

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STATEMENT:

**PROPOSED WASTE TRANSFER FACILITY AND ASSOCIATED EXTERNAL STORAGE
FORMER CAE GLAS MINE, FOCHRIW**

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Green Infrastructure Statement (GIS) supports the planning application for the change of use of an existing building and associated land at the former Cae Glas Mine, Fochriw, to a waste transfer facility with associated external skip storage.
- 1.2 The statement has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of Planning Policy Wales (PPW Edition 12), Future Wales: The National Plan 2040 and the Welsh Government guidance contained within the Ministerial Letter to Heads of Planning dated 11 October 2023 relating to Green Infrastructure Statements and the application of the stepwise approach.
- 1.3 The purpose of this statement is to identify existing green infrastructure assets associated with the site, assess the impact of the proposed development upon those assets and demonstrate how the proposal has followed the stepwise approach of avoiding, minimising, restoring and enhancing green infrastructure and biodiversity.
- 1.4 This statement should be read alongside the submitted planning application drawings, Planning Statement, Noise Assessment, Transport Statement and other supporting information submitted in support of the application.

2.0 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

- 2.1 Planning Policy Wales (PPW) describes green infrastructure as ‘the network of natural and semi-natural features, green spaces, rivers and lakes that intersperse and connect places’. PPW requires a stronger emphasis on taking a proactive approach to green infrastructure including the requirement of proportionate green infrastructure statements with planning applications.
- 2.2 The letter to Heads of Planning from the Minister for Climate Change dated 11th October 2023 states that a green infrastructure statement should demonstrate a stepwise approach has been taken. Figure 1 below provides an overview of the stepwise approach included in the annex to the letter referred to above.

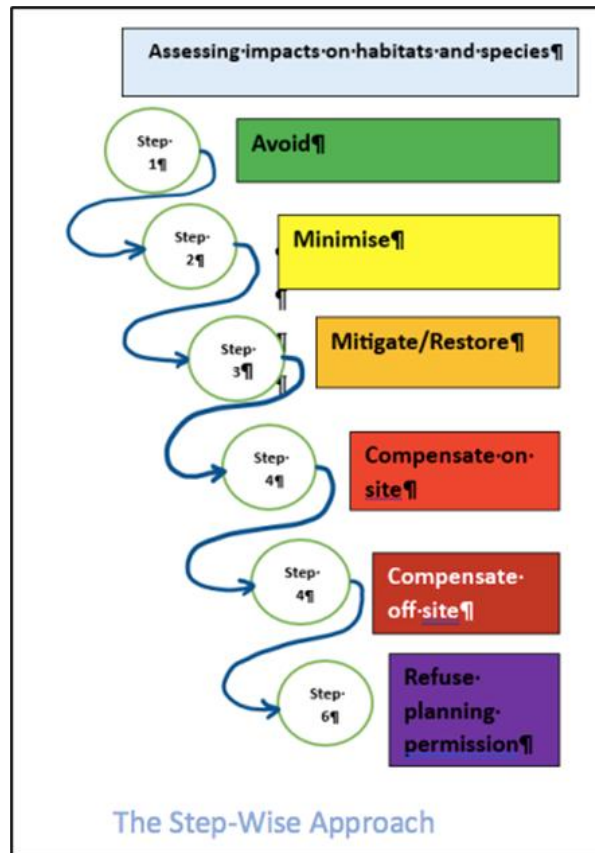


Figure 1: Extract of Stepwise Approach flow chart from the Letter to Heads of Planning (11/10/2023)

2.3 The level of detail contained within a Green Infrastructure Statement should be proportionate to the nature, scale and potential impacts associated with the proposed development.

3.0 APPLICATION SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

3.1 The application site comprises an existing industrial building and associated hardstanding located within the former Cae Glas Mine complex immediately west of Fochriw.

3.2 Historically the site formed part of a substantial mining operation. Whilst mining activities have ceased and much of the former infrastructure has been removed, the existing building, access arrangements and operational yard remain.

- 3.3 The application site is predominantly hard surfaced and contains very limited areas of vegetation within the operational compound itself.
- 3.4 The building occupies a substantial proportion of the operational area and is surrounded by extensive hardstanding that has historically been used in connection with mining operations and the lawful use of the building for the storage and maintenance of mining machinery, company vehicles and plant.
- 3.5 Existing boundary treatments comprise fencing, retaining structures and areas of naturally regenerated vegetation beyond the operational compound.
- 3.6 The wider site is surrounded by areas of grassland, scrub and naturally regenerated habitats associated with the restoration and natural regeneration of the former mining complex.
- 3.7 The site is located within the Northern Rhymney Valley Visually Important Local Landscape and lies adjacent to a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC). However, the operational compound itself is largely devoid of ecological features due to its historic industrial use.

4.0 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1 Planning permission is sought for the use of the existing building as a waste transfer facility together with associated external storage of empty skips. The proposal does not involve any extension to the existing building. No engineering works are proposed.
- 4.2 Waste sorting activities will be undertaken within the existing building. External operations are limited to the storage of empty skips within the existing hardstanding compound. The proposal therefore represents the re-use of an existing industrial building and previously developed land rather than the development of a greenfield site.

