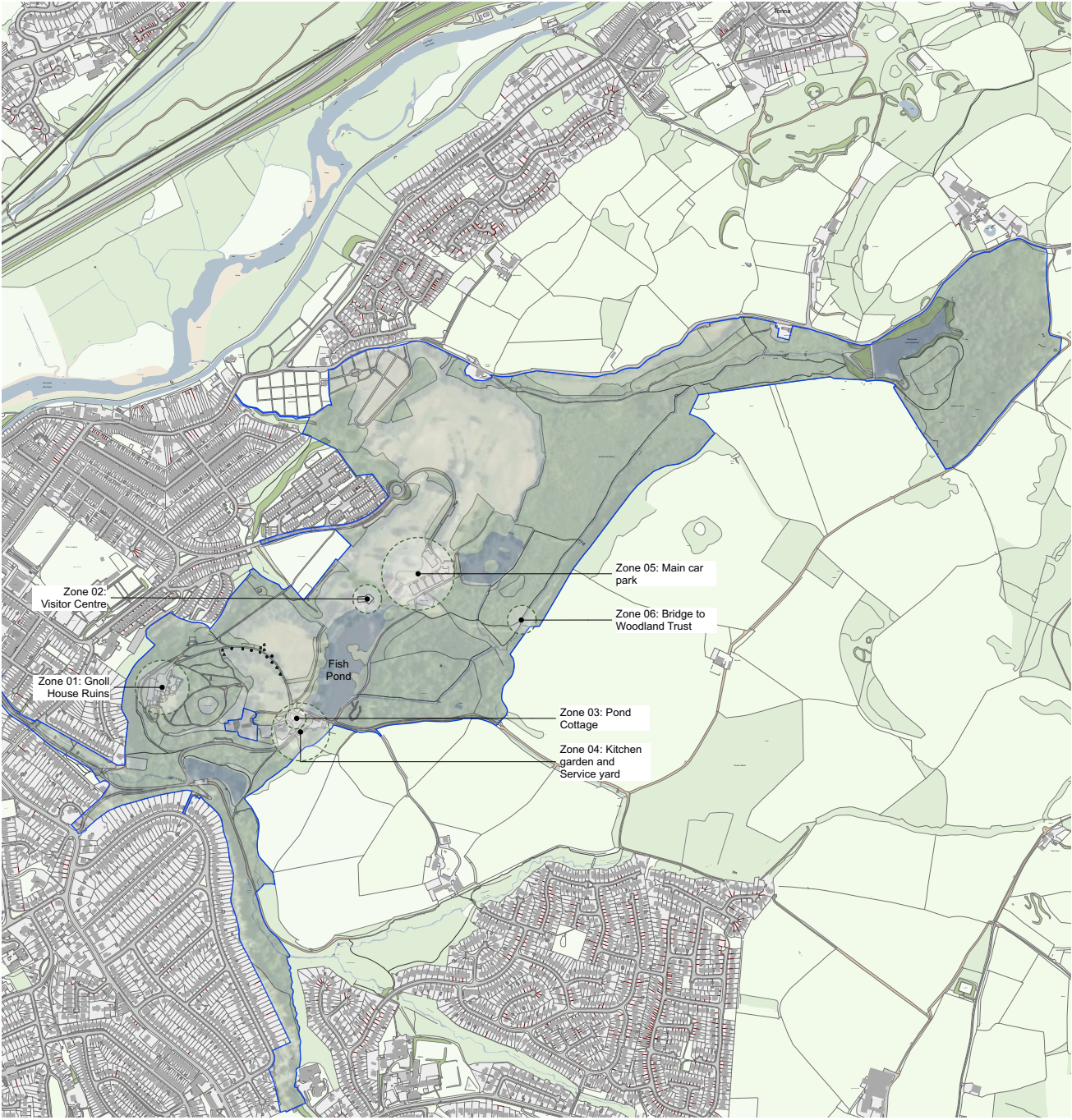




Hiraeth.

**ZONE 05_MAIN CAR PARK -
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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

SERIES		EXISTING	
SUITABILITY		S2 - ISSUED FOR INFORMATION	
REV	DATE	NOTE	

Hiraeth.

02920 025814 | office@hiraetharchitecture.co.uk
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 | notli 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:

SS765975
E 276545
N 197528



gently.enjoyable.enhancement

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 extension of car parking facilities to serve the new visitors accommodation 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	05	HIR	A	RP	06804	S2	P3
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 car park 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 additional car parking facilities to serve the proposed new visitor facilities and likely increase in numbers of visitors to the site.

