation Management Plan by CFP.

The proposals are born out of a wider desire to reinstate Gnoll Estate Country Park at the historic heart of its community, providing an iconic, aspirational and sustainable parkland that is a gateway to the wider Vale of Neath Heritage Corridor. The overall scheme is subject to individual applications that coincide with the project programme.

Ownership

Gnoll Estate Country Park is owned by Neath Port Talbot Council. Evolved from the landscaped grounds of the former Gnoll House, the park offers spectacular views across the county borough, allied with way marked trails through woodlands and grasslands, marshes and reservoirs. In addition to this, the area contains many fragments of history that tell the evolution of the town including the ruins of Gnoll House. Activity is now centralised around a visitor centre constructed in the 1990's, allied with the many children's play parks that are largely focussed around the main fishing pond.

To arrange a site visit, please contact the Client representative using the following details:

Nick Richards
Project Manager/ Rheolwr Prosiectau

T. 07735 098 495
E. n.g.richards@npt.gov.uk
www.npt.gov.uk

The consultant team responsible for this planning application are as follows:

Andrew Scott Ltd

Lead Contractors and delivery partners coordinating the RIBA stage 3 works and advising on the viability and build ability of the proposals.

Design Manager in charge of the project: Luke Rees

Andrew Scott Ltd | The Grange | Margam | Neath Port Talbot | SA13 2SP

T. 01639 889 800 Ext 1142

Hiraeth Architecture Ltd

Architects advising upon the architectural and conservation aspects of the project.

Director in charge of the project: Michael Plageman

Hiraeth Architecture | The Maltings | East Tyndall Street

Cardiff | CF24 5EA

T. 029 2035 1645

Asbri Planning

Planning Consultants providing planning advice, coordination and support with regards to the proposed repair and alterations

Director in charge of the project: Richard Bowen

Asbri Planning | Suite D | 1st Floor | 220 High Street

Swansea | SA1 1NW

T. 07825 597 796

McCann and Partners Consulting Engineers

Engineers advising upon mechanical and electrical aspects of the scheme including capacity and installation

Manager in charge of the project: Geraint Hopkins

Office 2.02 | Bay Technology Centre | Baglan Energy Park

Port Talbot | SA12 7AX

T. 01792 794285

Jubb Civil and Structural Engineers

Civil and Structural Engineers who have appraised the existing structure of Pond Cottage, together with addressing structural aspects of the proposals. In addition to this they have been responsible for drainage and SAB design.

Manager in charge of the project: Graeme Smith

2A Oak Tree Court | Mulberry Drive | Cardiff Gate Business Park

Cardiff | CF23 8RS

T. 029 2052 4446

Davies Landscape

Landscape architects responsible for landscape proposals

Manager in charge: Miles Gray

Office 1C | 1-2 King Street Stroud | Gloucestershire | GL5 3BS

T. 07983 610 065

Neath Port Talbot Ecologist (Consultancy + Planning)

Ecologists advising on all aspects of biodiversity and ecology proposals.

Consultant in charge of the project: Megan Price

Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council | The Quays | Brunel Way | Baglan Energy

T. 07816973877

Neath Port Talbot Arboriculturalist (Consultancy + Planning)

Arboriculturalist advising on all aspects of the growing, maintaining, managing and removal of woody plants

Consultant in charge of the project: Nick Thomas

Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council | The Quays | Brunel Way | Baglan Energy

T. 01639 686 197

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UPRN	Zone	Originator	Role	Type	File number	Suitability	Rev
2080	01	HIR	A	RP	06803	S2	P2
Suitability		S2 - Issued for Information					



Aerial View of Groll Estate Country Park showing the immediate context of Neath to the South West and the location of the ruins circled in red

INTRODUCTION

This document has been prepared by **Hiraeth** Architecture in support of an application for full planning permission from Neath Port Talbot Council for the repair, partial demolition and development of the ruins of Gnoll House and its associated cellars.

Further to an overview survey of the ruins and cellars undertaken by Hiraeth Architecture, the repair proposals broadly comprise:

- Reapplication of limewash to basement walls and ceilings
- Cleaning of retained stone flag floors to the basement
- The consolidation and repointing of existing stonework
- The removal of modern, incongruous stonework
- The removal of loose and friable stonework
- The treatment of all vegetative growth to retained fabric
- Demolition of the existing, modern, above ground structures

In addition to this, the following new additions are proposed:

- The reinstatement of the footprint of the ruins to the northern end of the formal west frontage
- Paving to the former ground floor rooms to the formal west frontage
- The provision of a free draining hogging surfaces to the remainder of the ground floor
- Construction of new stepped coverings and interpretation to the basement stairwells
- The reinstatement of the formality of the upper west terrace garden and associated construction of a raised performance platform

- Construction of removable screening to temporary toilet facilities in the ruins of the former coach house, to be used during proposed community events
- The provision of new electrical and background heating services to the cellars
- The provision of new lighting and power to the site

Objectives

The proposals are driven by a desire to address the following issues:

- To re-establish Gnoll House as a focal point at the heart of the Gnoll Estate Country Park and the wider Neath area by giving it new and relevant flexible uses
- General deterioration of the existing ruins which are in a poor state of repair following the previous ill-considered approach to their presentation
- The inappropriateness of the existing raised coverings to the cellars
- To open up access to the cellars of the structure to enhance the interpretation and understanding of the house
- To provide supporting infrastructure to enable the above proposals to be realised.

In addition to this, it is noted that planning applications are also being made for other areas of the park (as highlighted by the accompanying Project Context Statement by Hiraeth Architecture). The effects and implications of the proposed changing context of the ruins have therefore been born in mind when developing potential solutions.



BUILDING AND SITE ANALYSIS



*The house following the removal of the North West wing.
This undermined the formal frontage.*

Description of the Historic Asset

The ruins of Gnoll House now describe the ground floor footprint of a prominent building that once sat overlooking the town of Neath below. The former focal point of an 18th century landscaped estate, the cellars of the building are still retained and are in good condition below this area.

At ground floor level, the ruins predominantly reflect the footprint of the original house prior to demolition, albeit they have been extensively reconstructed in pennant stone with a 'crazy' paved finish and cementitious mortars to a height of approximately 0.5m. Former internal floor finishes have been removed with these areas now grassed over. The form of the footprint predominantly describes the plan as shown on the following page.

It is noted that to the east side of the ruins, the former coach house buildings backs onto an elevated terrace above, linked by stone steps from ground floor level. Access into the courtyard that was formerly located to this area was via a stone arched opening. This is still largely present to the north of this area, with access onto the top of it via pathways through the landscape.

At basement level there are three principal spaces – the former boiler room, basement store and cellar. These are linked by corridors with lime washed, stone vaulted ceilings. The ground and basement levels are linked by stone stairs. These have typically been gated off with metal gates to prevent access to the basement. The location of these is shown on the following pages.

In addition to the reconstruction of the ruins, modern above ground additions have also been introduced to provide cover to the basement stairwells. This has involved building up random rubble, pennant stonework walls with cement pointing and bedding, and capping these with corrugated metal roofing. The largest area that this relates to is above the basement store and cellar providing a particularly incongruous addition to the site. Materials and forms bare little resemblance to those that preceded them. In addition to this, the quality of the roofing materials actively detracts from and downgrades the interpretation of the ruins.



DRAWING NOTES

- Existing trees to former terraced landscape
- Former formal garden to former House
- Outline of basement below shown dotted
- Profiled metal roof covering to modern, random rubble stone walls with cementitious pointing
- Former rear courtyard to former House
- Existing high-level viewing platform above existing stone arched entrance to former rear courtyard to former house, overlooking ruins
- Existing high-level viewing platform over ruins
- Modern, profiled metal, above ground structure with random rubble stone walls and cementitious pointing
- Former entrance courtyard to former House
- Fomer conservatory to former House
- Former rose garden

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TREE SURVEY KEY

Category A Tree Stem	Category C Tree Stem
Category A Tree Canopy	Category C Tree Canopy
Category A RPA	Category C RPA
Category B Tree Stem	Category U Tree Stem
Category B Tree Canopy	Category U Tree Canopy
Category B RPA	Category U RPA

Please refer to 'BS5837 survey, Old Groll House' for detail of each tree, its condition and associated recommendations. This plan has been drawn based on the information provided in this report and the Topographical Survey provided by Andrew Scott Ltd. of the Ruins & the Topographical Survey provided by Landmark Surveys Wales for Pond Cottage. The original documents should be also be referred to in their entirety.

SERIES	PLANNING
SUITABILITY	S2 - ISSUED FOR INFORMATION
REV	DATE
REV	DATE
P1	23/06/2023
P2	21/08/2023

Hiraeth.

2325 01

Andrew Scott Ltd

GNOLL PARK

Existing:
Site Plan
Groll House Ruins

Scale: 1:250 @A1, 1:500 @A3

02920 025814 | office@hiraetharchitecture.co.uk

The Matings | East Tyndall St | Cardiff | CF24 5EA

06/23

2080 01 HIR A DR 00021 S2 P2

job number

Zone

06/23

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06/23

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Character Appraisal

The setting of the wider parkland is largely covered in the both the Project Context Statement by **Hiraeth** Architecture and the Conservation Management Plan by CFP, that accompany this application. Focussing in on the ruins, the character of the site is now largely formed by its wooded context and extensive but overgrown vegetation. This is generally unkempt and therefore provides somewhat of a contrast to the mown areas of grassland that is otherwise pervasive across the ruins.

Whilst the house has now been demolished, evidence of the former gardens and pleasure grounds that immediately surrounded the house remain. These extend beyond the treeline and down the hill on which the house once stood, giving one of the few physical suggestions that the house used to be connected with the town below. The formality of this arrangement is consists largely described by a series of retaining walls forming terraces to the west of the ruins. Beyond is an area of deciduous woodland with an ornamental understorey. It is notable that the tree canopy in this area is unmaintained and therefore now obscures the former view over Neath. At the northern end is a curving recessed stone seat and a yew on a small mound. To the south of the house is the former oval forecourt area, with grass in the centre. The overarching character to the context is therefore of a woodland clearing within which a building formerly sat, but the formality of the frontage of the house, that was once a dominant aspect in the landscape has now been returned to nature as part of an organic process.

Of note to the rear of the site are the former structures that traverse the change in level between the plateau of the ruins. The arched former entrance into the rear courtyard gives a sense of arrival within the ruins, that would otherwise be missing from this setting. Similarly the elevations

of structures to the rear of the former courtyard give a sense of scale to the former house that would otherwise be missing if the ruins consisted solely of the 0.5m high walls.

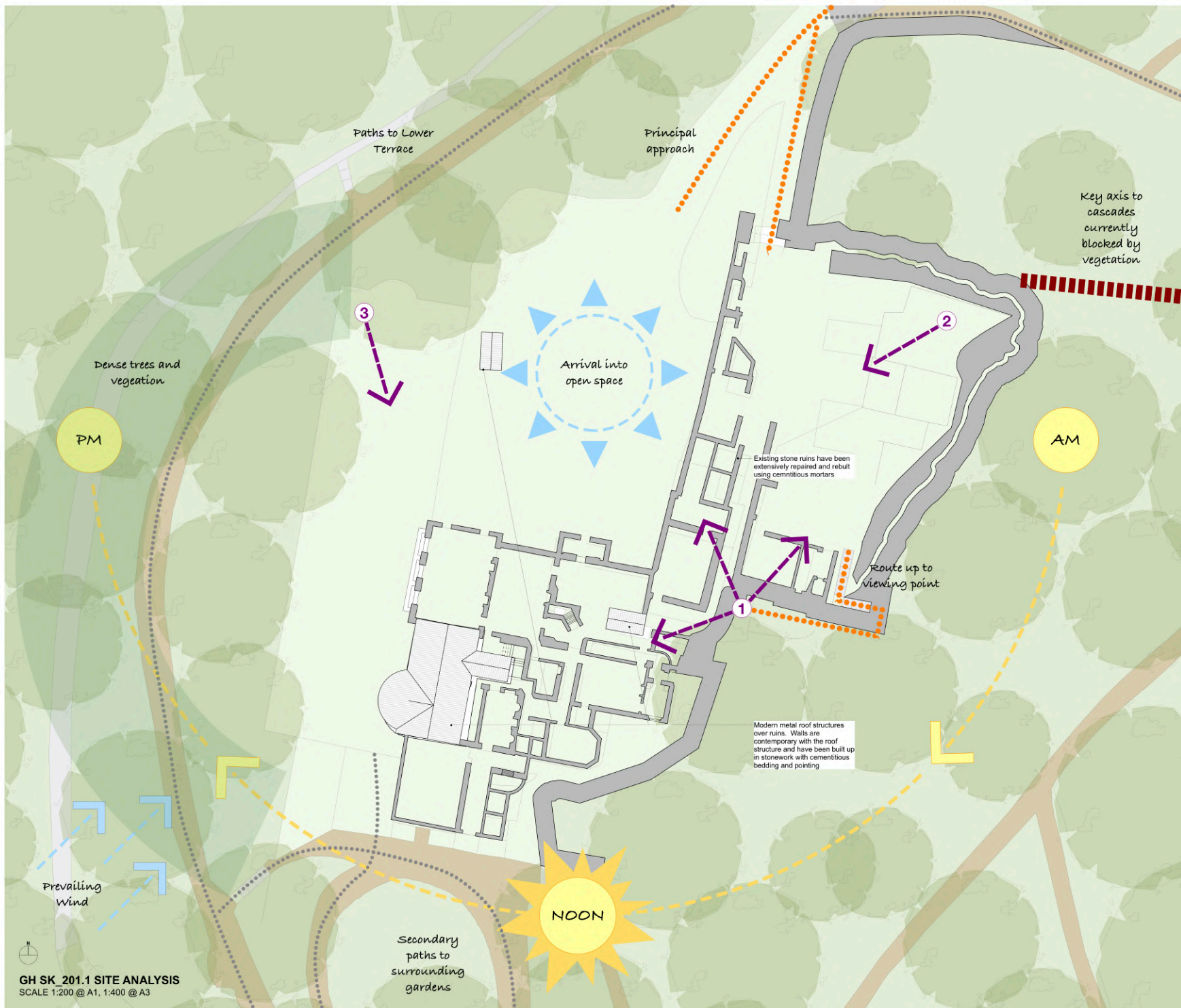
The modern additions are clearly incongruous to their setting. Their materials have little resemblance to the site, other than the green colour of the corrugated metal. They therefore significantly detract from the setting, obscuring views and compromising the otherwise significance of the ruins.

Beneath the modern additions, the character of the basement is almost cavelike. Without natural or artificial light, there is a sense of the below ground world and an opportunity to see and touch something more tangible and evidential with regards to the former house. This is particularly with regards to how the house would have operated with the support staff being confined to areas that were unseen and not for display. The presence of bats in this area further serves to enhance the idea of being in this below ground world.

Site Appraisal

Boundaries

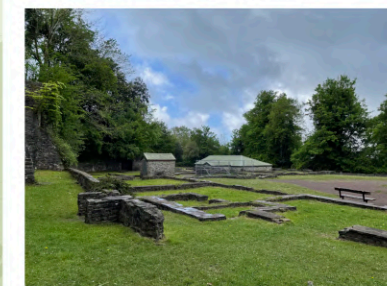
Located to the the south-west corner of Gnoll Estate Country Park, the site of the ruins of Gnoll House is described by an open plateau cut into a rising cliff face to the east that forms the notional boundary in this direction. The crown of the hill that emerges to the east of the cliff is occupied by wooded grounds laid out informally, with natural pathways and a few open areas. On the hill summit is the bowling green or croquet lawn, a roughly circular level lawn surrounded by rhododendrons and mixed trees.



