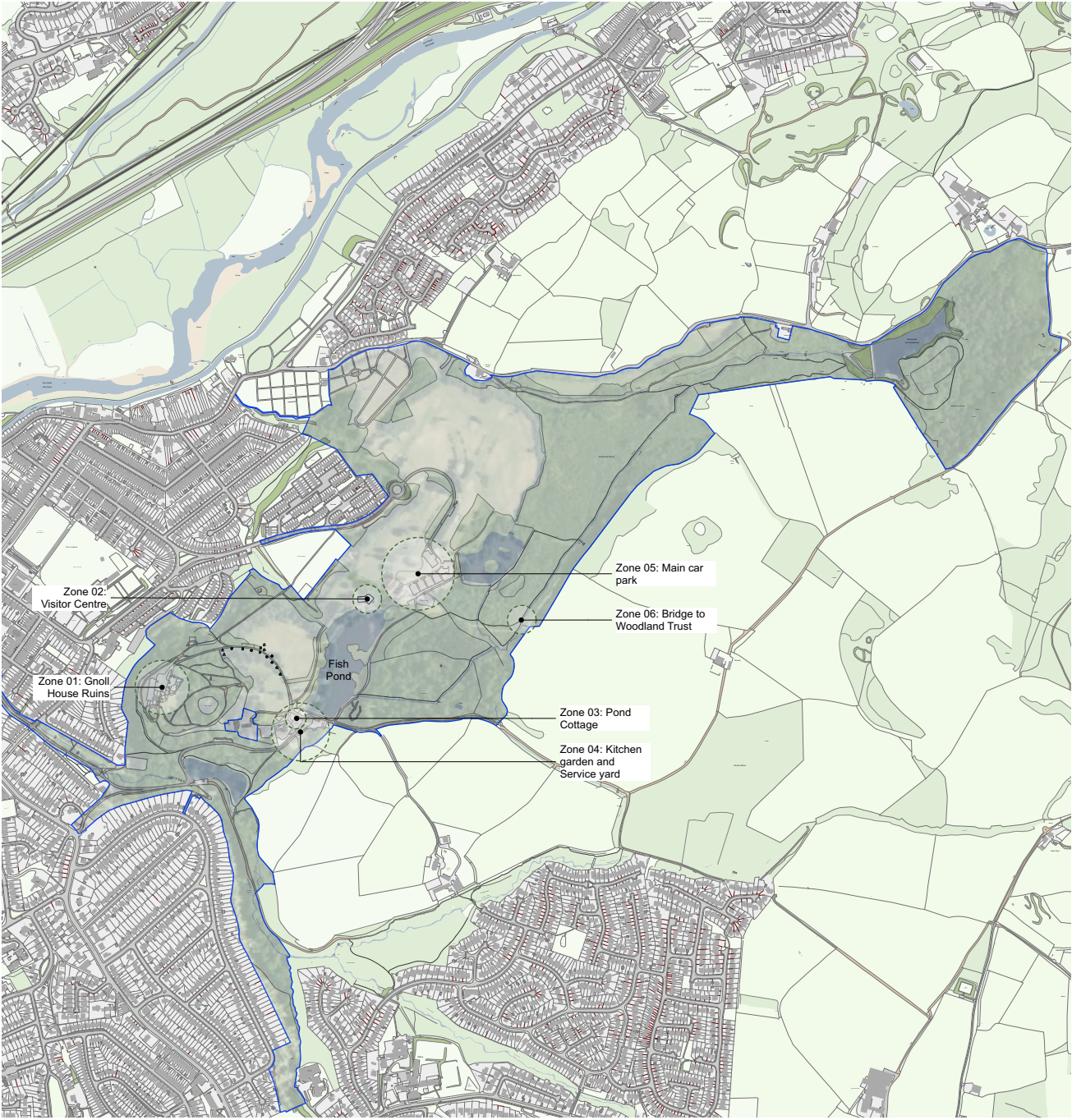




Hiraeth:

**ZONE 08_FACILITIES BUILDING -
DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT (INCLUDING HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT)**

Gnoll Estate Country Park | Neath | Neath Port Talbot | SA11 3BS



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

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

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SERIES		EXISTING	
SUITABILITY		S2 - ISSUED FOR INFORMATION	
REV	DATE	NOTE	

Hiraeth.

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

Job number

2325

Zone

00

Neath Port Talbot CBC

GNOLL PARK

Site Plan Zones

Scale

1:5000 @ A1, 1:10000@ A3

Date

08/23

UPRN	Zone	Originator	Role	Type	SH number	SI Code	Rev
2080	00	HIR	A	DR	00004	S2	

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

FOREWORD

Address:

Gnoll Estate Country Park
Neath
Neath Port Talbot
SA11 3BS

Unitary (Local) Authority:

Neath Port Talbot

Community:

Tonna

Grid Reference:

SS 76666 97512
E 276666
N 197512



Transfers.speaks.noise

Location:

The proposed site is located in Gnoll Estate Country Park. A grade II* designated parkland.

This document has been produced to support a planning application to Neath Port Talbot Council for the construction of a new facilities building to serve the new visitors accommodation and wider parkland at Gnoll Estate Country Park. It is to be read in conjunction with the associated information and drawings produced by the consultant team, and in particular the Gnoll Estate Country Park Context Statement by Hiraeth Architecture, which sets out a more detailed history of the site and overall project development.

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

Ownership

The Gnoll Estate Country Park is largely owned by Neath Port Talbot Council and has evolved from the landscaped grounds of the former Gnoll House. Set within 200 acres of woodland and open spaces, the Park is renowned for its picturesque beauty and although its historic character has been somewhat diluted through the loss of the original country house and associated ornamental planting, many of its structural elements remain intact and it continues to be a major attraction for both locals and visitors. Activity is now centralised around a visitor centre constructed in the 1990's, together with the many children's play parks that are largely focussed around the main Fish Pond.

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

Nick Richards

Project Manager/ Rheolwr Prosiectau

T. 07735 098 495

E. n.g.richards@npt.gov.uk

www.npt.gov.uk

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

Andrew Scott Ltd

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

Design Manager in charge of the project: Luke Rees

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

T. 01639 889 800 Ext 1142

Hiraeth Architecture Ltd

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

Director in charge of the project: Michael Plageman

Hiraeth Architecture | The Maltings | East Tyndall Street

Cardiff | CF24 5EA

T. 029 2035 1645

Asbri Planning

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

Director in charge of the project: Richard Bowen

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

Swansea | SA1 1NW

T. 07825 597 796

McCann and Partners Consulting Engineers

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

Manager in charge of the project: Geraint Hopkins

Office 2.02 | Bay Technology Centre | Baglan Energy Park

Port Talbot | SA12 7AX

T. 01792 794285

Jubb Civil and Structural Engineers

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

Manager in charge of the project: Graeme Smith

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

Cardiff | CF23 8RS

T. 029 2052 4446

Davies Landscape

Landscape architects responsible for landscape proposals

Manager in charge: Miles Gray

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

T. 07983 610 065

Neath Port Talbot Ecologist (Consultancy + Planning)

Ecologists advising on all aspects of biodiversity and ecology proposals.

