

Parc Pelenna

Planning Statement

August 2024



theurbanists

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1.0 Introduction

This statement has been prepared by The Urbanists on behalf of Trivselhus UK Holdings Limited, for the purpose of an Outline planning application in respect of the Parc Pelenna leisure proposals. This statement is written in respect of development proposals for a premium holiday lodge development on land located between the settlements of Tonna and Resolven, in Clyne and Melincourt Parish and Resolven Ward. The project will create a private leisure development that will include holiday lodges and supporting facilities. The proposal is designed to complement the wider natural leisure offer of the Vale of Neath, the adjacent Brecon Beacons National Park and South Wales Valleys landscape.

1.1 Site description

The development site is located on land between the settlements of Tonna and Resolven. The site is approximately 22ha and includes commercial forestry, a former quarry, and grazing land, with occasional use for shooting parties. It features a combination of current and historical land cover and uses, such as existing residential and other build structures, commercial forestry land, hosting of above-ground electrical lines and below-ground high-pressure gas mains, as well as grassland pastures. More minor developed areas include hardstanding and amenity gardens. Those historic uses in the site are relatively modern uses for quarrying and coal mining, and like more recent infrastructure are spread across the site.

A wider area of applicant ownership lies adjacent to the site, both east and west, comprising further and conjoined commercial forestry of approximately 24ha.

In areas adjacent to the site, there are historical remnants of cairns dating to the Bronze Age, and further Roman fortifications are present in the local vicinity nearby the site and wider areas

The site is located on the south-eastern aspect slopes of the Vale of Neath, with existing access via Fairyland Road to the south-east of the site, connecting more widely to the B4434, A465, and thereafter the M4 motorway. A more basic track exists to the north of the site through an area of woodland, connecting the southern upper-slopes to the lower northern area of the site, adjacent to the B4434. The site is intersected by public rights-of-way, with an

adjacent bridleway and designated cycle route. The Tennant Canal is located nearby, which features a cycle route located along its path, which provides connectivity to local settlements.

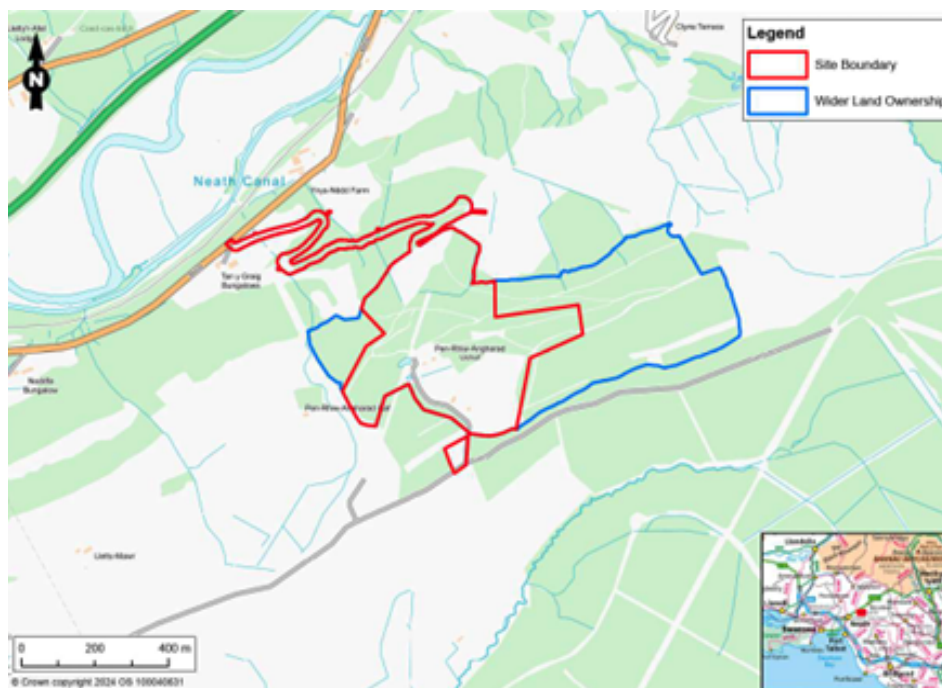
The site's setting is mainly characterised by variable woodland cover but also existing open spaces of pasture, areas more recently cleared of woodland, and interspersed built elements or historic remnants. Other natural habitats present include regenerating scrub and broadleaved and mixed woodland, small areas of plantation coniferous woodland, and some amenity ponds associated with the residential property.

The wider area comprises mainly scrub, broadleaved woodland, mixed woodland, and some minor bare ground tracks and standing water.

The local context around the site also features similar woodland and open pasture, including an area of plantation coniferous woodland with underlying superficial Peat deposits. The residential properties nearest to the site in local area are interspersed along the valley.

The site is located in a Pre-Assessed Area for wind energy, and approximately 4.5km northeast (at a minimum) is the Pen y Cymoedd Wind Farm. An additional proposed wind farm is located further to the south-east of the site, currently progressing through the Development Consent Order (DCO) process for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIP).

Figure 1: Aerial View of the site, wider area of ownership, and surrounding local area.



1.2 Development description

The development is proposed to meet a demand for high-end tourism accommodation in a location that is integrated within the local area's natural assets, and respects the local historic assets and special landscape character. The aim is to maintain, preserve, and, where possible, enhance those existing qualities as part of the proposal. The proposed development is constrained to the site area only, with ecological mitigation and enhancement proposed in both the site and adjacent wider areas of applicant ownership (the 'wider area').

The following components of both 'hard' and 'soft' development are proposed to integrate a holiday home and leisure development within the existing setting and its natural resource offering:

Proposed built or landscaped elements:

- 120 Holiday home properties, of both level and raised platform designs.
- A Site-Management-controlled leisure and hospitality clubhouse, including a large communal pool area.
- An associated new internal road and its spurs, accessing the B4434 by way of a new junction.
- Surface-water drainage, including attenuation and discharges to existing watercourses as required.
- Services infrastructure required for the above; including currently proposed waste-water treatment on-site, good and solid waste stores, and other piped and electrical cabling as required.
- Hard landscaping altering levels as required, and the soft landscape planting of new trees and other vegetation.

Proposed mitigation, compensation and enhancement elements:

- Ecological enhancement and improved habitat management, sensitive to the context and opportunities of the site, with a particular focus on woodland and transitional habitats; this to provide a Net Benefit for Biodiversity, an Ecosystem Resilience enhancement, and to enhance Green Infrastructure more generally.
- The above also produces appropriate levels of landscape visual and character mitigation.
- Any required stabilisation of land associated with historic mining activity, should it be required.

- Any required remediation of land and soils where potential contamination effects may be made harmful or worsened by the proposed development.