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1. Existing view over the ruins from the South East of the site



2. View looking South West over the ruins and basement structure



3. General view of the ruins from the North West. The structures are incongruous

Hiraeth. 2223 GH SK 201 Rev.
Neath Port Talbot CBC
Gnull Park Estate
Sketch
Site Analysis
Gnull House

Scale 1:200 @ A1, 1:400 @ A3 Date 05/22

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The Mallings | East Tyndal St | Cardiff | CF24 5EA

do not scale from this drawing | all dimensions to be worked on site | reflects current state of discrepancies | copyright Hiraeth architecture

As noted, the immediate curtilage to the former house is largely described by the surrounding vegetation that has not been controlled by planned management and maintenance. The grounds lie mainly to the south of the ruins, site but also on the slopes of the hill to the west. The south side is bounded by stone revetment walling. Below on the south-east is a walled enclosure, formerly the herbaceous garden but now rough grass. To the north is a gentle slope up to a long, level, grass terrace running east-west from the north end of the house to a ha-ha on the east. North of the terrace is an area of mixed ornamental woodland and shrubs, with some bamboo clumps. To west of the site there is a low stone parapet wall that defines where the ground starts to terrace down towards the town.

Access Points

The principal approach to the former house is still identifiable, being a formal driveway sweeping around to the northern side from the south west corner of the fish pond. This cuts through planted woodland to arrive at the former entrance courtyard, and is commonly referred to as the carriageway. The carriageway links to the former formal approach to the house from Gnoll Drive in the Town below which is marked by its grade II listed, war memorial gates. This approach is largely finished with tarmac and suitable for taking vehicles, albeit changes to the original cobble stone closer to the site which is in a poor condition.

Further approaches to the site are from secondary pedestrian pathways in the surrounding landscape. To the south west there are steps to more designated pathways that form the lower terraces. Whilst to the south east, steps and pathways sweep anticlockwise around the Gnoll to link back with the ha-ha on its eastern side. In addition to this there are also

steps adjacent to the the former coach house to the east of the site, that deliver visitors to the top of the cliff level, whilst the arched access to the former courtyard links to the formal tree lined vista to the cascades.

Site Features

The primary features of the site are the ruins themselves, allied with the still decipherable formality of the former gardens. It is important to note that the ruins are not reflective of the gradual process of ruination that might be found on historical sites such as the many castles and abbeys throughout South Wales. Their existence is due to a more 'violent' act where the building was torn down in relatively recent history. Their cement pointed, crazy paved cappings are reflective of this and haven't had the time to erode by any sort of natural process. They are therefore hard and modern in appearance.

In addition to this, the modern structures that have been located over the accesses to the basement are also dominant features of the site. These are similarly incongruous through their use of modern, mass produced corrugated metal that bears little relevance to what is otherwise a naturalised site.

To the south side of the site there are two further features to the area. These are the former conservatory which has an identifiable footprint, and the former oval shaped, rose garden which is still identifiable in the soft landscaping. To the east of the site, the meeting of more elevated structures and the existing cliff face create a sense of enclosure, whilst the aforementioned archway gives a more obvious sense of arrival - albeit to the courtyard to the rear of the former house.

Topography

The topography of the site is ostensibly flat. This is effectively formed as a cutting into the rising topography of the Gnoll, running west to east. To the western boundary the ground therefore falls away to the town below, whilst to the eastern boundary, the aforementioned cliff face forms a step up to the rising ground. To the south and north, the terraces sweep around from the western side.

Views

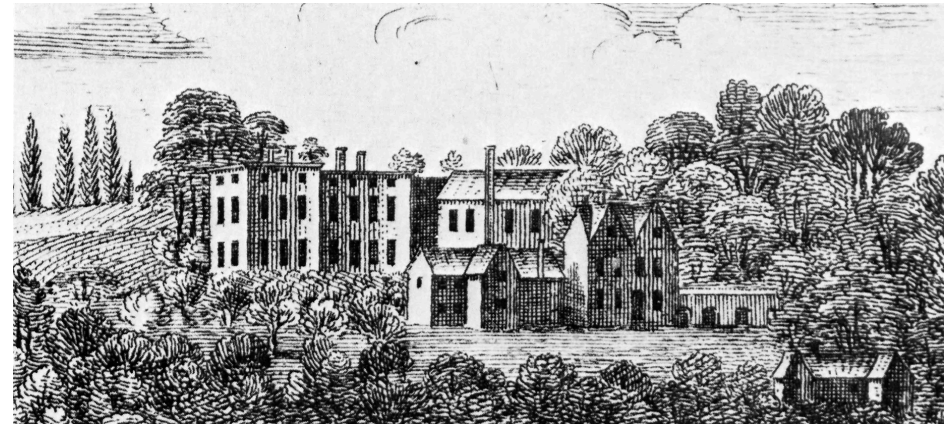
The topography of the site were historically used to the advantage of the house which stood with unobstructed, expansive views over the town of Neath below. Currently these views are obscured by the vegetation that surrounds the site, giving the feel of a woodland clearing that is very inward looking.

Within the site however, there are a series of important views that include the raised platforms above the arched entrance to the courtyard and adjacent to the former coach house. These give elevated views over the ruins so the full footprint of the house can be understood.

Architectural Overview

The appearance of Gnoll House as it once stood can principally be understood from historical plans, documents and photographs. Coflein gives a succinct description of the house as follows:

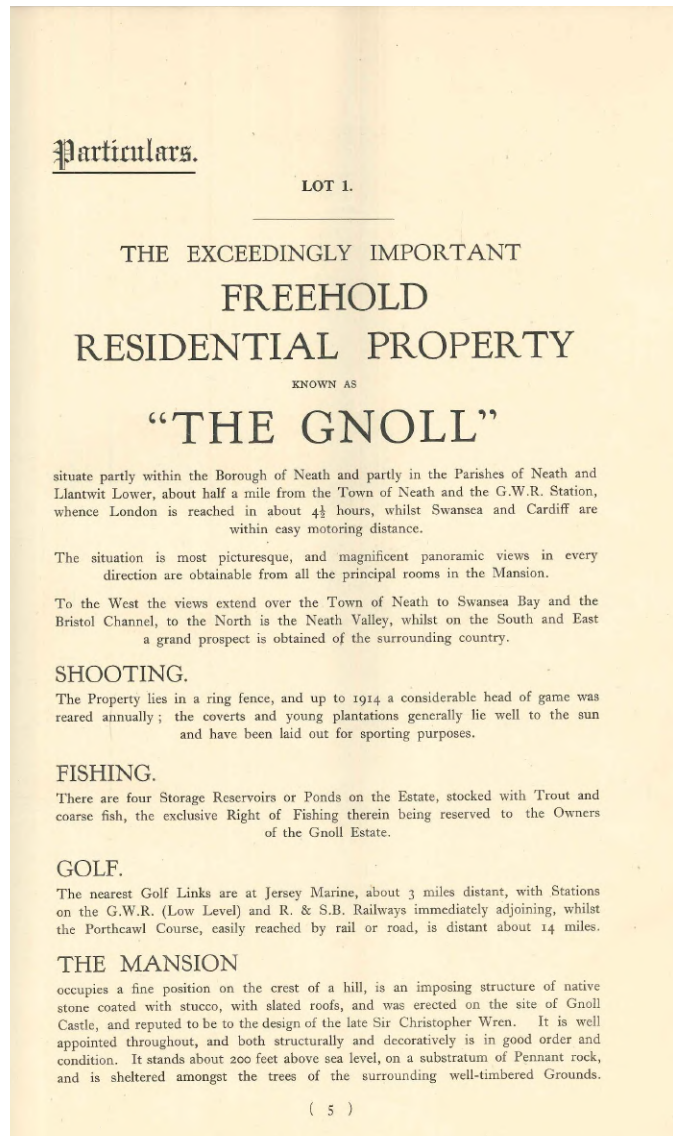
'Gnoll House was built by Sir Herbert Mackworth in 1776-8, the architect was John Johnson of Leicester. The house was 3 storied with an attached glass conservatory, it had round corner towers in a Georgian castellated style and either replaced or was adapted from an earlier house in the classical style. In 1881 the castellations were removed and



Enlarged section of an engraving by Nathaniel and Samuel Buck, 'The North West View of Neath Castle, in the County of Glamorgan' (1741)



Digitised image from page 28 of 'Guide to the beauties of Glyn Neath' showing the prominence of Gnoll House when viewed from the area below the Gnoll



Sales particularly from 1921 suggested the house was designed by Sir Christopher Wren

the east wing was demolished. The entire house was demolished in 1957.'

<https://coflein.gov.uk/en/site/18814/>

A sale catalogue of the estate dating to 1921 describes Gnoll house as:

'an imposing structure of native stone with stucco, with slated roofs'. It occupies an elevated position on the crest of the Gnoll, standing 'around 200 feet above sea level, on a substratum of Pennant rock, and is sheltered amongst the trees of the surrounding well-timbered grounds.'

The house appears to have been built within the concept of the country house - dominating its landscape and with the purpose of demonstrating the wealth of its owner. The historic view shown to the left of this page shows how this appeared to those working to maintain the estate below. Of some additional note, although it is not mentioned elsewhere is that the Sales Catalogue of 1921 states that the house is *'reputed to be to the design of the late Sir Christopher Wren'* although it is noted that neither the Conservation Management Plan or the Historic Environment Desk-Based Assessment have highlighted any such link. Should this be found to be accurate this may have some material effect on the perceived significance of the ruins.

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 the proposed works to Gnoll House Ruins are 'considered to largely be a slight impact as groundworks are assumed to be relatively minimal. Consolidation works to the masonry and improved woodland and shrub management in this area is also considered to ultimately have a beneficial impact...'

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, however, with works predominantly not requiring new excavations.

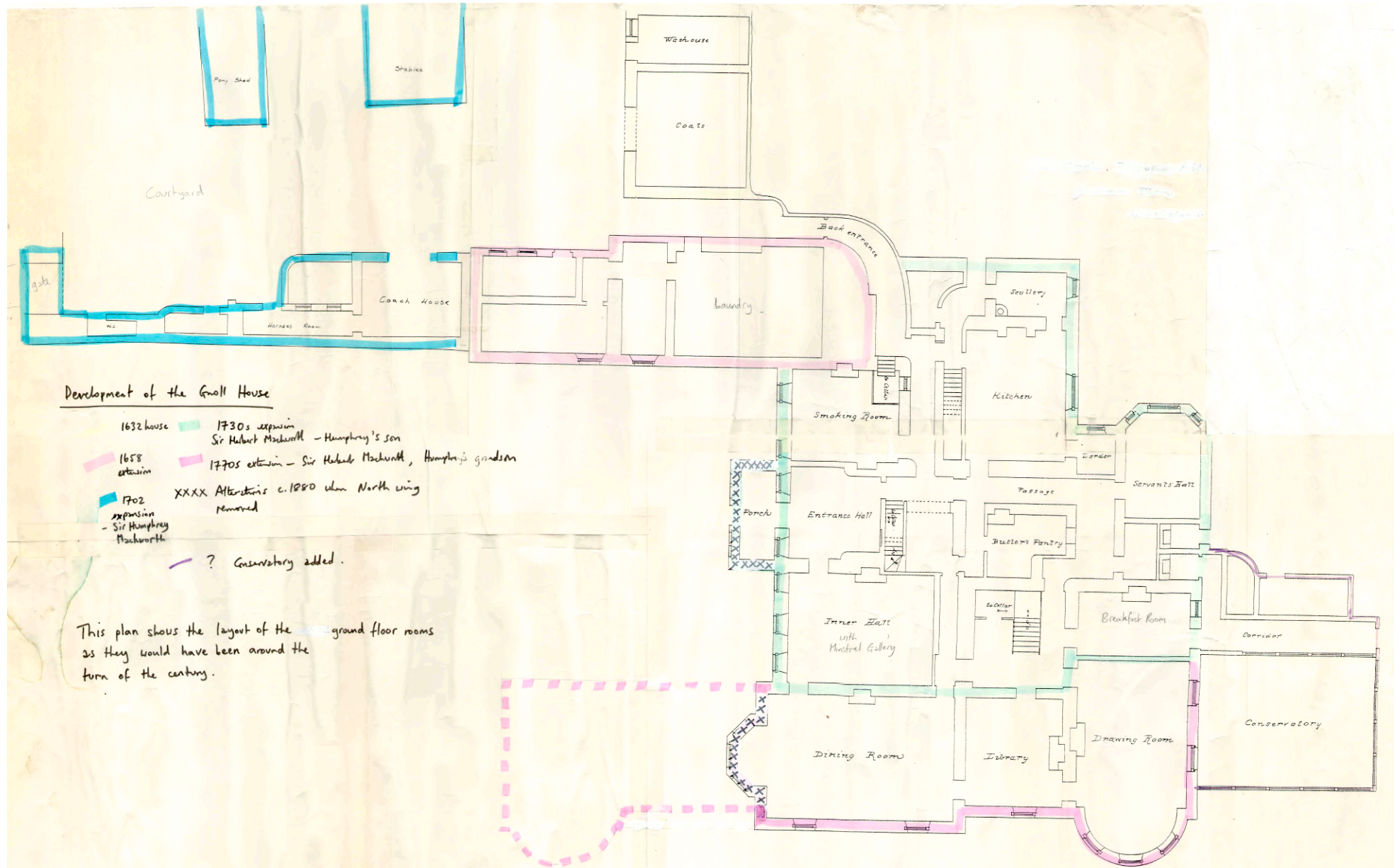


Diagram of the historic development of Gnoll House

HISTORY OF THE HISTORIC ASSET AND HISTORIC FABRIC

An overview of the history and significance of Gnoll House Ruins is highlighted in the following sections, however, this is more comprehensively covered in the Conservation Management Plan that accompanies this document.

Historical Development

There is some debate over exact dates in which crucial stages of the development of Gnoll House occurred, particularly with regards to when the house changed ownership or was extended. Several sources have been examined within the Conservation Management Plan which in turn identifies where there is contradictory evidence surrounding the development of the estate. The following paragraphs give an overview of the timeline in order to convey the general stages of development and understand their significance to what remains of the historic asset today.

The first house on the site was built by the Evans family in the early seventeenth century. In 1658 Thomas Evans leased the house from his nephew Sir Herbert Evans and part of the agreement was that a new house be built. Structural evidence suggests that a hall house, later the laundry, was built, probably in c. 1666. Of these seventeenth-century houses only a small amount of walling remains. By 1685 Sir Herbert's daughter Mary was the only surviving child. In 1686 she married Sir Humphrey Mackworth (1657-1727), from Derbyshire, already a prominent lawyer and entrepreneur. Sir Humphrey took possession of the estate in 1695, when his father-in-law died. He altered the house in 1702 with the buildings being enclosed in a courtyard and a coach house, servant's quarters and water storage tank being added. The walls against the hillside are remnants of this phase of building.

The house was extended in 1730 by Sir Humphrey's son, Herbert Mackworth (1689-1765). An engraving of 1741 by Samuel and Nathaniel Buck shows a large, rambling house of three distinct parts and phases, the earliest part with gabled roofs, another, to the north, a single-storey building (the 1666 house) on slightly higher ground and the last part, to its

north, in a more classical style with a flat roof. In 1776-78 a much grander house was created by Herbert's son, Sir Herbert Mackworth (1736-91), who added a large, castellated Georgian front. The architect was John Johnson of Leicester. Engravings show that this was severe in appearance, with corner round towers. The earlier service wing was retained.

