



GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STATEMENT FOR THE PROPOSED PITCH IMPROVEMENTS TO THE PLAYING FIELDS AT FELINFACH, CEREDIGION

PROJECT OUTLINE

This Green Infrastructure Statement (GIS) is to accompany the above application, for the proposed pitch improvements to the playing fields at 'Felinfach Playing Fields'. The aim of the proposal is to achieve a level playing field, by undergoing a cut and fill construction method to remove the existing mound from the centre of the pitch, whilst also installing a bypass drainage system below the playing field to improve the overall playability condition of the pitch, which in-turn will ensure that the pitch will be able to be maintained to a higher standard throughout the course of the playing season. These improvements will result in the proposed finished pitch to conform to performance quality standards.

INTRODUCTION TO GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

The requirement for a Green Infrastructure Statement (GIS) to accompany all submitted planning applications comes following the commitment of almost 200 countries at the COP15 United Nations Biodiversity Summit, which includes a global commitment to halt, and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030 and to protect 30% of land and oceans by the same date (the 30 by 30 project). Following this commitment, the Welsh Minister for Climate Change has issued an updated chapter 6 to Planning Policy Wales, to come into immediate effect from the 18th of October 2023. The aim of the update to this chapter, is to ensure that biodiversity is a primary thought in the design stages of all applications, to assure that long term and chronic decline of biodiversity and habit loss is not continued in the future. By implementing these changes, it is believed that Wales' ecosystems will become more resilient to climate change, and thus begin to thrive again over the coming years.

Within chapter 6 of Planning Policy Wales, 'Green Infrastructure' is defined as: *"Green infrastructure is the network of natural and semi-natural features, green spaces, rivers and lakes that intersperse and connect places. Component elements of green infrastructure can function at different scales and some components, such as trees and woodland, are often universally present and function at all levels. At the landscape scale green infrastructure can comprise entire ecosystems such as wetlands, waterways, peatlands and mountain ranges or be connected networks of mosaic habitats, including grasslands. At a local scale, it might comprise parks, fields, ponds, natural green spaces, public rights of way, allotments, cemeteries and gardens or may be designed or managed features such as sustainable drainage systems. At smaller scales, individual urban interventions such as street trees, hedgerows, roadside verges, and green roofs/walls can all contribute to green infrastructure networks."*

In conjunction with the definition above, combined with information extracted from the entirety of the chapter, green infrastructure should be viewed as any feature big or small that will enhance natural form thrive at any scale, whether that by the virtue of providing additional habitats for native animals or allowing for native grasses, plants and trees to flourish either in their existing form



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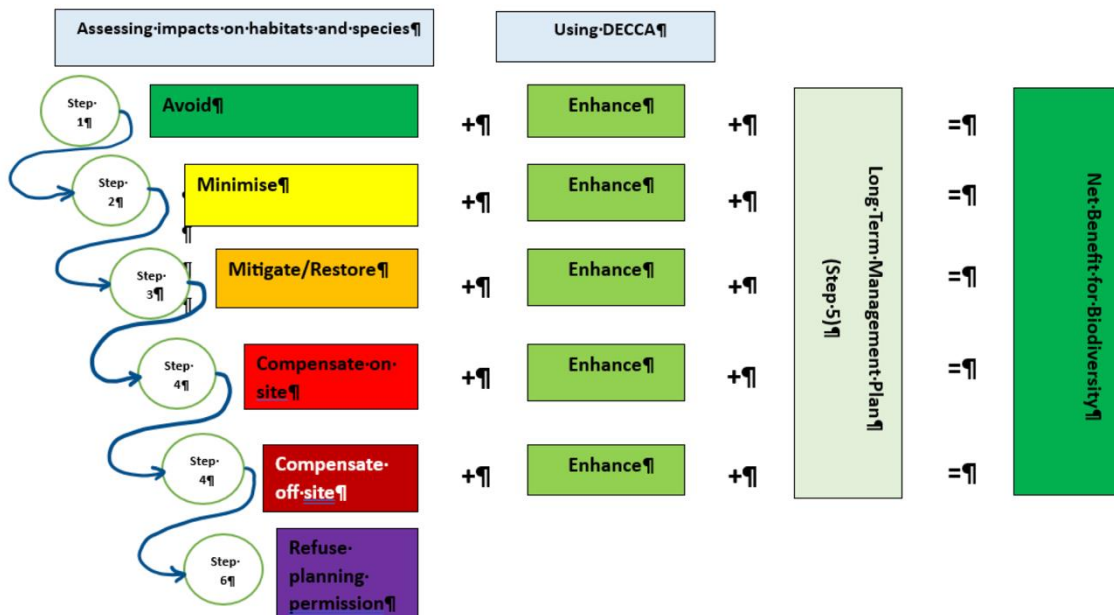
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or in a new location. The additional thought process towards the strengthening of biodiversity up and down the country will not only provide environmental enhancements, but also provide multiple benefits *“for social, economic and cultural resilience. The components of green infrastructure, by improving the resilience of ecosystems, can result in positive benefits to well-being including flood management, water purification, improved air quality, reduced noise pollution and local climate moderation, climate change mitigation and food production. These benefits are important in urban environments where they can facilitate health and well-being related benefits of open space, clean air and improved tranquility, for example, as well as creating a sense of place and improved social cohesion. In addition, green infrastructure has a role in protecting local distinctiveness, providing economic benefits and social and community opportunities.”*

