Project

Llandegla Forest Pods

Document Title

Design & Access Statement

Document No.

MS-0002-ID-002-01

MAKE SPACE

Document Information

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Contents

Introduction

Summary

This design and access statement has been prepared by Make Space Landscape Architecture Ltd on behalf of OnePlanet Adventure to support an outline planning application for the Llandegla Forest Pods development.

The proposals include locating of a number of holiday accommodation pods on a forested area of land to the north of the existing OnePlanet Adventure visitor centre, a landscape scheme to sensitively integrate the scheme into site, associated parking and drainage infrastructure.

This document should be read in conjunction with all other supporting documentation and drawings accompanying the application.

Site Context

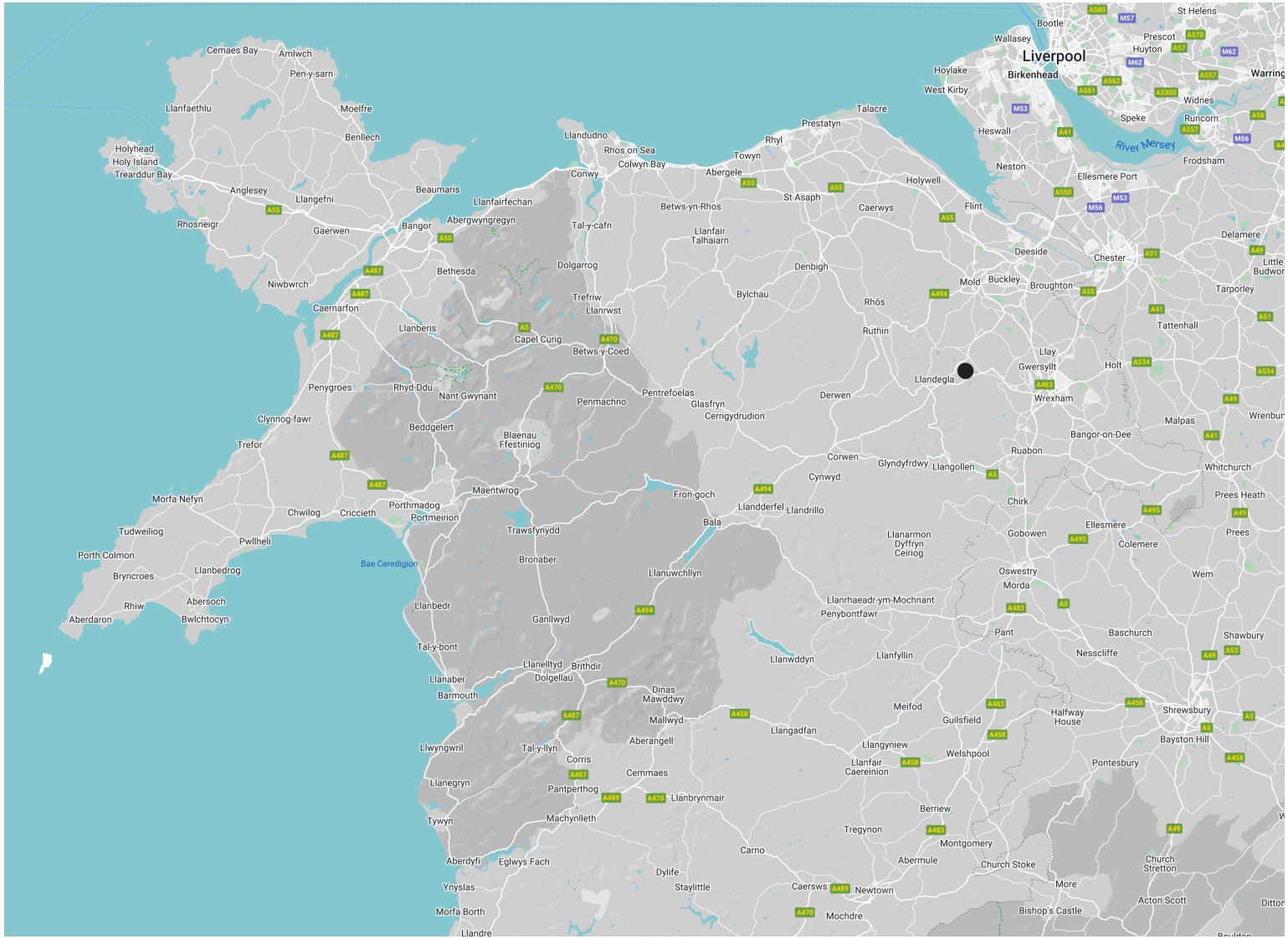
Regional Context

Llandegla is a small village located in North Wales, approximately 15km to the West of Wrexham. It lies within the county of Denbighshire and within the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB.