Consultant in charge of the project: Megan Price

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

T. 07816973877

Neath Port Talbot Arboriculturalist (Consultancy + Planning)

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

Consultant in charge of the project: Nick Thomas

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

T. 01639 686 197

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UPRN	Zone	Originator	Role	Type	File number	Suitability	Rev
2080	08	HIR	A	RP	06803	S2	P2
Suitability		S2 - Issued for Information					



Aerial View of Gnoll Estate Country Park showing the immediate context of Neath to the South West and the location of the facilities building circled in red

INTRODUCTION

Overview

This document has been prepared by **Hiraeth** Architecture to support an application for full planning permission from Neath Port Talbot Council for the construction of a facilities building to serve the proposed new visitor centre.

The proposed works include:

- Clearance of a small area of woodland within the park;
- The construction of a new purpose-built facilities building located closer to the new visitor centre;
- Associated landscaping, which aids legibility and embeds the proposals into its immediate context.

It is noted that further planning applications are being prepared for submission describing proposals for the new visitor centre. Amendments to the adjacent car parks and service facilities including new electric vehicle charging points are covered under a separate Heritage Impact Assessment. The effects and implications of changes beyond the immediate application area have therefore been borne in mind when developing proposals.



View of the current approach to the existing visitor centre, with the Tramper store in the foreground.

SITE CONTEXT AND ANALYSIS



OS map showing wider topography around the Facilities Building

Park Access

The main vehicular access to the carpark is via Fairyland, connecting the park with the town centre via a residential area comprising post-war housing. Proposals for the upgrading/ extension of the car park are covered by a separate planning application (refer to Zone 05). Various pedestrian routes run throughout the park and link to the wider surrounding context including the Grade II listed War Memorial Gates at the south of the estate. Recent acquisition of Brynau Wood and Farm to the east of the park by The Woodland Trust provides further opportunity to extend walking routes and increase the permeability of the park.

Location and Topography

The existing facilities building is located to the southwest of the fishpond in the pump house service yard. This is a reasonably flat site to the east of the former kitchen garden. The proposed location for the new facilities building sits further north in the park, northeast of the visitor centre, parallel to the main car park. At present, the site is formed of a wooded area entirely screened from view by trees. It is centrally located within the main body of the park, albeit Mosshouse Wood extends further to the North East.

Access Points

The proposed site at present is not accessible from the car park and is screened from view by trees. Proposed access will be via an opening at the southeastern edge of the car park which will allow for both vehicular and pedestrian access. This is accessed via an existing bay of car parking spaces located to the East side of the existing car park.

Adjacent features

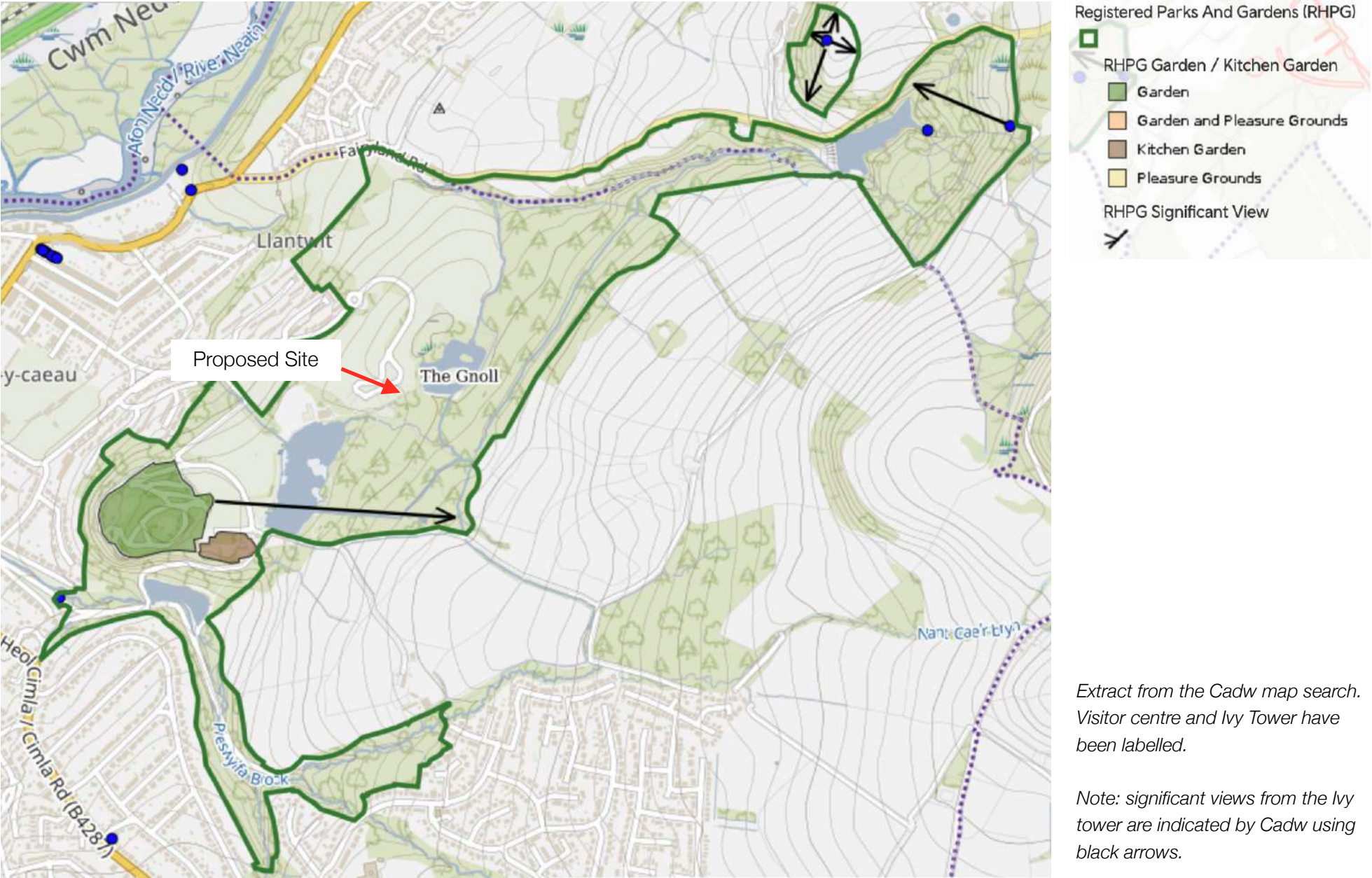
The site is located directly adjacent to the existing main car park for Gnoll Estate Country Park. To the immediate south is the largest of 4 ponds and reservoirs known as the fishpond, and the slightly west of this is the visitor centre, a central hub for activity in the parkland. To the south is a children's play park.