The last Mackworth to live at The Gnoll, Sir Robert, died in 1794, leaving an eighteen-year-old widow, Mary (Molly), who in 1797 married Capel Hanbury Leigh of Pontypool Park. In 1811 the estate was sold to Henry Grant. The Grant family initially resurrected the house and grounds, after they had fallen into disrepair after the departure of the Mackworths, but by the mid nineteenth century ownership had passed to a cousin, Charles Evan Thomas (1817-1902). During the century the house was gradually reduced in size. By 1845 the north-east wing had been demolished and in 1881 Charles Evan Thomas demolished the east wing and removed the castellation. The house continued to decline, part was pulled down in 1909 and in 1923 it was bought by Neath Borough Council, after which for several years part was used as a health clinic. Eventually, in 1957, the house was demolished.

The diagram on the facing page sets out the evolution of the house, with the 1921 Sales description overleaf.

THE HOUSE is entered on its Northern front from a Tiled Porch that leads through a pair of doors to the Outer Hall, thence to an Inner or Lounge Hall fitted with a Minstrel Gallery, also a large open fireplace and tiled floor.

THE DINING ROOM, measuring about 33 ft. 3 in. by 22 ft. 3 in. (exclusive of the Bay), is well lighted by windows on the West and North, and heated by a large grate ornamented by a fine Adams mantelpiece. The doors are also magnificent specimens in Spanish mahogany.

THE LIBRARY, measuring 19 ft. 6 in. by 16 ft. 3 in., overlooking the Terrace on the Western front.

DRAWING ROOM, measuring about 36 ft. by 19 ft. 6 in., leads into a large Conservatory or Winter Garden.

BREAKFAST ROOM, with access to the Garden through a lean-to Conservatory in which is situate a Gentlemen's Lavatory and W.C.

THE DOMESTIC OFFICES comprise: Cellar under the Staircase opposite the Dining Room; Pantry; Housekeeper's Room; Kitchen, with small Larder and Store Room leading therefrom; Scullery; Knife Room; Passage, leading to Back Entrance, in which is a stove that heats water for the Bath Rooms; Laundry, fitted with range; Washing Room, fitted with boiler; Game Larder; Servants' Hall, Butler's Pantry.

The Main Staircase leads on the Half-landing to the Minstrel Gallery overlooking the Inner Hall, thence to the fourteen Principal and Secondary Bed Chambers, and five Dressing Rooms on the First and Second Floors, in which are also three W.C.'s, fitted with Shank's patent closets, and two Bath Rooms.

THE EASTERN WING is approached from a Secondary Staircase in which are Butler's and Footmen's Rooms; Work Room, and Passage leading to the Servants' Bath Room and W.C., fitted also with slop sink; Linen Cupboard, fitted with hot water cylinder; Housemaid's Closet.

In the COURTYARD is a Coal House, Bakery, Coach House (sufficient for one car) and Stable, lean-to Stable and Wood House, Oil Shed, Paint Shop, Boot House and Men's W.C.

The Principal Apartments are heated by hot water pipes from a boiler in a building adjoining the Conservatory.

Electric light is installed practically throughout the premises and is obtained from the Neath Corporation's cables.

Water is supplied free of charge by the Neath Corporation, whose mains run through the Estate.

The Drainage System is modern in design and is believed to be in good order, the drains are ventilated and provided with means of inspection, and discharge into the Local Authorities' Sewer.

At a short distance from the House is the STABLING, which comprises:—

- (1) Stable, with stall, and two Loose Boxes.
- (2) Stable, with two stalls; two Loose Boxes, and Loft over.

Saddle Room; Coach House, sufficient for two cars; smaller Coach House, and Men's Rooms over. There are also some useful Farm Buildings adjoining.

(6)

The Pleasure Grounds, comprising about 9½ Acres, slope generally from the Residence in the front and rise in the rear, commanding magnificent views in all directions, and are well timbered with naturally grown Forest and Specimen Trees, and Shrubs of many varieties.

There is a Croquet Lawn, and two well-laid-out Tennis Lawns surrounded by Shrubberies occupy charming positions. Wilderness Walks traverse the Grounds, and the Carriage Drive from the Middle Entrance Lodge (a four-roomed Cottage and Garden in the occupation of Mr. WEAVER, at 14s. per month), near the Cimla Road, winds upwards in a most attractive manner through the Property.

The Residence and Pleasure Grounds, with the Coach Houses and part of the Stabling, are in the occupation of the ANGLO-PERSIAN OIL Co. on a Quarterly Tenancy (termination at Michaelmas), at a Rent of £300 per annum.

The Kitchen Gardens (in hand) are mostly walled-in, very productive, and well stocked with Bush and Fruit Trees.

THE GLASSHOUSES (all of which are heated) comprise a Range of three Vineries, Stove Houses, Greenhouse, Hot and Cold Frames, adjoining which are buildings used as Stokehole fitted with boiler, Bothy, Potting Shed, Fruit Room and Closet.

THE HEAD GARDENER'S HOUSE, guarding the Main Entrance Drive near Pond B, is a modern and attractive Building of Dressed Stone and Brick, with Slated Roof, and contains two Sitting Rooms, Kitchen, Back Kitchen, and four Bedrooms.

Near by is the AGENT'S HOUSE, known as "GNOLL COTTAGE," comprising a picturesque Residence, with Carriage Sweep leading from the Main Drive to Gnoll House. It contains Dining, Drawing and Morning Rooms, six Bedrooms, Bath Room (hot and cold), two W.C.'s inside and one outside, Kitchen, Scullery and usual Offices.

In the RANGE OF OUTBUILDINGS adjoining is the Agent's Office of two Rooms, Garage, Wood House, Potting Shed, Stove and Brew House (with water and gas laid on) and Outside W.C.

The Kitchen Garden and Flower Gardens (in one of which is an Asphalt Tennis Court) are in a high state of cultivation, and there are a large number of Fruit Trees in full bearing.

The Glasshouses, Forcing Pits, the Acetylene Gas Plant, and the apparatus for heating the Garage are claimed by the Occupier, and will have to be taken to by the Purchaser at a sum of £150.

Near the Head Gardener's House is a Stone-built and Slated five-roomed Cottage, in the occupation of GEORGE HALL, an Estate employee; also a Stone-built and Galvanized-roofed Carpenter's Shop and Timber Store adjoining.

There are also two other Employees' Houses on the Estate, known as "HARLE COTTAGES," each containing four Rooms, with Gardens adjoining, in the respective occupations of ANDREW BROOK at 4s. 6d. per week, and J. H. ABBOTT at 3s. 6d. per week.

With the foregoing will be included a DETACHED RESIDENCE near the Entrance Lodge, known as "DANYCOED," containing two Reception Rooms, Kitchen, Scullery and four Bedrooms. In the occupation of Mr. W. A. NISBETT, as Yearly Tenant, at a Rental of £15 per annum; exclusive of one room reserved as an Estate Office.

(7)

Historical Overview

For four centuries, from the sixteenth to the nineteenth, The Gnoll was the most important house in Neath. It stood on a prominent, steep-sided hill (or *knoll*, hence its name), on the east side of the town, with magnificent views out over the town and Vale of Neath from its main west front. The property and the town are therefore closely linked, both geographically and historically, with the evolution of the town being tied directly to the success of the industrial processes evolved on the site of The Gnoll.

In the wider context, the great wealth built on the back of industrialisation across Britain at this time, led to an astonishing boom in the building of similar elaborate, gentrified houses. These houses were built on a grand scale and to an enhanced degree of complexity, exhibiting a variety of design. The house at The Gnoll was in many ways typical of a client who liked the amenities of country life, but was not quite prepared to set up as a full-scale country gentry. It would have fallen into a more modest group of houses from this period containing a high degree of architectural quality. Such buildings and their environs as retained today, reflect a mixture of piety, snobbery, romanticism, idealism and pretentiousness that contextualised their construction.

The successes and failures of the owners of the house can be traced through the evolution and demise of the the property, which has in itself ebbed and flowed across history. The original house was built on an ancient occupied site in the location of Gnoll Castle. In the early 16th Century the site was home to the modest hall of the Earl of Pembroke, with the earliest iteration of Gnoll House, as its now known, being built by the Evans Family. The family was prominent in Neath and in 1632 David Evans, sheriff for that year, was described as 'of The Gnoll'. The house was therefore initially the means by which status was established.

Sir Humphrey Mackworth inherited the estate in 1696 following the death of his wife. It was from this time that the estate began to expand with 1695-1704 being a crucial era of development including the extension of the house and the creation of the ponds. The landscape is an inherent reflection of the house and alterations to its design, directly correlate to the evolution of industrial processes under the Mackworths. The family displayed their wealth through innovative grand landscape gestures.

Upon his death in 1727, Humphrey's son Herbert Mackworth inherited the estate, once again extending the house and initiating a series of landscape developments including the cascades that were an expression of ongoing wealth. In turn, the estate passed to his son, Sir Herbert Mackworth, who further extended Gnoll House in 1778.

Gnoll House changed hands a number of times through the 19th century, and the estate generally began to decline, as new industrialised processes took hold in wider society, which the estate did not follow. In 1881, the castellations were removed and the the entire east wing was demolished by owner Charles Evan Thomas due to tax liabilities. In 1923, the Neath Corporation (Borough Council) purchased the estate and it is understood that following its use initially for 'target practice' during the war years, it was subsequently levelled as part of a fire fighting exercise.

The evolution and subsequent demolition of the house can therefore be seen to track the prosperity of the various owners of the property. Eventually it is thought the upkeep of the house became too much for the local authority, leading to its demise.

It is fair to say that the house was originally integral to the surrounding parkland. These grounds to the house now largely form the Gnoll Estate



Plan of Gnoll Castle (exact date unknown). Note the sprawling plan form



1740 map of Neath showing the twin bays of Gnoll House



Plan of the estate in 1880 showing the presence of the two bays to the house



By 1887 the north west wing had been demolished

Country Park. This is an urban public park of great historical interest with regards to early industrialisation. Its history is largely one of private ownership, particularly by the Mackworth family, and is intimately bound up with that of the town of Neath and its evolution. Although the house has been demolished, the remainder of the original park is largely decipherable, albeit in different stages of deterioration. In this regard it is important to the identity of the town, with its historical understanding and interpretation without doubt having been significantly compromised by the loss of the house.

Summary of Condition

Prior to any refurbishment works being undertaken or alterations proposed to Gnoll House Ruins and the associated cellars, it is essential that there is an understanding of their 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, and all evidence points to minimal or no maintenance being carried out in the recent past as part of a reactive strategy to address immediate concerns with the retained structures. Following the demolition of the house, new work to retained masonry has been undertaken in inappropriate and non-breathable materials. There is now defective stonework, deteriorating masonry, whilst services to the site are unmaintained. Progressive mechanisms of decay are therefore affecting the ruins and presentation. The following gives a summary of findings from an overview condition survey undertaken by Hiraeth Architecture:

Stonework

- There is localised weathering and damage of individual stones due to the use of inappropriate modern materials such as cement to undertake pointing.
- Crazy paving to wall capping is significantly detracting from the presentation of the ruins
- The stonework has a dirty and dull appearance.
- Various and isolated stone dressings have mechanically caused chips, blown surfaces and missing stonework.
- Mortar joints require repointing generally.
- Vegetation growth is extensive to the built fabric on the eastern side of the site
- There are several cracks to walls

Cellars

- The original stone slabs to the floor to the cellars and stairs are dirty and dull in appearance.
- Floor slabs have been variously mechanically damaged.
- Retained, historic stone floor slabs require repointing generally, whilst modern slabs have been provided to supplement historic slabs
- Limewash to walls is deteriorating and requires renewal
- Electrical installations are unmaintained and not functioning

In addition to this, the modern addition of metal, corrugated roofs to the cellars is particularly incongruous in the setting, whilst utilitarian metal gates to the basement similarly detract from the presentation of the site.



Interior view of the cellar showing lime washed finishes. The structure is in a reasonable condition generally



The floor to the cellar has been renewed in part with modern pavers



Stonework above ground uses modern cements and lacks maintenance



General view of the ruins showing the incongruous shelters

OVERVIEW OF SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY VALUE

Gnoll House is therefore an example of a 'country estate' constructed by the nouveau- riche in an attempt to illustrate this acquired status: part of the landed gentry and with a consequent standing in the social hierarchy of the locality.

Following the purchase of the house and grounds by the forerunner to Neath Port Talbot Council in 1923, the parks and gardens of the house have grown to encompass considerable heritage value for the people of Neath, as part of the wider parkland. When originally built, the house was relatively detached in a physical sense from its community. Its location on rising ground above the town, and looking down on the population below, would have given it an almost superior or aloof relationship with its physical context.

The change in context - the opening of the park and the demolition of the house - inevitably also changed the relationship of the town with the ruins and the wider site. The loss of Gnoll House has detracted from the social value of the site, removing a physical representation of Neath's reason for being. Nowadays, the social value of Gnoll House Ruins and the surrounding parkland derives from its status as a retained source of identity for Neath – as a municipal park with tangible, if incomplete historical links.

Gnoll Estate Country Park replicates qualities of nature, thereby enhancing urban life within the town. Such open spaces form essential environmental and cultural assets in our towns and cities and research has shown that the British public value parks and open spaces as much as local schools. Similarly it is recognised that good-quality parks are

'essential to the well-being and future' of our built environment. They represent an important educational resource and can generate considerable social benefits by encouraging a shared sense of civic identity. Access to good-quality, well-maintained public open spaces can contribute to improved physical and mental health, while parks offer significant play and recreation benefits to children and young people. If properly maintained, public parks and open spaces can support urban regeneration, sustain the recovery of local housing markets, and enable communities to achieve biodiversity and urban sustainability.

Gnoll Estate Country Park encompassing the ruins of Gnoll House 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 as a place of cultural and historical importance. Its social values are therefore 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.

Local Facilities

The Gnoll Estate Country Park is well connected to the surrounding area with good transport links, more details of which can be found within the Project Context Document by Hiraeth Architecture.

The ruins themselves suffer from a detachment to the wider parkland. Facilities including toilets and refreshments are located some way away, currently in the visitor centre to the park. Electrical supplies to the area are present however, although the condition of them is currently unverified.

Physical Issues

The location of Gnoll House Ruins is currently perceived as being detached from the wider parkland. The surrounding screen of vegetation, the topographical form that binds it with a cliff to the eastern boundary and terraces that dramatically fall away to the south and west, give the impression that it is remote and on the fringes of the site. This is quite in contrast to the historical reality where the house was at the centre of its parkland.