The village is a popular tourist destination for those visiting the AONB, but particularly with mountain bikers who come to cycle in Llandegla forest.

Llandegla is well placed to benefit from visitors from across Wales, and much of North West England and the Midlands. Major conurbations within a 2 hour drive from Llandegla include St Asaph, Wrexham, Chester, Oswestry, Whitchurch, Shrewsbury, Chester, Liverpool, Stoke on Trent & Manchester.

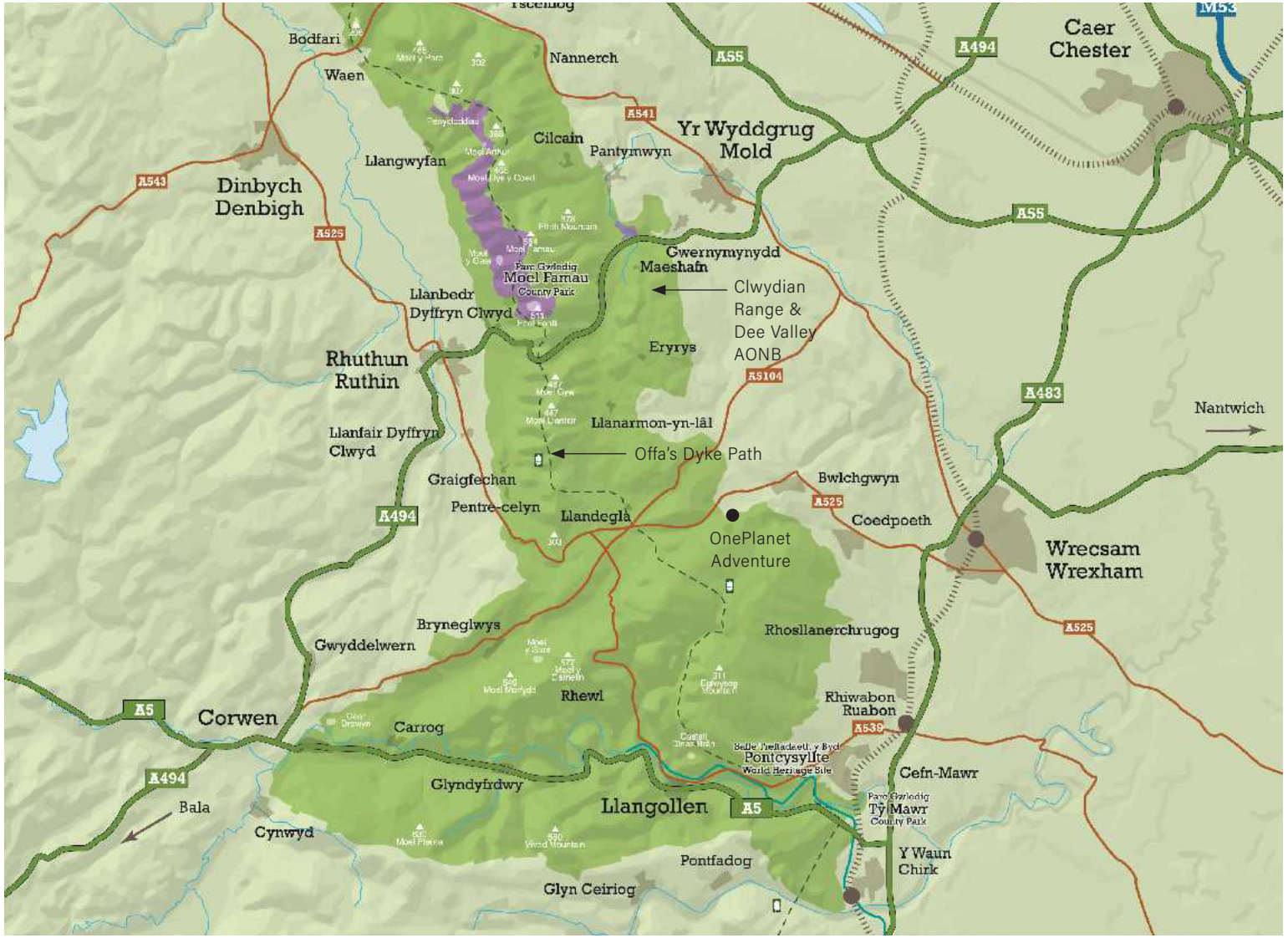
The village is well connected by road with the A525 running directly through the village linking the towns of Rhyl and Wrexham.



