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Biodiversity Net Benefits Report

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This report describes work commissioned by Tai Hedyn Ltd by an instruction dated 15th December 2025. The Client's representative for the contract was Peter Page of Tai Hedyn Ltd. Hannah Webster of JBA Consulting carried out this work

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1 Introduction

1.1 Project Background

JBA Consulting was commissioned by Tai Hedyn Ltd to complete a biodiversity net benefit report to support a Section 73 planning application for the redevelopment of a site at Usk Way, Newport.

This report is broadly based on the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) guidance (1). The scope and objectives of this report are to:

- Summarise the results of the baseline survey work undertaken on the Site.
- Review potential biodiversity and wider ecosystem benefits.
- Provide an overview of the proposed habitats following completion of the scheme.
- Assess the proposals following the DECCA framework: Diversity, Extent, Condition, Connectivity and Aspects of ecosystem resilience.

1.2 Site Location

The proposed development site is located at Usk Way in Newport, South Wales. The site is located to the east of the A4042 Usk Way in Newport and is 0.86ha. It comprises of brownfield land and has previously been used for temporary car parking. The site is bounded to the north by a residential building, to the east and south by the River Usk and a footpath, and to the west by the A4042 Usk Way. The site is accessed from the A4042 Usk Way to the west of the site. The site location and red line boundary are shown in Figure 1-1 Figure 1-1. Site location and red line boundary..

1.3 Proposed Development

Planning permission under planning reference 21/0983 was granted in 2021 for the development of 122 dwellings, two commercial units (A1 and A3 use classes), and associated works, including landscaping, sustainable drainage, and car and cycle parking. The development will comprise of five blocks, labelled A-E, as shown in

1 CIEEM (2021) Biodiversity Net Gain Report and Audit Templates Chartered institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester, UK.

Figure 1-2.

