



Green Infrastructure Assessment & Ecological Enhancement

26 Park Avenue

Skewen

Neath

SA10 6RU

July 2024

Background

On 11th October 2023¹ the Welsh Government issued updated National Planning Policy for chapter 6 of Planning Policy Wales.

The updated policy guidance recognises the value of green infrastructure within the built environment. In order to facilitate a quality built environment enhanced by integrated green infrastructure all planning applications must now include a green infrastructure statement.

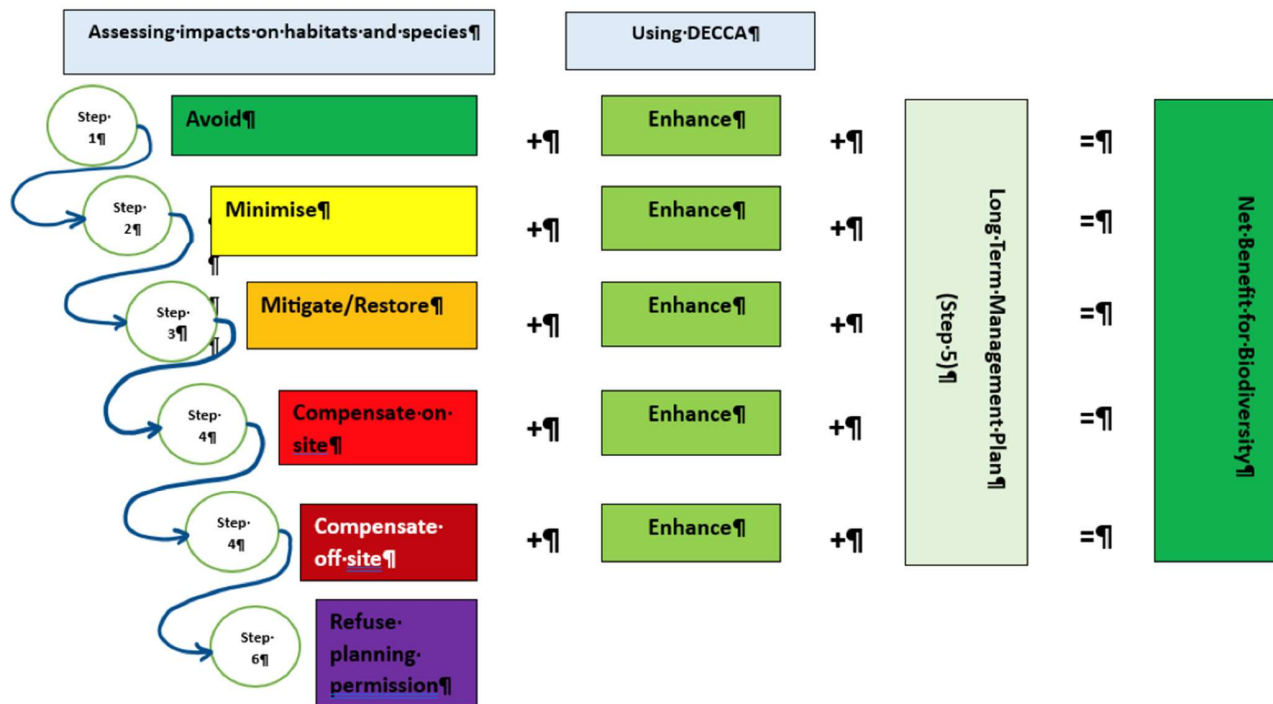
“6.2.6 A green infrastructure statement should be submitted with all planning applications. This will be proportionate to the scale and nature of the development proposed and will describe how green infrastructure has been incorporated into the proposal. In the case of minor development this will be a short description and should not be an onerous requirement for applicants. The green infrastructure statement will be an effective way of demonstrating positive multi- functional outcomes which are appropriate to the site in question and must be used for demonstrating how the step-wise approach (Paragraph 6.4.21) has been applied.”

Figure 1 below sets out the summary of the stepwise approach as set out in the Annex² to the published advice

¹ <https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2023-10/addressing-the-nature-emergency-through-the-planning-system.pdf>

² <https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2023-10/annex-addressing-the-nature-emergency-through-the-planning-system.pdf>

Figure 1



Proposal

The proposal is for the removal of the existing grass area to the front of the building and replacement with 2no off road parking spaces to extend the existing driveway width.

The Site

The application site is a semi detached dwelling. There are no ecological features within the development.

