

Guidance Note :Green Infrastructure Statement : Householder/ Minor Development.

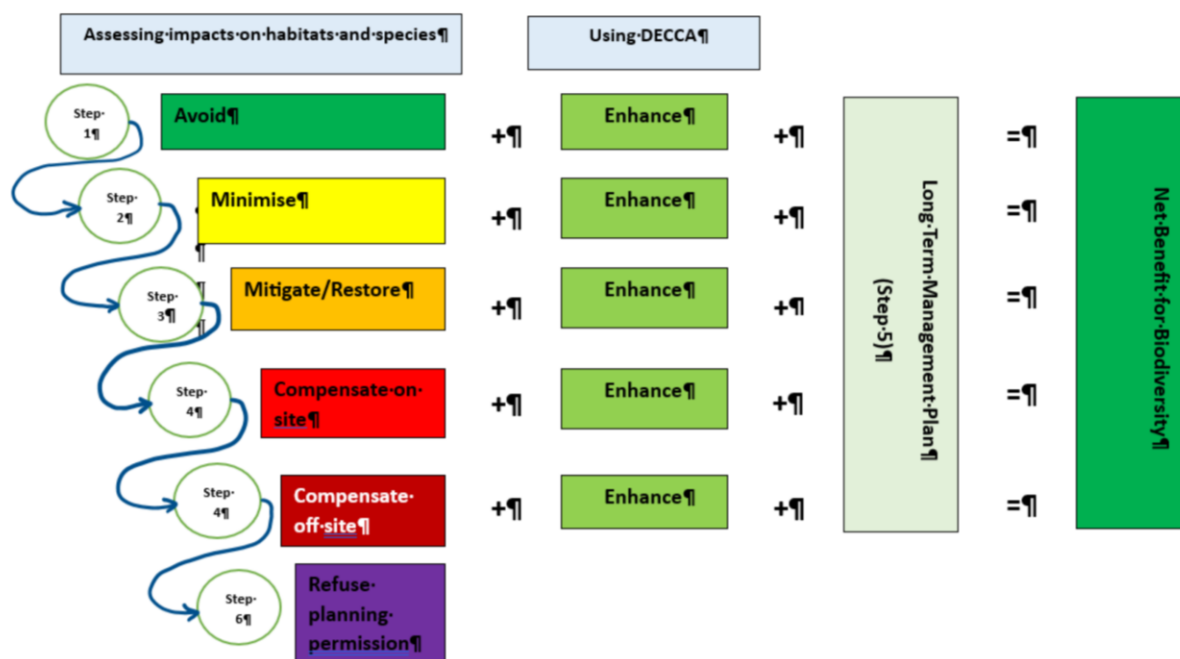
Addressing the Nature Emergency through the Planning System: Updated National Planning Policy for Chapter 6 of Planning Policy Wales

A green infrastructure statement should be submitted with all planning applications. This will be proportionate to the scale and nature of the development proposed and will describe how green infrastructure has been incorporated into the proposal. In the case of minor development this will be a short description and should not be an onerous requirement for applicants.

The green infrastructure statement will be an effective way of demonstrating positive multi-functional outcomes which are appropriate to the site in question and must be used for demonstrating how the step-wise approach (Paragraph 6.4.21) has been applied.

Paragraph 6.4.21 states;

Planning authorities must follow a step-wise approach to maintain and enhance biodiversity, build resilient ecological networks and deliver net benefits for biodiversity by ensuring that any adverse environmental effects are firstly avoided, then minimized, mitigated, and as a last resort compensated for. Enhancement must be secured by delivering a biodiversity benefit primarily on site or immediately adjacent to the site, over and above that required to mitigate or compensate for any negative impact.



The Step-Wise Approach

1.
 - A) The first priority for planning authorities is to avoid damage to biodiversity in its widest sense (i.e. the variety of species and habitats and their abundance) and ecosystem functioning. Where there may be harmful environmental effects, planning authorities will need to be satisfied that any reasonable alternative sites (including alternative siting and

design options) that would result in less harm, no harm or benefit have been fully considered.

- B) Proposals in statutory designated sites are, as a matter of principle unacceptable, and therefore must be excluded from site searches undertaken by developers. This principle also extends to those sites containing protected species and habitats which are irreplaceable and must be safeguarded. Such sites form the heart of resilient ecological networks and their role and the ecosystem services they provide must be protected, maintained and enhanced and safeguarded from development. It will be wholly exceptional for development to be justifiable in such instances.

2. When all locational, siting and design options for avoiding damage to biodiversity have been exhausted, applicants, in discussion with planning authorities must seek to minimise the initial impact on biodiversity and ecosystems by:

functioning ecosystems, particularly Section 7 habitats and species where present, by minimising development size and appropriate orientation on site, paying due regard to the potential for continued long term maintenance and management of retained areas to benefit biodiversity;

ensuring that retained habitats continue to be well connected to adjacent habitats to provide connectivity for key species and ensuring that the favourable conservation status of local species populations is maintained;

retaining existing features, develop a management plan for their future care (e.g., trees, hedgerows, species rich grasslands, heath, wetlands, ponds and freshwater habitats) and use appropriate buffers to protect these from construction and operational impacts, and

using proven innovative/creative solutions (where required) to minimise damage and maintain existing biodiversity features and ecosystems in tandem with robust monitoring and rectification strategies.