THE STEPWISE APPROACH

To achieve the goals for enhanced biodiversity throughout Wales set out in the 30 by 30, it is essential that the ‘Step-Wise Approach’ is used. Putting this approach into practice means firstly, avoiding any adverse environmental effects, then minimized, mitigated, and as a last resort to be compensated for. This approach is identified in ‘Figure 1X: Summary of the Step-Wise Approach’ below.

Figure 1X: Summary of the Step-Wise Approach





EXISTING SITE AND SURROUNDING AREA

Prior to being able to implement beneficial gain to biodiversity in the form of green infrastructure, it is firstly imperative that the existing landscape, biodiversity, geodiversity, historic and cultural features are identified. This is required so that it is identifiable that a biodiversity net gain is implemented into proposals.

The proposed site put forward as part of this planning application is the existing playing fields in Felinfach, which is located just off the A482 main road. Felinfach/Ystrad Aeron makes up one of Ceredigion Rural Service Centres, given its moderate size and number of amenities. Felinfach is situated midway between both Urban Service Centres of Aberaeron and Lampeter.

As described in Ceredigion County Councils Local Development Plan (LDP), 'the Settlement Group of Felinfach and Ystrad Aeron is located in the Aeron Valley midway between the Urban Service Centres (USCs) of Aberaeron and Lampeter. Although all of the settlements within the Group look towards both Aberaeron and Lampeter (USCs) for many of their wider needs, Felinfach and Ystrad Aeron supports their day to day needs and therefore has a Service Centre role at a local level. Felinfach and Ystrad Aeron are located in the Aeron Valley on the A482. It is located 10.6km (6.5 miles) from Aberaeron and 10.8km (6.7 miles) from Lampeter. Although counted as one Rural Service Centre (RSC) the centre is formed of two distinct villages that when considered jointly accounts for more than approximately 150 dwellings, providing access to a good range of facilities and services, including a primary school (capacity for 54 pupils), general store/post office, public house, garage, village hall, a place of worship, playing fields and children's play area.

A large inland Settlement Group situated in the Aeron Valley which is a large, shallow and wooded encloses flat pastures. Located on a flat plateau the settlements of Felinfach and Ystrad Aeron are surrounded by a large rural hinterland. Subtle variations in character occur throughout, related to altitude and level of exposure. These factors influence vegetation patterns, with more sheltered areas consequently more richly endowed with hedges and deciduous trees and shrubs. Commonly, however, traditional field boundaries are degraded and either replaced or reinforced with wire fences. To the west of Felinfach/Ystrad Aeron is the Allt Pen Cnwc Wildlife Trust Reserve (WTR). To the east there is Cors Nantcwnlle Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Dolau Hafod SSSI. To the north there is Rhos Cilcennin SSSI, Parc Pont-Faen and Allt Crug Garn WTR. To the south is Comin Silian SSSI. Outside the protected sites, the Group contains a variety of habitats, several of which may be priority habitats (BAP priority habitats, S42 habitats of principle concern for conservation or local priority habitats). Felinfach/Ystrad Aeron mainly constitutes of improved and semi-improved neutral grassland, scrub and hedgerows. Within the wider Group there are also areas of semi-natural broadleaved woodland, marshy grassland, valley mire, semi-improved acid grassland and dry heath/acid grassland. There are also various water courses and ponds.

