
Proposed Access Road and Lorry Park, Kronospan, Chirk



Green Infrastructure Statement

Prepared for: Kronospan Ltd

March 2024

3046-01-Green Infrastructure Statement



1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1.1 This Green Infrastructure Statement (GIS) has been prepared in relation to the proposed North Access Road and Lorry Park development at Kronospan, Chirk (the Proposed Development). A planning application for the Proposed Development was submitted to Wrexham County Borough Council (WCBC) in December 2022. Revised submissions were made in July 2023 and September 2023, reflecting changes to the design Proposed Development.

1.1.2 The GIS has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of paragraph 6.2.12 of *Planning Policy Wales*¹, which states that:

“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. In the case of minor development this will be a short description and should not be an onerous requirement for applicants. The green infrastructure statement will be an effective way of demonstrating positive multi-functional 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 Welsh Government, 2024. *Planning Policy Wales*, edition 12



2.0 THE SITE OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

2.1 Application Site

- 2.1.1 The Site of the Proposed Development (the Site) is located to the north of the existing Kronospan Facility, Chirk. It is on the western side of the B5070 Holyhead Road, on land that is presently in agricultural use. The Site has an area of approximately 11.74 hectares (ha). The entirety of the Site is under the ownership of the Applicant (Kronospan Ltd).
- 2.1.2 To the east, the Site abuts the B5070. The boundary with the highway is defined by a clipped hedgerow between 1.5m and 2m in height, which largely screens ground level views. To the east of the road, a series of two-storey residential properties at the edge of Chirk face the south-eastern part of the Site boundary. The north-eastern part of the Site faces a field on the eastern side of the road (which is under the control of Kronospan).
- 2.1.3 The northern boundary of the Site is defined by the existing access road to Afon Bradley Farm. This is a farm holding under the control of Kronospan, which includes a single residential property and a series of outbuildings.
- 2.1.4 The Afon Bradley is a small watercourse which runs along the western boundary of the Site and flows northwards into the River Dee. Fields under the control of Kronospan are west of the Afon Bradley. The western edge of these fields is defined by the railway that runs between Chester and Shrewsbury. West of the railway is the Llangollen Canal which forms part of the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal World Heritage Site (WHS).
- 2.1.5 A sewage treatment works (owned by Dwr Cymru Welsh Water), a gas governor (owned by Wales and West Utilities), and one property (owned by Kronospan), all abut the southern boundary of the Site, with the wider (existing) Kronospan Facility located beyond these



2.2 Wider Context

- 2.2.1 The wider Kronospan Facility covers an area of approximately 41.2 hectares at the western edge of Chirk. It is a well-established industrial facility in operation since the 1970s, and which includes a number of large industrial process buildings (some with emissions stacks), storage areas for raw materials, warehouse buildings, offices and car parking. Some of the existing structures are large in scale and height. The tallest structures on site are the emissions stack (70m), the WESP stack (65.5m), the MDF cyclones (57m), and the dryer exhaust stack at the wet electrostatic precipitator (WESP) Chip Dryer (50m). Emission plumes from these stacks are often clearly visible from the surrounding area. Surface water for most of the wider Kronospan site currently drains to two lagoons on the northern boundary. A third lagoon was constructed to take surface water from the log yard.
- 2.2.2 Chirk is a small town off the A5 and just north of the England-Wales border (within Wales). The residential areas of the town mostly lie east of the B5070, with the wider Kronospan site to the west of this road. Dense tree planting, some of which is on an earth bund defines the eastern perimeter of the wider Kronospan site and provides effective screening of views from nearby properties.
- 2.2.3 On the western side of the B5070, to the south-east of the wider Kronospan site is an area of greenspace comprising a private sports club (immediately south of the Kronospan car park) and Chirk Recreation Ground. The Cadbury's (Mondelez) factory is immediately south of the wider Kronospan site. Chirk town centre lies south-east of the wider Kronospan site and includes various commercial and community buildings and areas of public open space.
- 2.2.4 The wider area is rural. The landform falls steeply, from the hills to the west towards the much lower-lying Shropshire Plain to the east. Local variations in topography are evident, with a marked rise to a ridge east of the town.
- 2.2.5 To the west of the wider Kronospan site, the land rises towards the foothills of the Welsh mountains. The Llangollen Canal forms part of the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal WHS. In addition to recognised heritage value, the canal corridor is an important recreational route. The canal passes close to the western boundary of the wider Kronospan site and some of the existing structures and perimeter fencing are visible from it



- 2.2.6 Beyond the canal, settlement is sparse and land cover comprises a mixture of pasture and small woodlands. Much of this area falls within the boundary of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Chirk Castle and its associated grounds (Grade 1 registered) are a notable feature within the landscape. The Castle is owned by the National Trust and is a well-known and well-frequented visitor destination.



