

### Special Characteristics of the Site

- Gnoll Estate Country Park is located on a prominent, steep sided hill on the East side of Neath that steps out from the natural topography of the valley, thereby historically offering dramatic views to the South, North and West
- Despite its prominent location, the site still feels nestled down in its landscape, largely screened from the openness of the broad valley bottom and from prevailing winds by dense mature woodland and the surrounding topography.
- The surrounding landscape reflects in some capacity, almost all aspects of change that has been undertaken in the Vale of Neath in the last 300 years.



*The site offers extensive views of the surrounding designed landscape whilst lying relatively sheltered on its plateau. Relics and memories of the House together with the industrial processes and materials are never far away*

## SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PARK

The significance of the park has been established by the Conservation Management Plan, dated April 2022, by Ian Baggott of CFP - a specialist parks, green space and heritage consultancy. This states

*'The Gnoll's current designations give an indication of its significance in the fact that it is a Grade II\* registered park and garden and that it contains a further 3 Grade II listed buildings / features.'*

*The primary reason for grading is also clear 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."*

*There is also its industrial connection throughs Humphrey Mackworth's creation of pools for his industry below and possible remnants of mills on site.'*

More specifically the park illustrates the following qualities that demonstrate its heritage significance and which must be protected in any future development of the ruins and its environs:

### ***'As a Surviving 1720 / 1740s Landscape Design in Wales***

*It is not known how many 1720s landscape designs have survived in Wales, the most often cited examples are in England e.g. Castle Howard near York, Blenheim Palace in Oxfordshire, both by Stephen Switzer. There has not been time during this commission to fully explore this and it certainly warrants further exploration.*

*This era is sometimes called transitional or the very early stages of the English Landscape Design which became famous later under Repton.*

### ***As a Work of Thomas Greening***

*The two transcribed letters lead us to the connection between Herbert Mackworth before the inherited the estate and Thomas Greening (1684-1757). We do not know how Mackworth had lived in London nearer to Greening's nursery in Brentford.*



*Greening was working for Sir James Bateman at the time at Shobdon Herefordshire (about 70 miles North East over the Brecon Beacons) and he also bought a farm there himself. His work there is thought to have begun around 1720-21.*

*Greening was an exceptional plantsman – known to be an expert in growing dwarf apples in tub and pots, peaches, nectarine and espalier apricots. He also grew elm trees for which he gained a royal patent in 1720 for grafting English Elm on to Dutch elm stock for faster growth.*

*He was also involved in the 1720s in landscaping the gardens of Richmond Lodge, now part of Kew Gardens, for Queen Caroline working with Charles Bridgeman. It is likely that his contract there was more management rather than new design. He also worked at Claremont at this time with William Kent. Virtually all of his work at both sites has disappeared and it has not proved possible for specialists to decipher his work as still remaining at Richmond Garden or Kew Gardens.*

*He went on to become gardener for King George II, Lord Weymouth and the Duke of Marlborough.*

*There is reference in the letter of 25th September 1727 to Herbert Mackworth of creating a ‘semicircular theatre’. One such example was known to be created at Richmond Lodge using elms and is shown on the Rocque print of 1748.*

*The CADW listing also refers to the layout being “in the style of Stephen Switzer” which is in turn encapsulated in his book Ichnographia Rustica.*

*Thus, the main components of Greenings design appear to be the main axis connecting the house to the Ha Ha and its view beyond to the formal cascades. There is a significant difference in height at the western end of*

*the axis and its alignment north of the house manet that there would not be any views from the house down the avenue. Immediately next to the axis is the irregularly laid out gardens, all paths are curved and several link to a circular features later referred to as both a bowling green and later a croquet lawn. The formal cascades also would have been part of the design but were implemented slightly later in the 1740s.*

*Thus, in conclusion, this may be the only Thomas Greening design still in existence in the UK which makes it of national significance.*

### **Cultural and Historical Significance to the Development of Neath**

*The Gnoll most for very long the most important house in Neath. Its connections to the town date back to at least 1666 and the successive owners made their considerable wealth from the labour of the people of the area. Evan yr Halen’s connection to the salt trade, the Evans family’s initial coal mining and Humphrey Mackworth’s copper smelting all not only shaped the house and landscape of the Gnoll but also the surrounding area. The pools and waterways are a legacy of the industrialisation very early in the 1700s. There are quite possibly the remains of mills and other workings on site that require further exploration.*

*The current community of Neath have a great affection with the Gnoll and families have strong connections going back generations. This is a huge untapped resource not only in developing the stories of the Gnoll but also in securing the future of the park. The current Friends group consists of about 5 people and the council have virtually no volunteer engagement. Recent consultation shows that learning about the history of the Gnoll is one of the top 2 priorities.*

### **Ecological significance**

*The Gnoll Country Park is designated a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) (NPTSINC036) by the Local Planning Authority*

through the Local Development Plan (2011- 2026). SINC, also known as Local Wildlife Sites, are sites with local biodiversity value vital to declining plant and animal populations by providing habitat and facilitating dispersal. Damage or loss to a site designated a SINC should be avoided or mitigated if unavoidable.

The Gnoll was designated for its ancient woodland habitat and characteristic ground flora. The south of the site is characterised by broadleaved woodland, some of which is designated on the Ancient Woodland Inventory. The woodland features species such as beech (*Fagus spp.*) and woodruff (*Galium odoratum*), a priority species. The latter is a flowering perirenal and indicator species of ancient woodland. The broadleaved woodland is a priority habitat within the country park and supports notable species including Daubenton's bats (*Myotis daubentonii*).