As part of the proposed development, the existing residential and outbuilding properties would be proposed for removal. However, the electrical power lines that transect parts of the site would be respected, and suitable offsets would be provided as a constraint to any landscaping and development. The proposed development and landscaping has regard for the historic industrial remnants on the site, the engineering constraints they may pose, as well as the potential impacts on the surrounding setting of older heritage assets in the local area. The high-pressure gas main that crosses the site in two directions, connecting the nearby pumping station, restricts development within a certain distance to less vulnerable uses, as agreed under consultation with the Health and Safety Executive. Generally, those areas of greater vulnerability are proposed to be retained or used for landscaping, infrastructure, access, and other non-residential uses.

An existing basic track is located to the north of the site, through areas of woodland and field, winding up from the valley floor, and the B4434; it would be the proposed location of an improved development site access for construction and later development access use.

2.0 Planning History

Planning applications recorded online for the site are set out below:

Reference	Proposal	Date	Decision
P2006/1084	Details under condition 5 (materials for parking areas and tracks) under previous planning consent P2005/0962	27.07.06	Approved (14.09.06)
P2003/0946	Removal of condition restricting the occupation of dwelling to a person solely/mainly or last employed in agricultural/ forestry	04.06.03	Withdrawn (20.09.03)
P2005/1283	Extend period of time relating to condition 1 of previous planning consent P2003/0261 (removal of near surface pennant sandstone)	09.08.05	Approved (02.11.05)
P2008/0854	Construction of 4 Holiday Lodges	15.07.08	Approved (18.08.08)
P2012/0354	Construction of 32 Holiday homes, new access road, stables and children's play area (Outline).	20.05.14	Approved (20.08.14)
P2017/0628	Variation of condition 3 to allow an extension of time for a further 2 years for the submission of reserved matters.	30.06.17	Approved (02.08.17)
P2018/0618	Section 73 application to vary wording of condition 3 of Planning Application P2017/0628 granted on August 2nd 2017 to allow extension of time.	24.06.18	Withdrawn
P2024/0186	Request for Screening Opinion under Regulation 6 of the Town and Country Planning (Environment Impact Assessment) (Wales) Regulations 2017 for the construction of a series of holiday lodges, supporting infrastructure (access, parking, landscaping and drainage) and a clubhouse with a pool, food and drink hospitality and associated road.	02.04.24	EIA required
P2024/0318	Request for a Scoping Opinion in accordance with Regulation 14(1) of the Environmental Impact Assessment (Wales) Regulations 2017 for a leisure holiday resort development.	21.05.24	Awaiting Decision

3.0 Policy context

The site lies within the Local Planning Authority (LPA) of Neath Port Talbot Borough Council, and therefore the national and local planning contexts more generally applicable are:

- Legislation
- National Planning Policy and Technical Advice Notes (TANs); and
- Local Development Plan and supplementary planning guidance.

The specific relevant contexts for the proposed development as a whole are the following:

Legislation

Town and Country Planning Act 1990

Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004

Planning Act 2008

Planning Act Wales 2015

Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

Active Travel (Wales) Act (2015)

National Development Framework

Future Wales - the National Plan 2040 (Feb 2021)

National Guidance

Planning Policy Wales, Edition 12 (February 2024)

TAN 4: Retail and commercial development

TAN 5: Nature conservation and planning

TAN 12: Design

TAN 13: Tourism

TAN 18: Transport

TAN 21: Waste

TAN 23: Economic development

TAN 24: The Historic Environment

Local Development Plan

Neath Port Talbot Adopted Local Development Plan (2011-2026)

Supplementary Planning Guidance

Planning Obligations SPG (October 2016)

Open Space and Greenspace SPG (July 2017)

Biodiversity and Geodiversity SPG (May 2018)

Pollution (October 2016)

Renewable and Low Carbon Energy (July 2017)

The Historic Environment (April 2019)

3.1 Procedural Legislation

The following legislation sets the material considerations for planning permission decisions.

Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, sets out the requirements of LPAs to consider the longer term impacts of the decisions made, in order to work better with communities to deliver a sustainable outcome and prevent on-going issues such as poverty, climate change and health inequalities.

The Planning Act (Wales) 2015 states that Local Planning Authorities must exercise their function in relation to the determination of planning applications “... as part of carrying out sustainable development in accordance with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, for the purposes of ensuring that the development and use of land contribute to improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales.”

The Act puts in place seven well-being goals. The Act makes it clear that the listed public bodies must work to achieve all of the goals, not just one or two. The goals are identified in the image below.



Figure 2: The Well-being Goals:

The Future Generations Act defines Sustainable Development in Wales as: “The process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the well-being goals.”

The Sustainable Development Principle sets out how public bodies are required to work to apply sustainable development. These include, looking longer term to ensure that the needs of future generations are met without compromise, to meet their own needs. It also includes taking an integrated approach so that public bodies use the well-being goals to guide their objectives. Other key elements are involving a diversity of the population in the decision making, and working in a collaborative way to find shared solutions. Another way to work sustainably is to understand the root causes of issues to prevent them from occurring.

Active Travel (Wales) Act (2015)

This act set out that Welsh ministers must publish annual reports on the amount of active travel journeys made in Wales. There is also a requirement for Local Authorities to identify and plan for active travel routes and increase the provision for walking and cycling, and encourage users to rely less on cars. Local highway authorities are required to give greater consideration to the requirements of walkers and cyclists and provide greater infrastructure provision to them. The act also highlights the need to build connections between key sites such as workplaces, hospitals, schools and shopping areas with active travel routes.

3.2 National policy

The following national-level policies are further material considerations and set out how the above legislation should be interpreted and applied in planning permission decisions

Planning Policy Wales (2024) Ed. 12

The national planning policy context for the development is provided by **Planning Policy Wales (Edition 12) and Future Wales: The National Plan 2040**. Collectively these documents provide the guide to ensure the delivery of sustainable development proposals that improves the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of current, and as required by the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act, future generations.

Planning Policy Wales (Edition 12) (PPW) is the Welsh Government's land use planning policy for Wales. The primary objective of PPW is to ensure the planning system contributes towards the delivery of sustainable development, and improves the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, as required by the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act. PPW selects placemaking as the process of creating sustainable places and maximising wellbeing. PPW identifies key planning principles that include: growing our economy in a sustainable manner; delivering educational facilities; creating healthy and accessible environments; sustaining communities; and, maximising environmental protection and limiting impact.

These principles are then underpinned by National Sustainable Placemaking Outcomes which interrelate.

It also sets out the four key themes which contribute to placemaking thus:

- Strategic and spatial choices, including how to achieve good design that enables access and inclusivity, environmental sustainability and respect for local character; and healthier places, including enabling opportunities for outdoor activity and recreation.
- Active and social places, including encouraging the multiple use of open space and facilities, where appropriate, to increase their effective use.
- Productive and enterprising places, including the promotion of healthy lifestyles, and physical and mental health and wellbeing, provision of integrated green infrastructure and resilience to climate change.
- Distinctive and natural places, including the need to conserve and enhance the historic environment and its assets; protecting and enhancing green infrastructure assets and the protection and enhancement of biodiversity; protection of trees and woodland where they contribute towards the ecological, character or green infrastructure functionality of an area; and to integrate Sustainable Drainage Systems to minimise flood risk and maximise other benefits.