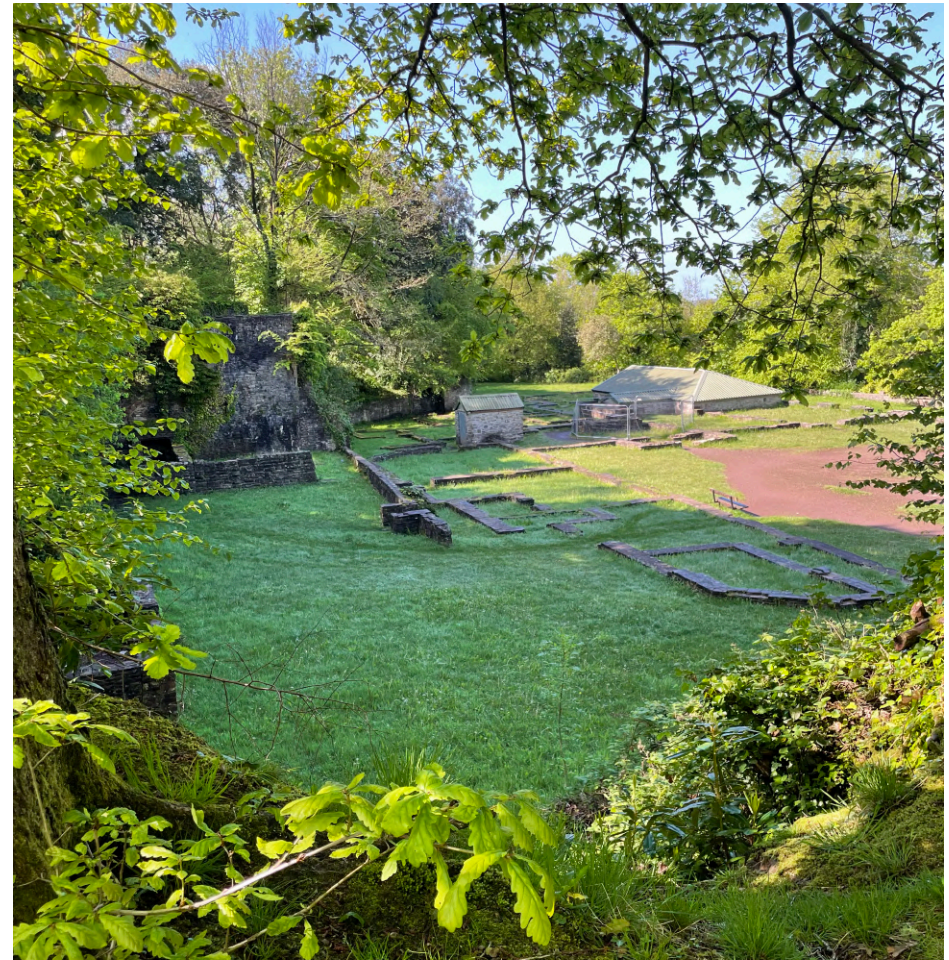
In this context, perception is perhaps the lens through which we interpret the reality. The reality is that the ruins are relatively well connected to the parkland via the level pathway that follows the route of the former carriageway, albeit the last 100yards or so is not so well surfaced.

Within the ruins access is challenging in part due to the grassed areas within which the stonework sits. Historic steps are without doubt challenging to climb without handrails, but there is some acknowledgement that this is perhaps the level of expectation when stood within such an area. The site is otherwise flat for all intents and purposes. Access to the cellars is similarly challenging with historic stone steps requiring clearing of moss and vegetation that has the potential to make them slippery. It is therefore clear that some challenges exist to be overcome in making the area more accessible and engaging to all abilities.

Economic Issues

Maintenance of the existing ruins is currently challenging economically. The ruins do not derive an income and their maintenance is therefore reliant on revenues from the wider parkland. This has led to a perceived lack of investment recently and the subsequent deterioration of the area.

In order for Gnoll House Ruins to have a viable and sustainable future, it is essential that a framework to afford opportunities to develop revenues is provided. This will minimise the required investment from other areas of the parkland.



Gnoll House Ruins appear as a woodland clearing but the nature of this provides inherent access issues

THE IMPORTANCE OF GNOLL HOUSE RUINS

The previous sections and associated reference documents, have developed a sound basis for identifying how Gnoll House came to be, and how it has contributed to the evidential, historic, aesthetic and communal value of the Gnoll Estate Country Park and wider Neath area. Gnoll House is recognised as being central to the development of Neath and the Vale of Neath Heritage Corridor, and illustrates the following qualities that demonstrate its heritage significance. These must be protected in any future development of the ruins and its environs:

- **It is a significant and focal element of a surviving example of a 18th century estate and gardens, developed by Sir Herbert Mackworth;**
- **For its group value with the Forecourt, Terrace Walls , and courtyard gateway;**
- **It has a wider group value within the surrounding context of Gnoll Estate Country Park and the historic buildings and structures within its boundaries;**
- **It contributes to the wider setting of the Gnoll Estate Country Park – a key parkland in Neath;**
- **It is a reflection of the historic significance of Neath as a developing urban area at the centre of the beginning of the world's copper manufacturing industry;**
- **For its contribution to the 'country estate' constructed by Sir Herbert Mackworth in an attempt to illustrate his newly acquired status as part of the landed gentry and with a consequent standing in the social hierarchy of the locality;**
- **For the high standard of design and construction of the house that had until relatively recently, withstood the test of time.**

THE BRIEF

A firm distinction must be drawn between ruin and pleasing decay. Medieval ruins have an appeal which is none the less potent for having been exploited by a long line of romantic artists. Later ruins have their own melancholy beauty. Pleasing decay is to be found everywhere, but not all decay is pleasing.

Pleasing Decay Article - John Piper (Architectural Review, 1947)

In May 2020, Planning Solutions Consulting Limited, produced a Gnoll Estate Country Park Accommodation Masterplan. The main focus of the commission was to assess the opportunity to introduce a form of overnight visitor accommodation within Gnoll Estate Country Park. In addition to this, they also developed a visitor experience action plan to enhance the wider country park, which built on the successful work carried out by the Parks and Cemeteries Department.

The prioritised visitor experience development plan that was developed was informed by the site review, strategic context, market assessment, consultation and direct primary research with members of the local community. Specific elements of the visitor experience within Gnoll Estate Country Park which could be enhanced were developed into a long list of project elements that formed the basis of a successful Levelling Up Funded Bid, for which the proposals for the enhancement of Gnoll House Ruins forms a fundamental part.

Of these elements, the following are of pertinence to the ruins:

- Safeguarding of existing ruins and enabling ongoing public access, alongside interpreting this location so that visitors understand the important context of the Gnoll House as part of the estate and wider Neath town.
- Opening up access to visitors who are currently unable to see the cellars. Adding to overall appeal of the park.
- To improve standard of visitor facilities.
- Encourage dwell time and offer more interactive, accessible and sensory options for a range of ages and abilities.
- To respond to visitor feedback on the need for such facilities within the locality, including:
 - additional interpretation,
 - improved signage,
 - outdoor cinema,
 - enhanced focus on conservation and the environment,
 - further information on the history of the site/ local area,
 - festivals and events
- Deliver a range of traditional and interactive interpretive interventions to encourage awareness of the important natural and heritage landscape of the park.
- Encourage a sense of place and foster community pride in the park.

The proposals for Gnoll House Ruins therefore look to address these points through their incorporation into the repair and renovation of the historic fabric. This will give new purpose to the ruins that are otherwise uneconomic to maintain and protect for future generations.

CONSTRAINTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Constraints

- The proposals should not dilute the historic significance of the surrounding landscape and parkland;
- The proposals have the potential to uncover archeologically sensitive material. Consideration must be given to the monitoring this during excavation works;
- 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 ruins, and should avoid a manicured finish;
- The proposals need to be large enough to meet the visitor requirements of the site, but must be reasonably unobtrusive within what is sensitive environment;
- It is noted that the ruins are a visible and identifiable location within the parkland as they are approached on foot from nearly every direction. Consequently any interventions should be considerate of their impact on existing views and vistas;
- The proposals should look to retain and uncover as much of the historic fabric as possible.

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;
- To develop a scheme that creates a unique outdoor events space which can provide income generation for the park and boost the local tourism economy more widely;
- To achieve a greater value and use from a currently under-utilised space in the park;
- To provide an interpretation and teaching space so that visitors can learn about the history of the Gnoll Estate Country Park whilst being immersed in one of its many historic assets;
- To build on the historic archival research to create a well landscaped area which takes cues from the historic layout/ development;
- Provide flexible space that can be used by a variety of community groups and initiatives, and that may evolve and change in the future;
- To provide an unobtrusive high quality scheme that improves the presentation of the house and parkland;
- To sensitively manage change within the curtilage of an existing, historic parkland to meet the current and future needs of the community and park, without compromising its historic significance, therefore enabling the park to have a viable and desirable future use and positive community impact.

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:

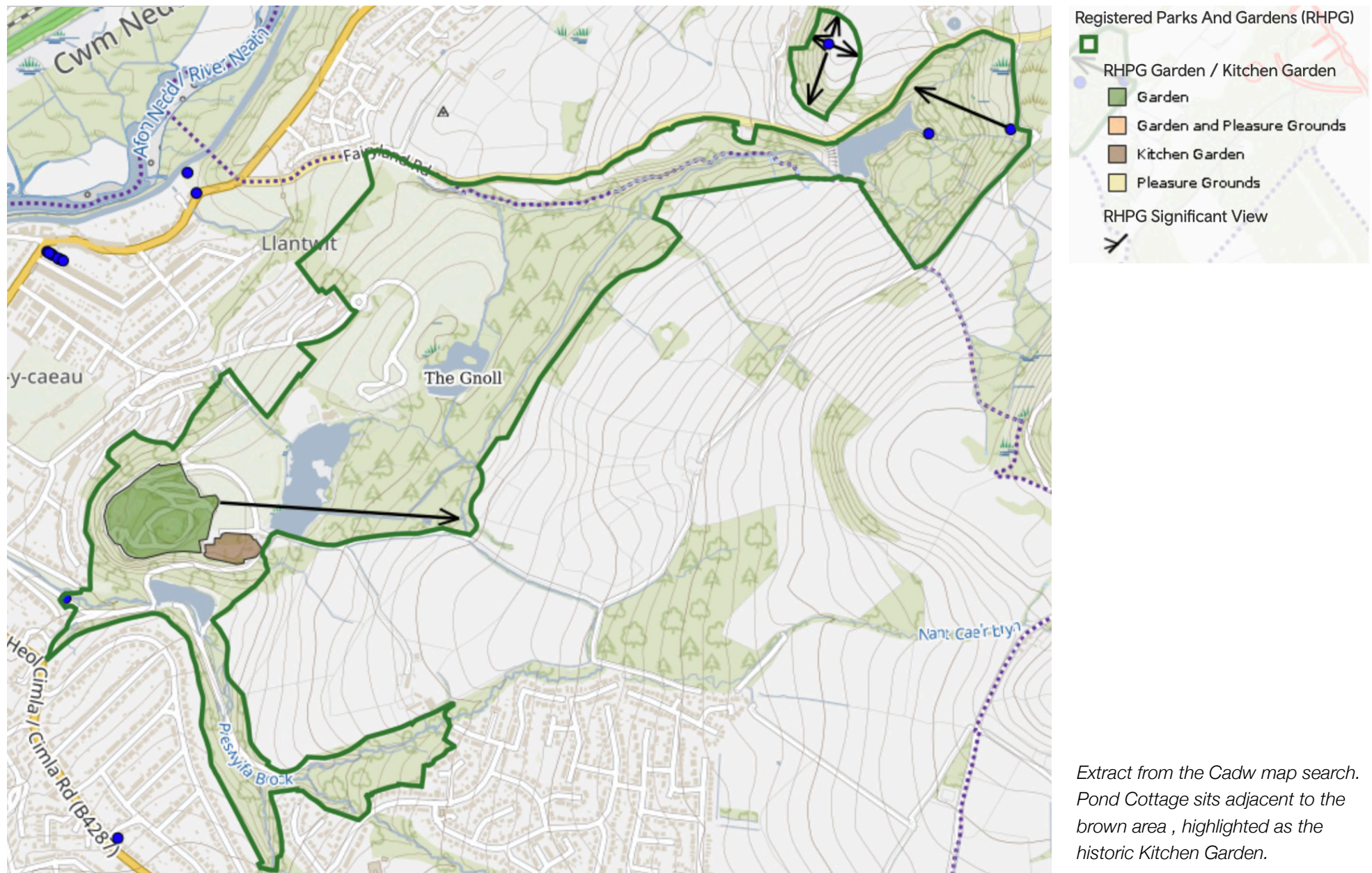
- conserve and enhance the historic environment, which is a finite and non-renewable resource and a vital and integral part of the historical and cultural identity of Wales;
- recognise its contribution to economic vitality and culture, civic pride, local distinctiveness and the quality of Welsh life, 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...'



*Extract from the Cadw map search.
Pond Cottage sits adjacent to the
brown area , highlighted as the
historic Kitchen Garden.*

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 Gnoll House Ruins

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 Gnoll House Ruins are 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.'

Gnoll House Ruins (Unlisted)

Gnoll House Ruins are not statutorily listed in their own right.

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

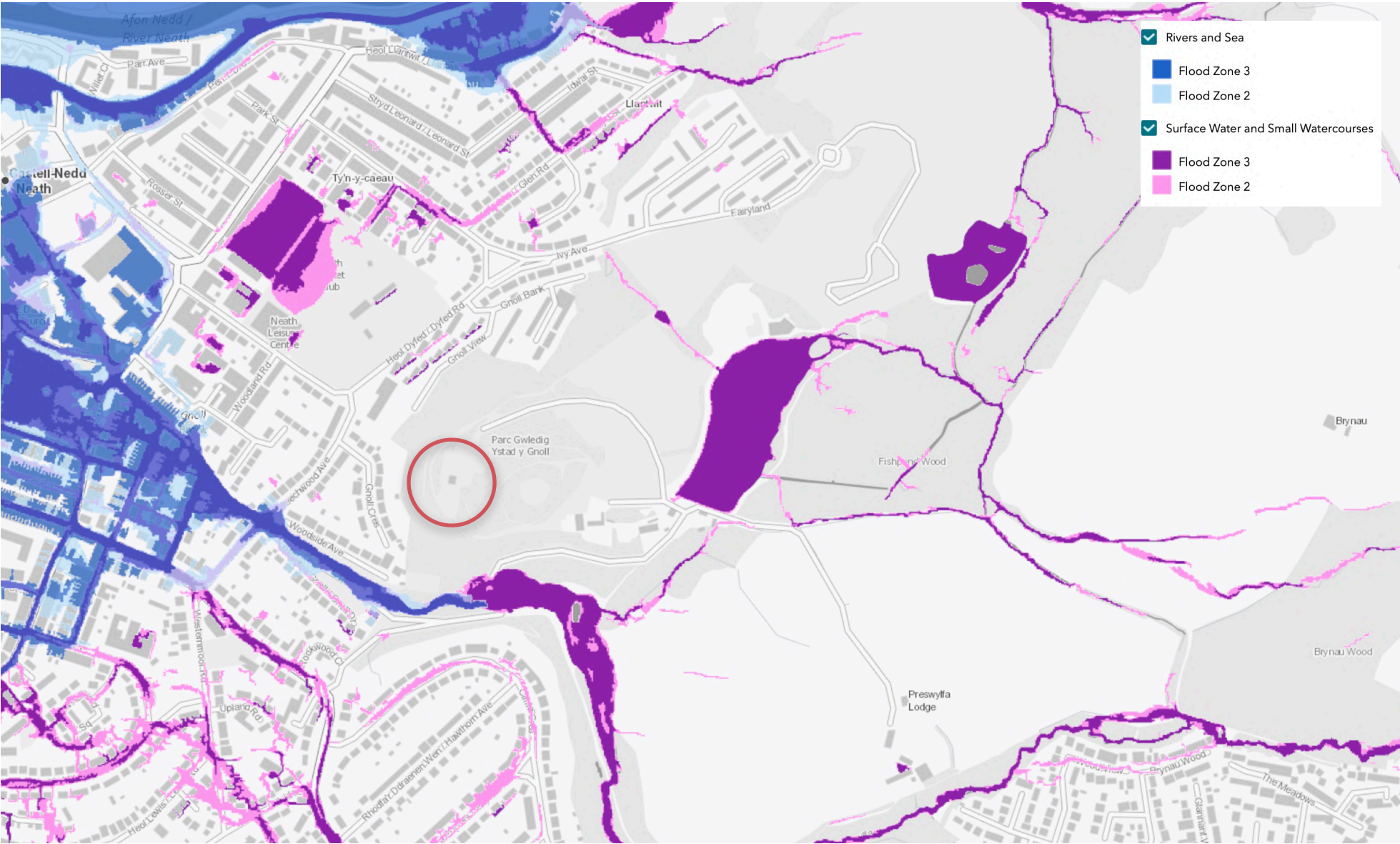
Flood Risk

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 Gnoll House Ruins. 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 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



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

(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 the presence of bats within the cellars of Gnoll House Ruins has been identified. This has been taken into account in developing proposals, with mitigation measures being incorporated into the scheme.