5.0 IDENTIFIED ON-SITE GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE ASSETS

5.1 Due to the site's historic use as part of a mining complex, green infrastructure assets within the operational compound are limited.

5.2 The principal green infrastructure assets associated with the site comprise:

- Areas of naturally regenerated vegetation beyond the operational compound;
- Grassland surrounding the site;
- Existing ecological connectivity associated with the wider former colliery landscape; and
- Boundary vegetation located outside the operational yard.

5.3 The existing building and associated hardstanding have limited ecological value due to their long-standing industrial use. The proposed development is confined entirely to the existing operational compound and does not directly affect wider green infrastructure assets adjoining the site.

6.0 APPLICATION OF THE STEPWISE APPROACH

Avoid

6.1 The proposed development has been designed to avoid impacts upon existing green infrastructure wherever possible. The proposal utilises an existing building and associated hardstanding rather than extending operations into surrounding grassland, scrub or naturally regenerated habitats. Furthermore, no significant vegetation clearance is required to facilitate the development. The development therefore avoids direct impacts upon on the green infrastructure assets associated with the wider site.

Minimise

6.2 The proposal minimises ecological impacts through the use of existing infrastructure and operational areas. Waste sorting activities will be undertaken within the existing building, thereby reducing the potential for disturbance to surrounding habitats.

- 6.3 External storage activities are restricted to existing hardstanding and operational areas. The proposal therefore minimises impacts upon existing habitats and ecological features.

Restore

- 6.4 As the proposal does not involve the removal of significant green infrastructure assets, restoration measures are not required to address habitat loss.
- 6.5 Nevertheless, opportunities exist to maintain and improve the ecological function of retained areas through appropriate management and enhancement measures.

Enhance

- 6.6 Whilst the proposal involves the re-use of an existing industrial site, opportunities remain to deliver proportionate biodiversity enhancements. The development provides opportunities to incorporate biodiversity enhancement measures associated with the retained building and surrounding operational land. Such measures will contribute towards compliance with Section 6 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 and the biodiversity enhancement requirements of Planning Policy Wales.

7.0 GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE ENHANCEMENT STRATEGY

- 7.1 Given the operational nature of the site, the exposed upland location and the limited opportunities for extensive landscaping within the existing compound, enhancement measures have been designed to be proportionate to the nature and scale of the proposal.
- 7.2 The proposed enhancement strategy focuses upon biodiversity improvements associated with the retained building and peripheral areas of the site rather than extensive new planting within the operational compound.
- 7.3 The site occupies an exposed former colliery location where opportunities for establishing and maintaining tree planting are limited. As such, the enhancement strategy focuses upon measures that are capable of delivering meaningful biodiversity benefits whilst reflecting the operational requirements and environmental conditions of the site.
- 7.4 The following biodiversity enhancement measures are proposed as part of the development:
- Installation of four bird nesting boxes on the retained building;
 - Installation of two bat roosting boxes on the retained building;
 - Retention of existing naturally regenerated vegetation surrounding the operational compound;
 - Protection of retained habitats during construction and operation; and
- 7.5 The existing building provides opportunities for the installation of bird and bat features that are currently absent from the site. The proposed bird boxes will provide nesting opportunities for a range of common bird species whilst the bat boxes will provide additional roosting opportunities within the wider landscape.
- 7.6 These measures will deliver a permanent biodiversity enhancement associated with the development and will contribute positively towards compliance with Section 6 of

the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 and the biodiversity enhancement requirements of Planning Policy Wales.

7.7 The proposal also secures the continued productive use of an existing building and previously developed land, thereby avoiding pressure for equivalent development elsewhere on greenfield sites. The re-use of existing buildings and infrastructure is recognised by Planning Policy Wales as an important component of sustainable development and resource efficiency.

7.8 Whilst a detailed landscaping scheme is not considered necessary given the operational requirements of the site, the proposed biodiversity enhancements are considered proportionate to the scale and nature of the development and are capable of being secured through planning condition if required by the Local Planning Authority.

8.0 CONCLUSION

8.1 This Green Infrastructure Statement has been prepared in accordance with Planning Policy Wales, Future Wales and Welsh Government guidance relating to Green Infrastructure Statements and the application of the stepwise approach.

8.2 The proposal represents the re-use of an existing industrial building and associated hardstanding within a former mining complex.

8.3 The development has been designed to avoid and minimise impacts upon existing green infrastructure assets through the use of existing buildings and operational areas.

8.4 The proposal provides opportunities for proportionate biodiversity enhancement measures including the installation of four bird nesting boxes, two bat roosting boxes and the retention and protection of existing naturally regenerated habitats surrounding the operational compound.

- 8.5 The proposed enhancements will provide permanent biodiversity benefits and represent a proportionate response to the nature and scale of the development.
- 8.6 The proposal is therefore considered compliant with Planning Policy Wales, Future Wales, the Welsh Government stepwise approach and the biodiversity enhancement requirements contained within national planning policy.