

Demolition and Redevelopment of Onllwyn Road Bridge

(Pont y Offeiriad / Clergyman's Bridge)

Onllwyn

Neath

Planning Statement

January 2024

CONTROL SHEET

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Planning Statement

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Fairhurst have been appointed by Global Centre for Rail Excellence (GCRE) Ltd to prepare and submit a Planning Application for the demolition of an existing road bridge (Pont y Offeiriad/Clergyman's Bridge), contained within the span of Onllwyn Road, and its subsequent replacement. In addition to these works, this planning application also seeks permission to deliver complimentary landscaping, drainage and associated development. Planning permission is explicitly sought for the following extent of development:

'Demolition and redevelopment of an existing bridge, including the provision of landscaping and associated development'

- 1.2 The purpose of this statement is to set out the relevant planning considerations in relation to the proposal. It demonstrates that the development is acceptable in planning terms, having regard to the Development Plan and other material considerations.

Supporting Information

- 1.3 The following plans are submitted in support of this application; shown in Table 1.1 below:

Document	Author	Reference/Drawing No.
Location Plan	5 th Studio	GCREB1-5 TH -XX-XX-DR-A-0700 Rev P03
Existing Plan	5 th Studio	GCREB1-5TH-XX-XX-DR-A-0701 Rev P01
Existing Long Sections	5 th Studio	GCREB1-5 TH -XX-XX-DR-A-0703 Rev P01
Existing Short Sections	5 th Studio	GCREB1-5TH-XX-XX-DR-A-0702 Rev P01
Topographical Survey	5 th Studio	GCREB1-5TH-XX-XX-DR-A-0704 Rev P02
Proposed Plan	5 th Studio	GCREB1-5TH-XX-XX-DR-A-0711 Rev P03
Proposed Short Sections	5 th Studio	GCREB1-5TH-XX-XX-DR-A-0712 Rev P02
Proposed Long Sections	5 th Studio	GCREB1-5TH-XX-XX-DR-A-0713 Rev P02
Proposed Soft Landscape Plan	JCLA	OW181-JCLA-DR-L-0001 Rev P01
Proposed Drainage General Arrangement	Expedition Engineering	1867-EXP-TN-001 Rev P3

Table 1.1 – Supporting Plans

- 1.4 The following documents and technical assessments, as shown in Table 1.2, are also submitted in support of this application:

Document	Author	Reference/Drawing No.
Application form, relevant land ownership certificate (duly signed) and relevant planning application fee.	Fairhurst	N/a
Planning Statement	Fairhurst	JR/MM/148698/001
Geotechnical and Land Contamination Assessment	Expedition Engineering	1867-EXP-TN-001
Outline Surface Water Management Plan	Expedition Engineering	1867-EXP-TN-001
Coal Mining Risk Assessment	The Coal Authority	71009630927001 V1.1
Archaeological Survey and Written Schemes of Investigation	Wessex Archaeology	271185.1 March 2023 271180.3 March 2023 271180.4 May 2023
Transport Assessment	Sanderson Associates	148698-002-04
Ecological Impact Assessment	Wildwood	WWE23159
Bat Survey Report	BSG Ecology	P22-218 – 2022/23
Arboricultural Report	Sylvan Ecology	J0228 V2.4
Notice 2	Planning Portal	N/a

Table 1.2 – Submission Documents

Development Context and the Global Centre for Rail Excellence

- 1.5 The development, subject of this planning application, is required in order to enable the wider Global Centre for Rail Excellence site to become operational. The Global Centre for Rail Excellence is a pioneering project that, once constructed, will provide a sophisticated testing facility for the railway industry; comprising rail testing loops and ancillary facilities; enabling research, testing and certification of railway infrastructure and rolling stock to be conducted on the site of a former coalmine. The GCRE project was consented through two separate planning applications, submitted to both Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council (LPA References: P2020/0362 & P2021/0327) and Powys County Council (LPA References: 20/0738/FUL & 21/0559/OUT), due to the site falling within the administrative boundaries of both Councils.

- 1.6 The first of these two planning permissions regarded the restoration of the site in a manner which would enable the construction of two looped landform platforms; on which it anticipated that the railway infrastructure would be sited upon. This is known as the 'Earthworks' planning permission (Powys County Council reference: 20/0738/FUL & Neath Port Talbot Council reference: P2020/0362). The second of the two applications secured outline planning permission for the Global Centre for Rail Excellence development and included the development of the railway infrastructure (railway tracks and associated equipment) and maintenance buildings. This permission also established the principle of the site incorporating office facilities, in addition to overnight staff accommodation; welfare facilities; research and development; education; and training uses. This permission is commonly referred to as the 'GCRE' planning permission (Powys County Council reference: 21/0559/OUT & Neath Port Talbot reference: P2021/0327).
- 1.7 The extent of land associated with the GCRE permission is, shown at **Appendix A**.
- 1.8 GCRE Ltd and their consultancy team have determined that the existing road bridge (Pont y Offeiriad/Clergyman's Bridge), contained within the span of Onllwyn Road, does not provide a sufficient clearance between ground level and the underside of the bridge. Accordingly, if this were not addressed, the existing dimensions of the bridge would prevent trains from utilising the proposed testing loops; to be built as part of the 'GCRE' planning permissions. As such, the proposed development, involving the demolition of the existing bridge and its replacement with a bridge containing an increased clearance is a fundamental requirement to the operation of the GCRE facility.

Structure of the Planning Statement

1.9 The structure of the Planning Statement is identified below:

- **Section 2: Site and Surroundings** – explains the site composition, its context and relevant planning history;
- **Section 3: Pre-application Consultation** – summarises engagement with the Local Planning Authority;
- **Section 4: The Proposed Development** – provides details of the proposals;
- **Section 5: Planning Policy Context** - provides the policy context for the proposals in which the application is to be determined;
- **Section 6: Planning Policy Assessment** – provides an assessment of the proposals and their compliance with policy through consideration of the key issues posed by the development plan and other material considerations;
- **Section 7: Technical Considerations** – sets out a summary of the technical work undertaken to support the planning application; and
- **Section 8: Conclusions** – summarises the content of this Statement and confirms the acceptability and merits of the proposal.

2.0 Site and Surroundings

- 2.1 The application site extends to an area of approximately 0.99ha and is situated within and adjacent to Onllwyn Road. The extent of the proposed site of development is outlined in red on the enclosed Site Location Plan (**Drg No. GCREB1-5TH-XX-XX-DR-A-0700 Rev P03**).
- 2.2 The application site contains Clergyman's bridge (Pont y Offeiriad), which is located within the span of Onllwyn Road; Onllwyn Road; a railway track; and embankments/associated areas adjacent to the highway/bridge containing shrubbery, trees and grassland. The development site lies north of the A4109 and is located approximately 250m to the north west of Onllwyn village.
- 2.3 Onllwyn Road, contained within the site, is designated as an adopted Highway (USRN: 47701492), and connects directly to the wider public road network. Specifically, Onllwyn Road connects to the A road network including the A4109 located to the south of the site and the A42121, situated to the north of the site.
- 2.4 In the past, a variety of activities associated with Onllwyn Colliery have occurred at or near the development site which included freight and passenger transport along the Neath and Brecon (NAB) Railway line, as well as colliery operations. In addition, the site is situated to the south east of the former Nant Helen opencast mine, which was one of the largest opencast mines in Wales. However, as part of Welsh Government's commitments to phase out the use of coal for electricity generation by 2024^a, extraction of coal has now ceased.
- 2.5 Within the wider area, there are several villages including Caehopkin, Coelbren, Dyffryn Cellwen and Seven Sisters, which are located north west, north east, south east and south west of the site; respectively.

Constraints

- 2.6 The site, in its entirety, is recognised by the Welsh Government's 'Development Advice Map and Flood Map for Planning' as being within Flood Zone A. Flood Zone A is an area considered to be at little or no risk of fluvial or coastal/tidal flooding. The immediate land encapsulating the proposed site is also recognised as being within Flood Zone A.
- 2.7 The site is not recognised as containing, or being located in the immediate proximity of, any designated heritage assets. The nearest designated heritage asset is the Scheduled

^a <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/end-to-coal-power-brought-forward-to-october-2024>

Monument of 'Tramroad at Ystradgynlais' (CADW Ref: GM399) which is located approximately 640m to the west of the site.

- 2.8 The site is not recognised as containing any statutory ecological designations. The nearest designation is 'Gors Llwyn, Onllwyn' Special Site of Scientific Interest (SSSI), located approximately 1km to the east of the Site.
- 2.9 The site does not contain any Public Rights of Way (PRoW). However, it should be noted that there are a number of ProWs and Bridleways located in the wider area of the Site. The site is partially located within registered Common Land.
- 2.10 The site does not contain, nor does it lie within the immediate proximity of, any Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs); as confirmed in email correspondence with the Local Authority on 05/04/2023, shown at **Appendix B**.

Accessibility

- 2.11 The site can be accessed from the A4109 (Wembley Avenue) from the south and the A4221 from the north.
- 2.12 Pont y Offeiriad/Clergyman's Bridge measures 3.8m in width and is a single carriageway. The bridge does not contain a pedestrian footpath. There is no lighting contained within the span of the bridge, nor the majority of Onllwyn Road.

Planning History

- 2.13 A planning history search has been completed using Neath Port Talbot Council's online planning register. This search has identified that the site has been the subject of several planning applications, which are listed below in Figure 2.1:

LPA Reference	Description of Development	Decision
P2019/5455	Request for Scoping Opinion under Regulation 14 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Wales) Regulations 2017 in respect of a proposed application for a rail testing and storage facility, known as the Global Centre of Rail Excellence (GCRE), and incorporating:- a Rolling Stock and Infrastructure Testing Facility (consisting of two test tracks of loop configuration; one 4.5km, inside a larger loop of 6.9km in length); New buildings including Test Platform/Station, Control Building, Research and Development Centre; Rolling Stock Maintenance Shed, Decommissioning facility and Rail Sidings; Winch-propelled facility for testing of track and track systems; Carriage Wash facility; plus ancillary development including land reformation, landscaping,	Scoping Opinion (November 2019)

	infrastructure works and access (affecting land within Neath Port Talbot and Powys County Council administrative boundaries).	
P2020/0362	Construction of complementary restoration earthworks to create 2 looped landform platforms (part in cutting and part on embankment) with associated drainage infrastructure and areas of landscaping and habitat creation to create a flexible and adaptable area of land that could be used for a variety of uses including agriculture, nature conservation, leisure, tourism and industrial, research and development/business uses (potentially including a proposed rail testing, research and development and storage facility). (Cross-boundary application - see Powys CC Application ref. 20/0738/FUL)	Approved (July 2020)
P2021/0327	Development of a Global Centre of Rail Excellence, comprising of two test tracks of loop configuration including an electrified high speed rolling stock test track of 6.9km in length and an electrified low speed infrastructure test track of 4.5km, with overhead line equipment (OLE) and dual platform station test environment; together with operations and control offices (including staff accommodation and welfare), shunter cabins (2 no.), research and development, education and training, rolling stock storage sidings and maintenance/cleaning/decommissioning facilities; and associated, drainage, internal vehicular accesses, branch line rail connection, staff and visitor car parking, lighting, electrical infrastructure (including substations and lineside shore supplies and transformers), fencing (perimeter security, acoustic and stock proof), land reformation and hard and soft landscaping, together with demolition of existing buildings/structures (cross-boundary application - see Powys CC Application ref. 21/0559/OUT). (Additional Environmental Info: Revised ES Chapters, Figures, Appendices - Air Quality / Biodiversity)	Approved (July 2021)
P2022/0649	Details pursuant to the discharge of condition 7 (construction phasing) of planning permission P2021/0327 (Development of a Global Centre of Rail Excellence, approved on the 27/07/2021)	Approved (October 2022)
P2022/0650	Non-material amendment to planning permission P2021/0327 (development of a global centre of rail excellence, approved on the 27/07/2021) to vary wording of conditions 1, 10, 21, 22, 23, 26, 36, 49, 50, 53, 54 & 55 to better align the permission with how the scheme will be implemented as well as enabling phasing of the development.	Approved (November 2022)
P2023/0173	Details pursuant to the discharge of conditions 4 (dust management action plan), 5 (noise monitoring and management action plan), 13 (preliminary investigation and assessment- contamination) and the partial discharge of condition 14 (nature and extent of contamination) of P2020/0362 granted on 31/07/2020	Approved (June 2023)
P2023/0336	Details pursuant to the discharge of conditions for Phase 1A only in respect of 08 (External materials), 09 (Fencing), 11 (CEMP), 13 (ecological protection plan), 15 (wildlife corridors), 19 (phase biodiversity plan), 25 (sewer protection), 26 (hard and soft landscaping), 27 (site investigation), 37 (air quality), 41 & 45 (noise), 56 (lighting scheme) and 59 (signage). Together with details pursuant to the discharge of site wide conditions in respect of 12 (CMP & traffic management), 14 (Site wide wildlife corridors), 16	Awaiting decision

	(reptile mitigation strategy), 17 (barn owl compensation), 18 (strategic biodiversity plan), 21, 22 & 23 (land contamination and remediation), 28 (landscape management and maintenance plan), 29 (dark skies lighting assessment), 30 (Energy Strategy), 31 (waste management plan), 48 (junction traffic management) and 52 (coal mining remedial works) of planning permission P2021/0327 relating to development of the global centre of rail excellence. (Amended description- Additional Info submitted)	
P2023/0337	Application for the approval of reserved matters (landscaping, layout and appearance-substation and tracks layout only) in respect of phase 1a of outline planning permission P2021/0327 for the Global Centre of Rail of Excellence.	Awaiting decision

Figure 2.1 – Relevant Planning History

3.0 Pre-Application Consultation

- 3.1 The proposed development, subject of this planning application, is key to enabling the Global Centre for Rail Excellence (GCRE) to become operational. Specifically, demolition and replacement of the existing bridge is fundamental to the future operation of the GCRE site, as the existing road bridge structure contained within the span of Onllwyn does not have sufficient clearance to enable trains to pass underneath the bridge, once the necessary railway infrastructure associated with the GCRE project has been installed. Accordingly, the project team prioritised the undertaking of pre-application engagement with the Council to ensure that the design of the replacement bridge, which incorporates sufficient clearance, could be shaped in collaboration.
- 3.2 The proposals are recognised, in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (Wales) Order 2012, as being a 'minor' development. Whilst Statutory Consultation is not required for minor scale development projects, in accordance with section 61Z of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, the applicant has engaged proactively with the Local Planning Authority; undertaking informal pre-application discussions with the Authority prior to submission of the application.
- 3.3 This chapter of the document details the nature of informal pre-application discussions which have taken place with the Authority and demonstrates how they have positively influenced the final form of development which this application seeks consent for.

