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herbert r thomas

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DESIGN STATEMENT

LAND AT DAN Y GRAIG, PONTWALBY

Revised March 2024

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DESIGN STATEMENT: LAND AT DAN Y GRAIG, PONTWALBY

1.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1.1 Design and Access Statements (DAS) have been required in Wales for many planning applications since 2009, however in 2016 requirements changed to state the provision of DAS to accompany planning applications applied only to:

- All planning applications for Major development (over 1,000 sq. m floorspace) **except** those for mining operations, waste developments, relaxation or amendment to conditions (section '73' applications) and applications for a material change in use of land or buildings
- All planning applications for development in a conservation area or World Heritage Site where there is provision of one or more dwellings or the creation of floorspace of 100 sq. (gross) or more

1.2 This development does not fall within the above categories and there is no formal requirement for DAS however this document has been prepared in order to inform the outline proposal.

1.3 The main purpose of this document is to illustrate the process that has led to the development proposal and explains the design evolution from the approved 2006/2009 iteration of the scheme to current.

1.4 Planning Policy Wales 12th edition (Feb 2024) and Technical Advice Note 12 (Design) explain the principles of good design.

1.5 TAN 12 now also includes important guidance on sustainable building standards in Wales and how to achieve them. (Note this follows the cancellation of TAN 22: Planning for Sustainable Buildings, in July 2014.) TAN 12 now details ways of reducing carbon emissions by application of the energy hierarchy and also provides details on a series of steps to be undertaken to decrease consequential carbon emissions of new development in the most cost-effective and efficient way.

1.6 The diagram below summarises the objectives of good design.



Figure 1 – Objectives of Good Design (Planning Policy Wales Edition 11, Feb 2021)

- 1.7 The DAS should act as a 'living document' and the reserved matters application/s to follow this outline should be accompanied by a progress statement updating any changes that have occurred to the design since this original application was submitted.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 On behalf of our client, Herbert R Thomas submit this Design and Access Statement in support of a resubmission of a previously approved outline planning permission ref: 2009/0417.
- 2.2 The application is in outline with ALL matters reserved for the erection of x3 no. detached dwellings. The development is proposed on a parcel of land at Dan y Graig, Pontwalby.
- 2.3 Please read the cover letter of the application to ensure the full and sensitive circumstances of the application are understood.
- 2.4 See Appendix A for a layout plan with the site edged red. The satellite images below show the site (general location of which is marked with a red dot) in the context of the surrounding settlement of Pontwalby.

Figure 2: The site (marked with a red dot) in context of the surrounding settlement (Google Maps)