The Gnoll Country Park features a range of other habitats, some of which are also key habitats and a high conservation priority. These include seven ponds created in 2009. They are a priority habitat and support a myriad of wildlife, including notable species such as the brown or sea trout (*Salmo trutta trutta*). Several grassland areas have also been improved as part of the Council's Bee Friendly Scheme and were seeded to increase species diversity. Some of the built features at the country park, including walls and buildings, also provide vital habitat for bats, including common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) and soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*).

It is also worth noting that, in addition to its SINC designation, the southern section of The Gnoll was identified as a Green Wedge in the Local Development Plan. Green Wedges are areas that are protected from inappropriate development to prevent urban coalescence, increase access to the countryside for residents and support biodiversity.

The Gnoll Country Park is also home to numerous priority and protected species, including 24 species listed under Section 7 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016, which outlines species of "Principle Importance" to maintaining and enhancing biodiversity in Wales...

### **...Significance of individual Features**

The country park has 3 listed features

- The Mosshouse Wood Cascades – Grade II
- The Grotto – Grade II
- The War Memorial – Grade II

The Former lodge and gates are thought to be outside of the park boundary and their management is unclear but as a further Grade III original element of the park they ought to be within the management of the park.

Other non-listed features have high significance such as:

- The Gnoll House ruins and associated features such as the ice house – to tell the story of life in the 1700s and 1800s. These are not well looked after and are very poorly interpreted
- The kitchen garden area with associated cottages – not fully explored as part of this work but part of the grade II\* listing. Gnoll Cottage is in a serious state of decline but in private ownership and Fishpond cottage is currently vacant. This assemblage of buildings relate to the development of the estate being for food growing, estate workers, bailiffs etc. All other late 19th century buildings have been demolished by the council'



## OVERVIEW OF SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY VALUE

The social and community value of Gnoll Estate Country Park is derived largely from its association with Gnoll House and its contribution to the wider Neath area as a public leisure park. The parkland is a source of identity for people in Neath both as a historic site of beautiful parkland, and also as an accessible semi wild landscape that allows people to connect with nature. It is a significant place for leisure and interaction, and the focus of the immediate community. It is also much appreciated by its visitors as an active centre within Neath, and also as a place of cultural and historical importance.

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

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

### Physical Issues

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

To the wider site, the principal walks of Gnoll Estate Country Park are generally accessible, but present the typical problems of accessibility that accompany such historic parks and gardens when these are not followed.

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

## KEY OUTLINE PLANNING CONTEXT AND DEVELOPMENT CONTROL

All Planning Applications for the site are 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.

### Policy Context

Planning Policy Wales provides the national planning policy context for Wales, supplemented by Technical Advice Notes (TANs), Welsh Government Circulars and policy clarification letters. Procedural guidance is provided in the Planning (Wales) Act 2015. Planning applications are typically decided in line with the local planning authority's (LPA) development plan. The development plan incorporates the local development plan for that area, and must have regard to the Wales spatial plan.

Central to the Planning Policy Wales is a primary objective of delivering sustainable development. Paragraph 1.2 of the document explains that 'The primary objective of PPW is to ensure that the planning system contributes towards the delivery of sustainable development and improves the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of

Wales, as required by the Planning (Wales) Act 2015, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and other key legislation.

The proposed interventions at Gnoll Estate Country Park require Planning Consents to be sought from Neath Port Talbot Council. In planning terms the site sits within the open countryside. In determining the acceptability of any proposals in planning policy terms, due consideration will therefore

been given to the Planning Policy Wales and the Neath Port Talbot Local Development Plan (2011-2026).

The following sections are of particular relevance:

Strategic Policy SP1 – Climate Change

Strategic Policy SP2 – Health

Strategic Policy SP3 – Sustainable Communities

Policy SC2 – Protection of Existing Community Facilities

Strategic Policy SP4 – Infrastructure

Policy OS2 – protection of Existing Open Space

Policy SP13 – Tourism

Policy TO1 – Tourism Development in the Countryside

Policy EN3 – Green Wedges

Policy EN5 – Conversion and Extension of Existing Buildings in the Countryside

Policy EN7 – Important Natural Features

Policy SP18 – Renewable and Low Carbon Energy

Policy SP21 – Built Environment and Historic Heritage

Policy BE1 – Design

### Local Development Plan

The Neath Port Talbot Local Development Plan 2011-2026 (Adopted January 2016) provides the local policy framework for the development and conservation needs of the area. In this respect the Council has an important role in securing the conservation of the historic environment

while ensuring that it accommodates and remains responsive to present day needs. This is a key aspect of the Council's wider sustainable development responsibilities, which needs to be taken into account in the exercise of development plan policy and development management functions.

