

BikePark Wales, Design and Access Statement

Proposed accommodation pods, changing village and vehicle workshop

**Bike Park Wales
Gethin Woodland Centre
Abercarnaid
Merthyr Tydfil
CF48 1YZ**

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Prepared by: The Urbanists Ltd

Address: The Creative Quarter, 8A Morgan Arcade, Cardiff, CF10 1AF

On behalf of: BikePark Wales



Email: info@theurbanists.net

Website: www.theurbanists.net

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Author	LH
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1. Introduction

This Design and Access Statement (DAS) accompanies the full planning application for development at BikePark Wales.

Previously planning permission was granted for extensive redevelopment of the site via permission P/19/0073. The proposed development will replace part of the development that was granted permission. This includes amended design and number of accommodation pods, a changing village to replace the approved shower block, and amendment to the design of the bike wash facilities and children's play area, and introduction of a new vehicle workshop that was not included in the planning permission.

The development proposed is 'major development' and hence is accompanied by this DAS in accordance with the Planning Act. The DAS details the site, development proposals, and then examines the project against the principles of good design relevant planning policy.

Figure 1: Rider on BikePark Wales trail.



2. The Development Site

The development site is located on the BikePark Wales site in the Gethin Woods in Abercarnaid, Merthyr Tydfil. It is approximately 1.12ha and consists partly of woodland and the operational BikePark Wales facility. Approximately 0.85ha is greenfield and 0.27 is brownfield land. Parts of the development site are included in designated Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCS), namely the Abercarnaid Fields and Craig Gethin.

The site is bounded to the west by the existing BikePark Wales site, to the north by woodland and parking plateaus that have recently been implemented under permission P/19/0073, and woodland and grassland to the east and south.

The area surrounding the site includes a mix of woodland types on the valley sides above the River Taff, the valley settlements of Abercarnaid and Pentrebach and the A470, which are all located to the east. To the west are the extensive network of mountain bike trails for which BikePark Wales is famous. Access to the development site is direct from the A470 via a roundabout access to the south-east of the development site.

Figure 2: Site photos (woodland and parking plateaus).



Figure 3: Site Location.



3. Proposed Development

The proposed development will replace part of the development that was previously granted planning permission at BikePark Wales in 2020 via permission P/19/0073. Development approved in that permission included 36 camping pods and 5 chalets, a of shower and toilet block, play and picnic area, new car parking areas to accommodate an additional 150 parking spaces, an overflow car park to accommodate an additional 46 car parking spaces, trail maintenance yard, highway access routes, ground profile works, drainage, infrastructure and landscape works. Following the grant of the permission part of the approved development has been implemented, in the form of the additional parking areas and the associated access routes required to access them, and bike washing facilities. The remaining development has yet to be implemented, and now needs to be amended to ensure that the development is delivered reflects the operational requirements of BikePark Wales and meets its ambition to remain the premier mountain bike destination in the UK.

The proposed development consists of the following:

- 29 camping pods, which will replace the 36 pods previously approved.
- A changing village, which will replace the shower and toilet block previously approved.
- A bike storage area, consisting of a series of containers that will replace existing site structures.
- A workshop for vehicle maintenance, and which was not included in the previous permission.
- Redesign of the children's play area to accommodate the vehicle workshop.
- Bike wash facilities, which are now proposed in an updated location.
- Appropriate landscape, highway and drainage design will be provided as part of the above works, but the approach remains unchanged from that previously granted planning permission.

Figure 4: Site Masterplan.



Accommodation Pods

A total of 29 accommodation pods are now proposed. This is less than originally approved 36 pods, as it is proposed to increase the quality of the pods being provided, with each pod afforded greater site space and privacy, and better internal living spaces and facilities. The pods are key to enabling BikePark Wales to meet growing demand (particularly in the family market) and will supplement the local B&B offer and the 5 chalets that are approved on site under planning permission P/19/0073. The pods would be in the same area of the Park as the originally proposed pods; sited in a woodland environment that would screen views of them from the wider Park and surrounding landscape.

The 29 pods vary in type, with sleeping accommodation provided via 21 camping pods and 3 shepherd huts and ancillary uses catered for with 2 toilet pods, 2 linen pods where bedding will be kept, and 1 workshop pod where guest can maintain their bikes. Unlike the previously approved pods, each pod type will have a consistent appearance and material treatment to ensure synergy, but will vary subtly in form to signify their different uses. Each pod would be clad in black timber with black metal sheet roofs, which would create a modern architectural appearance that is also sensitive to woodland environment they would be located in. The black appearance of the pods would also be in keeping with the BikePark Wales brand.

Changing Village and Shipping Containers

Given the increase in visitor numbers to the Park, additional shower, toilet and changing facilities are essential. Planning permission P/19/0073, including a toilet and shower block, but it is now intended to deliver a changing village, which will include WCs and showers in a better indoor/outdoor environment that will provide a better visitor experience and be easier to clean and maintain. The changing village would be located in roughly the same area of the site as the previously proposed shower block, though slightly further north. This would ensure that it is easy to access for guests staying in the pods and wider visitors to the Park. The changing village would be located within the

context of the site's existing visitor centre and would have a timber cladding appearance that is consistent with those buildings, albeit it would have a more functional finish befitting its status as functional building. The roof to the changing village would be polycarb.