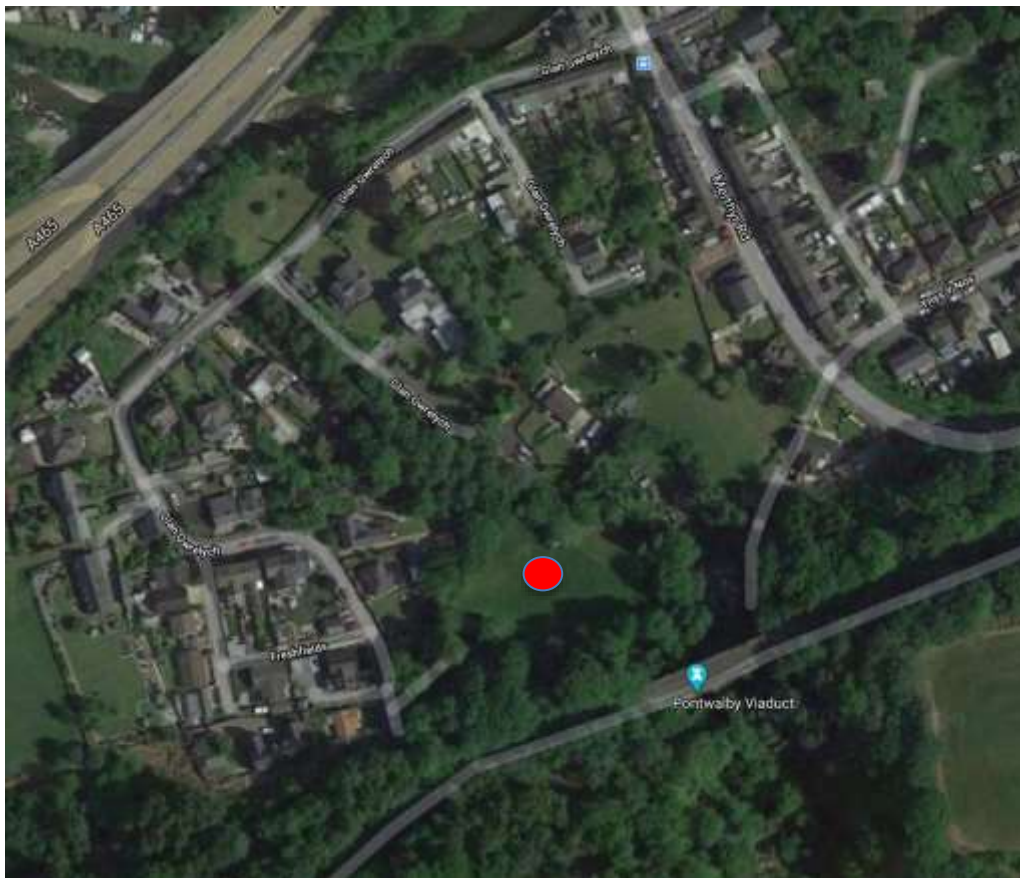


Figure 3: satellite image of the site (marked with red dot) adjacent to Pantwalby Viaduct (Google Maps)



3.0 CONTEXT OF DEVELOPMENT

3.1 *Historical context*

- 3.2 The imposing former rail viaduct to the south of the site is the most prominent feature of the immediate area and is a listed structure of historical interest and demonstrates the rich industrial heritage of the area. The site can be seen (beneath the word 'viaduct' on the historic plan from 1888 – 1913. Also shown on the plan is the Glan Gwrelych road following the same route as today.

Figure 4- Ordnance Survey Map from 1888-1913



Figure 5 – Images of Pontwalby Viaduct 1920

- 3.3 Authorised by Parliament on 3rd August 1846, the Vale of Neath Railway provided a Brunelian broad gauge connection between Neath and Merthyr Tydfil. The western section, as far as Aberdare, was opened on 24th September 1851 and the completed route was consumed into the Great Western's empire 14 years later. In 1863, a third

rail was added to provide a mixed gauge route, with a complete conversion to standard gauge taking place on 11th May 1872.

- 3.4 Pontwalby was the site of a viaduct which launched the two-track line over the Gwrelych valley. Built by contractors Gale and Warden, it comprises five spans of 35 feet each, giving an overall length of about 80 yards.
- 3.5 Whilst the arches are formed in red brick, the rest of the structure was built in locally-quarried grey stone. The piers incorporate arches to reduce weight and focus forces onto the foundations.
- 3.6 The Glynneath to Hirwaun line closed completely on 2 October 1967. Today the deck is tarmacked, hosting a foot and cycle path. The viaduct received a Grade II listing in September 2003.

3.7 Site context

- 3.8 The site is located in Pontwalby, approximately 11 miles from Neath. Together Pontwalby and Glynneath form a typical small Welsh valley town located in Neath Port Talbot County's vale of Neath. Glynneath is the main service centre for the Neath Valley, and is home to a number of shops and small businesses such as hairdressers, specialist shops and health providers such as dentist, optician, and pharmacy. A new health centre has recently opened on the edge of town. There is a leisure centre with pool, as well as a private gym.
- 3.9 The town is in the top 50% of areas of multiple deprivation in Wales in seven of the eight categories. (The exception been the physical environment.) It ranks as 24th overall for the County.
- 3.10 The population is ageing, and has dropped between the last two censuses, and is forecast to drop again.
- 3.11 The site forms a parcel of approximately 0.28 hectares of undeveloped land lying to the north of Pontwalby viaduct and bordered by Nant Gwrelych to the north and east. The land is accessed via an existing gated entrance off Glan Gwrelych. See also attached separate Access statement.