Local Context

The site lies within the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB which stretches from the coast at Prestatyn to the north and Llangollen to the south, covering a diverse range of landscapes but notably the upland areas of the Clwydian Range of hills.

The long distance Offa's Dyke Path also passes nearby which runs the full length of the AONB and beyond.



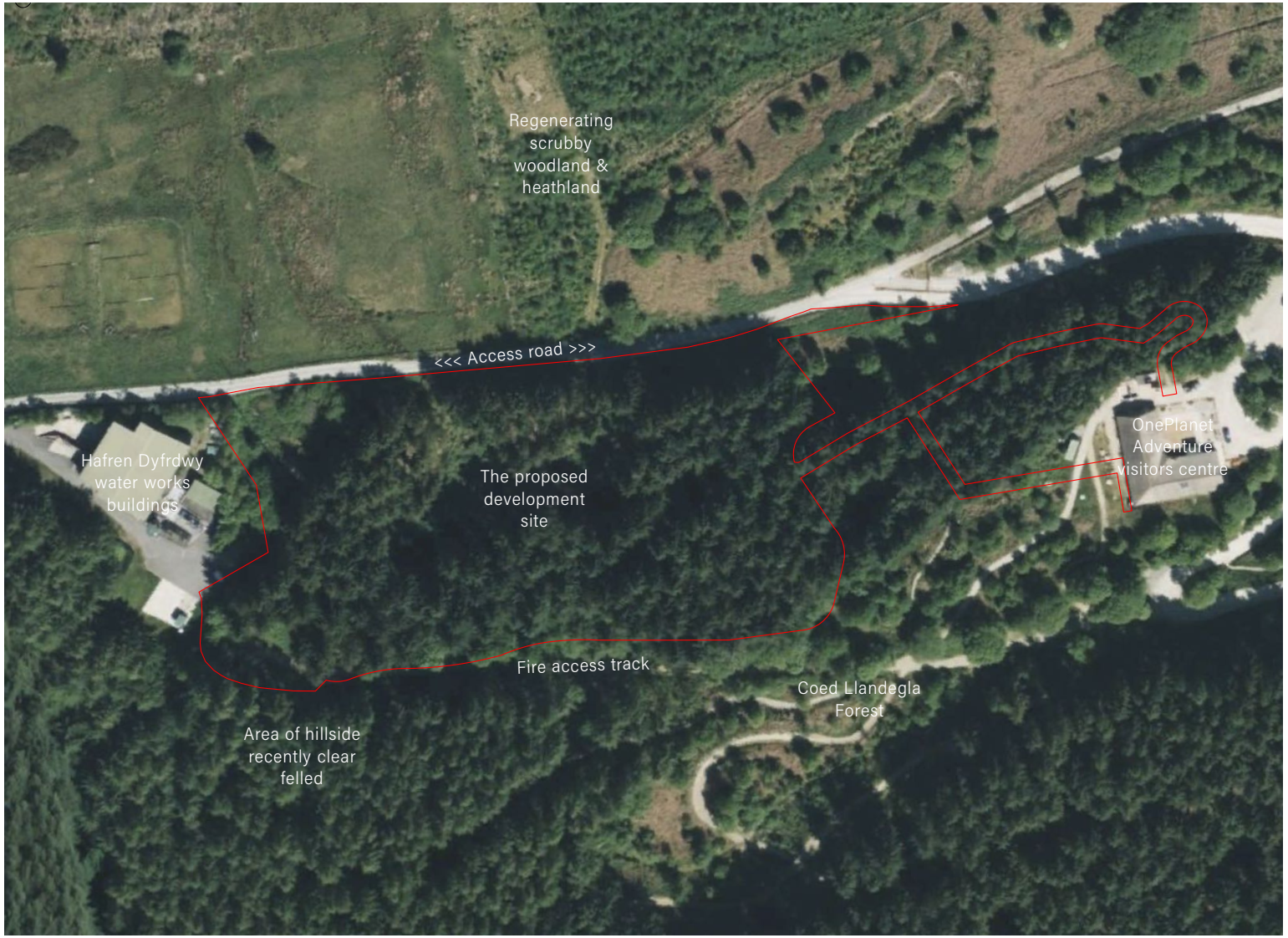
The Immediate Context

To the north of the site is the access road to the main OnePlanet Adventure visitor centre beyond which lies an area of regenerating scrubby woodland and heathland.

The main visitor hub building lies directly to the east of the site.

There is a fire access track which forms the southern boundary to the site, beyond which is a hillside that has recently been clear felled for forestry.

Directly to the west of the site there are a number of water works buildings under the ownership of Hafren Dyfrdwy, a regional water company providing water and waste water treatment services.