In terms of wider biodiversity, the ecologists have further inputted 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. This is with particular regards to the presence of ivy on site and the biodiversity benefits this brings, together with existing grassed areas.

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 proposals to lift the canopy of trees to the western boundary of the site to reintroduce views over the town of Neath below. It has been deemed that this is an acceptable and represents a sensible approach to the present and future maintenance of the vegetation in this area of the site.

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. It is however also noted that it is not intended for the cellars at Gnoll House Ruins to become a hermetically sealed environment and that, whilst secured, they will remain only largely wind and weathertight.

OVERVIEW OF PROPOSALS AND JUSTIFICATION

Repairs

In relation to Gnoll House a costed feasibility study and overview condition survey was carried out by Hiraeth Architecture and MJB Associates in April 2022. This developed a schedule of repairs and proposals for Gnoll House Ruins and Cellars that are summarised as follows. These should be read in conjunction with the repair drawings accompanying this application by Hiraeth Architecture:

Re-application of Limewash to Basement Walls and Ceilings

The existing lime wash to the walls and ceilings of the cellars is deteriorating. It is consequently to be renewed. Prior to redecoration of the walls analysis of decorative finish will be undertaken. Any loose matter or soiling to the walls and ceilings will be initially removed with a stiff bristle brush, followed by a soft one, with loose and friable material vacuumed.

All surface efflorescence will be removed also by brushing lightly with a soft, natural bristle or nylon brush, vacuuming away the debris. Thicker crusts of salt are to be carefully scraped away with a scalpel. All removed material is to be collected and sealed into bags prior to disposal. Significant surface damage and cracks will be made good with lime mortar, with localised marks and stains to be gently cleaned using water and detergent as directed by the Architect. 5 coats of lime wash will subsequently be applied with the colour to be white.

Justification

Traditionally limewash was the principal finish applied internally to the

cellars of Gnoll House. It would have been applied directly to the masonry and also to pre-applied lime coatings. Although often thought of as a decorative coating, the limewash was first of all a protective layer to the lime coatings and masonry substrate. On new lime renders and plasters it unifies and protects the surface particularly while strength is developing within the new plaster.

As with all lime coatings, limewash is a breathable coating allowing evaporation of moisture and water vapour. Limewash is also a repairing material, being used to fill small shrinkage cracks on the lime coverings. It can also be used as a sacrificial protective coat. Limewash is ideal for internal use as it is unaffected by rising damp which continually breaks down most other paints.

The lime wash to the cellars at Gnoll House has deteriorated to some degree and now requires reapplication so the benefits of the material can continue to be felt, and the cellars appropriately presented going forwards.

Cleaning of Retained Stone Flag Floors to the Basement

All existing stone flag floors are to be cleaned of all moss, oil, grease, stains, dirt and dust, including the drainage channel to the edge of floor. The mortar joints are to be carefully raked out to a depth of twice the width of the joint, but no less than 30mm deep, removing all loose and deleterious material. This is to be undertaken without damaging the arises of the masonry, therefore non-powered hand tools will solely be

used such as suitable jointing, plugging and toothed masonry chisels; hacksaw blades and bent spikes may also be used. Hacking hammers, cold chisels and mechanical aids are not to be used. Dust and any remaining loose debris are subsequently to be removed with a stiff bristle brush and the joints thoroughly flushed out with clean water – avoiding unnecessary saturation – prior to repointing.

Following the raking out, a sample area of repointing to match the adjacent retained lime mortar is to be approved by the Architect. The existing mortar will be analysed to ensure matching mortar is used for all repointing.

The new lime mortar will be pressed home hard into the prepared joints ensuring the cavities are completely filled. The pointing will be finished flush with the arises of the existing stone to exactly match the existing historical pointing. Rapid drying out of the new mortar will be prevented in accordance with the best traditions of lime repointing techniques. Similarly, the mortar will be protected from frosts and other inclement weather. The repointing sample will be judged on the dry and wet appearance. Following approval of the sample the remaining areas of floor will be repointed in accordance with the agreed sample.

Justification

The cleaning and repointing of the flagstone flooring will enhance the presentation of the floor and reinstate damaged original pointing in character on a like for like basis. The works will ensure that potential slips and caused by unclean surfaces will be avoided, whilst using materials that are sympathetic to the traditional materials used in the cellars.

The Consolidation and Repointing of Existing Historic Stonework (above ground)

Where existing historic stonework is loose and a substantial part of its bonding mortar has disintegrated or is missing, the masonry is to be carefully dismantled and rebuilt.

This will include carefully removing all loose debris and setting aside all loose stone for re-use. The tops of walls will be rebuilt using a combination of existing and new stone. The new work will closely match that of the original stonework. All loose stones will be re-bedded in place, with all joints being deep-pointed and finished, and the side walls rebuilt locally using a combination of salvaged and new stone. The walls will then be finished with capping stones with mortar profiled to shed water away from the top of the wall preventing any ponding occurring within joints.

The existing mortar will be analysed to ensure matching mortar is used for all repointing. The following mix will be allowed for

1 NHL 2:2.5 well graded aggregate

The new lime mortar is to be pressed home hard into the prepared joints ensuring the cavities are completely filled. The pointing will be finished flush with the arises of the existing stone to exactly match the existing historical pointing. Rapid drying out of the new mortar will be prevented in accordance with the best traditions of lime repointing techniques. Similarly, the mortar is to be protected from frosts and other inclement weather.



Existing stonework will be consolidated as part of the proposed repairs

The Removal of Loose and Friable Stonework

Loose and friable stonework is to be gently brushed with a stiff bristle, non-ferrous brush to remove loose stone. Care will be taken as not to leave any visible brush marks on the stone. This will improve the appearance of the stonework.

Justification

The walls are generally of a solid wall construction. This uses lime mortar, although this has been pointed over in a hard, cementitious mortar in several areas. This is leading to accelerated weathering of stonework in places. In particular, evaporation of moisture, absorbed from the environment into the stonework, is occurring predominantly through the stone and not the mortar joints. This means that during frosts, moisture within the stonework freezes just below the surface of the stone, expands and blows the face of the stone off. In order to improve this situation, the mortar should be more porous than the stone to encourage evaporation to happen through the mortar joints which can much more readily be maintained. Consequently the hard mortar should be removed and the affected areas repointed using a lime based mortar.

Harder mortars such as Natural Hydraulic Limes and cementitious mortars should largely be avoided going forwards in favour of hot mixed lime mortars. Hot mixed air lime mortars were the ubiquitous lime mortar of traditional construction, only falling from general use as the 20th century wore on, when the use of Portland cement displaced them from most building sites. These mortars were quickly and efficiently prepared and delivered mortars of eminent workability and usefulness. They enjoy unparalleled water retentivity and excellent bond, and display maximum cohesiveness and adhesiveness. Furthermore they are much more effectively porous than other mortars, keeping building fabric dry, and are

more durable and frost resilient.

The removal of modern stonework with cementitious pointing, and recapping and repointing in a lime based mortar

Existing modern 'crazy' paved stone cappings are to be carefully removed, cleaned and set aside for reuse. They are to be reinstated in a lime based mortar with the 'core' to the wall being capped in a lime mortar with an NHL 5 mix, with a consistent depth of mortar reflecting the wall profile. The new work is to closely match that of the original stonework to the ruins.

The existing pointing is to be analysed to ensure matching mortar is used for all bedding and pointing, allowing for the following mix:

1 NHL 2:2.5 well graded aggregate.

New lime mortar is to be pressed home hard into the prepared joints ensuring the cavities are completely filled. The pointing is to be finished flush with the arises of the existing stone to exactly match the existing historical pointing. Rapid drying out of the new mortar is to be prevented in accordance with the best traditions of lime repointing techniques. Similarly, the mortar is to be protected from frosts and other inclement weather. The mortar is to be profiled to shed water away from the top of the wall preventing any ponding occurring within joints.

Justification

The proposed wall repairs to the ruins involve general cleaning, together with the removal of non-breathable mortars. The walls are generally of a solid wall construction. These would originally have been constructed in

lime mortar although this has been reconstructed in a hard, cementitious mortar generally with modern 'crazy' paved stonework. This is leading to accelerated weathering of stonework in places. In particular, evaporation of moisture, absorbed from the environment into the stonework, is occurring predominantly through the stone and not the mortar joints. This means that during frosts, moisture within the stonework freezes just below the surface of the stone, expands and blows the face of the stone off. In order to improve this situation, the mortar should be more porous than the stone to encourage evaporation to happen through the mortar joints which can much more readily be maintained. Consequently the hard mortar should be removed and the affected areas capped and repointed using a lime based mortar.

The Treatment of all Vegetative Growth to Retained Fabric

All shrubs, plants saplings and any organic growth are to be removed from the masonry, including from the tops of walls and within crevices. Care will be taken as loose stones are often encapsulated within the roots and branches of the shrub. These roots will generally need to be cut back and treated with proprietary brushwood killer.

Larger shrubs and trees are to be given 'a hair cut' to reduce the weight of the shrubs and allow access to the root area. Root areas will then be treated with proprietary brushwood killer. Careful attention will be paid to the integrity of existing stonework during this process. Where stones are loose or at risk of working loose and falling they will be wedged in place and subsequently re-bedded. The location of each individual stone is to be identified prior to removal to ensure the stone is replaced in its original position. Walls are to be repointed where disturbed during the process in a lime based mortar.

Justification

The presence of vegetative growth to the masonry fabric of Gnoll House Ruins can have a detrimental effect on the stonework is left unchecked as it can ultimately dislodge masonry units and make it unstable. It is equally noted that high perimeter walls create positive ecological habitat due to current vegetation, including climbing ivy.

Prior to undertaking the treatment of vegetative growth assessment will be made on the invasive nature of it and the likely impact of its removal on both ecological and historic grounds. The maintenance of the historic fabric will take precedence where health and safety grounds determine that this is the necessary course of action.

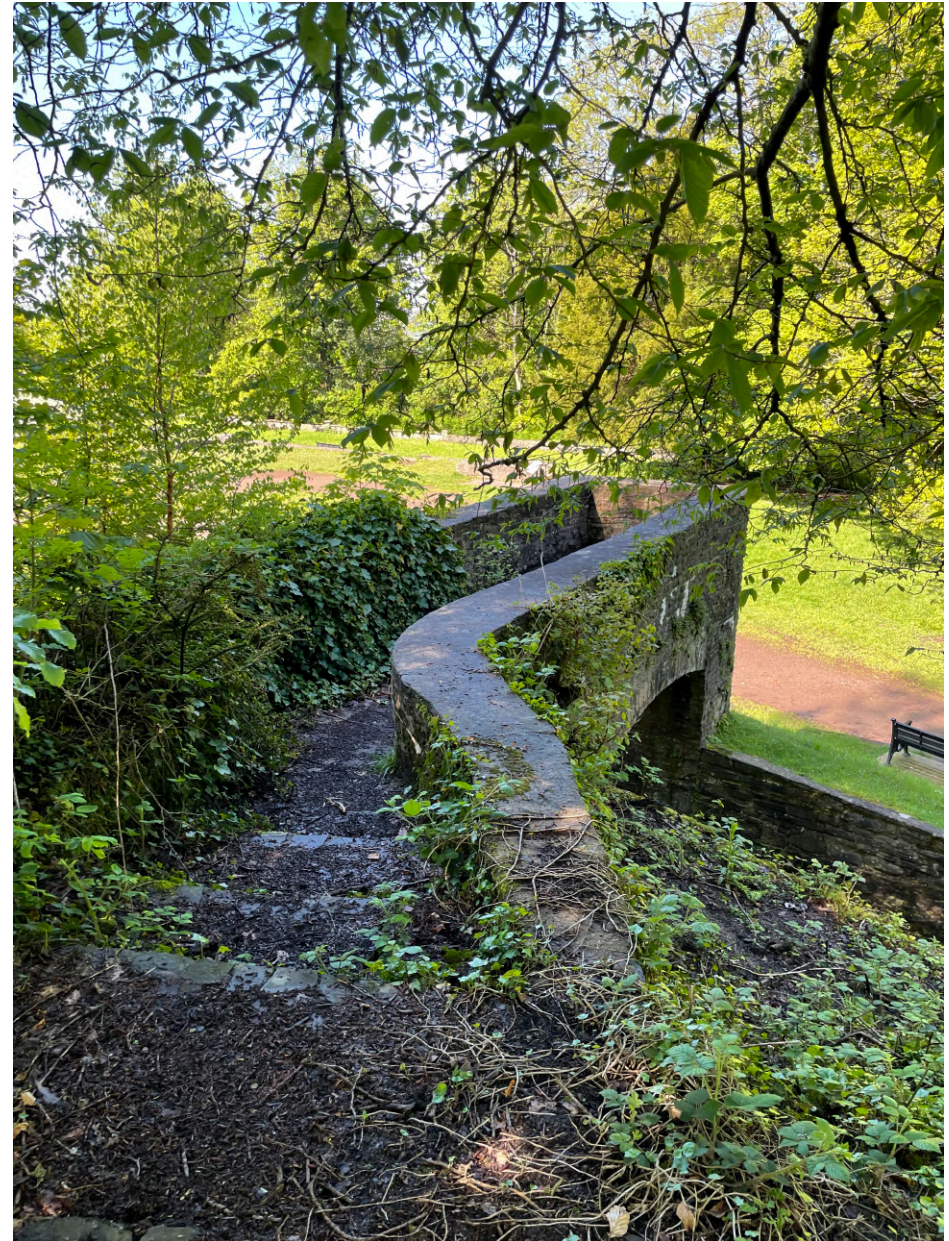
Demolition of the existing, modern, above ground structures

Existing modern roof structures and associated modern masonry will be taken down to the underside of the level of the former floors above Gnoll House Cellars with the tops of walls made good.

Justification

The existing above ground, modern structures are particularly incongruous within the setting of the ruins. They fail to sit comfortably with the character of the area and the expanses of metal roofing detract from the setting of the ruins. Their removal is consequently seen as a positive addition to the parkland and will afford the reintroduction of the walls to describe the footprint of the building more clearly.

Vegetative growth will be treated as part of the proposed repairs to stonework



RESPONSE TO OBJECTIVES OF GOOD DESIGN

Changes to the historic and traditional environment (whether designated or not) are inevitable in order to maintain and secure our heritage for future generations. Such development is often born in response to social, cultural and economic changes within society generally, and in this case include the evolution of the Gnoll House Ruins to provide educational and interpretation facilities within the cellars and performance facilities with temporary toilets and associated landscaping at ground floor level. This will be overlooked by existing, restored viewing platforms. This will ultimately facilitate the management of the wider landscape so it can be retained and enhanced as a large scale designed landscape that celebrates its associations with the town of Neath, its pioneering development of industrial processes, and as a valuable asset to its surrounding community.

The proposal therefore seeks to enhance the offer of Gnoll Estate Country Park, in terms of its evidential, historic, aesthetic and communal value. It looks to remedy the inaccessibility of the ruins to the public and to improve accessibility and facilities generally.

The proposed scheme sets out to achieve this by enhancing the importance and interpretation of the most significant elements of the existing site, whilst removing those elements that detract from it. To realise this, the site has to be considered as a composition in its immediate context, and through its relative significance in the wider parkland.

The proposals for the Gnoll House Ruins ultimately aim to reinstate it as a central point within the wider parkland. This redirection of focus will serve to give wider understanding as to why the parkland exists and re-establish the connection between the house and the estate that was lost following the demolition of the property. In order to achieve this, it is essential that the ruins have a meaningful function rather than just being presented as a frozen relic. This will include digital media and interpretive film telling the story of the house and its importance in the development of Gnoll Estate Country Park, Neath and the Vale of Neath.