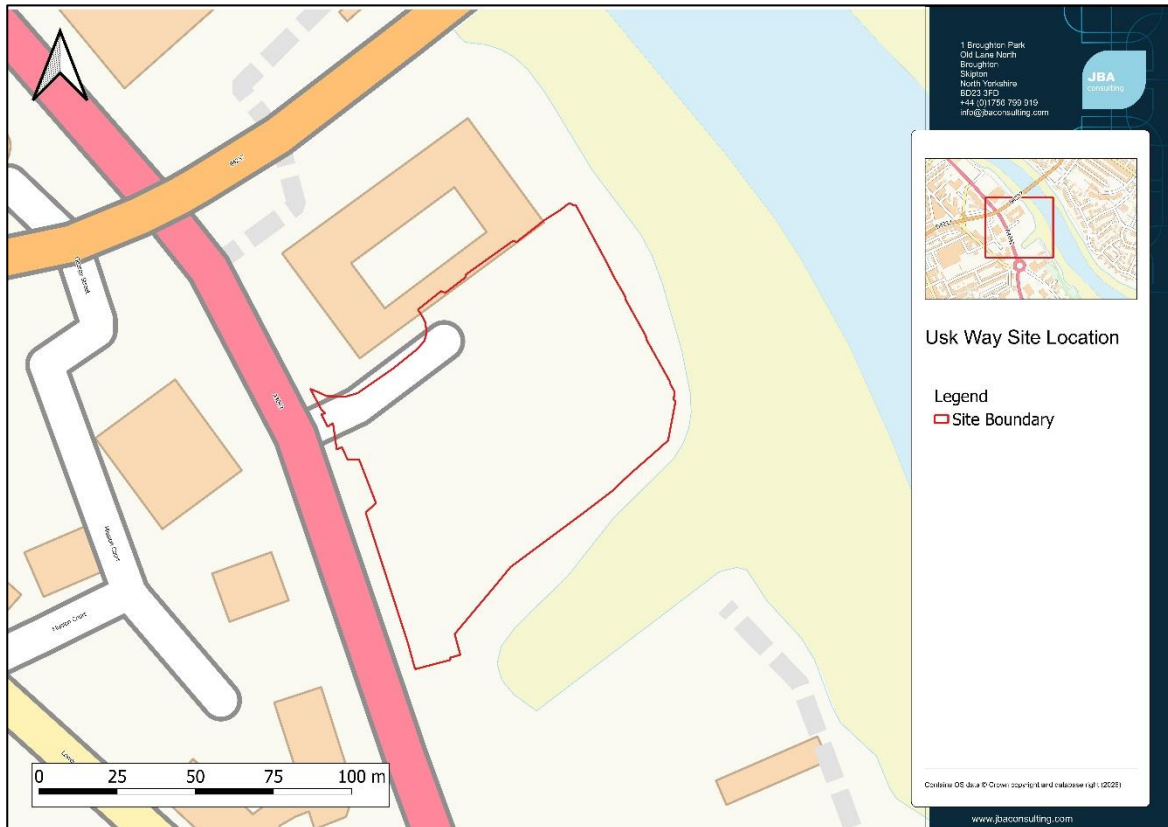


Figure 1-1. Site location and red line boundary.



Figure 1-2. Proposed site plan.

1.4 Legislative Context

The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 was introduced to put in place the legislation needed to plan and manage Wales' natural resources in a sustainable and joined-up way. The Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems Duty (the Section 6 duty) set out in the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 requires that public authorities must seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity so far as consistent with the proper exercise of their functions, and in so doing, promote the resilience of ecosystems.

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 requires national government, local government, local health boards and other specified public bodies to carry out sustainable development which seeks to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Natural Resources Wales (NRW), is the regulatory and advisory body for issues relating to the environment in Wales, and provide expert advice for planning authorities on the likely environmental effects from development proposals. NRW has a duty to ensure that the environment and natural resources of Wales are sustainably maintained, sustainably enhanced and sustainably used (Article 4 of the Natural Resources Body for Wales (Establishment) Order 2012).

1.4.1 Net-benefits for Biodiversity Approach

CIEEM have published a briefing paper (2) outlining the Welsh government approach to assessing Net Benefits for Biodiversity (NBB). This has been summarised below.

The NBB approach intends to deliver an overall improvement in biodiversity. Developments should be constructed on a case-by-case basis, considering biodiversity and wider ecosystem benefits that positively impact ecosystem resilience within a placemaking context. Interventions should be proportional to the extent and impact of development and ultimately contribute to a bigger, better, more joined up approach to a resilient and biodiverse ecological network in Wales.

Biodiversity enhancements that achieve NBB must be delivered in addition to the implementation of the mitigation hierarchy. Planning Policy Wales (3) instructs planning authorities to take account of and promote the resilience of ecosystems.

Natural Resources Wales (NRW) has developed a framework (4) for evaluating ecosystem resilience based on five attributes and properties specified in the Environment (Wales) Act.

2 CIEEM. 2022. Welsh Government's Approach to Net Benefits for Biodiversity and the DECCA Framework in the Terrestrial Planning System.

3 Welsh Government (2024) Planning Policy Wales 12. Available at: https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2024-02/planning-policy-wales-edition12_1.pdf

4 Garrett HM, and Ayling SC. 2021. Terrestrial and freshwater Resilient Ecological Networks: a guide for practitioners in Wales. 43 pp. NRW Report No. 483 Natural Resources Wales. Dolgellau

This is referred to as DECCA: Diversity, Extent, Condition, Connectivity and Aspects of ecosystem resilience:

- **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.

Following this guidance, a coherent, cumulative strategy is proposed to provide good quality habitats which connect into existing ecological networks, and accounts for the impacts across the whole site. There is no mandatory length of time that management is required for, however all planning proposals must demonstrate that they have both maintained and enhanced biodiversity and built resilient ecological networks.

2 Baseline Ecological Conditions

2.1 Designated Sites

2.1.1 Statutory Designated Sites

A search via the MAGIC database (www.magic.gov.uk) showed that there are a total of two statutory designated sites within 1km of the proposed development. These include the River Usk Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and the River Usk (Lower Usk)/ Afon Wysg Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) both of which are located adjacent to the proposed development.

These statutory designated sites and their qualifying features are outlined below in Table 2-1 and are mapped in Figure 2-1.

Table 2-1. Statutory designated sites within 2km of the site.