Connectivity

By car:

The site is easily accessible by the A525 which connects Rhyl with Wrexham followed by the lane leading to the OnePlanet Adventure visitor centre car park.

By public transport:

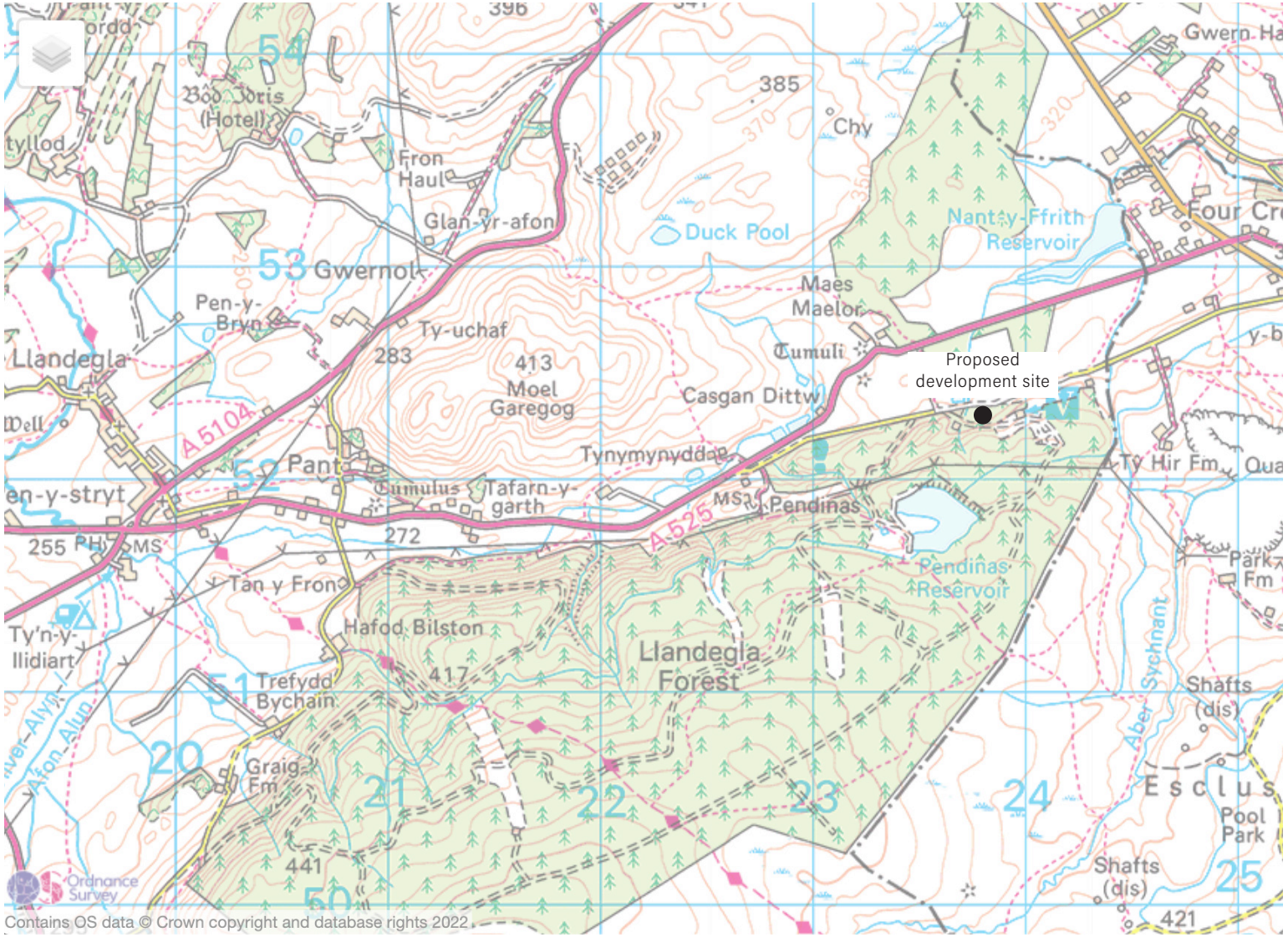
There is limited public transport connectivity, though it is possible to access the site on the X51 bus between Wrexham and Denbigh, followed by a 30 minute walk.

By bike:

Similarly to by car, the site is accessed by the A525. There is no dedicated cycle route or bridleway linking to the site at present.

On foot:

The site is located near to Offa's Dyke Path National Trail, which runs the length of the English-Welsh border. Closer to the site there are a number of public footpath links to the north.



