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GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STATEMENT, NEW ROADSIDE ENTRANCE, GELLI BWCH FARM.

Introduction

The Green Infrastructure Assessment is a requirement placed upon Local Planning Authorities (LPA) to adopt a strategic and proactive approach to the green infrastructure (ecological connectivity for example), biodiversity and ecosystem resilience (Planning Policy Wales (PPW) Section 6, Biodiversity Duty, updated October 2023). The LPA is required to produce regularly updated mapped outputs offering appropriate information on Green Infrastructure at a Landscape Scale, i.e. *'habitats, species and other green features and resources,'* to allow development management decisions to be based on current data relating to it.

A further strand to this is that all planning applications must be accompanied by a Green Infrastructure Statement that will be *'proportionate to the scale and nature of the development proposed and will describe the how the Green Infrastructure has been incorporated into the proposal'*. The Statement should demonstrate how a step wise approach, reflecting the Mitigation Hierarchy, has been utilised to maintain and enhance biodiversity, build resilient ecological networks and deliver net benefits for biodiversity.

The current proposals to create a new roadside entrance were designed prior to the requirement in PPW Section 6 being enforced, however this document summarises how the requirements have largely been met.

This statement should be read in conjunction with the Dream Fields Mitigation Document (December 2024) and landscape drawing number 2104-33.

Statement for the proposed development of a new road access at Gelli Bwch Farm

The works undertaken have resulted in the removal of approximately 20 trees, some of which were cut to prevent fouling of an existing power line wayleave. The new entrance was redesigned to formalise the main entrance to Gelli Bwch Farm. It was also necessary to offer off road space for parking up whilst opening gates and provide a vision splay. Given that the works have already been undertaken the approach taken in supporting the application from an ecological viewpoint was to address the loss of trees (as identified by ArbTS (ref 1750.1, Dream Fields, 11th October 2023) in accordance where possible with the step-wise approach offering appropriate mitigation and compensation which came into legislation following the initial works. Further to this an on-Site meeting with a member of the Neath Port Talbot Biodiversity Unit was held to confirm acceptable mitigation for the works.

The ArbTS report comments that approximately 20 trees have been lost to the works and recommended that 22 standard trees are planted in mitigation for the loss.

When measured against the requirements for sustaining Ecological Resilience, the works are considered to be of no impact when mitigation is considered. The small size and low biodiversity value of the application Site mitigate against a wider impact.

Following meeting with the NPT Biodiversity Unit representative, further recommendations are made on a wider scale across the farm ownership that include biodiversity enhancements along with other recommendations to ensure that the development is sustainable and enhances both connectivity and biodiversity across the Site. The wider Farm mitigation recommendations are made in the document 'Dream Fields Proposed Mitigation, December 2024'. In addition to those recommendations specific landscape details at the Site entrance are made in drawing number 2104.33 shown below.

In conclusion, the proposals offer both positive enhancements for biodiversity and are considered more than proportionate to the development proposals.

Eric Hawkeswood
Principal Ecologist
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Site entrance Mitigation Proposals.
For full detail please see the original drawing