The proposed works include:

- The construction of two areas of additional car parking spaces to be used as overflow to the existing car park;
- Provision of electric vehicle charging points;
- Associated hard and soft landscaping, which aids legibility and embeds the proposals into their immediate context.

It is noted that further planning applications are being prepared for submission describing proposals for the new visitor centre, whilst a separate Design and Access Statement including Heritage Impact Assessment has been produced for a relocated facilities building. 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 from the car park.

SITE CONTEXT AND ANALYSIS



OS map showing wider topography around the Main Car Park

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. 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 car park sits north of the existing visitor centre and the largest of 4 ponds and reservoirs - Fish Pond. It is centrally located within the main body of the park. From the car park the land drops some 1.5m to the ground floor of the existing visitor centre. This slope, along with the existing trees, partially screens the existing parking area from the visitor centre. Northeast of the car park sits Mosshouse Wood, where a series of informal cascades take advantage of this sloped woodland. Within this wood sits the Ivy Tower, which was built in 1795 as a viewing tower and banqueting area. The Tower is visible within the trees in long-range views from the car park, although it is not currently marked or referenced.

Pedestrian Access

A sloped path leads from the rear area of the existing carpark to the main, northern entrance of the Visitor Centre. However, due to the layout of the carpark, this path is rarely appreciated or used. Rather, the majority of visitors leave the carpark from the southernmost corner, adjacent to the adventure play area.

Adjacent features

To the south of the car park is the visitor centre and to the east a proposed site for a new facilities building, proposals relating to the visitor centre are covered by a separate planning application.

Site Photographs and Views

The proposed sites as existing, are reasonably flat, green open spaces that sit adjacent to the the existing car park. The site overlooks the town of Neath and is in an elevated position which has potential to be visible through the tree coverage. Likewise there is a view towards the Ivy Tower from the car park to the North, with the potential that the proposed car park areas will be visible from a distance and disrupt glimpsed views towards the tower. Views from the car park towards the visitor centre, are relatively restricted due to existing vegetation and topography.



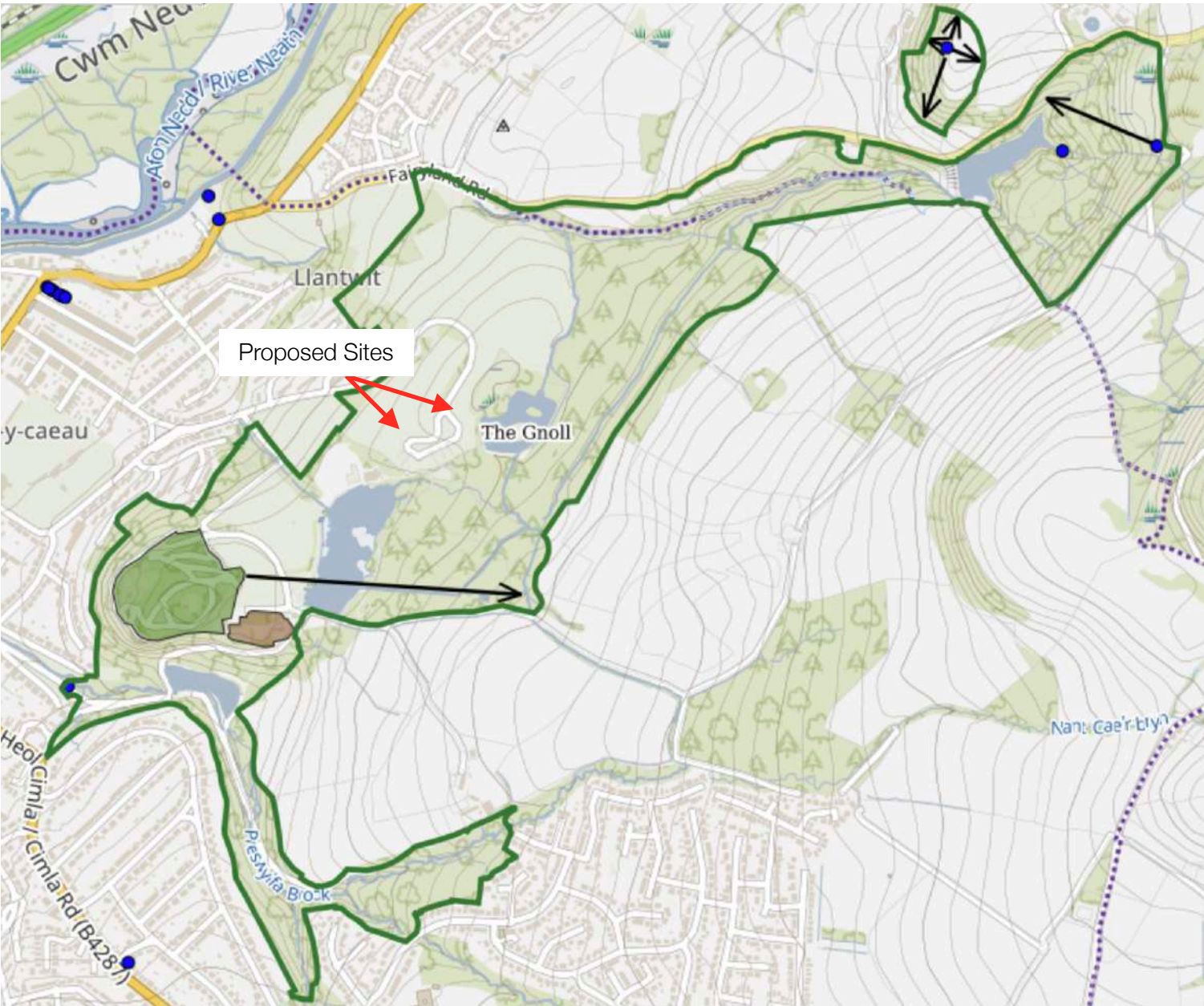
Existing entrances to the parkland with paths leading from the car park to the visitor centre.