The way these different principles, themes and targets integrate when considering planning proposals is summarised in Figure 5 below. That is, the first consideration is how the proposals contribute towards strategic and spatial choices; then how they contribute towards active and social places, productive and enterprising places and distinctive and natural places. The outcomes of this process should result in a proposal that contributes towards a sustainable place and achieving the well-being goals and sustainable placemaking outcomes.

Figure 3: Applying PPW principles in decision-making



Each theme contributes in different ways to the placemaking outcomes. Leisure development generally falls under the active and social places theme, which includes the key placemaking outcomes of: integrated green infrastructure; resilient to climate change; promotes physical and mental health and wellbeing; unlocks potential and regenerates; convenient access to goods and services; mix of uses; makes best use of natural resources; offers cultural experiences; provides equality of access; and is vibrant and dynamic.

The promotion of Active Travel is prominent in PPW; it highlights the important role of the planning system in promoting and supporting the delivery of Active Travel and creating the right environment and infrastructure to make it easier for people to walk and cycle. The Active Travel Act 2013 makes walking and cycling the preferred option for shorter journeys, particularly everyday journeys, such as to and from a workplace or supermarket or in order to access health services.

Active Travel is integral to placemaking, creating life and activity in public places and providing the opportunity to meet people; it is a key component for sustainable places delivering social, economic and environmental benefits, therefore, new development must be fully accessible by walking and cycling.

Figure 4: Active and Social Outcomes (P.42 PPW 12)



The updated Chapter 6 was initially set out in guidance, titled 'Addressing the nature emergency through the planning system: update to Chapter 6 of Planning Policy Wales'. This has now been incorporated into the Edition 12 of PPW.

The main changes to policy requirements, being:

- **Green Infrastructure:** A stronger emphasis would be placed on a proactive approach, covering cross-boundary consideration, identifying key outputs of green infrastructure assessments, the submission of proportionate green infrastructure statements with planning applications and signposting Building with Nature standards.
- **Net Benefit for Biodiversity and the Step-wise Approach** (see Figure 8 below): Off-site compensation is acknowledged as a last resort, and the need to consider enhancement and long-term management at each step is recognised. Green Infrastructure statements are set out as a requirement to demonstrate the 'step-wise approach' i.e. avoid, minimise, mitigate/restore, compensate on-site, compensate off-site. This links to the DECCA framework of ecosystem resilience to evidence adequate enhancements (Diversity, Extent, Condition, Connectivity and resultant Adaptation/resistance/recovery aspects)
- **Trees and Woodlands:** a close alignment is taken with the step-wise approach, as well as promotion of new planting as part of development based on securing the right tree in the right place. For any trees that may be removed as part of a proposed development, consideration of their GI value including carbon, landscape amenity and ecological resilience sets a baseline from which a proportionate ratio of planting compensation shall be considered. Furthermore, the prescribed minimum ratio or areas of tree cover to compensate for any tree/woodland loss should be regarded.

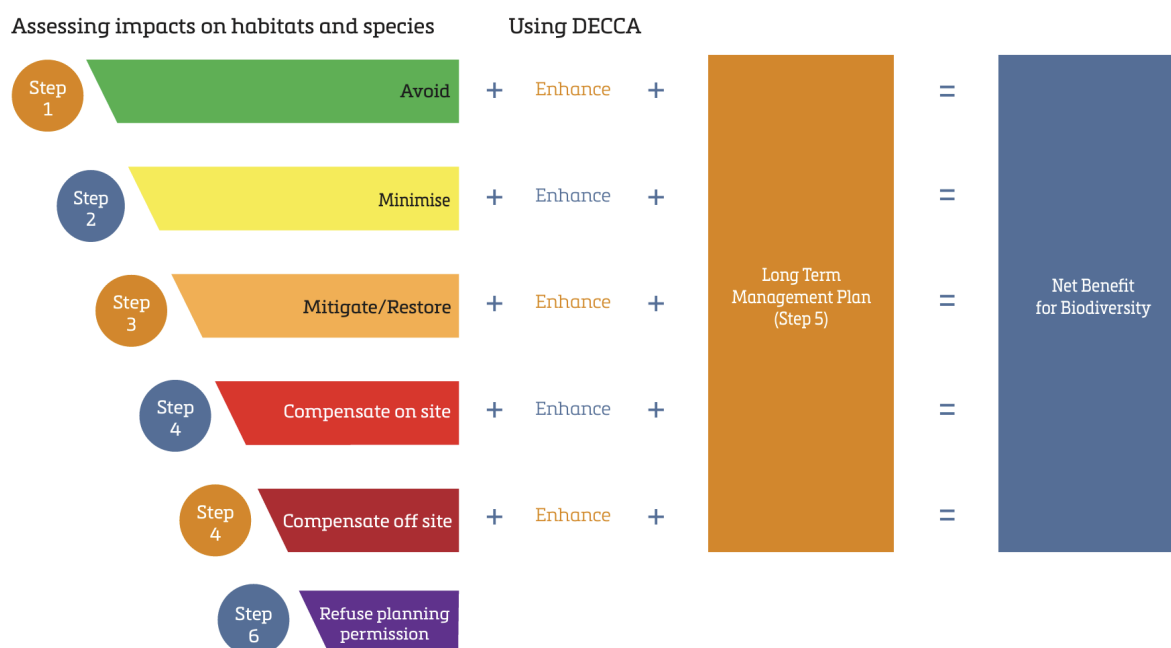


Figure 5: Summary of the Step-Wise Approach

Future Wales - The National Plan 2040

Future Wales - The National Plan 2040 was adopted in February 2021 as the national development framework setting the direction of development in Wales to 2040. The National Plan provides a strategy to address key national priorities through the planning system, including developing a vibrant economy, developing strong ecosystems, achieving decarbonisation and climate-resilience and improving the health and wellbeing of communities.

