GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STATEMENT – PLANNING APPLICATION (P/2024/1695) FOR PROPOSED FOOTPATH/CYCLEWAY AND BRIDGE WORKS ON NATIONAL TRUST LAND, RHOSTYLLEN

Welsh Government Planning Policy Wales Edition 11 requires all planning applications to be submitted with a 'Green Infrastructure Statement' (para 6.2.5).

A 'Green Infrastructure Statement' is now required with all new applications and should describe how green infrastructure has been incorporated into the proposal. It should be proportionate to the scale and nature of the proposed development.

It is acknowledged that Planning Authorities must seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity in the exercise of their functions. This means that development should not cause any significant loss of habitats or populations of species (not including non-native invasive species), locally or nationally and it must provide a net benefit for biodiversity and improve, or enable the improvement of the resilience of ecosystems.

This statement has been prepared in relation to a proposal to provide a new footpath/cycleway and bridge works on National Trust land in Rhostyllen. The proposed development will improve the link between the village of Rhostyllen and the Erddig Estate for pedestrians and cyclists.

The principle of this development has also been established by previous planning permissions P/2007/0683 & P/2012/0337 which pre-dated the current Welsh Government legislative requirements in relation to green infrastructure and net biodiversity gain.

The site is a woodland area either side of the course of Glanrafon Brook under the ownership of the National Trust, which lies to the east of the residential development.

The proposed design, route/alignment and layout of the proposed development has been carefully prepared in consultation with the Councils Ecologist and Arboricultural Officer. The objective is to provide a facility that causes minimal disruption to the existing area but at the same time adding value by providing biodiversity benefit and habitat creation and enhancement, complimenting the character of the existing woodland.

There are no statutory or non-statutory designated sites and habitats within the vicinity of the site. The woodland is not subject to a Tree Preservation Order, although a section is part of an Ancient Semi Natural Woodland. The submitted arboricultural appraisals acknowledge that the most notable trees can be satisfactorily protected during the development works. Whilst tree removal will be required to facilitate the development, the scheme has been designed to minimise impacts upon existing habitats and the Ancient Semi Natural Woodland as much as possible. This has been agreed with the Councils Arboricultural Officer and appropriate tree protection measures will be implemented during the construction phase. Similarly, no trees or hedgerows will be felled or removed other than those identified on the Aboricultural Method Statement. New native tree planting is proposed to mitigate for trees removed to facilitate construction of the new bridge and footpath and cycleway. This will more than compensate for those removed and will increase biodiversity within the site. The new planting will foster habitat creation and connectivity, eventually creating a continuous canopy as the planting matures. Native species scrub planting to the woodland edge along the eastern boundary will also be undertaken.

The proposals will establish a network of new and existing habitats and wildlife corridors through the site which will benefit biodiversity. New shrub, tree and hedgerow planting will also be introduced in line with the proposed planting plans. Extensive new planting of native species is proposed which will enhance biodiversity and opportunities for wildlife on the site. Native grass and wildflower species will be used based upon local flora and appropriate to the site ground and growing conditions. At the same time measures will be introduced to avoid, mitigate and compensate for any detrimental impacts upon wildlife which may be currently using the site. In addition, appropriate measures will be introduced to ensure any

imported landscaping materials and planting are free of invasive non-native species. All new planting areas will be maintained and managed to ensure successful establishment. Landscaping areas will be fenced to aid protection of new planting. The proposed new hedging, scrub and grassland as shown on the detailed landscaping plans will provide connecting routes for wildlife that link with existing hedgerows and the woodland to the west. The introduction of native species rich planting will provide a good source of direct and indirect forage for a variety of invertebrate, birds and small mammal species; improved habitat connectivity for the same, (particularly bats), and nesting opportunities for birds. A more sympathetic approach to the treatment and future management of the area will encourage improved habitat and opportunities for more native plants, animals and micro-organisms to populate this area.

Specific details are illustrated and set out in the Landscape Mitigation Plan. The whole objective through this planting is to enhance biodiversity and create opportunities for wildlife on the site. At the same time, ensuring measures are introduced to avoid, mitigate and compensate for any detrimental impacts upon wildlife which may be currently using the site.

In view of the legislative requirements all trees will be inspected for the presence of nesting birds and bats, prior to any tree work. A qualified Ecologist will also be appointed to ensure a preliminary ecological assessment is undertaken.

No external lighting is proposed and consequently there should be no impact upon bats and tree planting should encourage improved connectivity with adjoining woodland areas.

Underpinning all of these enhancements will be an effective management regime which will ensure timely management interventions and plant replacements are undertaken. Annual monitoring will check the establishment of new planting and any failing will be replaced with the same species and size of plant. Habitats will be monitored during the initial 5 year maintenance period to ensure they are establishing with the potential to continue to develop for future biodiversity benefit and continued enhancement beyond initial establishment. Regular on site

monitoring will be used to inform changes to the plan with recommendations for future management beyond this period.

The introduction of new planting, including species rich grassland & wildflowers, habitat creation, foraging opportunities for invertebrates, birds, mammals and bats which is managed is a significant net biodiversity gain for the site, a site which is presently unmanaged.

In summary, the proposals will ensure that there is a net biodiversity gain for the whole of the site and improve connectivity with the surrounding area.

The footpath/cycleway route has been designed to minimise the impact upon the woodland area, with significant compensatory measures introduced to mitigate the disturbance. This has been undertaken with the Councils Ecologist and Arboricultural Officer from the outset.

Once established the proposals offer significant long term benefits and enhancements as well as channelling pedestrian movement through the woodland area in an orderly and managed way. This, in conjunction with the proposed biodiversity enhancements within the rest of the site area will ensure there is a net biodiversity gain.

The introduction of a comprehensive management scheme which does not presently exist or required as part of the previous permissions will also ensure net biodiversity advantages over the current situation.

Given the nature of the proposed use and the environmental changes involved, the proposed improvements represent a proportionate intervention as required by the legislation.