

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STATEMENT

Proposed Temporary Outdoor Play Shelter

Funky Footsteps Day Nursery, Hospital Site, Baglan Way, Port Talbot, SA12 7BX

1.0 Introduction

1.1

This Green Infrastructure Statement has been prepared in support of a planning application for the proposed erection of a temporary outdoor play shelter at Funky Footsteps Day Nursery, Hospital Site, Baglan Way, Port Talbot, SA12 7BX.

1.2

The proposed development is intended to support the continued operation of the established nursery use and to enhance the provision of inclusive indoor and outdoor play and learning space for children attending the facility.

1.3

The shelter will provide a covered external area for supervised childcare activities and is intended to support the operational delivery of the Flying Start childcare model, enabling year-round access to outdoor play and learning opportunities in a safe and sheltered environment.

1.4

The proposal has been designed as a modest and proportionate addition within the curtilage of the existing nursery and includes biodiversity enhancement measures in the form of bird boxes attached to the structure.

1.5

This statement has been prepared to demonstrate that the proposal has appropriately considered Green Infrastructure principles and that the development will not adversely affect the existing environmental resource of the site and will deliver proportionate biodiversity enhancement in accordance with relevant national and local planning policy.

2.0 Site and Surrounding Area Description

2.1 Site Location and Context

2.1.1

The application site is located within the grounds of the existing Funky Footsteps Day Nursery, situated on the wider hospital site at Baglan Way, Port Talbot, SA12 7BX, within the administrative area of Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council.

2.1.2

The nursery occupies an existing single-storey building within the established hospital campus. The site is accessed from the internal road network serving the wider healthcare estate and is set within a predominantly developed institutional environment.

2.1.3

The immediate nursery grounds comprise a combination of:

- built form.
- hardstanding.
- enclosed play space.
- access routes.
- boundary treatments; and
- small areas of managed landscaping.

2.1.4

The area within which the shelter is proposed forms part of the existing operational nursery curtilage and is already used as part of the outdoor amenity and play environment associated with the childcare use.

2.2 Description of the Surrounding Area

2.2.1

The wider surrounding area is characterised by the established hospital campus and associated healthcare-related land uses, including buildings, service areas, parking, access roads, pedestrian routes, and managed landscape areas.

2.2.2

The broader setting around Baglan Way includes:

- institutional and commercial built development;
- highway infrastructure and transport corridors.
- areas of amenity grassland.
- ornamental planting and managed shrubbery.
- occasional trees and landscaped margins associated with the hospital site and surrounding development.

2.2.3

The site does not form part of open countryside, a designated ecological site, or an area of significant semi-natural habitat. Rather, it is situated within a previously developed urban site with limited ecological sensitivity at the scale of the proposed works.

2.2.4

Notwithstanding this, the wider site and surrounding area contain elements of soft landscaping and incidental green infrastructure which contribute to visual amenity, urban greening, and local biodiversity value.

3.0 Planning Policy and Legislative Context

3.1 National Planning Policy

3.1.1

This statement has been prepared with regard to the relevant provisions of Planning Policy Wales (PPW), current edition, which requires planning authorities and applicants to take a proactive approach to the protection, maintenance and enhancement of biodiversity and Green Infrastructure.

3.1.2

PPW identifies Green Infrastructure as a multi-functional network of natural and semi-natural features, including green spaces, trees, planting, habitats, drainage features, and associated environmental assets that provide ecological, social, visual, and climate resilience benefits.

3.1.3

PPW also requires planning decisions to demonstrate a biodiversity enhancement / net benefit for biodiversity, where this is proportionate to the nature and scale of development.

3.1.4

The proposal has therefore been designed to ensure that it:

- avoids unnecessary harm to environmental features.
- remains compatible with the developed context of the site; and
- delivers proportionate biodiversity enhancement as part of the scheme.

3.2 Legislative Context

3.2.1

The proposal has also been considered in the context of the following legislation and guidance:

- Environment (Wales) Act 2016, including:
 - Section 6 – Duty to seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity and promote ecosystem resilience.
 - Section 7 – Habitats and species of principal importance in Wales.
- Future Wales: The National Plan 2040.
- Technical Advice Note (TAN) 5: Nature Conservation and Planning.
- Technical Advice Note (TAN) 12: Design.