Particular designations of note in relation to the site are:

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

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

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

## Registered Parks and Gardens

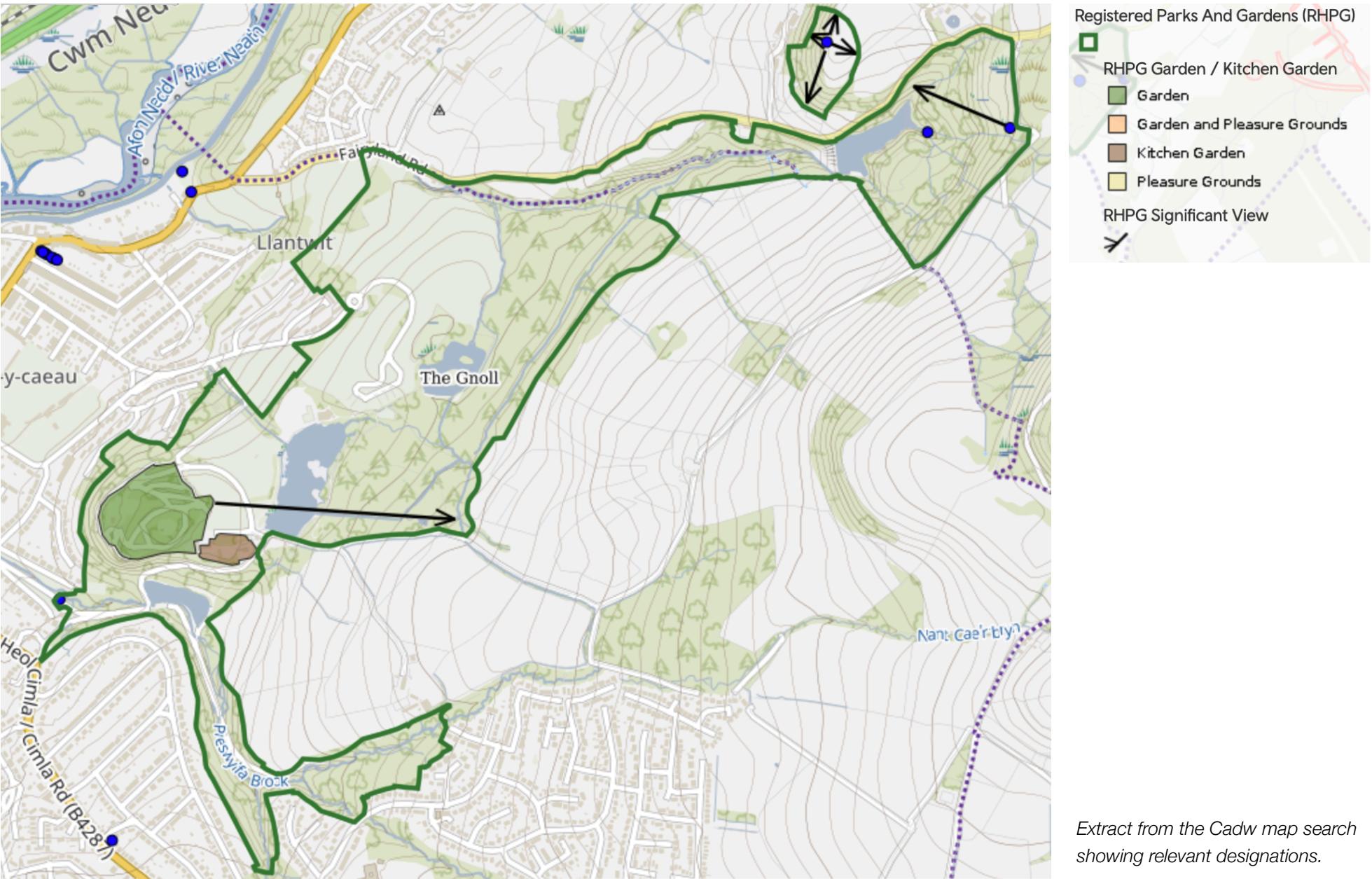
As amended by the Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2016, the 1979 Act places a duty upon the Welsh Ministers to compile and maintain a register of sites of special historic interest in Wales that includes:

- parks
- gardens
- designed ornamental landscapes
- places of recreation
- other designed grounds.

The statutory register came into force on 1 February 2022, and replaces the non-statutory register. It includes nearly 400 sites across Wales and continues to be an active record, incorporating new sites as they are identified. The statutory register does not impose any new legal restrictions on Wales' historic parks and gardens or introduce a new consent regime. Registered sites continue to receive the current level of protection through the planning system.

The creation of the statutory register will not impose any new legal restrictions on Wales's historic parks and gardens or introduce a new consent regime. Registered sites will continue to receive the current level of protection through the planning system.

Local planning authorities are expected to take the register into account when preparing local development plans. The effect of a proposed development on a registered site or its setting may also be a 'material consideration' in the determination of a planning application.



Extract from the Cadw map search showing relevant designations.



### Listed Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest

Buildings and structures of ‘special or architectural or historic interest’ are designated as ‘Listed Buildings’ under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Also under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, Listed Building Consent is required for any works of alteration or extension to be carried out that would affect the character of listed buildings or structures. The listing of buildings is carried out in order to provide Local Authorities with guidance in the application of the Act in addition to preventing their demolition or alteration.

A ‘listed building’ is a building, object or structure that has been judged to be of national, historical or architectural interest. Listed buildings are graded to show their relative importance. Grade II buildings are buildings or structures of special interest which justify every effort being made to preserve them. These make up approximately 91 per cent of the total number of listed buildings in Wales.