Street view of the proposed sites adjacent to the the existing car park, although in a slightly elevated position.



Potential views to and from the Ivy Tower and the Town of Neath.



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

Built in 1995, the history and architectural value or importance of the visitor centre are limited. Therefore its significance largely relates to the landscape character of the immediate context and the wider parkland setting.

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 existing car park and proposed site is located within compartment C. This is consistent with the CMP recommendation *'to focus any new recreational developments in this area'*. In addition, the Visitor Centre is located to the north of the Fish Pond (also referred to as the Second pond/ Upper Great Pond / Fishpond / Reservoir B). This pond forms part of Compartment B and is referenced in the CMP, as *'the most important of the 4 ponds at the Gnoll due to its scenic value and recreational potential'*.

In this context, the principal of development of the existing Car Park 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 car park 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.

Although it is a modern addition to the site, the car park has a fundamental function to facilitate visitors to the parkland, ensuring the social and communal value is maintained. The development of principal areas within the site has without doubt put a strain on the existing parking facilities and on busy days detrimentally affects the visitor experience. Therefore the improvement of the car park goes hand in hand with the improvement of the rest of the park and is required to improve the social and communal value.

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.

(Following page) Extract from Conservation Management Plan - Landscape Compartment Designations

The Gnoll CMP

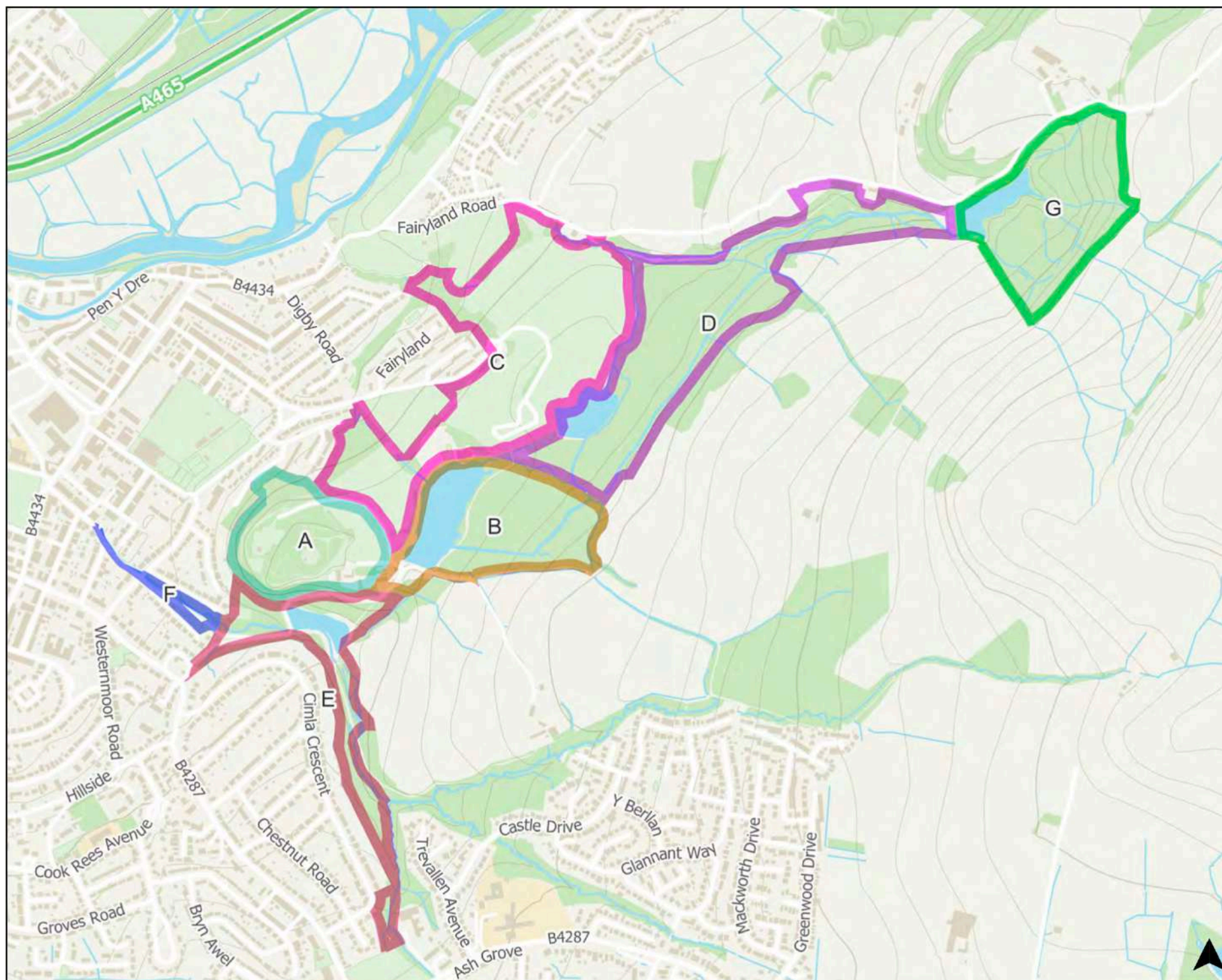
Figure 9
The Gnoll Landscape
Compartments

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. This has broad ambitions to enhance and contribute to the local economy and will be achieved, in part, through the development of a new visitor centre which will better respond to the parkland context, providing much needed, high-quality facilities and services for the community. The improvement of visitor facilities throughout the park requires increased parking facilities to accommodate this to manage existing demand during peak periods.

The car park scheme therefore looks to respond to the following key objectives:

- Provide a additional overflow parking facilities to accommodate the potential increase in visitor numbers;
- Consider the immediate parkland context, in terms of topography, materiality, views and vistas, in order to suitably locate the site and minimise its potential impact;
- Provide designated charging points for electrical vehicles.

Careful consideration has also been given to the existing character and landscape context, whilst making every effort to ensure the future sustainability of the park.