Immediately adjacent to the changing village it is proposed to place a series of shipping containers that will be used for guests staying on the site to store bikes. To ensure they have a consistent appearance to the changing village they will be wrapped in the same timber cladding as the changing village to ensure that they appear as one structure. A green roof and solar panels are proposed to be included on top of the containers.

Vehicle Workshop

A vehicle workshop is proposed in the north of the site, in an area that was previously allocated for a children's play area. The workshop is proposed to provide a place for BikePark Wales to maintain vehicles with protection from the elements. The workshop will replace the existing outdoor maintenance area and will serve to improve the visual appearance of the Park and the connections between the existing visitor centre area, the new pod accommodation and parking areas. The building would be functional in appearance, consisting of a steel frame and finish that would be coloured green for the elevations and grey for the roof.

Children's Natural Play Area

One of the main aims of BikePark Wales is to appeal to the family leisure and tourism market. Therefore, a small natural playground was included in permission P/19/0073. The play area is to be retained, but in light of the need for a vehicle workshop (refer above), it is necessary to reduce its size. The proposed park would still be sizeable in coverage and equipment and would help to soften views of the wider Park, with its natural appearance and associated planting.

Bike Wash Facilities

A small bike wash facility was previously included in permission P/19/0073 to be delivered at the northern edge of the original visitor centre building. It is now proposed to be located alongside the access track to its north east. The was facilities would include timber screens, hardstanding and water supply for bike washing. Appropriate receptors are to be included to catch any oil spillage.

Figure 5: Precent images for the proposed camping pods



Figure 6: Elevation and floorplans for the proposed camping pods.

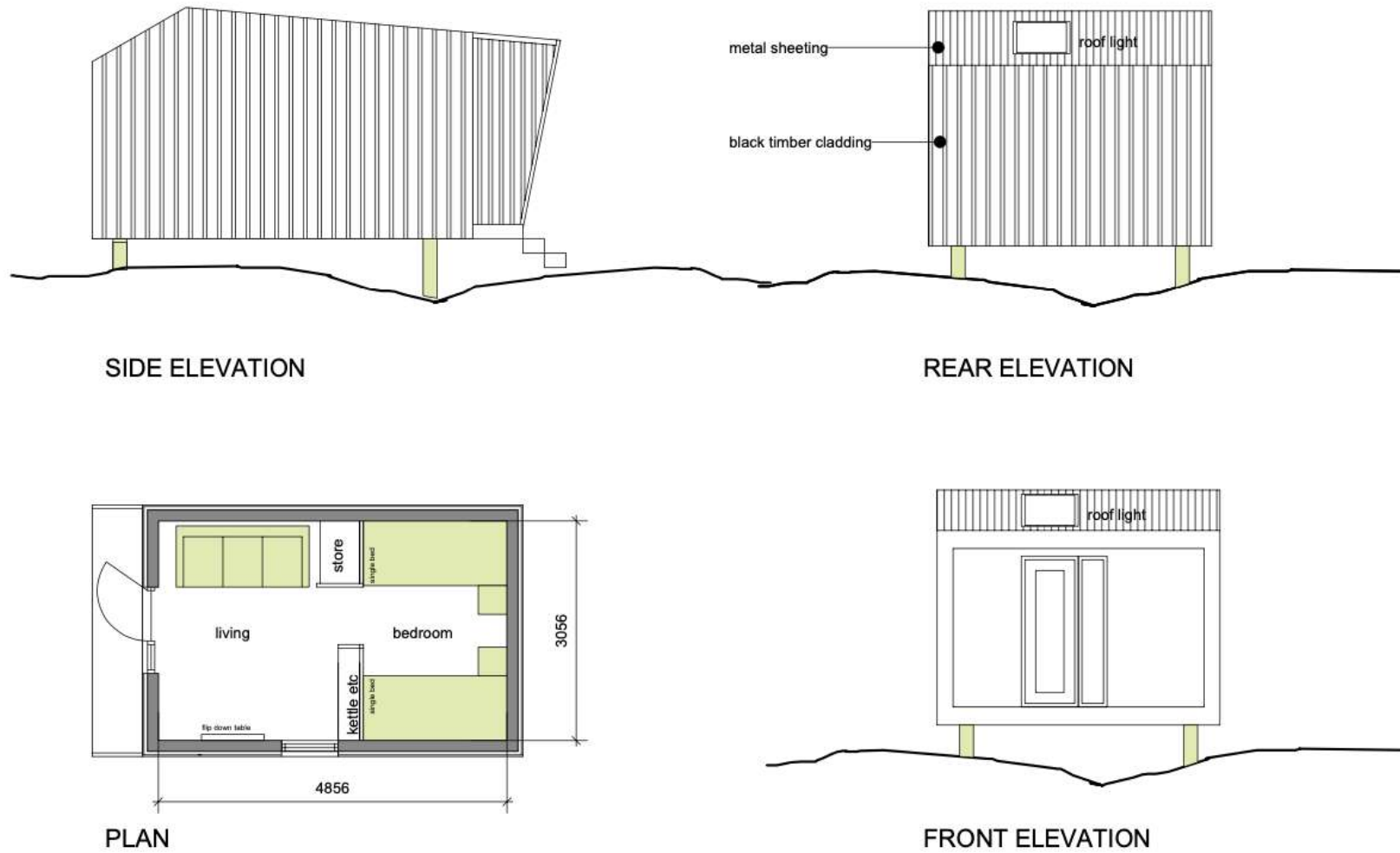
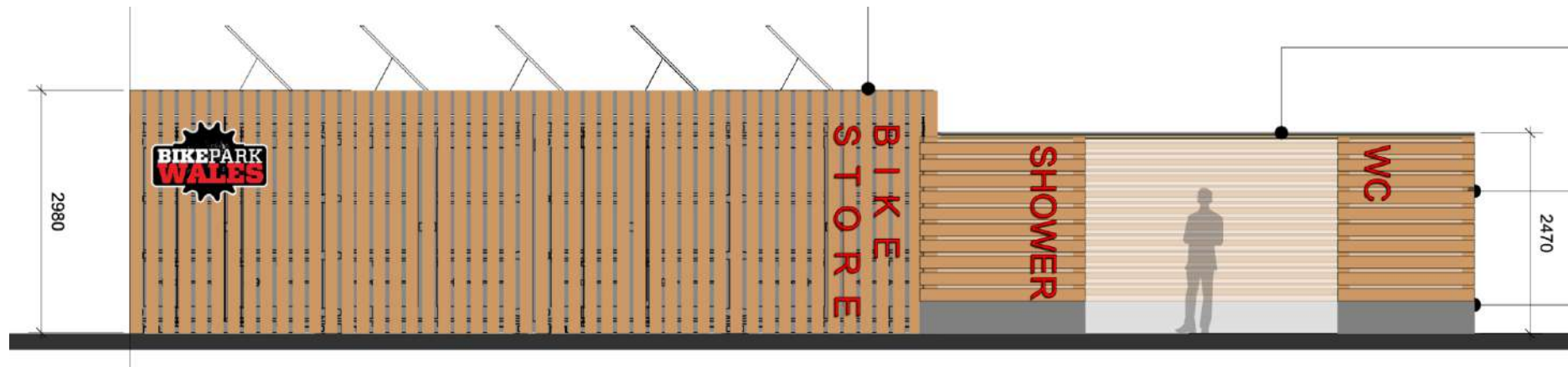