3.2.2

In accordance with the above, the proposal has been prepared to ensure that biodiversity and Green Infrastructure considerations are embedded within the design and justification of the development.

3.3 Local Planning Policy

3.3.1

The proposal has also had regard to the relevant policies of the Neath Port Talbot Local Development Plan, including those relating to:

- sustainable design.
- environmental protection.
- biodiversity.

- placemaking; and
- the protection and enhancement of Green Infrastructure assets.

3.3.2

While this is a small-scale and site-specific proposal, it is considered important to demonstrate that the development has been designed in a manner consistent with local planning objectives relating to environmental quality and biodiversity enhancement.

4.0 Description of Development

4.1 Proposed Works

4.1.1

The application seeks planning permission for the installation of a temporary outdoor childcare play shelter within the grounds of the existing nursery.

4.1.2

The proposed structure is ancillary to the lawful operation of the nursery and is intended to provide a sheltered external area for:

- supervised play.
- learning and developmental activities.
- inclusive childcare provision; and
- flexible indoor / outdoor use throughout the year.

4.1.3

The shelter will support the operational requirements of the nursery by improving the quality and usability of the outdoor space in varying weather conditions.

4.1.4

The proposal also includes the installation of bird boxes attached to the shelter structure, which form part of the biodiversity enhancement measures associated with the development.

5.0 Green Infrastructure Assessment

5.1 Existing Green Infrastructure Resource

5.1.1

The immediate application area comprises an existing managed nursery environment and is not identified as a significant Green Infrastructure asset in its own right.

5.1.2

The site is predominantly characterised by built development and hard surfaced play and circulation space, with only limited incidental landscaping within the immediate development footprint.

5.1.3

As such, the baseline ecological and Green Infrastructure value of the specific area affected by the proposal is considered to be low.

5.2 Green Infrastructure Function of the Site

5.2.1

Whilst the site is not of high ecological value, it nonetheless forms part of the wider urban Green Infrastructure network associated with the hospital campus and surrounding developed landscape.

5.2.2

At a local level, the site contributes in a modest way to:

- visual amenity.
- urban greening.
- opportunities for nature engagement.
- limited habitat provision for common urban species.

5.2.3

The proposal has therefore been considered in the context of ensuring that these functions are not materially harmed and, where possible, are enhanced.

6.0 Assessment of Development Impacts

6.1 Impact on Existing Green Infrastructure

6.1.1

The proposed development is of a small scale and is located wholly within an existing operational nursery area on a previously developed site.

6.1.2

The proposal will not result in the loss of:

- trees.
- hedgerows.
- woodland.
- water features.
- priority habitat; or
- any designated ecological feature.

6.1.3

The proposal will also not sever any identifiable ecological corridor or materially reduce the functionality of the wider Green Infrastructure network associated with the surrounding hospital site.

6.1.4

Given the location and nature of the works, the development is considered to have a neutral impact on the existing Green Infrastructure resource of the site.

6.2 Construction Phase Effects

6.2.1

Construction impacts are expected to be minor, short-term, and localised in nature.

6.2.2

Potential temporary effects may include:

- minor disturbance during delivery and installation.
- short-duration construction activity and noise.
- limited localised ground disturbance associated with installation or fixing works.

6.2.3

Given the developed character of the site and the absence of sensitive habitats within the immediate application area, these impacts are considered to be negligible and not significant in planning or ecological terms.

6.3 Operational Effects

6.3.1

Once installed, the shelter will function as an ancillary element of the established nursery use and will not introduce any materially harmful operational impacts in Green Infrastructure terms.

6.3.2

The use of the structure for supervised childcare play and learning is wholly compatible with the established use of the site and will remain contained within the existing nursery boundary.

6.3.3

The proposal is not expected to generate any significant adverse effects on local biodiversity, habitat function, or ecosystem resilience.

7.0 Justification for Development

7.1 Childcare and Inclusive Play Provision

7.1.1

The proposed shelter is required to support the continued operation and development of the nursery as an established childcare facility.

7.1.2

The structure will provide an important covered outdoor area that enables children to benefit from external play and learning opportunities in a broader range of weather conditions.

