

Green Infrastructure Statement

Site Address: 43 Neath Road, Briton Ferry, SA11 2DX

Proposed Development: Proposed change of use of a first and second floor office (Use Class: B1) to a house of multiple occupation (Use Class: Sui Generis)

Planning Portal Reference: PP-13210796

Site description

The site is located on a corner plot between Neath Road and Villiers Street in the south of Briton Ferry. The existing property comprises a part two part three-storey detached building along with a small yard to the rear of the property. The land along Neath Road has a flat topography, while a gentle slope exists along Villiers Street. The property lies at the top of this slope on Villiers Street.

The A48 is located approximately 200m to the south of the site and access to the M4 can be found via junction 42 from the west. The Briton Ferry District Centre as designated in the LDP lies immediately to the north of the site and extends north along the A474 for approximately 425m. The District Centre contains a number of local facilities such as a library, a chemist, public houses, convenience stores, hair dressers and barbers, and fast-food eateries. The site is centred on the following grid coordinates E:274118, N:194006.

Green Infrastructure Strategy

Paragraph 6.21 of Planning Policy Wales defines green infrastructure as *"the network of natural and semi-natural features, green spaces, rivers and lakes that intersperse and connect places. Component elements of green infrastructure can function at different scales and some components, such as trees and woodland, are often universally present and function at all levels. At the landscape scale green infrastructure can comprise entire ecosystems such as wetlands, waterways, peatlands and mountain ranges or be connected networks of mosaic habitats, including grasslands. At a local scale, it might comprise parks, fields, ponds, natural green spaces, public rights of way, allotments, cemeteries and gardens or may be designed or managed features such as sustainable drainage systems. At smaller scales, individual urban interventions such as street trees, hedgerows, roadside verges, and green roofs/walls can all contribute to green infrastructure networks."*

The Environment (Wales) Act 2016, provides a context for the delivery of multi-functional green infrastructure. Its protection and provision can make a significant contribution to the sustainable management of natural resources, and in particular to protecting, maintaining and enhancing biodiversity and the resilience of ecosystems in terms of the diversity within and connections between ecosystems and the extent and condition of these ecosystems, so that they are better able to resist, recover from and adapt to pressures. This means that the development of green infrastructure is an important way for local authorities to deliver their Section 6 duty under the Environment (Wales) Act 2016.

The quality of the built environment should be enhanced by integrating green infrastructure into development through appropriate site selection and use of creative design. With careful planning and design, informed by an appropriate level of assessment, green infrastructure can embed the benefits of biodiversity and ecosystem services into new development and places, help to overcome the potential for conflicting objectives, and contribute to health and well-being outcomes.

The DECCA Framework and Net Benefits for Biodiversity

The DECCA framework is used for evaluating ecosystem resilience based on five attributes and properties specified in the Environment (Wales) Act. These are: Diversity, Extent, Condition, Connectivity and Aspects of ecosystem resilience.

A summary of the definitions is described below:

- **Diversity:** maintaining and enhancing diversity at every scale, including genetic, structural, habitat and between-habitat levels. This supports the complexity of ecosystem functions and interactions that deliver services and benefits.
- **Extent:** incorporating measures which maintain and increase the area of semi-natural habitat/features and linkages between habitats. In general, smaller ecosystems have reduced capacity to adapt, recover or resist disturbance.
- **Condition:** The condition of an ecosystem is affected by multiple and complex pressures acting both as short term and longer term types of disturbance. Both direct and wider impacts should be considered, for example avoiding or mitigating pressures such as climate change, pollution, invasive species, land management neglect etc.
- **Connectivity:** This refers to the links between and within habitats, which may take the form of physical corridors, stepping stones in the landscape, or patches of the same or related vegetation types that together create a network that enables the flow or movement of genes, species and natural resources. Developments should take opportunities to develop functional habitat and ecological networks within and between ecosystems, building on existing connectivity.
- **Aspects** of ecosystem resilience (adaptability, recovery and resistance): ecosystem resilience is a product of the above four attributes. Adaptability, recovery and resistance to/from a disturbance are defining features of ecosystem resilience.

Paragraph 6.4.11 of Planning Policy Wales states that “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.”