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 -

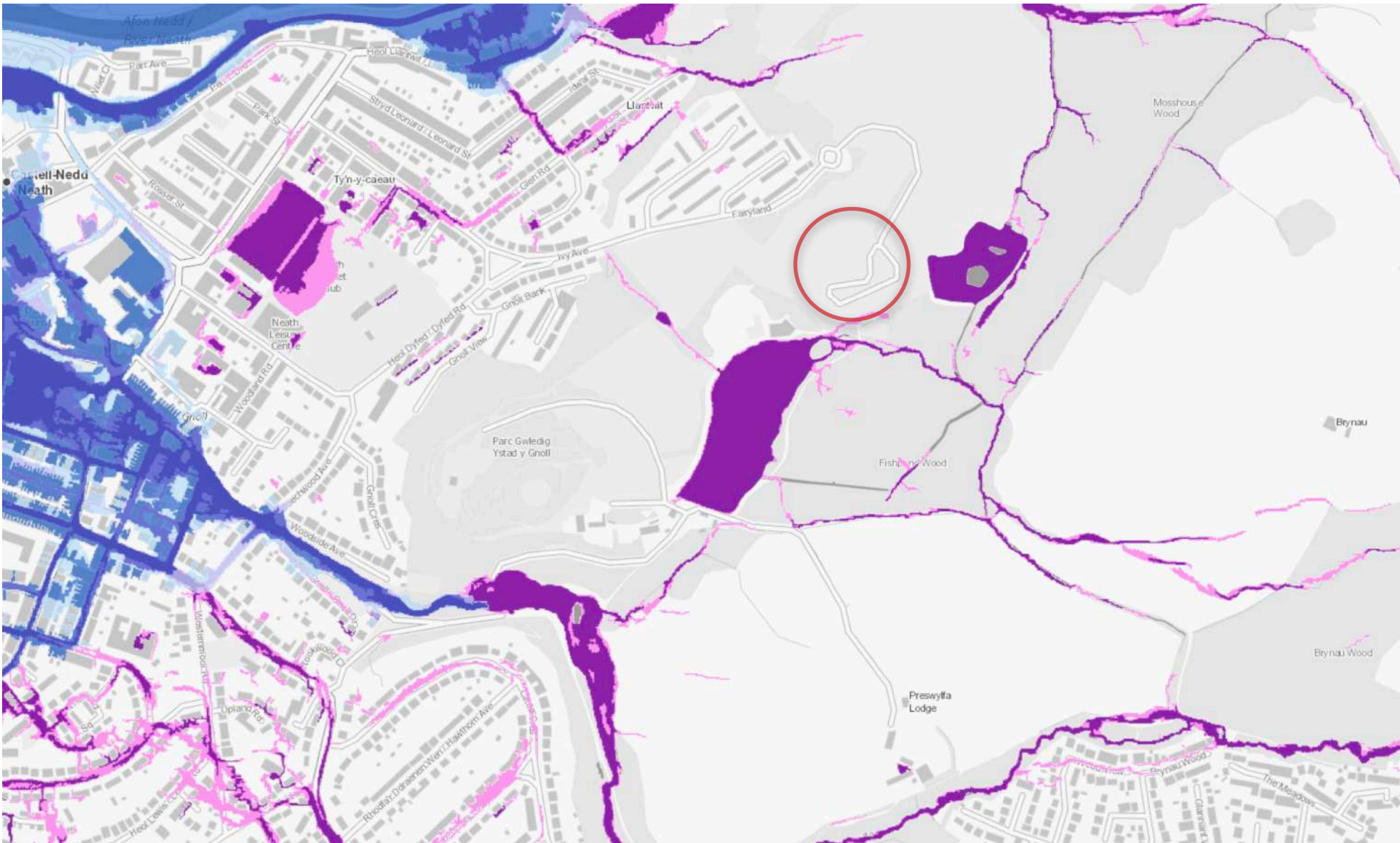
Registered Historic Park and Garden (Grade II*)

'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 existing car park. The map demonstrates that the site 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 Bat Surveys and Preliminary Ecological Appraisal prepared by the Ecologist (Planning +Consultancy) Countryside and Wildlife Team Neath Port Talbot CBC, and that accompany this application.

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.

Previous Planning Applications

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



Existing planting is both ornamental and more natural in nature, giving a diverse habitat across the site.

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 where possible.

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.

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 facilitate the enhancement of Gnoll Estate Country Park, in terms of its evidential, historic, aesthetic and communal value whilst improving the economic sustainability of the commercial offer in line with similar destinations across the region. It looks to build on existing successful commercial offers and broaden the demographic and seasonality whilst representing the unique values of its location.

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 additional parking has been developed. These key considerations represent a framework for the careful response to the contextual analysis. The overall proposals for the parkland respond to the specifics of the site in terms of views, topography, access and community need.

OVERVIEW OF PROPOSALS AND JUSTIFICATION

Several locations were considered for the extension of the car park including utilising part of the golf course to the north of the existing car park. Although this is a reasonably flat area which would be screened by trees it is further from the visitor centre and has the potential for the car park to unnecessarily spread out into the landscape. Instead, the proposals are set around the existing car park in order to minimise the expansion into the surrounding area.

Proposed Access, Car Parking and Landscaping

It is proposed that the existing car park is extended in response to the existing and projected need but will retain its close proximity to the Visitor Centre and existing facilities. The new visitor centre is the basis of a different application (refer to Project Context document, which sets out all the proposals). New parking spaces are to be located to the northwest and northeast of the existing loop road to the car park which will provide vehicular access to these areas without requiring extensive access roads. As with the existing car park, the newly proposed areas will be laid with permeable paving (gravelcrete) with asphalt tarmac at the point of entry and the spaces also set out with permeable paving (grasscrete). Unlined permeable paving will be used where possible however, it should be noted that some areas require lined permeable paving in order to limit infiltration into the surrounding clay strata (these have been shown on plan). The proposals will provide 100 additional spaces within the car park. Existing retained trees along with a new native hedgerow

