

Hiraeth.

Neath Abbey Car Park
DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT INCLUDING HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT
Neath Abbey | Monastery Road | Neath | SA10 7DH

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UPRN	Originator	Zone	Level	Type	Role	File number	Suitability	Rev
2355	HIR	XX	XX	RP	A	06801	S2	P1
Suitability		S2 - Issued for Information						

FOREWORD

Address

Neath Abbey
Monastery Road
Neath
SA10 7DH

Grid Reference (NGR)

SS737973
E 273720
N 197313



///people.adjust.hint

Unitary (Local) Authority | Neath Port Talbot Council

Listing

Neath Abbey is a Scheduled Ancient Monument

Location

The site is not located in a Conservation Area.

Hiraeth Architecture

Architects specialising in the conservation of historic buildings, and advising upon the architectural and conservation aspects of the project for this report.

This document has been produced to support a planning application for a new car park in proximity to Neath Abbey. It is to be read in conjunction with the associated drawings produced by **Hiraeth** Architecture. The proposals are born out of a desire to improve visitor experience and accessibility by increasing parking capacity at the site, and to also reduce the impact of vehicles currently parking on the site.

The proposed site is in the ownership of Neath Port Talbot Council, whilst the adjacent site of Neath Abbey is in the ownership of Cadw. The Abbey is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM) and therefore classified as being a nationally important site of archaeological interest. Archaeological sites of national importance are given legal protection by being placed on a 'Schedule' of monuments. In Wales there are over 4000 examples of Scheduled Monuments, which include Roman remains, burial mounds, castles, bridges, earthworks, the remains of deserted villages, industrial sites and 20th century military complexes etc. Scheduled Monuments cannot include in-use ecclesiastical buildings or monuments occupied as a dwelling, and unlike Listed Buildings, they are not assigned grades. It is noted however, that the proposed site sits outside of the boundary of the Scheduled Ancient Monument.

To arrange a site visit, please contact the applicant using the following details:

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Aerial View of Neath Abbey in colour to the centre of the picture, showing the surrounding context including the proposed car park site outlined in red to the west



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General view of the proposed site for the parking from the north. Note the restricted width of the road as existing, and that tree screening of surrounding industrial buildings occurs mainly at canopy level. Other considerations include the telephone poles running along the perimeter of the site.

OVERVIEW DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE AND HISTORIC ASSET

The site is located to the northwest of Neath Town Centre on the opposite side of the River Neath. It is roughly rectangular in plan with the principal access road running north-south, dividing the wider site into two distinct sections - the Abbey to the east and a slice of green space to the west. The adjacent Neath Abbey was built on a rocky terrace overlooking the marshland beside the River Neath, whilst the monument is now surrounded to the north by a railway line, to the west by industrial buildings, to the south by the Tennant Canal and to the east by the River Clydach.

The medieval design of Neath Abbey follows the typical structure of Cistercian monasteries with the Church to the north and all other claustral buildings to the south surrounding an open cloister. Although in a ruinous state, the development of the Abbey can be clearly identified with structures including: the Lay Brothers' Range (c.1170-1220), the Monk's Living Quarters (c.1220-1250), the Abbey Church (c.1280-1330) and the Tudor Mansion (c.1540-1560). A more comprehensive description of the existing structures is covered within the Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment produced by Headland Archaeology. However, this summary is given by Cadw in their scheduling description:

'Neath Abbey was founded in 1130 by a Devonshire Knight named Richard de Granville. Built upon a rocky terrace overlooking the marshland beside the River Neath, its proximity to the marsh afforded it

peaceful seclusion. It was established as a daughter house of Savigny in Normandy but was, together with all the other houses of the Order of Savigny, absorbed into the Cistercian Order in 1147. As the Abbey consolidated its estates, the expanding monastic community soon began to outgrow the initial buildings and several major programmes of reconstruction occurred during the period between the late 12th and 14th centuries. The church itself was erected in one building operation between about 1280 and 1330.

The ranges around the cloister survive on the east and west sides. The east range contained the dormitory, reredorter and chapter house and was completed in the early 13th century. That portion of the range nearest the church has almost entirely been destroyed, although several of the vaulted undercrofts in the southern end of the range survive. The south range contained the refectory and kitchen although these have almost entirely been destroyed. The west range contained the dormitory, refectory and common room of the lay brothers and was completed in the late 12th century.

After the Dissolution of the monasteries in 1539, the abbey was purchased by a wealthy Tudor magnate. During this time a large Tudor house developed over the south-east corner of the monastic complex. The house was lived in by a succession of wealthy families until the early 1700's when it was abandoned and copper working in the abbey grounds began. By 1900, the abbey site was disused and overgrown.'



The principal view of Neath Abbey from the site looking east. The railings in the foreground provide a clear delineation of the line of the Scheduled Ancient Monument, however, the existing road is in stark contrast to the otherwise manicured context. To the left of the image, trees screen the railway line which is raised on a banking

HISTORY OF THE HISTORIC ASSET AND THE HISTORIC FABRIC

A comprehensive assessment of Neath Abbey was undertaken by Headland Archaeology in their 2023 report. The relevant findings have been summarised in the followings sections:

'Neath Abbey was established in c.1130 by Richard de Granville, an undated charter records the granting of a tract of land between the Rivers Tawe and Neath to the Monks of Savigny in West Normandy. In 1147 the abbey was absorbed along with all the Savigny houses into the Cistercian Order and became a Cistercian House.

The abbey was directly associated with the occupation of the Norman conquest. To the local populace, the abbey will presumably have been seen as a symbol of conquest colonisation. During the centuries after its establishment, the monastery gained significant power and control over large areas of land in the south and west of Wales.

In the medieval period, Neath Abbey was attacked on several occasions. In 1316 during the rebellion of Llywelyn Bren, the abbey was plundered, and uprisings led by Owain Glyndŵr in the early 15th century meant the abbey frequently suffered from pillaging and the loss of valuable ornaments.

Neath Abbey survived the initial dissolution in 1536 and in 1537 but the monastery was eventually dissolved in 1539. The estate and land were sold by the crown to Sir Richard Williams (Cromwell) as part of a parcel of monastic possessions who subsequently sold off parcels of the estate lands. The 16th century saw the beginning of the conversion of the abbot's lodging into a Tudor mansion house, though historians dispute who commissioned the conversion.

In the 17th and 18th centuries, the abbey buildings passed through several families. Sir John Herbert 2nd, acquired the site of the abbey in 1617, and it is probable at this point that the lodge was converted into a dwelling. The abbey passed to Sir John Herbert's daughter Mary and son-in-law Sir William Dodington, before being passed onto their son Edward Dodington, and in turn, to Philip Hoby in 1650. The house remained in the Hoby family until the end of the 17th century, and Philip Hoby's widow is thought to be the last family member to have occupied the house.

The industrialisation of the area around Neath Abbey and wider Glamorgan has its roots in the 16th-century, when a charter dated to 1565, which was later confirmed by King James I in 1604, allowed Thomas Smyth to establish a copper works. In the late 17th-and early 18th-centuries the exploits of Sir Humphrey Mackworth's "Company of Mine Adventures" led the way for the establishment of the metal industry in the area.

In the 18th century, the abbey had come to the Rice family of Dynevor. In 1731, the abbey buildings were leased for 14 years to be used for copper smelting. Industrialisation of the area around Neath Abbey continued throughout the 18th century and the use of the abbey for metal working developed.

In the 18th century, during the site's use as a copper works, the Tudor mansion house was occupied by the workers and their families, evidence of which is indicated by a 1770 estate map created by John Davies, which appears to indicate the presence of several segmented parcels of land (possibly gardens) to the south of the Tudor mansion house. By the late 18th century, an account of the abbey by Armand-Louis-Bon Maudet,

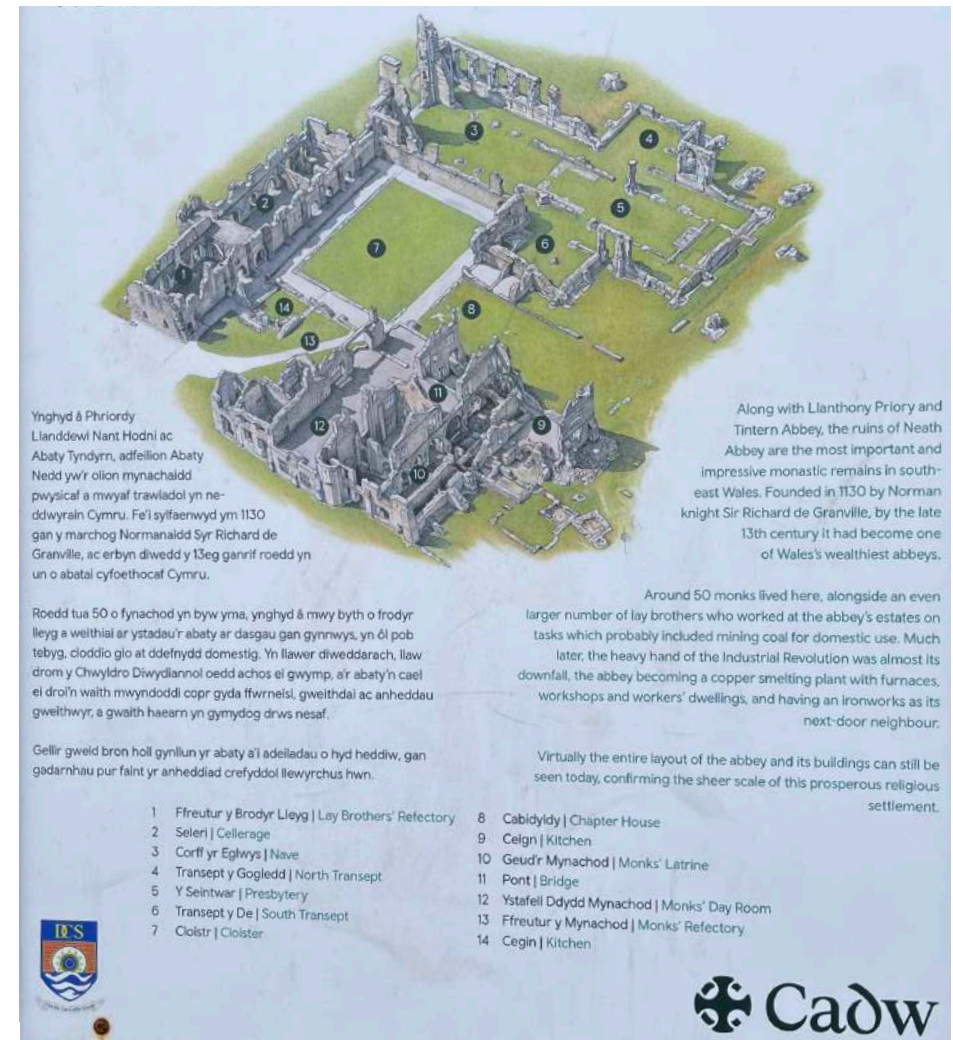
Comte de Penhouet, who visited the abbey in 1796 described meeting homeless women and children who lived among the ruins.

Towards the end of this period, the abbey was abandoned and subjected to vandalism. A considerable part of the claustral buildings fell down during the years between 1857 and 1887. The removal of stone from the abbey had occurred since its dissolution. The construction material for the Tudor manor house was largely taken from the abbey itself.

The modern-day area of grass to the west of the scheduled monument area, is shown through historic map regression to have been the location of Neath Abbey Ironworks Branch Canal, in the 18th and 19th centuries. The branch canal is shown to have been mainly infilled between 1897 and 1914. The Tennant canal from which the Neath Abbey Ironworks Branch Canal splits was opened in 1824.

In the early 20th Century permission was sought, from the 9th Lord Dynevor, by a group of local antiquarians led by Glen Taylor to clear the abbey ruins of industrial waste. Over 15 years 7,000 tons of fallen debris and industrial waste were cleared from the site, the deepest area of soil measured over 5.2 m in height.