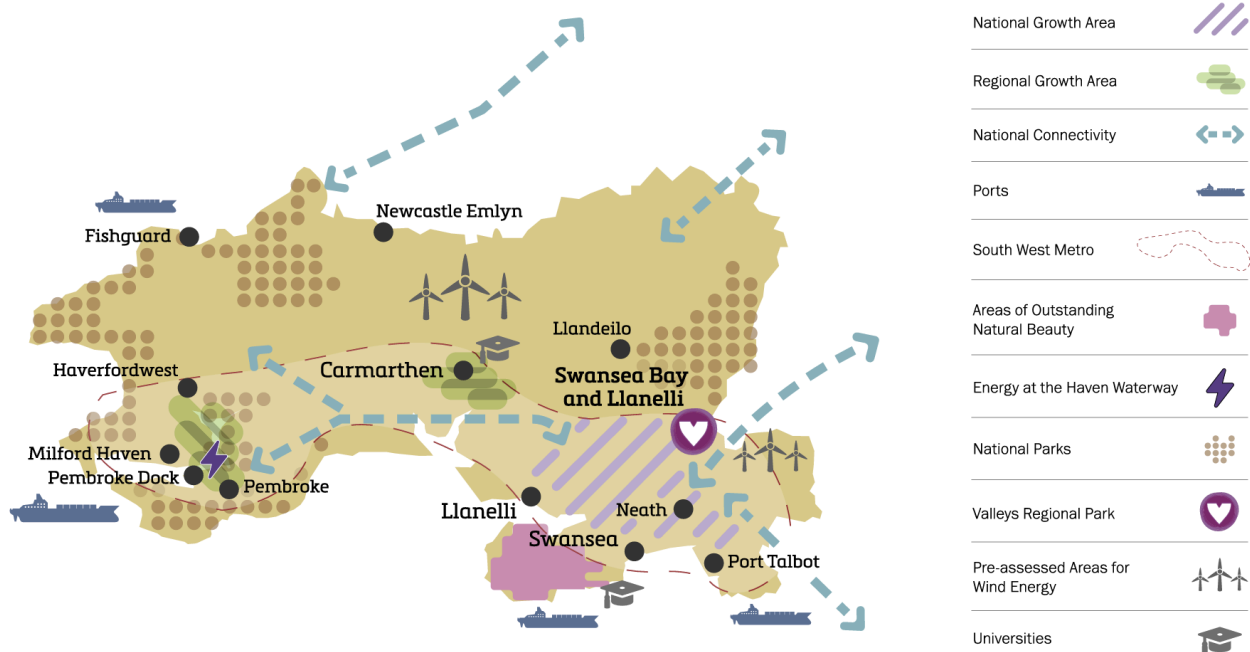
It sets out 11 outcomes of Future Wales comprising the vision for Wales in 2040. The aim is for a Wales where people live:

- In connected, inclusive and healthy places;
- In vibrant rural places with access to homes, jobs and services;
- In distinctive regions that tackle health and socio-economic inequality through sustainable growth;
- In places with a thriving Welsh Language;
- In towns and cities which are a focus and springboard for sustainable growth;

- In places where prosperity, innovation and culture are promoted;
- In places where travel is sustainable;
- In places with world-class digital infrastructure;
- In places that sustainably manage their natural resources and reduce pollution;
- In places with biodiverse, resilient and connected ecosystems; and
- In places which are decarbonised and climate-resilient.

Future Wales divides Wales into 4 regions with The Site falling into the South West region as covered by the Regional Strategic Development Plan. The area adjacent to the site has been identified as a route for National Connectivity. The surrounding area is also designated as a National Park.

Figure 6: South-West Regional Strategic Development Plan



Future Wales also provides a series of national policies (Strategic and Spatial Choices), the following are pertinent to the proposed development:

- Policy 1- Where Wales will grow;
- Policy 4- Supporting Rural Communities;

- Policy 5- Supporting the rural economy;
- Policy 9- Resilient Ecological Networks and Green Infrastructure;

Policy 1 identifies that South Wales is a key location for future growth and Policy 2 sets out the need to create spatial frameworks to achieve the placemaking aims of the Wales planning system.

Policy 4 sets out that development plans should support rural communities, assess their needs and set out policies that support them. This should encourage employment opportunities and local services to those areas.

Policy 5 sets out how the rural economy should be supported to promote and sustain economic growth by delivering proposals that meet the employment needs of the area. This policy also sets out the importance of supporting development that broadens the economic base of the area.

Policy 9 explains the importance of identifying areas which should be safeguarded and created as ecological networks for their importance for adaptation to climate change, for habitat protection, restoration or creation, to protect species, or which provide key ecosystems services, to ensure they are not unduly compromised by future development; and also the importance of identifying opportunities where existing and potential green infrastructure could be maximised as part of placemaking, requiring the use of nature-based solutions as a key mechanism for securing sustainable growth, ecological connectivity, social equality and well-being.

3.2 Technical Advice Notes (TANs)

Technical Advice Notes should be read in conjunction with Planning Policy Wales (PPW). TANs should be taken into account by the local planning authorities in the preparation of Development Plans. They may be material to decisions on individual planning applications and would be taken into account by inspectors and the Welsh Government in the determination of appeals and called-in planning applications. The following TANs are relevant to the proposed development:

Technical Advice Note 4: Retail and Commercial Development (2016)

This TAN focuses on promoting viable urban and rural retail and commercial centres as the most sustainable locations to live, work, shop, and socialise. Another objective is to sustain and enhance the vibrancy, viability, and attractiveness of retail and commercial centres. There is also a focus on improving access to and within development centres by all modes of transport, especially sustainable methods.

Technical Advice Note 5: Nature Conservation and Planning (2009)

This Technical Advice Note provides advice about how the land use planning system should contribute to protecting and enhancing biodiversity and geological conservation. It brings together advice on sources of legislation relevant to various nature conservation topics that may be encountered by local planning authorities. The key principles of planning for nature conservation are set out, followed by advice about the preparation and review of development plans, including the relevant statutory requirements.

Technical Advice Note 12: Design (2016)

The revised TAN aims to equip all those that are involved in the design of development with advice on how sustainability, through good design, may be facilitated through the planning system. It sets out the core design principles that any development proposal must follow to help create a sustainable environment and exhibit a high level of design quality. These are structured via the five key objectives of good design:

- Access - Ensuring ease of access for all;
- Character - Sustaining or enhancing local character; promoting legible development; promoting a successful relationship between public and private space; promoting quality, choice and variety; and promoting innovative design;
- Community Safety - Ensuring attractive, safe public spaces and security through natural surveillance;
- Environmental Sustainability - Achieving efficient use and protection of natural resources and enhancing biodiversity; and,
- Movement - Promoting sustainable means of travel.

Figure 7: Objectives of Good Design



Technical Advice Note 13: Tourism (1997)

This TAN identifies the importance of The Wales Tourist Board and their responsibility for promoting and developing tourism in Wales. Tourism makes a major contribution to the Welsh economy, provides employment in a wide variety of occupations, and can bring benefits to local economies and communities in urban and rural areas.

Technical Advice Note 21: Waste (2017)

This TAN provides guidance on how the planning system should contribute towards sustainable waste management and resource efficiency. The 'Towards Zero Waste- One Wales: One Planet' sets out a long-term framework for waste management in Wales up to 2050, taking into account social, economic, and environmental outcomes.

Technical Advice Note 23: Economic development (2014)

This document recognises that economic development can include any form of development that generates wealth, jobs and income, but planning decisions should be made in a

sustainable way that considers social, environmental, and economic factors. This TAN, however, does focus primarily on B-class uses.

Technical Advice Note 24: The Historic Environment (2017)

This TAN sets out how development should consider the historic environment, including World Heritage sites, Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings and Historic landscapes.

3.3 Local policy

The Adopted Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council Local Development Plan (2011-2026)

The LDP sets out the local planning policy framework for guiding development within the district. It designates sites for protection and/ or enhancement and allocates sites for development, supported by written policies providing more detail on the nature of development that will be acceptable in the district.