Figure 7: Elevation of the proposed shower block and elevations.



4. Legislative Context

It is a statutory requirement under the Planning (Wales) Act 2015, that planning applications for the following types of development are accompanied by a Design and Access Statement (DAS):

- All planning applications for “major” development except those for mining operations, waste developments, relaxation of conditions (section 73 applications), and applications of a material change in use of land or buildings; and,
- All planning applications for a development in a Conservation Area or World Heritage Site Which consists of the provision of one or more dwellings or the creation of floorspace of 100 sq. m. (gross) or more.

Major development that is non-residential is defined as any development of over 1,000 sq.m. of new floor space, or development on a site with an area of 1 hectare or more. The proposal is categorised as major development and therefore the application is required to be accompanied by this DAS.

The guidance document prepared by Welsh Government and the Design Commission for Wales (2017) states that a DAS must demonstrate and clearly communicate the logical design process; the requirements of a DAS reflect the objectives of good design set out in Planning Policy Wales (PPW) and Technical Advice Note 12: Design (TAN 12). It advises that a DAS should communicate what is proposed and demonstrate the design process that has been undertaken to reach the final proposal, explaining how the design has responded to the site, context, brief, vision, relevant policy and the objectives of good design.

5. Planning Policy Context

This chapter sets out the main national and local planning policy context which is relevant to the development proposal.

National Policy

The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (2015)

The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act requires public bodies in Wales to consider the long-term impact of their decisions, to work better with people, communities and each other, and to prevent persistent problems such as poverty, health inequalities and climate change.

The Planning Act (Wales) 2015 states that Local Planning Authorities must exercise their function in relation to the determination of planning applications “...as part of carrying out sustainable development in accordance with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 (annex 2), for the purpose of ensuring that the development and use of land contribute to improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales.” (PA(W), Sec.2(2)). The Act puts in place seven well being goals. The Act makes it clear that the listed public bodies must work to achieve all of the goals, not just one or two. The goals are identified in Figure 3.