Site Name	Qualifying Features	Proximity to Site
River Usk SAC	Annex I habitats; primary reason for selection: - 3260 Water courses of plain to montane levels with the <i>Ranunculon fluitantis</i> and <i>Callitricho-Batrachion</i> vegetation Annex II species; primary reason for selection: - 1095 Sea lamprey <i>Petromyzon marinus</i> - 1096 Brook lamprey <i>Lampetra planeri</i> - 1099 River lamprey <i>Lampetra fluviatilis</i> - 1103 Twaite shad <i>Alosa fallax</i> - 1106 Atlantic salmon <i>Salmo salar</i> - 1163 Bullhead <i>Cottus gobio</i> - 1355 Otter <i>Lutra lutra</i> Annex II species; not primary reason for selection: - 1102 Allis shad <i>Alosa alosa</i>	Adjacent to site

Site Name	Qualifying Features	Proximity to Site
River Usk (Lower Usk)/ Afon Wysg SSSI	The River Usk(Lower Usk)/Afon Wysg SSSI has been designated as it has been strongly influenced by extensive fluvio-glacial and alluvial deposits, as well as supporting a wide variety of flora. In the middle and upper reaches there is the frequent occurrence of floating and submerged plants including Common Water Crowfoot <i>Ranunculus aquatilis</i> and Water Milfoils <i>Myriophyllum spp</i>, which disappear towards the tidal reaches of the Usk near Newbridge. Riverside rocks and boulders are characterised by mosses, such as <i>Amblystegium fluviatile</i>, <i>Cinclidotus fontinalioides</i>, <i>Fontinalis antipyretica</i>, <i>Rhynchostegium riparioides</i> and <i>Thamnobryum alopecurum</i>, liverworts, such as <i>Chiloscyphus polyanthus</i>, <i>Conocephalum conicum</i>, and <i>Marchantia polymorpha</i>, the filamentous alga <i>Lemanea fluviatilis</i> and lichens of the genera <i>Verrucaria</i>. Below Newbridge, the upper mud banks are colonised by saltmarsh species such as Sea Aster <i>Aster tripolium</i>, Saltmarsh-grass <i>Puccinellia spp.</i>, and Scurvygrass <i>Cochlearia spp</i>. Otter <i>Lutra lutra</i> is widespread along the length of the river as well as tree cover providing feeding and roosting habitats for several bat species including Daubenton's bat <i>Myotis daubentonii</i>. After Newbridge, there is an increasing frequency of breeding birds such as Yellow Wagtail <i>Motacilla flava</i>, Grey Wagtail <i>M. cinerea</i>, and Dipper <i>Cinclus cinclus</i>. The river also supports a large variety of migratory and non-migratory fish with Chub <i>Leuciscus cephalus</i>, Roach <i>Rutilus rutilus</i> and Dace <i>Leuciscus leuciscus</i> being the most abundant. The lower Usk has important assemblages of Craneflies including rare and scarce species such as <i>Limonia omissinervis</i>, <i>Erioptera limbata</i> and <i>Rhabdomastix hiliaris</i>, <i>Gonomyia abbreviata</i> and <i>Cheilotrichia imbuta</i>, as well as the rare Mayfly <i>Potamanthus luteus</i>.	Adjacent to site