The Existing Site

Site Photos

Looking West along the main access road to the existing OnePlanet Adventure visitor centre. The development site is immediately to the left of the image, with the water works buildings located beyond.

Looking North from the main access road, through the development site to the area of clear felled plantation woodland on the hillside beyond.

Looking North across regenerating woodland and moorland from the access road to the North of the proposed development site.

Looking West along the fire track directly to the South of the site. The proposed site is off the track to the right of the image.

Looking North from within the site. There is substantial damage to the plantation woodland with a number of trees blown over by the wind.

Looking West towards the site from the dense woodland block directly to the east of the site. Here the trees are denser and the stand is more in-tact and has been subject to less wind damage.

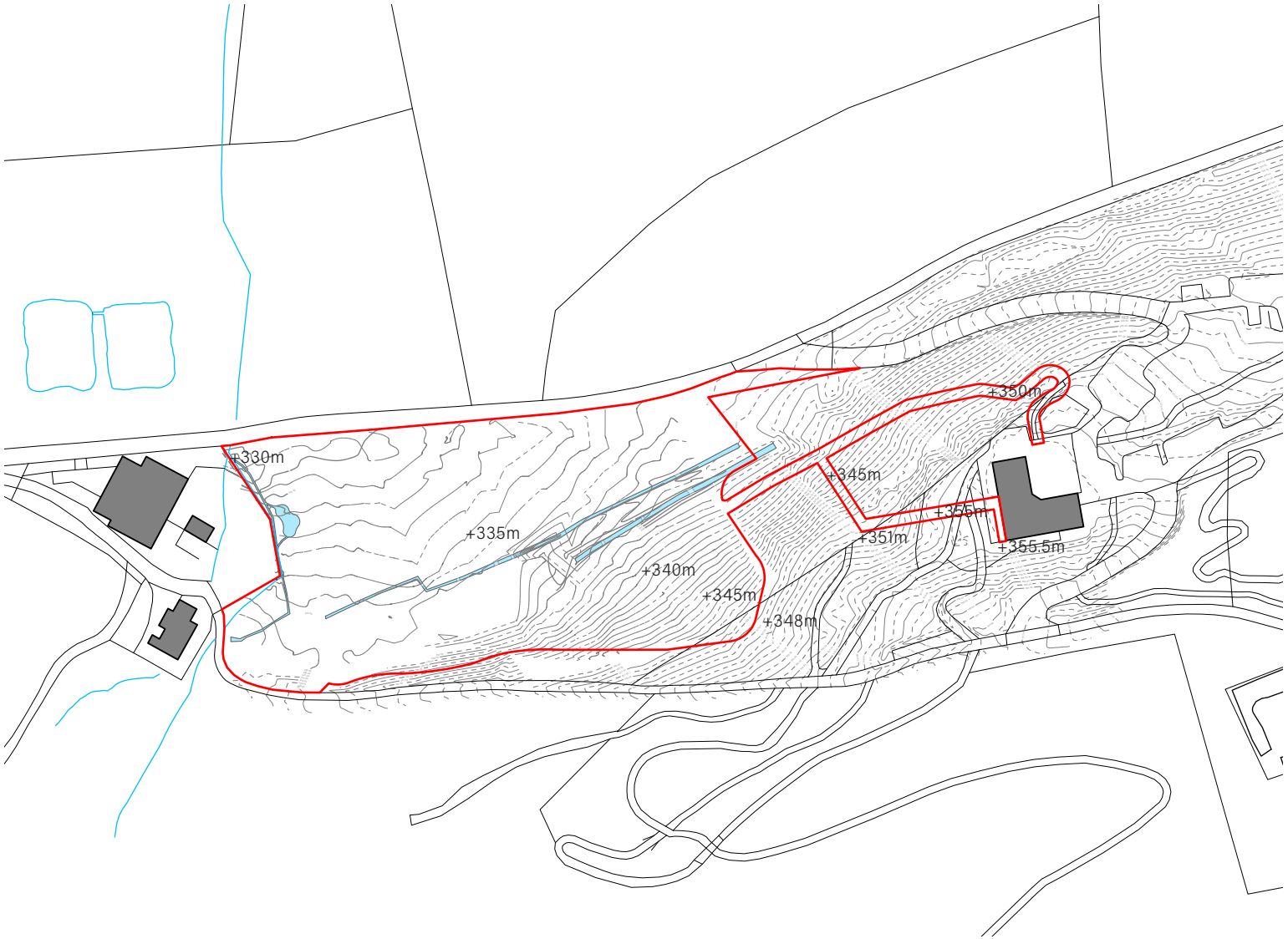
There is rapid regeneration of vegetation where light has been let in to the site through loss of wind blown trees. Young Larch and Mountain Ash can be seen taking hold.