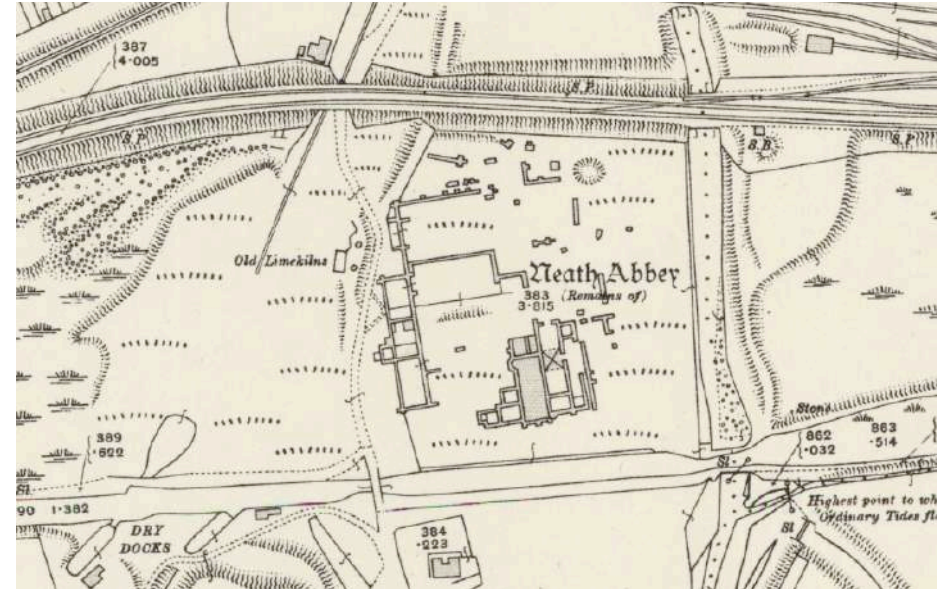
In 1944 the abbey passed into guardianship of the Ministry of Work for its preservation, and then into their freehold ownership in 1949. In the 1940s and 1950s major works were undertaken to consolidate the abbey remains. In the 1960s the Ministry used Neath Abbey as a depot from which lawnmowers and other materials were stored for the maintenance of local monuments. In this period the monument was used for local events including religious and cultural gatherings.'



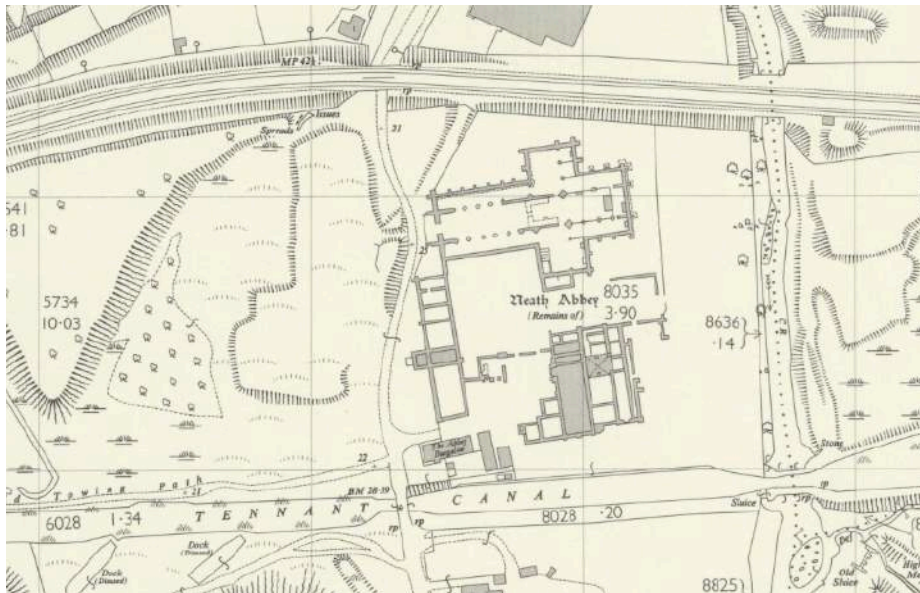
Cadw signage at the site highlighting the historic arrangement of the buildings helps visitors to interpret the former layout and usage of the currently ruinous structures



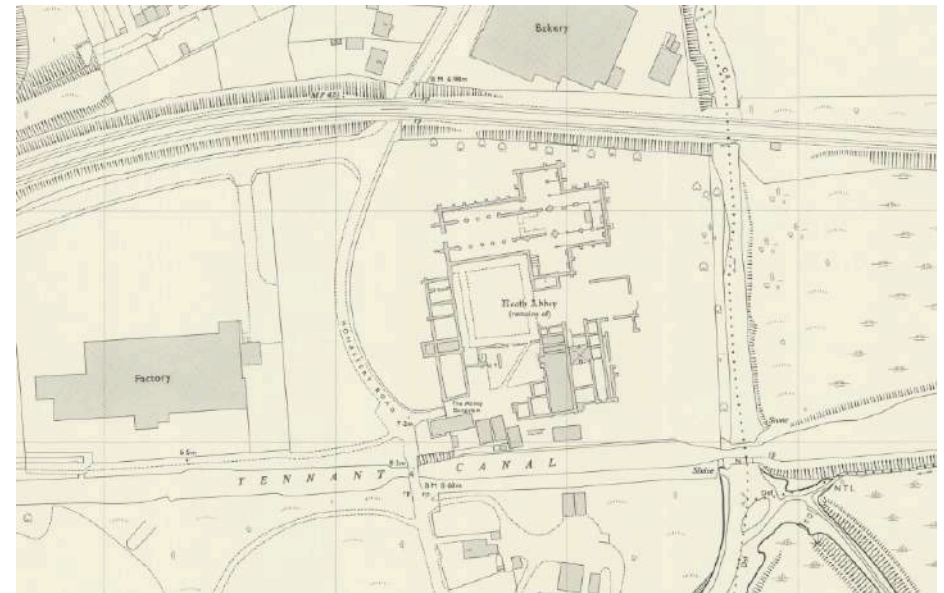
Glamorgan XV surveyed 1876-77, published 1884 - note the canal in red.



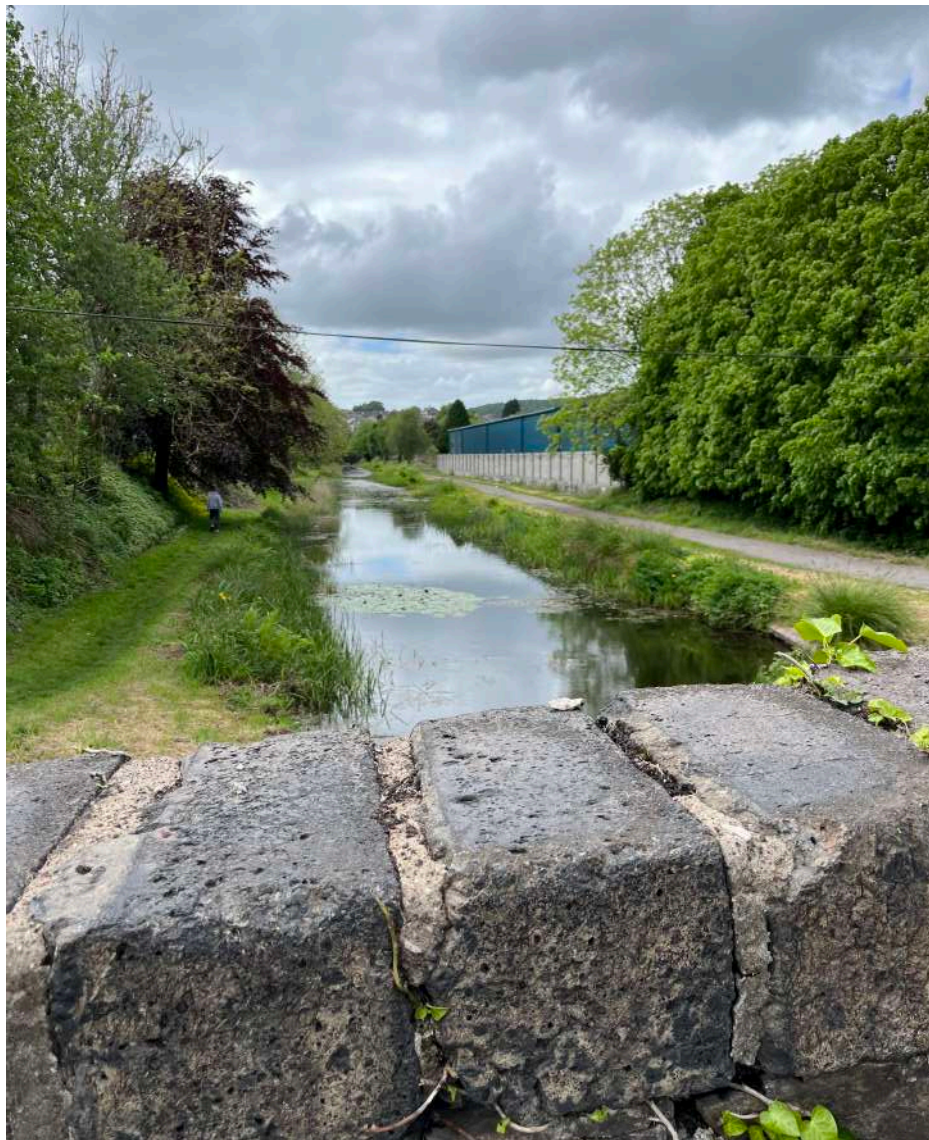
Glamorgan XV.12 revised 1914, published 1918.



SS297-SS7397-BB revised 1950-1962, published 1964



SS7397SE-B revised 1969, published 1970



View looking west along the Tennant Canal from the Grade II listed bridge to the south of the entrance to the Abbey. Note the copper slag copings

Setting

'The monument today is sandwiched between two 18th-century transport networks, a railway line to the north and the Tennant Canal to the south and has 20th-century industrial buildings to its west. Its wider surrounding reflects urban expansion in the second half of the 20th century, as a result of the development of the town of Neath, the village of Skewen and residential infilling. As a result, the approach to the abbey ruins by road is through a modern urban landscape.

The abbey's physical surroundings have changed radically from the remote marshland it was founded within or the undulating grass and wetland depicted in 19th-century engravings. However, an element of its historic isolation is still experienced when approaching the monument along the Tennant Canal towpath to its south-east. From this approach, the topographic positioning of the abbey on a terrace above the Neath River valley floor and adjacent to the Clydach River can also be appreciated. The landscaped areas around the standing remains have created a close setting within which the ruins can be enjoyed by visitors, largely screened from the modern features surrounding the site which form the wider setting. The monument draws some heritage significance from its "cleared" location since it can be appreciated in relative isolation from later features of the Post-Medieval and modern landscape. It is important to note that this "historic ruin" aesthetic is very much a 20th Century construct and not an accurate reflection of how the monument looked or functioned during the Medieval period. Nonetheless, it does allow visitors to focus on the surviving and exposed elements of the abbey complex. Changes within the close setting of the monument may need to accommodate how visitors are able to approach, experience and understand the remains as both a ruin and a functioning religious community.

Despite the development of the area surrounding the abbey ruins it retains a degree of tranquillity, largely a result of the conservation work carried out on the site in the second half of the 20th century. And, though the cause of its seclusion has changed, an element of the abbey's historic isolation may still be appreciated by its modern screening from vegetation. The monument site forms an oasis within its modern surroundings and an appreciation of its past grandeur is still possible.

Reduction of the abbey buildings since the dissolution has meant the monument lacks long-range visibility: the tall walls at the western end of the church are still present in part, the church's tower does not survive. The position of the monument on low-lying land just above the River Neath's valley floor and the 19th-and 20th-century development of the immediate and wider area have also contributed to the monument's lack of wider visibility.

The development of the area surrounding the abbey ruins has not only changed the visible setting of the monument. The sound of traffic is audible at the site from the A465, 0.12 km to the south, though the dual carriageway is well-screened by trees and vegetation.

Though the monastery was dissolved in 1539, the abbey buildings have been used and developed in the intervening 500 years. The construction of the Tudor mansion house in the southern range of the abbey complex is a visual representation of how the abbey site has changed with its surrounding.

In the 19th century, the Tennant Canal and the Neath Abbey Branch Canal served the industrial ventures that dominated the area in this period. The abbey ruins have a direct relationship with the industrial past of the area, having been used in the 18th century as the site of a copper works. Though the infrastructure has been removed from the monument walls

the presence of the canal in close proximity to the monument gives an aesthetic nod to its industrial past.

The monument may be considered to draw through aesthetic, cultural and historic significance from its immediate and wider setting.'

Architectural Overview

'The Medieval period saw the majority of the abbey's construction. The abbey's design follows the usual structure of Cistercian monasteries with the church to the north and all other claustral buildings to the south surrounding an open cloister.

In 1289, an exchange of land between the Tawe and Neath with Gilbert de Clare, Earl of Gloucester, by Abbot Adam (1266-89) raised funds to build a new church at Neath Abbey. The new church was constructed between 1280 and 1330, cruciform in design and constructed mostly from Pennant Stone, with Sutton Stone used for dressed stone quoins around windows, doors and mouldings. Birch (1902) describes the apparent quarrying of Sutton Stone near Margam Abbey (a neighbour to Neath Abbey) and the potential design of the abbey by the same architect that designed Margam Abbey. An alternative source for the quarrying of the ornamental Sutton Stone is in the Vale of Glamorgan near Ogmere.

The new church replaced an earlier Romanesque church that had presumably been built shortly after the founding of the monastery. Little is known of the early church at the site, but it is presumed to have been located in the same position as the later church, to the north of the claustral buildings. It is probable that the Romanesque church was predated by a timber church that would have acted as a temporary structure while the Romanesque church was under construction.