The cellars will also be used to store and supply visitors with interactive virtual reality sets that will enable them to leave the cellar and view how the house would have looked in 3-dimensions from the grounds of the property.

Whilst this proposal does provide a functional use for the cellars of the house, it is very much looking at the past glories of Gnoll House. In more recent times however it is noted that a number of names famous in the entertainment worlds have connections in the wider Neath Port Talbot area. This has included Hollywood stars Richard Burton, Anthony Hopkins and Michael Sheen, together with internationally recognised performers such as Bonnie Tyler, Rob Brydon, Max Boyce, and Siwan Roberts. This demonstrates an affinity with such entertainment, and to support this it is proposed that the site of the ruins is developed as an outdoor performance space with the potential for theatre and outdoor cinema events. This will further serve to provide new and contemporary

uses of the ruins that are relevant to the current day, in a historically important and intimate environment.

The proposals therefore both address the past, present, and future of Gnoll Estate Country Park and its community, through explaining its history, providing a supporting framework for a diversity of events to occur now, and additional potential income streams looking forward that will enable further investment going forwards. This is supported by biodiversity, and all serves to place Gnoll House back at the centre of the park that it generated, thereby giving it renewed meaning and relevance to its community, a sense of place and rationale to the parkland, and importantly a reconnected identity for Neath and the wider Vale.

Layout

At ground floor level, the layout of the scheme aims to reinstate the footprint of the north west wing of the house. Prior to its demolition, this area balanced up the primary frontage of the west elevation of the property that overlooked Neath. This was a formal composition that exuberated mans dominance over the landscape and arguably the people below.

The reinstatement of the footprint would be undertaken by reinstating a 0.5m high rubble stone wall in lime mortar with stone work to match that of the existing rubble stone walls on site. The wall would be capped in a lime mortar. Together with the adjacent two former formal rooms the area would be paved in a porcelain stone denoting the hierarchy of these spaces within the former house, and further forming a solid terraced area which would subsequently overlook the performance stage located to the west of this on the western boundary of the formal garden below.

The addition of the terrace over the existing basement area will require the introduction of a beam and block floor. The existing modern stone masonry will be carefully taken down in this area to facilitate this, with the 0.5m height of the ruin being re-built in random rubble stonework with lime capping, following the construction of the floor.

The remainder of the footprint of the building will have the existing grass scraped away with hoggin surfacing laid within the walls. To the rear of the building in the former courtyard, the former coach house will be used as a location for temporary toilets during events.

Above this area, the adjacent steps to the upper level will give access to a viewing platform looking down over the ruins and allowing the footprint to be appreciated as a whole. There will be a similar viewing spot located to the north of the courtyard above the entrance arch into this area. This will similarly be accessed from the upper level and will lie approximately to the end of the formal tree lined vista that links with the cascades.

The to cellars the two inner stairwells to the basement will be used for public access. On entering the space below the current roofed area, there will be a welcome and interpretation area, with an educational room to the south side. These two spaces will serve to inform visitors about the house, the estate and its importance to the wider community and context. The corridor to the north will further serve to tell the story, together with that of the ecology of the site, before turning east to return visitors to ground floor level by existing steps.

Located off the corridor spaces will be two bat hot houses. These will accommodate existing bats whilst also maintaining foraging lines within the cellars. Wholly separated from visitor routes the two will exist in

harmony, with the opportunity for the interpretation elements of the scheme to share knowledge on the existing uses of the cellars.

Access

Access to the site will generally be improved through the resurfacing of the carriageway drive that sweeps around to the north of the site. This will be undertaken in resin bound gravel, giving a smooth surface suitable for users of all abilities. On entering the site, access within the ruins will also be enhanced through the addition of a hoggin floor finish in lieu of the current grass. This will give a more solid floor finish whilst concurrently describing the footprint of the building more clearly. To the cellars, the introduction of simple, black coated, mild steel handrails fixed into the mortar joints of existing stonework will improve access to the cellars. Whilst lift access has been considered, it is felt that this would significantly compromise the historic interpretation of the house, and be particularly difficult to manage and maintain in this area of the parkland.

Within the cellars, the floors are generally uneven. This is the nature and character of the historic building and there are therefore no proposals to regularise this. Equally however, there are not any obvious trip hazards.

Access to the viewing platforms at the rear of the site will be improved through the introduction of further handrails to the existing steps adjacent to the former coach house. Again, this will be undertaken with fixtures into the mortar joints of existing stonework. To the viewing platforms themselves, a similar rail will be run around the top of the existing walling to ensure falls are prevented. This will be extremely discrete in the context of the mass of the walling and set back from the front edge so it can not be seen from the ruins below.

Scale

The proposals look to remove the large mass of built form that has been added to the site through the demolition of the modern enclosures that have been introduced over the cellars. This will enable the footprint of the former house to become much more legible - particularly when viewed from the viewing platform above. It is indeed notable that the majority of intervention above ground level is taking place at a height of less than 0.5m. This will improve views across the site, enabling a sense of scale of the former grounds around the house to be appreciated.

To the western boundary of the formal garden terrace, a plinth will be formed as a performance stand to facilitate events. The scale of this has been designed to align with the floor of the existing house, and therefore ensure audiences can clearly see this area.

In addition to the performance stand, new polyester powder coated steel stairs will be introduced over top of the existing stairwells to the cellars. These will importantly mark the location of the entrance and exists to this area, giving further opportunities to interpret the former house, both by reintroducing the former form of the stairs that historically existed, and through the opportunity to include panels to the sides of the structure that will allow more physical descriptions of the house to be introduced at ground level in an integrated manner.

Character

The philosophy adopted towards Gnoll House Ruins addresses this as follows:

Where new fabric is to be added into the existing historic landscape, then

this, whilst respecting the character of the site, should also be distinct, so it can clearly be differentiated from that which is not.

This approach is perhaps grounded in and best explained by SPAB in their working principles SPAB state:

‘Complement not parody

New work should express modern needs in a modern language. These are the only terms in which new can relate to old in a way which is positive and responsive at the same time. If an addition proves essential, it should not be made to out-do or out-last the original.’

However, it does not mean that new additions need be alien to their site. There are many examples of new, contemporary works and alterations being successfully undertaken to significant historical places. These examples identify that such developments are based on:

- A comprehensive understanding of the impacts on the significance of the existing building.
- The proposal not materially harming the values of the place and where appropriate reinforcing and further revealing the significant historical elements.
- An aspiration for a high-quality design and execution which may be valued now and in the future
- The long-term consequences of the proposals being benign, or that they do not prejudice alternative solutions in the future.

Appearance

Following on from the approach to character, the appearance of the site is likely to be enhanced through the repair of the historic fabric in more traditional materials and the removal of the incongruous modern

structures. This will serve to open up the site so its scale can be appreciated as a whole without unnecessarily being subdivided.

The majority of the interventions are low key, and will be undertaken at ground floor level, with the resurfacing of the ruins focussing on introducing clarity in the delineation of the footprint of the former house.

The modern intervention of the screening for the temporary toilets to the rear of the site, has been designed to be temporary in nature and can therefore be taken away, stored and reintroduced when events take place. The addition of the stair elements meanwhile introduce a verticality into the scheme that suggests that the house was something much bigger in nature, and this will be further described by interpretation on integral panels.

To the basement, the majority of the area will be repaired in traditional materials aimed at representing, not redefining the feel of the historic cellars. Within the proposed education room the feel will be slightly different, due to the modern beam and block flooring above. This will be clad in timber boarding giving a warmer appearance than elsewhere, and one that is perhaps slightly more reflective of a modern intervention and educational facility. That said, the walls and floors will still reflect a more historic character.

Landscaping

Landscaping proposals have been developed by Davies Landscape Architects. These are based around the reintroduction of formal planting to more formal areas, together with the incorporation of biodiverse habitat in the less formal areas of the site. Hard landscaping looks to reintroduce formal paths where appropriate, whilst the raising of the canopy of the



Early artists impression of the proposals for the ruins showing the opportunity for events to take place in the historic setting

trees to the western boundary of the site will reintroduce the important link between the ruins and the town below.

Environmental Sustainability

In order to meet the UK's commitment for decarbonisation, our construction industry must fundamentally change its approach to design, performance and construction of our built environment. Wales has committed to a framework of carbon reduction which will result in the revision of Building Regulation standards particularly in regard to energy performance but whilst we wait to see the effects on regulations, we believe that we must be delivering projects of today that are future proofed and offer a truly sustainable long-term solution. Consequently the proposals developed for Gnoll House Ruins seeks to improve on current building regulations where possible and consider the whole life of the development.

In considering the nature of these objectives we have prepared and taken into consideration with the design team a number of factors -

- analysis of the site's physical and environmental constraints and opportunities including sun path and shading, the natural and built environment, accessibility, ecology and vegetation.
- analysis of the project's use and users, considering when the various elements will be in use, for how long and for what type of activities.
- a knowledge of existing construction standards and potential future changes specifically in regards to the national and regional low carbon strategies.
- the client's environmental policy including an objective understanding of its approach to capital and whole life costs.

The proposed scheme has attempted to address sustainable principles from the outset by adopting a general approach that reduces the buildings' carbon footprint by sequentially looking to:

- Reduce the amount of energy that the building uses
- Maximise the free gains that are available to the site
- Addressing the energy source.

This approach ensures that the proposal addresses the issues that can be realistically achieved and specifically relate to the individual site. The approach subsequently needs to be continued and will have further implications at a detailed level.

The majority of the interventions are external, however, the scheme looks to address the existing fabric of the cellars by repairing existing breathable materials. This will assist the drying out of the masonry, thereby improving the thermal performance of the wall and reducing the required heating.

As well as minimising technical risks, the following guidelines will be adhered to in developing the proposals:

- Avoidance of any actions that might cause the building envelope to deteriorate, particularly those that run the risk of trapping moisture from external or internal sources
- A preference to implement the simplest measures practicable as well as possible

In developing proposals for mechanical and electrical installations it is noted that the proposed heating installations will aim to introduce services that minimise the impact on the environment by being energy-efficient, and where possible maximise the use of renewable energy sources. This

is set against a primary aim to minimise the amount of intervention, damage and loss of existing fabric. Services will therefore be installed with as little disruption as possible to the existing fabric – existing spaces and voids will be used rather than cutting in new for example. In addition to this, new work will aim to be reversible, allowing the fabric to revert to its former state where appropriate and achievable.

Ecology

Ecological proposals have been generated in consultation with Megan Price of Neath Port Talbot Ecologist (Planning and Consultancy). Existing bat activity has been addressed through the incorporation of bat hot boxes in the cellars, whilst biodiversity proposals have been integrated into the landscape design. This is covered in the Ecologist's report.

Community Safety

Community safety is likely to be enhanced through the use of Gnoll House Ruins both as an educational resource and as a performance area. The uses will attract further users to this part of the parkland providing a level of natural surveillance in this area that does not currently exist. The proposals furthermore include a lighting scheme that will further serve to enhance the visibility and safety in the area generally.

To facilitate the development of the proposals, helpful discussions have been held with Joy Nicholls, Designing Out Crime Officer for South Wales Police. She has advised that 'It is understood that the cellars are not listed and are therefore able to be secured with SBD standard doors or gates. The cellars are currently gated with metal, rail gates which are rusted. These could be replaced by new metal gates that meet LPS 1175: SR2 standard.'. The consultant team will endeavour to address this in a proportionate manner going forwards.

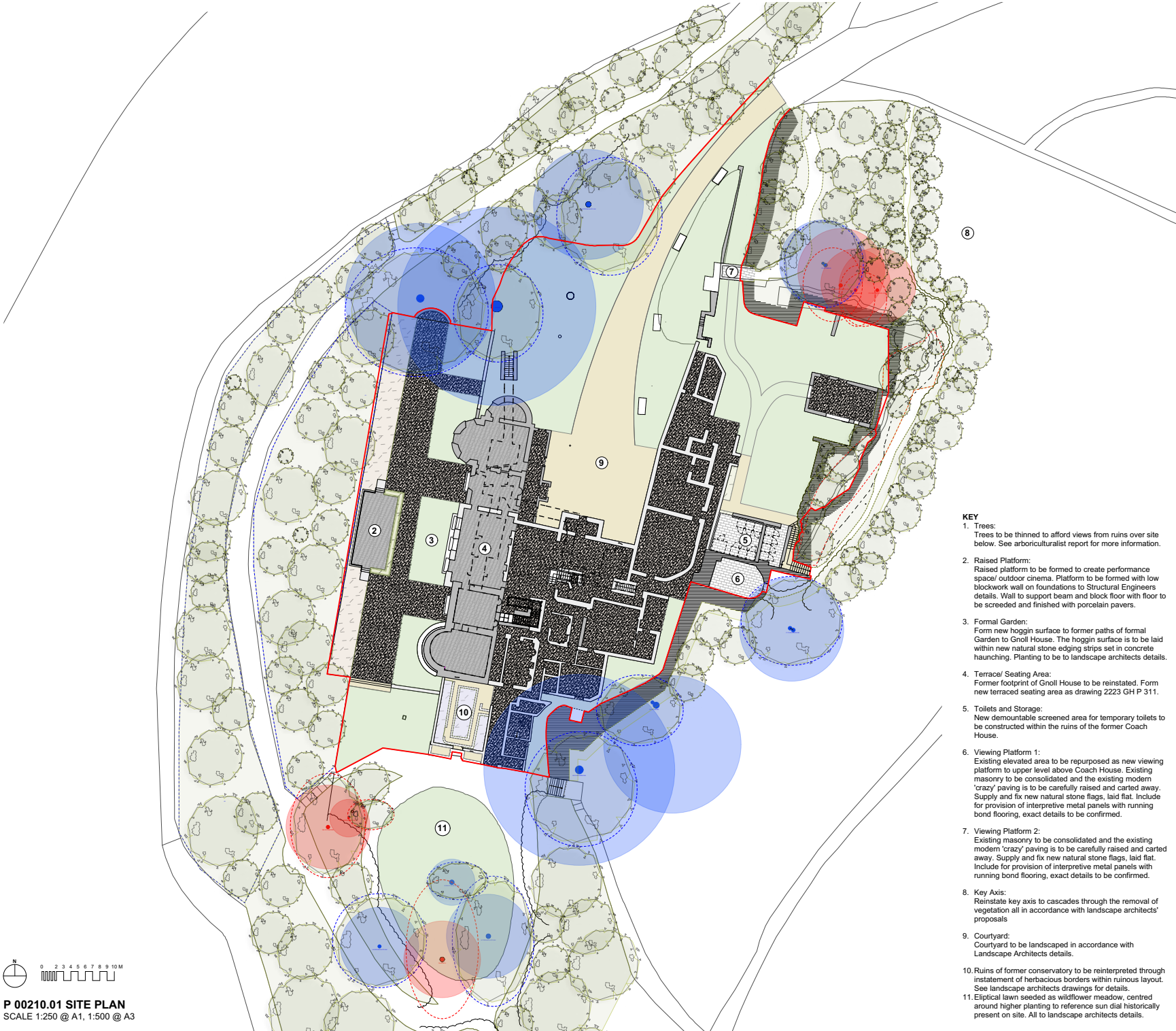


Improved lighting will make spaces more accessible and less intimidating

FINAL SCHEME



The proposed ruins being used as a intimate backdrop for events will help to reposition Gnoll House at the cultural heart of the park and wider area



- KEY**
- Trees:
Trees to be thinned to afford views from ruins over site below. See arboriculturalist report for more information.
 - Raised Platform:
Raised platform to be formed to create performance space/ outdoor cinema. Platform to be formed with low blockwork wall on foundations to Structural Engineers details. Wall to support beam and block floor with floor to be screeded and finished with porcelain pavers.
 - Formal Garden:
Form new hoggin surface to former paths of formal Garden to Gnoll House. The hoggin surface is to be laid within new natural stone edging strips set in concrete haunching. Planting to be to landscape architects details.
 - Terrace/ Seating Area:
Former footprint of Gnoll House to be reinstated. Form new terraced seating area as drawing 2223 GH P 311.
 - Toilets and Storage:
New demountable screened area for temporary toilets to be constructed within the ruins of the former Coach House.
 - Viewing Platform 1:
Existing elevated area to be repurposed as new viewing platform to upper level above Coach House. Existing masonry to be consolidated and the existing modern 'crazy' paving is to be carefully raised and carted away. Supply and fix new natural stone flags, laid flat. Include for provision of interpretive metal panels with running bond flooring, exact details to be confirmed.
 - Viewing Platform 2:
Existing masonry to be consolidated and the existing modern 'crazy' paving is to be carefully raised and carted away. Supply and fix new natural stone flags, laid flat. Include for provision of interpretive metal panels with running bond flooring, exact details to be confirmed.
 - Key Axis:
Reinstate key axis to cascades through the removal of vegetation all in accordance with landscape architects' proposals
 - Courtyard:
Courtyard to be landscaped in accordance with Landscape Architects details.
 - Ruins of former conservatory to be reinterpreted through reinstatement of herbaceous borders within ruinous layout. See landscape architects drawings for details.
 - Elthical lawn seeded as wildflower meadow, centred around higher planting to reference sun dial historically present on site. All to landscape architects details.