Site Photographs and Views



Photographs of the site as existing:

- 1. View into the proposed site showing dense woodland of trees and shrubs.*
- 2. View of the proposed site showing its vicinity to the existing public footpath in the car park*
- 3. View of the car park looking northeast, the site would be located to the right and screened by the existing tree line.*
- 4. View of the car park looking east, the approximate location of the proposed site entrance is circled in red.*



Extract from the Cadw map search.
Visitor centre and Ivy Tower have
been labelled.

Note: significant views from the Ivy
tower are indicated by Cadw using
black arrows.

HISTORY AND IMPORTANCE OF THE GNOLL ESTATE COUNTRY PARK

Landscape Character

The heritage of the park has been explored within the Conservation Management Plan (CMP), which subdivides the park into 7 defined landscape compartments. For each compartment, a key approach has been summarised.

The proposed site is located just within compartment C along with the visitor centre and car park. This is consistent with the CMP recommendation *'to focus any new recreational developments in this area'*. In this context, the principal of development of the existing visitor centre site and its immediate environs is considered appropriate. A focus on the principal centres of recreational visitor activity within these areas thus forms a key starting point for the facilities building proposals.

Overview of Social and Communal Value

There has always been a strong connection between Gnoll Estate Country Park and the wider community and since the estate came under the ownership of Neath Port Talbot Council it has transitioned from private to public ownership. In turn, the parkland has consistently remained a popular destination for visitors. In the past, the reservoirs were popular for swimming and boating; today visitors participate in a range of activities throughout the parkland including, walking, golf and fishing. The visitor centre acts as a communal hub and is the current focal point for tourism in the park as the primary location of public facilities.

Separate proposals to enhance the visitor centre and the kitchen garden seek to improve upon the social and communal value of the park. As

such, the relocation of facilities is necessary to ensure the park can continue to function and be a desirable destination for its visitors.

Local Facilities

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



Photograph looking towards the proposed site entrance (circle in red) showing the existing tree line and play park in the background.

The Gnoll CMP

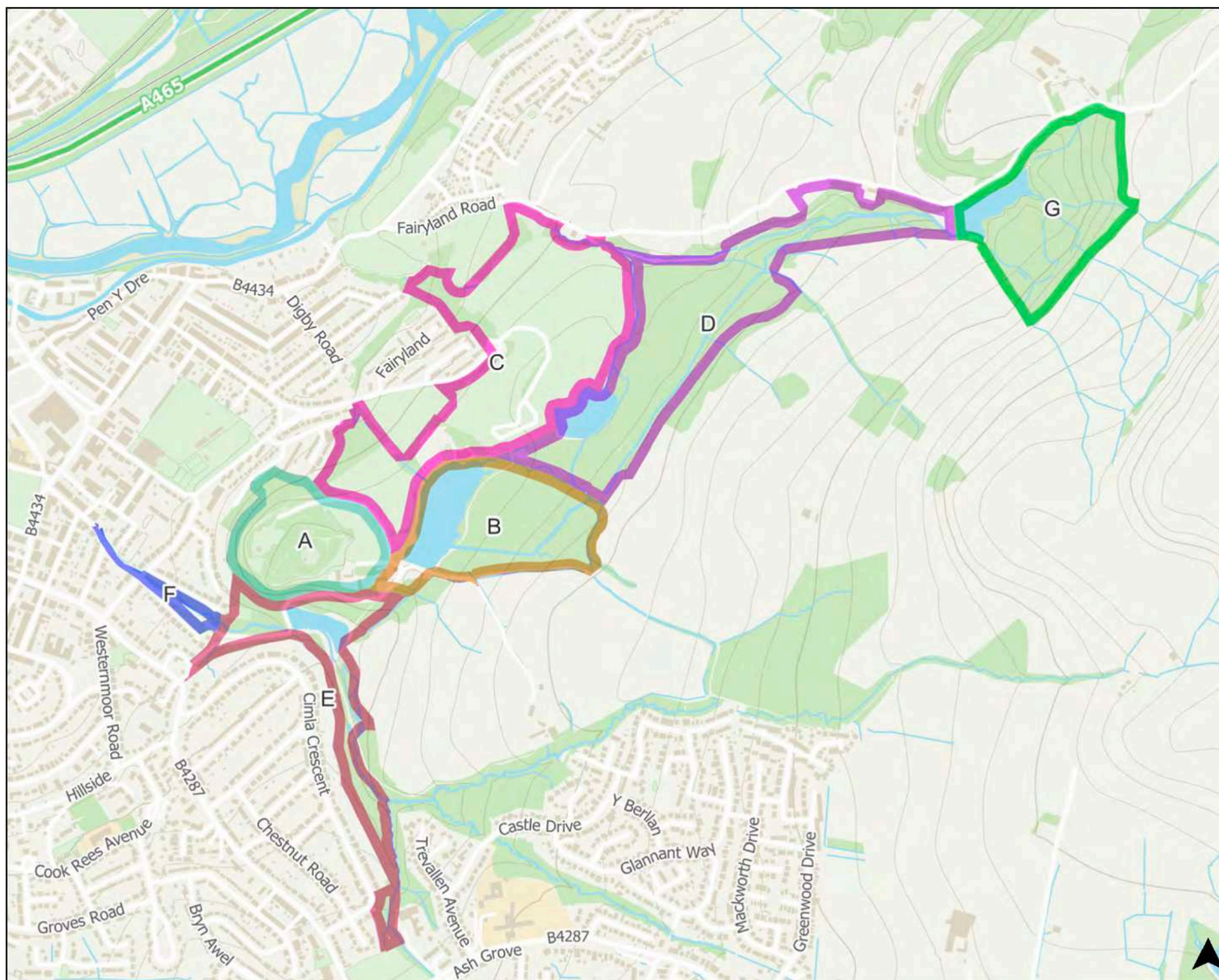
Figure 9
The Gnoll Landscape
Compartments

Legend

-  A - The House and Gardens including kitchen garden
-  B - Fishpond and Fishpond Wood
-  C - The Pleasure Grounds / Recreation Ground
-  D - Mosshouse Wood
-  E - Preswylfa Dingle and Lower Pool
-  F - Memorial Garden, Gates and Gnoll Brook
-  G - The Picturesque Landscape

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Drawn by: CL	Checked by: IB	Date: 11/04/22
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THE BRIEF

The proposed scheme provides a timely opportunity to improve Gnoll Estate Country Park for the community of Neath, with the additional aim of attracting a wider audience to visit the park, with broad ambitions to enhance and contribute to the local economy. The provision of visitor accommodation within the Kitchen garden now necessitates the relocation of the facilities building with an opportunity to provide more considered approach which can accommodate the growing demand across the parkland.

