



## GI STATEMENT

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| Subject  | Blaen Y Garth GI Statement |      | Date               | 07/05/26 |
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### ASSESSMENT AGAINST POLICY -PLANNING POLICY WALES: STEPWISE APPROACH AND GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STATEMENT

On the 11th October 2023, ahead of PPW12 being published, the new Chapter 6 came into force with immediate effect. Net benefit must be secured via planning applications using the step-wise approach, including the acknowledgement of off-site compensation measures and the need to consider enhancement and long- term management. Green Infrastructure Statements will be used to demonstrate the step wise approach. The following information will be used in order to show compliance with policy.

The Environment (Wales) Act, the Well-Being of Future Generations Act and the Chief Planner's letter frame biodiversity with respect to its contribution to achieving ecosystem resilience. Natural Resources Wales (NRW) has developed a framework for evaluating ecosystem resilience based on five attributes and properties specified in the Environment (Wales) Act. This is referred to as DECCA: Diversity, Extent, Condition, Connectivity and Aspects of ecosystem resilience. The attributes provide a framework for considering the state of ecosystem resilience in Wales and can be applied across different habitats and land uses and for a range of different scales. NRW works to the definition of ecosystem resilience published in its State of Natural Resources Report in 2020, which is: "An environment that can respond to pressures by resisting, recovering or adapting to change; and is able to continue to provide natural resources and benefits to people."<sup>16</sup> When assessing planning applications, Planning Policy Wales

instructs planning authorities to take account of and promote the resilience of ecosystems, in particular the five attributes of ecosystem resilience. The DECCA attributes are explained further in NRW's Terrestrial and freshwater Resilient Ecological Networks: a guide for practitioners in Wales<sup>17</sup>, but as a broad summary, the definitions are as follows:

- **Diversity:** maintaining and enhancing diversity at every scale, including genetic, structural, habitat and between-habitat levels. This supports the complexity of ecosystem functions and interactions that deliver services and benefits.
- **Extent:** incorporating measures which maintain and increase the area of semi-natural habitat/features and linkages between habitats. In general, smaller ecosystems have reduced capacity to adapt, recover or resist disturbance.
- **Condition:** The condition of an ecosystem is affected by multiple and complex pressures acting both as short term and longer term types of disturbance. Both direct and wider impacts should be considered, for example avoiding or mitigating pressures such as climate change, pollution, invasive species, land management neglect etc.
- **Connectivity:** This refers to the links between and within habitats, which may take the form of physical corridors, stepping stones in the landscape, or patches of the same or related vegetation types that together create a network that enables the flow or movement of genes, species and natural resources. Developments should take opportunities to develop functional habitat and ecological networks within and between ecosystems, building on existing connectivity.
- **Aspects of ecosystem resilience (adaptability, recovery and resistance):** ecosystem resilience is a product of the above four attributes. Adaptability, recovery and resistance to/from a disturbance are defining features of ecosystem resilience.

## **1.0 Background to the site**

This document was prepared in order to support a planning application for the variation of condition 1 of planning permission P/16/0094 to extend the time period for the commencement of development (a further 5 years) | Blaen-y-Garth Farm Blaen-y-garth Access Road Pant Merthyr Tydfil CF48 2UY.

A PEA was undertaken of the site by Just Mammals in 2018, with an updated PEA of the site undertaken by BE Ecological Ltd in 2025.

## **2.0 Existing Green Infrastructure**

There site currently comprises of improved grassland surrounded by trees and defunct hedgerows.

Direct habitat loss implications within the development site can be limited if compensatory planting can be incorporated within the site plans.

The following relevant enhancement measures are recommended and have been incorporated into the proposals:

- Bat and bird boxes providing additional habitat for species
- use of native species within the soft landscaping works
- suitable long-term management of soft landscaping to ensure spaces are useful to wildlife

(please note, full details are not yet available but will be a condition of any planning permission)

## **3.0 Step wise approach**

Step 1- Avoidance- Impacts cannot be avoided on all existing habitats due to the size of the development.

Step 2- Minimise- Impacts have been minimised by retaining the site boundaries, as much grassland as possible and mitigating lighting.

Step 3- Mitigate/Restore- Mitigation will be via appropriate method statements to ensure no harm to protected species Any site lighting will conform to the following guidance to prevent any indirect impacts on foraging bats  
<https://theilp.org.uk/publication/guidancenote-8-bats-and-artificial-lighting/> .

(both to be conditioned on the application).

Step 4- Compensation on site- Wildflower meadows will be planted within the landscaped areas of the site. Wiidflower meadows will be planted within the rear garden to compensate for the loss of reptile and invertebrate habitat. The wildflower areas will be seeded with Emorsgate EM2 <https://wildseed.co.uk/mixtures/view/4/specialgeneral-purpose-meadow-mixture>. Enhancement will then include maintenance and management of this area to benefit both reptiles and invertebrates.

Please see Laird Bailey Soft Landscaping proposals Drawing Number: LB761\_D01 for full details of the wildflower areas.

Soft landscaping will be implemented, please see the above soft landscaping plan. Trees will be planted within the site. Trees will be native and as local a provenance as possible. Location and species can be found within the above soft landscaping plan.

Defunct hedgerows will be planted to form linear habitats with native species. Location and species can be found within the above soft landscaping plan.

