

REWE 2

LAND NORTH AND SOUTH OF NATIONAL ROAD



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INTRODUCTION

Planning Policy Wales¹ – ‘A Green Infrastructure Statement should be submitted with all planning applications. This will be proportionate to the scale and nature of the development proposed and will describe how green infrastructure has been incorporated into the proposal... ..The green infrastructure statement will be an effective way of demonstrating positive multifunctional; outcomes which are appropriate to the site in question and must be used for demonstrating how the step-wise approach (Paragraph 6.4.15) has been applied).’

- 1.1

This Green Infrastructure Statement has been prepared by Pegasus Group on behalf of REWE 2, in support of the planning application for land north and south of National Road, Cilfynydd, Wales. It is to be read in conjunction with the associated drawings and information which form the planning application as a whole.
- 1.2

This document has been produced in reference to the recently updated Chapter 6 ‘Distinctive and Natural Places’ of Planning Policy Wales, and the requirement of paragraph 6.2.12 (Feb 2024).
- 1.3

Green Infrastructure is the network of natural and semi-natural green features, green spaces, rivers and lakes that intersperse and connect places, which combine to create multi-functionality on all scales.
- 1.4

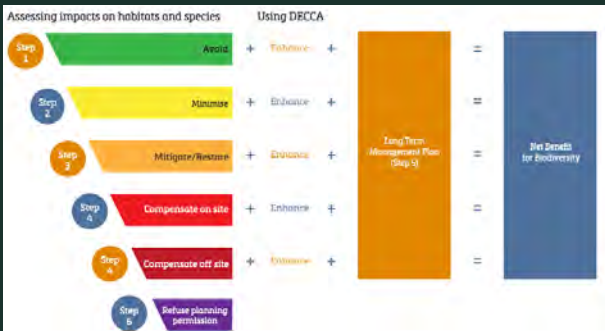
In the context of the site the Green Infrastructure will most beneficially be considered at a local scale, where it comprises elements such as fields, hedgerows, trees in groups or individually and grasslands.
- 1.5

The purpose of this document is to demonstrate how green infrastructure has been incorporated into the proposals in line with Planning Policy Wales, February 2024: Figure 12.
- 1.6

Proposed Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) with associated infrastructure, including a substation, earthworks, access, drainage, landscaping and an underground cable route connection. Access to serve the site is proposed from National Road, north-east of Cilfynydd. The proposals are shown on the Indicative Landscape Masterplan, submitted with the application.
- 1.7

The following relevant assessments have been carried out on the existing site landscape and the surrounding context:
 - Ecological Assessment Report by Avian Ecology Ref: Pegas-075-6663 V1. Feb 2025.
 - Arboricultural Impact Assessment by Barton Hyett Associates. Ref: 5420. Feb 2025.
 - Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment by Pegasus Group Ref: P22-2733_EN_RO01. Feb 2025.

FIGURE 12: SUMMARY OF THE STEP-WISE APPROACH



1 Planning Policy Wales 12, February 2024: Chapter 6, Para 6.2.12

SITE CONTEXT

- 2.1 The overall application site comprises approximately 23.95ha. The red line covers a number of agricultural fields and the existing Cilfynydd 400kV substation.
- 2.2 The BESS will be located within the north western portion of the red line with two access tracks linking to National Road; the substation will be located in the southern portion of the site. A cable route will run east from the proposed substation, through existing fields and link to the existing Cilfynydd substation.
- 2.3 The Site sits within the Natural Wales Special Landscape Area. A small portion of the western access track lies within Registered Common Land. There are no public rights of way (PROW) within the site boundary, the nearest is over 100m from the site boundary. The site also intersects with Craig-Ecan Leyshon Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) – refer to Ecological Assessment Report for further details (Avian Ecology).
- 2.4 Tree cover is mainly individual and groups of native tree planting within hedgerows/along field boundaries. This is a undulating, agricultural landscape, therefore management is typically completed on a rotation basis, with some evidence of browsing.
- 2.5 The wider land use beyond settlement boundaries is predominantly agricultural with pasture and scattered farmsteads. Fields are generally regular in shape, and small to medium in scale. Field boundaries are typically formed by hedgerows of varying quality, which frequently contain hedgerow trees.