Informal Pre-Application Discussions

- 3.4 To ensure that feedback could be obtained from the Council, evaluated and incorporated within the design for the replacement bridge, extensive correspondence and meetings were held with the Local Planning Authority over the course of 10no. months. These meetings began on the 11th November 2022, with the final meeting taking place on the 25th September 2023. Attendees of the meetings comprised GCRE's project team, including representatives from 5th Studio, Expedition, JCLA and Fairhurst. Furthermore, Officers from the following Council departments were also in attendance at these meetings:
- Planning
 - Environmental Health
 - Active Travel
 - Bridge & Highway Structures
 - SAB & Highway Development

3.5 These meetings were crucial in achieving the following:

- Confirmed that applying for detailed planning permission would be the most appropriate means to secure consent for the replacement bridge, as opposed to obtaining outline planning permission or varying the existing outline 'GCRE' planning permission.
- Established the acceptability of the indicative dimensions that the proposed bridge would be constructed to.
- Agreed the suitability of the proposed widths of the carriageway.
- Discussed GCRE's approach to 'future-proofing' the development by increasing the width of the bridge deck so that an active travel route could be incorporated.
- Confirmed the extent of documents that would be required to support the planning application.
- Established that GCRE's approach to designing the bridge would not preclude SAB approval from being obtained at a later stage.
- Informing the design of the proposals so that the bridge would conform to AIP principles.

Summary

3.6 Pre-application discussions were undertaken with the Council over the course of 10 months to ensure that the demolition and redevelopment of the existing bridge is conducted in a manner in an appropriate manner, to a design that is suitable for all parties. Pre-application discussions were extremely useful in ensuring that the Council's feedback could influence the final form of development at the site.

4.0 The Proposed Development

- 4.1 This section of the statement sets out the proposed development, which is the subject of the planning application.

'Demolition and redevelopment of an existing bridge, including the provision of landscaping and associated development'

- 4.2 The proposed development comprises the demolition of the existing road bridge (Pont y Offeiriad / Clergyman's Bridge) contained within the span of Onllwyn Road and its subsequent replacement. There are two bridges located along Onllwyn Road, however, this planning application only seeks to replace/make alterations to the northern bridge (Pont y Offeiriad / Clergyman's Bridge). The southern bridge contained within the span of Onllwyn Road will remain in situ and will be unaffected by the proposed development.
- 4.3 The requirement for the proposed development has arisen due to the limited clearance between the underside of the existing Pont y Offeiriad (Clergyman's Bridge) and ground level, which if is not altered, would prevent new railway infrastructure and trains from passing underneath the existing bridge. If this were not realised, in turn, trains and rolling stock would be prevented from accessing the testing facilities that will be created as part of the wider GCRE development.
- 4.4 GCRE's project team determined, through an extensive optioneering exercise, that the most viable option to securing the operation of the wider GCRE site was to remove the existing bridge and replace this piece of road infrastructure with a more modern, durable structure which accommodated the sufficient clearance required for trains travelling beneath, whilst still accommodating road traffic. Options that were discounted due to their impracticality or adverse long term impacts included excavating additional material underneath the bridge to achieve the clearance, or raising the existing bridge. The latter of these options was primarily discounted due to a recent survey confirming the deteriorated condition of the existing bridge deck, precluding its viable reuse.
- 4.5 Accordingly, the proposed development comprises the full demolition and replacement of the northern crossing (Pont y Offeiriad / Clergyman's Bridge) on Onllwyn Road. The replacement bridge will have a width of 10.6m^b and a length of 19m^c. The carriageway will have a width of minimum width of 6m and the future active travel corridor will have a minimum width of 3.5m. The bridge will have a minimum clearance of 5.87m^d between the top of the future railway tracks and the underside of the bridge.

^b including a tolerance of +/- 500mm

^c Including a tolerance of +/- 1000mm

^d Including a tolerance of + 150mm

4.6 The proposed design will realise a number of benefits, primarily in that it will facilitate freight trains being able to access the GCRE site but also that it improve road safety by significantly increasing the carriageway width; adhering to current road design standards. Furthermore, the proposed design incorporates space for the inclusion of an active travel route, future-proofing the development and ensuring that sustainable and safe means of travel can be achieved, in and around the future GCRE site.

4.7 As part of the proposed development, a Proposed Soft Landscaping Plan (Drg No. OW181-JCLA-DR-L-0001-P01) has been developed which depicts the extent of planting which will take place within the site. This plan has been directly informed by the results of the ecological and arboricultural assessments.

Phasing of Development

4.8 The proposed development will be conducted in distinct phases, given the number of different consents/agreements, which must be secured to realise the project in its entirety. These consents include but are not limited to:

- SAB approval;
- Approval in Principle (AIP);
- Closure of the Highway (s247 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990); and
- Re-dedication of the road to the Highway Authority (s38 of the Highways Act 1980).

4.9 An indicative order of works is shown below, which will be undertaken once all of the necessary approvals are in place:

- Permanent stopping up of Onllwyn Road.
- Removal of the existing bridge deck, associated structures and diversion of existing utilities infrastructure.
- Modification of existing landforms and profiling works.
- Installation of replacement bridge and associated drainage and landscaping works.
- Rededication of the bridge and road to the Highway Authority.

4.10 However, full details of the process will be detailed to Neath Port Talbot CBC through the submission of a Construction Management Plan.

5.0 Planning Policy Context

5.1 This section of the statement sets out the planning policies that are of relevance to the proposed development.

5.2 Section 38(4) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that for the purposes of any area in Wales, the development plan comprises of the following:

- a) The National Development Framework for Wales;
- b) Any strategic plan for an area that includes all or part of that area; and
- c) The local development plan for that area.

5.3 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that any determination of a planning application must be made in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Development Plan

5.4 The statutory Development Plan for the site comprises the following documents:

- Future Wales: The national plan 2040 (the 'National Framework'); and
- Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council Local Development Plan (2011-2026) (Adopted January 2016), hereafter referred to as to as the 'NPTLDP'.

5.5 It should be noted that a Strategic Development Plan for the area does not currently exist.

5.6 The following policies are considered relevant to this proposal and are listed below. Full extracts of these policies for the NPTLDP are contained in **Appendix C** of this Statement.

The Neath Port Talbot Local Development Plan (NPTLDP) (2016):

- Policy SP 1 – Climate Change;
- Policy SP 2 – Health;
- Policy SP 4 – Infrastructure;
- Policy I 1 – Infrastructure Requirements;
- Policy SP 15 – Biodiversity and Geodiversity;
- Policy EN 7 – Important Natural Features;
- Policy SP 16 – Environmental Protection;
- Policy EN 8 – Pollution and Land Stability;
- Policy M 1 – Development in Mineral Safeguarding Areas;

- Policy SP 20 – Transport Network;
- Policy TR 2 – Design and Access of New Development;
- Policy SP 21- Built Environment and Historic Heritage;
- Policy BE 1 – Design; and
- Policy BE 2 – Buildings of Local Importance.

Supplementary Planning Guidance

5.7 The abovementioned local planning policies are supported by Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG). The following SPGs are considered to be relevant to the proposed development:

- SPG: Planning Obligations (October 2016);
- SPG: Landscape and Seascape (May 2018);
- SPG: Biodiversity and Geodiversity (May 2018);
- SPG: Pollution (October 2016); and
- SPG: Design (July 2017).

Welsh Government Policy Legislation

Future Wales – the national plan 2040

5.8 Future Wales – National Plan 2040 was published in 2021 and replaced the Wales Spatial Plan (2008) and forms the statutory development plan for Wales. The document represents the Welsh Government's strategy for, '*for addressing key national priorities through the planning system*'. These priorities include:

- sustaining and developing a vibrant economy;
- de-carbonisation and achieving climate resistance;
- developing strong ecosystems; and
- improving the health and well-being of communities.

5.9 The policies below, in Table 5.1, are considered relevant to the proposed development. Extracts of these paragraphs are contained within **Appendix D** of this statement.

Future Wales – National Plan Reference	Topic
Policy 4	Supporting Rural Communities
Policy 8	Flooding
Policy 9	Resilient Ecological Networks and green Infrastructure

Table 5.1 – Relevant Policies from the Future Wales – the national plan 2040

Well-being of Future Generations Act (2015)

- 5.10 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015^e (the Well-being Act) was enacted in 2015 and focuses on improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. The overarching aim of the document is to create a Wales that people want to live in; both now and in the future.
- 5.11 The Well-being Act places a duty on those listed in the Act, and public bodies in Wales, to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. To help realise these ambitions, the identified bodies must identify, set and publish well-being objectives. These objectives must consider and be written in a manner which achieves actions in the short and long term. The Act also recognises that, in setting objectives, the bodies must also work better with people and communities to address issues utilising a collaborative approach.

Planning Policy Wales Edition 11 (2021)

- 5.12 The eleventh edition of Planning Policy Wales (PPW11)^f was published in February 2021. This document sets out the land use planning policies of the Welsh Government. This document has been written so as to align and reflect the content of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.
- 5.13 A key thread running through PPW11 is the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Sustainable development is explicitly defined within the document as, *“the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the Well-being Goals”*.
- 5.14 The policies below, shown in Table 5.2, are considered relevant to the proposed development. Extracts of these paragraphs are contained within **Appendix E** of this statement.

Planning Policy Wales	Topic
Paragraph 2.8	Achieving Well-being Through Place-Making
Paragraph 2.17	National Sustainable Placemaking Outcomes
Paragraph 2.20	National Sustainable Placemaking Outcomes
Paragraph 2.27	Assessing the Sustainable Benefits of Development
Paragraph 3.1	Strategic and Spatial Choices
Paragraph 3.3	Placemaking in Action

^e Legislation.gov.uk (2015) <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2015/2/contents/enacted>

^f Welsh Government (2018) https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-02/planning-policy-wales-edition-11_0.pdf

Paragraph 3.5	Access and Inclusivity
Paragraph 3.6	Access and Inclusivity
Paragraph 3.7	Environmental Sustainability
Paragraph 3.8	Environmental Sustainability
Paragraph 3.9	Character
Paragraph 3.12	Movement
Paragraph 3.13	Movement
Paragraph 3.17	Design and Access Statement
Paragraph 3.22	Promoting Healthier Places
Paragraph 3.23	Promoting Healthier Places
Paragraph 3.38	Placemaking in Rural Areas
Paragraph 3.39	Placemaking in Rural Areas
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Paragraph 4.1.19	Active and Social Streets
Paragraph 4.1.20	Active and Social Streets
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Paragraph 6.6.16	Water Quality and Surface Water Flooding
Paragraph 6.6.25	Development and Flood Risk
Paragraph 6.6.27	Development and Flood Risk
Paragraph 6.7.6	Framework for Addressing Air Quality and Soundscape
Paragraph 6.7.8	Framework for Addressing Air Quality and Soundscape
Paragraph 6.7.16	Location of Commercial, Industrial and other Potentially Polluting Development

Table 5.2 – Relevant Paragraphs from the Planning Policy Wales Edition 11

Technical Advice Notes

5.15 As set out in Planning Policy Wales (PPW11), a number of Technical Advice Notes (TANs) provide further guidance on specific aspects of development. In the case of this proposed development, the following TANs are considered to be particularly relevant:

- TAN 5 - Nature Conservation and Planning;
- TAN 11 – Noise;
- TAN 12 – Design;
- TAN 15 – Development and Flood Risk;
- TAN 18 – Transport;
- TAN 20 – Planning and the Welsh language; and
- TAN 24 – The Historic Environment.

5.16 The way in which these TAN's have been taken into consideration throughout the redevelopment/alterations of the railway bridge is considered further within the planning assessment in Section 6.

6.0 Planning Policy Assessment

6.1 Section 38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended by the Planning (Wales) Act 2015) states that Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) are required to determine planning applications in accordance with policies contained within the statutory Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

6.2 The proposed development will be assessed against policies contained within the Development Plan (as outlined in the preceding section). The key planning issues relevant to the proposed development are identified below and have been identified through the applicant's own site appraisal and through pre-application discussions with the local planning authority.

- Principle of Development;
- Previously Developed Land;
- Design;
- Heritage and Archaeology;
- Ecology;
- Arboriculture and Landscape; and
- Welsh Language.

Principle of Development

6.3 The proposal comprises the demolition and redevelopment of the northern road bridge contained within the span of Onllwyn Road (Pont y Offeiriad / Clergyman's bridge), to facilitate freight train access to the future Global Centre for Rail Excellence (GCRC) site. Onllwyn Road currently accommodates a bridge and therefore, the principle of the site accommodating such a structure is considered to be established. The replacement bridge is required to ensure that vehicles can travel along an existing highway, whilst also allowing for modern freight trains to pass underneath. In doing so, the development, as proposed, maintains the existing use of the area as part of the highway network.