The new church, the ruins of which are still present on the site today, measured 60 m in length and was located at the highest point of the site, raised above the claustral buildings to the south. The western end of the building contained the nave, and, to the centre, the chancel was divided into two spaces comprising the Retro Choir and the Monks Choir. In the northern transept were two chapels and the southern transept contained two further chapels as well as the night stairs. At the eastern end of the building were the presbytery and the high altar. The church was decorated with armorial devices on its stained glass, tile pavement and sculptured stonework.

Along the east range of the cloister were the sacristy and bookstore, chapter house, and parlour. Little today survives of the chapter house and parlour. The Slype located adjacent to the chapter room was a passageway through to the eastern part of the abbey. To the south of the west range were the novice rooms and Day Room or Undercroft. The undercroft was rib vaulted with 5 bays; a new roof was built over it in the 20th century to help protect it. Above the undercroft was the monks' Dormitory and to the west of the building was the monks' Reredorter (latrine), which was accessed by the first-floor vaulted bridge. On the north-western corner of the undercroft were the day stairs which were used to access the dormitory. Along the southern range were the kitchen, refectory and warming house. Today little survives of the kitchen and warming house but the southern end of the refectory was incorporated into the Tudor Manor house, built in the 16th century.

The western range was the lay brother range, built between 1170 and 1220. This is the earliest surviving part of the Monastery. The abbey's outer entrance passes through the west range and the front of the entrance was extended in the 14th century. The lay brothers' dormitory extended over the whole of the west range. The rooms in the northern section of the west range were probably storerooms, though one large

room on the northern side of the main entrance may have been the Lay Brothers' chapter house. To the west of the southern end of the west range was a small extension to the range, this has been suggested to have been a porter's lodge and lay brother reredorter.

Some buildings that may be expected to be present at a Cistercian monastery have not been accounted for, including an infirmary, which was possibly located to the southeast of the church. Other buildings, including the Cellarer's office, are thought to be part of the western range. The abbey cemetery is located on the northern side of the church.

In about 1500, one of the last Abbots of Neath adapted the southern part of the dormitory and the refectory into a comfortable suite to serve as his private accommodation. Known as the abbot's lodging, a block was raised to connect the dormitory with the latrine to the east. The structure incorporated a projecting polygonal stair turret to provide improved access. To the west of the dormitory, a further block was added over the southern end of the monks' refectory creating a large south-facing range.

In this period the abbey would have been surrounded by a monastery wall, the only surviving remnant of which is part of the gatehouse located to the north of B4230 next to a primary school.'

Overview of Social and Community Value

In the Cadw's description of Neath Abbey the reason for scheduling is listed as the following:

'The monument is of national importance for its potential to enhance our knowledge of the organisation and practice of medieval Christianity. The site forms an important element within the wider medieval landscape. It retains significant archaeological potential, with a strong probability of the

presence of associated archaeological features and deposits. The structure itself may be expected to contain archaeological information concerning chronology and building techniques.'

In addition to this, the social and community value of the site is derived largely from its contribution to the wider development of Neath over several key phases from early medieval christianity to more recent conservation movements. It is a source of identity for the local community demonstrated by the work undertaken in the early 20th century by local people to clear away industrial waste. Today, the site is a significant place for leisure and is appreciated by visitors as a place of cultural and historical importance.

When originally constructed the Abbey was somewhat remote and detached from the surrounding area, however industrial development has now encroached upon the historic setting. Despite this however, the site of the Abbey has managed to retain a sense of tranquility and separation that is evidently appreciated by visitors.

It is noted that although the Abbey is now in a ruinous state, some elements of the structure have been conserved. The site therefore continues to capture the imagination of visitors and remains important to the local public. The site's social values are perhaps best exemplified by the way that many of the people of Neath, together with visitors from outside the area come to spend their leisure time within its boundaries.

Open spaces form essential environmental and cultural assets within towns and cities and research has shown that the British public value parks and open spaces as much as local schools. Parks, gardens and open green space represent an important resource that can generate

considerable social benefits by encouraging a shared sense of civic identity. Access to good-quality, well maintained public open spaces can also contribute to improved physical and mental health.

Archaeological Overview

The Scheduled Ancient Monument of Neath Abbey has significant archaeological potential and has been subject to several investigations in the past. The report by Headland Archaeology provides the detail of previous findings as well as a summary of the archeological potential across the site. The following overview has been given in relation to the proposed site:

'The area of the PDA to the west of Monastery Road (marked A) comprises a strip of managed grass with trees planted around its north, south and west edges. The First Edition OS 1884 map shows this area of the PDA was, in the 19th-century, crossed by the Abbey Works Branch Canal. Evidence of the branch canal and associated activities are likely to have been disturbed or damaged by the process of infilling the canal in the late 19th or early 20th-century, and the construction of a speedway track, in the early 1960s. An archaeological watching brief, in 2005, conducted during the installation of a drain across this part of the PDA identified a vaulted structure, which was interpreted as part of the construction of Monastery Road, though it is possible that the feature may be part of the branch canal's structure. The watching brief report was not available during the research for this report as a result it has not been possible to interrogate the findings directly. The GPR survey carried out by Headland in 2022 indicates the survival of below-ground features associated with a hut shown by historic aerial photographs to have been present along the west of Monastery Road at the time the speedway track in use.'

Key

□ PDA Boundary

Areas of potential

■ High

■ Low

■ Low to High

■ Medium

■ Unknown

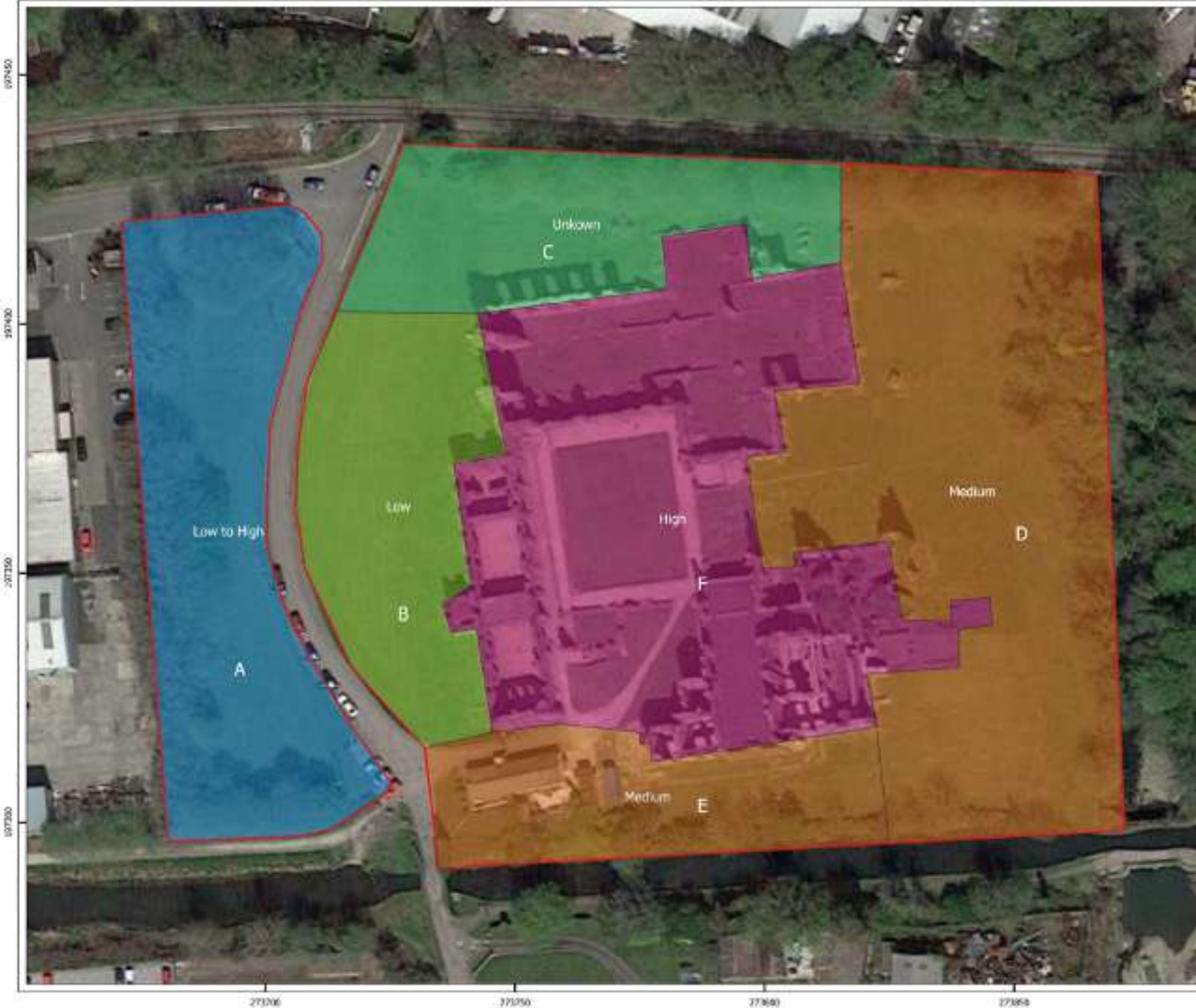
Contains Google 2023

1:750



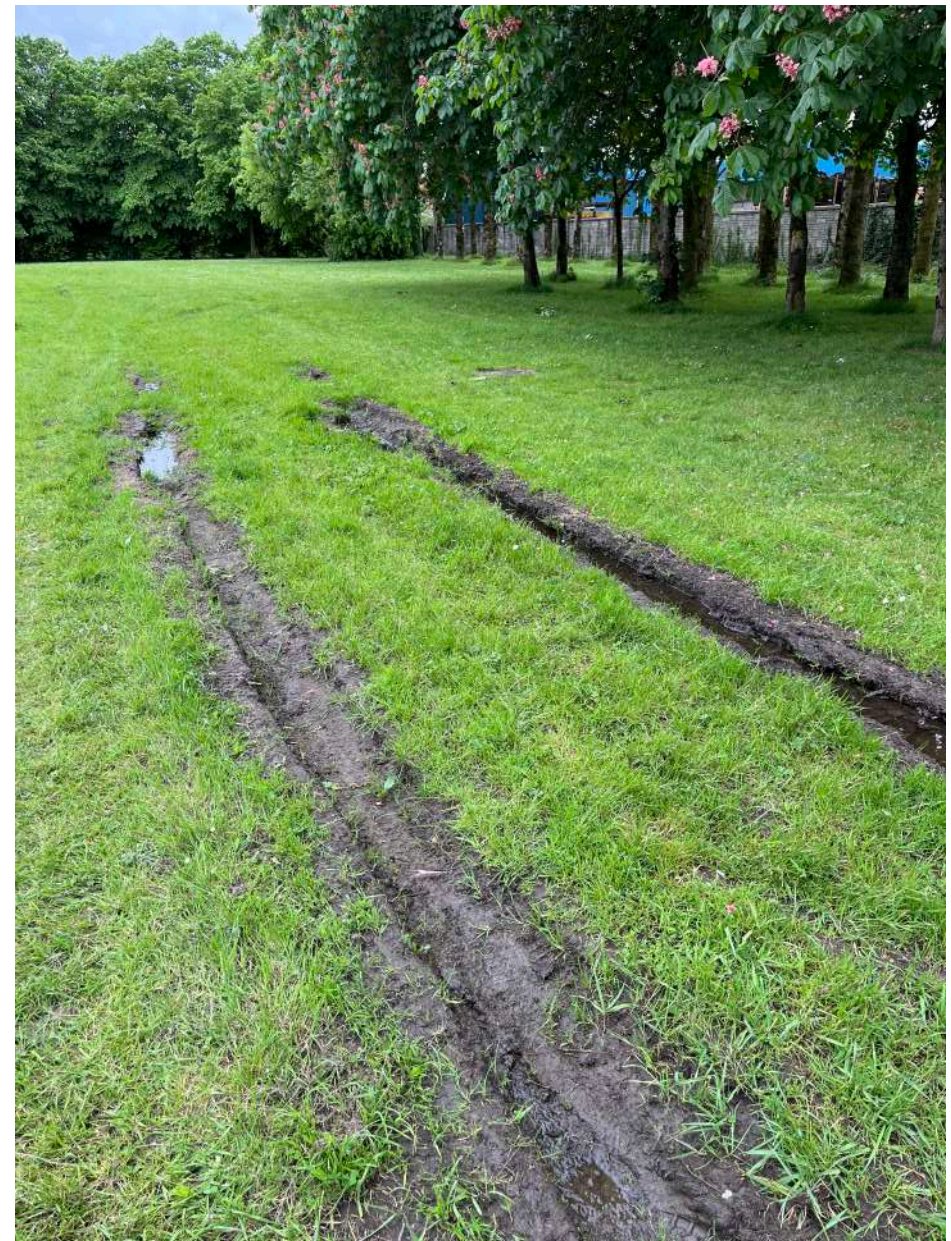
0 25 50 m

Ilus 33: Plan showing the varied potential for unknown buried archaeology to be present within the PDA



In the research of this report no reference has been identified which indicated monastic structures were present in this part of the PDA and engravings dated to the 17th century indicate the land to the west of the abbey was unmanaged in the late post-medieval period with a pool present to the west of the PDA. There is assessed to be a low potential for archaeological remains to be present from the Medieval Period but a high potential for remains dated to the Post-Medieval and later periods to be present in this part of the PDA. It is likely that any archaeological features present would be associated with the Abbey Works Branch Canal, late 19th-century industrial activities, the 1960s speedway track, or modern redevelopment, and be considered of Low (local) Importance. If present early archaeological features are likely to have been damaged as a result of the construction of the Abbey Branch Canal and the modern development of the land.'