### Existing Heritage Protection

The following statutory designations apply to historic assets within Gnoll Estate Country Park:

#### **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.’*

##### **Grotto in Gnoll Estate (Grade II)**

*Listed for its architectural interest as a prominent example of an eye-catcher folly associated with the Gnoll Estate*

##### **Mosshouse Wood Cascade (Grade II)**

*Listed, notwithstanding restoration, as a prominent man-made feature of an important landscape garden, and for group value with the adjacent grotto*

##### **Ivy Tower (Grade II)**

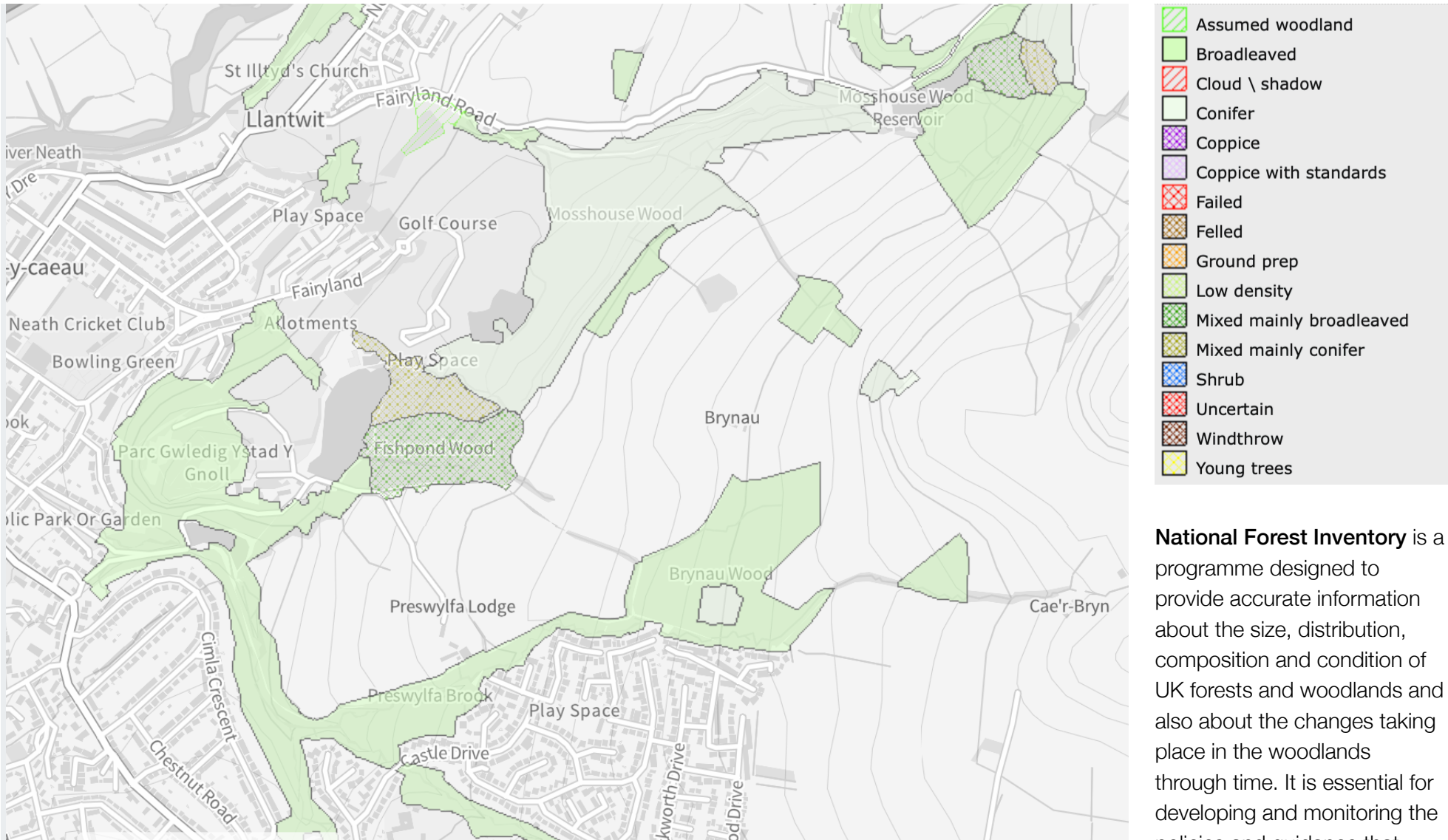
*Listed for its architectural interest as a prominent example of an eye-catcher folly associated with the Gnoll Estate.*