6.4 The site is recognised as being partially contained within the following planning policy designations, when viewing the Council's online interactive Proposals Map:

- Valleys Strategy Area – Policy SP6
- Onllwyn Washery Safeguarded Freight Facility – Policy TR4/4
- Settlement Protection Zone – Policy M2/1

- 6.5 The proposed development does not conflict with the intent of any of the identified policy designations. Each of the policies associated with these designations will be discussed in turn, demonstrating the proposal's accordance.

Policy SP6 - Valleys Strategy Area

The proposed development will support significant levels of economic growth, in that it will help to realise the wider GCRE project. The nature of the proposals are therefore in complete alignment with this policy, which seeks to ensure that developments do not adversely impact on existing employment sites and uses; undermine the Council's aspirations to realise regeneration efforts in these areas; or erode cultural identity.

Policy TR4/4 - Onllwyn Washery Safeguarded Freight Facility

This policy seeks to ensure that the use of existing rail connections and sidings are not inhibited by development. The demolition and replacement of the existing bridge is being conducted so as to maximise and improve the use of the existing rail infrastructure in the area. Therefore, the proposals are concordant with the aims of this policy.

Policy M2 – Surface Coal Operations (Settlement Protection Zone)

This policy supports surface coal operations so long as they do not conflict with the criteria outline within the Policy. Given the nature of the proposals, this policy is not relevant to determine the principle of the sought development.

Relevant Policies

- 6.6 Policy SP 4 of the NPTLDP states that developments will be expected to make efficient use of existing infrastructure and, where required, provide for new infrastructure which does not detrimentally impact on the area or local community. These aims are also reflected in Paragraph 3.13 of the PPW11, which states that where new infrastructure is necessary to maximise accessibility by sustainable non-car modes, it is to be integrated within the development layout and beyond its boundary. This paragraph goes on to state that this could include works to connect cycle routes within a site to a wider strategic cycling network. The proposed development aligns with these aims, in that it will improve the site's existing road infrastructure, will enable the future GCRE development to become operational and will facilitate sustainable connections in the future through the inclusion of additional space within the bridge deck, which could be utilised as an active travel corridor.

Paragraph 8.14 of TAN 12 states that when determining planning applications, local planning authorities should ensure that disused railways and their infrastructure are not severed by new development, if there is potential for their reuse. This is also reflective of the aforementioned Policy TR4/4 contained within the NPTLDP. The proposed development

has been specifically designed to improve existing rail infrastructure and therefore is acceptable in this regard.

Summary

- 6.7 Therefore, taking the existing use of the site and the referenced policies into account, it is considered that the principle of the proposed development is established as GCRE Ltd seek to replace an existing road bridge in the span of Onllwyn Road, in a manner which also enables future railway movements/infrastructure to take place/be installed within the clearance below the structure. Therefore, it is considered that the proposed development is supported by Policy SP 4 of the NPTLDP, Paragraph 3.13 of the PPW11 and Paragraph 8.14 of TAN 12.

Previously Developed Land

- 6.8 Welsh Government and local planning authorities seek to ensure that development takes place on previously developed land, in preference to greenfield land, to aide wider sustainability ambitions. PPW11 states that, *"Previously developed (also known as brownfield) land is that which is or was occupied by a permanent structure (excluding agricultural or forestry buildings) and associated fixed surface infrastructure. The curtilage of the development is included, as are defence buildings and land used for mineral extraction and waste where provision for restoration has not been made through development management procedures."*
- 6.9 Paragraph 3.43 of the PPW11 states that Planning Authorities must prioritise the use of previously developed land and/or underutilised sites for all types of development in order to promote sustainable spatial planning.
- 6.10 Paragraph 2.5.13 of the NPTLDP states that Existing employment areas should be prioritised for development in order to meet the needs of existing businesses and residents.
- 6.11 The proposed development comprises the demolition of an existing bridge and its subsequent replacement on a revised alignment. The site will partially comprise of previously developed land in accordance with the PPW11 definition, a location where all types of development are prioritised. It is therefore considered that the development is supported by Paragraph 3.43 of the PPW11 and Paragraph 2.5.13 of the NPTLDP and represents a sustainable location for development to take place.

Design

- 6.12 A key element of the sought development is the proposed design of the bridge solution. GCRE and their representatives have held extensive discussions with the LPA to ensure that a design can be developed which adheres to legislation and the Council's requirements, whilst also facilitating the movements of modern trains within the clearance below the bridge deck. The proposal aims to demolish and redevelop an existing bridge, providing a development that is both respectful to the original bridge and appropriate in character, enabling the development to assimilate within the site's wider natural and historic environment. In doing so, it is hoped that the development will have a strong sense of identity and a sense of place that reflects its location within Onllwyn, whilst reflecting its historical context.
- 6.13 Paragraphs 3.3 and 3.4 of the PPW11 state that good design is fundamental to creating sustainable places where people want to live, work and socialise. These paragraphs also recognise that good design is achieved through consideration of the relationship between the natural and built environments and between people and places.
- 6.14 TAN 12, which discusses how developments can promote sustainability through good design, is also of relevance within this Section. Specifically, TAN 12 outlines the need for developments to have good inclusive access to all, character, accessible, community safety, environmental sustainability and promote active travel.
- 6.15 Policy SP 20 of the NPTLDP states that transport systems and infrastructure will be developed in a safe, efficient and sustainable manner by promoting connectivity, and to be designed in a manner that ensures efficient and safe access.
- 6.16 Of particular relevance to this aspect of the development is Policy BE 1 of the NPTLDP, which pertains to design. The key facets of this policy are discussed in-depth within this section of this statement. Additionally, the NPTLDP SPG Design explains in greater detail, the criteria outlined within Policy BE 1 of the NPTLDP.
- 6.17 Policy BE 1 states that all development proposals must be of high quality design that is sensitive to the natural, historic, and built environment and contributes to the creation of attractive, sustainable places.
- 6.18 Policy BE 1 of the NPTLDP states that the design of proposals should adhere to 10 no. specific criteria, which the proposal has been appraised against, below:
1. *"It complements and enhances the character and appearance of the site, building or area in terms of siting, appearance, scale, height, massing and elevation treatment;"*

The existing bridge measures approximately 3.8m in width and 18.2m in length. The replacement bridge will have a width of in the region of 10.6m and a length of 19m. It is therefore acknowledged the bridge will have a greater width than the existing however, the length will remain largely the same. The increase in scale is not considered to be substantial in the context of the overall site and landscape, due to the existing width of the carriageway leading up to the bridge and the scale of the nearby southern bridge in its vicinity. Therefore, the proposal is considered to compliment and retain the existing character of the site in these respects.

2. *"It respects the context of the site and its place within the local landscape, including its impact on the important arterial gateways into the County Borough, its effects on townscape and the local historic and cultural heritage and it takes account of the site topography and prominent skylines or ridges;"*

Over the course of the past year, GCRE and their advisors have explored various options for how the bridge can be replaced or modified to enable suitable clearances to be achieved. In discussing possible solutions, the following options have been explored:

- Modification of existing bridge deck to increase height and achieve clearance.
- Removal of existing bridge structure and its relocation on a revised alignment.
- Demolition of the existing bridge and its replacement with a new bridge of similar proportions.
- Demolition of the existing bridge and its replacement with a new, wider bridge.

The finalised bridge design will feature concrete beams, deck, and abutments. The design will provide enough clearance for the installation of new rail tracks, access, and overhead line electric structures. Soft landscaping and features will be added to the new embankments to improve biodiversity and add local value. The designs were created through collaboration between the Design Team, including representatives from 5th Studio (architects), Expedition (structural and civil), Sanderson Associates (highway), JCLA (landscape), as well as engineers from the wider project team Arcadis (rail engineers) and Atkins (lower level drainage). The proposal is considered to be consistent with the character of the existing bridge due to its similar massing.

In terms of cultural heritage impacts, almost all historic buildings and infrastructure have been lost on the site. Remnants of the site's past operations can be found at the lower ground of the bridge (by the tracks and access road), such as the wagon retaining wall and retaining walls of the winding house. Onllwyn Bridge is included in the area defined in the Written Scheme of Investigations, which currently refer to the outline planning

permission for the wider GCRE development (LPA Ref: P2021/0327). A watching brief has been prepared for the wider GCRE development, and it is considered that a condition could be placed on the potential planning permission for the proposed development, requiring that development be conducted in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI). The WSIs for the GCRE development are included as part of the documents being submitted through this application for the replacement bridge.

3. *"It utilises materials appropriate to its surroundings and incorporates hard and soft landscaping and screening where appropriate;"*

The development is to, where feasible, reflect the existing materials of the original development. Details of hard and soft landscaping include an open drainage feature leading into a wetland feature. Rain garden and SUDs are also proposed to the South West of the road. Trees are also proposed on the north east, north west and south west embankments. Final details of the materials to be utilised as part of the construction of the replacement bridge will be secured by way of condition.

4. *"It would not have a significant adverse impact on highway safety, the amenity of occupiers of adjacent land or the community;"*

The proposed design has been developed with the future operation of the GCRE site in mind. To achieve this, space within the bridge deck has been included to allow for a future active travel route. By incorporating future active travel provision, the development is considered to increase roadside safety and provide protection to all active users. Furthermore, the bridge deck carriageway is significantly larger than that associated with the existing bridge deck, therefore enabling two-way vehicular traffic and reducing the prospect of vehicle collisions. The provided Transport Assessment, prepared by Sanderson Associates, highlights how the removal of the bridge and its subsequent replacement would have an acceptable impact on the local/wider transport network.

5. *"Important local features (including buildings, amenity areas, green spaces and green infrastructure, biodiversity and ecological connectivity) are retained and enhanced as far as possible;"*

As discussed in further detail within the Ecology section of this report, contained within the Technical Considerations section, the proposed development has sought to limit its impact on local ecological features and provide compensatory planting and landscaping features which aim to deliver net benefits to biodiversity. Whilst the proposed

development will require vegetation clearance, local features will be protected where achievable.

The EclA submitted as part of this application identifies that no further surveys are required to support the proposed development. GCRE intend to follow the recommendations outlined within the EclA and associated reports in full to ensure that the proposed development will adequately mitigate, compensate and enhance the protected, priority and notable habitats within the vicinity of the site.

6. *"It achieves and creates attractive, safe places and public spaces, taking account of 'Secured by Design' principles (including where appropriate natural surveillance, visibility, well lit environments and areas of public movement);"*

The development is to provide safe access for all road users and, in particular, users such as cyclists and pedestrians by providing a dedicated, future active travel route. Furthermore, by increasing the width of the carriageway to enable two-way travel, the risk of vehicular collisions is also reduced. In designing the development in this manner, it is considered that the proposals create a safe environment, enabling all users to travel safely, feel safer and limits risks from occurring. This represents a significant improvement from the existing condition of the bridge.

7. *"It plays a full role in achieving and enhancing an integrated transport and communications network promoting the interests of pedestrians, cyclists and public transport and ensures linkages with the existing surrounding community;"*

The operation of a road bridge in this location of Onllwyn Road will continue but the existing bridge will be removed and replaced. One of the benefits of the proposed development is to ensure that active road users have a safe and effective means to travel across Onllwyn Bridge. Furthermore, the development is to maintain and improve the existing bridge in a manner that would enhance existing transport network links including vehicular access, pedestrian access and access for railway freight development crossing underneath.

8. *"It uses resources, including land and energy, as efficiently possible through... The layout and form of the development does not preclude the reasonable use of other adjacent land; (c) Developing brownfield land in preference to greenfield land where possible; (d) Minimising building exposure while maximising solar gain."*

The proposed development will replace the existing infrastructure to facilitate freight trains to access the GCRE Site. It is not possible for the GCRE development to operate

without the replacement of this bridge, due to the overhead clearance required for the trains. However, although the bridge will be repositioned on a revised alignment, it will occupy the same broad area as the existing bridge. Therefore, the proposed development does not preclude the reasonable use of other adjacent land and is to take place on partially brownfield land.

9. *"Its drainage systems are designed to limit surface water run-of and flood risk and prevent pollution;"*

Full details of drainage are provided within the Outline Surface Water Management Plan accompanying the submission of this Planning Statement. This document identifies how on site attenuation is to be accommodated within the proposals to ensure that existing runoff from the site will not be increased and a small betterment will be achieved. Full details will be provided through the SAB consenting process.

10. *"The layout and design of the development achieves inclusive design by ensuring barrier free environments, allowing access by all and making full provision for people with disabilities."*

The proposed development will have built in capacity for a future active-travel route. This will facilitate walking and cycling journeys taking place over the bridge. Furthermore, active-travel lanes can be used by a wide variety of individuals with different mobility requirements. Therefore the proposal is considered to make provision for people with disabilities.

- 6.19 It is considered that the proposed development would be in keeping with the existing character of the locality and site, having been designed to integrate within its environment, whilst respecting any constraints. Furthermore, the proposed development is to provide safe and accessible means for all people to cross the bridge safely. Therefore, it is considered that the proposed development is in full accordance with Policies BE 1 and SP 20 of the NPTLDP and also adheres to NPTCBC's Design SPG and TAN 12. Furthermore, it is also considered that the development is supported by paragraphs 3.3 and 3.4 of the PPW11.

Heritage and Archaeology

- 6.20 Paragraph 6.1.3 of PPW11 details that the way in which historic assets are identified varies. The most significant assets often benefit from statutory protection or inclusion in formal registers while others, including buried archaeological remains, may not yet be formally recognised.