The facilities building looks to respond to the following key objectives:

- Provide a building that provides a designated space for storing the necessary plant and equipment required for maintaining the parkland
- Considers the immediate parkland context, in terms of topography, siting and materiality, in order to create building that is not detrimental to special characteristics of the Gnoll Estate Country Park;
- Relocate vital facilities nearer to the epicentre of activity in the park;

Options for the location of a new facilities building have been considered as part of the design process and these are detailed within this report.

CONSTRAINTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Constraints

- Designation of the wider parkland as Grade II* Listed (Ref. Number: PGW(Gm)50(NEP)).
- Visibility of the building within the landscape
- Construction in close proximity to mature vegetation including access routes require consideration of impact on tree roots, and ecology generally.
- Existing adjacent play park and footpaths are to be retained.
- The building needs to be large enough to accommodate the required plant and equipment

Opportunities

- To relocate facilities nearer to the visitor centre, the main hub of activity in the park.
- To have a building designed to the specific plant and equipment requirements for park maintenance
- To make more efficient use of space within the park, facilities can be located where they are most needed.
- Utilise existing vehicular routes to provide access to the facilities building.
- To integrate the building into the landscape, with a more high quality scheme than the existing garages and shipping containers.

Conclusions

The existing facilities buildings are fundamentally poor in design, quality and condition and the construction of a new building is unavoidable. It is therefore critical to consider the most appropriate placement of these facilities within the parkland, taking into consideration its history, ecology and proposed development.

DEVELOPMENT CONTROL

This document is supported by Planning Statement/Detailed Covering Letter by Asbri Planning and should be read in conjunction with the enclosed information.

Policy Context

Please refer to the supporting information produced by Asbri Planning which has been submitted as part of this application.

Local Development Plan

For details regarding the local development plan please refer to the Project Context Document produced by Hiraeth Architecture and the planning statement by Asbri Planning.

Relevant Designations

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

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

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

Gnoll Estate and Country Park -

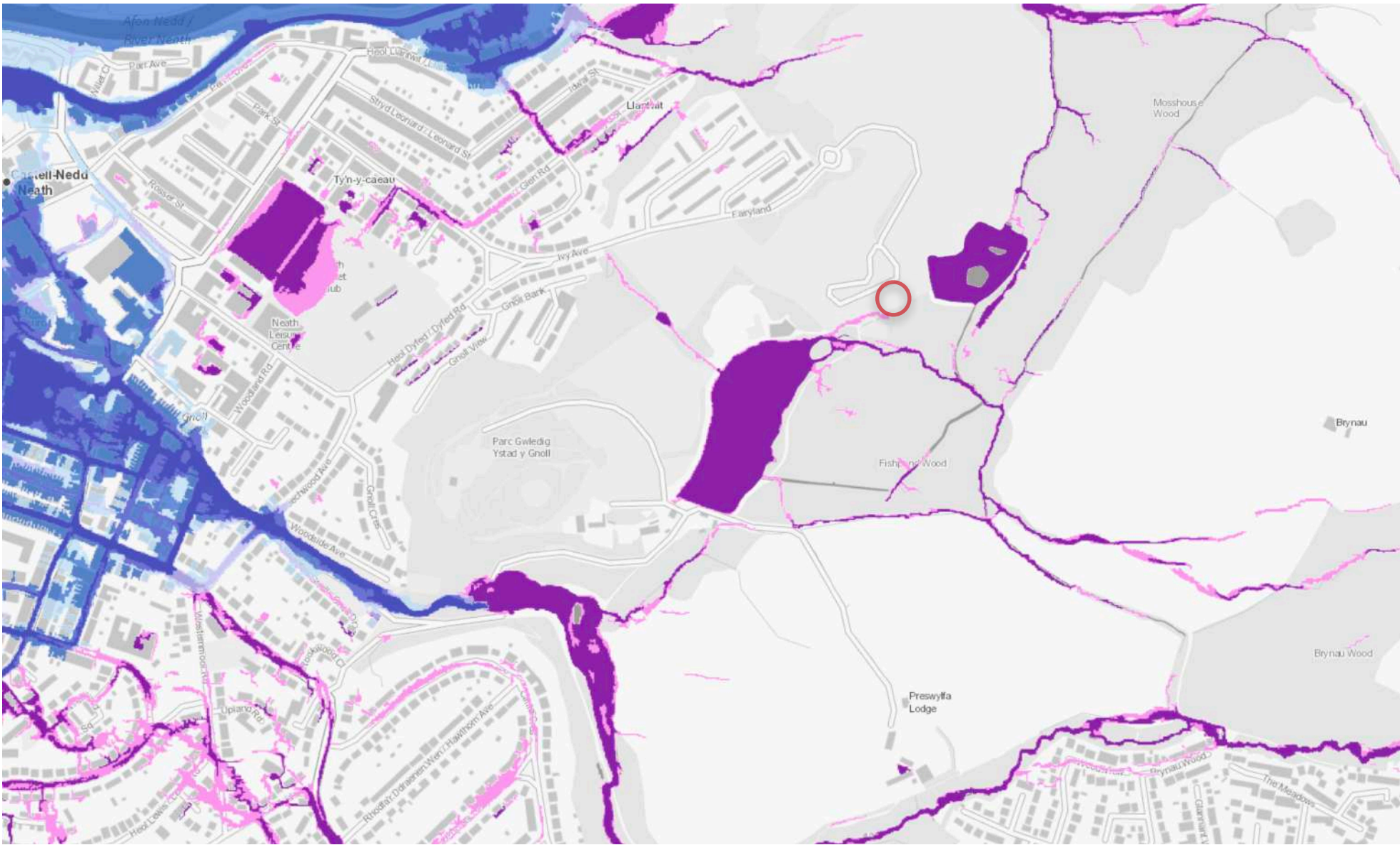
Registered Historic Park and Garden (Grade II*)

'It is registered for the survival of its largely eighteenth-century landscape park, which is of great historic interest, in its original rural setting above Neath. It lies on the flank of the Vale of Neath, long famed for its picturesque beauty. The landscape of The Gnoll is exceptional for its combination of industrial and ornamental functions and for its strong visual relationship with the surrounding countryside.'

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

Flood Risk

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



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

Ecology

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

Bats and their roosts are fully protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), and the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994 (as amended). Under Regulation 3 (4) of the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994, local planning authorities, in exercise of their functions, are to have regard to the provisions of the 1992 *Habitats* Directive (92/43/EEC) in so far that they might be affected by those functions

Bat surveys have been carried out by Neath Port Talbot Ecologist (Consultancy + Planning). In terms of wider biodiversity, the ecologists have also had input into the development proposals. These are detailed in the associated Bat Surveys and the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal prepared by the Ecologist (Planning +Consultancy) Countryside and Wildlife Team Neath Port Talbot CBC.