(See plan by Headland Archaeology on the previous page showing areas of different potential for unknown buried archaeology to be present)



(Right) Damage to the existing site caused by vehicular parking on the grass verges

THE IMPORTANCE OF NEATH ABBEY

The previous sections have developed a sound basis for identifying how Neath Abbey came to be, and how it has contributed to its cultural value. The Abbey illustrates the following qualities that demonstrate their heritage significance and which must be protected in any future development of the building and its environs:

- It is a monument of national significance with the potential to enhance our knowledge of early medieval christianity
- It is a significant Abbey in South Wales that evidences several centuries of development through its form and layout, which further provide a clear interpretation of the growth of the Abbey from a simple monastery to a high status residence and later an industrial metalworks.
- In turn, the Abbey is representative of the historic development of Neath, including; early monastic tradition, Tudor landed gentry, industrialisation and modern conservation.
- It has a wider group value due to its connection with other historically significant structures in the vicinity, that are linked by their industrial purposes;
- For its architectural significance as a structure that developed in various styles over several centuries and the degree of extant fabric and features provide an indication of the quality of the original structure.
- As a public historic asset that provides an attractively landscaped setting for community events and leisure activities.

THE BRIEF AND OBJECTIVES

The project brief sets out to investigate the feasibility of providing visitor parking on land in proximity to Neath Abbey. This is with a view to enhancing its accessibility, interpretation and presentation, which currently provides a limited offer to visitors. The brief should also be considered in the wider context of Neath Abbey Ironworks, located to the north of the site, and the collective benefits that might also be gained from providing parking in this location.

Objectives

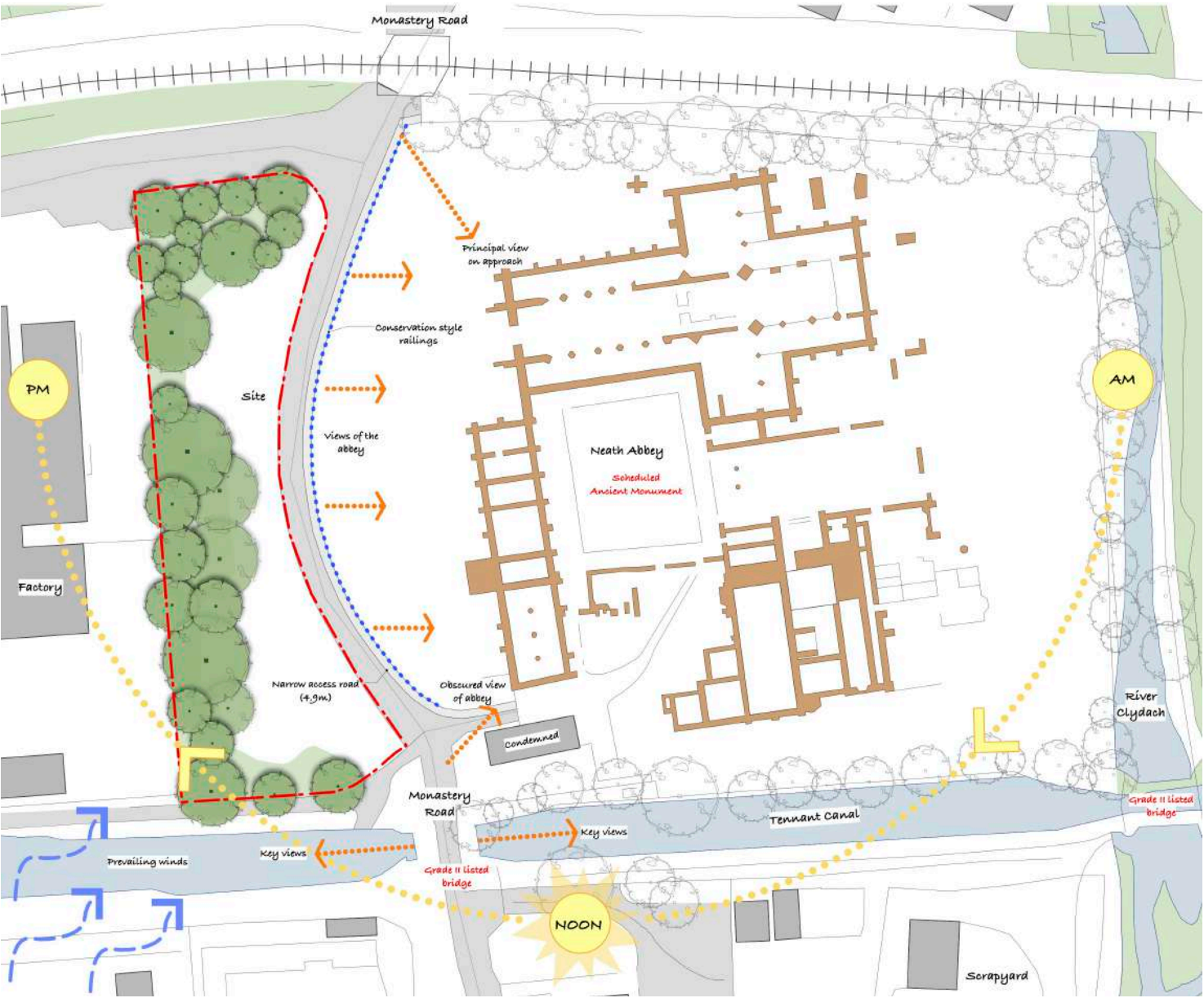
The proposed works broadly comprise:

- The introduction of a new car parking area to the west of Neath Abbey with a minimum capacity for 25 cars and space for a coach.
- Addressing existing trees, some of which are considered to be in an existing poor condition and providing improved screening to surrounding industrial buildings.
- The introduction of a native planting scheme, minimising any impact of the proposals on the setting of the Abbey, and an enhancement generally.
- The enhancement of biodiversity across the site.
- The introduction of a sustainable drainage strategy for the site.

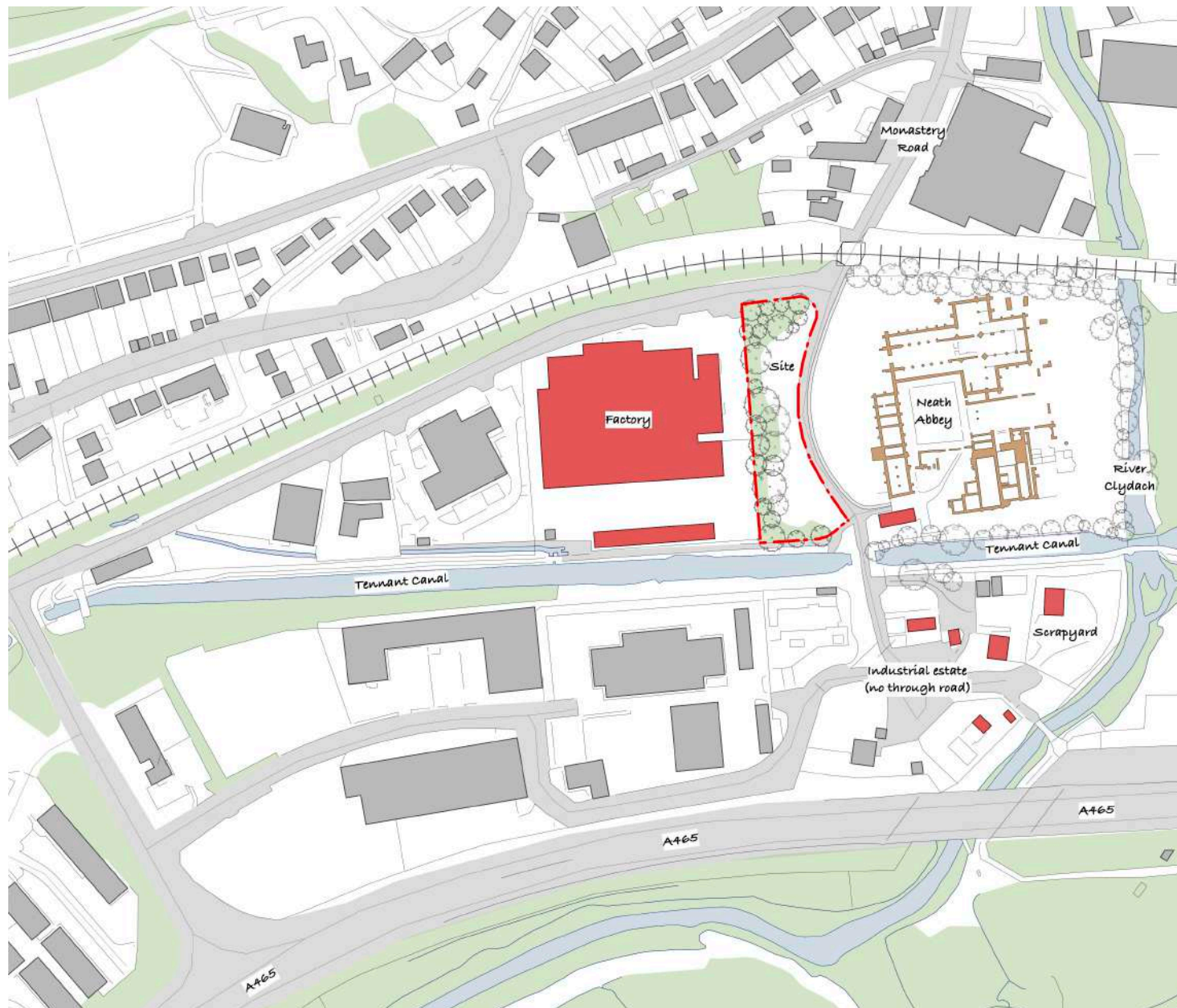
The proposals are driven by a desire to address the following issues:

- The improvement of parking facilities to the Abbey to ensure there is sufficient space for visitors arriving by car or coach, together with clear and safe routes to visit the monument.
- Addressing the ongoing issue of cars parking on grass verges which have a negative impact on the setting of the Scheduled Ancient Monument.
- Forward planning - to sensitively manage change to the historic setting of the Abbey and ensure it continues to be enjoyed by visitors.
- To ensure the sustainability of the historic asset going forwards.