3.0 THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 3.1.1 The proposed north access road would require the creation of a new junction in the form of a roundabout from the B5070 approximately 1.2km to the north of the existing site entrance to the Kronospan Facility. This would be at the existing junction with an unnamed road running east near to Lodge Farm Cottage. The new roundabout would allow vehicles travelling to and from the existing Kronospan Facility to enter and exit the B5070 to the north of Chirk, avoiding the requirement for the majority of heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) accessing the Facility to enter the settlement of Chirk. The proposed route would require the diversion of the existing access to Afon Bradley Farm, which would become an exit from the proposed roundabout. The new access road would lead from the roundabout west and then south across the existing agricultural field, entering the existing Kronospan Facility in the northeast corner of the current operational site.
- 3.1.2 An area (of approximately 0.87ha) for the parking of HGVs is proposed to the east of the proposed access road and to the west of the B5070. The proposed lorry park would cater for up to 45 HGVs and has been designed so that vehicles can enter and exit the proposed parking spaces in forward gear, without the need for reversing.
- 3.1.3 Approaching the existing wider Kronospan Facility there would be four parallel weighbridges to service incoming and outgoing vehicles. In between the weighbridges is a proposed three storey timber clad building with a gantry, allowing timber samples to be taken from incoming vehicles for quality checking.
- 3.1.4 A proposed staff and visitor car park would be to the south of the proposed lorry park and immediately east of the proposed weighbridges. A single-storey facilities block for the lorry park would be north of the staff and visitor car park
- 3.1.5 From the weighbridge, vehicles would continue south going to the east of the existing Gas Governor, entering the existing Kronospan Facility between the East Logyard (where the new East Warehouse is currently under construction) and Kronoplus. A route north towards the proposed roundabout and out of the Proposed Development



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- 3.1.6 Vehicles exiting the Site would follow the route described above, with both lanes merging before the 'out' weighbridge', and then routing north to the new roundabout junction. There would be an access to the proposed 132kV substation, described below.
- 3.1.7 The proposed 132kV substation would cover a broadly rectangular area and would be constructed where possible from permeable materials (such as gravels or stones). Bund walls would be constructed around some of the proposed equipment to provide protection from vehicles on the adjacent access road. Two fire walls would be located adjacent to the two main transformers. An access road would be provided around three sides of the equipment, with an area for parking. A substation building and a building for ancillary equipment would also be constructed. The substation would be surrounded by palisade security fencing and floodlights would be provided.
- 3.1.8 Two proposed roundwood storage areas are proposed. One storage area would be immediately north of the proposed 132kV substation and west of the proposed weighbridge and would cover an area of approximately 0.41ha. The second storage area would be south of the proposed weighbridge car park and south-east of the proposed weighbridges and would cover an area of approximately 0.3ha.
- 3.1.9 Both proposed roundwood storage areas would provide temporary storage for logs (maximum storage height of 4m), prior to being moved to other facilities within the wider Kronospan Facility for processing.
- 3.1.10 The Proposed Development would include landscape and ecological mitigation intended to reduce the visual effects of the new structures and vehicle movements and to enhance biodiversity. Measures to manage surface water flow, including two new drainage basins, would also be provided. These are all described in greater detail in Section 6.0 below.



4.0 GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE BASELINE

- 4.1.1 The baseline environment of the Site is described in detail in the documents submitted to WCBC to date. Notably, the Environmental Statement (ES) includes chapters addressing landscape and visual effects, and effects on biodiversity and nature conservation. A Flood Consequences Assessment and Surface Water Drainage Strategy, and an Arboricultural Impact Assessment also form part of the planning submission.
- 4.1.2 In summary, the Site chiefly comprises pasture grassland with boundary hedgerows, and a denser belt of tree cover at the northern and north-eastern boundaries. The Site is not within or adjacent to any area that is designated for its nature conservation interest. The hedgerows within the Site are priority habitat, and the Afon Bradley watercourse that runs adjacent to the western boundary is also a priority habitat. One of the trees within the Site is a veteran sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*).
- 4.1.3 Outside of the Site, hedgerows run north and south along the B5070 corridor. Denser belts of tree cover are located along the eastern side of the Kronospan Facility and at the junction of the B5070 with the A5. The Llangollen Canal corridor is also lined with tree cover, with more substantial woodland (locally designated Local Wildlife Site) on the cutting slopes south and south-west of the Kronospan Facility. West of the canal, further woodland areas are located, including within the Chirk Castle Estate. The Chirk Castle Estate also includes wildflower meadows, and veteran parkland trees. The Chirk Castle Estate is also designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).
- 4.1.4 Recent planting has been undertaken by the Applicant to discharge planning conditions attached several permissions. These conditions all required the preparation of a landscape strategy to mitigate the visual effects of the Kronospan Facility from public viewpoints. As such, the Applicant submitted a landscape strategy for the area surrounding the Kronospan Facility to WCBC in 2017 (updated in 2018). The landscape strategy was approved in 2019, and planting has subsequently been carried out within land owned by Kronospan. This planting (which comprises narrow woodland belts) is beginning to become effective in screening views, including views towards the Site. Further similar planting is required by several more recent (i.e. post-2019) planning consents.