Policy	Summary
SP1- Climate Change	This policy is focused on implementing measures to address the causes of climate change. Such as, developing the efficiency and sustainability of settlements and transport. Provision will also be made for renewable and low carbon energy generation within NPT.
SP2- Health	This policy focuses widely on health and improving the high levels of poor long term health across NPT. There is a specific reference to encouraging more active lifestyles through a range of accessible leisure, health and social facilities throughout the Borough.
SP4- Infrastructure	Developments will make efficient use of existing infrastructure and where required make adequate provision of new infrastructure, ensuring there are no adverse impacts on the area and community.
SP6- Development in the Valleys Strategy Area	In the Valleys Strategy Area, the local economy and communities will be enhanced and reinvigorated and the distinctive environment will be protected through the following area-specific measures: making provision for the majority of new valleys residential development, safeguarding employment sites and uses; taking a flexible approach to encourage employment uses, including live-work units and protecting cultural identity including areas of importance for the

	Welsh language.
SP11- Employment Growth	Existing employment uses will be supported and safeguarded and new and expanding employment developments will be encouraged.
SP13- Tourism	The economic prosperity of Neath Port Talbot will be promoted through encouraging continued growth in the tourist sector by: encouraging high quality, sustainable tourism development; providing a flexible approach to the development and conversions to tourism facilities; resisting, where appropriate, proposals which would result in the loss of tourism facilities; and supporting tourism proposals through the allocation of land for tourism development.
SP14- The Countryside and the Undeveloped Coast	The countryside and undeveloped coast, including landscapes, seascapes and agricultural land, will be protected and where feasible enhanced through the following measures: the protection of the open countryside through the control of inappropriate development outside settlement limits; the protection of the undeveloped coast through the control of inappropriate development; the designation and protection of Special Landscape and the designation and protection of Green Wedges.
SP15- Biodiversity and Geodiversity	Important habitats, species and sites of geological interest will be protected, conserved, enhanced and managed through specified measures: including identification and protection of statutory and non-statutory wildlife related sites, and protection of natural heritage features. - relates to Policies EN6 Important Biodiversity and Geodiversity sites, and EN7 important Natural Features, as well as SP16
SP16- Environmental Protection	Environmental protection of air, water, and ground, as well as the environment generally will be protected where feasible, by a number of specific measures regarding development: these include ensuring no significant adverse effects on those environmental aspects, preference to brownfield (where appropriate and deliverable), and do not increase the number of people exposed to significant levels of pollution.
SP17 - Minerals	Safeguarding a minimum supply of aggregate and identified sites, promoting efficient use of resources, ensuring not unacceptable impact on environment and amenity from mineral development, minimising conflict.
SP20- Transport Network	The transport system and infrastructure will be developed in a safe, efficient and sustainable manner through the following measures: promoting connectivity and access to public transport through improving bus and rail facilities; supporting enhancements to the walking and cycling network; promoting

	efficient use and links to the transport network through the identification of a road hierarchy; restricting development which would have an unacceptable impact on highway safety; requiring development proposals to be designed to provide safe and efficient access and promote sustainable transport; an appropriate parking provision;
SP21- Built Environment and Historic Heritage	The built environment and historic heritage will, where appropriate, be conserved and enhanced through the following measures: encouraging high quality design standards in all development proposals; protecting gateways from intrusive and inappropriate development; safeguarding features of historic and cultural enhancement: importance; the identification of the following designated sites to enable their protection and where appropriate enhancement.
OS1- Open Space Provision	Where there is a quantitative deficiency in outdoor sport, children's play, informal space or allotments, provision will be sought, including the requirement for maintenance. In the case of employment or commercial development proposals of over 1,000 sqm, provision will be sought for associated amenity space.
EN2 - Special Landscape Areas	This policy sets out how landscapes of high quality shall be protected unless it can be demonstrated that there are no significant adverse impacts on the features and characteristics for which the SLA has been designated. The site lies in Vale of Neath (SLA3) designated landscape area, and development will only be permitted where it is demonstrated that there will be no significant adverse impacts on the features and characteristics of that area.
EN6- Important Biodiversity and Geodiversity Sites	Non-statutory natural environment designation and Local Biodiversity Action Plan or S42 habitats or species will be permitted only where they conserve and where possible enhance natural heritage, where there is no reasonable alternative site, and the development benefits outweigh a designated site's importance; and mitigation / compensation agrees where adverse effects.
EN7- Important Natural Features	Development that would adversely affect natural assets will only be permitted where they are fully accounted for in the design, with retention and protection where possible, and values taken into account in mitigation if required.
SN8- Pollution and Land Stability	Proposals which would be likely to have an unacceptable adverse effect on health, biodiversity and/or local amenity or would expose people to unacceptable risk due to the following will not be permitted: Air/ noise/ light/ water pollution; Contamination; Land instability.

M1- Development in Mineral Safeguarding Areas / M2- Surface Coal Operations	Area of mineral safeguarding and of surface coal: it must be demonstrated that the mineral concerned is no longer of any value or potential value (or other criteria less likely possible to fulfil), and surface coal operations are highly unlikely to be appropriate irrespective of unacceptable principles of Policy M2.
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There is a Replacement Local Development Plan (2023-2038) which is currently being prepared and will gain more weight as it progresses through preparation. The current programme is anticipated to be as follows:

- Pre-Deposit (Preferred Strategy) Consultation (Regulation 15) - November-December 2024
- Deposit Consultation (Regulation 17) - December 2024-November 2025
- Independent Examination (Regulation 23) - September 2026-December 2026
- Adoption - April 2027.

3.4 Supplementary Planning Guidance

Supplementary Planning Guidance expands upon the policies outlined in the Local Development Plan for key topics and / or types of development. The most relevant are as follows:

- Planning Obligations SPG (October 2016)
- Open Space and Greenspace SPG (July 2017)
- Biodiversity and Geodiversity SPG (May 2018)
- Pollution (October 2016)
- Renewable and Low Carbon Energy (July 2017)
- The Historic Environment (April 2019)
- Landscape and Seascape (May 2018)
- Design (July 2017)

4.0 Planning Assessment

4.1 Introduction

The proposed development is detailed in accompanying documents and plans to a level sufficient to establish the acceptability of the principles of the development and its core design parameters, its benefits, as well as its potential impacts and the associated mitigation approach (to be further detailed as part of any reserved matters).

The accompanying details include an Environmental Statement (ES) suitable to provide an Environmental Impact Assessment, as was considered required by the Local Planning Authority in response to an EIA screening request made. This ES provides a response to the concerns raised in a Scoping Opinion request made to the Local Planning Authority, and addresses the potential for 'Significant' environmental effects from the proposal.

Other areas of specialist concerns which are considered in accompanying plans and documents are assessed in summary below. Some of those specialist areas of concern are also assessed within the ES, where there is a more detailed consideration of any effect types and scales.

