

Green Infrastructure Statement

Hornbeam Close, Merthyr Tydfil

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Plans:

LB594_D01c: Detailed Soft Landscape Proposal



Section 1: Introduction

- 1.1. Laird Bailey Ltd has been commissioned by Merthyr Valley Homes to develop a Green Infrastructure Strategy and Green Infrastructure Statement to support the proposed development at Hornbeam Close, Merthyr Tydfil, CF47 9BW (referred to herein as ‘the site’). The assessment comprised a desktop study and review of ecological survey work.
- 1.2. The purpose of this document is to identify the local Green Infrastructure (GI) network both within and surrounding the site, illustrating how the development proposals have been designed to avoid, minimise, mitigate and, where required, compensate the local GI in line with Chapter 6 of Planning Policy Wales (Edition 12).
- 1.3. GI is defined by the UK government as “*a network of multi-functional green space, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities*”. This can include natural habitats ranging from grasslands, wetlands and woodlands to parks, open spaces, playing fields, street trees, rain gardens, allotments and private gardens.
- 1.4. Development proposals include are for four residential plots with associated access, parking and landscaping.
- 1.5. The site is located in the Gurnos, approximately 2.1km north of Merthyr Tydfil, on the southern side of the Gurnos Ring Road, (grid reference SO 04486 08566). The site measures approximately 0.1 ha.
- 1.6. The rectangular site includes an area of existing hard landscaping utilised for parking. The parking area is enclosed by amenity grass, with a line of mature trees located along the northern boundary. The site's topography slopes down from the east to the west. The car park sits on a plateau with the surrounding soft landscaping sloping down to the surrounding roads to the north, south and west and up beyond the site to the east.
- 1.7. The northern boundary is open and adjoins Gurnos Ring Road. To the east, the site is partially open and bordered by palisade fencing and residential development. The southern boundary is open, with a strip of amenity grass separating the site from Hornbeam Close, which provides access to the southeast. Similarly, the western boundary is open and directly connects to Fernhill Close.
- 1.8. Internally, the site comprises amenity grassland around its perimeter. Seven trees of varying sizes are spaced across the site, creating a partial sense of enclosure from the adjacent road network. Access from Hornbeam Close leads via a tarmac driveway to the existing rectangular area of hardstanding. A cluster of shipping containers is currently located on the west of the car park.
- 1.9. The site is accessed from Hornbeam Close, which connects to Fernhill Close along the western edge of the site. Fernhill Close then leads onto Gurnos Ring Road, which in turn connects to the



A465 Heads of the Valleys Road, situated approximately north (60m) of the site. Public transportation is also accessible via a bus stop located approximately west (120m) of the site.

- 1.10. Landscape and GI plans prioritise creating an attractive, inviting environment for residents while also promoting biodiversity, habitat creation and connectivity. The GI objectives seek to create an attractive and sustainable environment for the community by replacing the current unmanaged landscape with a diverse, well-designed planting scheme and new soft landscape amenities. Proposed elements will be designed to create a cohesive ecological network connecting to the wider green infrastructure framework.
- 1.11. A Green Infrastructure Strategy has been developed to inform pre-application discussions with the local planning authority (LPA) and has been submitted as part of this application (Ref. LB594_D01c).
- 1.12. Specifically, the development proposals and landscape philosophy follow the Stepwise Approach set out in Figure 12 of Planning Policy Wales:
- **Avoid** – The layout of the site should be designed to avoid damage or removal of existing GI assets wherever possible;
 - **Minimise** – The site layout should be developed and refined through an iterative approach to minimise habitat loss and functioning ecosystems and retaining connections and existing features wherever possible;
 - **Mitigate/Restore** – Potential damage to GI assets will be mitigated through best arboricultural practice, protecting landscape features during construction and repairing damaged habitats in excess of like-for-like; and
 - **Compensate** – When all other steps have been exhausted further, on-site/immediate proximity or, as a last resort, off-site compensation should be provided. New planting areas should be designed and specified to contribute to the local and wider GI network.



Section 2: Existing Green Infrastructure

Local Green Infrastructure Networks

- 2.1. Located on the northern edge of the Gurnos residential area, the site has limited connections to the broader Green Infrastructure (GI) network. The site benefits from direct connections to amenity grassland to the east and south. Areas of grassland surrounding the site feature mature trees.
- 2.2. The wider local network comprises tree-lined streets, front and rear gardens, and local parks such as Pen-y-garn wood located to the north of the Prince Charles Hospital (200m South-west) and Cyfarthfa Park (1km South-west). To the north, the newly constructed Heads of the Valleys Road (A465) has removed the existing tree belt that lined Gurnos Ring Road, although ground cover remains comprising grassland remains along the verge.

Onsite Green Infrastructure

Existing on-site GI includes amenity grass and seven native trees of varying maturity along the north, south and western boundary. These features are well-maintained, contributing to visual amenity.