The reports look to cover ecological mitigation measures in relation to the particular habitats, any protected species and the proposed works. Details of ecological mitigation measures to be implemented prior to and during construction to protect and mitigate effects on important ecological features within the site are covered within the Ecology report and should be referred to in full as part of this application.

Arboricultural Impact and Tree Protection Orders

An Arboricultural Impact Assessment has also been carried out as part of the development proposals by Neath Port Talbot Arboriculturalist

(Consultancy + Planning). This is also attached to the application. This has established that the loss of trees in implementing a scheme in this location can largely be mitigated by improvement of the retained woodland.

Previous Planning Applications

Please refer to the Project Context Document for details of previous planning applications pertaining to the site.



View towards the Guinea Pond (Reservoir A) from within the woodland.

INVOLVEMENT

Community

Extensive consultation has been undertaken with the Neath Port Talbot Council's Project Advisory Group throughout the project. This group has been chosen to represent the interests of the many staff and volunteers that input into the management and running of the Gnoll Estate Country Park. Consequently the proposed scheme is representative of their involvement and decision making and validation.

Wider consultation has also been undertaken with the surrounding community with the Community Council, neighbours and interested parties to explain the scheme and its wider benefits. This follows initial consultation with the community on the LUF developed scheme, the responses to which have been considered and incorporated into the proposals where possible. The outcomes of this consultation have been summarised by Planning Solutions Ltd. Overall, this consultation revealed some clear feedback, which has amended the overall park strategy (refer to Project Context document).

Pre-Application Consultation Response

A comprehensive, positive and constructive pre-application consultation process has been undertaken with input from Cadw, Ecology and Arboricultural consultants proving to be particularly valuable to the scheme development. A more formal response has been collated by Asbri Planning that accompanies this application, whilst subsequent discussions and development of the proposals, have looked to address the points raised. This has largely been accomplished, however, unfortunately the timescales driven by the funding of the scheme mean that a constructive and meaningful engagement with the Design

Commission for Wales has not been possible prior to the formal planning application being submitted. We feel it is important to add that we recognise the importance of peer review during the development of our schemes. This has consequently been undertaken during the development process via in-house architectural advisors from Neath Port Talbot Council and through our internal processes.

Ongoing engagement

Cadw

Given the sensitivity of the designated context as a grade II* listed parkland, ongoing discussions have been held with Cadw, to ensure that the design development has been carried out in dialogue.

Secured by Design

Additional consultation has also been undertaken with representatives of South Wales Police in relation to the intention to achieve Secured By Design Gold Award. Advice was received regarding specification of glass, gating of external covered areas, lighting schemes, CCTV and the storage of site vehicles. This has been incorporated in the developed designs.



Birds-eye view over the fishpond towards the visitor centre and car park showing the surrounding landscape.

INTERPRETATION/ DESIGN STRATEGY

Taking into consideration the requirements of the brief; the historic context of the park, the consultation responses; and the constraints of the site, a strategic approach to the proposed facilities building has been developed.

These key development principles relate to relevant design objectives and represent a careful response to the contextual analysis. Thus the building responds to the specifics of the site in terms of views, topography, access and community need, including:

Landscaping

The opportunity exists to relocate the facilities building in a position closer to the visitor centre and more centrally within the parkland. This allows for further consideration of how the building can be better concealed within the landscape and appear unobtrusive in its immediate context.

Layout

Given that the existing layout of the facilities building comprises of garages and shipping containers, there is an opportunity to simplify the design of the building and condense the requirements for the maintenance of the park into a singular building. The layout should also take into consideration suitable access required for vehicles and plant.

Form, Scale and Massing

Key driving influences in relation to the form and scale of the new facilities building have been established to ensure the building responds to context:

- Be sympathetic to the context in form, responding to the parkland setting and location adjacent to important park features and visitor facilities;
- Be respectful to the immediate context in terms of scale, utilising the existing topography;
- Recognise the existing tree line and dense vegetation, integrating it into the design.

Materiality

With regards to materiality the proposals should look to:

- Utilise materials that are appropriate within the parkland setting where possible;
- Consider the weathering of materials to ensure they will age well and have longevity within the parkland setting.

Views

Consideration should be given to the screening of the building as to be relatively hidden within the landscape. The building needs to be identifiable for its users but not obstruct key views and vistas of the parkland.