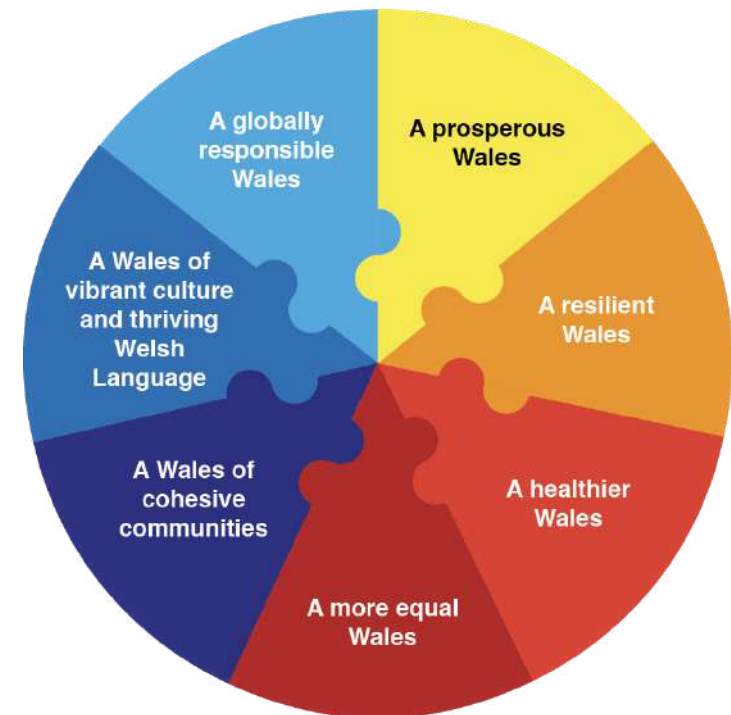


Figure 8: Wellbeing goals

Planning Policy Wales (2021) Ed. 11

Planning Policy Wales (PPW) is the Welsh Government's land use planning policy for Wales. It replaces the 2018 edition of PPW. A strong focus on placemaking and sustainable development is retained as key elements to deliver the wellbeing goals and direct development plans and development management decisions. PPW describes the process of placemaking as an "inclusive process, involving all of those with a professional or personal interest in the built and natural environment. It defines placemaking as *"a holistic approach to the planning and design of development and spaces, focused on positive outcomes. It draws on an area's potential to create high quality development and public spaces that promote people's prosperity, health, happiness, and well being in the widest sense"* (p.14).

PPW sets out the key planning principles of 'achieving the right development in the right place' by the principles of: growing our economy in a sustainable manner; making best use of resources; facilitating healthy and accessible environments; creating and sustaining communities; and maximising environmental protection and limiting environmental impact. These are then underpinned by National Sustainable Placemaking Outcomes in relation to each principle.



Figure 9: Planning Policy Wales 2021

Future Wales - The National Plan 2040

Future Wales - The National Plan 2040 was adopted in February 2021 as the national development framework setting the direction of development in Wales to 2040. The Plan provides a strategy to address key national priorities through the planning system, including developing a vibrant economy, developing strong ecosystems, achieving decarbonisation and climate-resilience and improving the health and wellbeing of communities. It sets out 11 outcomes of Future Wales comprising the vision for Wales in 2040. The aim is for a Wales where people live:

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

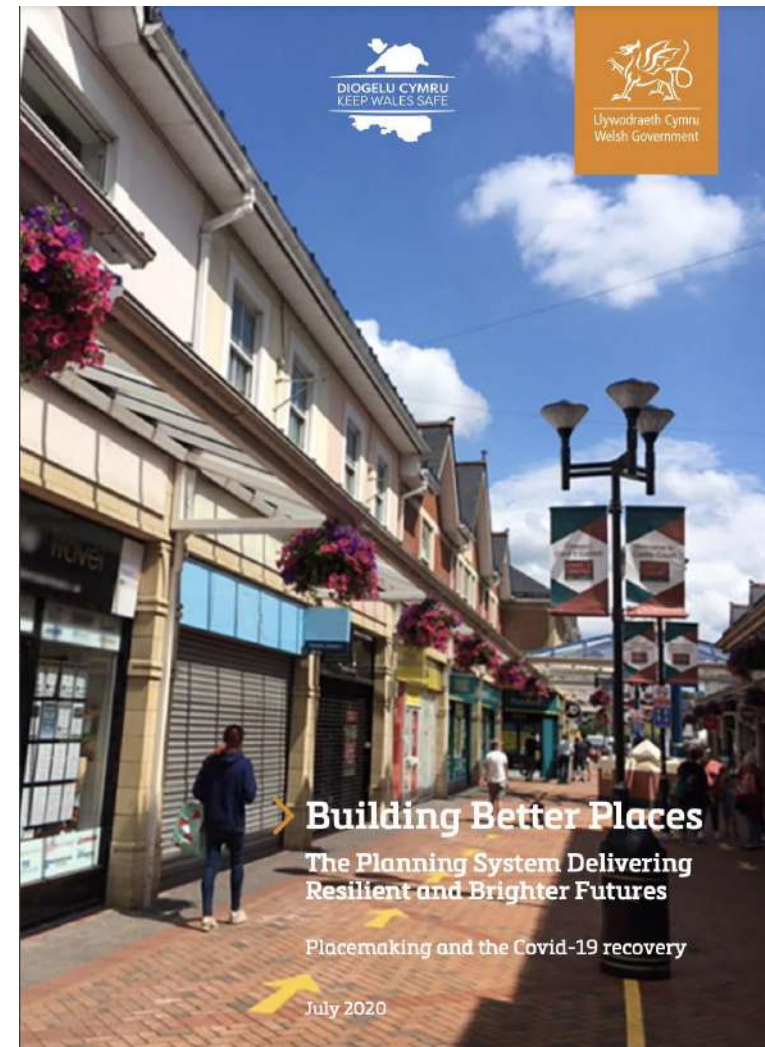
- In places with world-class digital infrastructure;
- In places that sustainably manage their natural resources and reduce pollution;
- In places with biodiverse, resilient and connected ecosystems; and
- In places which are decarbonised and climate-resilient.