SPECIAL LANDSCAPE AREA

- 2.6 The Site lies within the Natural Wales Special Landscape Area – Taff Vale Eastern Slopes. This is a non-statutory designation applied by the local authority to define areas of high landscape importance within their administrative boundary, and do not necessarily preclude development. Refer to the Environmental Designations Plan (P22_2733_EN_O2 EDP) submitted as part of the planning application.
- 2.7 The key policy and management issues of this SLA are set out below:
 - Conserve skyline;
 - Protect/preserve/conservate historic features relating to Senghenydd;
 - Bracken control on open common land;
 - Introduction of Tir Gofal for conservation of grasslands;
 - Restrict edge of settlement developments, especially on steep sites;
 - Recreational and other rural developments to be in keeping with conspicuous hillside location; and
 - Conserve Cilfynydd tips in generally unreclaimed condition for historic/cultural and visual value.

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE ANALYSIS

ECOLOGICAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 3.1 In February 2025 an Ecological Impact Assessment was undertaken by Avian Ecology. Within this Assessment elements of green infrastructure were assessed and considered alongside avoidance, mitigation and compensation measures.

DESIGNATIONS

- 3.2 In reference to statutory sites, the assessment notes that the Nelson Bog Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), located approximately 3km north-east of the site, is the only statutory designated site located within 5km of the site. It concludes that due to the nature of the Proposed Development, and separation distances involved, it is not considered that any direct or indirect impacts will occur to any designated sites or the habitats and species they support, outside the red line boundary, as a result of the Proposed Development.
- 3.3 In reference to non-statutory sites, the assessment highlights that the Site intersects Craig-Ecan Leyshon Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC). Minor vegetation removal of bracken habitat within the SINC may be required along the site access. In line with the Stepwise approach, this loss has been avoided with passing places located within existing vegetation breaks wherever practicable. The assessment concludes that the loss of habitat is considered negligible and given the existing access track at this location would not negatively affect any of the criteria for which the SINC is designated.

HABITATS

- 3.4 The assessment describes the North Site as predominantly modified grassland and improved acid grassland but goes on to note that grassland habitats within the Site are typically of low conservation value in their current state. The battery storage containers will be situated primarily within areas of modified grassland of low conservation value, with the boundary habitats largely retained and protected. The assessment notes that tree, woodland and hedgerow planting will offset the minor removal of existing hedgerow required and that while agricultural grassland of low ecological value will be lost to facilitate the proposed development, it is considered that the development presents opportunities for the creation of higher quality grassland.
- 3.5 The assessment describes the South Site as dominated by rush pasture, which was not considered to meet the definition of priority a habitat. It then concludes that following development, and tree planting around the substation for screening, the remaining area will be managed through regular topping of rushes to recreate rush pasture of higher conservation value.
- 3.6 The assessment describes the Cable Corridor as consisting of further improved acid grassland, cropland and woodland. It notes that the cable route shall avoid woodland (to avoid necessitating removal) and that works associated with cabling will be short term and temporary, with route restored to crop or grassland once laying complete to avoid permanent impacts.

PROTECTED AND NOTABLE SPECIES

- 3.7 In reference to birds, the assessment notes that the site is unlikely to be suitable for breeding birds due to the intensity of agriculture etc. i.e. they are not present on site at the moment. However, the design of the Proposed Development so far as reasonably practicable avoids the most suitable habitats for breeding bird species. Hedgerows and field boundary habitats will be largely retained and protected throughout construction and operation of the proposed development with only minor removal required. It goes on to note that the landscape design which includes substantial tree, woodland and hedgerow planting, will offer increased nesting habitat for a variety of bird species. In addition, a minimum of ten bird boxes would be installed on land within the Site to provide in enhancements for breeding bird species.
- 3.8 In reference to bats, the assessment concludes that hedgerows and field boundary habitats will be largely retained and protected throughout construction and operation of the proposed development with only minor removal required. It goes on to note that the landscape design, which includes substantial tree, woodland and hedgerow planting, will serve to ensure that bat foraging and commuting habitats are not affected by the Proposed Development. In addition, a minimum of ten bat boxes would be installed on land within the Site to provide in enhancements for roosting bats.
- 3.9 From the assessment it is confirmed that, through avoidance, the impact on the existing green infrastructure elements which provide an ecological benefit, will be negligible. And that with the enhancement provisions described later in this statement, provide ample mitigation and enhancement of the green infrastructure.

ARBORICULTURAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 3.10 In February 2025 an Arboricultural Impact Assessment was undertaken by Barton Hyett Associates.
- 3.11 The survey recorded 177 arboricultural features. Twelve trees, one group of trees and one area of woodland were recorded as high quality features. The twelve trees were noted as being of considerable size with a limited number of significant defects recorded. The majority of the agricultural features were recorded as being of moderate quality (130 items).
- 3.12 Two individual trees, the understorey of one woodland area, and two hedgerows are proposed to be removed. The trees, one portion of hedgerow and the woodland understorey to be removed are of moderate quality, the second area of hedgerow to be removed is of low quality.
- 3.13 Sectional removals would be required for a number of moderate and low quality hedgerows to allow clearance for construction and use of the access tracks.
- 3.14 The assessment highlights that the current indicative cable route conflicts with several moderate and low quality trees. It recommends that localised adjustments to the cable route to avoid the trees and locate the cable outside of the RPAs. Refer to Construction Method Statement for further details.
- 3.15 The conclusion of the assessment is that, subject to the implementation of the advice contained within this report, the proposed development is acceptable from an arboricultural perspective. The loss of trees can be readily avoided through good design, mitigated by substantial replacement tree planting and retained trees can be adequately protected during construction activities to sustain their health and longevity

LANDSCAPE PROPOSALS

3.16 The planning application is supported by a Landscape Masterplan which sets out the proposed landscape enhancements. This plan demonstrates how the proposals will expand upon the existing green infrastructure resource and provide mitigation in response to the development. Refer to Appendix One – Indicative Landscape Masterplan.

3.17 As can be seen on the Indicative Landscape Masterplan the development has been designed to have the least impact on the existing landscape framework as possible, with battery storage units spread within the open areas of the existing field pattern, avoiding existing hedgerows and trees, where possible. The proposed substation is located within the open area of an existing field, offset from the existing hedgerow/tree resource ensuring no removals. The western access track follows an existing track to National Road, thus naturally avoiding any existing vegetation. The eastern portion of the access track runs through existing field areas, avoiding existing vegetation where feasible.

3.18 The following landscape enhancements are proposed:

NORTHERN FIELD:

- Enhancement of boundary hedgerows through new hedgerow planting to infill existing gaps, with hedgerow tree planting.
- Widespread creation of new native hedgerows throughout the field, combined with extensive hedgerow tree planting.

- Numerous blocks of native woodland belt planting to aid in screening the BESS units.

SOUTHERN FIELD:

- Enhancement of the north boundary hedgerow through new hedgerow planting an infill existing gap, with hedgerow tree planting.
- New hedgerow planting along the access track, with hedgerow tree planting
- Substantial native tree belt planting south-west and south-east of the substation to aid in screening.
- Scattered individual tree planting to the south-east portion of the southern field
- Overseeding of the existing rush pasture with a native wildflower meadow mix suitable for seasonally wet soils, to increase the species mix.

3.19 The retention and integration of the existing landscape features / framework, and enhancement through proposed trees and hedgerows ensures that links to the wider green infrastructure are maintained and enriched.

3.20 The proposals have regards to the local context, reflecting the local character through the provision of linear hedgerows with standard trees, tree belt and enhancement of the existing grassland with wildflowers. The use of native trees/hedgerow species within the proposals will reinforce the local landscape flora and reinforce the habitats available.