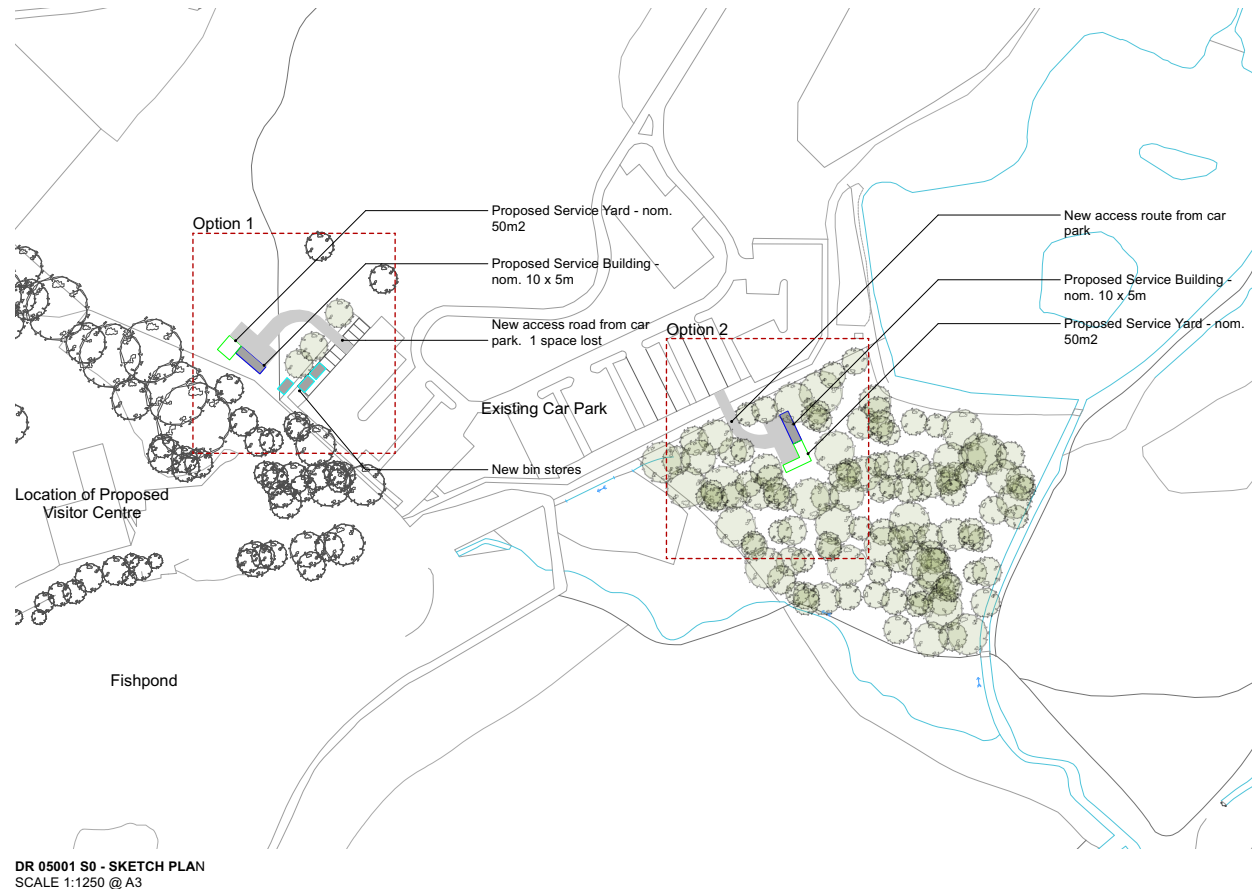
DESIGN EVOLUTION

Initial discussions determined that the new service building should be located nearer to the visitor centre for purposes of practicality. As such, two principal locations were considered in the early stages of the facilities building design.

Option 1 located the building behind the visitor centre near, adjacent to the existing bin stores. This was located directly beside the existing car park and would have resulted in the loss of one parking space for access purposes. This option meant that the facilities building would be visible from the car park and likely from the visitor centre. Furthermore it was significantly more obvious in the landscape.

Option 2 located the facilities building within a small area of woodland to the southeast of the car park. Although this option requires clearing of part of the woodland, the existing trees and vegetation could be utilised to screen the building thereby reducing its visibility.

Ultimately, option 1 was discounted due to its visibility within the wider landscape and therefore option 2 was deemed to be the most suitable location for the proposed service building.



Sketch Plan produced by Hiraeth Architecture showing options considered in the placement of the new facilities building. (Do not scale)

OVERVIEW OF PROPOSALS

Programme of Accommodation

The existing facilities buildings and storage containers are located in the pump house service yard. Proposals to the kitchen garden now necessitate removing these and relocating facilities to elsewhere in the park so the area can be used for car parking to the kitchen garden accommodation. The existing accommodation for services is limited with a lack of storage space and the use of containers which are not fundamentally designed for the purpose in which they serve.

The new proposals will provide a more functional building that better utilises valuable space in order to meet the specific requirements of plant and machinery used across the site. The proposed building therefore needs to provide space for the following:

- Horse Box
- Flail Dek Mower
- Mini Compact Tractor
- Gator
- All Terrain Vehicle

In addition the area requires an external service yard and a controlled access route which allows for pedestrian and vehicular use, whilst separating users of the parkland.



Existing facilities buildings and storage containers to the pump house service yard.



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SERIES	PROPOSED	
SUITABILITY	S2 - ISSUED FOR INFORMATION	
REV	DATE	NOTE
P1	28/09/2023	
P2	12/10/2023	Revised in line with client comments

I Job number Zone
2080 08

Neath Port Talbot CBC
GNOLL PARK

**PROPOSED:
SITE PLAN**

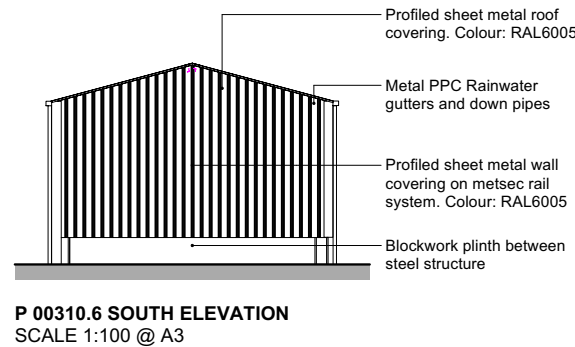
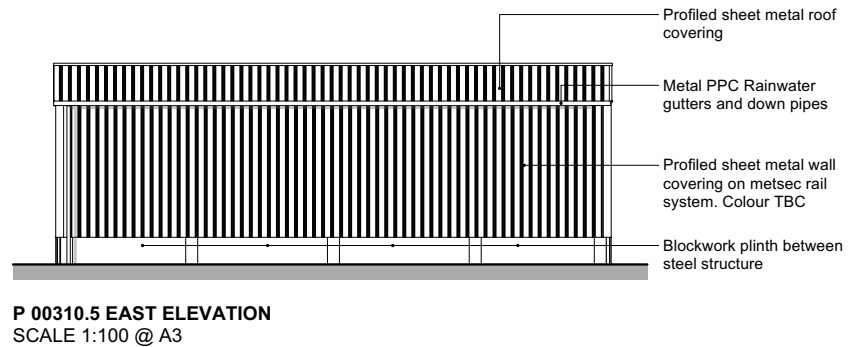
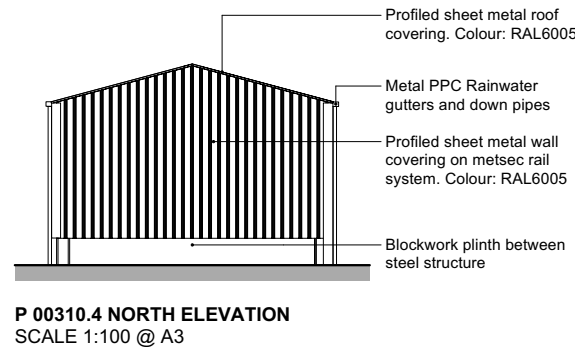
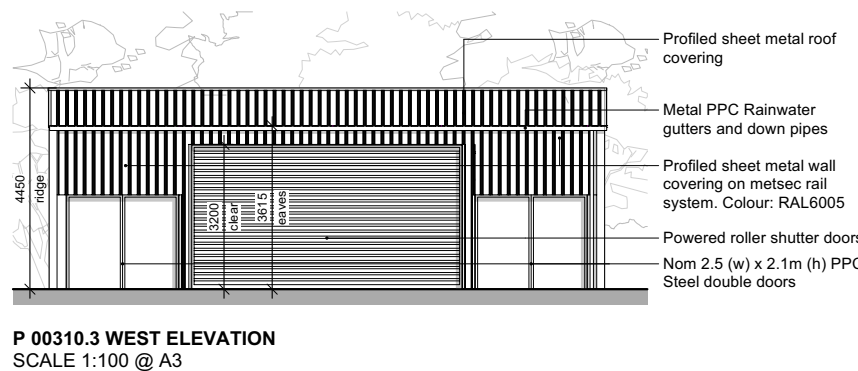
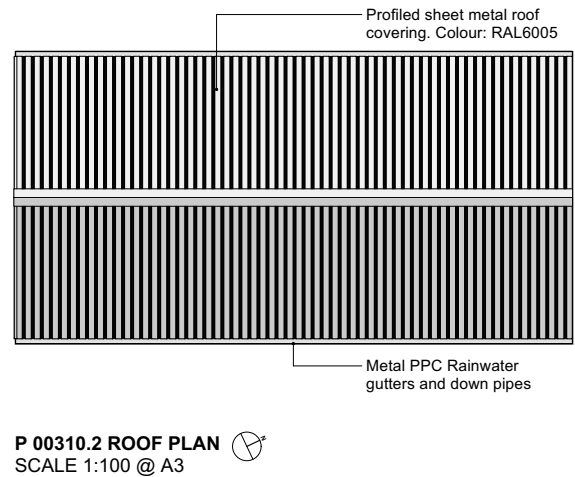
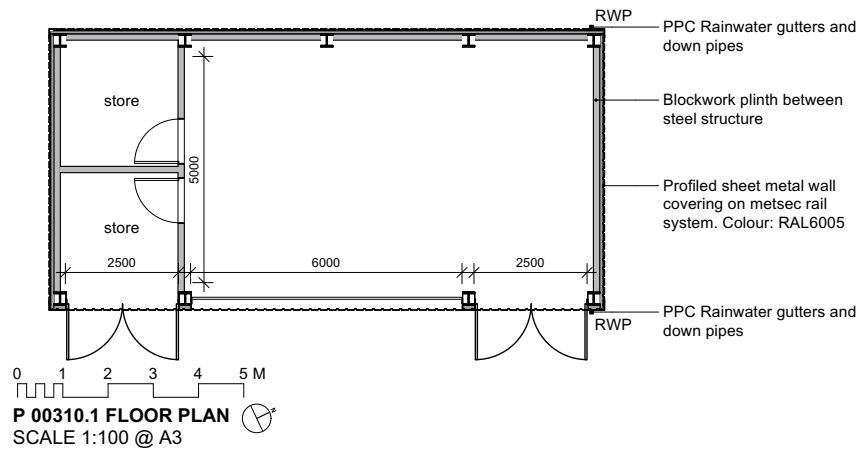
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Date 09/23