Future Wales divides Wales into 4 regions with Merthyr falling within the South-East Region. Within this area, Policy 33 of the Plan identifies Cardiff, Newport and The Valleys (where the site is located) as a National Growth Area, where investment and sustainable economic growth and development are to be encouraged. This includes enhancement of the tourism offer.

Building Better Places (2020)

The purpose of Building Better Places (2020) is to set out Welsh Government's planning priorities to assist in the recovery of the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. It highlights the key role of the planning system in shaping the vision for better places and delivering positive change, and places priority on particular aspects of national policy from PPW. The document states that the pandemic crisis has highlighted the need for good quality places for people to live, work and relax and has emphasised the importance of the quality of living and working environments. A duty is placed on the planning system to ensure that the post-covid economic recovery does not compromise the quality of the built and natural environment.

Figure 10: Planning Policy Wales 2021



Technical Advice Notes (TANs)

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

TAN 5: Nature Conservation and Planning

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

TAN 12: Design

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

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

TAN 15: Development and Flood Risk

This TAN provides guidance in relation to development and flooding. It provides advice on matters including the use of development advice maps to determine flood risk issues, how to assess the flooding consequences of proposed development and action that can be taken through development plans and development control (management) procedures to mitigate flood risk when planning for new development. The application site is located in flood risk Zone A as defined by Natural Resources Wales's development advice mapping system. This means that there is little or no risk of flooding

TAN 18: Transport

Technical advice note 18: Transport (Welsh Government, March 2007) covers the integration of land use and transport planning, the location of new development, regional transport plans, parking, and the design of development. The guidance highlights the importance of parking and highways standards for new development and the need to consider walking and cycling.

Figure 11: Development Advice Map extract.



Local Plan

The Merthyr Tydfil Replacement Development Plan 2016-2031 is the adopted Development Plan for Merthyr Tydfil. Key policies of the Plan relevant to the proposed development include:

- Policy SW4 Settlement Boundaries
- Policy SW 11 Sustainable Design and Placemaking
- Policy CW1 Historic Environment
- Policy ENW 1 Nature Conservation & Ecosystem Resilience
- Policy ENW 3 Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation
- Policy ENW 5 Landscape Protection
- Policy ECW 7 Tourism, Leisure & Recreation Development

In the Development Plan constraints map the site is shown as being included in a group Tree Preservation Order (green in Figure 12) includes areas of ancient woodland (hatch in Figure 12) and a Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest. In the proposals map the site is included in the Merthyr West Flank Special Landscape Area (light green in Figure 13), a Mineral Safeguarding Area for Sandstone (orange hatch), and part is located in the Abercarnaid Fields Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (green hatch).

Figure 12: Constraints Map extract.



Figure 13: Proposals Map extract.