7.1.3

The proposal is particularly important in supporting inclusive play provision, ensuring that children are able to access outdoor environments in a setting that is safe, adaptable, and suitable for supervised early years childcare.

7.1.4

The development will therefore contribute positively to:

- child wellbeing.
- social development.
- sensory and physical play.
- access to fresh air and outdoor learning; and
- the quality and resilience of the childcare environment.

7.2 Flying Start Model

7.2.1

The proposal will support the practical delivery of the Flying Start childcare model, which places emphasis on high-quality early years provision and child development outcomes.

7.2.2

The provision of a sheltered and usable outdoor space will improve the nursery's ability to provide:

- flexible learning opportunities.
- continuity between indoor and outdoor play.
- inclusive access to year-round external activity; and
- enhanced support for the developmental needs of children attending the setting.

7.2.3

The proposal therefore provides a clear functional and social benefit in planning terms, whilst remaining modest and proportionate to the scale and character of the site.

8.0 Biodiversity Enhancement Proposals

8.1 Overview

8.1.1

In accordance with the biodiversity enhancement principles set out in Planning Policy Wales and the Environment (Wales) Act 2016, the proposal includes measures

intended to provide a proportionate ecological enhancement as part of the development.

8.2 Bird Boxes

8.2.1

The proposed shelter will incorporate bird boxes fixed to the structure.

8.2.2

These features will provide potential nesting opportunities for common bird species associated with urban and suburban environments and will represent a simple but meaningful enhancement within the context of the site.

8.2.3

The bird boxes should be installed in appropriate positions, taking account of shelter, orientation, and likely disturbance, and should be retained for the lifetime of the development unless otherwise replaced on a like-for-like basis.

8.3 Additional Enhancement Opportunities

8.3.1

In addition to the proposed bird boxes, the following biodiversity enhancements are recommended where practicable:

- the use of pollinator-friendly planting in planters or soft landscaped areas.
- incorporation of native or wildlife-supporting species where any future planting is introduced.
- installation of a small invertebrate habitat features such as a bug hotel.
- avoidance of unnecessary external lighting spill onto biodiversity features.

8.3.2

These measures are proportionate to the scale of development and appropriate to the operational nature of the site.

8.4 Educational Value

8.4.1

The proposal also presents a positive opportunity for nature-based learning and environmental awareness within the nursery setting.

8.4.2

The inclusion of biodiversity features within a childcare environment can assist in promoting early awareness of:

- wildlife.
- seasonal change.
- habitats; and
- the value of the natural environment.

8.4.3

Whilst this educational benefit does not form part of the formal ecological mitigation, it represents a positive additional outcome of the development.

9.0 Mitigation and Good Practice Measures

9.1

The proposal is not expected to require formal ecological mitigation. However, the following proportionate good practice measures are recommended:

9.2

Any adjacent planting or landscaped areas should be protected from accidental damage during installation works.

9.3

Installation works should remain confined to the defined nursery area and avoid unnecessary disturbance to any adjoining landscaped margins.

9.4

Any future lighting associated with the shelter should be designed and operated to minimise unnecessary light spill and avoid direct illumination of bird boxes or any wildlife-supporting features.

10.0 Conclusion

10.1

This Green Infrastructure Statement has been prepared in support of the proposed erection of a temporary outdoor childcare play shelter at Funky Footsteps Day Nursery, Hospital Site, Baglan Way, Port Talbot, SA12 7BX.

10.2

The application site is located within an established and previously developed institutional setting associated with the wider hospital campus. The proposal is modest in scale and is located wholly within the existing nursery curtilage.

10.3

The development will support the continued operation of the nursery and provide an important covered external space to facilitate inclusive indoor and outdoor play and learning, including the practical delivery of the Flying Start childcare model.

10.4

The proposal has been designed to ensure that:

- no significant Green Infrastructure asset is lost.
- no unacceptable ecological impacts arise.
- the development remains proportionate to the character and function of the site; and
- biodiversity is enhanced through the inclusion of bird boxes and associated opportunities for wildlife support.

10.5

Overall, the proposed development is considered to result in a neutral to positive Green Infrastructure outcome, and the scheme is considered acceptable in environmental and planning terms.