- 6.21 Paragraph 6.1.8 of PPW11 states that the responsibility for safeguarding the historic environment falls upon all stakeholders in the planning system and the most effective approach to protecting, conserving, and enhancing historic assets involves considering these aspects from the initial stages of plan development or proposal design.
- 6.22 Paragraph 6.1.9 of PPW11 outlines that decisions made through the planning system must comprehensively assess the impact on the historic environment, considering the significance, heritage values, and place-making contributions of individual historic assets.
- 6.23 NPTLDP Policy SP21 recognises that the built environment and historic heritage will be preserved and improved by encouraging high quality design standards, safeguarding historically and culturally significant features, and identifying designated sites for protection and improvement.
- 6.24 There are no designated heritage assets contained within the application site. The nearest such asset is the Scheduled Monument of 'Tramroad at Ystradgynlais' (CADW Ref: GM399) which is located approximately 640m to the west of the site. The Environmental Statement (ES) submitted as part of the determination of the wider GCRE development (LPA Ref: P2021/0327) recognised that there was negligible historic value contained within the Washery Zone (in which the proposed bridge replacement site is contained) and concluded that no mitigation was necessary within that area.
- 6.25 The ES did recognise that there were two non-designated heritage assets 'points' located within the site which are contained within the red-line boundary associated with the replacement bridge application. These are recognised as CH011 and CH059, when viewing 'Figure 8.2' from the submitted ES; an extract of this document is shown below, at Figure 6.1.

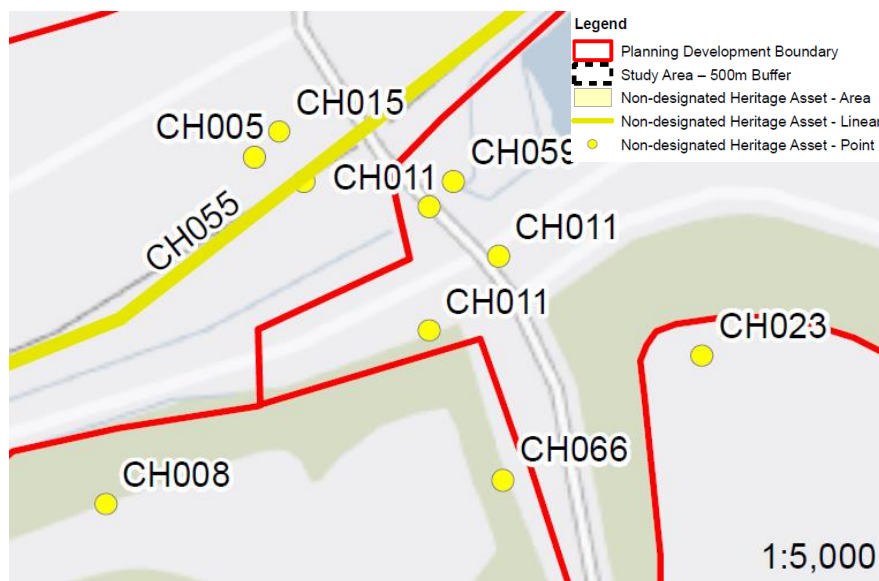


Figure 6.1 – Extract from 'GCRE' Environmental Statement (Figure 8.2)

- 6.26 A further extract from the ES is shown below in Figure 6.2, which details the value of these non-designated heritage points:

Railway bridge bases (CH010, CH011 and CH059)

Several railway bridge bases or structures relating to former underbridges which carried the Brecon Forest Tramroad across the River Dulais are recorded in the southern part of the site. Several of the records may relate to the same features, as there is some uncertainty over locations. It is understood that the majority of these features have been removed, but possible bridge bases are recorded to survive beneath the modern road bridge immediately west of the Onllwyn Washery. While these structures are associated with the historically significant Brecon Forest tramroad, their fragmentary condition and mostly illegible context has diminished their individual historic interest. They are not designated and are of **low** value.

Figure 6.2 – Extract from 'GCRE' Environment Statement (Paragraph A4.1.6)

- 6.27 It is therefore recognised that the proposed development will not adversely impact on any designated heritage assets. Written Schemes of Investigation, prepared by Wessex Archaeology Ltd to discharge conditions associated with the wider GCRE development (LPA Ref: P2021/0327), are submitted as part of this application, will be utilised to inform how the proposed bridge replacement project will be conducted; to ensure that any impacts to non-designated heritage assets are minimised. Accordingly, the proposals are in accordance with Policy SP21 of the NPTLDP and the identified paragraphs from PPW11.

Ecology

- 6.28 TAN 5, which pertains to Nature Conservation and Planning, recognises that the land use planning system should contribute to protecting and enhancing biodiversity and geological conservation. In particular, paragraph 4.3.4 is of relevance to the proposed development as it states which information should be submitted alongside a planning application to enable LPAs to make an informed decision as to the impacts of a development on ecology and biodiversity. The submission of this application has been informed by this Technical Advice Note 5.
- 6.29 Policy SP15 of the NPTLDP states that important habitats, species, and sites of geological interest will be protected, conserved, enhanced, and managed through the identification and protection of sites of international, national, regional, and local importance, as well as the protection of important natural heritage features.
- 6.30 Policy EN6 of the NPTLDP states that development proposals that affect sites of significant natural heritage value will only be permitted if they, conserve or enhance the site's natural heritage importance, or if the development cannot be located elsewhere and its benefits

outweigh the site's natural heritage value. The policy goes on to recognise that where adverse effects are unavoidable, mitigation and/or compensation measures will be required.

- 6.31 The NPTCBC Biodiversity and Geodiversity SPG provides information and guidance setting out the expectations on all development proposals to protect, conserve, enhance and manage important habitats, species and sites of geological interest.

Bat Survey

- 6.32 A number of bat surveys were undertaken by BSG Ecology over the course of 2022 and 2023 as part of ecological investigations required to inform the wider GCRE development. These surveys were utilised to inform a document entitled '2022/2023 Bat Survey Report', prepared in September 2023, which discusses the impacts of the proposed bridge development on bat species.
- 6.33 The report specifically identifies that, *"The survey results do not indicate the presence of a regularly used roost or hibernation roost within the Northern Bridge, Southern Bridge, Brick Structure, Western Wall or Eastern Wall. Activity was very low, and the timing of passes did not indicate nearby emergence from or return to a roost. This is supported by an absence of evidence of bats found during the close-inspection work"*.
- 6.34 In light of the findings of the surveys, the document goes on to state in specific relation to the northern bridge, *"It is unlikely that works to the Northern Bridge (assessed as having low suitability for bat roosts) will have a significant negative impact on the favourable conservation status of the local bat population. However, these structures should be inspected by a suitably experienced ecologist immediately prior to works taking place to confirm likely absence of roosting bats"*.
- 6.35 The report states that in order to minimise any potential harm to bat species during the demolition of the existing bridge/construction of the new bridge that the measures identified within the Ecological Protection Plan, prepared by BSG Ecology in 2022, should be adopted.

Ecological Impact Assessment

- 6.36 An Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) was prepared by Wildwood Ecology in December 2023 and is submitted alongside this planning application. This document consolidates the findings and summaries contained within the various ecological assessment undertaken by BSG Ecology (including the aforementioned '2022/2023 Bat Survey Report'), Sturgess Ecology, Dalcour Maclaren and Atkins; conducted to determine the impacts of the wider GCRE development, and applies their findings to the proposed development, subject of this

application. The document recognises that no further surveys are necessary to inform the potential impacts of the proposed development.

- 6.37 The EclA outlines that the nearest statutory ecological designation is the Gors Llwyn Onllwyn Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), located approximately 0.2km to the east of the wider GCRE site but located approximately 1km to the east of the proposed development. The closest non-statutory sites are the Gorsllwyn Meadows and Onllwyn Coal Washery Sites of Nature the Conservation Interest (SINCs), which are located approximately 250m to the north east of the site and 500m to the east of the proposed site; respectively. However, due to the nature of the proposed development and its distance from these site, the document does not identify that any harm will arise to these sites.
- 6.38 The document acknowledges that due to the nature of the sought works, the project will entail the removal of category C broadleaved woodland, semi-improved grassland, potential nesting sites for Sand Martins and may cause potential impacts to reptiles and otters, if they are present onsite. However, it is explicitly recognised that so long as the recommendations contained within the constituent reports, which have informed the EclA, are adhered to, that the proposals will, *“adequately mitigate, compensate, and enhance the protected, priority and notable habitats and species within and adjacent to the site”*.
- 6.39 The EclA identifies a number of ecological enhancements that will be delivered as part of the development including the planting of 29 new trees; the creation of rain garden SuDS features; and the delivery of wet meadow flora, coal seam and open mosaic habitats. These measures have been specifically incorporated within the design of the proposals, as depicted when viewing the ‘Proposed Soft Landscape Plan’ (Drg No. OW181-JCLA-DR-L-0001-P01), submitted as part of this application, to ensure that the project delivers net benefits for biodiversity.
- 6.40 Taking the results of the various surveys into account and the proposed mitigation measures which are embedded within the design of the development, the proposed development is considered acceptable in ecology terms and accords with the relevant local and national planning policy.

Arboriculture and Landscape

- 6.41 TAN 5, which regards nature conservation and planning, states in Paragraph 4.3.2 that, landscaping proposals should be submitted as part of planning applications including, *“...measures to address potential adverse effects on nature conservation”*. This paragraph from the document goes onto identify that proposals for enhancing nature conservation

interests should be included upfront, as these factors are crucial for determining whether planning permission should be granted.

- 6.42 Paragraph 6.3.3 of the PPW11 states that Local authorities should protect and enhance the unique qualities of all landscapes in Wales, considering their social, economic, environmental, and cultural benefits, their role in creating valued places, and their contribution to well-being.
- 6.43 EN 7 of the NPTLDP states that development proposals that adversely affect, either ecologically or visually important natural features, including trees, woodlands and hedgerows this will only be permitted if either:
- the design of the development fully accounts for the features and protects them wherever possible; or
 - if the biodiversity value and role of the feature has been taken into account and the removal of the feature is unavoidable, mitigation measures are agreed upon.
- 6.44 Policy SP14 of the NPTLDP states that the countryside and undeveloped coast, including landscapes, seascapes, and agricultural land, will be protected and enhanced through measures such as controlling development outside settlement limits and designating Special Landscape Areas.
- 6.45 Policy EN 2 of the NPTLDP states that the Dulais Valley and other areas of high landscape quality are designated as Special Landscape Areas, and development within these areas will only be permitted if it does not significantly adversely impact their special features and characteristics. The Dulais Valley Special Landscape Area is located approximately 3km to the south west of the proposed development site.
- 6.46 Neath Port Talbot Council's Landscape and Seascape SPG, states that development proposals within Special Landscape Areas must demonstrate that they will not significantly adversely impact the features and characteristics that led to the area's designation.

Arboricultural Report

- 6.47 An Arboricultural Report was completed by Sylvan Ecology and is submitted alongside this application. The document identifies that many of the trees on the site are dominated by areas of overgrown scrub, resulting in many of these having grown too close together, which in turn has adversely impacted upon their own growth. The trees that are present predominantly consist of sycamore and other fast growing species, with the report concluding in this regard that species diversity is low.

- 6.48 All trees and groups within the survey area are worthy of Category C grade. The report recognises that trees or groups of category C trees will not usually be retained where they would pose a significant constraint to development. A Tree Constraints Plan is included within the report. When cross referencing this plan against the submitted Proposed Plan, it is recognised that tree groups G1-G3 and T1 are to be removed to facilitate the proposed development. However, the proposed Landscaping Plan however seeks to mitigate and enhance the site's existing condition through the planting of 29no. trees and the creation of a number of diverse habitats.
- 6.49 The proposed landscaping design that is to be implemented through the redevelopment of the site, not only seeks to enhance the site's biodiversity, ecology and arboricultural environment but also will seek to visually improve the locality. Whilst the proposed replacement bridge will be larger in scale than the original structure, it is considered that the proposals will have a beneficial impact to local views and the wider landscape. Due to the site's distance from the Dulais Valley Special Landscape Area, it is recognised that the proposed development will not have an impact on this designation.
- 6.50 It is therefore considered that the proposed development is in accordance with Policies SP14, EN2 and EN7 of the NPTLDP, Paragraph 4.3.2 of TAN 5. Paragraph 6.3.3 of the PPW11 and the relevant provisions contained within the Landscape and Seascape SPG. Accordingly, with respect to landscaping, it is considered that the proposed development is appropriate.

Welsh Language

- 6.51 Welsh Government and the Welsh Planning System seek to ensure that the Welsh language is preserved and promoted and that development does prevent these ambitions from occurring. Within a planning context, Future Wales: the national plan 2040 sets out the aim of creating '*a Wales where people live in places with a thriving Welsh language*' and having a million Welsh speakers by 2050.
- 6.52 TAN 20 pertains to Planning and the Welsh Language. In specific relation to how this document relates to the determination of planning application, paragraph 3.1.2 recognises, that when decisions are made on individual planning applications and appeals, the use of the Welsh language may be considered as a material factor.
- 6.53 Policy SP22 of the NPTLDP regards Welsh language and outlines that it will be safeguarded and promoted in 4no. specific areas within the authority areas, recognised as being language sensitive areas. The proposed site is not located within these 4no. areas, the nearest being the community of Crynant, in the Dulais Valley, located approximately 7.2km

to the south west. However, it should be recognised that the Neath Port Talbot SPG entitled, 'Development and the Welsh language' details that the Welsh Language Sensitive Areas also include Seven Sisters and Onllwyn.

- 6.54 It is therefore proposed that, in tandem with the efforts being conducted as part of the wider GCRE development, GCRE Ltd will seek to promote and preserve the Welsh language through the replacement bridge project; subject of this application. Specifically, and subject to confirmation from the Local Highway Authority, road related infrastructure including sign posting and road markings are to be provided for in the Welsh Language. Furthermore, discussions will be held with the LPA, through the determination of the planning application, to determine appropriate measures that can be incorporated within the development or its construction to promote the Welsh Language. Subject to adoption of such measures, it is considered that the proposed development is in accordance with Paragraph 3.12 of TAN 20 and Policy SP22 of the NPTLDP.