Image showing one of the ditches that run through the site. The wetter conditions favouring ferns and mosses.

Topography

The site is a north facing wooded hillside that rises towards the south. At the lowest point the level is 330m AOD and at the highest point the level is 355.5m AOD.

The south east corner of the site and the southern boundary are the most steeply sloping areas and the site flattens out towards the north west corner, which represents the most easily developed part of the site.



Trees

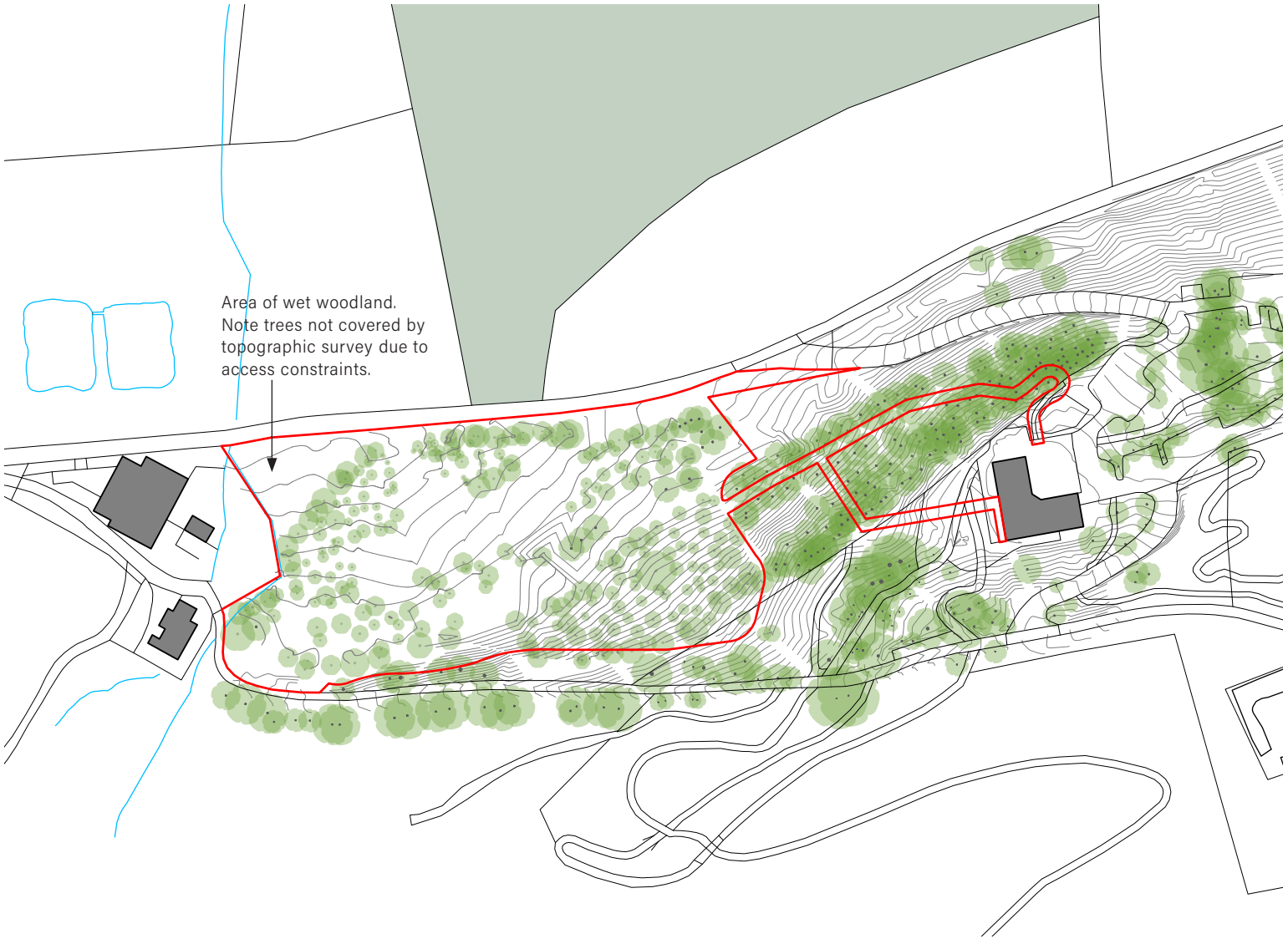
The site is heavily vegetated, predominantly by non native plantation woodland.

To the north west corner of the site is an area of wet woodland at the low point of the site. This area contains native broadleaf species such as Got, Willow, Rowan and Silver Birch.