- 3.12 There are no permanent buildings on the site subject to this planning application. Surrounding the site are residential properties and their associated gardens and driveways. Note that the properties on Glan Gwrelych that are in closest proximity to the site are of single storey or 1.5 storey design (dormer bungalow). The images below show those neighbouring properties (images taken from Street View of Google).



Images of residential properties at Glan Gwrelych in close proximity to the site



3.13 *Development Plan Policies*

- 3.14 The National policy is contained within Planning Policy Wales (PPW) and associated Technical Advice Notes (TANs) – please refer to the accompanying Planning Statement for reference to these documents.
- 3.15 The current adopted development plan for the area is the Neath Port Talbot Local Development Plan (NPTLDP) 2011- 2026. The extract below shows the proposals map for the relevant part of the borough. Note preparation is underway for a replacement Local Development Plan (RLDP) with a period, otherwise referred to as the 'Plan period', for 15 years from 2021 to 2036. Once adopted (anticipated during 2027), the NPT RLDP 2021-2036 will replace the NPT LDP 2011-2026.

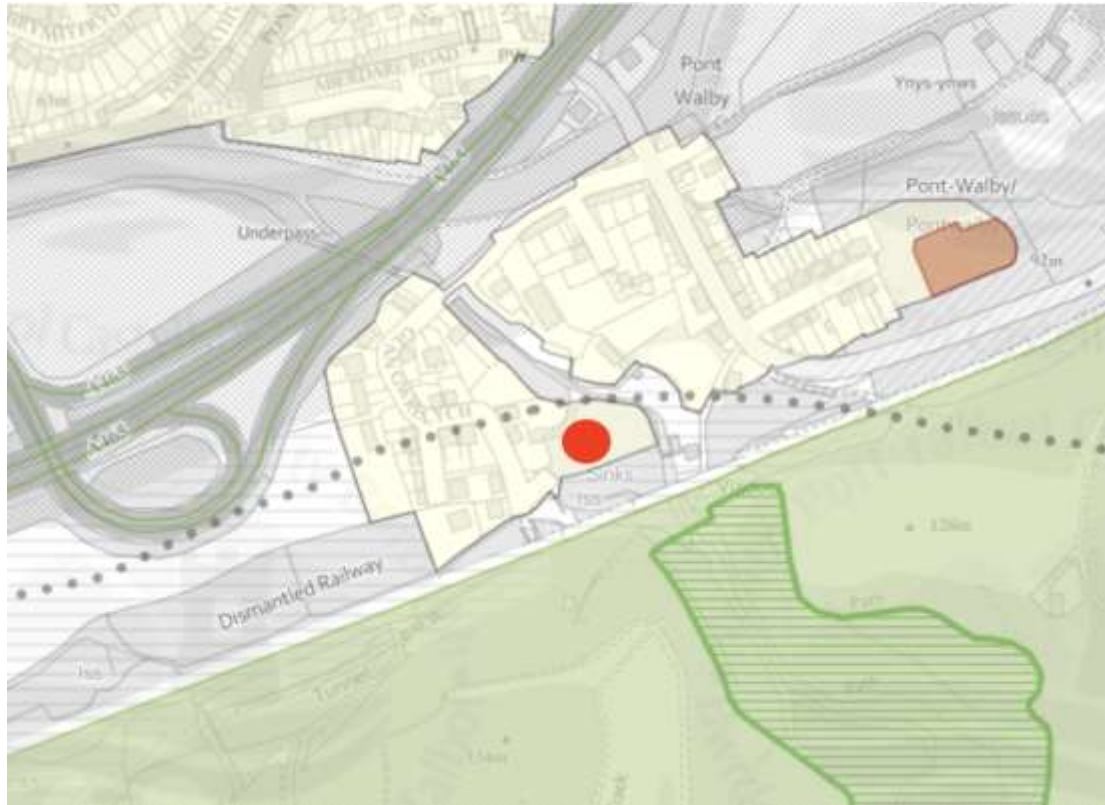


Figure 6: Extract from Deposit Draft Local Development Plan Proposals Map (with added indicative red dot to show location of site)