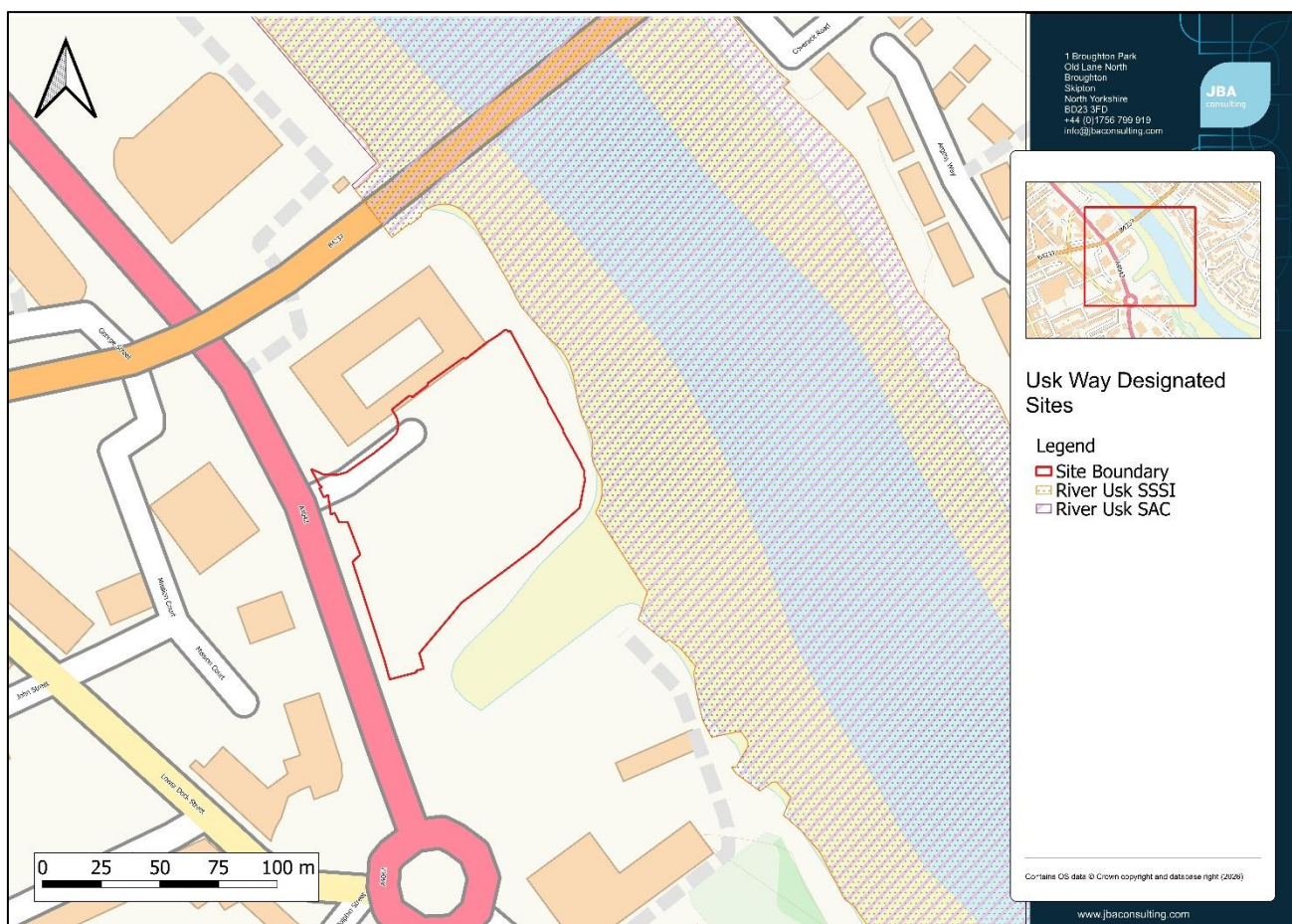


Figure 2-1. Statutory designated sites within 2km of the site.

2.1.2 Protected Species

Details of the relevant protected species records held by LERC within 2km of the proposed site are outlined below in Table 2-2. Only the bird species protected under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) (WCA1.1) have been presented. Reptile, amphibian and mammal species protected under Annex V of the Habitats Directive and under the Wildlife Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) have also been included. Only records submitted after 2000 are considered. Where multiple records exist the closest to the site is included.

Table 2-2. Protected species records within 2km of the site.

Scientific Name	Common Name	Legal Protection	Distance From Site (m)
Birds			
<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	Peregrine	Birds Directive, WCA1.1	100

Scientific Name	Common Name	Legal Protection	Distance From Site (m)
<i>Turdus iliacus</i>	Redwing	Birds Directive, WCA1.1	354
<i>Turdus pilaris</i>	Fieldfare	Birds Directive, WCA1.1	652
<i>Tringa nebularia</i>	Greenshank	Birds Directive, WCA1.1	949
<i>Tyto alba</i>	Western Barn Owl	WCA1.1	1030
<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>	Black Redstart	WCA1.1	1651
<i>Ichthyaetus melanocephalus</i>	Mediterranean Gull	Birds Directive, WCA1.1	1651
<i>Falco subbuteo</i>	Hobby	WCA1.1	1651
<i>Circus cyaneus</i>	Hen Harrier	Birds Directive, WCA1.1	1651
<i>Falco columbarius</i>	Merlin	Birds Directive, WCA1.1	1651
<i>Alcedo atthis</i>	Kingfisher	Birds Directive, WCA1.1	1651
Mammals			
<i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>	Common Pipistrelle	WCA5	224
<i>Lutra lutra</i>	European Otter	WCA5	316
<i>Phocoena phocoena</i>	Common Porpoise	WCA5	652
<i>Pipistrellus nathusii</i>	Nathusius's Pipistrelle	WCA5	707
<i>Plecotus auritus</i>	Brown Long-eared Bat	WCA5	854
<i>Pipistrellus pygmaeus</i>	Soprano Pipistrelle	WCA5	1019
<i>Myotis mystacinus</i>	Whiskered Bat	WCA5	1139
<i>Arvicola amphibius</i>	European Water Vole	WCA5	1518
Vascular Plants			
<i>Hyacinthoides non-scripta</i>	Bluebell	WCA8	1235