A full schedule of supporting document and plans is below:

- Phase 1 Ground Conditions Desk Study - Hydrock Preliminary Road Long Sections Sheet 1 - Hydrock Preliminary Road Long Section Sheet 2 - Hydrock Preliminary Road Levels Assessment - Hydrock Catchment Plan - Hydrock Drainage Assessment - Hydrock Initial Lighting Strategy - Hydrock Utilities Statement - Hydrock Energy Feasibility Report - Hydrock Drainage Strategy - Hydrock Transport Assessment - Hydrock
- Archaeological and Heritage Assessment - EDP
- Illustrative landscape masterplan - EDP
- Landscape and Visual Appraisal
- Arboricultural Impact Assessment
- Outline Green Infrastructure Assessment
- Design and Access Statement - Ross Peedle Architecture
- Location Plan - Ross Peedle Architecture

- Concept Masterplan - Ross Peedle Architecture
- Parc Pelenna Business Case-June 24 - Continuum
- Environmental Statement - The Urbanists
- Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) Report - The Urbanists

The proposed scheme is considered to be in line with both the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and Active Travel (Wales) Act (2015), as well as all other associated and planning legislation. This includes the requirement to carry out Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) with required stakeholders, the consideration of those comments in design revisions if required, and the reporting of this process.

The scheme would provide an economic benefit to the local area, through direct workforce employment, as well as secondarily employment and economic prosperity through increased visits by tourists to local businesses. It is understood that the nearby Gnoll Country Park may especially benefit from improved viability of its new visitor centre, due to be have its construction commence shortly. There would also be procurement chains needed by the management company, and many of these could involve local businesses. Some of those benefits and the viability consideration of the scheme are presented in the accompanying business case. The proposed scheme is considered supportive of 'Future Wales: The National Plan-2040', as well as TAN 13 regarding tourism and TAN 23 regarding economic development.

The scheme and Outline planning application comply with the requirements of Planning Obligations SPG. There are multiple areas of specialist concerns, with regard to the proposed development, the site, and where relevant surrounding areas. These are set out in the documents and plans above, and below is a consideration of these with regard to planning legislation and policy:

4.2 Design and Function

The proposed scheme has a high regard for the design of proposed lodges such that they integrate with the surrounding. This includes the provisional consideration of lodge and the central hub heights, limited to maximum to avoid impacts to the landscape setting and visual impact. This height is proposed to be approximately 8.5m at a maximum, while the minimum

building height is to be approximately 4.5m, and will vary to suit their site location and context.

The lodges have also been designed to minimise impact to the natural environment specifically, and therefore the area of ground they would cover across the site. The smallest lodges are to be approximately 6.7m x 8.2m, the largest lodges approximately 9.8m x 12.4m, while the communal leisure and hospitality hub is to be a maximum of approximately 33m x 47m. The unit types and designs are illustrated within the Design and Access Statement as are other design and function considerations, including integration of built elements into a sloping site.

The layout of lodges and associated infrastructure has been informed by existing coal mining risks, associated with historic workings and adits, by removing proposed development from those areas that are highest risk. A scheme of works to further investigate and manage risks on site would be provided as part of any reserved matters. The scheme has been highly considered, even at this Outline stage, and the various informing aspects are discussed further below.

Also to be provided is access and promotion of active travel routes through and adjacent to the site, as well as provision of active recreational routes and green spaces within the proposed development. These would include areas of specific recreational and outdoor activities which would be considered to meet any requirement that may arise due to local policy OS1, regarding provision of open space, if required.

The principles of the design and functional use of the development for leisure is considered to accord with the local plan policy SP6 regarding development in the valleys strategy areas. This sets out support for a flexible approach to encourage employment uses, which the scheme would partially provide, and so policy SP11 relating to employment growth is also partially relevant. The proposed scheme would provide employment benefits whilst also enhancing the protection of cultural built and natural assets and promoting these. The scheme also accords with SP6 as well as SP13 in its promotion of that cultural offering to tourists, within a high quality and sustainable rural tourism development. The rural aspect of the proposed accord with the requirements of policy SP14 relating to various rural and coastal quality protections, by the proposed scheme being sensitive to its landscape setting and therefore appropriate. Similarly the proposal accords with the Landscape and Seascape SPG.

The overall design of the scheme also accords with TAN 12, regarding good design elements, and also accords with the local Design SPG. While not strictly relevant the design is also supportive of the themes within the Open Space and Greenspace SPG, by way of the greenspace and access to nature provisions for site users.

4.3 Ground Conditions

The ground conditions of the site have been assessed within a Phase 1 ground condition assessment which includes a desk-based consideration of the mining risk from coal mines under and overground adits, spoil or other mining remnants within parts of the site. That assessment also considers the potential contamination at site from historic and contemporary use.

While the site is located on a minerals safeguarding site, the potential feasible extraction is not considered likely, given the constraint of policy SP17 and nearby residential properties. As such this policy is considered complied with, alongside policy M1.

There has also been a consideration that potential ground risks to the development, and any existing risks which could be made worse by the proposal, mean further surveys are necessary. Despite that further recommendation, there are standard approaches to those surveys to identify hazards on site and, importantly, standard approaches to the adequate management of associated risks. These ensure that the scheme could be found acceptable at this Outline planning stage, with the reassurance that one of a number of those standard approaches could make any risk acceptable. It will be necessary, both practically and commercially, to ensure those standard approaches take place to ensure the viability of the proposed scheme. Inherently this will be required by any developer to commence any construction, and such details would be most appropriate at the reserved matters stage. As such, the principle of the proposed development as part of this Outline planning application is considered in adherence with, and will again later regard, the relevant SPG policy regarding pollution, as well as local plan policy SN8.

The site sits on a relatively steep slope, which is part of its inherent natural qualities that are desirable for the proposed development. The stability of those slopes is paramount to the development proposals success. As such, all roads and development will in the majority utilise the natural contours and existing gradients, setting back from steep edges where possible, and with any requirements for engineering limited as far as possible by this and

other passive design. This includes consideration of the building's designs to better conform to existing gradients, and reduce the need for any cut and/or fill of ground. The proposed internal road and buildings follow contours where possible. This will result in a similar reduced need for any engineered retaining features, but where potentially still necessary areas have been safeguarded for a range of potential measures. The principle of some extent of slope stabilisation is therefore accepted in the design, where some levelling of ground may be required or gradients reduced for the proposed internal road. Further details would be provided as part of any reserved matters applications, once details of structures and infrastructure are further defined at that later stage of planning. As such, the principle of the proposed development as part of this Outline planning application is considered in adherence with the relevant local and national policies regarding sustainable design and local policy SN8 regarding land stability. It also accords with the Pollution SPG.

Overall the ground conditions at the site have been assessed by way of desktop exercises, and the design and potential options for development have considered this to a reasonable degree for this stage of the planning process.

Importantly, the design enables reasonable avoidance or mitigation measures, by standard approaches. This ensures the feasibility of managing the potential ground issues raised, and makes approval at Outline stage possible. Reserved matters could deal with further survey and assessments required, alongside further design details to demonstrate maximum avoidance or any potential issues, and the suitable (standard) method of mitigation of any ground hazards identified (and/or further detailed) provided where avoidance is not possible.