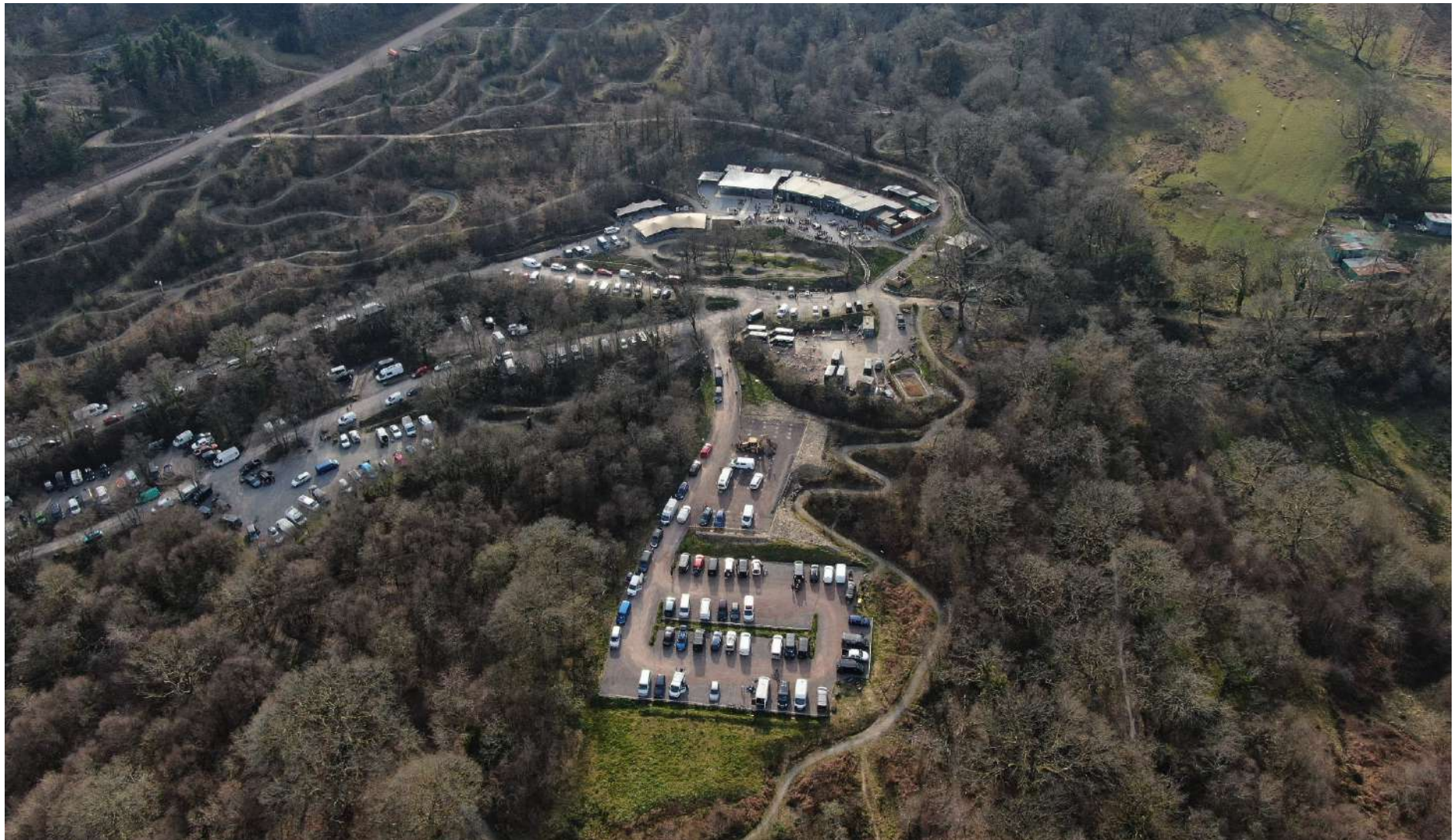


Planning History

A review of the planning history for the site reflects the operational nature of the BikePark Wales facility and its ongoing growth as a recognised national tourism and leisure destination. Key planning applications are listed below.

- P/12/0235 - The planning permission for the original BikePark Wales facilities. Decision: Approved.
- P/13/0214 - Erection of single story extension to visitor centre to accommodate plant room. Decision: Approved.
- P/15/0385 - Construction of 23 additional mountain bike trails to expand the existing facility. Decision: Approved.
- P/16/0055 - Retention of revised car parking layout, including the provision of additional car parking spaces and the erection of two wood clad huts. Decision: Approved
- P/17/0367 - Construction of a new access track and widening of existing forest roads to be used as an uplift route by BikePark Wales. Decision: Approved
- P/18/0335 - Erection of new bike hire centre with associated bike washing facilities and storage areas. Erection of new catering unit and staff office building. Decision: Approved
- P/19/0073 - Provision of 36 camping pods and 5 chalets, erection of shower / toilet block and construction of play and picnic area. Construction of new parking area (150 spaces) with overflow car park (46 spaces), together with a trail maintenance yard, new highway access routes, ground profile works, drainage, infrastructure and landscape works. Decision: Approved.

Figure 14: Aerial view of BikePark Wales, with parking areas implemented via permission P/19/0073.



6. Design Analysis

This chapter assesses the proposed development having regard to the principles of good design as set out earlier in the DAS.

Character

The proposed location for the development is either previously developed land that is part of the operational nature of the BikePark Wales site, or is located on land (in the case of the accommodation pods) that was previously included in planning permission P/19/0073. Most of the development for which planning permission is being sought is replacement development, that is being sought to increase the design quality and character of the development. The pods for example, will now have a bespoke architectural design and be finished in a colour (black timber and metal sheeting) that has synergy with the BikePark Wales brand and is also appropriate to the woodland environment. The proposed pods would blend into the woodland environment and offer architectural interest; an appropriate addition to the BikePark Wales facility. In respect of the changing village and shipping containers, they would be located on a key part of the site, bridging the new pods with the existing visitor centres. While they would be functional structures, it is proposed to treat them as a single entity that has an appearance that is complementary to the existing style of the visitor centres (albeit with a more functional finish).

The new development included in the planning application is required to rationalise the existing vehicle maintenance arrangements on the site, which currently take place outside. This is not an optimum working environment for staff, and increases visual clutter on the site. The provision of the maintenance yard in an area of the site that can be screened by existing landscape and new soft landscape and the retained children's play area, will address both these factors. The green finish of the steel building will further assimilate the building to the site.

Access

The proposed development will be served by pedestrian routes that are made accessible for all users, and the key buildings and structures will also be accessible. The development would not impact on allocated disabled parking spaces at the Park.