2.2 UKHab Survey

2.2.1 Habitats

The site is predominately hardstanding with scattered scrub and tall ruderal vegetation scattered around the boundary of the site. The habitats on site offer little ecological value. The results of the extended UKHab survey are described in the following sections below with a description of each habitat type recorded on site found in the following text.

2.2.1.1 u1b - Developed land; sealed surface

The majority of the site consists of hardstanding with large areas of bare concrete, gravels and building aggregate. The site has previously been used as a temporary carpark.

2.2.1.2 u1a - Open mosaic habitat on previously developed land

Areas of the site have become sparsely vegetated, with vegetation established within some of the larger cracks in the concrete, predominantly with Buddleia *Buddleia davidii* and other ephemeral species and mosses. Other species present include Thyme-leaved Sanwort *Arenaria serpyllifoli*, Common centaury *Centaureum erythraea*, and Weld *Reseda luteola*. A small number of grass species are also present in small quantities. Perennial Rye Grass *Lolium perenne* is dominant with False Oat grass *Arrhenatherum elatius* also present. Other species recorded across the site included Clover *Trifolium spp.*, Dogwood *Cornus sanguinea*, Valerian *Centranthus ruber*, Kidney Vetch *Anthyllis vulneraria*, Meadow Vetchling *Lathyrus pratensis*, Hawk's-beard *Crepis spp.*, Ox-eye Daisy *Leucanthemum vulgare* and Purple Toadflax *Linaria purpurea*.

2.2.1.3 h3h - Mixed scrub

Around the perimeter of the site and along the fence line scrub species have begun to establish. The scrub is dominated by stands of Buddleia with frequent Bramble *Rubus fruticosus agg*, Maple *Acer campestre*, Broad-leaved Dock *Rumex obtusifolius*, Creeping Thistle *Cirsium arvense*, Dog Rose *Rosa Canina* and Common Nettle *Urtica dioica*. It appears that some vegetation clearance has been carried out since the previous PEA was conducted in 2021, with scrub noted as being less abundant and dense.

2.2.2 Protected and Notable Species

The following section summarises any observation of protected and/or notable species, or the potential for these to occur in the habitats observed on site during the site visit.

2.2.2.1 Birds

The desk study completed as part of the previous PEA returned over 90 species records for birds within 2km of the proposed site. These included records for the Schedule 1 species Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris*, Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis* and Redwing *Turdus iliacus*. The scrub

habitat present onsite provides opportunities for common and widespread nesting bird species.

2.2.2.2 Badger

There are no records of Badger within 2km of the proposed works. The proposed site does not provide foraging potential and given the isolated nature of the site it is considered unlikely that Badger would excavate setts.

2.2.2.3 Bats

No buildings or trees suitable for roosting bats were identified within the site area. The site provides limited potential for foraging bats and it is not considered that the loss of this of this area will have a significant impact upon bat species. The River Usk that runs adjacent to the site provides a commuting and foraging corridor for bat species.

2.2.2.4 Otter

Otter have been recorded within 2km of the scheme area, the closest being approximately 360m from site, and are known to be present within the River Usk as a feature of the SAC and SSSI. The proposed site, however, does not provide habitat suitable for Otter holts or resting sites. The separation of the site from the River Usk by fencing and a well-used public footpath further decreases the potential for Otter to be encountered.

2.2.2.5 Water Vole

The desk study returned one record of a Water Vole *Arvicola amphibius* approximately 1.5km to the east of the site, on the opposite side of the River Usk. The site does not provide suitable habitat for Water Vole and there are considered to be likely absent from the immediate area of the proposed works. Therefore, Water Vole will not be discussed further in this report.

2.2.2.6 Amphibians including Great Crested Newt

No records for Great Crested Newt were provided for within 2km of the proposed scheme. It is not considered that this area is suitable for breeding Great Crested Newts, with the lack of suitable breeding ponds locally and the isolated nature of the site making it unlikely that Great Crested Newts would have colonised the area. No records for more common amphibian species were provided and the site provides limited habitats for species such as Common Frog *Rana temporaria* and Common Toad *Bufo bufo*.