Existing Trees

- 2.3. Four mature trees line the northern boundary of the site, species include three Whitebeam (*Sorbus aria*) and one Wild Cherry (*Prunus avium*) tree.
- 2.4. Two Whitebeam (*Sorbus aria*) are located to the south east of the site on to the adjoining amenity grassland. A single Wild Cherry (*Prunus avium*) tree lies on the eastern edge of the site.

Existing Hedgerows

- 2.5. No existing Hedgerows were identified on-site.



Section 3: Proposed Green Infrastructure

Soft Landscape Proposals

- 3.1. With the existing site comprising predominantly of hard standing and little vegetation, development proposals seek to enhance the development area through the introduction of a considered and robust landscape scheme, increasing the GI capacity.
- 3.2. Connecting to the wider network is a key consideration for on-site GI. The site features direct connections to the wider network to the east and south of the development. Development proposals seek to maintain and enhance these connections where possible.
- 3.3. To facilitate construction and development, no trees on the site will be removed. Consequently, the development will not only preserve all existing GI features but also actively enhance them by incorporating additional ground cover and tree planting to improve both ground and canopy connectivity. Furthermore, the site boundaries will be enhanced with hedgerows and shrubs, providing valuable habitat and promoting biodiversity
- 3.4. The proposed strategy aims to create well-defined site boundaries that blend visually with the adjacent residential context. These boundaries will be linked to the internal spaces of the site through a cohesive landscape design incorporating wildflower grasses, ornamental beds, hedgerows, and trees. 77% of proposed plants within the scheme are native to the United Kingdom. The proposed on-site GI network seeks to link to the peripheral trees on the east and south boundaries.
- 3.5. The landscape design includes a range of new GI features for the benefit of people and wildlife. These include a diverse range of tree planting to improve amenity, structure and privacy, as well as providing summer shade and a food source for wildlife.
- 3.6. Development proposals seek to introduce many soft landscape features into the site. These include:
 - **Tree Planting** – A mix of native and ornamental specimen trees are proposed across the site comprising individual specimens within the street scene and groups to the site periphery. A mix of species are to be planted to ensure climate resilience and resistance to disease;
 - **Hedgerow Planting** – A mix of native and ornamental hedgerows is proposed across the scheme, to create defined boundaries to the site and gardens;
 - **Ornamental Planting** – Ornamental planting proposes mixed shrub, perennial and herbaceous plants within the community garden, rain gardens and to the front of development plots. The evergreen structure provided by shrubs is balanced with seasonal flowering plants and grasses, enhancing visual amenities and providing habitat and foraging opportunities;



- **Wildflower Grassland** – Wildflower grassland is to be established in islands under existing and proposed trees. wildflower areas are to have neatly maintained margins providing seasonal colour and habitat opportunity; and
- **Amenity Grassland** – Amenity grassland within the community garden, plot gardens and along the site frontage will be maintained to create accessible areas for a range of activities.

Landscape Management

- 3.7. The proposed landscape management will include an appropriate aftercare period to ensure that any retained and created habitats, connections and landscape planting establish well and are maintained for connectivity and health.
- 3.8. The main objectives for the Landscape Management Plan include:
- The conservation, protection, and enhancement of all proposed and retained natural features;
 - The establishment, through exemplary horticultural and contractual practices, of a high-quality and functional landscape with wildlife biodiversity enhancements;
 - To ensure that plant Bio Security principles, including biodiversity, are embedded in both the implementation and management of all new landscaping; and
 - To maintain the amenity of the proposals, ensuring an attractive place to live and visit.



Section 4: Conclusion

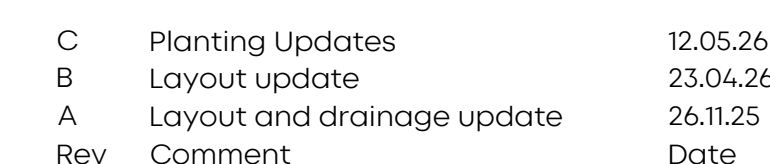
- 4.1. The existing landscape has been evaluated, and features, opportunities, and constraints have been identified. Development proposals aim to significantly increase GI features across the site. All trees on site will be retained, and connectivity will be strengthened through the addition of wildflower planting. Direct links to the wider landscape will be preserved, with new on-site features connected to improve the site's GI capacity within the broader GI network. Impact on existing site features will be avoided.
- 4.2. The scheme will utilise a mix of ornamental and native species throughout to create and enhance the development's peripheral corridors and central spaces. 77% of proposed plants within the scheme are native to the United Kingdom. This approach will introduce a range of landscape typologies, diversifying biodiversity, providing important ecological habitats, and enhancing the sites and surrounding residential amenity.
- 4.3. The successful maintenance and establishment of the landscape features on the site will provide a robust network of healthy, multi-functional and biodiverse green spaces capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality-of-life benefits for people and wildlife. Given the Green Infrastructure design and long-term management proposals, it is considered that the proposed scheme complies fully with Chapter 6 of Planning Policy Wales (Edition 12), which sets out the policy for biodiversity and nature.



Plans:

LB594_D01c: Detailed Soft Landscape Proposal





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