3.15 The key LDP planning policies for consideration are:

- SP3 – sustainable communities
- SP7 – Housing requirement
- SC1 – Settlement limits
- H1 – Housing sites
- SP8 - Affordable housing
- AH1 – Affordable Housing
- EN7 – Important natural features
- BE1 - Design

3.16 During 2021 (and following the initial submission of the planning application P2021/0600 for the development of 3 dwellings) an emergency order for Tree Preservation (Tree Preservation Order 2021 No (4) rear of 8 Glan Gwrelych, Pontwalby) was placed on this site under W1 – mixed deciduous woodland in order to protect those trees around the edges of the site and in particular a Lime tree at the entrance to the site.

4.0 CONSULTATIONS

- 4.1 The previous applications (P2006/0307 and P2009/0417) were discussed, by the then applicant, on site with various Council Planning and Highways officers. The main issue at that time was considered to be the proximity to the stream and the potential for flooding. This issue was addressed by a flood assessment report that indicated the risk was negligible. Flood risk information is provided as part of this current application. A Flood Consequences Assessment report has been carried out by Tulip Engineering concluding the development as proposed meets the key TAN 15 requirements including a flood-free development and emergency access route and no flood risk increase elsewhere.
- 4.2 An application was made in April 2023 (ref P2023/0303) this application was withdrawn in June 2023 in order to further discuss the DCWW issues. Neighbours were consulted under the statutory council consultations as part of this application process. As far as we are aware, specific formal neighbour consultations have not been undertaken in relation to this most recent proposal to date – please refer to the cover letter of the application and note the sensitive circumstances surrounding this application.
- 4.3 It is noted that the neighbours immediately adjacent to the site are aware of the previous permission for residential development of this site and provided comments at the time those applications were under consideration. It is also noted comments were made to the submission of April 2023.
- 4.4 A Tree Survey and accompanying report has been carried out. The report concludes that two trees require removal to facilitate the proposed development; it is understood that the loss of these trees will not significantly impact local amenity or landscape character. Given recent policy changes to PPW a total of 6 replacement trees will be provided – see Technical Note of BEEcological for suggested native species.
- 4.5 A landscape scheme, including new tree planting, is recommended to mitigate the loss of the two trees and provide a resilient, more sustainable tree population, helping to ensure the development has a positive impact on local amenity, canopy cover and landscape character.

- 4.6 The Preliminary Ecology Appraisal that has been carried out on the site and was updated July 2023. This recommends bat and bird boxes (as per the previous permission) as well as provision for amphibians to ensure their protection within the final detailed design within the RMAs. Please see submitted updated PEA for further details.

5.0 DESIGN

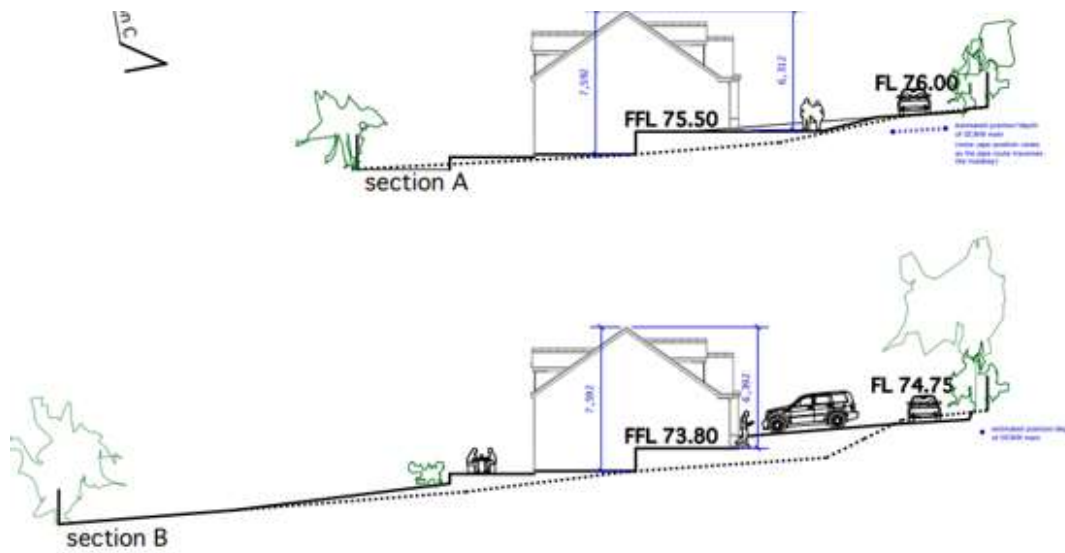
5.1 **Amount:** The list below provides the maximum and minimum length, width and height for the development,:

- Maximum length 12 m
- Minimum length 10m
- Maximum height 9 m
- Minimum height 7m
- Maximum width 14 m
- Minimum width 12 m

5.2 Using the above maximum and minimum measurements the maximum foot print for each dwelling would total 168 sq. m whilst the minimum foot print would total 120 sq. m. Note the maximum height of 9m could potentially accommodate a 2 storey dwelling however the current design vision, in line with that of the original submission, is for a dormer style single storey with potential split level to the ground floor and provision of bedrooms in the roof of the dwelling providing a lower roofline, less impact and opportunity for more attractive design. This design would be considered in-keeping with surrounding properties of the area.

5.3 Below are sectional drawings of the indicative properties to give a flavour of how the changing levels within the site could work with the properties. Some indicative designs of such dwellings are provided on page 14, ranging from more traditional to Scandinavian style single story / dormer dwellings. The final designs will be the subject of the reserved matters application.

5.4 Note the design has evolved with the road access being moved slightly south away from the DCWW watermain as far as possible. This provides additional garden area, especially to the front of plot 1 (that has the smallest garden) and therefore is beneficial to the scheme in a number of ways.



Extract from Section plan Ref 2229 -007 Rev G (Produced by CFW Architects)



Designs for single storey, split level or dormer bungalows (indicative only)



- 5.4 **Layout:** The dwellings will be served by a newly constructed private road within the site. This private road will use the existing access to the site and join Glan Gwrelych (note at this point the road widens significantly).
- 5.5 It is considered that the hedging surrounding the site is dense enough to provide a barrier plus the stream to the north and eastern edge provides a further barrier. Therefore, no fencing treatment will likely be required to secure the site.
- 5.6 **Scale:** The proposed dimensions of the dwellings are provided on Page 12 for indicative purposes. The dwellings final scale will be determined at the reserved matters stage but would need to be in keeping with surrounding dwellings and respect the site context.
- 5.7 **Landscaping:** All mature trees and hedging on the site will be retained as far as practical (note that 2 trees require removal to facilitate the scheme with tree planting elsewhere in the immediate area to mitigate the loss of these trees). Land in the ownership of the applicant and not proposed for development is outlined blue on the plan in Appendix A. You will note a large proportion of the land is to remain open (approximately 80%) on the east and southern portion of the site to allow openness within the site and separation between the development and the river and also the wooded bank and setting of the listed Pontwalby Viaduct.
- 5.8 **Appearance:** The final appearance of the dwellings will be agreed at reserved matters stage. It is noted however that the residential properties will take cues from the local vernacular and as many local materials will be used as possible. Given the private nature of the site it does not sit within a street scene and the impacts therefore to the existing Glan Gwrelych will be minimal and not adversely affected.

6.0 CHARACTER

- 6.1 This outline proposal is considered to be in keeping with the semi-rural character of this part of Pontwalby through the careful positioning, sensitive design, appropriate choice of materials that will be detailed in the reserved matters proposals. The neighbouring viaduct forms an attractive and imposing 'edge' to the site and lends itself to the character of the area. The residential development would likely take design cues from arched form of the viaduct, the imposing grey stone and contrasting red brick that has been used in its construction.



Figure 7 - Photos demonstrating the arches, red brick and grey stone of the neighbouring viaduct.