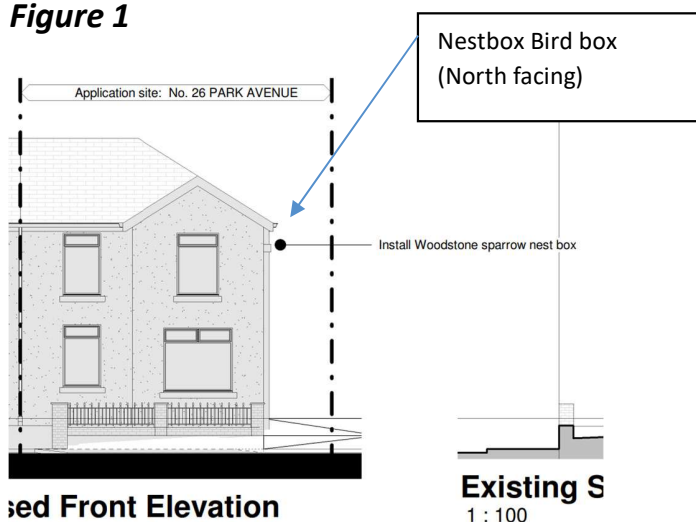
Proposed Enhancement

It is accepted that Future Wales now requires ecological enhancement however, it is submitted that any ecological enhancement must be proportional to the development proposed.

Given the scale of the proposal it is considered that the provision of a bird and bat boxes within the site will provide adequate ecological enhancement. Details of the location of the boxes are set out below **Figure 1**.

Location of bird box

Figure 1



Box Specifications

Bird Boxes

Boxes to attract garden birds and woodland breeding species such as tits, nuthatch, redstart and pied flycatcher can be placed in gardens, orchards, woodlands and a wide variety of other habitats. The species of birds attracted to the box will depend upon the size of the entrance hole (see table below).

Boxes should be fixed two to five metres up a tree or wall, out of the reach of predators such as domestic cats. Unless there are trees or buildings, which give permanent shelter, it is best facing between north and east.

General		
Example	Description	Picture
Schwegler No. 1B General Purpose Nest box	www.arkwildlife.co.uk Suitable for various garden and woodland birds, created with different sized entrance holes to avoid competition between species. Other variations (e.g. 2M) can be free hanging, to deter predators	
Nestbox Company – Bird Box Kit	https://www.nestbox.co.uk/products/bird-box-kit Suitable for various garden and woodland birds. Wall mounted, FSC Certified Exterior Grade Plywood. 2 fixing holes in top corners of back panel	
Entrance Hole	Species	
26mm	Blue-, Marsh-, Coal- and Crested Tit, possibly Wren. All other species are prevented from using the nest box due to this smaller entrance hole.	

32mm	Great-, Blue-, Marsh-, Coal- and Crested Tit, Redstart, Nuthatch, Pied Flycatcher, Tree and House Sparrows.
Oval	Redstart; also used by species that nest in the diameter 32 mm boxes. However, because more light enters the brood chamber, it is preferred by Redstarts.

Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 it is an offence to disturb breeding birds and therefore annual cleaning cannot be undertaken between the months of March and September inclusive. Bird nest boxes should be cleaned in October to prevent the build-up of nest parasites in the boxes whilst avoiding the risk of disturbing birds using the boxes as a roost site during the cold winter months. All nesting material and other debris should be removed from the box. Ideally, it should then be scrubbed clean with boiling water to kill any parasites (avoid using any chemicals). Once the box is clean, it should be left to dry out thoroughly. Bird boxes should be left up over winter as they can provide useful roosting sites for birds in bad weather.



Site lighting and dark corridors

Not applicable

Implementation

- Bird Box - Within one month of the completion of works

GIA Assessment

Table 1 below sets out the stepwise approach in assessing impacts of a development on habitats and the species

Table 1

	Steps	Assessment	Enhancement	Long Term Maintenance	Net Benefits
1.	Avoid	The application is replacement of the front lawed area to provide additional off street parking The development is located on a site occupied by a dwelling with no ecological features. The parking provision will result in the loss of approx. 20m² of grass, and as a compensatory measure it is proposed that a side herb bed planting border be constructed as indicated on the site plan, and as such accords with the <i>stepwise</i> approach set out in the published advice.	Bird box to be provided Herb planting bed to be provided	Annual Cleaning as set out above	Yes
2.	Minimise	Na	Na	Na	Na
3.	Mitigate/restore	Na	Na	Na	Na

4.	Compensate on site	Na	Na	Na	Na
5.	Compensate offsite	Na	Na	Na	Na

Conclusion

Applying the step-by-step approach, the assessment indicates that:

- The development avoids any damage to biodiversity
- The proposal provides an ecological enhancement proportionate to the scale of the development.
- The proposed ecological enhancement will be maintained
- There is a net benefit to biodiversity as a result of the development.