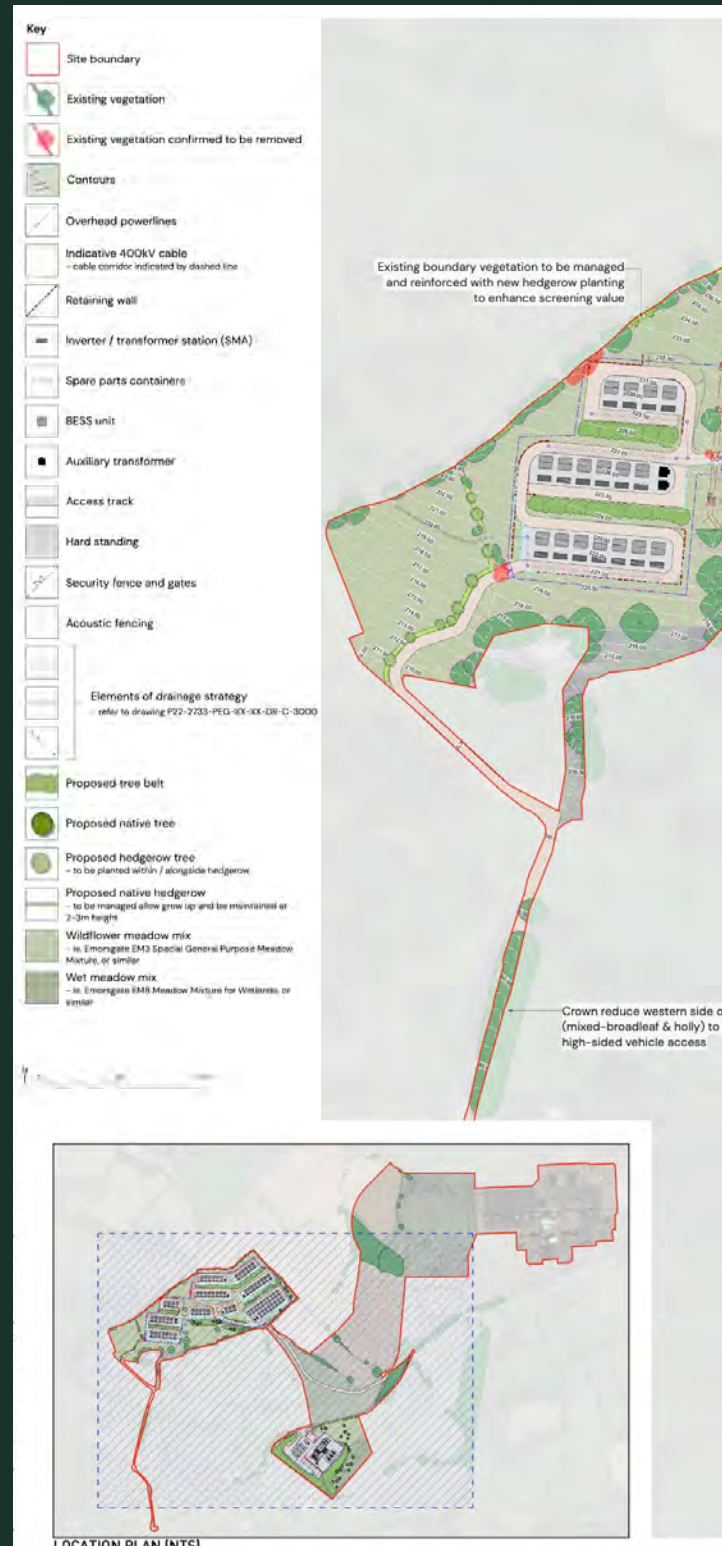
3.21 Overall enhancement of habitats within the Site will increase ecological connectivity within the local area by providing a stepping stone of habitats linked by hedgerow to the surrounding area.

3.22 In particular, to the south site the rush pasture will be oversown with a suitable wildflower meadow seed mix, and managed through being regularly topped to create rush pasture of higher conservation value.

3.23 Implementation of the proposed landscaping will be undertaken with sensitivity and have regard to the existing landscape elements to ensure they are not damaged. Short and long-term management will be set out to ensure that the new landscape elements will establish successfully and thrive in the new environment. Management for the retained landscape features will focus on their long-term health and value for the existing habitat, ensuring the existing landscape features are positively contributing to the landscape.

3.24 The layout of the proposals has been carefully considered with hedgerow management, new hedgerow and tree planting are proposed to minimise landscape and visual effects.

3.25 The Proposed Development promotes land management practices which protect and enhance the environment, which include improved grassland, a high number of additional trees and relaxed management of hedgerow for biodiversity interest.



3.26 It is considered that following the installation of the proposed development and the associated landscape enhancements, the inherent qualities of the SLA will be retained and enhanced.



CONCLUSION

- 4.1 In consideration of the Step-wise approach, the design has enabled the important landscape features, including the hedgerows, trees and grassland, to be respected and retained, with long term management designed to support their ability to thrive and succeed. The proposed landscape measures ensure that retained habitats and features are not only enhanced, but also increased through new tree belt, individual trees, and hedgerow planting, and species increased within the grassland.
- 4.2 The development layout and the proposed landscape has been designed to protect and reinforce the existing green infrastructure, and create a harmonious balance between the proposed development and the existing green infrastructure.





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