Movement

The proposed development would not alter the movement arrangements that were agreed via planning permission P/19/0073. Appropriate and safe vehicle access would be provided into the site from the A470 and through the site on established site routes to established parking areas and drop-off areas. The proposed development would not generate greater levels of vehicles entering the site from the numbers previously agreed via permission P/19/0073. While the majority of people access the site via vehicle (given the operational nature of BikePark Wales) access is available from public transport (bus and rail stops) in the local settlement of Abercarnaid and Pentrebach. The Park is connected to public transport infrastructure via a series of rights of way and public routes. The proposed development would not impact on these arrangements and the Park promotes travel by sustainable transport modes.

Environmental Sustainability

The proposed development has been undertaken to be sensitive to the environment. The pods, for example, will be carefully located to be integrated into the woodland, while avoiding tree loss, reduction in the tree canopy and disturbance to ground cover. While the proposed changing village and shipping container structure would include a green roof and solar panels. Where feasible natural materials that blend to the site environment have been selected. A programme of ecological mitigation and enhancement and landscape enhancement has previously been agreed via planning permission P/19/0073, and the proposed development will comply and apply that approach.

Community Safety

The BikePark Wales site is a safe environment and the proposed development would not endanger this. All development would be well-overlooked by the wider Park or adjacent development, and appropriate lighting would be provided to ensure safety for guests at all times. Lighting of the camping pods would be sensitive to the woodland setting and bat activity, but would provide good visibility levels for overnight guests staying in the accommodation pods.

Figure 15: Aerial view of the BikePark Wales visitor centres, one of which was recently delivered under permission P/18/0335.



7. Assessment of Alternatives

The location of the proposed development is defined by their operational need to be in close proximity to the existing BikePark Wales visitor centres. The choice of the site location was justified and accepted through the grant of planning permission P/19/0073. The proposed development is an amendment to key aspects of development approved in the permission and does not change the findings of the site selection process.

In respect of the proposed development components, the alternatives considered are identified below:

- Accommodation Pods - The original design of the pods employed natural materials, but following review, it was considered that their form and specification was not distinctive and of sufficient quality, and it was decided to enhance the accommodation offer. The design of the pods now proposed will be bespoke to BikePark Wales, offering both a contemporary architectural approach in the selection of materials and building forms that will create visual interest and be sensitive to the woodland environment. Internally the accommodation would also be more practical for future guests, providing more usable space for group stays.
- Changing Village - The changing village has been pursued as an evolution to the original shower block approved under P/19/0073, as the indoor/outdoor environment will create a more hygienic facility for Park users to utilise. It would also allow more visitors to use the facility at once. The introduction of the facility also provides the opportunity to rationalise bike storage arrangements on site, and by wrapping the proposed containers into the same structure as the changing village, both development components can be viewed as one entity; reducing existing stand-alone structures on site. The choice of materials diverges from the original shower block design, as it is proposed to create a natural timber finish that is more appropriate to indoor/outdoor nature of the changing village and it would be more in keeping with the visitor buildings on site.

- Vehicle Workshop - The proposed location for the workshop is proposed as it can be screened in the location and is away from Park customers. A more central location could have been considered, but it would have a greater landscape and visual impact and may result in operational issues of the site. The proposed finish of the workshop (steel frame and finish) reflects its practical function where vehicles will be entering for maintenance works. A more elaborate or natural finish may be subject to damage and would not withstand the 'wear and tear' likely in such a workshop as the proposed structure.
- Children's Play Area - The loss of the Children's Play Area was considered to facilitate the Vehicle Workshop, but this was avoided as the Park is considered to be key to appeal to the family leisure and tourism market, and because its natural finish will help to soften and screen views of the development. Alternative locations for the development are not possible because of its size, the allocation of existing facilities on the site, and the need for proximity to the visitor centre. Its current location will also help to screen the new workshop proposed.

Figure 15: Aerial view of the BikePark Wales trails, located to the west of the main visitor centre area and development site.



8. Planning Assessment

This chapter considers the scheme against the relevant planning policy previously identified. Planning applications must be determined in accordance with the adopted Development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. This requirement is set out in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (Sec.38(6)). Further to this, is the requirement that a Local Planning Authorities in Wales, when carrying out a function in relation to an application for planning permission, must exercise that function for the purpose of ensuring that the development and use of land contribute to improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales (Planning (Wales) Act 2015). The below assessment demonstrates how the development satisfies policy and the well-being requirements

Development Plan Policy

- Policy SW 4 Settlement Boundaries - The development is located outside of the settlement boundary. The policy states that development shall only be permitted when specific criteria is met. This includes the expansion of an existing business in the countryside. The proposed development satisfies these criteria and therefore meets the policy.
- Policy SW 11 Sustainable Design and Placemaking - The policy requires development to adhere to good design criteria. The previous sections of this DAS have demonstrated that the development has been subject to a careful design response to elevate key development components included in planning permission P/19/0073. For example, the pods will provide a better quality architectural project that provides a more premium accommodation offer, and an architectural response that is appropriate to a woodland setting; having the ability to blend to the woodland scene and creating architectural interest up close. Similarly, the changing village will offer a more aesthetically pleasing shower and wash facility over the previously approved shower block. In short, it is considered the

development is sustainable, high quality and unique to the BikePark Wales setting. It is therefore considered that the development proposals comply with the policy.

