



Green Infrastructure Statement

**Land adj. Abergarwed Farm,
Near Resolven, Neath**

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Site Address: Land Adj. Abergarwed Farm, Near Resolven, Neath.

Proposed Development: a single commercial storage building with turning and parking areas. (See Plan at Figure 1.)

Site description: predominantly comprising of Previously Developed Land. Other than the existing hard standing, the majority of the site consists of gravel substrate, on which typical species of “brown-field” plants are growing. Boundary features include old stone walls and wire fencing, Bramble scrub, and trees. The site also includes a section of vehicular access track which leads to the site directly off the B4242.

Surrounding Area description: The habitats present within the survey area include bare ground, Ephemeral Short Perennial and boundary features including marginal scrub with mature trees, and wooded Riparian Corridor. Immediately adjacent to the site, there are domestic gardens, other industrial land, and a small watercourse. Beyond the immediate habitats are grazing pastures, native woodland and watercourses (Neath River and Canal). (See Aerial at Figure 2.)

Development Impacts:

Habitats

Due to the small scale of the proposed development, very few adverse impacts are envisaged from the construction or the operational phases, however, consideration of effects on statutorily designated sites must be given.

The site is adjacent to a watercourse (NPT Watercourses SINC) and the Neath Canal is immediately at the northern end of the site boundary.

Ancient semi-natural woodland can be found 127m from the northwestern boundary, on the far side of the B4242.

Appropriate recommendations in relation to cautionary guidance are provided in Section 6 of the PEA Report (I&G Ecological Consulting 2024). Any change in design will require an updated consultation by a suitably qualified ecologist.

Species

According to the PEA (I&G Ecological Consulting 2024) the field survey identified the on-site habitats as having the potential to support the following species: Bats, reptiles, terrestrial phase amphibians, invertebrates and to a lesser degree Nesting Birds, small mammals.

Wider Site boundaries include trees, and scrub (including INNS). The Trees will be unaffected by the proposed development. There will be no loss of connectivity resulting from the development.

No lighting plan has been made available at the time of writing this GI Statement, but any external lighting will be designed to maintain dark corridors and minimise adverse effects on the feeding and commuting behaviour of the local bat populations (must conform to the following guidance <https://theilp.org.uk/publication/guidance-note-8-bats-and-artificial-lighting/>).

Biodiversity Enhancements Proposed (as recommended in the PEA, I&G 2024),

1. Native hedgerow planting to the Western boundary – at base of stone bank, to form screening below roadside stone retaining wall. Additional interplanting along the western boundary to create continuous hedge line. (See indicative plan at Figure 3).
2. Bat boxes to mature trees within site boundary.
3. Multi-chamber swift box to be installed externally to new unit.
4. A reptile and amphibian hibernaculum will be created in a sheltered, undisturbed location within the site.
5. Additional bird nesting provision will be in the form of small-holed nest boxes to trees within the site.
6. Scraping off of selected areas of gravel to reveal sub layers, allowing faster re-vegetation of ephemeral/short perennial cover, providing an increase in nectar opportunities for invertebrates.
7. Design and implementation of an INNS treatment and management plan.

NB. Locations and specifications of all enhancements proposed should be indicated within any agreed Biodiversity Enhancement Plan.

Evidencing the Stepwise Approach

The site layout has been designed in such a way as to avoid the need for any tree removal. The Building position is such that it will be outside of any root protection zone along the western boundary to protect the retained treeline.

The positioning of the building on the existing concrete platform will avoid any unnecessary removal of ephemeral vegetation but any loss of floristic forage resources will be mitigated by additional tree planting and increased ephemeral habitat in the wider site.

Planting of native shrubs and trees will provide additional resources for a range of invertebrates, small mammals and birds.

Additional man-made habitats for Bats and Nesting Birds will bring net benefit as existing quality habitat for these species will not be lost as a result of the development.

Currently the treeline to the north (alongside canal), ends at the northern tip of the site. Net biodiversity benefit will be achieved by planting native trees and shrubs (as a double staggered row, with Standard trees) between the northern end of the site and the South West corner, running parallel with the road, connecting to existing trees and shrubs along the boundary with an adjacent garden. Any gaps along this boundary will be planted with native trees and shrubs to form a complete hedgerow to the western site boundary, as far as the site entrance. Although the entrance end of hedgerow will not directly connect to off-site habitats, the only 'gap' is the width of the single-track entrance road.