7.0 Technical Considerations

7.1 This section of the Statement summarises the findings of the technical assessments which are submitted in support of the application; demonstrating the proposal's accordance with both national and local planning policy. Technical assessments and documents have been commissioned to support the proposed development and their respective findings are discussed in the sub-headings shown below:

- Transport and Highways;
- Geo-environmental, Coal Mining Risk and Contamination; and
- Drainage.

Transport and Highway Impacts

7.2 Paragraph 3.13 of the PPW11 details that existing infrastructure must be utilised and maximised whenever possible, and new infrastructure should be integrated into the development layout to mitigate transport impacts and maximise accessibility by sustainable non-car modes.

7.3 Paragraph 5.3.14 of the PPW11 states that the design of new road schemes and improvements should prioritise active and sustainable transport modes over private motor vehicles, minimising community severance and enhancing the safety, convenience, and amenity of routes for pedestrians, cyclists, and public transport users.

7.4 Paragraph 6.2 of TAN 18 recognises that Local Authorities should utilise their planning and transportation powers to promote walking as the primary mode of transportation for shorter trips, considering measures to enhance pedestrian safety and attractiveness through land-use arrangements and design policies.

7.5 Paragraph 6.4 of TAN 18 outlines that Local Authorities should aim to develop a network of cycle routes with new developments connecting with these.

7.6 Policy TR 2 of the NPTLDP states that the design and access of new development should adhere to specific criteria. The proposed development has been appraised against each of these criteria, below:

1. *"The development does not compromise the safe, effective and efficient use of the highway network and does not have an adverse impact on highway safety or create unacceptable levels of traffic generation;"*

The proposed development is required to ensure that freight trains and rolling stock are able to access the wider GCRE site. However, as part of the proposals for the replacement bridge, the bridge deck that is being provided will deliver significant safety improvements over the existing bridge.

It is recognised that to realise the full extent of the proposed development, that the existing bridge will have to be removed, and therefore when this takes place Onllwyn Road will be severed; temporarily disrupting through journeys on Onllwyn Road. During this period, users of Onllwyn Road will have to use a diversionary route. Sanderson Associates have modelled and described the impacts that would be realised to pedestrians, cyclists, public transport services and drivers during this period, within the submitted Transport Statement. They have determined that the impact, 'would not be significant'. Furthermore, the document states that traffic displaced onto surrounding roads during this period would not adversely impact upon the surrounding highway network.

2. *"Appropriate levels of parking and cycling facilities are provided and the access arrangements for the site allow for the safe maneuvering of any service vehicles associated with the planned use;"*

The proposed development primarily involves the demolition of an existing bridge and its subsequent replacement. Given the nature of the proposals, the development does not accommodate parking for bikes or motor vehicles. However, the bridge is to be constructed in accordance with modern standards and therefore service vehicles would be able to safely utilise the sought infrastructure.

3. *"The development is accessible by a range of travel means, including public transport and safe cycle and pedestrian routes;"*

The proposed development comprises a piece of infrastructure, which will facilitate various forms of travel to take place. Therefore the development is not a 'destination' in its own right. However, the proposal has been 'future proofed' and incorporates an active travel route which is hoped will integrate with the wider cycling and pedestrian network, in the future.

4. *"Transport Assessments and Travel Plans are provided for developments that are likely to create significant traffic generation."*

The proposed development, in its own right, is not considered to be a traffic generator. This is due to proposals comprising the demolition and replacement of

an existing bridge. However, to demonstrate that the development will not cause significant trips to be generated when the existing bridge is temporarily removed, the Applicant has commissioned a Transport Statement (Doc Ref: 148698-002-02); according with Paragraph 9.2 of TAN 18. This document has been submitted in support of GCRE Ltd's application for the replacement bridge and demonstrates the proposal's limited impacts on the wider highway network; through the completion of modelling and other analysis. The report specifically identifies that the impact of temporarily removing the existing bridge on pedestrians, cyclists, public transport services and driver of motor vehicles would not be significant. Once the new bridge is installed, impacts will be nullified. Therefore, it is considered that the development's impact with respect to traffic generation is considered to be limited.

- 7.7 The submitted Transport Assessment identifies that there is not considered to be any road safety issues at any junctions close to the bridge which would be exacerbated by its removal or the implementation of the associated diversion route. The impact on pedestrians, cyclists, public transport services and drivers would not be significant and once the replacement bridge is in place it would enhance local connectivity and road safety.
- 7.8 Accordingly, it is considered that the development is appropriate with respect to planning policy as it adheres to Policies SP 20 and TR 2 of the NPTLDP, the relevant contents of TAN 12, Paragraphs 3.11 and 9.16 of TAN 18 and Paragraphs 3.13, 3.39 and 4.1.11 of the PPW 11.

Geo-environmental, Coal Mining Risk and Contamination

- 7.9 Paragraph 3.5.6 of PPW11 states that planning authorities should work collaboratively with landowners to identify and bring forward suitable previously developed sites for development.
- 7.10 Policy SP15 of the NPTLDP outlines that sites of geological interest are to be protected, conserved and enhanced. The Biodiversity and Geodiversity SPG details that there are four SSSIs and two Regionally Important Geodiversity Sites (RIGS) within Neath Port Talbot which are designated for geological reasons. The proposed site is not contained within either of these forms of designations.
- 7.11 Policy SP16 of the NPTLDP seeks to ensure that developments do not create adverse impact on air, water and ground quality and that the environment is to be protected, where feasible.

7.12 Policy EN8 of the NDTLDP recognises that applications for development which would have an unacceptable adverse effect on health, biodiversity and or local amenity will not be permitted. Furthermore proposals which would expose people to unacceptable risks due to the following, will also not be permitted:

- Air pollution;
- Noise pollution;
- Light pollution;
- Contamination;
- Land instability;
- Water (including groundwater) pollution.

The policy further states that proposals, *"...which would create new problems or exacerbate existing problems detailed above will not be acceptable unless mitigation measures are included to reduce the risk of harm to public health, biodiversity and/or local amenity to an acceptable level"*.

Coal Mining Risk Assessment

7.13 As the site is located within a 'Development High Risk Area' for coal, a Coal Mining Risk Assessment (CMRA) has been commissioned by GCRE Ltd to support this application. The CMRA prepared by the Coal Authority, identifies that the risk to the site from legacy mining features is 'medium'. This is considered on the basis that the site has been previously been the subject of coal mining activity (shallow mine working in the Bute (Peacock) seam and possible unrecorded shallow mine working in the Nine Feet seam). However, the document acknowledges that subject to the completion of site investigations and any associated remediation measures, that it is possible for the site to be made safe for future development. The document also recognises that recorded coal mining legacy issues do not present any adverse implications for the proposed redevelopment of the bridge.

Geo-technical and Land Contamination Assessment

7.14 Due to the site's former use as coal mine, the associated activities which would have taken place on site and the need to ensure that the proposed development can constructed in a safe manner, a Geo-technical and Land Contamination Assessment has been prepared by Expedition Engineering to support this planning application. This report identifies that the following risks have been identified in relation to the following topics:

- Presence of mining galleries and shallow workings in proximity of the bridge/embankment:

- Variability in embankment material
- Groundwater
- Presence of shallow compressible material
- Below ground obstructions
- Contamination

- 7.15 However, a series of mitigation measures are identified within the report which will be undertaken prior to commencement of the proposed development.
- 7.16 The Completed Geo-technical and Land Contamination Assessment also discusses the results of the Coal Mining Risk Assessment completed by the Coal Authority. In response to their recommendations, the Expedition document details that initial GI has been undertaken within the site which revealed that no cavities were found but recommends that further GI is undertaken prior the commencement of the proposed development.
- 7.17 In summary, subject to the identified mitigation measures being undertaken//pursued, it is not considered that the proposed development should be precluded on geo-environmental grounds. Once these mitigation measures are employed, it is recognised that the proposed development will accord with the identified policies, contained within the NPTLDP and PPW11, which relate to geo-environmental, coal mining and contamination.

Flood Risk and Drainage

- 7.18 Paragraph 6.6.27 of PPW11 states that planning authorities should be mindful of the risk of surface water flooding and ensure that developments are designed and planned to minimise potential impacts.
- 7.19 Within TAN 12, which regards Design, Paragraph 5.4.11 of the document recommends that sustainable drainage measures should be incorporated into the design of developments to effectively manage the potential impacts of flooding.
- 7.20 Policy 8 of the Framework relates to flooding and states that, "*Flood risk management that enables and supports sustainable strategic growth and regeneration in National and Regional Growth Areas will be supported*".
- 7.21 Policy BE 1(9) of the NPTLDP states that Proposals will only be permitted if their drainage systems effectively manage surface water runoff, mitigate flood risk, and prevent pollution.
- 7.22 Chapter 4.9 of Neath Port Talbot Council's Design SPG refers to Drainage Systems (Criterion 9 of Policy BE 1). Paragraph 4.9.1 of the Design SPG states that new

developments should be designed to avoid detrimental impacts on water quality or flood risk, and the use of sustainable and efficient drainage systems can help manage surface water runoff.

- 7.23 Paragraph 4.9.13 of the Design SPG states that Developments should strive to reduce or maintain existing surface water runoff rates. If this is not feasible, they must demonstrate no net increase in runoff rates.

Flood Risk (Rivers and Seas)

- 7.24 The entirety of the proposed site is recognised within Natural Resource Wales' (NRW's) 'Flood Map for Planning' as being located within Flood Zone 1 and within NRW's Development Advice Map as being within Zone A. These areas are considered to be at little or no risk from fluvial flooding. Accordingly, the submitted Outline Surface Water Management Plan determines that the proposed development will not have to be supported by a Flood Consequence Assessment.

Outline Surface Water Management Plan, Associated Documents and SAB

- 7.25 SAB approval is required prior to the construction of any development which has a construction area of 100m² or larger⁹. The SAB process was introduced to ensure that applications for new development which present drainage implications could be assessed by the SAB Approval Body prior to their construction, and confirm that development of this scale are being built in accordance with the national standard for sustainable drainage. Whilst it is recognised that the SAB approval process is a separate consenting process to applying for planning permission, GCRE Ltd and their consultants have sought to design the bridge in such a manner that design elements required to achieve SAB approval, are incorporated within the proposals for the replacement bridge, which planning permission is being sought for.
- 7.26 An Outline Surface Water Management Plan has been submitted alongside this application, which is supported by a Proposed Drainage General Arrangement Plan (Drg No. C081 Rev P3). The overarching document details that the indicative drainage strategy that will be pursued, as part of the construction of the replacement bridge, will be to discharge all surface water runoff from the impermeable areas to local drainage ditches on each side of the bridge. The document recognises that, utilising this strategy, the ultimate point of discharge will be to the River Dulais, located to the west of the site. This design has been shaped by the aspiration to replicate the existing situation.

⁹ In accordance with Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 [1]

- 7.27 The provided outline surface water management document, demonstrates how through attenuation, existing runoff from the proposed development will not be increased and a small betterment will be achieved. The exact betterment will be confirmed in during the RIBA stage 3 process, when a full drainage strategy will be prepared. This document will be designed and shaped in conjunction with the SAB Approval Body.
- 7.28 The proposed development is therefore recognised as being appropriate with regard to flood risk and surface water management, adhering to Policy BE1(9) of the NPTLDP, Paragraphs 4.9.1 and 4.9.13 of the Design SPG, Paragraph 5.4.11 of TAN 12, Paragraph 6.6.27 of the PPW11 and Policy 8 of the NDF. A separate submission to the SAB will also be made to conform with Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010.

8.0 Conclusion

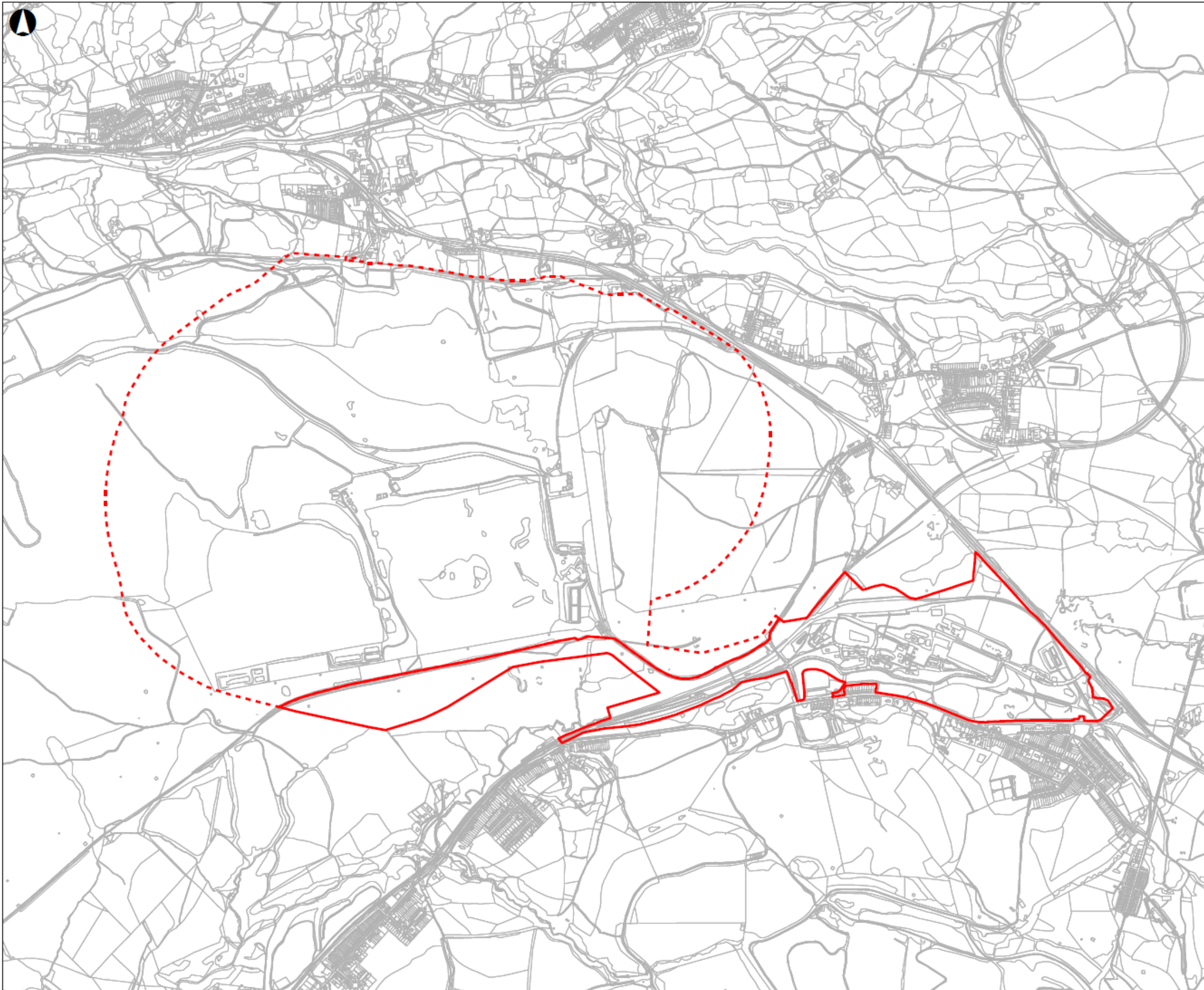
- 8.1 This Planning Statement is prepared by Fairhurst on behalf of GCRE Ltd. in support of an application which seeks detailed planning permission for development on land located within the span of, and adjacent to, Onllwyn Road, Onllwyn. Specifically, planning permission is sought after for the following extent of development:

'Demolition and redevelopment of an existing bridge, including the provision of landscaping and associated development'

- 8.2 The proposed development comprises the removal and replacement of the northern bridge within Onllwyn Road, which is required in order for the Global Centre for Rail Excellence project to become operational. Specifically, the development sought through this application will provide sufficient clearance underneath the replacement bridge to enable trains and rolling stock to pass underneath Onllwyn Road. The application also seeks permission for the implementation of complimentary landscaping works and associated development, in order to ensure that the development integrates within and enhances its environment.
- 8.3 The Applicant has demonstrated their dedication to shaping the proposals in a collaborative manner with Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council by engaging in constructive pre-application discussions, over the course of 10 months. This activity has significantly aided the project team in determining the site-specific development principles to be incorporated within the proposals; with the scale, massing and overall design of the development being directly influenced by these discussions. It is hoped that through these efforts, that the proposals will create a functional piece of infrastructure in a manner which enhances the site's ecology, arboriculture and landscape setting.
- 8.4 At a local level, the proposed development will improve road safety, through the inclusion of a two-way vehicular carriageway and incorporates additional land within the proposed bridge deck which can be utilised in the future as part of an active travel route.
- 8.5 To conclude, this Planning Statement, in conjunction with the supporting technical surveys; reports and drawings, demonstrate that the proposals accord with the principle of sustainable development. Specifically, the development makes efficient use of previously developed site to provide a multi-functional bridge, in a manner which will enable the GCRE development to become operational. The Global Centre for Rail Excellence is a pioneering project that, once constructed, will provide a sophisticated testing facility for the railway industry and is significant development for the UK and European rail industries. It is therefore paramount that the proposed replacement bridge be consented to enable this innovative project to be realised.

- 8.6 It is therefore recognised that the proposals are in accordance with the statutory Development Plan and National Planning Policy, and therefore it is respectfully requested that the application be approved without delay.

Appendix A – GCRE Location Plan



Legend
Planning Development Boundary

Neath Port Talbot
 Powys

P0	2021-02-23	KD	TK	RE
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Issue	Date	By	Chkd	Appd
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Client

Job Title
Global Centre of Rail Excellence

Figure Title
SITE LOCATION PLAN
(NEATH PORT TALBOT)

Scale at A3
1:15,000

Job No 264904-00	Drawing Status Planning
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Drawing No 001	Issue P0
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Appendix B - Correspondence with Neath Port Talbot CBC



Thu 04/05/2023 11:14

Planning <planning@npt.gov.uk>

RE: Tree Preservation Orders - Onllywn Bridge, Neath

To  Jonathan Hobbs

 Follow up. Completed on 04 May 2023.

Good morning

I have checked our system and there are currently No Tree preservation orders for the area you have identified

Kind regards,
Planning

Planning and Public Protection / Cefnogaeth Swyddog Technegol Busnes
Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council/ Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Tel/ Ffôn: 01639 686387
Email: planning@npt.gov.uk

Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council/ Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Castell-nedd Port Talbot Tel/ Ffôn: 01639 686387

We welcome correspondence in Welsh and will deal with Welsh and English correspondence to the same standards and timescales.
Croesewir gohebiaeth yn y Gymraeg a byddwn yn ymdrin â gohebiaeth Gymraeg a Saesneg i'r un safonau ac amserlenni.

If you would like to use Welsh when dealing with the Council please click [here](#)
Os hoffech ddefnyddio'r Gymraeg wrth ddelio â'r Cyngor os gwelwch yn dda cliciwch [yma](#)



DARPARU GWELL GWASANAETHAU AR-LEIN | DELIVERING BETTER SERVICES ONLINE



Digidol drwy Ddewis
gwell profiad customer,
gwell defnydd gwell arian cyhoeddus



Digital by Choice
improving customer experience,
making better use of public money



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Mae'r e-bost hwn ac unrhyw ffeiliau a drosglwyddir gydag of yn gyfrinachol ac at ddefnydd yr unigolyn neu'r corff y cyfeirir ydych chi'n ymgyhoeddus. Os ydych chi wedi derbyn yr e-bost hwn mewn camgymeriad, dylech hybysu'r person a anfonodd yr e-bost ar unwaith. Helyd, sylwer nad oes unrhyw siorwydd nad yw'r e-bost hwn neu unrhyw ymgyhoedd yn rhydd o ffirws ac nad yw ddaeth wedi'i ryng-gipio na'i newid.

Appendix C - Neath Port Talbot Local Development Plan

Policy SP1 - Climate Change - The causes and consequences of climate change will be addressed by implementing the following measures. In relation to the causes of climate change:

1. The efficiency and sustainability of the County Borough's settlements will be enhanced through developing more cohesive and efficient settlements and settlement patterns, and consequently more sustainable travel patterns;
2. Greenhouse gas emissions from transport will be minimised through encouraging freight / commercial transport by alternatives to road (e.g. rail or sea);
3. Dependence on the private car and the need to travel in general will be reduced through promoting alternative means of transport and more efficient use of existing facilities, co-location and joint use of facilities;
4. Provision will be made for the County Borough's appropriate contribution to renewable and low carbon energy generation.

In relation to the consequences of climate change:

1. Likely increased food risk will be taken into account and addressed by ensuring that there is greater resilience by avoiding development on land that is at risk from flooding in the first instance in accordance with the sequential approach set out in national guidance or in locations that could increase the risk of flooding elsewhere;
2. The fragmentation of habitats will be minimised and opportunities made for habitat and species change and migration where possible.

Policy SP2 - Health - The following measures will be taken in relation to the high levels of poor long term health and sickness in Neath Port Talbot:

1. The development of sustainable, safe and confident communities will be promoted through the colocation of jobs and facilities and the development of community facilities and services in accordance with the settlement framework;
Relevant Key Policies: SC1-SC2; I1; EC1-EC6; BE1.
2. People's exposure to those elements that can have an adverse impact on their health (such as their social, economic or physical environment) will be reduced where possible through consideration of the environmental and safety impacts of new developments;
Relevant Key Policies: H1; AH1-AH2; GT1-GT2; OS1-OS2; EN8-EN10; W1; BE1.
3. Healthier, more active and safer lifestyles will be encouraged through the retention of a range of accessible leisure, recreational, health, retail, social, cultural and community facilities throughout the County Borough;
Relevant Key Policies: OS1-OS2; SC2; I1; R1-R3; BE1.
4. Accessibility within and between communities will be improved to encourage active travel;
Relevant Key Policies: TR1-TR2; BE1.
5. The provision of new employment opportunities will be promoted to reduce unemployment and economic inactivity rates.

Policy SP4 - Infrastructure- Developments will be expected to make efficient use of existing infrastructure and where required make adequate provision for new infrastructure, ensuring that there are no detrimental effects on the area and community. Where necessary, Planning Obligations will be sought to ensure that the effects of developments are fully addressed in order to make the development acceptable

Policy I1 - Infrastructure Requirements- In addition to infrastructure improvements necessary to make a development acceptable in health, safety and amenity terms, additional works or funding may be required to ensure that, where appropriate, the impact of new development is mitigated. These requirements will include consideration of and appropriate provision for:

Policy EC2 - Existing Employment Areas- In order to protect the employment function of the County Borough's employment areas, uses on the following sites will be restricted in accordance with Policy EC3:

Reference	Site
EC2/1 *	Fabian Way
EC2/2	Lonlas Village Workshops, Neath
EC2/3	Neath Abbey Business Park, Neath
EC2/4	Neath Abbey Wharf, Neath
EC2/5*	Melincryddan CMB / Milland Road Industrial Estate, Neath
EC2/6*	Baglan Energy Park
EC2/7*	Baglan Industrial Estate, Port Talbot
EC2/8	Endeavour Close, Port Talbot
EC2/9+	Kenfig Industrial Estate, Port Talbot
EC2/10*	Llewellyn's Quay, Port Talbot
EC2/11*	Tata Steelworks, Margam
EC2/12	Croeserw Industrial Estate, Afan Valley
EC2/13*	Glyncorrwg Workshops, Afan Valley
EC2/14*	Cwmgors Workshops and Industrial Estate, Amman Valley
EC2/15*	Crynant Business Park, Dulais Valley
EC2/16*	Vale of Neath Supplier Park, Neath Valley
EC2/17*	Glynneath Village Workshops, Neath Valley
EC2/18	Alloy Industrial Estate, Pontardawe
EC2/19*	Former Compair / GMF Factory, Ystalyfera, Swansea Valley

Policy EC3 - Employment Area Uses - Within allocated and existing employment areas, unless otherwise specified and where appropriate, uses will be restricted as follows:

- Uses within classes B1, B2 and B8;
- Ancillary facilities or services which support and complement the wider role and function of the primary employment use;
- Commercial services unrelated to class B

Developments will be required to demonstrate that proposals do not cause any adverse impacts on the overall function of the employment area and neighbouring commercial and residential properties, the proposal can be sustainably justified in this location and is appropriate in scale and form to the role and function of the employment area.

Policy SP15 - Biodiversity and Geodiversity - Important habitats, species and sites of geological interest will be protected, conserved, enhanced and managed through the following measures:

1. The identification of the following Internationally and Nationally designated sites within the County Borough to enable their protection:
 - a) Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Ramsar Sites;
 - b) Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs);
 - c) National Nature Reserves (NNRs).
2. The identification and protection of sites of regional and local importance;
3. The protection of important natural heritage features

Appendix D - Future Wales – the national plan 2040

Policy 4 - Supporting Rural Communities

The Welsh Government supports sustainable and vibrant rural communities. Strategic and Local Development Plans must identify their rural communities, assess their needs and set out policies that support them. Policies should consider how age balanced communities can be achieved, where depopulation should be reversed and consider the role of new affordable and market housing, employment opportunities, local services and greater mobility in tackling these challenges.

Policy 8 - Flooding

Flood risk management that enables and supports sustainable strategic growth and regeneration in National and Regional Growth Areas will be supported. The Welsh Government will work with Flood Risk Management Authorities and developers to plan and invest in new and improved infrastructure, promoting nature-based solutions as a priority. Opportunities for multiple social, economic and environmental benefits must be maximised when investing in flood risk management infrastructure. It must be ensured that projects do not have adverse impacts on international and national statutory designated sites for nature conservation and the features for which they have been designated.

Policy 9 - Resilient Ecological Networks and Green Infrastructure

To ensure the enhancement of biodiversity, the resilience of ecosystems and the provision of green infrastructure, the Welsh Government will work with key partners to:

- identify areas which should be safeguarded and created as ecological networks for their importance for adaptation to climate change, for habitat protection, restoration or creation, to protect species, or which provide key ecosystems services, to ensure they are not unduly compromised by future development; and
- Identify opportunities where existing and potential green infrastructure could be maximised as part of placemaking, requiring the use of nature-based solutions as a key mechanism for securing sustainable growth, ecological connectivity, social equality and well-being.

Planning authorities should include these areas and/or opportunities in their development plan strategies and policies in order to promote and safeguard the functions and opportunities they provide. In all cases, action towards securing the maintenance and enhancement of biodiversity (to provide a net benefit), the resilience of ecosystems and green infrastructure assets must be demonstrated as part of development proposals through innovative, nature-based approaches to site planning and the design of the built environment.

Appendix E - Planning Policy Wales Edition 11 Extracts

Paragraph 2.8 - Planning policies, proposals and decisions must seek to promote sustainable development and support the well-being of people and communities across Wales. This can be done through maximising their contribution to the achievement of the seven well-being goals and by using the five Ways of Working, as required by the Well-being of Future Generations Act. This will include seeking to maximise the social, economic, environmental and cultural benefits, while considering potential impacts when assessing proposals and policies in line with the Act's Sustainable Development Principle.

Paragraph 2.17 - In responding to the key principles for the planning system, the creation of sustainable places and in recognition of the need to contribute to the well-being of future generations in Wales through placemaking, development plans and development proposals must seek to deliver developments that address the national sustainable placemaking outcomes.

Paragraph 2.20 - Not every development or policy proposal will be able to demonstrate they can meet all of these outcomes, neither can it necessarily be proved at the application or policy stage that an attribute of a proposal will necessarily lead to a specific outcome. However, this does not mean that they should not be considered in the development management process to see if a proposal can be improved or enhanced to promote wider well-being. It is for developers and planning authorities to identify these opportunities and act upon them.