SITE ANALYSIS

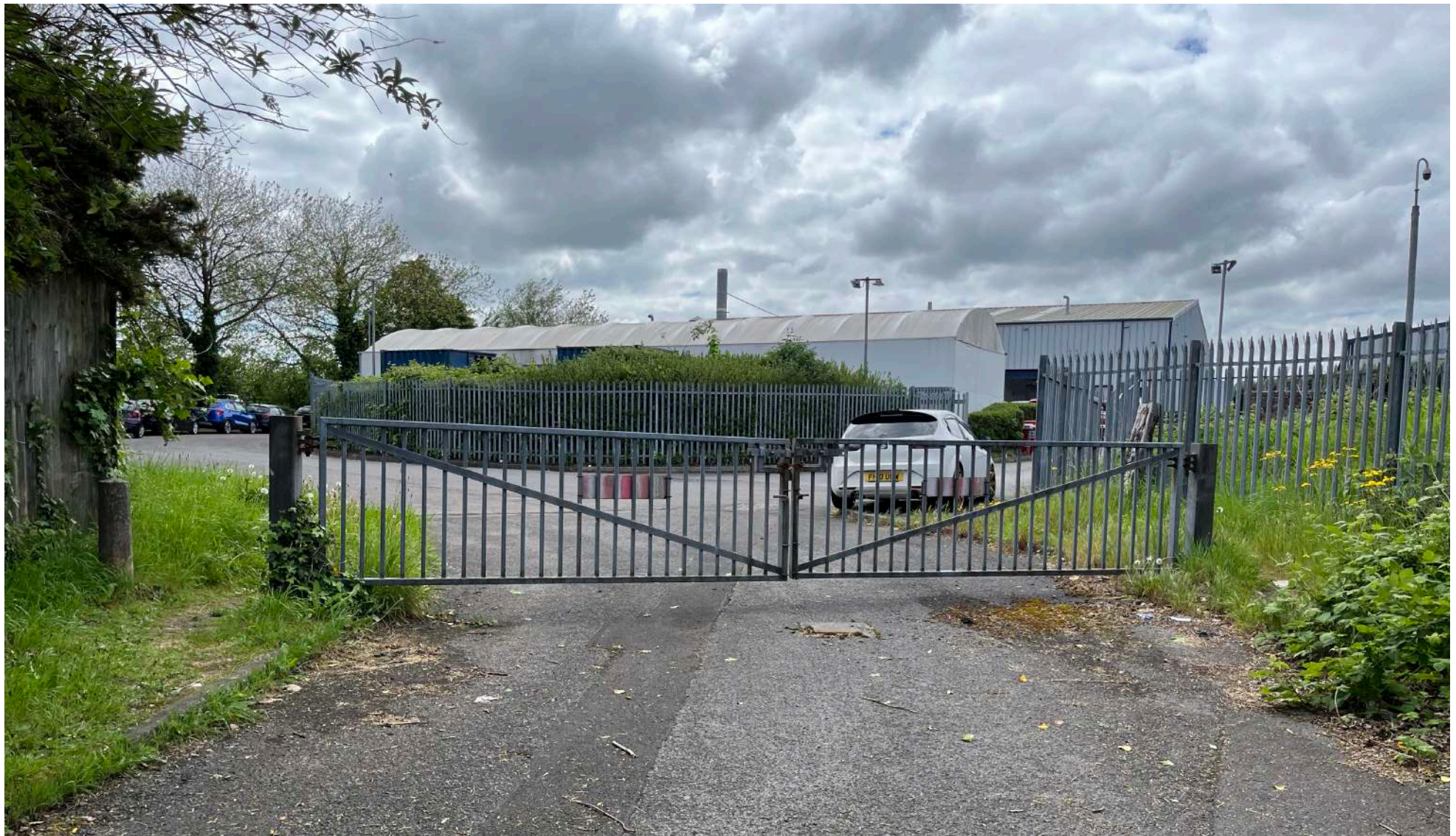


Site and environmental analysis showing the key elements of consideration that affect the selected site for the proposed visitor parking at Neath Abbey (do not scale). The diagram explores some of the key opportunities and constraints affecting the proposed visitor centre location. These have been investigated, resolved, and incorporated into the design proposals during the development of the scheme.

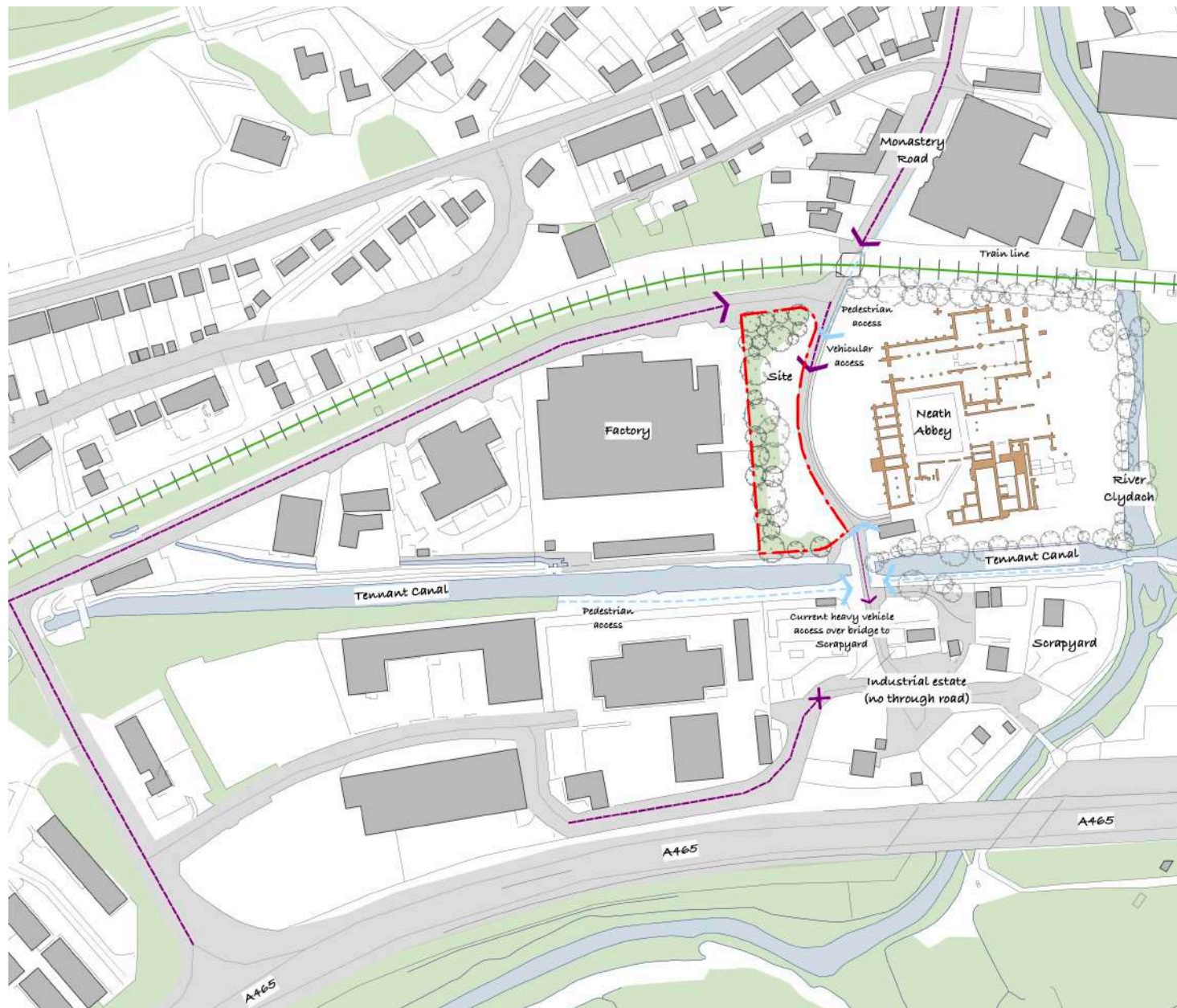


Structures with negative impact on Neath Abbey

The character of the site, and more importantly the setting of Neath Abbey, has changed significantly overtime. It is now largely defined by the manicured grounds immediately around the Abbey, and the surrounding tree line which offers some patchy seclusion from the neighbouring industrial buildings. These often produce smoke and fumes which impact the sensory experience of the site. To the north of the site, the raised banking of the railway line reduces the impact of the trains on the site in part.



Surrounding buildings are industrial in nature. The closure of Neath Abbey Business Park Road determines that access to the salvage yard on the south side of the Tennant Canal is via Monastery Road and directly across the Grade II listed, humped back Canal Bridge to the south of the entrance to the Abbey.



The principal access to the Abbey is via a gated entrance to the southwest of the site. The site more generally is accessed from monastery road which curves north to south around the west side of the scheduled monument. The site can also be accessed via a road leading from the A465 to the south. There is currently heavy vehicle access over the listed Tennant Canal Bridge to the scrapyard and industrial estate to the south.



Along with the opportunities presented by the site, the proposed area is heavily constrained by existing trees together with important relationships with the historic monument. Less visible is the historic canal that previously dissected the site and can be seen on the historic plans previously presented in this document.

CONSTRAINTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Constraints

- The proposals should not dilute the historic significance of the surrounding landscape and setting of the monument;
- The proposals have the potential to uncover archeologically sensitive material. Consideration must be given to the monitoring this during excavation works;
- The proposals should work with the existing tree and vegetation constraints and minimise their impact on these;
- The quality of any proposals should be considered in the context of the existing monument
- The proposals need to be large enough to meet the visitor requirements of the site, but must be reasonably unobtrusive within what is sensitive environment, particularly with a potential to affect views in and out of the site;
- The existing mains water

Opportunities

- Provide a high-quality scheme that engages positively with the existing natural environment;
- Deliver a design that is sympathetic to its setting and an exemplar of its type;
- To achieve a greater value and use from a currently under-utilised green space;
- To provide an unobtrusive high quality scheme that improves on the current parking provision;
- To reduce the visual and environmental impact of cars parking on verges due to a lack of sufficient parking space;
- To provide a welcoming and accessible route for visitors arriving by coach;
- To sensitively manage change within the setting of an existing, historic monument to meet the current and future needs of the community and visitors, without compromising its historic significance, therefore enabling the monument to have a viable and desirable future use and positive community impact.

THE PLANNING CONTEXT AND DEVELOPMENT CONTROL

Scheduled Ancient Monuments

Archaeological sites of national importance are given legal protection by being placed on a 'Schedule' of monuments. In Wales there are over 4000 examples of Scheduled Monuments, which include Roman remains, burial mounds, castles, bridges, earthworks, the remains of deserted villages, industrial sites and 20th century military complexes etc. Scheduled Monuments cannot include in-use ecclesiastical buildings or monuments occupied as a dwelling, and unlike Listed Buildings, they are not assigned grades.

Existing Heritage Protection

The following statutory designations apply to Neath Abbey and its associated or nearby historic assets:

- Neath Abbey - Scheduled Ancient Monument (GM006)
- Neath Abbey Ironworks - Scheduled Ancient Monument (GM389)
- Bridge over Tenant Canal to S of entrance to Neath Abbey (11834)
- Clydach Aqueduct of Tennant Canal (82339)

Development Control

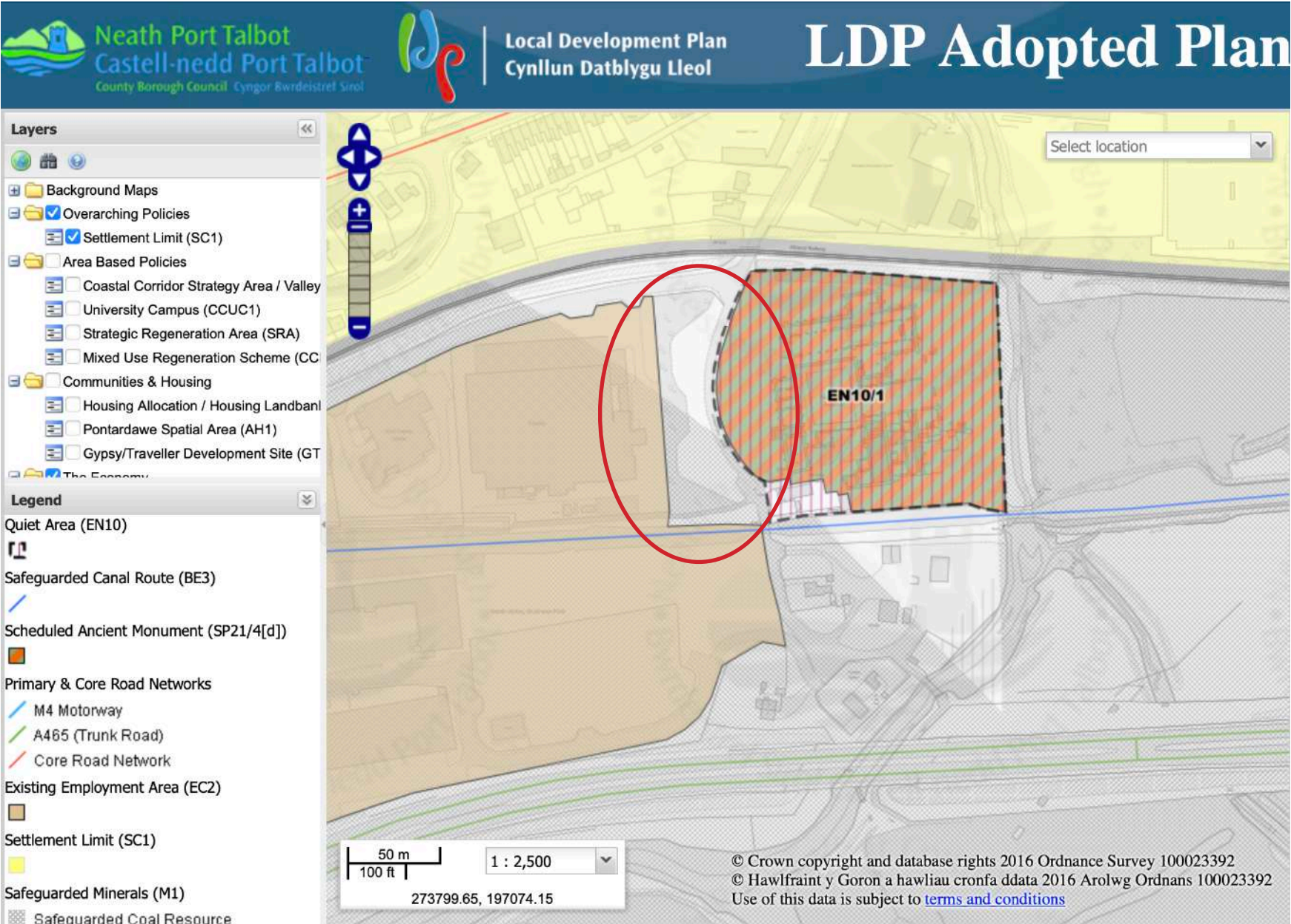
Planning Policy Wales provides the national planning policy context for Wales, supplemented by Technical Advice Note 24 (TAN). Procedural guidance is provided in the Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2016.