## **4.0 MANAGEMENT OF HABITATS**

### **EM2**

Description This meadow mixture contains species that are characteristic of traditional meadows across a wide range of soil types. This mixture is compliant with the following Environmental Stewardship options: • Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI): IPM2 Flower-rich grass margins, blocks, or in-field strips • Countryside Stewardship (CSS): AB8: Flower-rich margins and plots

### **Ground Preparation**

Endeavour to select ground that is not highly fertile and does not have a problem with perennial weeds. Good preparation is essential to success so aim to control weeds and produce a good quality seed bed before sowing. To prepare a seed bed first remove weeds using repeated cultivation. Then plough or dig to bury the surface vegetation, harrow or rake to produce a medium tilth, and roll, or tread, to produce a firm surface. Sowing Seed is best sown in the autumn or spring but can be sown at other times of the year if there is sufficient warmth and moisture. The seed must be surface sown and can be applied by machine or broadcast by hand. To get an even distribution and avoid running out divide the seed into two or more parts and sow in overlapping sections. Do not incorporate or cover the seed, but firm in with a roll, or by treading, to give good soil/seed contact.

### **First Year Management**

Most of the sown meadow species are perennial and are slow to establish. Soon after sowing there will be a flush of annual weeds, arising from the soil seed bank. These weeds can look unsightly, but they will offer shelter to the sown seedlings, are great for bugs, and they will die before the year is out. So resist cutting the annual weeds until mid to late summer, especially if the mixture contains Yellow Rattle, or has been sown with a nurse of cornfield annuals. Then cut, remove and compost. Early August is a good time. This will reveal the young meadow, which can then be kept short by grazing or mowing through to the end of March of the following year. Dig out any residual perennial weeds such as docks.

### **Management Once Established**

In the second and subsequent years EM2 sowings can be managed in a number of ways which, in association with soil fertility, will determine the character of the grassland. The best results are usually obtained by traditional meadow management based around a main summer hay cut in combination with autumn and possibly spring mowing or grazing. Meadow grassland is not cut or grazed from spring through to late July/August to give the sown species an opportunity to flower. After flowering in July or August take a 'hay cut': cut back with a scythe, petrol strimmer or tractor mower to c 50mm. Leave the 'hay' to dry and shed seed for 1-7 days then remove from site. Mow or graze the re-growth through to late autumn/winter to c 50mm and again in spring if needed.

Details of other habitat management to be provided in the Landscape Habitat Ecology Scheme (LHES).

## 5.0 ENHANCEMENT USING THE DECCA FRAMEWORK

To build resilient ecological networks the following enhancements are proposed:

Bird boxes 7 no Enhancement on existing trees within the site

Bat boxes 7 no Enhancement on existing trees within the site

A hibernacula will be created within the site

Details of other habitat management to be provided in the Landscape Habitat Ecology Scheme (LHES).

| DECCA FRAMEWORK ELEMENT | Relevant measures                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|-------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Diversity               | <p>The scheme will aim to retain habitats and avoid loss.</p> <p>Opportunities for enhancement are focussed on priority habitats including the maintenance and enhancements of retained habitats through supplementary planting to improve structural and species diversity.</p> <p>New planting will benefit a range of species as a food source or by supporting the local invertebrate community.</p> |
| Extent                  | <p>The scheme seeks to retain important habitats and avoid loss (trees, hedgerows etc)</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |

|                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                      | Opportunities for habitat creation will be considered where possible (making linear features of hedgerows)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Condition                            | The condition of habitats will be maintained through a management plan and will contain a monitoring regime to monitor success                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Connectivity                         | Connectivity will be retained and enhanced through retention and enhancement of priority habitats (hedgerow, trees etc)<br><br>Supplementary planting and provision of additional food sources and shelter for a range of protected species.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Adaptability recovery and resistance | Habitat creation and retention provides a continued and enhanced resource via increased species diversity and structure<br><br>Supplementary planting of species of local provenance will extend food resources whilst increasing structural diversity and improving the condition of habitats. This will provide feeding, sheltering and commuting resources for a range of species.<br><br>Additional habitat creation (bat and bird boxes etc) will bolster the existing resource to ensure the long term success of the populations. |

## 6.0 Monitoring

Monitoring of habitats species at the Site shall be undertaken to ensure their continued value during the operation of the Development. At the end of year 5 an ecological audit of habitats shall be undertaken by a suitably qualified ecologist to ensure that those habitats which have been retained and created are meeting the standard they should be. The general condition monitoring should be undertaken in the form of an annual review. As part of the annual review a letter report should be produced. As a minimum, this should summarise those key management works which have been undertaken during that period, together with an assessment against those aims and objectives and management specification. Any observations with regard to general habitat condition, including deterioration of habitats should be noted, together with any recommendations for any remedial measures if required. The council and ecologist should be

notified of any recommended remedial measures so that these can be agreed and implemented at the earliest opportunity and ensure that targeted habitat conditions would still be met.

The proposed scheme acknowledges the requirement to achieve a Net Benefit for Biodiversity and from the beginning this has been built into the planning of the project. It is recognised that the footprint of the scheme has likely removed an area of scrub. The applicant aims to deliver biodiversity enhancements at the local scale by offering the enhancements stated above on the site. The site will be subject to enhancements along with long term appropriate management. As result of the ecological measures within this report, it is expected that there will be a demonstrable net benefit for biodiversity. The habitats to be impacted have been identified as being of relatively low value. All habitats will be retained/created/enhanced on site.

The proposals meet the recent changes to Chapter 6 of Planning Policy Wales 12 February 2024 which requires a proactive approach to green infrastructure conservation, restoration and enhancement and the securing of a net benefit for biodiversity through use of the step-wise approach and DECCA framework to provide mitigation and enhancement in addition to a commitment for long-term management of the biodiversity resource.

The wildlife boxes and wildflower area will be retained and managed for at least 25 years. Any breakages/deterioration of boxes will require replacement of said boxes. The client must ensure that the wildflower area is maintained and managed as per this GI statement. The client and any successor in title will be responsible for the funding and maintenance of the boxes, soft landscaping and wildflower areas.

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