The trees within the centre and to the West of the site are predominantly Sitka Spruce and Larch which have been planted for forestry purposes. A large number of the trees within this area have been subject to wind damage and have fallen over as illustrated in the site photos.

Immediately to the East of the site there is a woodland block of predominantly Sitka Spruce which is both denser and less subject to wind damage than the majority of the trees enclosed within the red line boundary.

To the South of the site the character of the vegetation changes and self sown trees of Goat Willow, Rowan and Birch are thriving on the steep slope.



Vision & Design Principles

The Vision

The creation of a sensitive and sustainable holiday accommodation destination to supplement the existing mountain bike trails located at OnePlanet Adventure at Llandegla Forest.

Pods inspired by Shepherds huts located in an ecologically rich broadleaf woodland. A quiet and tranquil destination where you can be surrounded by nature and enjoy the special qualities of the local landscape.

By day enjoy walking, cycling and running in the forest and local hills, by night enjoy the sounds of the forest and the brightness of the stars in the night sky.

A place: **to reconnect with nature**

A place: **to reconnect with family and friends**

A place: **to appreciate the qualities of the landscape**

A place: **for active pursuits**

Design Principles

The following design principles have been developed to steer the design proposals.

The design principles combined will result in a sensitive development that is well integrated into the site and surrounding landscape, and has sustainability at it's core.

Work with the existing

Placement of pods in the areas of the site where minimal ground disruption is required. Retain as many existing broadleaf trees as possible.

Light touch on the land

Pods that have a minimal foundation and sit on legs to avoid the need for large pad foundations. The pods could be removed in the future leaving minimal trace on the site.

Take, and add as little as possible

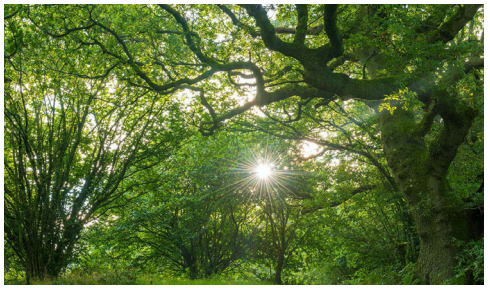
Minimise cut and fill operations and re-use any arisings on site. For any fallen or existing trees removed keep as much of the material on site as possible for creative re-use.

Integrated into the landscape

Careful site design to minimise the visual impact of views of the existing site. The promotion of new broadleaf woodland to screen the pods and green the development.

Of the place: local materials

Use of site won and local materials for all hard landscape proposals. This will help the development integrate into the landscape and ensure that the proposals are of the place.