Artificial features including bird and bat boxes, and a reptile/amphibian hibernaculum will provide additional refuge and be a net benefit to local wildlife.

Successful management of INNS will mean that existing and developing habitats will be of better quality with less competition.

Conclusion

It is considered, that subject to the above, that the proposed development would enhance biodiversity, and deliver net benefits for biodiversity by increasing the quantity of nectar and seed forage and of shelter resource, through planting of native hedgerow species . Net benefits are also delivered by additional artificial nesting and shelter for birds, bats and reptiles.

Adverse effects of construction and operation of the industrial unit will be minimised and avoided by following a Construction Environmental Management Plan, or similar which sets out best practice protocols to protect locally/nationally designated sites (watercourses and woodland).

Given the design of the development layout and incorporation of biodiversity enhancements as above, there will be no loss of habitat connectivity or displacement of species as a result of the development.

Therefore, as a result of the ecological measures embedded within the proposed scheme, it is expected that there will be a demonstrable net benefit for biodiversity. The site has been identified as being of relatively low ecological value, with immediate on-site impacts adequately mitigated on-site and net gain being achieved primarily through on-site and off-site measures. All habitats retained/created/enhanced on site, will be managed for long-term biodiversity benefit.

APPENDIX - PLANS

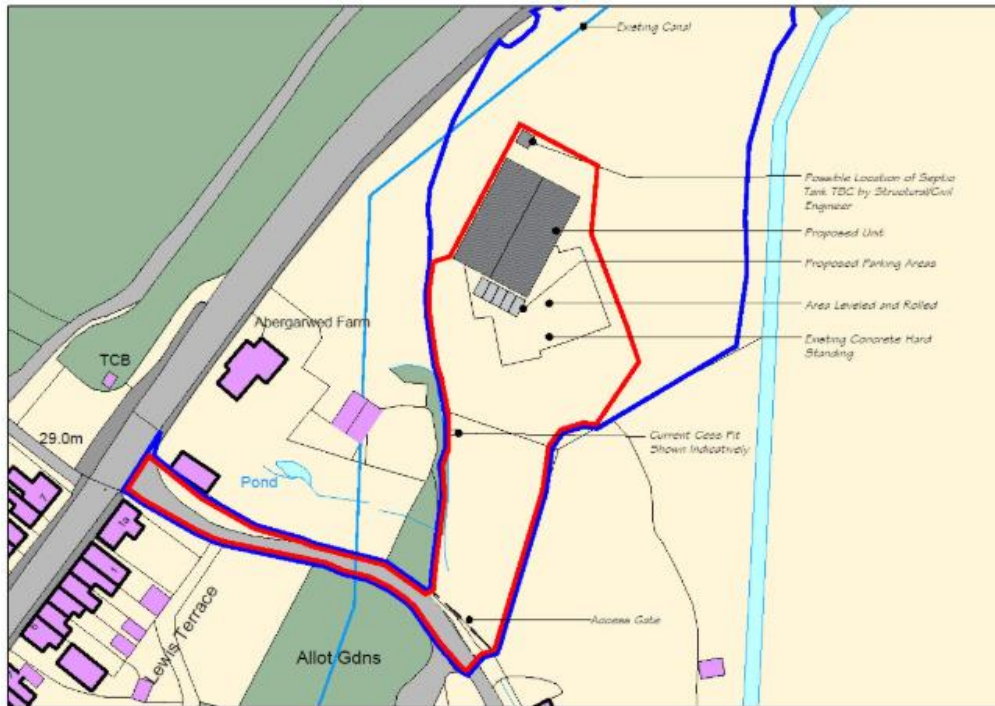


Figure 1: Current Site Layout Plan extracted from JBA Consulting –
Flood Consequences Assessment May 2024



Figure 2. Site in wider landscape context



Figure 3. Hedgerow planting plan (indicative).
Solid green line indicates new hedgerow planting. Dashed line indicates gapping up

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Advice in this report is based on the judgment of I&G Ecological Consulting and the interpretation of data gathered during the course of their survey on the property named in this document.

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