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

UPRN	Zone	Originator	Role	Type	Stt number	S Code	Rev
2080	08	HIR	A	DR	00201	S2	P2

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



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SERIES		PROPOSED
SUITABILITY		S2 - ISSUED FOR INFORMATION
REV	DATE	NOTE
P1	28/09/2023	
P2	12/10/2023	Revised in line with client comments
P3	25/10/2023	Updated as DTM comments

Hiraeth.

2080 08

Neath Port Talbot CBC
GNOLL PARK

**PROPOSED:
FACILITIES BUILDING**

Scale 1:100 @A3

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

UPRN	Zone	Originator	Role	Type	Sh number	S Code	Rev
2080	08	HIR	A	DR	00310	S2	P3

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Date 09/23

RESPONSE TO OBJECTIVES OF GOOD DESIGN

Changes to the historic and traditional environment (whether designated or not) are inevitable in order to maintain and secure our heritage for future generations. Such development is often born in response to social, cultural and economic changes within society generally, and in this case the renewal of facilities for visitors at the Gnoll Estate Country Park is a critical element of the council's strategy to promote the Park and wider Vale of Neath region as a highly-desirable place to live, work and visit with tangible economic benefits. This will ultimately facilitate the management of the wider landscape so it can be retained and enhanced as a large scale designed landscape that celebrates its associations with the town of Neath, its pioneering development of industrial processes, and as a valuable asset to its surrounding community.

The proposal therefore seeks to enhance the offer of Gnoll Estate Country Park, in terms of its overall evidential, historic, aesthetic and communal value. It looks to provide a more considered approach to park maintenance and servicing that is integrated with the site and landscape context, thereby facilitating its operation.

Siting

The proposed facilities building is located southeast of the existing car park, nestled into a section of woodland adjacent to the play park. The area will subsequently require clearing in order to form the service yard and access road, however the building has been located as close to the existing road as possible to minimise the amount of clearance needed whilst maintaining some trees and vegetation for screening. The proposed location was chosen for its proximity to the visitor centre and existing facilities. As a central hub within the parkland, relocating the

facilities building to this area ensures that staff and services are in the same place.

Access

The building will require a new access route into the woodland clearing. This will lead directly from the existing car park and allow for both vehicular and pedestrian access to the site, however this will be restricted and access controlled by a gate at the entrance to the site. Existing paths within the landscaping of the parkland will provide an accessible route from the car park to the proposed entrance. The building has been designed to be legible, with designated areas for plant and storage.

Layout

The service building is simple in form and function, with the layout of the site being designed around the requirements for vehicular plant. The site comprises of a service building with two internal store rooms, an access road and hardstanding yard for storage. There is one large roller shutter door opening within the principal elevation of the building, with side doors providing further access, including to a separate store room. The rest of the building will be used for the storing of plant and machinery. There is a second store room accessible via an internal door.

Scale

Although simple in design and single storey, the service building is somewhat large in scale. This is to accommodate the sizeable plant and machinery which is necessary to undertake regular maintenance of the parkland. The existing service yard to the south of the park has the machinery stored across two garages and two shipping containers. This

is unconsolidated, and therefore the proposals have sought to condense this into a singular building.

Character, Appearance and Landscape

The building has been designed to appear unobtrusive in the surrounding woodland and wider landscape largely due to screening from existing vegetation.

In addition to this, the building is to be clad in profiled metal sheeting in the following colour:

- RAL6005 Dark Green

This is to help the building blend into the surrounding greenery and vegetation and thus be less visible from outside the facilities compound.

The building itself is purposefully simple in design with a metal clad structure which appears as a more lightweight addition to the landscape. As noted, trees are to be retained surrounding the building and service yard as to obscure any views in and out of the site thus making it more secluded. Similarly the access road is to be laid with grasscrete to maintain a more natural appearance to the ground surface.

Community Safety

The relocation of facilities in this manner ultimately grants more control over the access and security of the site. A designated gated area which contains both the facilities building and service yard allows for restricted access granted to authorised personnel. Given the equipment being used across the site, it is crucial that there is a secure place of storage to ensure the safety of staff, volunteers and visitors of the park.

Ecology and Arboriculture

Accompanying ecological and arboricultural report have paid consideration to the sensitivities of the selected site. Whilst it is felt that the proposal represents a discrete location in terms of the ongoing heritage significance of the park, the potential effect on ecology and arboriculture could be perceived to be somewhat more significant. In order to address this improvement of the surrounding woodland has been developed as part of a mitigation strategy that will see an overall benefit to the area.

Conclusion

The building is a necessary addition in order to ensure there is an adequate provision facilities for the ongoing maintenance of the parkland. The placement and design of the proposed scheme has taken into consideration the fundamental service requirements as well as its potential impact on the surrounding landscape. Ultimately the building improves upon the existing facilities building and locates services to the central hub of activity in the park.