Gnoll Park is a Grade II* registered parkland. As a consequence of this designation it is statutorily protected. Extreme care should therefore be taken not to cause any unspecified damage to any fabric or part of structures and landscape on or within the site when undertaking any construction works.

BAT NOTES AND METHODOLOGY

- There are known bats in the Gnoll house Ruins. Consequently all works need to be undertaken in accordance with the methodology as set out by the ecologist.
- All British bat species and their roosts (occupied or not) are legally protected. It is a criminal offence to kill, injure or take a wild bat, and/or intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy, or obstruct access to, a bat roost. Prosecution could lead to fines and imprisonment. Any involved individual or company could be held liable.
- All work carried out where bats are or have been found to be present must be supervised by and carried out to the satisfaction of the retained bat expert.

TREE SURVEY KEY

- | | |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| Category A Tree Stem | Category C Tree Stem |
| Category A Tree Canopy | Category C Tree Canopy |
| Category A RPA | Category C RPA |
| Category B Tree Stem | Category U Tree Stem |
| Category B Tree Canopy | Category U Tree Canopy |
| Category B RPA | Category U RPA |

Please refer to 'BS5837 survey, Old Gnoll House' for detail of each tree, its condition and associated recommendations. This plan has been drawn based on the information provided in this report and the Topographical Survey provided by Andrew Scott Ltd. of the Ruins & the Topographical Survey provided by Landmark Surveys Wales for Pond Cottage. The original documents should be also be referred to in their entirety.

General Notes
Responsibility is not accepted for errors made by others scaling from this drawing.

All construction information should be taken from figured dimensions only. Dimensions are in millimetres unless otherwise stated.

All dimensions and conditions are to be checked on site prior to preparing drawings or commencing any work.

Any variations or supplementary drawings are to be approved by The Architect.

All details are to be read in strict accordance with GA drawings and construction notes

All steelwork sizes, padstones, blockwork strengths and associated structural design to be in accordance with structural engineers design and requirements. Hiraeth Architecture accepts no liability to any discrepancies in the structural design indicated on these drawings. Any structural related queries should be directed to the project engineer immediately.

SERIES		PLANNING	
SUITABILITY		S2 - ISSUED FOR INFORMATION	
REV	DATE	NOTE	
P1	23/06/2023		
P2	26/07/2023	Further information added	
P3	21/08/2023	Further information added	

Hiraeth.

UPRN

2080

Job number

2325

Zone

01

Andrew Scott Ltd

GNOLL PARK

Proposed:

Site Plan

Gnoll House Ruins

Scale

1:250 @ A1, 1:500 @ A3

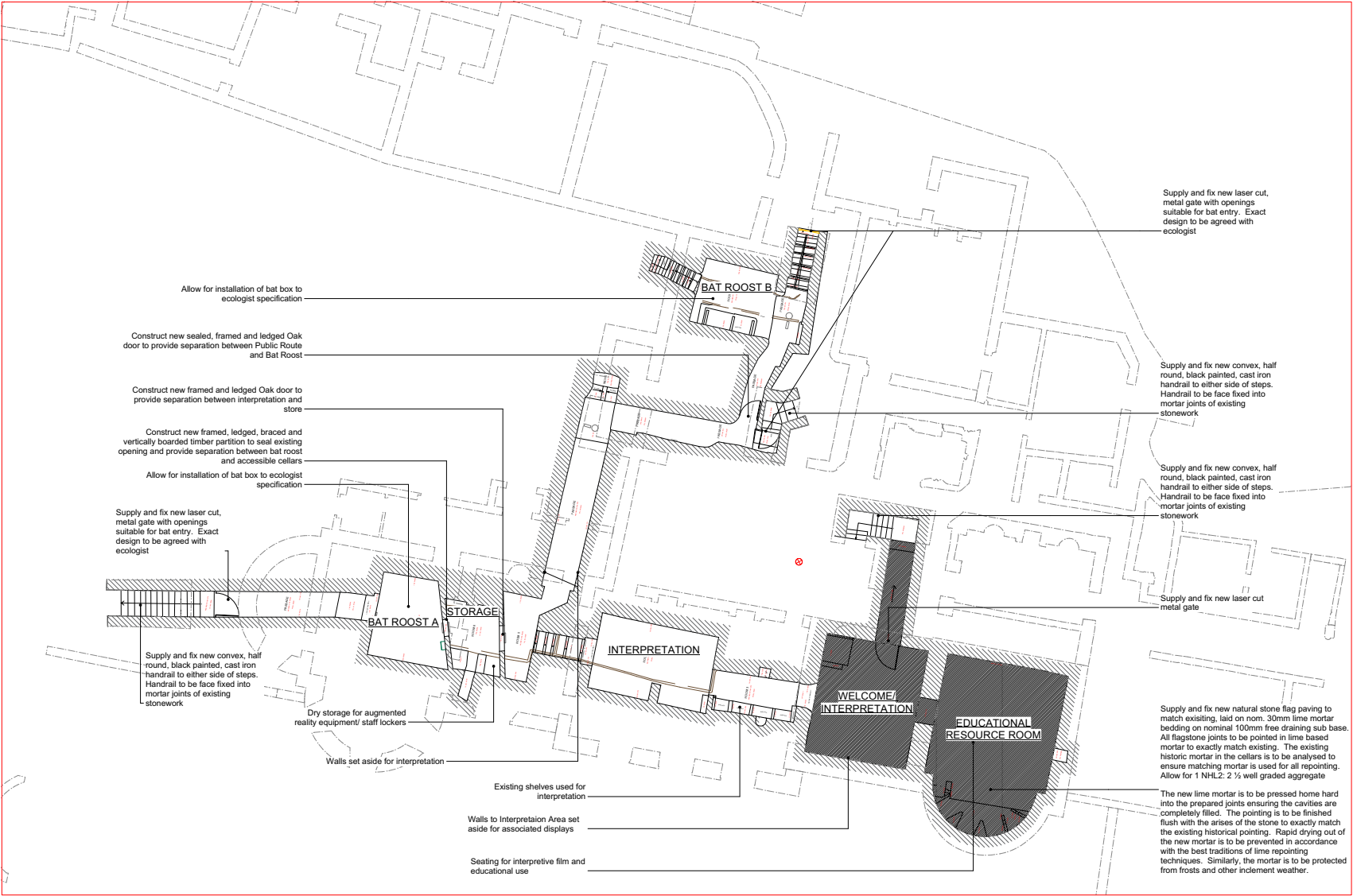
Date

05/23

02920 025814 | office@hiraetharchitecture.co.uk

The Maltings | East Tyndall St | Cardiff | CF24 5EA

Zone	Originator	Role	Type	Sheet number	IS Code	Rev
2080	01	HIR	A	DR	00210	S2/P3



P 01300.01 BASEMENT PLAN
SCALE 1:100 @ A1, 1:200 @ A3

General Electrical Installation

1. In conjunction with Architect renew existing electrical services. New services are to minimise the impact on the historic fabric of the existing church. Amendments are to minimise intervention, damage and loss of historic fabric with services to be installed with as little disruption as possible – e.g. existing spaces and voids being used rather than cutting in new. All new work should aim to be reversible, allowing the fabric to revert to its former state where appropriate and achievable. All new fittings are to minimise the impact on the environment by being energy-efficient. Unused electrical fittings are to be carefully removed. Include for any necessary making good as required.

Include allowance for CCTV system to be incorporated discretely to the site at Ground Floor and Basement levels.

General Heating Installation

1. In conjunction with Architect, supply and fix electrical heating installation. The proposed heating installation aims to introduce services that minimise the impact on the environment by being energy-efficient, and where possible maximise the use of renewable energy sources. This is set against a further aim to minimise the amount of intervention, damage to fabric, and indeed, loss of historic fabric. Consequently services should be installed with as little disruption as possible to the historic fabric – existing spaces and voids being used rather than cutting in new for example. In addition to this, new work should aim to be reversible, allowing the fabric to revert to its former state where appropriate and achievable.

Gnoll Park is a Grade II* registered parkland. As a consequence of this designation it is statutorily protected. Extreme care should therefore be taken not to cause any unspecified damage to any fabric or part of structures and landscape on or within the site when undertaking any construction works.

BAT NOTES AND METHODOLOGY

1. There are known bats in the Gnoll house Ruins. Consequently all works need to be undertaken in accordance with the methodology as set out by the ecologist.
2. All British bat species and their roosts (occupied or not) are legally protected. It is a criminal offence to kill, injure or take a wild bat, and/or intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy, or obstruct access to, a bat roost. Prosecution could lead to fines and imprisonment. Any involved individual or company could be held liable.
3. All work carried out where bats are or have been found to be present must be supervised by and carried out to the satisfaction of the retained bat expert.

General Notes
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All construction information should be taken from figured dimensions only. Dimensions are in millimetres unless otherwise stated.

All dimensions and conditions are to be checked on site prior to preparing drawings or commencing any work.

Any variations or supplementary drawings are to be approved by The Architect.

All details are to be read in strict accordance with GA drawings and construction notes

All steelwork sizes, padstones, blockwork strengths and associated structural design to be in accordance with structural engineers design and requirements. Hiraeth Architecture accepts no liability to any discrepancies in the structural design indicated on these drawings. Any structural related queries should be directed to the project engineer immediately.



P 01300.02 SITE LOCATION PLAN
SCALE 1:500 @ A1, 1:1000 @ A3

SERIES		PLANNING
SUITABILITY		S2 - ISSUED FOR INFORMATION
REV	DATE	NOTE
P2	23/06/2023	Detailed information updated
P3	26/07/2023	Further information added
P4	21/08/2023	Further information added

job number 2325 01
Zone
Andrew Scott Ltd
GNOLL PARK

**Proposed:
Basement Plan
Gnoll House Ruins**
Scale 1:100 @ A1, 1:200 @ A3 Date 06/23

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UPRN	Zone	Originator	Role	Type	Sheet number	S Code	Rev
2080	01	HIR	A	DR	01300	S2	P4

do not scale from this drawing | all dimensions to be verified on site | notify architect of all discrepancies | copyright Hiraeth architecture

DESIGN EVOLUTION



Initial concept proposal for the development of the Ruins

Following Page: The LUF Funded application included on site toilets which have subsequently been amended to portable toilets, reducing the impact on the site

The majority of the proposals for Gnoll House Ruins have been governed by the constraints on the site. These include:

- The remains of the historic fabric
- Interpretation of the historic drivers of design such as views over the town of Neath, and historic approaches to the site
- The presence of bats within the existing cellars
- The sensitivities of flora and vegetation around the site

In working in such a sensitive environment the constraints often become the driver to a single solution, and this is largely what has happened with regards to the proposals for Gnoll House Ruins.

Decisions have been made in the wider context of the park however. When deciding where performance areas should be sited, whilst the perhaps more obvious choice is the large field area that sits between the current visitor centre and the ruins, the historic impact on the surrounding landscape for such events, is perhaps much greater. In suggesting the location of these events should be located in the ruins, the character of the site can help to form the context and enhance the event, layering on a level of history and sense of place. In this manner, the traditions of the past can find new meaning in the present whilst concurrently giving use to otherwise important, yet disregarded historic relics.



Notes:
Responsibility is not accepted for errors made by others scaling from this drawing.
All construction information should be taken from figured dimensions only. Dimensions are in millimetres unless otherwise stated.
All dimensions and conditions are to be checked on site prior to preparing drawings or commencing any work.
Any variations or supplementary drawings are to be approved by The Architect.
All details are to be read in strict accordance with GA drawings and construction notes.
All steelwork sizes, padstones, blockwork strengths and associated structural design to be in accordance with structural engineers design and requirements. Hiraeth Architecture accepts no liability to any discrepancies in the structural design indicated on these drawings. Any structural related queries should be directed to the project engineer immediately.

- KEY**
- Trees:**
Trees to be thinned to afford views from ruins over site below
 - Raised Platform:**
Raised platform to be formed to create performance space/ outdoor cinema. Platform to be formed with low blockwork wall on foundations to Structural Engineers details. Wall to support beam and block floor with floor to be screeded and finished with pavers
 - Formal Garden:**
Form new hoggin surface to former paths of formal Garden to Gnoll House. The hoggin surface is to be laid within new natural stone edging strips set in concrete haunching.
 - Terrace/ Seating Area:**
Former footprint of Gnoll House to be reinstated. Form new flexible terrace area as drawing 2223 GH P 311
 - Toilets and Storage:**
New Toilet and Storage building to be constructed within the ruins of the former Visitors Coach House. Include for all associated drainage and septic tank to be located in proximity of entrance gatehouse
 - Viewing Platform 1:**
Form new viewing platform to upper level above Visitors Coach House, giving views over the ruins and through the trees to Neath below. The existing masonry is to be consolidated and the flooring raised and renewed in natural stone flags laid flat. Include for provision of interpretive metal panels
 - Viewing Platform 2:**
Form new viewing platform at the termination of the key axis to the cascades. Structure to cantilever over cliff edge by approximately 3m and to be constructed in steel with metal balustrade and mesh infill. Allow for incorporation of interpretation panels
 - Key Axis:**
Reinstate key axis to cascades through the removal of vegetation all in accordance with landscape architects' proposals
 - Courtyard:**
Courtyard to be landscaped in accordance with Landscape Architects proposals to create a sense of arrival

GH P_201.1 SITE PLAN
SCALE 1:200 @ A1, 1:400 @ A3

Hiraeth. 2223 GH P 201 Rev.
Neath Port Talbot CBC
Gnoll Park Estate
Proposed Site Plan
Gnoll House
Scale 1:200 @ A1, 1:400 @ A3 Date 05/22
02920351645 | office@hiraetharchitecture.co.uk
The Maltings | East Tyndall St | Cardiff | CF24 5EA

derived scale from this drawing | all dimensions to be verified on site | not a contract of all discrepancies | copyright Hiraeth Architecture

ASSESSMENT OF IMPACT AND MITIGATION

The following page summarises the assessment of the impact of the proposals on the existing heritage values of the Gnoll House Ruins and Cellars at Gnoll Estate Country Park. It is measured against the following four values in accordance with Cadw's Conservation Principles for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment in Wales:

Evidential Value – Value deriving from the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity.