4.4 Access

The proposed internal road has been provisionally designed, as already discussed, with a high regard for the topography and conditions of the site. This includes that consideration relating to: minimising ground works required (as above); but also the needs for access across the site; the gradients required for all potential modes and emergency vehicles to reasonably attend site; the avoidance of potentially sensitive areas and trees (where possible); and, the drainage provision that will need to be further detailed / the areas for drainage. Those considerations have led to a preliminary design that would minimise harmful impacts while delivering what is likely to be the only feasible design option to meet those considered requirements. The acceptability of this route has been previously established in planning approvals and so is again relied on here. As such, the proposed internal road is considered

suitable for Outline approval. Allowance has been made within the redline to accommodate the associated measures for this internal road (drainage, realistic engineering options etc.) and any minor route changes once a detailed design is arrived at, which would usually be required at the reserved matters stage.

The site location is well connected to active travel routes in the local area. A single Public Right of Way (PRoW) crosses the centre of the site, and a bridleway and national cycle network route passes adjacent, to the south of site. These routes would connect visitors from the site with surrounding settlements, and areas of natural assets, along established and connected routes. The nearby canal path to the north of site further diversifies the range of potential active travel, with a more accessible route option along a flatter path which also connects settlements in the area. The likely provision of facilities, or required development, to promote such uses would be detailed as part of any reserved matters.

The wider highways network connected to the internal road has been considered with regard to the potential impacts of the proposed development, use, and access point between the site and the B4434. This begins at the potential junction which is principally in an acceptable location with good visibility splays, and relatively low 30mph speed limit on the public highway, and was considered acceptable by previous approved planning permissions. The proposed alternative access to that existing at Fairyland Road is considered more appropriate even than previously approved holiday lodge permissions, which still utilised that single track road. The impact on the wider highways network that connects the site to the local area and further has been considered and found acceptable. There would not generally be peak times of new access use, it being naturally beneficial to spread out the arrival and departure of visitors; therefore the proposal would not present any significant impacts to existing peak flows in the local area that would require further considerations.

The acceptability of the site from a highways and transport perspective can be clearly established even at this Outline stage, and precedent in planning supports this. Reserved Matters details required have already had general principles and requirements explored, separately delivered from the Local Authorities perspective as part of PAC, and those likely needed are enabled by the proposed scheme. As such, the principle of the proposed development as part of this Outline planning application is considered in adherence with the relevant local policy SP20 regarding transport and SP4 regarding use of existing infrastructure. It would also be in accordance with local policy SP2 regarding health and active

travel.

4.5 Landscape and Visual

The landscape and visual elements of the site as it exists, the potential impacts of the proposed development, and the impacts of potential mitigation are discussed in accompanying reporting. The Landscape and Visual appraisal was developed and used to inform the design, propose mitigation, as well as reflect on this. The ES Chapter regarding Landscape and Visual consideration of proposed developments potential for 'significant' environmental effects, in line with the appraisal but in more detail, and with the additional consideration of potential residual effects.

It is accepted that the proposed development will have some effect on the landscape character of the site, and this more likely because of the location's qualities which contribute to the wider Special Landscape Area designation. As such, the manner in which the design has considered the location's value, and reflected on it the layout and design of built elements, has resulted in strong design that minimises the negative landscape and visual effects. Further mitigation by way of tree planting and woodland management, both in site and a wider area of ownership, would serve to further reinforce the reduction of potential effects from the proposal. These principles are established as part of this Outline planning proposal. These demonstrate the acceptable integration of the proposed scheme within the landscape. While some details surrounding built elements and landscaping / management prescriptions would be decided at a later stage of planning, these are relatively minor. The maintenance of a suitable scheme can therefore instead be ensured during the reserved matters stage of planning, to align with and deliver the outline principles of mitigation and enhancement proposed.

The proposed scheme is considered to be in accordance with the principles of Local policies EN2 regarding the protection of Special Landscape Areas from significant adverse effects. As set out previously, the proposal accords with the Landscape and Seascape SPG.

4.6 Ecology

The consideration of ecology by way of evaluation of natural habitats and potential for protected or otherwise important species at the site has taken place. This within both an ecological impact assessment and ES chapter covering the same assessment but with more

emphasis on considerations relating to potential for 'Significant' effects. The scale of this consideration is expansive, with surveys for some species extending over multiple years.

The potential for 'significant' or other effects and the scale of these has informed the design and the recommendation made for mitigation. Those recommendations are either integral to the design or additional elements set out in this application, and to be detailed further at a reserved matters stage. The resultant residual effects after mitigation have been considered as part of that reporting.

For the site's areas and habitat, consideration of designated sites, ancient woodland, and those habitats present on the site, reporting concludes that there would be no residual significant effects. This conclusion is based on phase 1 surveys of habitats in the site, as well as more details NVC survey of some areas of woodland. The conclusion takes into account the considerations of the site's areas and habitat status, as well as mitigation detailed in the design or further set out in principle in that ecological reporting. There is also the potential to produce a positive effect for general habitats, in line with the step-wise approach and a need to produce both a net benefit for biodiversity (NBB) as well as an enhancement of ecological resilience (ER). The delivery of that potential positive effect would require the details of the scheme and mitigation to be further set out, as part of any reserved matters.

Similarly those reserved matters details would further ensure the delivery of a compliant GI scheme that produces multiple benefits and ecosystem services. An outline Green Infrastructure Statement is provided at this stage setting out those considerations of the Step-wise process as are possible, enhancements proposed, and high-level management proposals. Together these present that the scheme is currently and can continue in the reserved matters stage to be found acceptable. Further details would be provided at a reserved matters stage and a revision or addendum to the Green Infrastructure Statement then required.

The consideration of potential significant effects on any bird species was able to be scoped out early, based on the multiple bird surveys carried out over multiple years, including updated surveys. For other faunal species of interest comprising invertebrates, amphibians, reptiles, bats, badger, hedgehog, polecat and brown hare the potential impacts were assessed; with some based on surveys carried out.

There were no residual significant effects on any single species, with the implementation of proposed mitigation, including that for nesting birds. For Reptiles, invertebrates, and hedgehog, there is the potential for a positive effect, which again is reliant on further detail at the reserved matters stage. Of note is that the lack of significant effects on bats would be reliant on the application for a protected species licence from Natural Resource Wales. This would normally be the case for any planning application, and so the principle of this being established at the outline planning stage is also considered suitable. Should any further potential effects on this species or any other arise as part of the reserved matters, none would be considered of any significance. Suitable further mitigation, if required to reduce any negative effects, would be in-line with the principles already established at this outline stage of planning.