Paragraph 2.27 - Planning authorities should ensure that social, economic, environmental and cultural benefits are considered in the decision-making process and assessed in accordance with the five ways of working to ensure a balanced assessment is carried out to implement the Well-being of Future Generations Act and the Sustainable Development Principle. There may be occasions when one benefit of a development proposal or site allocation outweighs others, and in such cases robust evidence should be presented to support these decisions, whilst seeking to maximise contributions against all the well-being goals.

Paragraph 3.1 - Effective strategic placemaking requires early collective consideration of placemaking issues at the outset, in the formulation of a development plan, or when developing specific proposals. The policy issues should not be considered in isolation from one another. This includes considering the design of a development and its impacts upon everyday lives as well as thinking holistically about where people might live and work and which areas should be protected. These crucial, early decisions will have the greatest impact on the type of development which is ultimately delivered and its contribution to sustainable development and the environmental, social, cultural and economic well-being of Wales.

Paragraph 3.3 - Good design is fundamental to creating sustainable places where people want to live, work and socialise. Design is not just about the architecture of a building but the relationship between all elements of the natural and built environment and between people and places. To achieve sustainable development, design must go beyond aesthetics and include the social, economic, environmental, cultural aspects of the development, including how space is used, how buildings and the public realm support this use, as well as its construction, operation, management, and its relationship with the surrounding area.

Paragraph 3.5 - Good design is inclusive design. Development proposals should place people at the heart of the design process, acknowledge diversity and difference, offer choice where a single design solution cannot accommodate all users, provide for flexibility in use and provide buildings and environments that are convenient and enjoyable to use for everyone.

Paragraph 3.6 - Development proposals must address the issues of inclusivity and accessibility for all. This includes making provision to meet the needs of people with sensory, memory, learning and mobility impairments, older people and people with young children. There will often be wider benefits to be gained through the sensitive consideration of such provision, for example, whilst the presence of visual cues will be invaluable in assisting those with hearing loss to engage in a noisy environment, a navigable environment will benefit all. Good design can also encourage people to meet and interact with each other, helping to address issues surrounding loneliness. Good design must also involve the provision of measures that help to reduce the inequality of access to essential services, education and employment experienced by people without access to a car. Design measures and features should enable easy access to services by walking, cycling and public transport.

Paragraph 3.7 - Good design promotes environmental sustainability and contributes to the achievement of the well-being goals. Developments should seek to maximise energy efficiency and the efficient use of other resources (including land), maximise sustainable movement, minimise the use of non-renewable resources, encourage decarbonisation and prevent the generation of waste and pollution. An integrated and flexible approach to design, including early decisions regarding location, Figure 8: Objectives of Good Design Access Ensuring ease of access for all Promoting sustainable means of travel Sustaining or enhancing local character. Promoting: legible development / a successful relationship between public and private space / quality, choice and variety / innovative design Achieving efficient use and protection of natural resources / enhancing biodiversity / designing for change Ensuring attractive, safe public spaces / security through natural surveillance Character Movement Environmental Sustainability Community Safety Good Design Appraising Context 27 density, layout, built form, the choice of materials, the adaptability of buildings and site treatment will be an appropriate way of contributing to resilient development

Paragraph 3.8 - Good design can help to ensure high environmental quality. Landscape and green infrastructure considerations are an integral part of the design process. Integrating green infrastructure is not limited to focusing on landscape and ecology, rather, consideration should be given to all features of the natural environment and how these function together to contribute toward the quality of places. This embraces the principles of 'ecosystems services' and sustainable management of natural resources where multiple benefits solution become an integral part of good design. In a similar manner, addressing environmental risks can make a positive contribution to environmental protection and improvement, addressing land contamination, instability and flood risk and providing for biodiversity, climate protection, improved air quality, soundscape and water resources benefits.

Paragraph 3.9 - The special characteristics of an area should be central to the design of a development. The layout, form, scale and visual appearance of a proposed development and its relationship to its

surroundings are important planning considerations. A clear rationale behind the design decisions made, based on site and context analysis, a strong vision, performance requirements and design principles, should be sought throughout the development process and expressed, when appropriate, in a design and access statement.

Paragraph 3.12 - Good design is about avoiding the creation of car-based developments. It contributes to minimising the need to travel and reliance on the car, whilst maximising opportunities for people to make sustainable and healthy travel choices for their daily journeys. Achieving these objectives requires the selection of sites which can be made easily accessible by sustainable modes as well as incorporating appropriate, safe and sustainable links (including active travel networks) within and between developments using legal agreements where appropriate.

Paragraph 3.13 - Existing infrastructure must be utilised and maximised, wherever possible. Where new infrastructure is necessary to mitigate transport impacts of a development and to maximise accessibility by sustainable non-car modes, it should be integrated within the development layout and beyond the boundary, as appropriate. This could include works to connect cycle routes within a site to a wider strategic cycling network or provision of bus priority measures on highway corridors serving a new development.

Paragraph 3.17 - A Design and Access Statement communicates what development is proposed, demonstrates the design process that has been undertaken and explains how the objectives of good design and placemaking have been considered from the outset of the development process. In preparing design and access statements, applicants should take an integrated and inclusive approach to sustainable design, proportionate to the scale and type of development proposal. They should be 'living' documents dealing with all relevant aspects of design throughout the process and the life of the development, clearly stating the design principles and concepts adopted and include illustrative material in diagrams, plans, elevations and sections where relevant.

Paragraph 3.22 - Planning authorities should develop and maintain places that support healthy, active lifestyles across all age and socio-economic groups, recognising that investment in walking and cycling infrastructure can be an effective preventative measure which reduces financial pressures on public services in the longer term. The way a development is laid out and arranged can influence people's behaviours and decisions and can provide effective mitigation against air and noise pollution. Incorporating drinking water fountains or refill stations for reusable bottles in public spaces is a simple and effective way of making places healthier and of reducing unnecessary waste. Effective planning can provide calming, tranquil surroundings as well as stimulating and sensory environments, both of these make an important contribution to successful places.

Paragraph 3.23 - Green infrastructure can be an effective means of enhancing health and well-being, through linking dwellings, workplaces and community facilities and providing high quality, accessible green spaces. In all development and in public spaces especially, there should be sensitive management of light, and exposure to airborne pollution should be kept as low as reasonably practicable. The compatibility of land uses will be a key factor in addressing air quality and creating

appropriate soundscapes which are conducive to, and reflective of, particular social and cultural activities and experiences, particularly in busy central areas of towns and cities. Equally, the provision of quiet, tranquil areas Strategic & Spatial Choices Planning Policy Wales | Edition 11 30 which provide peaceful sanctuaries in otherwise noisy environments can help to reduce general levels of pollution and promote both mental and physical well-being.

Paragraph 3.38 - The countryside is a dynamic and multi-purpose resource. In line with sustainable development and the national planning principles and in contributing towards place-making outcomes, it must be conserved and, where possible, enhanced for the sake of its ecological, geological, physiographic, historical, archaeological, cultural and agricultural value and for its landscape and natural resources. The need to conserve these attributes should be balanced against the economic, social and recreational needs of local communities and visitors. Fostering adaptability and resilience will be a key aim for rural places in the face of the considerable challenge of maintaining the vibrancy of communities and availability of services as well as contributing to the Cohesive Communities well-being goal. This is coupled with ensuring the countryside is resilient to the impacts of climate change and plays a role in reducing the causes of climate change through the protection of carbon sinks and as a sustainable energy source in line with the Resilient Wales well-being goal.

Paragraph 3.39 - For most rural areas the opportunities for reducing car use and increasing walking, cycling and use of public transport are more limited than in urban areas. In rural areas most new development should be located in settlements which have relatively good accessibility by non-car modes when compared to the rural area as a whole. Development in these areas should embrace the national sustainable place-making outcomes and, where possible, offer good active travel connections to the centres of settlements to reduce the need to travel by car for local journeys.

Paragraph 3.43 - In developing their spatial strategy planning authorities must prioritise the use of suitable and sustainable previously developed land and/or underutilised sites for all types of development. When identifying sites in their development plans planning authorities should consider previously developed land and/or underutilised sites located within existing settlements in the first instance with sites on the edge of settlements considered at the next stage. It is recognised, however, that not all sites of this nature are suitable for all types of development

Paragraph 3.49 - Spatial strategies should support the objectives of minimising the need to travel, reducing reliance on the private car and increasing walking, cycling and use of public transport. Spatial strategies should be informed by the development of an integrated planning and transport strategy, which takes into account the transport considerations set out in the Active & Social Places chapter 4, as well as the transport infrastructure considerations contained in the Productive & Enterprising Places chapter 5.

Paragraph 3.55 - Previously developed (also referred to as brownfield) land (see definition overleaf) should, wherever possible, be used in preference to greenfield sites where it is suitable for development. In settlements, such land should generally be considered suitable for appropriate development where its re-use will promote sustainability principles and any constraints can be

overcome. It is recognised, however, that not all previously developed land is suitable for development. This may be, for example, because of its unsustainable location, the presence of protected species or valuable habitats or industrial heritage, or because it is highly contaminated. For sites like these it may be appropriate to secure remediation for nature conservation, amenity value or to reduce risks to human health. There may be instances where it may not be possible to develop sensitive uses on previously developed land without placing unnecessary constraints on adjacent existing businesses and activities which require that particular location. In such circumstances the agent of change principle will be a relevant consideration.

Paragraph 3.60 - Development in the countryside should be located within and adjoining those settlements where it can best be accommodated in terms of infrastructure, access, habitat and landscape conservation. Infilling or minor extensions to existing settlements may be acceptable, in particular where they meet a local need for affordable housing or it can be demonstrated that the proposal will increase local economic activity. However, new building in the open countryside away from existing settlements or areas allocated for development in development plans must continue to be strictly controlled. All new development should be of a scale and design that respects the character of the surrounding area.

Paragraph 3.63 - Development should be located so that it can be well serviced by existing or planned infrastructure. In general this will involve maximising the use of existing infrastructure or considering how the provision of infrastructure can be effectively co-ordinated to support development plans. Infrastructure choices should support decarbonisation, socially and economically connected places and the sustainable use of natural resources.

Paragraph 4.1.10 - The planning system has a key role to play in reducing the need to travel, particularly by private car, and supporting sustainable transport, by facilitating developments which:

- are sited in the right locations, where they can be easily accessed by sustainable modes of travel and without the need for a car;
- are designed in a way which integrates them with existing land uses and neighbourhoods; and
- make it possible for all short journeys within and beyond the development to be easily made by walking and cycling.

Paragraph 4.1.11 - Development proposals must seek to maximise accessibility by walking, cycling and public transport, by prioritising the provision of appropriate on-site infrastructure and, where necessary, mitigating transport impacts through the provision of off-site measures, such as the development of active travel routes, bus priority infrastructure and financial support for public transport services. Importantly, sustainable transport infrastructure and services should be prioritised and put in place from the outset, before people have moved in and travel patterns have been established.

Paragraph 4.1.17 - Different approaches to sustainable transport will be required in different parts of Wales, particularly in rural areas, and new development will need to reflect local circumstances. For example, a planning authority wishing to grow a rural village, despite it having limited public

transport accessibility, could apply the transport hierarchy by: first considering how the location and design of new development could encourage walking and cycling to shops and services in the village centre; then consider whether new development could be located near a bus stop or enable improvements to the bus service; before finally considering the needs of private motor vehicles, including measures to encourage the use of Ultra Low Emission Vehicles.

Paragraph 4.1.18 - Design and Access Statements should show how the design of the scheme has responded to the sustainable transport hierarchy.

Paragraph 4.1.19 - Well-designed, people orientated streets are fundamental to creating sustainable places and increasing walking, cycling and use of public transport. New development should improve the quality of place and create safe, social, attractive streets where people want to walk, cycle and enjoy, and children can play. To make streets safer and more attractive places for people, the Welsh Government is making 20 mph the new default speed limit for most streets and taking measures to prevent pavement parking.

Paragraph 4.1.20 - The design and layout of streets must give a high priority to their role as public spaces and meeting the needs of pedestrians, cyclists and public transport users, reflecting the principles of the sustainable transport hierarchy. To create streets that are social places, the public realm needs to be safe and attractive and the street designed for low speeds of 20 mph or less.

Paragraph 4.1.26 - Walking and cycling are good for our health and well-being. They support valuable social and recreational opportunities and are integral to placemaking, creating life and activity in public places and providing the opportunity to meet people. Sustainable places invite people to walk and cycle as part of their everyday routine.

Paragraph 4.1.30 - New development places additional demand on transport infrastructure and networks, with the location, layout and design of development affecting the distance and way in which people travel. Developing local active travel networks can help to mitigate the impact of new development, by providing an alternative mode of travel to the private car, particularly for shorter journeys. Provision for active travel must be an essential component of development schemes and planning authorities must ensure new developments are designed and integrated with existing settlements and networks, in a way which makes active travel a practical, safe and attractive choice. As outlined in paragraph 4.1.11, active travel infrastructure should be put in place early on in a development, and before the people living there move in, to support active and healthy travel patterns from the outset.

Paragraph 4.1.31 - Planning authorities must support active travel by ensuring new development is fully accessible by walking and cycling. The aim should be to create walkable neighbourhoods, where a range of facilities are within walking distance of most residents, and the streets are safe, comfortable and enjoyable to walk and cycle.

Paragraph 4.1.34 - In determining planning applications, planning authorities must ensure development proposals, through their design and supporting infrastructure, prioritise provision for access and

movement by walking and cycling and, in doing so, maximise their contribution to the objectives of the Active Travel Act.