Chapter 6 of PPW, The Historic Environment sets out the Welsh Government's objectives with regard to the protection and enhancement of Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas in Wales as follows:

- conserve and enhance the historic environment, which is a finite and non-renewable resource and a vital and integral part of the historical and cultural identity of Wales;
- recognise its contribution to economic vitality and culture, civic pride, local distinctiveness and the quality of Welsh life, and its importance as a resource to be maintained for future generations;
- base decisions on an understanding of the significance of Wales' historic assets;
- contribute to the knowledge and understanding of the past by making an appropriate record when parts of a historic asset are affected by a proposed change, and ensuring that this record or the results of any investigation are securely archived and made publicly available.

The Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council Local Development Plan 2011-2026 (Adopted January 2016) provides the local policy framework for the development and conservation needs of the area. In this respect the Council has an important role in securing the conservation of the historic environment while ensuring that it accommodates and remains responsive to present day needs. This is a key aspect of the Council's wider sustainable development responsibilities, which needs to be taken into account in the exercise of development plan policy and development management functions.

Although the proposed site falls outside of the Scheduled Ancient Monument boundary and a scheduled monument consent is not required, the proposals have a potential to impact the setting of the monument and an assessment of impact is therefore required.



Extracts from the local development plan southern proposal map showing various development restrictions (see key). The site is highlighted in red.

Development Restrictions

The local development plan map for Neath Port Talbot indicates a number of development restrictions that apply to this area of the county. This is shown on the previous page. Of additional note is that the site falls into a safeguarded mineral zone and forms part of the Coastal Strategy Area (SP5). In addition to this the site sits within the Settlement Protection Zone M2/1.

Archaeological Overview

No below ground archaeological investigations have been commissioned for the purpose of the project, however, evidence from previous archaeological investigations has been provided in the report by Headland Archaeology that accompanies this application. It is further noted that proposed excavations are extremely limited due to the proposed approach to developing the proposals for the site and further investigation has consequently not been deemed necessary to inform the works at this stage.

Flood Risk

The Natural Resources Wales Flood Map for Planning (right) shows that the site is at risk from flooding and sits partially in zone B and zone C2 designations. With the proposal being for car parking, it is not deemed that there would be significant impact or danger to life caused by the proposed use.

SAB

All construction work in Wales with drainage implications, of 100m² or more, is now required to have Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) to manage on-site surface water (whether they require planning permission





Site plan showing the indicative easement associated with the Welsh Water mains sewerage pipe running below the site

or not). These SuDS must be designed and constructed in accordance with the Welsh Government Standards for Sustainable Drainage. The proposal affects an area in excess of 100m² and therefore appropriate mitigation has been proposed going forwards.

Existing Site Services

Existing site services are documented in the Neath Abbey Pre-Masterplan Technical Pack by Castria. Of principal concern is the presence of a mains Welsh Water Sewerage pipe running below the site with associated easement. This is shown on the attached plan (right). This clearly has a significant affect on the developable site.

Trees and Tree Preservation Orders

A Tree Survey and Arboricultural Constraints Report was undertaken by The ARB Team - Arboricultural Contractors and Consultants in August 2024, and accompanies this report. The document surmised the following:

'The Ash trees have a height range between 5 and 20 metres and have foliage density between 5 and 50%. Due to their condition and proximity to the existing and proposed structures it would be advisable if the 56 Ash trees and tree number 169 are removed.

Except for the trees above the remaining trees are in a good or acceptable condition. After the removal of the Ash trees the Horse Chestnuts 160 to 171 will be exposed to the prevailing wind and will be at an increased risk of wind throw. The removal of these trees would be advisable.

Due to their increased exposure the Lime trees 135, 136 and 184 should have their height reduced by 2.5 to 3 metres.

Modify the current design to allow the retention of the A category trees 120, 1198 and 1199. With the removal of the central Ash and Chestnut trees the retention of the two groups of Lime trees on the north and south side of the site are increasingly important.'

These considerations have consequently been incorporated into the design evolution.

Ecology

A preliminary ecological assessment of the site has previously been undertaken by Western Ecology, with a further overview survey undertaken by Megan Price - Ecologist (Consultancy & Planning). This concludes:

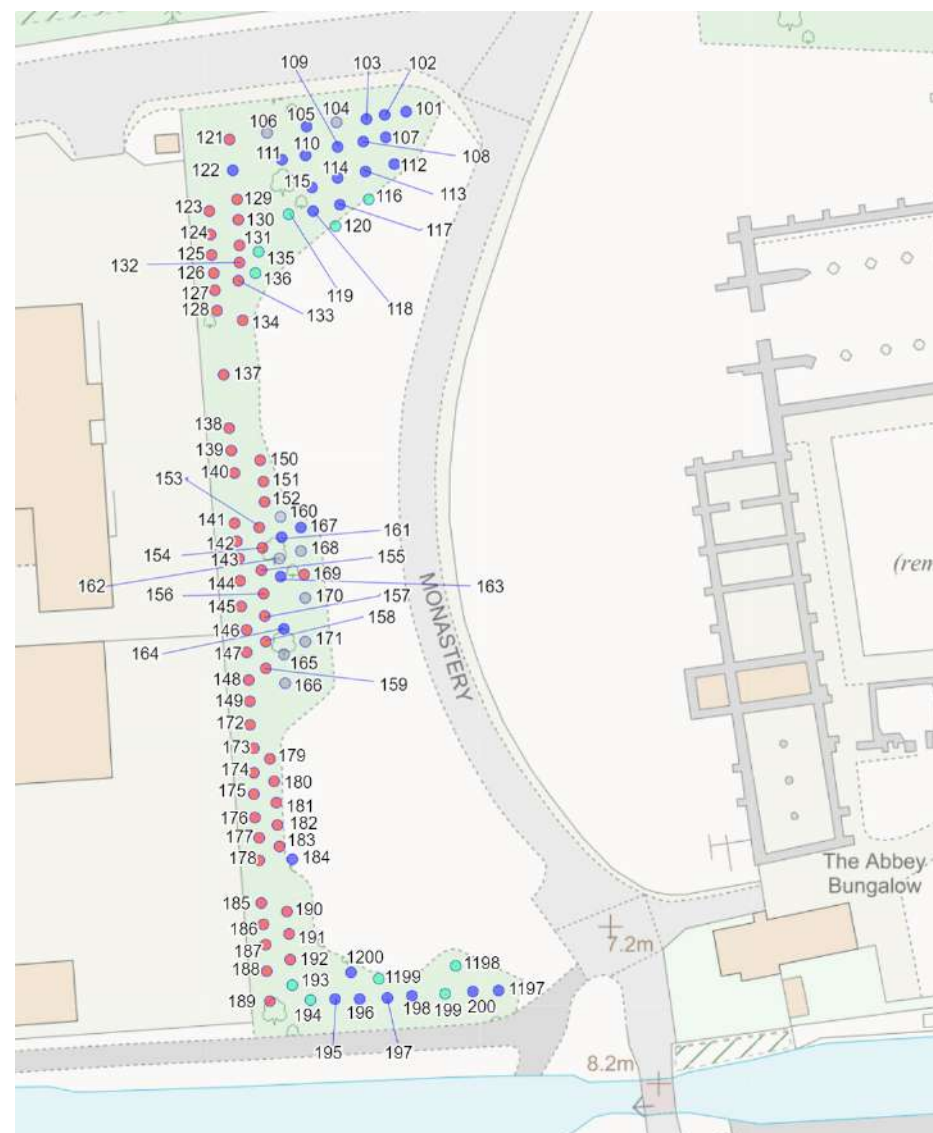
Tennant Canal and River Clydach

Depending on proposals these habitats may need to be protected during any construction phase. These would best be detailed in a Construction Environment Management Plan and may include sections on pollution, protective fencing, dust, storage of materials and wildlife.

Bats

A variety of potential bat roosting features are associated with the Neath Abbey ruins, the Gatehouse, a modern building to the south, and lime trees, whilst boundary features may be used by commuting and foraging bats, including light averse species. Proposals that could require mitigation informed by bat emergence and/or activity surveys include, but are not limited to:

- Change of use of enclosed rooms
- Repairs to walls
- Installation of additional external lighting
- Demolition/conversion of the modern building



Site plan showing the trees that require removal in red as reproduced from the report by the ARB Team



Legend

- Target note
- Scattered trees
- Fence
- Wall
- Amenity grassland
- Scrub
- Running water
- Building
- Introduced shrubs
- Tarmac
- Wall
- Hardstanding

Title: Map 1. Phase 1 habitats

Project: Neath Abbey and
Gatehouse

Checked by: CDH Version: 01
Date: 07/04/2023

- *Tree felling/management.*

Of this, tree felling is clearly of consideration albeit this is noted as a necessity in the report by the ARB Team.

Birds

It is likely that occasional common bird species nest within built and vegetated woody habitats within the Site. If any of these habitats are to be cleared, disturbed or managed during the accepted bird nesting season (March to August inclusive), the habitat should be thoroughly inspected, by a suitably qualified person, prior to disturbance. If nesting birds are found, all activities likely to damage the immediate area should be delayed until chicks have fledged.

It is noted that the works are programmed to be undertaken between January 2025 and March 2025, and therefore fall outside of the bird nesting season.

Reptiles

The Site has potential to support common lizard, grass snake and slow worm at its margins. Provided impacts are limited in extent, by following simple mitigation any adverse impact can be avoided. Reasonable avoidance measures are recommended.

Otter

Otter is likely to be present in adjacent watercourses. If any ground works are proposed within 50 metres of the river/canal or additional external lighting is proposed for these habitats, further surveys may be required to assess the likely impacts.

Invasive non-native plants

Japanese Knotweed is present in two locations. A method statement should be produced for any works within 7 metres of this area (including any excavations) and a plan developed to eradicate Japanese Knotweed from the Site.

The findings consequently provide a further opportunity to enhance the biodiversity of the surrounding landscape, both sensitively and not to the detriment of the Scheduled Ancient Monument. It is not suggested that further surveys are required at this juncture however to further inform the proposed mitigation.

Involvement

Representatives from both Neath Port Talbot Council and Cadw have been present at regular design review meetings to provide feedback in relation to the impact of proposed design options. They have advocated for measures to reduce the visibility of the parking and improve visitor experience to the site. For example, the request for a new crossing point that references the Abbey's historic entrance, or additional planting to increase the screening of the parking and adjacent industrial buildings.

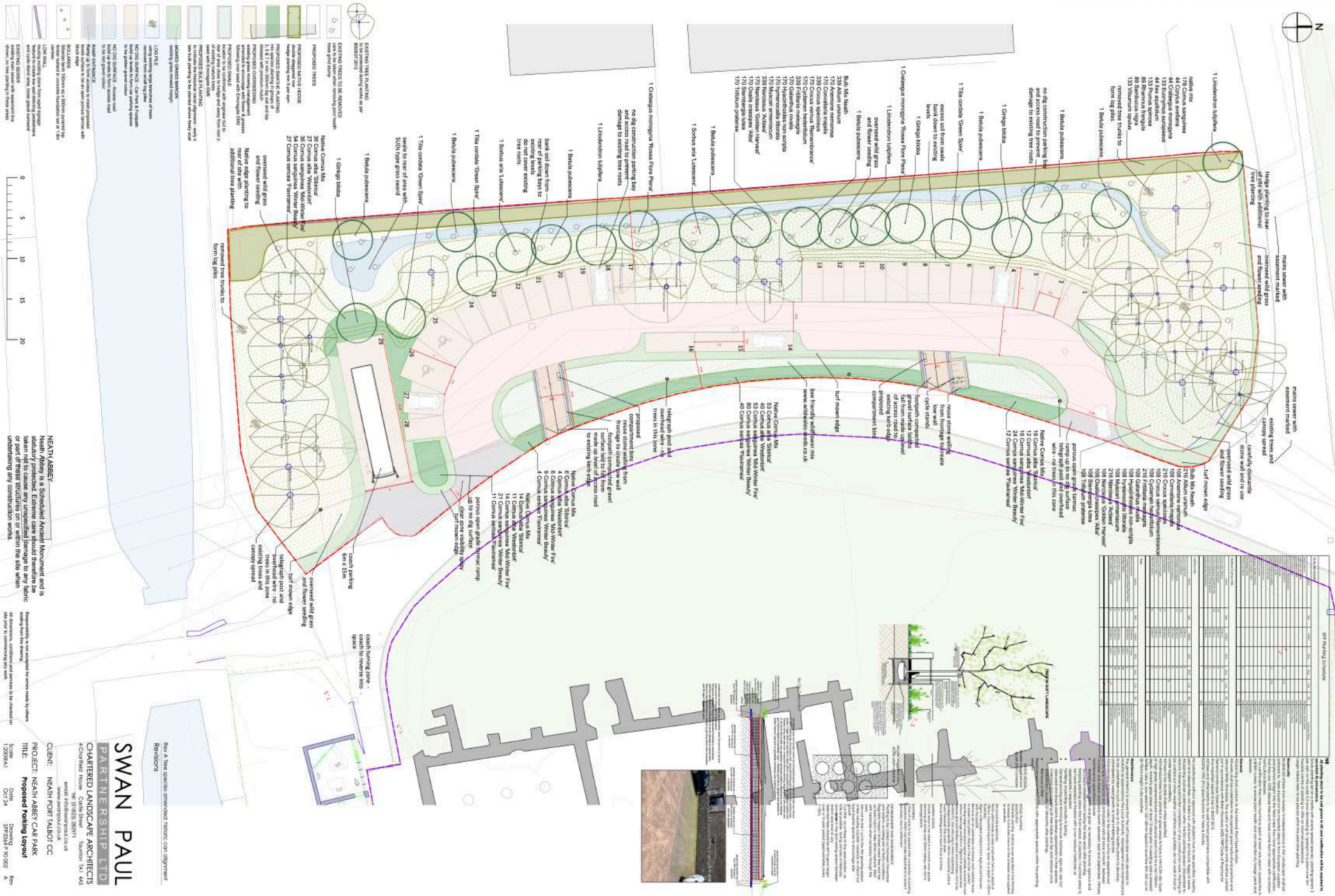
They have also provided their experience of the impact of the current parking arrangement on the site. Cars parked along the grass verge are clearly visible from key viewpoints within the abbey site. The lack of parking spaces can also deter potential visitors, therefore reducing its community value.