- Policy CW1 Historic Environment - The policy requires that the historic environment will be conserved and enhanced. The development is proposed in a Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest so an Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment and ASIDOHL 2 has been prepared. This assessment identifies that the proposed development will have a slight impact on the registered asset, which means that the value of the historic landscape will remain unchanged if the development is delivered. The proposed development is therefore considered to satisfy the policy.
- Policy ENW 1 Nature Conservation & Ecosystem Resilience - The policy requires development to promote the resilience of eco-systems, and requires developments to demonstrate that the need for the development outweighs biodiversity value of the site and that the impacts of the development can be satisfactorily mitigated. The impact of the proposed development on the development site's ecology was fully assessed as part of the grant of planning permission P/19/0073; as part of that process a comprehensive ecological scheme of mitigation and enhancement was agreed and it was concluded that the development could be integrated into the site while maintaining its ecological value. The proposed development has also been subject to ecological assessment and it concludes that the original programme of mitigation and enhancement remains valid; it is therefore considered that the amended development can also be delivered while protecting the ecological value of the site, and that the proposals comply with the policy.
- Policy ENW 3 Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation - Part of the site is located in the Abercarnaid Fields SINC. The policy states that development in SINC's will only be permitted where the need for the development outweighs the harm, adverse impacts can be avoided, and appropriate mitigation and enhancement is delivered. The impact of the development has been factored into the

Ecological Impact Assessments undertaken to inform the grant of permission P/19/0073 and the current application; the proposed mitigation and enhancement includes the protection and enhancement of the SINC and it is therefore concluded that the development and its economic benefits can be delivered alongside the protection of an important ecological resource. It is considered that the development proposals satisfy the policy.

- Policy ENW 5 Landscape Protection - The policy identifies Special Landscape Areas (including the Merthyr West Flank) and confirms that development will only be permitted in such areas where it can be demonstrated that it would not cause unacceptable impact on the quality of the landscape setting, are sensitive to the character of the character of the Special Landscape Area, protects landscape features and key views, includes appropriate mitigation, there are no alternatives and the benefits of the development outweigh the harm. A Landscape and Visual Impact has been prepared for the development and confirms that while the proposed development would impact on the landscape character of the local site area and some key views from the local area surrounding the site, there would be limited impact beyond that area. On landscape impact, the Assessment concludes that subject to the appropriate landscape mitigation proposed it is not considered likely that the overall landscape character would be altered by the proposed development and the landscape would be able to receive the development without noticeable changes to its overall character. On visual impact, the Assessment again concludes that the development would not increase the number of significant effects on visual receptors, subject to the implementation of the proposed mitigation. In light of these findings, and the fact that the development needs to be in the proposed location to be part of the operational BikePark and would deliver significant socio-economic benefits for the local and regional economy, it is considered the development satisfies the policy.
- Policy ECW 7 Tourism, Leisure and Recreation Development - The development supports tourism, leisure and recreation development outside settlement boundaries provided the need for a countryside location is fully justified and the environmental and amenity impacts are minimised. The proposed development is required to be part of the operational BikePark facility to strengthen its offer; this is

considered sufficient justification for a countryside location. The environmental and amenity impacts of the development have previously been fully considered through planning permission P/19/0073, and again through the technical assessments and updates supporting this planning application. As referenced above, they demonstrate that impacts will be minimised to acceptable levels. The proposed development is therefore considered to meet the policy.

Wellbeing Requirements

The proposed development would help to grow the offer of a national tourism and leisure destination, helping BikePark Wales to maintain its status as a premier UK mountain bike destination. The proposed development would therefore deliver significant economic benefits for the local area, creating more local job opportunities and attracting more people to Merthyr Tydfil and the wider Capital City Region. The proposed development would also create social opportunities, facilitating social interaction for visitors, whether they are experienced groups of mountain bike riders or families and groups getting their first taste of biking, and enhancing wellbeing by encouraging outdoor activity, interface with the natural landscape and active lifestyles. Clearly there will be some landscape and visual impacts and ecological impacts through delivering the development, due to the character of some parts of the site. But these have been minimised through comprehensive mitigation and also enhancement where appropriate. In summary, it is considered that the economic, social, environmental and cultural impacts of the development can be delivered alongside the management of environmental impacts; this was why planning permission P/19/0073 was granted. It is therefore considered that the proposals are fully in accordance with the requirements of national wellbeing requirements.

9. Summary and Conclusion

This DAS has set out the background to the development, explained the site context, the form of the development, and the planning context. It also demonstrates how the development conforms to the principles of good design and key planning policy.

The delivery of the proposed development will allow BikePark Wales to grow, remain the premier mountain bike destination in the UK and continue to increase its important contribution to the local economy. Careful consideration has been given to the character of the area in the proposed development design and design measures have been undertaken to minimise the environmental impacts of the development to acceptable levels.

On this basis, the development is considered to be supported by applicable planning guidance and policy, and it is therefore respectfully requested that the Local Planning Authority grant planning permission.