5.0 GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY

- 5.1.1 The approach to the environmental design of the Proposed Development is described in the Environmental Statement and Design and Access Statement documents that form part of the planning submission. The proposed design has been arrived at following input from WCBC and from consultees including Cadw, the National Trust and the Canal & River Trust (CRT).
- 5.1.2 The planning submission includes an Illustrative Landscape Masterplan. Landscape proposals would include new native woodland planting, new native hedgerow planting, new specimen tree planting, new species-rich grassland and new wetland vegetation. Following implementation, the proposals would be managed proactively by the Applicant as part of the ongoing management and maintenance of vegetation within their landholding. Management would be undertaken with the aim of maximising the biodiversity interest and screening views of the Proposed Development from sensitive visual receptors.
- 5.1.3 It is envisaged that the implementation and management of the landscape proposals would be controlled via planning condition.
- 5.1.4 The overall changes in vegetation cover within the Site would be as follows:

Table 1 – Change in Vegetation Cover

Vegetation Type	Removed	Created	Net Increase
Woodland	0 ha	2.22 ha	2.122 ha
Hedgerow	620m	1150m	530m
Individual Trees	13 no.	89 no.	76 no.
Pasture	8.44 ha	0 ha	-8.44 ha
Species-rich Grassland	0 ha	4.05 ha	4.05 ha
Wetland	0 ha	0.39 ha	0.39 ha
Approximately 4.39 hectares of the Site would be permanently lost to accommodate the proposed new structures and hard surfaces. Approximately 0.8 hectares of existing vegetation cover would be retained			

- 5.1.5 The provision of a net gain in woodland cover, hedgerow length, specimen trees, species-rich grassland and wetland vegetation would result in a beneficial effect upon biodiversity and nature conservation (i.e. a net biodiversity benefit).



- 5.1.6 Additional off-site landscape enhancements would be implemented on land under the control of the Applicant. This would comprise planting of new native woodland and of specimen trees, and changes to the management of hedgerows located along the route of the Offa's Dyke Path National Trail. The principal aim of these enhancements is to reduce the visibility of the Kronospan Facility from the surrounding area. However, the increase in tree and woodland cover would also result in biodiversity benefits.
- 5.1.7 It is envisaged that the implementation and management of the additional off-site landscape enhancements would be controlled via an update to the 2018 Landscape Strategy (referred to at Paragraph 4.1.4 above) and secured via planning condition.
- 5.1.8 The Applicant would also, via a Unilateral Undertaking with CRT, implement a Woodland Management Plan covering the land within CRT ownership along the canal corridor west and south-west of the Site. The aims and objectives of this would be to:
- i) Manage the woodland (including individual trees and tree belts) to ensure its long-term viability.
 - ii) Maintain and enhance the nature conservation value of the woodland.
 - iii) Maintain and enhance the heritage value of the WHS.
 - iv) Maintain the integrity of canal structures.
 - v) Ensure no adverse effects on navigation of public access to the canal towpath.
- 5.1.9 In relation to the requirements of Planning Policy Wales, the design has followed the step-wise approach, which is set out in paragraphs 6.4.15-6.4.17 of that document as follows:
- i) Avoid (and enhance).
 - ii) Minimise (and enhance).
 - iii) Mitigate/restore (and enhance).
 - iv) Compensate on site (and enhance).
 - v) Compensate off-site (and enhance).
- 5.1.10 The step-wise approach reflects good practice in environmental design. Key outcomes of the design process for the Proposed Development include:



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- i) Retention of the veteran sycamore tree along the western boundary of the Site, and the adjacent hedgerows along the Afon Bradley.
 - ii) Retention of tree and hedgerow cover along the boundary with the B5070.
 - iii) Provision of new native woodland, native hedgerow and specimen tree planting, with a net gain in all three vegetation types.
 - iv) Some of the proposed new native woodland planting would link with similar existing vegetation to form a single block of woodland between the canal and the railway, thus enhancing habitat connectivity.
 - v) Net gain in species-rich grassland.
 - vi) Wetland vegetation incorporated into the surface water drainage design.
 - vii) Overall increase in the species and structural diversity of vegetation cover within the Site, providing favourable habitat conditions for a range of species, including amphibians, small mammals and invertebrates.
 - viii) Provision of new bird and bat boxes.
 - ix) Residual beneficial effects for breeding birds, due to enhanced habitat provision.
 - x) An overall net biodiversity benefit as a result of the Proposed Development.
 - xi) Further off-site enhancements to enhance the landscape and nature conservation value of vegetation cover in the surrounding area.
- 5.1.11 Additional measures to enhance the cultural heritage resource within the surrounding area have also been proposed by the Applicant via a Conservation Management Plan which will be implemented and managed via a s106 Agreement.



6.0 CONCLUSION

- 6.1.1 The Proposed Development would result in an overall reduction in vegetation cover within the Site but would result in clear increase in the range of species and structural diversity of vegetation present following the implementation and establishment of the landscape proposals. There would be a net increase in the amount of woodland cover, hedgerow planting, specimen trees, species-rich grassland and wetland vegetation. The proposals would assist with integrating the developed Site with its surroundings and would enhance landscape and ecological connectivity.
- 6.1.2 As such, the design of the Proposed Development incorporates green infrastructure. There would be a net biodiversity benefit as a result of the landscape proposals.