- 6.2 The site forms a parcel of land of around 0.28 hectares and it is envisaged that the total building footprint for the 3 dwellings would range from 360 sq. m (minimum total footprint) to 504 sq. m (maximum total footprint). This represents a low density scheme given the NPTCBC LDP policy guidance of BE1 that recommends 30 per hectare in the valleys area. The low density is considered to respect the neighbouring properties and edge of settlement location.

7.0 COMMUNITY SAFETY

- 7.1 There are no issues with this application which would result in a negative impact on community safety.
- 7.2 Furthermore the development of this small-scale scheme will ensure an ongoing benefit of surveillance over this area. It is considered that safety and security of the area will be improved by a beneficial use of the site that creates a natural surveillance.
- 7.3 In previous years (prior to January 2020) the land was actively used and accessed regularly for parking of an HGV, entry for wood collection and maintenance purposes and frequent dog walking and dog training by the owners. Whilst after this date occasional access has still been gained it is noted the level of use has dropped and therefore surveillance has decreased accordingly. This lack of access has in turn resulted in less self policing/surveillance of the land itself. The proposal of 3 dwellings would create a beneficial use and active surveillance and self policing of the area.

8.0 ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

8.1 The proposal will progress in line with guidance at local and national level. The Welsh Government puts forward the 7 goals of the well being of future generations (see diagram below) and confirms:

'As a country, we understand our duty to be globally responsible and we also recognise equally that good development is a matter of local and community scale importance. Future Wales is a vital link between the two, and for the next twenty years it will enable us to make the right choices – and to put the right development in the right place.' NPfW 2040

The Well being of future generations (7 goals)



8.2 The environmental sustainability of the scheme will be promoted through the reserved matters stage of the application process.

8.3 The development will be constructed using high quality materials to ensure that they will stand the test of time.

8.4 The development will use as many local materials and craftsmen/women as possible to ensure travel distances for products and labour are minimised.

8.5 Planting will be encouraged to be of native species and where possible existing trees and hedging retained. The accompanying Technical Note by BEEcological addresses how the proposal will seek to meet policy of Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity Net Gain, both elements of revised PPW Edition 12 (Feb 2024).

9.0 MOVEMENT

- 9.1 A safe access and egress will be created ensuring the current access way is utilised to its full potential. See attached plan showing the established existing access point that is to be used for the scheme (denoted by blue arrow).
- 9.2 The access road of Glan Gwrelych does not lead to any dwellings by vehicle beyond the Pontwalby Viaduct Bridge (it continues in to the open countryside). There is no visible speed limit however by nature of the winding road that widens and narrows in places and current reduction in speed limits in Wales, drivers would likely be required to travel at 20MPH max.
- 9.3 Pedestrians may use the intermittent footways along the side of the road. A footway or suitable shared surface would be provided within the scheme at the reserved matters stage. The reserved matters stage will also detail junction design, vision splay and driveways. Note the current design shows the driveways to the houses to the south of each dwelling, immediately accessed from the access road. These will slope towards the homes with either steps or ramps as necessary to facilitate pedestrian access to the houses. This arrangement can be seen in the sections (extract) provided on Page 15 of this document.
- 9.4 Promoting active and sustainable travel - EV charging points can be included at the reserved matters stage to encourage travel generating less emissions and contributing to more sustainable travel. Note the proximity to the bus stop at Pontwalby Bridge is within approximately 550m and therefore easily achievable on foot.

10.0 ACCESS

- 10.1 The site is located at the 'tail end' of Glan Gwrelych road on a relatively unused and straight stretch of the road affording good visibility for both vehicle and pedestrian traffic in both directions.
- 10.2 A right of way is legally secured by the applicant over the access.
- 10.3 The site junction with Glan Gwrelych has been widened over the years when historically Heavy Goods Vehicles used this area to turn and park. The applicant has confirmed legal right of way over this access in to the site.
- 10.4 There are no obstructions at this junction to obscure oncoming traffic or pedestrians. There is very little traffic flow past this junction as the road only provides access to a few isolated farms beyond the viaduct (south).
- 10.5 The design envisages the plots will incorporate a driveway providing surface car parking space within the curtilage of each plot for 2 cars. This arrangement will minimise the need to park on the private road. Note full designs will be provided as part of the reserved matters stage.