##### **Pond Cottage (Unlisted)**

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

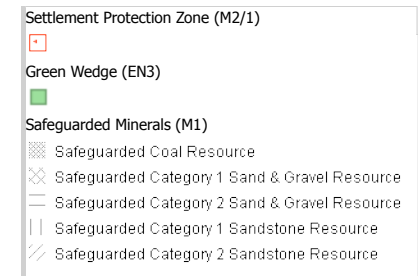
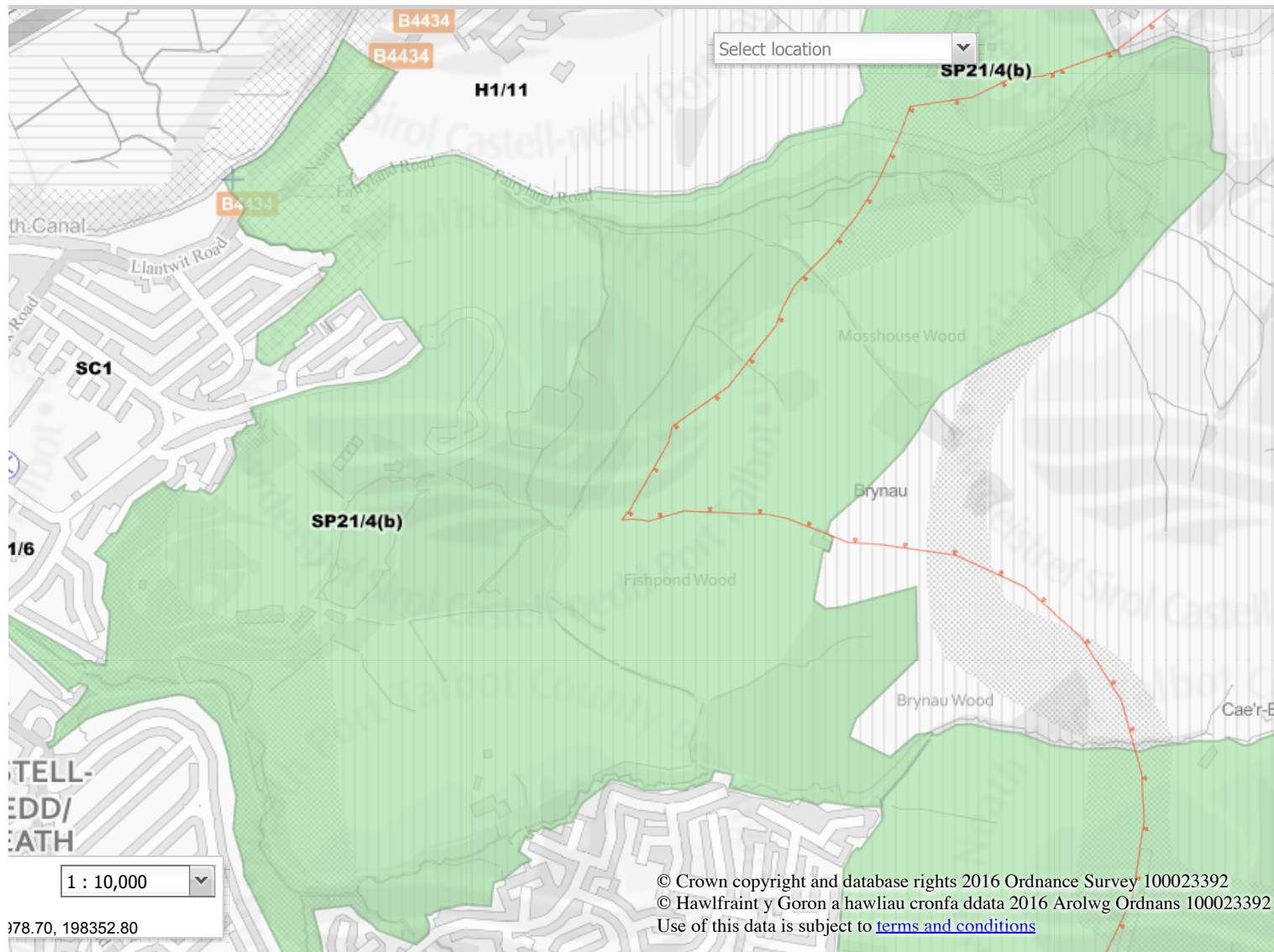
### **Arboriculture and Tree Preservation Orders**

An Arboricultural Impact Assessment has also been carried out as part of the development proposals by Neath Port Talbot Arboriculturalist (Consultancy + Planning) is also attached to the application.



Natural Environment Map (Do not scale) describing the proximity of existing forestry, together with the extent of planting that has been undertaken in the parkland Source: The National Forestry Inventory)

**National Forest Inventory** is a programme designed to provide accurate information about the size, distribution, composition and condition of UK forests and woodlands and also about the changes taking place in the woodlands through time. It is essential for developing and monitoring the policies and guidance that support the sustainable management of woodland.

