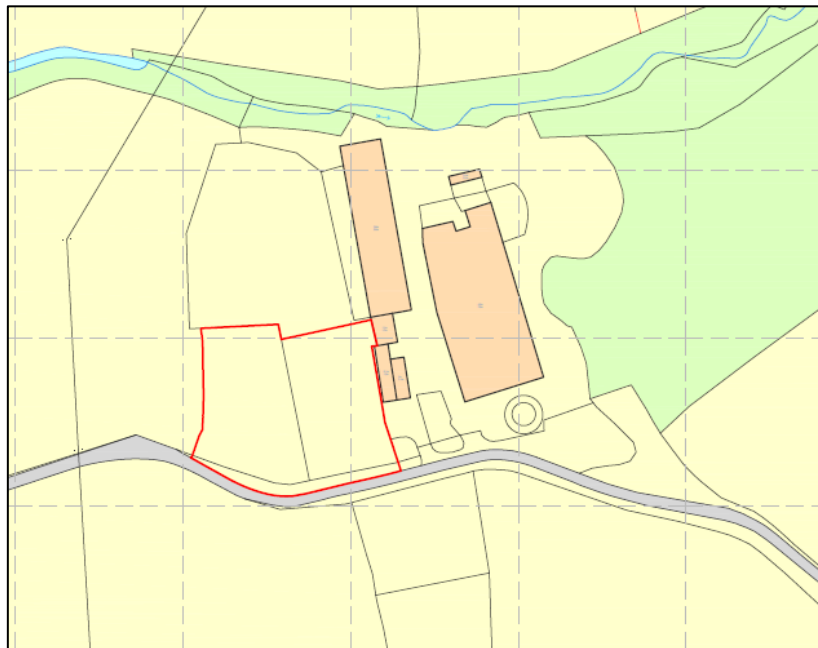


# Land at The Paddocks - Green Infrastructure Statement (GIS)

April 2024

## Introduction

- 1.1 This Green Infrastructure Statement (GIS) has been prepared by Turley on behalf of the Applicant. It supports a full planning application for the construction of a rural enterprise dwelling on land at The Paddocks, Bedlinog.
- 1.2 The description of development is as follows:  
  
*“The construction of a rural enterprise dwelling and associated works.”*
- 1.3 The Site Location Plan for the proposed development is shown below:



## Background

- 1.4 Chapter 6 of Planning Policy Wales (PPW) was updated on 18 October 2023. The updates were published in a Chief Planning Officer letter with immediate effect. These include the need for all planning applications to be accompanied by Green Infrastructure Statements (paragraph 6.2.5).
- 1.5 These updates have subsequently been included in the updated PPW (Edition 12), which was published in February 2024.
- 1.6 Pre-application engagement was undertaken with Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council (MTCBC) in January 2023 to develop the proportionate approach to biodiversity

at the site, and where necessary offsite. The proposed approach to biodiversity and ecology at the application site is detailed in full within the supporting Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) and Habitat Management Plan.

### **Site Selection**

- 1.7 The site selection process for the proposed development was undertaken in summer 2022. During this time, the applicant recognised the significance of the chosen location for constructing a rural enterprise dwelling, ensuring that the residents can be on site within sight and sound of the agricultural buildings at The Paddocks. It is important to recognise that the location of the proposal is a crucial element of the application. It is vital to ensure that the dwelling is connect to and located within close proximity to the farmstead.
- 1.8 There are no other viable options in relation to the location of the proposed dwelling. The predominant reason for constructing the building is to provide a much-needed rural enterprise dwelling, allowing a resident worker to be on hand to respond to any agricultural emergencies.

### **Stepwise Approach**

#### **Avoidance Measures**

- 1.9 Once the location of the proposed development was established, the potential to avoid sensitive habitats within the application site was considered in the early stages of site layout and design.
- 1.10 It was decided that the dwelling would be located towards the eastern section of the red line boundary to ensure sufficient space was provided for landscaping purposes to the west of the proposed dwelling.
- 1.11 As outlined in the accompanying PEA, the two mature oak trees will be retained as part of the proposals as they provide shelter and nesting opportunities for birds and small mammals. A Root Protection Zone (RPZ) will be implemented around the retained trees within the site and any trees which lie adjacent to the boundaries of the proposed development. Measures will include clear marking of the RPZ to guarantee no machinery is used or digging carried out in that area. This will ensure that there is no detrimental impact to the trees and the flora or fauna it supports.

#### **Minimisation of Impacts**

- 1.12 The applicant has been working closely with a qualified ecologist at Ecological Services Ltd to ensure that no habitats are adversely impacted by the proposal. A summary of the proposed measures is outlined below:
- Careful consideration will be given to the use of lighting within the developed site, as this can adversely affect activity by a variety of fauna, particularly foraging bats, nesting birds and invertebrates. Light spillage into the wider landscape will be avoided and brightness kept to the lowest permissible level in the areas adjacent to such habitats. This will be achieved by complying with the BCT Guidance Note 08/18 Bats and artificial lighting in the UK document <https://theilp.org.uk/publication/guidancenote-8-bats-and-artificial-lighting/>.