2.2.2.7 Reptiles

There are no records of reptiles within 2km of the site area. However, the open mosaic habitats on site provide potentially suitable habitat for reptile species with bare ground or short vegetation in sunny, sheltered positions for basking, immediately adjacent to taller dense vegetation in which to retreat from predators, and dry protected sites for hibernation.

Rubbish and rubble piles provide potential for refuge. However, the lack of connecting habitat lowers the value of this habitat and the potential for finding reptiles. The denser vegetation recorded in the previous PEA has since been cleared reducing the sites suitability to support reptiles.

2.2.2.8 Invertebrates

The site contains habitats for a range of invertebrate species, with the mosaic of habitats providing conditions for species that require different habitats throughout their lifecycle, although it should be noted that no freshwater was recorded within the site.

2.2.2.9 Fish

The River Usk SAC/SSSI is designated for a range of migratory and non-migratory fish species, a number of these are for migratory species that are known to spawn further upriver. The site runs adjacent to the river and is separated by fencing and a public footpath. There are no water bodies on site.

2.2.2.10 Invasive Non-Native Species

Two stands of Japanese Knotweed were recorded during the previous PEA conducted in 2021 however it appears these stands have been treated and were not recorded during the most recent survey. It should however be noted that the survey was conducted in February, a suboptimal time for recording INNS, when a number of species can be inconspicuous or have died back and therefore may be present to a greater extent than were recorded during the survey.

The desk study returned a number of invasive species records within 1km of the proposed scheme area including; *Cotoneaster horizontalis*, Cherry Laurel *Prunus laurocerasus*, Giant Hogweed *Heracleum mantegazzianum*, False Virginia-creeper *Parthenocissus inserta* and Pampas-grass *Cortaderia selloan*.

3 Proposed Habitat Enhancement and Creation

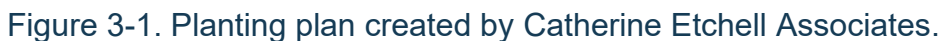
3.1 Proposed Scheme

The aim of the proposals is the development of 122 dwellings, two commercial units (A1 and A3 use classes), and associated works, including landscaping, sustainable drainage, and car and cycle parking. As part of the landscaping aspect of the proposal consideration has been given to how the site could deliver improvements for biodiversity and wider ecosystem.

As part of the proposed development the following areas of habitat creation have been proposed:

- Communal Open Spaces which include wildflower grassland, bulb planting, trees, hedges and ornamental shrub and perennial planting.
- Rain gardens and bio retention areas with a mix of perennial and shrub planting and trees.
- Underplanted tree avenues with hedges along site perimeters.

A detailed planting plan has been completed by Catherine Etchell Associates and can be found in the document '538.03.C.PlantingPlan' and is shown below in Figure 3-1.



Biodiversity enhancements that provide NBB must be considered subsequently to the implementation of the mitigation hierarchy (i.e. in addition to). The mitigation hierarchy has informed the specific measures detailed in the above assessments and can be broadly summarised as follows:

- 14

- **Minimise:** Works will proceed in line with a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), ensuring that the working area is contained to prevent potential impacts spreading into the surrounding habitats. This includes designated fuelling and storage areas and biosecurity measures. Should lighting be required, it will be designed to comply with an ecologically sensitive lighting scheme.
- **Restore:** Restoration of habitats following temporary impacts will focus on access routes, the site and wider area is largely urbanised with little ecological value and as such any habitats will be allowed to recolonise naturally. There will be targeted monitoring and management to protect these areas from invasive species and respond if any areas fail to reestablish. Restoration following temporary impacts arising from site compounds, storage and access will aim to provide betterment, enhancing the value of these areas in line with the wider green infrastructure proposals. The CEMP will contain provision to address any unintentional negative impacts, including pollution incident protocols.
- **Compensate:** The small-scale loss of scrub habitat will be compensated for with new ornamental and native hedgerows, buffer scrub planting and tree planting. This will provide a greater diversity of plant species and microclimates which in turn will support a wider range of animal and invertebrate species. Species-rich flower grassland has also been proposed, providing habitat of greater value for supporting biodiversity.