Justification

The various proposed improvements to Gnoll Estate Country Park are likely to result in an increase in the number of visitors to the site on a more

frequent basis. As such, suitable provision is necessary to accommodate the needs of visitors and in turn, minimise the disruption to the immediate landscape and surrounding area. The proposals seek to contain the parking within a reasonable distance from the visitor centre and existing facilities in order to avoid spreading out further into the designated landscape. As such, the proposals sit adjacent to the existing roadway, albeit in slightly more elevated positions than the existing car park area. This ultimately means there is a potential for increased visibility of the car park from various points in the surrounding area. It also has the potential to interrupt glimpsed views of the ivy tower. In mitigation the car park is intended to be used as an overflow space which means that it will appear fairly discreet on a day to day basis. To minimise the appearance of cars at times where the overflow spaces are in use, native hedgerows have been proposed along with the retention of existing trees to provide some screening of the two sites.

Electrical Vehicle Charging

Electric vehicle chargers (EVC) will be provided to a minimum of 10% of the new parking spaces. This will be achieved by upgrading a number of existing car parking spaces closest to the visitor centre.

Justification

EV chargers are to be located in existing car parking spaces closest to the visitor centre to minimise disruption to the landscape and utilise existing infrastructure and services. These areas are screened by trees and will therefore be less disruptive to key views in and out of the site. Provision for electric vehicles is a beneficial addition for visitors with electrical vehicles and aids the sustainability of the park going forwards.



View of the existing car park showing grasscrete surfacing and native hedgerow.



ASSESSMENT OF IMPACT AND MITIGATION

The following page summarises the assessment of the impact of the car park 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: - Construction of 100 additional car parking spaces - Provision of electric vehicle charging points within the existing car park area - Associated hard and soft landscaping	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 form part of a wider scheme to improve visitor facilities within the Gnoll Estate Country Park. Consequently, it is projected that there will be an increase in visitors to the parkland and as such, increased space for parking is required.	Evidential Value – There is no evidential value to the car park itself, 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 car park are likely to have a limited impact on the evidential value of the park as the new facilities are to be located adjacent to the existing. However, the footprint of the carpark will become larger than existing and therefore will have an impact the surrounding landscape. Despite this, improved facilities within the park will enhance the visitor experience, promote tourism, and therefore allow for further 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 – As the new parking areas are proposed to sit adjacent to the existing car park it is already in an area of the park which has seen significant alteration. As an existing modern addition to the park, the extension of the car park is considered to be a reasonable development given its impact on the visitor experience and communal value 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 there car park 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 – As a modern addition to the park, the car park 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 have already been significantly altered and therefore the extension of the car park is unlikely to have a more detrimental affect than what already exists.		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 function with the projected increase in visitors.	
		Aesthetic Value – The existing car park is of negligible aesthetic value to the surrounding park. It is largely screened by trees and woodland making it fairly discreet in the landscape. 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 key views and vistas may be interrupted by the car park. As such the proposals require careful consideration of their siting and landscaping.		Aesthetic Value – The proposals to improve the parkland necessitate the expansion of the car park. Although it does not add to the aesthetic value of the historic landscape, ensuring that there are designated overflow parking areas will prevent unwarranted expansion into the surrounding parkland. The detrimental affects may reasonably be mitigated by thoughtful planting schemes which screen the cars 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 car park performs a critical function in allowing community engagement with parkland and therefore holds significant communal value in its own right. It provides a designated starting point for visitors which is adjacent to primary public facilities. It also contains the parking within the site which prevents it from spilling out into the landscape and surrounding area with adverse affects. However, it is likely that the projected increase in visitor numbers will result in parking facilities falling short of what is required.	Communal Value – Given the scale of proposals across the park there is a likelihood that the demand for parking at peak days and times will be higher than that which is currently provided. In order to prevent visitors spilling out into the surrounding area and landscape it is necessary to provide a reasonable number of overflow spaces so that the parking is contained within a designated area. 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 serve the project increase in visitor numbers. This will not only improve the communal value of the car park but will also have a positive influence on the wider estate.	

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]



CONTACT

Hiraeth.

Michael Plageman

BSc(Hons), BArch(Hons), DipArch, MA, GradDipCons(AA), CA, RIBA

Hiraeth Architecture | The Maltings | East Tyndall Street | Cardiff | CF24 5EA

T. 029 2002 5814 | E. mike@hiraetharchitecture.co.uk