- All machinery and construction materials will be kept within a securely fenced and locked construction compound overnight. This will reduce the potential for mammals to shelter in any materials or machinery that could harm them.
- All excavations within the site will be securely covered over if left unattended. Any excavations that have a depth in excess of 0.5m and that are left open overnight will have a means of escape left for any mammals (e.g. badger, hedgehog) that may fall into them. A wooden board or equivalent will be left from the bottom to the top of the hole at an angle no steeper than 45°. This will allow any mammal to escape and avoid increased stress from being trapped.
- The provision of bird boxes of varying design to be incorporated into the newly constructed dwelling or within suitable trees across adjacent land in the ownership of the client. Boxes should be located as high as possible, i.e., as close to the eaves as possible.
- The use of native species within any proposed soft landscaping works on the site.
- All fencing within the site will be hedgehog friendly in design. A friendly design is considered to allow passage of small animals across the site. It should provide either a continuous gap of at least 13cm between the bottom of the fence and ground, alternatively 13cm by 13cm gaps can be cut every 3m along fencing.

#### **On-site Mitigation**

- 1.13 The new dwelling will only take up to a quarter of the overall development site. As such, approximately 3,912m<sup>2</sup> of soft landscaping will be created within the site boundary.
- 1.14 Biodiversity enhancement measures will be provided within the site boundary in the form of integrated bat and bird boxes, native planting and hedgehog passes in any fencing. However, as outlined in the Habitat Management Plan, while on site landscaping will be designed to benefit wildlife where possible, the exclusive use of non-native species within a garden setting is not realistic. As such, off site compensation is proposed, which is discussed next.

#### **Off-site Compensation**

- 1.15 A suitable off-site compensation site has been identified adjacent to the application site, which is also within the applicant's ownership. The site is shown overleaf. The site measures approximately 9,803m<sup>2</sup>.



- 1.16 The field is currently subject to low intensity cattle grazing as part of the applicant's farm. The overall aim for the compensation site will be to improve the floral diversity of the grassland and create species rich neutral grassland. The following measures will be implemented at the compensation site.

#### ***Mowing Strategy***

- All grassland habitat within both sections of the compensation site will be managed via mowing. For the first few years of management 2 cuts per year will be undertaken to help reduce soil fertility and prevent bracken encroachment. Amendments to the cutting frequency can be undertaken from year 3 onwards.
- The grassland will be cut twice each year for at least 3 years. The grassland will be cut in April and September each year. All cuttings will be collected and removed to an agreed compost location in the eastern most field.
- In year 3 the site will be subject to a summer (May - August inclusive) monitoring visit by a suitably experienced ecologist. The ecologist will walk the entire compensation site recording all plant species present. A comparison to the baseline data held within this report will be made and hopefully an increase in species diversity will be recorded. The monitoring visit will make special note of indicator species for neutral grassland present.
- After the monitoring visit changes to the management regimes within the compensation site can be proposed and agreed with the Local Planning Authority Ecologist. Any amendments to the agreed Habitat Management Plan must be agreed in writing with the LPA ecologist prior to being implemented.

#### ***Tree Planting***

- 4 native trees will be planted within the compensation site. All planted trees will be root ball and at least 1.5m in height as opposed to sapling whips. By using root ball trees, the specimens are more likely to establish and to establish more quickly into mature trees.

- It is not proposed to graze the compensation site therefore tree protection is not suggested at this point. If management is to switch to grazing in the future tree protection will be required to prevent cattle damage to trees while they are establishing.
- It is recommended that native sessile oak trees are planted. Any failed planting must be replaced in the next growing season.

#### **Compost Area**

- All cuttings collected, as part of the mowing activities within the site boundary, will be deposited in the north-eastern corner of the eastern most field within the compensation site.
- This area has been chosen as its the lowest point within the compensation site. Therefore, any nutrients that leach out of the material as it decomposes will not run into the compensation site.
- A compost pile will also provide an additional habitat for small animals such as slow worm/ grass snake, fungi and small invertebrates. The decomposing material provides heat and shelter for a range of animals and species.

#### **Conclusion and Planning Balance**

- 1.17 A stepwise approach has been followed during the design of the development.
- 1.18 The avoidance, minimisation, mitigation and off-site compensation measures outlined above will ensure a positive biodiversity outcome in the context of achieving a net benefit for biodiversity (NBB) meeting the requirements of Environment (Wales) Act 2016 and PPW Edition 12.

#### **Contact**

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