In relation to the specific site of application, the playing field is located amongst a largely communal domestic setting, given that the housing estate of Bro Henllys wraps around the field to the north and west sides of the field, the inclusion of a row of houses to the opposite side of the A482 main road and more recently the construction of the new Aeron Valley school to the south. The site comprises of one main football pitch with grassed areas to the east and west which are utilized to



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train on. Off the access point from the A482 main road, there is a hardcore parking area made up of hardcore. There are two buildings located within the site, with one serving as changing facilities, toilets and preparation area, and the other being a storage facility for goals and kit. During a feasibility study completed by Alan Lewis LTD Sports Surface Consultant, an examination of the grass coverage and soil build up was completed. These examinations identified that the pitch had an average vegetative cover of 80%, with this coverage being made up of Perennial Ryegrass, Smooth Staled Meadow Grass, Creeping Red Fescue and Annual Meadow Grass. Other weeds that were present on the site were Dandelions, Clovers and Speedwell. The analysis of the soil investigation identified that the topsoil texture was classed as a heavy clay loam made up of 26% sand, 46% silt and 28% clay. The subsoil was a heavy silt clay loam made up of 14% sand, 54% silt and 32% clay. Surrounding the site there are numerous mature trees to the south and west, as well as more recently planted hedgerows to the north.

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE AND BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN

As taken from chapter six of Planning Policy Wales, Distinctive and Nature Places, it is important to understand that green infrastructure is not just the implementation of planting or additional habit space for birds and bats, but also how these interconnect with the surrounding areas of wildlife, and the local community. Producing areas which incorporate values of 'green' elements are what create distinctive natural places, giving both benefits to the environment, as well as to local communities as there is an enhanced visual appearance created, provision of better facilities, and thus in-turn a promotion of physical and mental health and well-being.

The development for the proposed application takes into account all guidance set out within Planning Policy Wales. The aim of the proposal is to greatly improve the playability of the football pitches at the existing playing fields in Felinfach. This will be achieved by levelling off the existing pitch using a cut and fill construction method to create a flat surface. There will also be a bypass drainage system installed below the new level pitch to aid the free draining ability of rainfall during the wetter months. These changes will drastically improve the playability of the pitch, and will result in the proposed finished pitch to conform to performance quality standards.

Given that the net gain in terms of biodiversity should be *"proportionate to the scale and nature of the development proposed and will describe how green infrastructure has been incorporated into the proposal. In the case of minor development this will be a short description and should not be an onerous requirement for applicants."* (As taken from PPW). Given the nature of the application, there will ultimately be no removal of 'green infrastructure' from the site, as the aim is to retain the open green space, just to upgrade the playing standards. In identifying this, there is little enhancement required to provide a net gain. This biodiversity net gain will be achieved firstly in the level of vegetation present to the playing area, after the improvements have been carried out. As identified above, there is a reduced coverage of vegetation present on the field due to wear and tear of the nature of activities undertaken all year-round. In improving the drainage and topsoil build up, it will allow for a more dense vegetation coverage, which, over the field as a whole, will provide a net gain. The additional proposals to achieve a net gain within the site, is the installation of both a bird and bat box amongst the mature trees to the south of the site. This will provide birds and bats with additional habitat space in an area close enough to the potential food sources in the locality. After



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every bird nesting season, which is between February and August, check condition of the bird box to ensure no deterioration has occurred. If deterioration has occurred, replace bird box. Apply same method to bat boxes. Checks to be carried out towards the back end of the summer roost activity months and before winter hibernation period.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, the proposal will provide no negative impact on biodiversity within the site of application, as there is no removal of natural features required to achieve the desired outcome. This is in-line with the step-wise approach explained above. It is believed that this development will provide beneficial progress towards Wales' goals of the 30 by 30 as it is a sustainable form of development providing a biodiversity net gain.



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