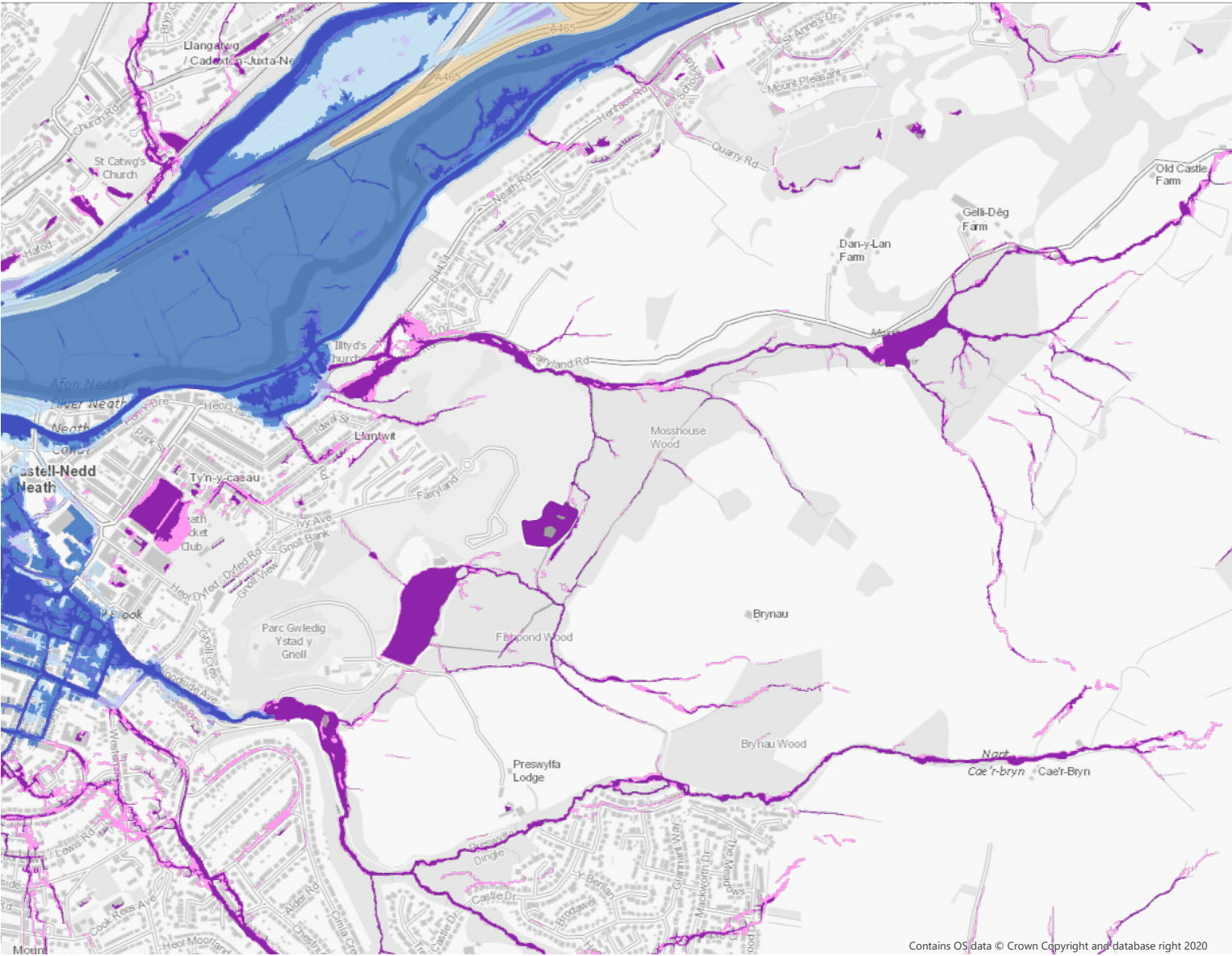


A **green wedge** is an open area around and between parts of settlements, which maintains the distinction between the countryside and built-up areas

**Mineral Safeguarding** is the process of ensuring that non-minerals development does not needlessly prevent the future extraction of mineral resources, of local and national importance. Local Authorities adopt clear development management policies which set out how proposals for non-minerals development in Minerals Safeguarding Areas will be handled, and what action applicants for development should take.

Natural Environment Map (Do not scale) showing the designation of 'Mineral Safeguarding' and 'Green Wedge' on the site





Natural Environment Map (Do not scale) describing surface water flooding on the site

**Rivers and Sea**

- Flood Zone 3 Flood Zone 3
- Flood Zone 2 Flood Zone 2

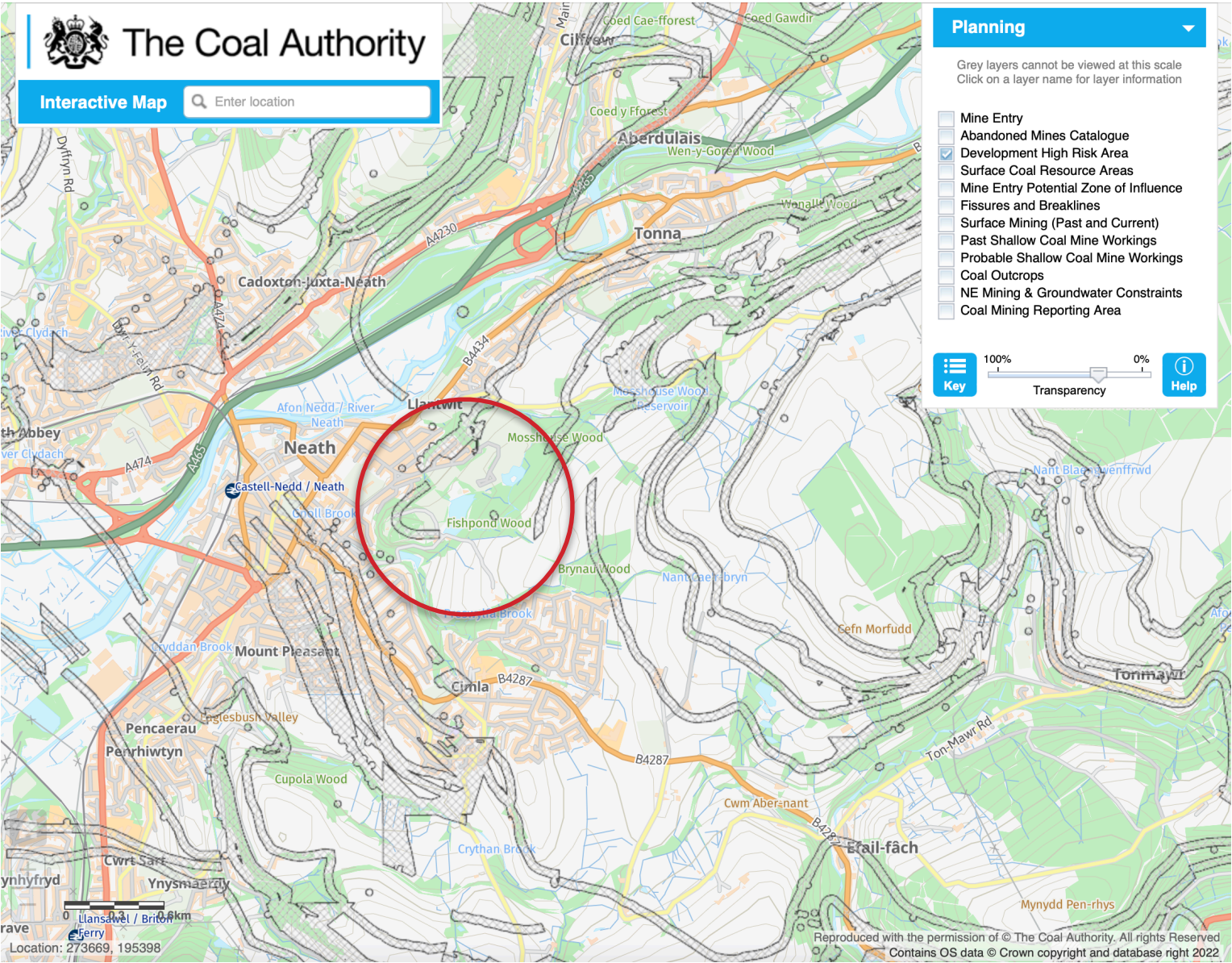
**Surface Water and Small Watercourses**