DCWW apparatus in relation to access:

- 10.6 Since the withdrawal in June of the 2023 application, significant discussions took place with regard to the watermain beneath the road way in to the site. The applicant commissioned Alpine Land surveyors to pin point the line of the main in the summer of 2023 (see attached Utilities Plan) – the line of the main is in broad correlation with the Sketch plan submitted with the 2023 application (and 2006/2009 permissions).
- 10.7 Negotiations were then entered in to with DCWW in order to agree a way forward. This took significant time and chasing and culminated in a meeting on 10 November 2023 with DCWW Planning Liaison officer and Engineer and the client team (applicants, surveyor and HRT Planner). The history and context of the current application proposal was explained in full and it was reiterated that the previous permissions included conditional support by DCWW for a near identical scheme.
- 10.8 The conclusion of the meeting was the road way to be amended to avoid the main beneath for as much of the length of the road as possible – it was acknowledged a small section would be unavoidable at approximate point where the field gate

currently sits. The client commissioned the architect to make the necessary adjustments to the access road by moving it south plus any minor tweaks in connection with the dwellings.

- 10.9 The amended plan was submitted to DCWW on 1st Feb 2024 together with an explanatory letter (See Appendix 4 of Planning Statement). This was then discussed at the DCWW internal meeting and initial feedback provided 19th February 2024 with questions raised from the applicant team and further response provided 18th March 2024, including the verification that DCWW would support the application but would need to provide conditions – this is understood by the applicant. A request was made (26 Feb 2024) for the final DCWW condition list to be forwarded and at the time of writing this had been chased but was still awaited.
- 10.10 In summary whilst it has always been acknowledged the access sits above a watermain this is no different o many watermains set in roads throughout Wales. The conditions applied to the permission (similar to those of the previous permissions) will ensure the protection of the main both during construction and on beneficial occupation of the dwellings. It is confirmed the dwellings are at least 5m distant from the main.

11.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 11.1 The proposal is located fully within the settlement limit of Pontwalby and falls within an established residential area. At the reserved matters stage the design will take its cues from the surrounding low density residential developments and balance with the imposing industrial architecture of the Brunel viaduct.
- 11.2 The scale of the development is sympathetic to the surroundings in producing a development that preserves the openness of this site toward the stream corridor. The setting of the viaduct is also respected in so far as the development leaves a buffer between the structure and the development itself.
- 11.3 The proposal concept ensures it works with the changing levels, that the site can be accessed and egressed adequately using the existing wide vehicular access (designs will be produced as part of the reserved matters stage) with no highway safety concerns arising from the outline proposal.
- 11.4 The proposal can be developed ensuring the 5m easement to the DCWW main that is confirmed to lie in the location on the attached Alpine Utility DCWW main plan.
- 11.5 The proposal seeks to mitigate the loss of 2 trees with the proposed 6 native trees (or trees as stipulated by the Council Ecologist) in replacement. Biodiversity enhancement measures are included in the BE Ecological PEA, this includes planting to encourage habitat, reptiles, and birds. The measures are considered to meet with the policy expectations of GI and BNG as set out in PPW Edition 12.

APPENDIX 1

Layout plan and Sections (CFW Architects)



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Property freehold & leasehold
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rightmove

Cardiff Office

11-12 Jellicoe Court,
Atlantic Wharf,
Cardiff, CF10 4AJ

02922 671555
cardiff@hrt.uk.com

Cowbridge Office

59 High Street,
Cowbridge, CF71 7YL

01446 772911
cowbridge@hrt.uk.com

Bridgend Office

The Toll House,
1 Derwen Road,
Bridgend, CF31 1LH

01656 660036
bridgend@hrt.uk.com

Neath Office

33 Alfred Street,
Neath, SA11 1EH

01639 639541
neath@hrt.uk.com