Historical Value - Value deriving from the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present.

Aesthetic Value – Value deriving from the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place.

Communal Value – Value deriving from the meanings of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Proposal	Justification	Significance	Potential Impact of Proposal	Activity required to assess impact	Value based judgement	Possible mitigation
The proposed repairs to the Gnoll House Ruins and Cellars include: • Reapplication of limewash to basement walls and ceilings • Cleaning of retained stone flag floors to basement • Consolidation and repointing of existing stonework • The removal of loose and friable stonework • The treatment of all vegetative growth to retained fabric • Demolition of the existing, modern above ground structures In addition to this, the following new additions are proposed: • The reinstatement of the ruins of the northern end of the formal west frontage • Paving of the former ground floor rooms to the formal west frontage • The provision of free draining hogging surfaces to the remainder of the ground floor	General Overview – Gnoll House was an example of a ‘country estate’ built by the nouveau-riche with the great wealth that had been acquired on the back of industrialisation. Whilst the house has since been demolished, the ruins and cellars remain as markers of the former building. These have been subject to ill-considered repairs and alterations, with the importance of the house in the context of the surrounding park being lost. The proposals are driven by a desire to address the following: • Re-establish Gnoll House as a focal point at the heart of Gnoll Estate Country Park and the wider Neath area • General deterioration of the existing ruins which are in a poor state of repair • The inappropriateness of the existing coverings to the cellars • To open up access to the cellars and enhance interpretation and understanding of the house • To provide supporting infrastructure to enable the proposals to be realised	Evidential Value – The ruins and cellars are the only surviving structures of Gnoll House. Although they have been subject to modern repairs, they provide a tangible connection to the original house and allow for the interpretation and understanding of the estate and the wider industrial heritage of Neath. That being said, the construction of modern structures to cover the cellar stairwells has had a detrimental effect on the evidential value of the ruins, making it difficult to read the remaining footprint and to clearly understand what is a modern addition and what is original fabric. In this context, the cellars give an insight into the past operation of the house, particularly with regards to how the servants quarters operated, with multiple points of access to the ground floor level suggesting that servants were generally not to be seen.	Evidential Value – The proposals are likely to have a positive impact on the evidential value of the Gnoll House ruins and cellars. The repair of the structures will allow will significantly improve both the clarity and overall interpretation of the remaining fabric of the house. Resurfacing in different materials will delineate the former interior rooms from the former external spaces. Likewise, the removal of inappropriate structures and their replacement with more sympathetic stair-like covers to the cellar entrances will help to interpret the floor plan, whilst opening up the full scale of the site. The reinstatement of the footprint to northern end of the formal west frontage will reintroduce the formality of this important elevation to the house that once stood dominantly overlooking the town below. In this manner, together with the raising of the tree canopy to reopen the vista over the town, it will improve the evidential value of the former relationship that existed between the house and the town.	Historical research into Gnoll Estate Country Park to date and particularly in relation to the Gnoll House Ruins, has been required to justify the proposals. This has included reference to the Conservation Management Plan which has proven to be a valuable document when assessing impact against the significance and pressures faced by the ruins. It has further been essential to understand the particular economic context in which the ruins are found in order to conclude what potential solutions might be, and whether the impact that derives is acceptable. There has been accurate and ongoing recording of the ruins and cellars, and this will need to continue following the end of	Evidential Value – As Gnoll House no longer exists and the remaining structures have already been altered significantly, their evidential value lies mainly with their potential for interpretation. Like any historical fabric, the ruins and cellars require ongoing maintenance, however, the lack of economic viability is clearly a hindrance to this and has led to a significant period since the last repair work was undertaken. A more significant intervention is now required to protect existing evidential value and allow the history of Gnoll House and its setting to be rediscovered and reinterpreted. The proposals for this project will allow the ruins to be repaired, and enhanced through the introduction of a viable use. This will be beneficial to the evidential value as the original fabric will be repaired with new fabric introduced to replace that which has been previously lost.	Careful selection of new materials should be undertaken to match, as closely as possible, surrounding original materials, in terms of appearance and properties. An archaeological written scheme of investigation and historic environment desk based assessment has been produced to mitigate potential impacts of the works.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Proposal	Justification	Significance	Potential Impact of Proposal	Activity required to assess impact	Value based judgement	Possible mitigation
• Construction of new free standing stepped coverings to the basement stairwells • The reinstatement of the formality of the upper west terrace garden and associated construction of a performance space • Construction of removable screening for temporary toilet facilities in the ruins of the former Coach House, to be used during proposed events • The provision of new electrical and background heating services to the cellars • The provision of new lighting to the site.		Historical Value – The ruins and cellars of Gnoll House are important because they act as historical touchstones. They link the past to the present and enable people to connect across time and generations. This is enhanced by the historic drawings, written records and photographs of the former house. The historical value is also found in the wider contribution that the ruins make to the designed landscape of the parkland and its setting. This parkland was designed with the house at its centre, and its importance, although compromised but the loss of the building, is still critical to the understanding of the wider context. The ruins are an identifiable connection to the former house which, at the height of its influence, was central to the industrial development of Neath and was a marker of the great wealth that came with it. Again however, it should be noted that the addition of ill-considered modern structures has reduced the historical value, particularly the ability for visitors to interpret the ruins and access the cellars.	Historical Value – The proposal is likely to have beneficial effect on the historical value and significance of the ruins. Over time, the ruins have lost much of their historic importance within the context of the wider parkland. The proposals look to re-establish them as a focal point at the heart of Gnoll Estate Country Park and wider Neath area with a new meaningful function and use. Together with repairing historic fabric, the proposals will aid the interpretation of the former house as well as allowing for the display of historic photographs, information and archival material. Likewise, the reinstatement of the footprint of the formal west frontage will also enhance the value of the ruins as a historical reference point for visitors.	the bat activity period. This will inevitably continue with ongoing archaeological assessment and documenting of the structures during the construction process as necessary. This will be undertaken through drawn, photographic and written recording. Samples of proposed replacement materials will also need to be collected and used to assess their appropriateness in due course.	Historical Value – The regeneration of Gnoll House as a focal point for the park will re-engage visitors with the history of the estate and wider area of Neath in a tangible way. The proposals will allow for visitors to interpret the former house whilst incorporating Neath's more modern cultural significance in the arts, enriching the overall historical value.	

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Proposal	Justification	Significance	Potential Impact of Proposal	Activity required to assess impact	Value based judgement	Possible mitigation
		Aesthetic Value – At one time, Gnoll House would have held great aesthetic value with its formal frontage and elevated position overlooking the town below. Over the years, the aesthetic value of the original house has been lost almost entirely as it was reduced in size and ultimately demolished. This was in the context of a surrounding landscape that has similarly been unmaintained to some degree. The new context of a ruin in a wooded enclave, on paper offers a new aesthetic that talks of pleasing decay as described by John Piper in his article of in the Architectural Review of September 1947. However, this is currently compromised by the current condition of the site. Modern repairs and alterations have had a detrimental impact on the appearance of the ruins, making their visual interpretation difficult. The cellars are largely unused, with no access for members of the public, and have had little maintenance over several years. The existing aesthetic value is therefore currently poor.	Aesthetic Value – By removing incongruous modern structures and replacing them with new stepped coverings incorporating interpretation will reduce the mass of the current interventions. This will enable the whole of the immediate context of the site to be appreciated and reinforce the idea of the wooded enclave. Likewise, repair works to the ruins will restore the footprint of the formal frontage of Gnoll House, whilst resurfacing areas will enable a better differentiation between former interior and exterior space. This care and improvement the overall appearance of the site will further enhance the interpretation of the ruins. Although the introduction of an outdoor performance space will result in a somewhat altered perspective of the house and ruins, it is likely to be a positive change in visitor experience that consolidates the presentation of the ruins with appropriate materials, providing a softer and less harsh display of this important site. This will inevitably give an overall improvement of aesthetic value.		Aesthetic Value – The aesthetic value of the structures in their current condition is significantly compromised, with potential for further improvement. The proposals look to improve the repair and maintenance of the ruins and cellars so that they may be more easily interpreted by visitors. The presentation is more purposeful and visually appealing, representation of the aesthetic, and the aesthetic value of the structures and is likely to result in an enhancement.	

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Proposal	Justification	Significance	Potential Impact of Proposal	Activity required to assess impact	Value based judgement	Possible mitigation
		Communal Value – Although Gnoll House may have been lost, the ruins and surrounding parkland still hold significant communal value derived in part from its status as a source of identity for Neath - both as a municipal park and for its historical connections to the area and development of industry. The cellars and footprint of the house also give insights to the operation of the house. The park is nowadays a significant place for leisure and is a focus of the immediate community for recreation. The community of Neath furthermore have great affection for Gnoll Estate Country Park and families have strong connections going back generations. This is represented by the numerous memorial plaques and benches - some of which are located in and around the ruins. However, the ruins and cellars in their current condition do not maximise the communal value, with the cellars in particular closed off to visitors all together. As the only surviving remnants of Gnoll House there is therefore potential to reengage visitors with its communal history value.	Communal Value – The proposals are likely to evolve and change the memory of the Gnoll House as experienced by the public through their re-presentation and associated interpretation. This is seen to be as positive intervention that will change the understanding from a one dimensional view of ruins to a 3-dimensional understanding of the former house. The public currently do not have the opportunity to fully interpret and engage with the ruins - despite having strong generational connections. The proposals therefore look to address this by creating usable communal spaces whilst improving the appearance of the ruins and ensuring its enjoyment by future generations.		Communal Value – The ruins and cellars have significant communal value as the remaining feature of Gnoll House, which forms a source of identity for the people of Neath. Their neglect reflects on wider society and contrastingly their repair is likely to have a positive effect on the wider area. Likewise, the proposals seek to provide a functional space for the community to interact with its heritage and hold events. This will not only improve the communal value of the ruins but will also have a positive influence on the wider estate, whilst creating ongoing memories of the current community.	

APPENDICES

Registered Historic Park & Garden



Details

Reference Number	Name	Grade	Date of Designation	Status
PGW(Gm)50(NEP)	The Gnoll	II*	01/02/2022	Designated

Location

Unitary Authority	Community	Easting	Northing
Neath Port Talbot	Tonna	276824	197582

Broad Class	Site Type	Main phases of construction
Gardens, Parks and Urban Spaces	Formal and informal park; Victorian pleasure grounds; walled kitchen garden	1720s; 1740s; 1776-90; 1811-61; 1899

Description

Summary Description and Reason for Designation

The Gnoll was located on a prominent, steep-sided hill or knoll, on the east side of Neath.

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. The eighteenth-

century landscaping is of several phases, including an exceptionally interesting early transitional layout by Thomas Greening, in the style of Stephen Switzer, with formal and informal elements, including a (restored) formal cascade. The following phases include an outstanding informal cascade of the 1740s and the later eighteenth-century follies of a rock-hewn grotto and the Ivy Tower, which forms a prominent landmark in the Neath valley. Although the park's historic character has been somewhat diluted through the loss of the house and planting, most of its structural elements remain intact or have been restored or rebuilt. Most of the major developments in the park and grounds took place during the eighteenth century under the ownership of the Mackworth family.

The park lies on elevated, rolling ground on the south flank of the Vale of Neath. It is linear, orientated north-east by south-west. Its eastern, upper side is largely wooded, its western side more open. On the east the ground rises towards the high ground of Cefn Morfydd, while to the south and west it drops below the park to the town of Neath. The house is sited on a prominent hill at the south-western end of the park. There are three ponds and a late nineteenth-century reservoir, to supply water for coal mining and copper smelting, and for ornament.

South of the house site, at the south end of the park, is the wooded Preswylfa valley, largely deciduous, with the Great Pond half way along it. To the north is an open area of parkland, the largest pond, the Fishpond, and a smaller pond with two small islands. Fishpond Wood is mature woodland containing the (restored) formal cascade to the east and remnants of a more extensive lime avenue. This is aligned on a long formal axis from the north end of the hill on which the house stood, across the ha-ha and up the cascade to Brynau Wood and Cefn Morfydd, beyond the park.

The northern part of the park comprises open ground on the western side, now partly a golf course, and Mosshouse Wood, mixed woodland which extends from Fishpond Wood on the south to high ground on the north. It contains the reservoir and a long, informal Grade II Listed cascade (LB 22870). There are also several eighteenth-century follies including the rebuilt 'gazebo' and a Grade II Listed Grotto (LB 22860). The final feature of the landscape park is Grade II Listed Ivy Tower (LB 11768), a prominent eighteenth-century eye-catcher folly tower situated on a hilltop to the north of Mosshouse Wood, overlooking the park and the Vale of Neath.

There have been several entrances at The Gnoll, only two of which remain in use. An entrance with imposing castellated stone archway and a simple iron gate now lies on Gnoll Avenue. Inside the entrance the former drive, now a public road, is lined with pines, leading to the Grade II Listed War Memorial Gate of Honour entrance (LB 11784). Inside, a tarmac drive runs eastwards up the Preswylfa valley. A former entrance at the end of Gnoll Avenue is marked by Grade II Listed gate & lodges (LB 11782).

The garden and pleasure grounds lie on the hill on which the house once stood. The garden consists of the terrace to the west of the house site, which looks out over the town and beyond. It is a rectangular grassy platform bounded with a low stone parapet wall on the west and a revetment wall on the east, accessed from the house by a flight of steps. Below is an area of deciduous woodland with ornamental understorey. At the north end is a curving recessed stone seat and a yew on a small mound. To the south of the house is the oval forecourt area, with grass in the centre. Two paths now lead into it.

The grounds lie mainly to the east of the house site but also on the slopes of the hill to the west and south.

The crown of the hill is occupied by wooded grounds laid out informally, with paths and a few open areas. The south side is bounded by a stone revetment walling. Below on the south-east is a walled enclosure, formerly the herbaceous garden but now rough grass. On the hill summit is the bowling green, a roughly circular level lawn surrounded by rhododendrons and mixed trees. To the north is a gentle slope down to a long, level, grass terrace running east-west from the north end of the house to a ha-ha on the east. North of the terrace is an area of mixed ornamental woodland and shrubs, with some bamboo clumps.

The former kitchen gardens lie to the east of the pleasure grounds, on ground sloping gently to the south, and have origins in the mid-eighteenth century. To their west is Gnoll Cottage, or Little Gnoll House, and garden. The kitchen gardens forms three compartments. The northernmost is roughly oval in shape, partially walled and under rough grass. The others occupy a roughly rectangular area adjoining on the south, bounded by walls 2.5m-4.5m high with a wide entrance at the east end. The east compartment is on two levels; on the upper one is a modern glasshouse; on the lower one are two long, parallel ranges of single-storey stone and brick bothies. To their south are three modern glasshouses set at right-angles to the bothies. The third compartment, to the west, is roughly square, the south-east corner rounded and with an entrance towards the west end of the south side. Tipping has raised the ground level in this compartment.

Setting - The Gnoll stood on a prominent, steep-sided hill or knoll, hence its name, on the east side of the town, the park lying on the flank of the Vale of Neath, well known for its picturesque beauty. Urban expansion means that the town now abuts the southern and western margins of the park.

Significant views - From the main west front of the house there were magnificent views out over the town and Vale of Neath, and from the pleasure grounds views east towards the higher ground of Cefn Morfudd. The view eastwards from the end of the pleasure ground terrace is across the sloping park to the Fishpond and up the cascade on the wooded slope beyond. The Ivy Tower folly, at the north end of the park, afforded panoramic views over the park and the Vale of Neath.

Sources:
Cadw Historic Assets Database (ref: PGW(Gm)50(NEP)).

Cadw : Registered Historic Park & Garden [Records 1 of 1]



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