ASSESSMENT OF IMPACT AND MITIGATION

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

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

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

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

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

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Proposal	Justification	Significance	Potential Impact of Proposal	Activity required to assess impact	Value based judgement	Possible mitigation
The proposals include: - Clearing of a section of woodland and associated landscaping works to create a service yard that sits centrally within the park - Construction of a facilities building to provide covered and secure storage for plant and materials.	General Overview – Gnoll Estate Country Park is a grade II* designated formally designed park encompassing wider informal areas. Its main phases of construction include the 1720's, 1740's, 1776-1790, 1811-1861 and 1899. Gnoll house, which was once at the heart of the landscape was an example of a 'country estate' built by the nouveau-riche with the great wealth that had been acquired on the back of industrialisation. Whilst the house has since been demolished, the parkland is now under the ownership of Neath Port Talbot Council and provides an important recreational space for the community. Likewise it forms an integral part of the historic and present day identity of the local population. The proposals have been developed out of a need to relocate the existing facilities from the pump house service yard to elsewhere in the park. As such there is an opportunity to locate the service yard and necessary facilities closer to the visitor centre, a central hub of activity within the park.	Evidential Value – There is little evidential value to the proposed service yard site, instead, the evidential value lies in the surrounding parkland. Gnoll Estate Country Park is a surviving example of 1720s/40s landscape design in Wales, with elements of the early layout by Thomas Greening still identifiable. It also retains evidence of its connections with development of industry in Neath, including pools and waterways associated with the nearby copper works.	Evidential Value – The proposals for the facilities building are likely to have a limited impact on the evidential value of the park as they are located in an area of lesser value. It also sits adjacent to the existing car park which has already altered the landscape in this area. However, the construction of the facilities building does require the clearing of part of the woodland. Despite this, a designated facilities building allows for the necessary maintenance of the parkland which will ensure its longevity allow for the continued interpretation of the parkland and its significant evidential value.	Historical research into Gnoll Estate Country Park to date has been required to justify the proposals. There should be accurate and ongoing recording of the park and its historic structures. Documenting the structures should continue throughout the construction process as necessary. This should be undertaken through drawn, photographic and written recording. Careful consideration of proposed design and materials to ensure they are sympathetic to the surrounding Grade II* listed parkland in terms of appearance and properties. Consultation with arboriculturalist to determine the effect of development on historic tree lines.	Evidential Value – The proposed area of woodland is considered to be of lower value trees and shrubs and therefore can be cleared with minimal impact to the evidential value of the parkland. The relocation of the facilities building closer to the visitor centre and core areas of the park will ultimately allow for better maintenance of the parkland going forwards. The minimal loss of evidential value is deemed appropriate in order to facilitate the day to day servicing of the park.	Careful consideration of siting and materials to ensure they are sympathetic to the surrounding Grade II* listed parkland in terms of appearance and properties. Planting should be used to minimise the affect of the proposal on potential views and vistas of the parkland.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Proposal	Justification	Significance	Potential Impact of Proposal	Activity required to assess impact	Value based judgement	Possible mitigation
		Historical Value – The proposed woodland area is of little to no historic value. Again, the historical value lies primarily in the surrounding parkland. Gnoll Estate Country Park is important because it acts as a historical touchstone. It links the past to the present and enables people to connect across time and generations. This is enhanced by the historic record and photographs of the landscape. At the height of its influence, Gnoll House and its surrounding landscape were central to the industrial development of Neath, embodying the great wealth that came with it.	Historical Value – The proposals will have a negligible impact on the historical value of the surrounding parkland. The areas affected are currently inaccessible and considered low value, therefore the construction of the facilities building is unlikely to have a detrimental affect.		Historical Value – The improvements to the visitor experience at the Gnoll Estate Country Park facilitates visitors to reengage with the history of the park and wider area of Neath. The proposals are necessary to ensure the park can continue to function and be maintained for its visitors.	
		Aesthetic Value – The proposed area of woodland is of negligible aesthetic value to the surrounding park. It is not currently accessible and is largely comprised of low value tress and shrubs. Gnoll Estate Country Park has huge aesthetic value as a significant 18th century landscaped estate which retains many of its early features.	Aesthetic Value – The proposals have the potential to adversely affect the surrounding landscape. In particular, the loss of vegetation and trees may affect the views and vistas of the park. As such the proposals require careful consideration of their siting and landscaping.		Aesthetic Value – The proposals to improve the parkland necessitate the relocation of the facilities building and service yard. Although it does not add to the aesthetic value of the historic landscape, ensuring that there is a designated area for plant and materials allows for the continued maintenance of the parkland. The detrimental affects may reasonably be mitigated by considered planting and retention of the existing tree line which will screen the site from significant views and vistas.	

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Proposal	Justification	Significance	Potential Impact of Proposal	Activity required to assess impact	Value based judgement	Possible mitigation
		Communal Value – Gnoll Estate Country Park holds significant communal value derived in part from its status as a source of identity for Neath - both as a municipal park and for its historical connections to the area and development of industry. The park is a significant place for leisure and is a focus of the immediate community. The community of Neath have great affection for The Gnoll and families have strong connections going back generations. The facilities building performs a critical function in allowing the ongoing maintenance of the parkland and therefore contributes to the communal value and enjoyment of visitors. It provides a designated area for storage and plant which is adjacent to primary public facilities. It also contains the the facilities within the site which prevents it from spilling out into the landscape and surrounding area with adverse affects.	Communal Value – Given the scale of proposals across the park there is a likelihood that the demand for maintaining the park will be higher than that which is currently provided. It is necessary to provide a designated space for plant and materials that has given reasonable thought to the day to day running of the park. The level of maintenance of the park is reflective of its perceived value. Therefore providing suitable means for facilitating this will likely have a positive affect on the visitor experience and improve the communal value. The regeneration of facilities in this way also ensures its longevity going forwards.		Communal Value – Gnoll Estate Country Park forms a source of identity for the people of Neath. The neglect of facilities reflects on wider society and contrastingly their renewal is likely to have a positive effect on the wider area. Likewise, the proposals seek to provide the necessary additional space required to service the projected increase in demand on the parkland. This will have a positive influence on the wider estate and its communal value.	

APPENDICES

Registered Historic Park & Garden



Details

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

Location

Unitary Authority	Community	Easting	Northing
Neath Port Talbot	Tonna	276824	197582

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

Description

Summary Description and Reason for Designation

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

It is registered for the survival of its largely eighteenth-century landscape park, which is of great historic interest, in its original rural setting above Neath. It lies on the flank of the Vale of Neath, long famed for its picturesque beauty. The landscape of The Gnoll is exceptional for its combination of industrial and ornamental functions and for its strong visual relationship with the surrounding countryside. The eighteenth-

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Cadw : Registered Historic Park & Garden

[Records 1 of 1]



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