

Green Infrastructure Statement

For

Proposed Residential Development, Hillcrest

Prepared By



On Behalf of

Merthyr Housing Association

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INTRODUCTION

The design for the Hillcrest development has used a holistic approach, incorporating biodiversity enhancements and retaining existing GI wherever possible. The design was informed by the updated National Planning Policy for Chapter 6 of Planning Policy Wales.

Specifically, the development proposals and landscape philosophy follow the Stepwise Approach set out in paragraph 6.4.21:

- 1) **Avoid** – The initial layout of the site was developed over a number of years, initially by Cardiff University and subsequently by Pentan Architects. It was designed to avoid damage to existing GI assets wherever possible (refer to page 3 for details).
- 2) **Minimise** – The site layout was then developed and refined further, to minimise habitat loss and retain more of the existing landscape.
- 3) **Mitigate** – Potential damage to on-site GI assets was mitigated with the production of arboricultural assessments and ecological surveys to record and evaluate existing GI.
- 4) **Compensate** – Extensive GI enhancements including native trees, hedgerows and wildflower habitat are detailed on the landscape proposals for the development (refer to page 4 for details).

PREVIOUS STUDIES

Arboricultural survey produced by Treescene in 2024

Preliminary Ecological Assessment produced by Ecological Services Ltd in 2024

THE SITE

The development site comprises a sloped area of semi-improved grassland with scattered trees and large patches of tall ruderal vegetation. A hard surfaced parking area is located in the south west corner. The site is surrounded by roads and residential properties on all sides and there are no significant links to the wider GI network.



Image 1 – View looking East from Hillcrest



Image 2 – View looking South East from Mitchell Crescent



Small, close mown incidental open spaces, predominantly on street corners, are present across the wider residential estate

Mitchell Close

The Development Site

Retained Landscape within developer's ownership

Hillcrest

Haydn Terrace

Play area & sports pitches

Incidental open space comprising a mix of close mown & rough grassland

EXISTING GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE ASSETS

Existing Trees

18 no. trees and 13 no. tree groups tree groups primarily in the eastern section of the site. One tree (T13) is categorised as B – Moderate Quality & Value. The remaining trees are all assessed as either C - Low Quality & Value or Category U (Unsuitable for Retention).

Existing Hedgerows

There are no existing hedgerows on site

Green Corridors

There are no significant green corridors on site and, due to the surrounding roads and houses, no significant connectivity with other vegetated habitat in the local area or the wider GI network.

Stepping Stones

GI stepping stones form a patchwork of small incidental open spaces around the site and across the wider residential development. These generally low ecological value areas predominantly comprise close mown amenity grassland.

Soils

The site comprises significant areas of open green space, currently occupied by semi-improved grassland. Pending soil testing, it is likely that there are sufficient soil resources within the site for future landscape purposes.

Public Open Space

The entire site is currently open to public use

Grassland

Almost all of the 1.2-hectare site comprises semi-improved grassland. Species include Birds foot trefoil, Bluebell sp., Broad leaved dock, Brown knapweed, Caraway, Cleavers, Cock's-foot, Common bent, Common cats-ear, Common chickweed, Common mouse-ear, Common ragwort, Common sedge, Common sorrel, Common vetch, Creeping buttercup, Creeping cinquefoil, Creeping thistle, Cuckoo flower, Daisy, Dandelion, possible Devil's-bit scabious, Dove's-foot crane's-bill, Fescue sp., Field wood rush, Germander speedwell, Greater plantain, Hedge bindweed, Hogweed, Lesser trefoil, Mare's-tail, Meadow buttercup, Meadow foxtail, Mouse-ear-hawkweed, Red Clover, Ribwort plantain, Rosebay willowherb, Smooth meadow-grass, Soapwort, Sweet vernal-grass, Wild carrot and Yorkshire fog.

Tall Ruderal Vegetation

Growing in patches across the site. Species include Bracken, Bramble, Caraway, Common nettle, Common ragwort, Meadow foxtail and Rosebay willowherb

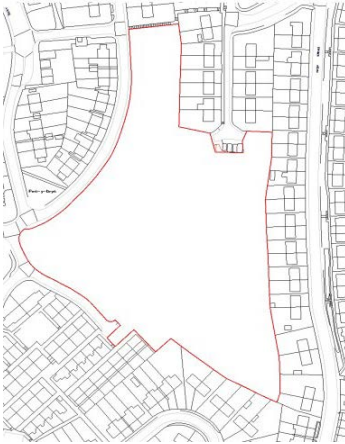
Scrub

Patches of Gorse and bramble scrub are located on the boundaries and in the centre of the site.

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE LOSSES

6 no. individual trees and 6 no. tree groups will be removed to accommodate the development. Two of these trees (T22 & T23) and two of the tree groups (G26 & G30) were assessed as Category U, and are unsuitable for retention regardless of the development proposed. The remaining trees and tree groups are all Category C – Low quality & Value.

The area of existing grassland and vegetation that will be removed to accommodate the proposed development is illustrated in Image 3 below.



**Total red line site ownership
area as shown = 21959.4m²**
Image 3 – Development Area



**Area of retained habitat
= 7,666m²**

PROPOSED GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

Proposed Native Trees – 16 no. new native trees are proposed on the northern and eastern edges of the development.

Proposed Orchard Trees – 8 no. new orchard trees of local provenance located in the north west corner of the development.

Proposed Street Trees – 28 new trees within the development including avenue street trees SUDs tolerant trees and landmark species.

Proposed Hedgerows – 270 linear metres of new species rich hedgerow wraps around the northern and eastern boundaries

Proposed Wildflower Habitat – 1,484 square metres of hedgerow, wetland and meadow wildflower areas across the development.

Proposed On-plot planting and SUDs features – A diverse mix of 53 species of native and ornamental shrub, grass and perennial spread across the development.

Proposed Reptile Hibernacula - Located within the retained grassland and designed in consultation with the project ecologist

SUMMARY

Due to the surrounding built development, the site is cut off from the wider GI network and there is no significant connectivity with other vegetated habitat in the local area

GI losses are compensated with new tree, hedgerow, grassland and wildflower habitat.

The retained grassland to the north and south will be managed to improve quality and biodiversity (refer to landscape management plan for details).