Paragraph 4.1.39 - Planning authorities should consider whether public transport services are of a scale which makes public transport an attractive and practical travel option for occupiers and users travelling to and from development sites. They should also consider whether it is necessary to mitigate the movement impact of a development and minimise the proportion of car trips that the development would generate. Where additional public transport would be required to allow development to proceed, an appropriate policy must be included in the development plan, and financial contributions secured through planning conditions and/or planning obligations. As outlined in paragraph 4.1.11, new public transport infrastructure and services should be put in place early on in a development, and before the people living there move in, to support sustainable travel patterns from the outset.

Paragraph 4.1.55 - Transport Assessments are an important mechanism for setting out the scale of anticipated impacts a proposed development, or redevelopment, is likely to have. They assist in helping to anticipate the impacts of development so that they can be understood and catered for appropriately.

Paragraph 4.1.56 - Planning applications for developments, including changes of use, falling into the categories identified in TAN 18: Transport²⁷ must be accompanied by a Transport Assessment. In addition, in areas where the transport network is particularly sensitive, planning authorities should consider requiring Transport Assessments for developments which fall outside of the thresholds set out in TAN 18. Transport Assessments can be required for any proposed development if the planning authority considers that there is a justification or specific need. Transport Assessments provide the basis for negotiation on scheme details, including the level of parking, and measures to improve walking, cycling, and public transport access, as well as measures to limit or reduce levels of air and noise pollution. They should cover the transport impacts during the construction phase of the development, as well as when built and in use. Transport Assessments also provide an important basis for the preparation of Travel Plans. Further guidance on Transport Assessments and Travel Plans is contained in TAN 18.

Paragraph 5.3.1 - The provision of sustainable transport infrastructure is essential in order to build prosperity, tackle the climate emergency, reduce airborne pollution and to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. The planning system should facilitate the delivery, decarbonisation and improvement of transport infrastructure in a way which reduces the need to travel, particularly by private vehicles, and facilitates and increases the use of active and sustainable transport.

Paragraph 5.3.2 - Planning authorities should support necessary transport infrastructure improvements, where it can be demonstrated that such measures are consistent with Welsh Government policy to encourage and increase use of sustainable transport and reduce reliance on the private car for daily journeys. Transport infrastructure should not generate significant demand for additional car movements or contribute to urban sprawl or neighbourhood severance. The planning and design of transport infrastructure must consider the needs of users of active and sustainable transport before that of the private car, taking into account the sustainable transport hierarchy.

Paragraph 5.3.4 - Great care must be taken to minimise the adverse impacts of new or improved transport infrastructure on the natural, historic and built environment and on local communities, including on public health resulting from community severance and airborne pollution. Green infrastructure measures to mitigate negative effects and enhance environmental quality and connectivity should be considered at an early stage. Routes should make the best use of existing landforms and other landscape features to reduce noise and visual effects, subject to safety and other environmental considerations. Where no other alternative routes or options are practicable, transport infrastructure schemes should provide mitigation measures to minimise the negative impacts and enhance the positive ones caused by their construction and operation, including reducing exposure to airborne pollution.

Paragraph 5.3.8 - Disused railways and disused or unused rail sidings should, in collaboration with Transport for Wales and Network Rail, be safeguarded from development which could adversely affect them being brought back to rail use in the future. Any planning application or proposed development plan policy in the vicinity of, or directly affecting a former railway line should consider the impact on their potential use for rail in the future. As an interim measure, it may be appropriate to use disused rail alignments as open space corridors, for example for walking and cycling.

Paragraph 5.3.13 - The process of designing new road schemes and road improvements should take into account the transport hierarchy, whereby active and sustainable transport is considered before private motor vehicles. This will help to minimise community severance from a scheme and its impacts on the safety, convenience and amenity of routes for journeys on foot, bicycle and public transport.

Paragraph 6.1.8 - It is the responsibility of all those with an interest in the planning system, including planning authorities, applicants, developers and communities, to appropriately care for the historic environment in their area. The protection, conservation and enhancement of historic assets is most effective when it is considered at the earliest stage of plan preparation or when designing proposals new proposals.

Paragraph 6.1.9 - Any decisions made through the planning system must fully consider the impact on the historic environment¹⁰² and on the significance and heritage values of individual historic assets and their contribution to the character of place.

Paragraph 6.1.31 - Enabling development may be appropriate if the public benefit of rescuing, enhancing, or even endowing an important historic asset decisively outweighs the harm to other material interests. It must always be in proportion to the public benefit it offers.

Paragraph 6.1.32 - When considering a scheme of enabling development, planning permission should be granted only where all of the following can be applied:

- where the impact of the development was precisely defined in the application at the outset, and normally through the granting of full, rather than outline, planning permission;
- where the achievement of the heritage objective is securely and enforceably linked to the enabling development;

- where the place concerned is repaired to an agreed standard, or the funds to do so are made available, as early as possible in the course of the enabling development, ideally at the outset and certainly before completion or occupation of the enabling development;
- where the planning authority closely monitors implementation, if necessary acting promptly to ensure that obligations are fulfilled; and
- the enabling development does not give rise to significant risks, for example residential development in the floodplain or significantly impact on air quality or soundscape.

Paragraph 6.2.4 - Green infrastructure plays a fundamental role in shaping places and our sense of well-being, and are intrinsic to the quality of the spaces we live, work and play in. The planning system should protect and enhance green infrastructure assets and networks because of these multi-functional roles. The protection and enhancement of biodiversity must be carefully considered as part of green infrastructure provision alongside the need to meet society's wider social and economic objectives and the needs of local communities. The multiple benefits that resilient ecosystems and green infrastructure offer to society, including the economic and social contribution they make to local areas, should be taken into account when balancing and improving these needs.

Paragraph 6.2.5 - The quality of the built environment should be enhanced by integrating green infrastructure into development through appropriate site selection and use of creative design. With careful planning and design, green infrastructure can embed the benefits of biodiversity and ecosystem services into new development and places, helping to overcome the potential for conflicting objectives, and contributing towards health and well-being outcomes. There are multiple ways of incorporating green infrastructure, dependent on the needs and opportunities a site presents. Landscaping, green roofs, grass verges, sustainable urban drainage and gardens are examples of individual measures that can have wider cumulative benefits, particularly in relation to biodiversity and the resilience of ecosystems as well as in securing the other desired environmental qualities of places.

Paragraph 6.2.10 - The need for ecosystems, habitats and species to adapt to climate change should be considered as part of the Green Infrastructure Assessment. This should include identifying ways to minimise or reverse the fragmentation of habitats, and to improve habitat connectivity through the promotion of wildlife corridors and identifying opportunities for land rehabilitation, landscape management and the creation of new or improved habitats. Planning authorities should ensure that development minimises impact and provides opportunities for enhancement within areas identified as important for the ability of species to adapt and/or to move to more suitable habitats.

Paragraph 6.2.11 - Planning authorities must encourage the appropriate management of features of the landscape which are of major importance for wild flora and fauna in order to complement and improve the ecological coherence of the Natura 2000 network¹¹⁴. The features concerned are those which, because of their linear and continuous structure or their function as 'stepping stones' or 'wildlife corridors', are essential for migration, dispersal or genetic exchange. The development of networks of statutory and non-statutory sites and of the landscape features which provide links from one habitat to another can make an important contribution to ecosystem resilience and the maintenance and

enhancement of biodiversity and the quality of the local environment, including enabling adaptation to climate change.

Paragraph 6.3.3 - All the landscapes of Wales are valued for their intrinsic contribution to a sense of place, and local authorities should protect and enhance their special characteristics, whilst paying due regard to the social, economic, environmental and cultural benefits they provide, and to their role in creating valued places. Considering landscape at the outset of formulating strategies and policies in development plans and when proposing development is key to sustaining and enhancing their special qualities, and delivering the maximum well-being benefits for present and future generations as well as helping to deliver an effective and integrated approach to natural resource management over the long term. Collaboration and engagement with adjacent planning authorities, Natural Resources Wales (NRW), Cadw and the third sector will be necessary to draw on a wide range of expertise and evidence. This means:

- ensuring Wales contributes to meeting international responsibilities and obligations for landscapes;
- ensuring statutorily designated sites are properly protected and managed;
- ensuring that the value of all landscapes for their distinctive character and special qualities is protected; and
- ensuring the opportunities landscapes provide for tourism, outdoor recreation, local employment, renewable energy and physical and mental health and well-being are taken into account and multiple well-being benefits for people and communities secured.

Paragraph 6.4.3 - The planning system has a key role to play in helping to reverse the decline in biodiversity and increasing the resilience of ecosystems, at various scales, by ensuring appropriate mechanisms are in place to both protect against loss and to secure enhancement. Addressing the consequences of climate change should be a central part of any measures to conserve biodiversity and the resilience of ecosystems. Information contained in SoNaRR, Area Statements and species records from Local Environmental Record Centres should be taken into account. Development plan strategies, policies and development proposals must consider the need to:

- support the conservation of biodiversity, in particular the conservation of wildlife and habitats;
- ensure action in Wales contributes to meeting international responsibilities and obligations for biodiversity and habitats;
- ensure statutorily and non-statutorily designated sites are properly protected and managed;
- safeguard protected and priority species and existing biodiversity assets from impacts which directly affect their nature conservation interests and compromise the resilience of ecological networks and the components which underpin them, such as water and soil, including peat; and
- secure enhancement of and improvements to ecosystem resilience by improving diversity, condition, extent and connectivity of ecological networks.

Paragraph 6.4.4 - It is important that biodiversity and resilience considerations are taken into account at an early stage in both development plan preparation and when proposing or considering development proposals. Since these considerations are not confined by administrative boundaries they must be addressed strategically through consultation and collaboration with adjoining planning authorities and other bodies such as NRW and the third sector. All reasonable steps must be taken to maintain and enhance biodiversity and promote the resilience of ecosystems and these should be balanced with the wider economic and social needs of business and local communities. Where adverse effects on the environment cannot be avoided or mitigated, it will be necessary to refuse planning permission.

Paragraph 6.4.5 - Planning authorities must seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity in the exercise of their functions. This means development should not cause any significant loss of habitats or populations of species, locally or nationally and must provide a net benefit for biodiversity. In doing so planning authorities must also take account of and promote the resilience of ecosystems, in particular the following aspects:

- diversity between and within ecosystems;
- the connections between and within ecosystems;
- the scale of ecosystems;
- the condition of ecosystems including their structure and functioning; and
- the adaptability of ecosystems.

Paragraph 6.4.8 - A proactive approach towards facilitating the delivery of biodiversity and resilience outcomes should be taken by all those participating in the planning process. In particular, planning authorities must demonstrate that they have sought to fulfil the duties and requirements of Section 6 of the Environment Act by taking all reasonable steps to maintain and enhance biodiversity in the exercise of their functions.

Paragraph 6.6.16 - Diffuse pollution and surface water flooding arise as a result of run-off from built surfaces, from potentially polluting development types and through sewage discharges from overloaded sewers or from private infrastructure, for example, septic tanks. Planning authorities should secure better management of drainage and surface water so as to tackle these issues by:

- ensuring sustainable drainage systems are incorporated into development enabling surface water to be managed close to or at source; and
- ensuring connection to the sewer in sewered areas and by minimising the proliferation of private sewage systems.

Paragraph 6.6.25 - Development should reduce, and must not increase, flood risk arising from river and/or coastal flooding on and off the development site itself. The priority should be to protect the undeveloped or unobstructed floodplain from development and to prevent the cumulative effects of incremental development.

Paragraph 6.6.27 - Planning authorities should be aware of the risk of surface water flooding, usually caused by heavy rainfall, and ensure developments are designed and planned to minimise potential impacts. Development should not cause additional run-off, which can be achieved by controlling surface water as near to the source as possible by the use of SuDS. Care should be taken in places of shallow groundwater or where flooding is caused by combined surface and groundwater processes. In such situations direct infiltration SuDs may not be appropriate. Consultation with drainage bodies and NRW should be undertaken and relevant evidence and information drawn from Area Statements taken into account.

Paragraph 6.7.6 - In proposing new development, planning authorities and developers must, therefore:

- address any implication arising as a result of its association with, or location within, air quality management areas, noise action planning priority areas or areas where there are sensitive receptors;
- not create areas of poor air quality or inappropriate soundscape; and
- seek to incorporate measures which reduce overall exposure to air and noise pollution and create appropriate soundscapes.

Paragraph 6.7.8 - Good design, for example setting back buildings from roads to avoid canyon effects and using best practice in terms of acoustic design¹⁵⁰ to ensure the appropriate and intended acoustic environment of completed developments should be incorporated at an early consideration in the design and planning process. Other mitigation measures must be capable of being effectively implemented for their intended purpose, and could include those related to:

- traffic management and road safety;
- ensuring progress towards a shift to low or zero emissions means of road transport, such as electrical charging points;
- supporting low or zero emissions public transport;
- providing active travel infrastructure; and
- incorporating green infrastructure, where it can improve air quality by removing air pollution and aiding its dispersal, reduce real or perceived noise levels by absorbing and scattering noise and introducing natural sounds to soften man-made noise, provide areas of relative tranquillity, and reduce exposure by putting a buffer between sources of pollution and receptors.

Paragraph 6.7.16 - Relevant considerations in making planning decisions for potentially polluting development are likely to include:

- location, including the reasons for selecting the chosen site itself;
- impact on health and amenity;
- effect of pollution on the natural and built environment and the enjoyment of areas of landscape and historic and cultural value;
- impact on groundwater and surface water quality;

- effect on biodiversity and ecosystem resilience, including where there may be cumulative impacts on air or water quality which may have adverse consequences for biodiversity and ecosystem resilience;
- the risk and impact of potential pollution from the development, insofar as this might lead to the creation of, or worsen the situation in, an air quality management area, a noise action planning priority area or an area where there are sensitive receptors; and
- impact on the road and other transport networks, and in particular on traffic generation, particularly where the proposed development is not transport infrastructure itself.