The ecological considerations incorporated in the design (such as avoidance of significant woodland impacts etc.), and additional proposed or recommended elements of the scheme (such as enhancement of that same woodland etc.), would produce an NBB and ER enhancement. The information currently provided clearly provides for the above at this Outline stage, with the high-level ability to adhere to the Mitigation hierarchy and offer a further enhancement to be detailed later. At the reserved matters stage details of ecological Mitigation and enhancement would be expected to set out the more specific form of these, the scale and type of the overall benefit provided, and the management measures to ensure their sustainability. They would also provide further assurance of the multifunctional GI benefits from those, and the maintenance or betterment of opportunities for any specific protected species that may be impacted by the proposal.

As such, the principle of the proposed development as part of this Outline planning application is considered in adherence with the Future Wales Act Policy 9, TAN 5, Planning Policy Wales Ed. 12 Chapter 6 as well as adheres to local policies SP15, EN6, EN7, and is supportive of SP16. The Biodiversity and Geodiversity SPG is further considered to be complied with.

4.7 Arboriculture

The consideration of trees within the site has included those significant woodland assets present, but also the detailed consideration of designations that have been applied by Natural Resource Wales. The conclusion of the arboricultural impact assessment considers no woodland at site to meet the criteria for ancient woodland, based on OS historical mapping.

Areas of trees would be impacted by the proposed development, including some tree loss because of parts of the access road, and associated engineering / drainage requirements. Within the proposed design, efforts have been made to avoid the loss of trees, especially where they are of higher arboricultural and potential other values, with buildings arranged to avoid trees in the majority. Where not possible and trees are required to be removed, suitable compensation is possible across the large areas of the site and wider area available for tree planting. This includes targeted replanting of native broadleaved species in areas of more recently felled woodland, on site and in the wider area, which would provide a wider Green Infrastructure and ecosystem resilience benefit. As such, the principle of the proposed development as part of this Outline planning application is considered in adherence with the relevant local policies EN7, EN6, and SP15. It is also supportive of SP1, regarding protection of trees and their cooling effects which reduce demand for technological cooling.

4.8 Historic Environment

Within the site and wider area are historic remnants of mining activities. Adjacent to the site is a single area of Scheduled Monument (SM) comprising cairns. A further SM is located nearby the site to the south-west. These assets are considered in the accompanying archaeological and heritage assessment. The proposed development would safeguard the more modern historical assets within the site, and avoid impacts to those offsite. The proposed avoidance of development impacts, by way of providing a suitable offset, is inherent in the proposed design. As such, the principle of the proposed development as part of this Outline planning application is considered in adherence with the relevant TAN 24 regarding the SM, and local policy SP21 regarding historic heritage. The proposal is also in accordance with the Historic Environment SPG.

4.9 Water

A sustainable approach to water use and management within the site is proposed to begin with a catchment approach, informed by the drainage assessment. That accompanying assessment has considered the levels of run-off from areas of the proposed development, and set out the principle of maintaining each catchment's outflows from run-off. This would be managed by sustainable drainage principles, including swales and other such GI features, which would outflow within the same catchment as they collect from. This principle would extend to the proposed management of internal road run-off, and which has been allowed within the proposed scheme by the extension of the redline to accommodate flows to the existing small watercourses across the sites.

Similarly, management of foul water is currently proposed to be dealt with within the proposed development by a centralised sewage treatment plant (STP), controlled by a central management company. The option of connecting to mains foul is also to be explored as part of more detailed design, but establishing the principle acceptability of an STP is considered necessary to safeguard any approval. As such, an operating company would be accountable for either maintaining the foul outflow to public sewerage, or the quality of STP outflows and the suitability of these therefore ensured. Any STP outflows would look to utilise existing watercourses through the site, to discharge to the wider River Neath. As such, the principle of the proposed development as part of this Outline planning application, by either option, is considered in adherence with the relevant local policy SP16, and supportive of SP15 in the wider catchment.

4.10 Other Services

A range of other service provisions for the proposed site have been considered at this early stage of outline planning. This includes the supplies of potable water, gas (if required), and national grid electrics, which are seen to be already available in the local area, demonstrating the likely feasibility of connecting to these. The use of energy options within the site has also been considered in a energy technology feasibility report, which established the principles of renewable and sustainable energy technology within the site. Similar consideration of the external lighting of the site at a high level has similarly been had within the Initial Lighting Strategy plan. This establishes the principles which will be explored further at the reserved matters stage, and the potential concerns for this, including noting likely ecological interests.

The proposal therefore accords or will have the ability to accord with the local plan policy SP1, and Renewable and Low Carbon Energy SPG.

4.11 Health and Safety

The site includes an area where a high pressure gas pipeline both crosses and lies nearby the site, and as such presents a potential hazard to the proposed use which at some locations may have an unacceptable risk. A consultation with the Health and Safety Executive regarding a previous design iteration established certain principles, including the limited habitation in the inner risk zone to only three lodges wholly located there. This advice has been carried over to this proposed development, and as such is considered compliant with the advice of the Health and Safety Executive.

As part of the Local Authorities scoping exercise, the high pressure gas main asset owner (National Gas Transmission) were contacted, and advised a holding objection based on their calculated 49m Building Proximity Distance (BPD). The acceptable density of occupancy in this BPD is considered likely to align with the restrictions on holiday lodge density previously advised by the Health and Safety Executive. It is considered that on any approval of Outline planning, the details of occupancy restrictions in the risk zone, and any safeguarding method statement required for construction could then be set out. At this stage the asset owners reasons for a holding objection and interpretation of BPD restrictions are not known and so can't be addressed. Irrespectively, both would be a statutory consultee because of that pipeline and will have multiple opportunities to provide comments as part of the application process, both at Outline and and later Reserved Matters stages.

5.0 Conclusion

The proposed development has had a high regard for the sensitivities of the site and its individual qualities as well as those relating to its place in the wider area. The site does include some constraints to potential development. These are considered to have been largely avoided or can be mitigated by either standard approaches or by other principles / approaches (set out for providing later detail), as part of this Outline application. The opportunities of the site and wider areas natural assets and setting have been highly considered, as being inherent to the viability of the scheme, and therefore look to be protected and enhanced.

The Outline scheme's reporting identifies areas of further required assessment, but is considered to provide the necessary information to positively respond to planning policy and legislative requirements. Where further detail is needed, the principles of acceptability have

been established. This either by details already provided in reporting or plans, or a scheme of standard approaches / mitigation that could provide an acceptable way forward. Where known, areas of further detail suitable for the reserved matters stage of planning have been identified. As such, a positive approach has been had that looks to provide a framework to progress the application further, in an acceptable manner.

Overall, the scheme would provide a much needed economic benefit to the local area, has considered adequately the potential constraints and the design reflective of these and opportunities to safeguard and enhance the site. The proposed development is considered suitable, by the principles of existing consideration, design, and future further investigation and potential standard measures to achieve an Outline planning approval. The details provided regarding future reserved matters stage requirements shows a positive approach, and a willingness to proceed with a balanced public benefit at the forefront of the proposal. The scheme has been demonstrated to accord and support all relevant legislation and policies, and as such approval at this Outline planning stage would be considered appropriate.