Previous Planning Applications

A search of Neath Port Talbot Council planning applications has indicated that there are no previous applications for this site.



The copyright of this drawing belongs to Swan Paul Partnership. It is to be used for the project only and not for any other purpose. It is to be used for the project only and not for any other purpose. It is to be used for the project only and not for any other purpose.



Notes: The plan shows the proposed layout of the car park, including the location of trees, paths, walls, and seating. The plan is to be used for the project only and not for any other purpose. It is to be used for the project only and not for any other purpose. It is to be used for the project only and not for any other purpose.

OVERVIEW OF PROPOSALS AND JUSTIFICATION

The information presented in this document thus far has sought to define the context of Neath Abbey and the requirement for additional parking spaces. The preferred proposal has been developed following the options appraisal outlined in the Design Development section included later in this document. The conclusion of this in conjunction with the local authority, Client and Cadw was that an approach that introduces a 'green' buffer between the proposed parking and the Abbey, thereby screening the majority of vehicles was likely to have a beneficial impact on the monument. Consequently this option was developed, with further consideration of the impact on trees, ecology and biodiversity being investigated, together with the impact of SUD's requirement and existing services on the site.

The submitted proposal provides space for 25 cars, two of which are accessible parking bays, with an additional coach parking space and turning zone. The parking is made up of a mixture of 'drive-in' spaces and parallel parking in order to reduce the width required for the access roadway and subsequently limiting the encroachment on the existing tree line and root protection areas of trees that are to be retained. The new access road is to be constructed as a 'no dig' development thereby diminishing potential impact on underlying archaeology. This is to be finished with a compacted gravel hogging with free draining reinforced grass pavers to the parking bays.

The proposed parking is to be screened by a 'buffer zone' with tree and native species planting across the site to replace those that are to be removed and provide an overall biodiversity gain. In heritage terms, the planting will largely provide a physical screening of the proposed car park

from the monument and thereby limit the visual impact on the setting. The scheme also provides an area for bike parking and a new footpath to the Abbey entrance, aligned with existing axis to the Monastery wing and the Church. The site is to be bounded by hedgerows along the road side to prevent parking on verges and improve pedestrian safety. Furthermore, to aid interpretation of the site, the line of the former canal arm on the site will be set out in planting with an alternative bulb mix. Lighting is not provided due to potential impacts on ecology.

In order to address SUD's requirements, a swale is to be constructed to the west side of the site. This will manage the flow of rainwater runoff and address the filtering of water entering surrounding water courses.

Justification

Changes to the historic and traditional environment (whether designated or not) are somewhat inevitable in order to maintain and secure our heritage for future generations. Such development is often born in response to social, cultural and economic changes within society, and in this case includes a much needed improvement to parking facilities at Neath Abbey to address ongoing issues of visitor access, and to provide facilities that are commensurate to the setting of the Scheduled Ancient Monument. This will ultimately facilitate the management of visitor and coach parking and improve visitor experience to make it a valuable asset to its surrounding community.

The existing vehicle parking facilities are currently falling short of requirements. Addressing this, together with improving the setting of the Abbey and addressing health and safety issues in relation to Ash trees

currently present on the site are consequently key generators of the project brief. The proposals furthermore aim to stop people parking on grass verges, facilitating further enhancement and maintenance of the site as a visitor attraction.

The proposed parking layout significantly increases the number of vehicle spaces currently available, providing an off road dedicated parking solution that includes accessible parking bays. In addition, the provision of cycle racks and a coach parking point improves the transport options available to visitors. This encourages more sustainable travel to the monument with the provision for coaches is particularly important for encouraging education groups to visit the site.

The proposed scheme is part of a developing scheme by Cadw and Neath Port Talbot Council. The wider scheme looks to enhance the visitor experience and interpretation of the Abbey, whilst removing those elements that detract from it where possible. Parking facilities are an important part of day-to-day logistics at the site which are presently insufficient for the needs of visitors. However, proposals need to be considered both in their immediate context, and through their relative significance within the wider setting of the monument.

Although any provision of car parking facilities is likely to have an impact on the setting of Neath Abbey, the proposals have looked to minimise this as much as possible by screening the car park with a planted buffer zone aimed at enhancing the setting of the monument. Overall, the proposals are deemed to be appropriate to the setting of the Abbey and the bridge over Tenant Canal and would positively impact visitor experience and interpretation whilst minimising the impact that cars currently have on the site.

RESPONSE TO OBJECTIVES OF GOOD DESIGN

Scale

The proposal seeks to enhance the offer of Neath Abbey, in terms of its evidential, historic, aesthetic and communal value. This is to be achieved by introducing dedicated parking facilities in a sensitive manner that is considerate of the setting of the monument, to ensure that the site is fit for purpose going forwards.

Whilst larger parking schemes were considered, the proposal limits the number of car parking spaces to 25, including 2 accessible bays, with a further additional coach park and turning space. The scale of intervention has been constrained both by existing trees on site and the need to provide a sufficient buffer space between the parking and Abbey that would allow for screening of the parking and an additional biodiversity enhancements. This said, the number of parking spaces equally needs to meet a sensible number derived from existing and projected visitor use of the site.

In order that the parking is screened, planting species to the buffer zone have been chosen so they reach heights that largely obscure cars parked behind them. This minimises the presence of vehicles on site as perceived from the Abbey, thereby enabling it to be experienced in a more natural setting as opposed to one more largely influenced by man-made elements.

Layout

The layout of the parking has looked to increase the extent of buffer zones with the Abbey where possible. In this regard the design has reduced the space required for the intervention by turning the parking to

run north-south at the pinch point of the site. This allows the retention of healthy trees on site within the design, avoiding their root protection areas. New planting around parking bays and in the buffer zone will help to replace any trees that are lost and furthermore look to enhance the biodiversity of the site. This is covered in more detail in the accompanying Green Infrastructure Statement.

A swale has been introduced to the rear of the site. This avoids locating SUD's interventions over the existing mains sewer that runs below the site. It is not envisaged that the swale would have a negative effect on existing retained trees, whilst new tree and planting species have been chosen so they are suitable for this environment. Of further note is that the proposal includes a 'no dig' specification, thereby minimising impact on potential underlying archaeology.

Accessibility

An overarching benefit to the proposal is the improvement of access to the monument. Existing parking on the road presents health and safety concerns with large vehicles accessing the salvage yard on the south side of the Tennant Canal, interacting with pedestrians walking between parked cars to cross the road to the monument. By providing a dedicated parking area and preventing parking on grass verges through the use of timber bollards, parked cars will be moved off the road. This will in turn improve the health and safety concern.

The proposed car parking is set out on a one way system, accessed from the north. This will mitigate issues regarding access and egress from the proposed parking by simplifying the direction of vehicle movement. Coach parking is also separated out to avoid potential conflicts with larger vehicles to the site.

Two accessible parking spaces will be provided within the proposal, enhancing the access for all to the site. Dedicated footpaths to the roadside will also channel pedestrians to clear points for crossing the road, ensuring a legibility of layout that again serves to minimise risks of conflict between pedestrians and vehicles. These footpaths have furthermore been aligned with key points of historic access to the monument should Cadw wish to enhance these at a later date.

Appearance

The appearance of the parking area aims to be recessive in the context of Neath Abbey. Consequently, as noted, it has been screened with a buffer zone of planting to its eastern boundary. This serves to provide a more natural backdrop to the Abbey whilst concurrently enhancing the biodiversity of the site through a mix of native planting.

Materials for the car park consist of a gravel hogging for the road way with free draining reinforced grass crates to the parking bays. These materials have been chosen as they are commonly found on similar sites due to their more natural appearance. Indeed, the grass crate paving will minimise the extent of hard surfacing, providing a lesser visual impact. The former canal is also to be interpreted through the provision of paved sets following its alignment in the ground, allowing an enhanced understanding of the site.

In addition to the above, it is proposed to reuse the existing natural stone that currently forms the wall to the frontage of the site to form low level walls containing the pedestrian access pathways to the site. This repurposes the material in the site, tying the proposal subtly to the monument.

ASSESSMENT OF IMPACT AND MITIGATION

The following page summarises the assessment of the impact of the proposals on the existing heritage values of the site and adjacent historic assets. It is measured against the following four values in accordance with Cadw's Conservation Principles for the Sustainable Management of the Historic Environment in Wales:

Evidential Value – Value deriving from the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity.

Historical Value - Value deriving from the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present.

Aesthetic Value – Value deriving from the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place.

Communal Value – Value deriving from the meanings of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Proposal	Justification	Significance	Potential Impact of Proposal	Activity required to assess impact	Value based judgement	Possible mitigation
The proposals broadly comprise of the following: - Introducing a new car parking area to the west of Neath Abbey, where a small area of parking already exists. - Removal of trees, considered to be in an existing poor condition. - Associated planting scheme to minimise the impact on setting and enhance biodiversity..	General Overview – Neath Abbey has a long and varied history that is closely connected to the community that surrounds it. Originally founded in c.1130 the building initially served as an Abbey and Cistercian House and was subject to several uprisings in the medieval period. Following the dissolution of the monastery, the abbots lodge was converted to a Tudor manor house which passed through several families until the late 17th Century. It was from this point that industrialisation started to take hold across Wales and subsequently the Abbey was converted into a metalworks, however by the end of the 18th century the Abbey was abandoned and subject to vandalism. The site was cleared in the early 20th century with some consolidation works undertaken in the 1950's by the Ministry of Work. The proposals are driven by a desire to address current issues surrounding parking with a general lack of provision resulting in visitors parking on grass verges. This has an impact on the setting of the	Evidential Value – Neath Abbey is a Scheduled Ancient Monument with significant archaeological potential. A large part of its evidential value is derived from its potential to enhance our knowledge of medieval christianity. Furthermore, the Abbey represents several architectural phases and therefore the existing fabric is of high evidential value. The proposed site location has some evidential value due to its archaeological significance, however the site sits outside of the SAM boundary and therefore is of lesser value than other areas relating to the Abbey. It's significance is mainly associated with the later industrial development of the site.	Evidential Value – The proposals may have the potential to negatively impact the evidential value of the proposed site as the works could inadvertently disturb archaeological deposits. The proposals are unlikely to affect the evidential value of the Abbey itself as all works are located outside of the SAM boundary.	Historical research into Neath Abbey has been required to date to justify the proposals. This has included reference to the Archaeological Desktop Study by Headland Archaeology which has proven to be a valuable document when assessing impact against the significance and pressures faced by the ruins. There has been accurate and ongoing recording of the site. This will inevitably continue with ongoing archaeological assessment and documenting of the structures during the construction process as necessary. This will be undertaken through drawn, photographic and written recording. Samples of proposed replacement materials will also need to be collected and used to assess their appropriateness in due course.	Evidential Value – The green space to the west of the Abbey although part of the monument's setting is currently underutilised. It is an area of lower significance than that of the SAM and has previously been disturbed. It is therefore the most appropriate location for the proposals. The need for suitable parking provision is necessary for the future maintenance and sustainability of the site as a heritage asset. In order to address the potential to disturb archaeology, a 'no dig' construction has been developed to reduce levels of excavation. With this in place the proposals are deemed to be reasonable.	Careful selection of new materials should be undertaken in terms of appearance and properties and their impact on the setting of the monument. An archaeological written scheme of investigation and historic environment desk based assessment has been produced to mitigate potential impacts of the works. It is likely that a watching brief will be required for any excavation works.
		Historical Value – Neath Abbey is important because it acts as an historical touchstone. It links the past to the present and enables people to connect across time and generations. This is enhanced by the historic drawings, written records and archaeological studies that exist about the structure. The Abbey is an identifiable connection to the wider history of the area with its long and varied history the Abbey has been at the forefront of development since the early medieval period. The importance of the Abbey, although compromised by the loss of some of its structures, is still critical to the understanding of the wider context. Again however, it should be noted that the encroachment of surrounding industrial buildings has eroded the historical interpretation of its setting.	Historical Value – The proposal is likely to have a negligible impact on the historical value of the site as a whole as the value is largely derived from the Abbey and its historical development. There is some potential for the proposals to impact the setting of the monument and subsequently how the Abbey historically appeared in its surrounding context.		Historical Value – The improvement of facilities at Neath Abbey will encourage visitors to explore the historic asset and subsequently re-engage them with its history in a tangible way. The setting of the asset has arguably already been eroded to a point in which the addition of parking spaces will have a minimal impact to the overall interpretation of the site. Furthermore the use of landscaping to demonstrate the historic features of the proposed site such as the canal will allow for interpretation of the area that has not previously been utilised and improve the historic value. In addition to this, screening of parking with vegetation will reintroduce a more rural setting.	