- Flood Zone 3 Flood Zone 3
- Flood Zone 2 Flood Zone 2

**Surface water flooding** happens when rainwater does not drain away through the normal drainage systems or soak into the ground, but lies on or flows over the ground instead. The shading on the map shows the risk of flooding from surface water.

Recorded flood extents for the site suggest that it is not in a flood risk area. Whilst it is considered to be at little or no risk of fluvial or tidal/coastal flooding, it is noted that the small water courses passing through the site determine that parts of the property are in Flood Zones 2 and 3 for surface water and small watercourse flood map planning. This is expected and is limited in extent.





## Coal Mining

The site of the kitchen garden is highlighted as a site of high risk for coal mining. In order to understand the true nature of the risk and potential associated costs with the identification, consultation is being held with the National Coal Mining Board as part of the Pre-Application Consultation process being conducted in conjunction with the development of the proposals. It is further noted that all developments in this area are being evolved to largely sit lightly on the ground with the premise that foundation solutions will have a degree of flexibility.



## Previous Planning Applications

Reference: N1993/0416

Application Validated: Wednesday 18th August 1993

Proposal: Visitor Centre for information and leisure purposes

Status: Approved.

Reference: N1993/0535

Application Validated: Friday 29th October 1993

Proposal: Visitor Centre

Status: Approved.

Reference: N1994/0436

Application Validated: Wednesday 3rd August 1994

Proposal: Modification to car parking area adj. to first pond as approved on apple. no. 2/3/93//0394/11

Status: Approved

Reference: P1997/0491

Application Validated: Friday 2nd May 1997

Proposal: Renovations and improvements to Pond Cottage

Status: Permitted Development

Reference: P2014/0598

Application Validated: Monday 23rd June 2014

Proposal: Prior notification for demolition of classroom building

Status: Prior notification not required

Reference: P201 7/0312

Application Validated: Friday 19th May 2017

Proposal: Extension to existing children's playground

Status: Approved

## Building Control

The Building Regulations set standards for how buildings must be constructed to achieve a minimum level of acceptable performance. At such an early stage of development there are few areas of the requirements that would present a concern or constraint to development, these include;

- Drainage : Proposals will need to consider both foul drainage and surface water drainage. Of particular note is the mandatory requirement for sustainable drainage systems, which should not present an undue concern.
- Access : Approved Document Part M sets out guidance to ensure that people are able to access and use buildings and their facilities. Due to the topography of the site, this should be considered as a key project objective and an Access Strategy developed and monitored throughout the design development process.
- Fire : Fire safety guidance is set out in Approved Document Part B Volume 2 - Buildings other than dwelling houses. Of particular consideration is the nature of escape requirements which should be identified and integrated early in the development of design proposals and the internal and external spread of flame - particularly in its relation to materials such as lightweight claddings and insulation.

Early engagement with the local authority building control or an approved inspector should identify areas of particular consideration and establish a strategy for the management of all areas of the regulations.

## A COHERENT APPROACH TO LANDSCAPE

In addition to the development of the buildings and historic structures in Gnoll Estate Country Park, Davies Landscaping have undertaken a review of the landscape of the parkland. This ties the interventions together. The parkland is the primary surviving element of the historic development of the parkland and consequently the principal, tangible connection with the beginnings of Neath and the wider area. It contains the remnants of many of the early industrial processes that allowed the town to develop and subsequently tracks the evolution of industry in the 18th century within its boundaries.

The landscape proposals look to re-connect the park with these historic entities. Central to this of course is Gnoll House as the focal point of the estate. In response to this new paths are proposed to connect from the existing primary point of arrival at the Visitor Centre with this area, together with the reinstatement of the former carriageway key approach to the House. This will be highlighted by a lift in hierarchy of the finished surface in this area, with the introduction of a resin bound surface.

Elsewhere, key vistas that were part of the landscape are to be protected and re-opened. This includes a view from the proposed Visitor Centre to the Ivy Tower, and is particularly critical with regards to the axis between the House and the cascades, and consequently some clearance is required to reinstate this.

With regards to the ongoing sustainability of the parkland, the proposals for woodland management will address issues relating to invasive species and ensure that well-structured and biodiverse woodlands are developed for the future. By creating multi-layered woodlands that include

understorey and ground layer vegetation, drainage flows will be slowed, which in combination with the work being done by the Woodland Trust in the upland area above Gnoll Estate Country Park, will help alleviate flood risk downstream.