- 3 a) Where, after measures to minimise impact, biodiversity and ecosystems could still be damaged, or lost through residual impacts, the proposed development should mitigate that damage. Mitigation measures must be put in place to limit the negative effects of a development.

b) Effective mitigation or restoration measures should be incorporated into the design proposal following the consideration of steps one and two above. Mitigation or restoration measures must be designed to address the specific negative effects by repairing damaged habitats and disturbed species. They should seek to restore in excess of like for like, accounting for disturbance and time lags for the recovery of habitat and species, and in every case, mitigation or restoration measures should seek to build ecosystem resilience within the site and where possible the wider area. In some circumstances, where like for like mitigation measures are not possible, particularly in respect of restoration measures, it may be necessary to consider on site compensation measures in the first instance. In designing mitigation measures where uncertainty exists, applicants should follow the precautionary principle and assume a significant effect. Off-site compensation measures (as set out in step four below) should be considered as a last resort.

- 4 When all the steps above have been exhausted, and where modifications, alternative sites, conditions or obligations are not sufficient to secure biodiversity outcomes further on-site/immediately proximate, and as a last resort off-site compensation for unavoidable damage must be provided. This must be of significant magnitude to fully compensate for any loss.

In the absence of a planned approach, compensation measures must be guided by place-based evidence and the onus is on applicants to address the following:

a) Off-site compensation should normally take the form of habitat restoration, or habitat creation, or the provision of long-term management agreements to enhance existing habitats and deliver a net benefit for biodiversity. It should also be informed by a full ecological assessment to establish a formal baseline before habitat creation or restoration starts and secured far enough in advance before the loss of biodiversity on site.

- 5 The Green Infrastructure Assessment should be used to identify suitable locations for securing off-site compensation. Where possible, a landscape-scale approach, focusing on promoting wider ecosystem resilience, should help guide locations for compensation. The Green Infrastructure Assessment should provide a spatial guide to opportunities already identified for securing a net benefit for biodiversity. Using the assessment will help determine whether locations for habitat compensation should be placed close to the development site, or whether new habitat or additional management located further away from the site would best support biodiversity and ecosystem resilience at a wider scale.

Where compensation for specific species is being sought, the focus should be on maintaining or enhancing the population of the species within its natural range. This approach might also identify locations for providing species-specific compensation further away from the site. Where they exist, Spatial Species Action Plans should be used to help identify suitable locations.

Any proposed compensation should be place based, take account of the Section 6 Duty (Biodiversity and Resilience of Eco systems Duty), the DECCA framework and appropriate ecological advice from the local authority Ecologist, NRW and, or a suitably qualified ecologist.

Each stage of the step-wise approach must be accompanied by a long term management plan of agreed and appropriate avoidance, minimisation, mitigation/restoration and compensation measures alongside the agreed enhancement measures. The management plan should set out the immediate and on-going management of the site, future monitoring arrangements for all secured measures and it should clearly identify the funding mechanisms in place to meet the management plan objectives. The management plan must set out how a net benefit for biodiversity will be achieved within as short a time as possible and be locally responsive and relevant to local circumstances.

- 6 Finally, where the adverse effect on biodiversity and ecosystem resilience clearly outweighs other material considerations, the development should be refused.

Green Infrastructure Statement

Site Address: Lodge Service Station, Shelone Road, Briton Ferry, Neath SA11 2NS

Proposed Development: Extension and replacement of existing units and office

Site description: A commercial working garage site, the front made up of various units and vehicle sales. The rear of the site consists of 4 units, a cleaning bay and two-story office, the old maintenance workshop buildings have been demolished to make way for the new building, there is a two-storey office/Store block, the ground is made up of concrete and hard core. There is an old railway embankment to the rear of the premises which has some trees on the boundary, to the west of premises lays the railway line, there is a Bridge designed by Brunel on the boundary. To the east, next to the community centre steel fencing has been erected to replace broken chain link fence.

Surrounding area description: the application site is situated on Shelone Road, this has a main road frontage (image attached) with houses opposite.

Development Impacts:

The front of the application premises has a canopy and various retail units, there are no bats or provision for them as there are many builds and trees within and on the boundary of the site for any habitual requirements if they did appear.

A Large soakaway was dug and filled with clean stone, this allows surface and rainwater to safely be disposed of whereas before there was no provision. Trees have been retained and maintained to enhance the appearance and provide homes for wildlife, eco drains have been added on the boundary to the east next to the Community centre where water is fed to the soakaway.

Noting that

The site has been a working motor garage repair site for over 60 years, the work recently carried out has modernised and improved the appearance along with enhancing the green infrastructure making it more eco-friendly for the environment.

Biodiversity Enhancements Proposed

Existing trees have been maintained along with natural hedgerow and plants, birds have ample habitual space, the nearby bridge provides shelter along with open eaves for what bats may develop. As an added edition I would provide 2 bird boxes and 2 Bat boxes to add extra support for wildlife

Conclusion.

The site has been greatly enhanced and brought up to modern standards, much cleaner and economical to run and work, water dispense has had a huge impact on the environment, we continue to reduce the carbon footprint and work in a clean environment by taking regular advise from build control during construction.

Signed,

Paul Boyce

Dated. 11/06/2024