4 Net Biodiversity Benefits

The aim of the proposals is the development of 122 dwellings, two commercial units (A1 and A3 use classes), and associated works, including landscaping, sustainable drainage, and car and cycle parking. The above section details the impacts and mitigation in relation to the necessary construction works. The following section focusses on the additional benefits that proposed landscape planting and habitat creation will provide in the long-term. This has been structured following the DECCA framework.

4.1.1 Diversity

The proposed habitat creation on site includes the creation of species-wildflower grassland, planting of native and ornamental hedgerows and tree planting all of which will represent an increase in habitat diversity compared to the baseline habitats currently present on site. Planting mixes for each habitat type will utilise a diverse range of native and ornamental species, with some habitats allowing for additional opportunities for colonisation by species found within the local area. Winter and early-flowering species have been selected to provide pollen and nectar at times when little else is available for early pollinators;

Management will promote further structural diversity, creating spatial and temporal variation within habitats, allowing for natural cycles of regeneration.

4.1.2 Extent

The proposed on site habitat creation will increase the extent of available habitat for a range of species including nesting and foraging birds, bats, herpetofauna and invertebrates.

The proposed scrub, hedgerow and tree planting represents a significant increase relative to the limited amount of these habitats found in the sites baseline habitats. In the long-term this will provide new foraging, sheltering and breeding habitat for a range of species. In the short-term, bat and bird boxes will be provided to increase the available nesting and roosting resources.

4.1.3 Condition

Long-term management will be delivered by the Management Company and will focus on maintaining and enhancing the Site's biodiversity value. A key focus for management will be to monitor and combat any invasive species encroachment. Details of the full site management plan can be found in the document '538.04.B.Management Plan'.

4.1.4 Connectivity

Proposed planting will wrap around and through the site providing corridors for wildlife connectivity, improving the existing tree avenue and linking to the river corridor bringing wildlife into public open spaces and gardens. Proposed trees will balance the height of the development softening the street scene and improving the microclimate.

4.1.5 Aspects of ecosystem resilience

New habitat creation, including hedgerow, scrub and individual tree planting will increase connectivity to the wider landscape, strengthening the green corridor along the River Usk. This will provide greater resiliency when considered in context of the wider habitats related to the River Usk SAC and SSSI.

New opportunities for a range of species will be created through the provision of diverse habitats and new structural complexity. Long-term management provided by the Management Company will focus on ensuring the biodiversity value of the site is protected, and any incidents are responded to appropriately.

5 Conclusions

The proposals deliver a new nature reserve which provides biodiversity benefits tailored to the local situation. The mitigation hierarchy has been followed to account for construction impacts with additional NBB provided through the creation of native and ornamental hedgerows, tree planting and the creation a species-rich wild-flower grassland area, improving habitat connectivity and resilience.

The above have been guided by the Biodiversity Net Gain Good Practice Principles. These principles are applicable for developments across the UK and provide a framework to illustrate that projects followed good practice. Table 5-1 below lists the principles along with a description of how the principles has been applied to this assessment.

Table 5-1. Application of the Biodiversity Net Gain Principals to the development

Principle	Indicators
Principle 1: Apply the Mitigation Hierarchy	Site design followed a stepwise approach to avoid impacts, minimise impacts, restore habitats, and compensate for remaining impacts.
Principle 2: Avoid losing biodiversity that cannot be offset by gains elsewhere	The site is a brownfield site that provides little ecological value and therefore no higher distinctiveness habitats are present on site.
Principle 3: Be inclusive and equitable	The DECCA framework has been applied to consider the proposals in the context of the wider landscape.
Principle 4: Address risks	The habitats recommended for creation include those that would be suitable for establishment in the local area. Management will ultimately strive to maintain and enhance these habitats. This includes risks from invasive species, and impacts of climate change
Principle 5: Make a measurable Net Gain contribution Principle 6: Achieve the best outcomes for biodiversity	The site is a brownfield site that provides little ecological value and therefore the proposed habitat creation as outlined above will result in an increase in habitat diversity compared to the baseline habitats currently present on site.

Principle	Indicators
Principle 7: Be additional	NBB has been measured in addition to requirements under the mitigation hierarchy. Further species-specific enhancements will be provided in the form of bat and bird boxes and hibernacula.
Principle 8: Be transparent	All source material has been referenced within this report, ensuring clarity.