The principle of maximising biodiversity and the habitat potential of the parkland will be adopted for any new landscape works, ensuring that proposals are sensitively designed and incorporating locally appropriate native species throughout. Appropriate sustainable drainage schemes will be incorporated into all new landscape works. The landscape proposals will also ensure that opportunities are taken to utilise existing resources and materials on site, as opposed to importing new materials in. For example, existing play equipment will be retained and supplemented with new play areas, and site-won timber from woodland management works can be used for informal play elements, informal seats and other uses.



## ECOLOGY AND BIODIVERSITY

### Designations

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

### Ecology

To inform detailed design proposals, an extended Phase 1 habitat survey has been undertaken across areas that will be affected by the development. This supplements existing known information. The surveys assess the habitats currently present on site and identify any further surveys that are recommended. This has been supplemented by detailed analysis and mapping of key interventions including consideration of existing woodland structure, ground flora and shrub layers. This level of detail will ensure that proposals are fully integrated within their existing natural setting whilst sensitively managing and enhancing habitats and features. Completed surveys have informed the proposed detailed designs, which include appropriate landscape mitigation and compensation.

The Phase 1 habitat survey site was carried out in accordance with the standard methods set out in JNCC (2010). This encompassed the project site and the immediately surrounding habitats that could be safely accessed or viewed. Habitats were mapped and features of ecological value recorded. Any evidence of protected or non-native invasive plant species were also noted.

The surveys have been extended (in line with the CIEEM Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (2017)) to include an assessment of the suitability of habitats to support protected fauna and note the presence of signs of any protected fauna or those of conservation concern. This is all captured in the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Bat Surveys that support each application for the various elements of the park.

Wherever possible the detailed design proposals have been adapted to suit the ecological sensitivities identified through the site surveys with the aim of keeping ecological impacts to an absolute minimum. For example, the scheme will be adjusted as necessary to avoid the removal of any moderate or high bat roost potential trees.

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.

## Arboriculture

In addition to the extended Ecological surveys, an arboricultural impact assessment has been undertaken of the project sites to record information on all trees and hedges on, or within influencing distance of, the proposed development areas, in accordance with BS 5837.

The results of the site survey and associated desktop searches has been provided in the form of a Tree Constraints Plan showing tree locations, canopy extents, Root Protection Area (adjusted to reflect site conditions and constraints to root growth) and tree quality categorisation for the site. Full survey data and management recommendations in response to any existing or developing defects, hazards and opportunities are also noted.

The initial results of the survey and desktop searches are provided in the form of a Baseline Plan detailing tree locations, their canopy extents, Root Protection Area (adjusted to reflect site conditions and constraints to root growth) and quality categorisation. The plans also include a summary of all desktop search results and a description of the constraints to development presented by the existing trees. This information has been used to facilitate discussion regarding tree retention and removal, and assess the potential impacts on retained trees from the emerging detailed design schemes, with the aim of keeping tree impacts to an absolute minimum and identifying opportunities to enhance.

Following agreement on tree removal and retention, an Effects Plan showing the proposed layout and the existing trees has been produced. It identifies all trees that will be pruned and those that will be removed, including a detailed schedule of works. The plan makes an assessment, in accordance with BS 5837, of the effects on arboriculture from the proposed development.

On the basis of the final tree retention and pruning schedule, a Mitigation Plan for each project has been produced as necessary describing all relevant mitigation measures that are proposed as part of the overall application. It shows trees that will be retained within the proposed development where possible, along with temporary protection measures (ie. tree protection fencing and/or ground protection) that are required during construction. It also identifies any areas in which controlled construction detailing is required and specifies any additional procedural measures that may be required.

## Biodiversity Enhancements

The findings of the ecological and arboricultural surveys have been used to inform the detailed design of the landscaping and building proposals.

Key objectives of the landscape proposals are to:

- Protect and enhance biodiversity;
- Implement sustainable drainage systems to improve water quality and prevent water run-off;
- Provide mitigation for the impact of development;
- Achieve Biodiversity Net Gain; and
- Utilise locally sourced plants and materials where appropriate.

Trees identified as trees of landscape and amenity value will be retained where possible to help maintain integrity and maturity of the landscape, and aid integration of the development within the existing site and wider landscape. However, where some tree or vegetation loss is required in order to facilitate the development any tree loss will be offset by new native or wildlife friendly tree planting across the site.



Mitigation has been directed by the recommendations of the ecological assessments. The biodiversity enhancements within the landscape therefore include:

- Use of a CEMP during the implementation of the works to protect existing habitats;
- Appropriate and ongoing management of any invasive species within the site;
- New native tree planting within the site;
- Historic planting schemes to enhance the historic interpretation of the park;
- Native understorey shrub planting within existing woodland at Gnoll Estate Country Park to improve the diversity and structure of woodland;
- A diverse mix of wildlife friendly and pollinator planting to proposed new planting beds;
- Aquatic planting to new or existing waterbodies;
- Wet grassland seeding, with 20% wildflowers, to SuDs features;
- Wildflower seeding and management to improve the diversity of existing grassland areas;
- Native bulb species naturalised within grassed areas;
- Bird and bat boxes installed on buildings and/or existing trees;
- Bug hotels within semi-natural habitat; and
- Introduction of hibernacula and brash piles in appropriate areas.









APPENDICIES

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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