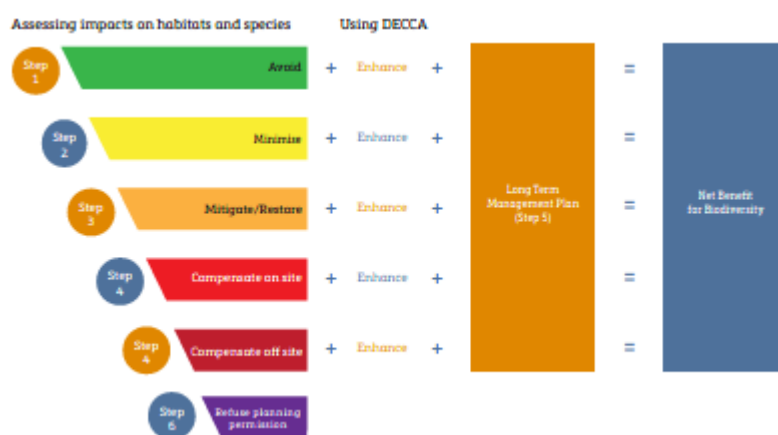


Figure 1: Summary of the Step-Wise Approach

Paragraph 6.2.12 of Planning Policy Wales states that “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 6.4.15) has been applied.

Development Impacts

As aforementioned, the proposals relate to a change of use planning application of a first and second floor office (Use Class: B1) to a house of multiple occupation (Use Class: Sui Generis). The only external alterations comprise the reinstatement of a second-floor window on the south elevation and the addition of 1 bat and 1 bird box. No work is proposed within the loft-space of the building, as indicated within the accompanying Existing and Proposed Floor Plans (Ref: 0526_P02). As such, no trees, hedgerows or vegetation will be removed as part of the development, and a European Protected Species License is not required to undertake the proposed works.

The above demonstrates that the proposals adhere to Step 1 of the Step-Wise Approach as it avoids the unnecessary removal of existing trees, hedgerows and vegetation on site, demonstrating that the baseline position in terms of green infrastructure provision will remain unaltered.

Demonstrating Net Benefits for Biodiversity [NBB]

The accompanying Bat and Bird Enhancement Report states that a Schwegler 1FQ Bat Box and a Vivara Pro WoodStone Swift Box will be placed at the southern and northern elevations of the property respectively.

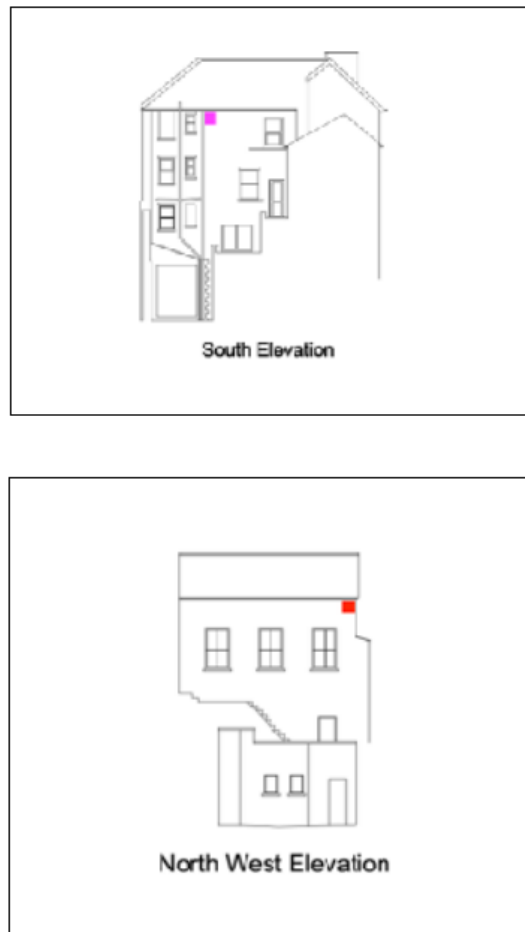


Figure 2: Recommended Locations of Bat and Bird Enhancements

Furthermore, a planter will be placed within the courtyard area of the property, and will contain appropriate species to the surrounding area. The exact location of the planter can be found within the Existing and Proposed Floor Plans (Ref: 0526_P02). These enhancement proposals will assist with the creation of a resilient and biodiverse ecological network across the site, and help ensure that the proposals comply with Chapter 6 of Planning Policy Wales (Edition 12).

Conclusion

It is considered that this Green Infrastructure Statement follows the Step-Wise approach advocated in Planning Policy Wales, and has evidenced that the proposed development is respectful of existing green infrastructure assets at the site, and seeks to avoid impact as much as possible.

The proposed development would build resilient ecological networks and deliver net benefits for biodiversity by incorporating bird and bat boxes along with a planter filled with appropriate species for the area. In addition, no trees, hedgerows or vegetation are proposed to be removed as part of the proposals.

The biodiversity enhancements described above, achieve NBB by following the Step-Wise Approach of firstly avoiding, then minimising, mitigating and as a last resort compensating for, adverse impacts on the environment in a development.

Dated: 6th August 2024