References

CIEEM (2021) Biodiversity Net Gain Report and Audit Templates Chartered institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester, UK.

CIEEM. 2022. Welsh Government's Approach to Net Benefits for Biodiversity and the DECCA Framework in the Terrestrial Planning System.

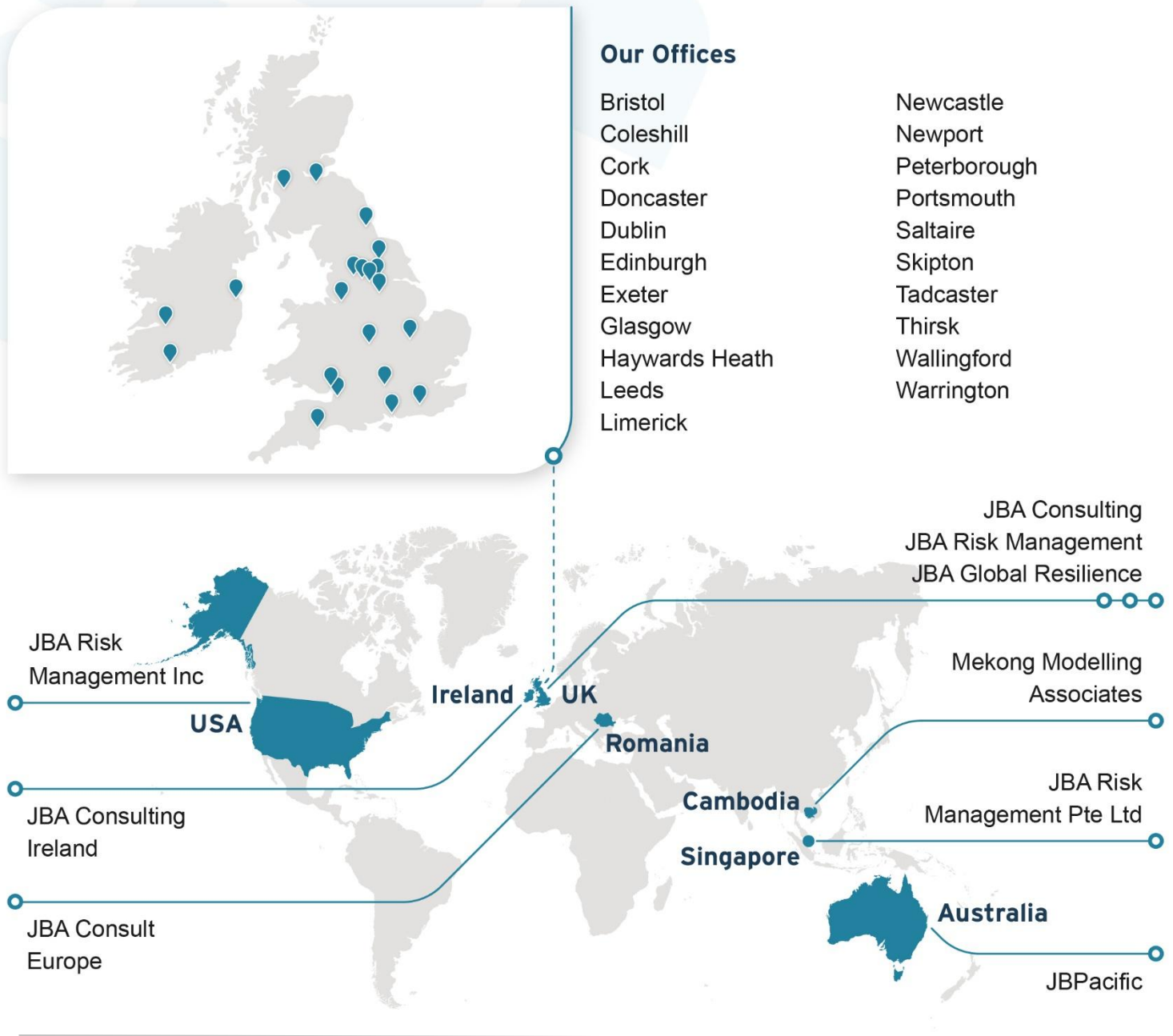
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Garrett HM, and Ayling SC. 2021. Terrestrial and freshwater Resilient Ecological Networks: a guide for practitioners in Wales. 43 pp. NRW Report No. 483 Natural Resources Wales. Dolgellau

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