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Proposal	Justification	Significance	Potential Impact of Proposal	Activity required to assess impact	Value based judgement	Possible mitigation
	monument and therefore needs a considered solution. In addition to this, existing trees on site require management, predominantly due to ash dieback.	Aesthetic Value – At one time, Neath Abbey would have held great aesthetic value and dominated the surrounding landscape. Over the years, the aesthetic value of the original structures that made up the site have been lost with the loss of historic fabric. That being said, the efforts to clear the site and consolidate the remaining fabric has resulted in Neath Abbey holding high aesthetic value in its status as a ‘romanticised ruin’. The Abbey has however lost much of its original setting to encroaching industrial buildings. This has been mitigated somewhat by the use of planting to maintain a sense of tranquility. The setting of the monument is therefore the most vulnerable part of its aesthetic value and requires careful consideration in any proposals. Communal Value – Neath Abbey holds significant communal value derived in part from its status as a source of identity for Neath resulting from its contribution to the historical development of the area since the early medieval period. It is noted that although the Abbey is now in a ruinous state, some elements of the structure have been well conserved. The site therefore continues to capture the imagination of visitors and remains important to the local public. The site’s social values are perhaps best exemplified by the way that many of the people of Neath, together with visitors from outside the area come to spend their leisure time within its boundaries. However, the current facilities for visitors do not maximise the communal value, with the parking provision being very poor. As a monument of national importance there is therefore potential to re-engage visitors with its communal historic value.	Aesthetic Value – The proposal has the potential to negatively impact the aesthetic value of the monuments setting by increasing the number of parked vehicles around the site. A degree of separation between the Abbey and any parking is necessary to ensure the SAM is not directly affected. In addition, the proposals should maintain or enhance the existing screening of surrounding industrial buildings, so as to not have an adverse affect. Communal Value – The proposals are likely to have a positive impact on the communal value of Neath Abbey. There is currently limited capacity for visitors and the facilities do not currently encourage people to visit and engage with the monument - despite having strong generational connections. The proposals therefore look to address this by creating usable parking facilities that meet the needs of its users and facilitating the future development of the site as an historic asset ensuring its enjoyment by future generations.		Aesthetic Value – The proposals have considered the potential impact to setting and have mitigated this by providing a ‘buffer zone’ between the monument and the car park. This will provide screening of the cars from the Abbey and minimise the visual impact. Similarly where trees are to be removed they are to be replaced to maintain sufficient screening of the surrounding industrial buildings. There is an argument that the setting of the Abbey is already affected by the inappropriate parking of cars on the site and therefore providing sufficient space that is sensitively designed will have a lesser impact on the aesthetic value, than if the current conditions are allowed to continue. Communal Value – The ruins and cellars have significant communal value as a scheduled monument of national importance, which forms a source of identity for the people of Neath. The neglect of visitor facilities reflects on wider society and contrastingly investment into the site is likely to have a positive effect on the wider area. Likewise, the proposals seek to provide a functional parking area for visitors to interact with the historic asset. This will not only improve the communal value of the monument but will also have a positive influence on the wider area, whilst creating ongoing memories of the current community.	

DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

The proposed scheme for new parking adjacent to Neath Abbey aims to address the existing issues relating to the site. These include:

- The lack of purpose built parking for the Abbey site and that of Neath Abbey Ironworks which detracts from the potential of additional visitors to the structures and consequently limits their community value;
- The existing parking of cars on Monastery Road that is both a health and safety issue due to the restriction of vehicular movement in association with pedestrian movement, and detrimentally affects the setting of the monument due to the associated paraphernalia;
- Health and safety issues associated with a number of ash trees to the western side of the site that are affected by ash dieback.

In determining the approach to take to address the parking at the Abbey, essentially four strategic options were considered. This involved initially testing the capacity of the site to accommodate parking and biodiversity enhancements, noting that all options aimed to achieve a minimum of 25 parking spaces and a coach parking space. These were developed with the inclusion of potential future proposals to improve pedestrian access to the Neath Abbey site by Cadw in mind.

In developing and refining the preferred proposal for the site with the client and Cadw, it was determined that an approach akin to option 1 would be more appropriate for the site. This was principally due to the allowance for the introduction of a 'buffer zone' with the potential to screen the majority of parking thereby separating parking from the immediate setting of the monument. Options 2 and 3 were determined to have a much bigger impact on the setting of the Abbey as no screening was possible, and although Option 4 introduced a larger 'buffer zone' with the Abbey, construction of this approach was deemed to be largely unfeasible due to the requirement to alter highways outside of the site boundary.

The various options are consequently summarised on the following pages:



Option 1 introduces 35 parking spaces with a simple through road to the parking and a space for 6 picnic benches. This option allows for a buffer zone of planting to largely sit between the parking area and the abbey, offering screening and a degree of separation from the monuments immediate setting. The layout allows for a new crossing point which aligns with the historic axis to the monastery wing. The proposal would require the removal of existing trees which will potentially need to be replanted at a greater density to ensure the level of screening between the Abbey and the adjacent factory remains sufficient.



Option 2 differs to option 1 in locating the parking directly off Monastery Road. This introduces a potential highways issue with the management of the road likely to require altering to accommodate cars reversing onto it. This could include preventing through access which could benefit the grade II listed bridge over the Tennant Canal. It is noted that coaches cannot currently access and turn at the site and therefore the option of including a coach turning circle has been explored. The approach provides 25 parking spaces and includes a new pedestrian crossing point in alignment with the historic axis of the monastery. The option requires the removal of fewer existing trees, however, it has lost the buffer zone between the monument and the parking area. This therefore has a bigger impact on setting where there is no screening in place, albeit the extent of 'green' space is greater.



Option 3 looks at replacing the coach turning circle in option 2 with a permanent Coach space on site. This allows for the reversing and parking of coaches. The approach increases the number of available parking spaces to 32, noting the highways issues raised in option 2. It does however also allow for larger green spaces. Incumbent on this option, together with option 2, is the burying of the existing telephone line that runs across the front of the site. Again this option faces the same issue as option 2 whereby there is no allowance for a buffer zone between the monument and the parking area, subsequently increasing the visual impact on the setting.



Option 4 explores the possibility of re-routing Monastery Road slightly to the west, which in turn allows for 31 parking spaces to line the east side with an increased grassed area directly in front of the monument. There is some benefit to this approach as it reduces the impact on the monument by providing more open space between the Abbey and hard standing. Further planting could therefore be introduced between the Abbey and the proposed road. The approach also improves the safety for car park users by negating the need to cross the road to reach the Abbey. That said reversing onto the road is a potential highways issue. The proposal requires disruption to traffic passing the site during the construction of the parking. The existing road sits outside of the current site boundary however, and it is also understood that the cost of rerouting the road is likely to exceed available funds.

APPENDICES

Scheduled Monuments- Full Report



Summary Description of a Scheduled Monument

Reference Number	Name	Date of Designation	Status
GM006	Neath Abbey		Designated

Location

Unitary Authority	Community	Easting	Northing
Neath Port Talbot	Dyffryn Clydach	273790	197367

Broad Class	Site Type	Period
Religious, Ritual and Funerary	Abbey	Medieval

Description

Summary Description and Reason for Designation

The following provides a general description of the Scheduled Ancient Monument.

Neath Abbey was founded in 1130 by a Devonshire Knight named Richard de Granville. Built upon a rocky terrace overlooking the marshland beside the River Neath, its proximity to the marsh afforded it peaceful seclusion. It was established as a daughter house of Savigny in Normandy but was, together with all the other houses of the Order of Savigny, absorbed into the Cistercian Order in 1147. As the Abbey consolidated its estates, the expanding monastic community soon began to outgrow the initial buildings and several major programmes of reconstruction occurred during the period between the late 12th and 14th centuries. The church itself was erected in one building operation between about 1280 and 1330.

The ranges around the cloister survive on the east and west sides. The east range contained the dormitory, reredorter and chapter house and was completed in the early 13th century. That portion of the range nearest the church has almost entirely been destroyed, although several of the vaulted undercrofts in the southern end of the range survive. The south range contained the refectory and kitchen although these have almost entirely been destroyed. The west range contained the dormitory, refectory and common room of the lay brothers and was completed in the late 12th century.

After the Dissolution of the monasteries in 1539, the abbey was purchased by a wealthy Tudor magnate. During this time a large Tudor house developed over the south-east corner of the monastic complex. The house was lived in by a succession of wealthy families until the early 1700's when it was abandoned and copper working in the abbey grounds began. By 1900, the abbey site was disused and overgrown.

The monument is of national importance for its potential to enhance our knowledge of the organisation and practice of medieval Christianity. The site forms an important element within the wider medieval landscape. It retains significant archaeological potential, with a strong probability of the presence of associated archaeological features and deposits. The structure itself may be expected to contain archaeological information concerning chronology and building techniques.

The scheduled area comprises the remains described and areas around them within which related evidence may be expected to survive.

Full Report for Listed Buildings

Summary Description of a Listed Buildings

Reference Number	Building Number	Grade	Status	Date of Designation	Date of Amendment
82339		II	Designated	22/12/2003	22/12/2003
Name of Property		Address			
Clydach Aqueduct on Tennant Canal					

Location

Unitary Authority	Community	Town	Locality	Easting	Northing
Neath Port Talbot	Dyffryn Clydach	Neath	Neath Abbey	273876	197293
Street Side		Location			
		Situated crossing the River Clydach just SE of Neath Abbey ruins.			

Description

Broad Class	Period
Transport	

History
Canal aqueduct built 1821 to carry the Tennant Canal over the River Clydach. The engineer was William Kirkhouse and the associated sluices on the SW side were part of the ill-fated Neath floating dock scheme. The canal opened in 1824 from the Neath Canal at Aberdulais to Port Tennant, Swansea. Traffic declined from the 1860s due to competition with railways but the canal did not close to commercial traffic until 1934.
Exterior
Canal aqueduct, rubble stone, two arches with cutwater between. Arches are segmental with thin stone voussoirs. On S side are rubble stone parapets with coping of curved slag blocks to centre and abutments splayed out each side in quadrant curves. To W is sluice gate with sandstone steps through right angle to river and rusticated pillars. No parapets on N side which is heavily repaired with cement.
Interior
Reason for designation
Included as a major historic feature of an important Welsh canal.
Cadw : Full Report for Listed Buildings
[Records 1 of 1]

Full Report for Listed Buildings



Summary Description of a Listed Buildings

Reference Number	Building Number	Grade	Status	Date of Designation	Date of Amendment
11834		II	Designated	29/01/1980	22/12/2003

Name of Property

Bridge over Tennant Canal to S of entrance to Neath Abbey

Address

Location

Unitary Authority	Community	Town	Locality	Easting	Northing
Neath Port Talbot	Dyffryn Clydach	Neath	Neath Abbey	273733	197287

Street Side

Location

Crossing the Tennant Canal just S of the entrance to Neath Abbey.

Description

Broad Class	Period
Transport	

History

Canal 'roving' bridge, where towpath changed sides, probably built 1821 by canal engineer William Kirkhouse. The canal opened in 1824 from the Neath Canal at Aberdulais to Port Tennant, Swansea. Traffic declined from the 1860s due to competition with railways but the canal did not close to commercial traffic until 1934.

Exterior

Hump-backed canal bridge, rubblestone with single segmental arch of dressed sandstone voussoirs. Low parapets with coping of rectangular cast blocks of copper slag, some with Roman numerals cast in. Abutments splay outwards slightly on each side extended as wall on SW side. Former tow path crosses from S to N side of canal over bridge.

Interior

Reason for designation

Included for historic transport interest as an early C19 canal bridge retaining its character.

Cadw : Full Report for Listed Buildings

[Records 1 of 1]

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