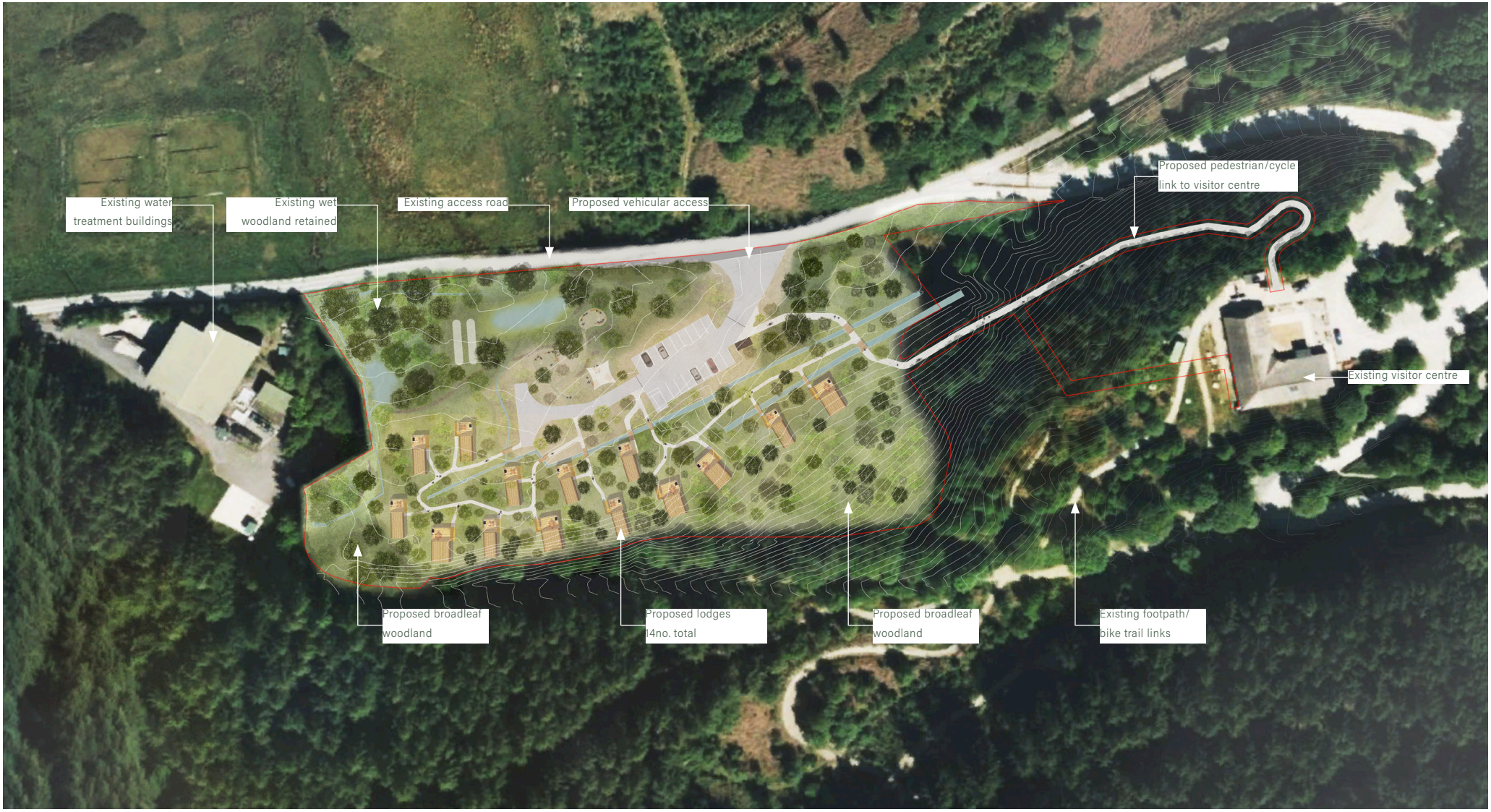


Leave it better than we found it

The creation of broadleaf woodland using appropriate local and native species will result in net biodiversity gain when compared to the monoculture plantation that occupies the site at present.

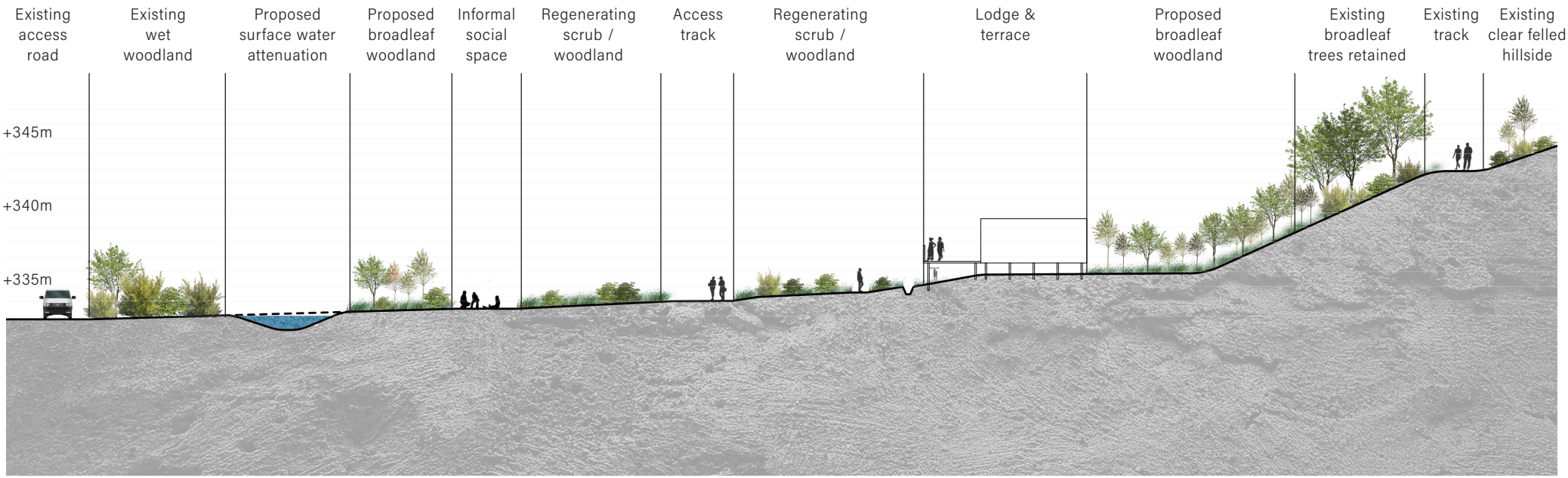
Design Proposals

Landscape Masterplan



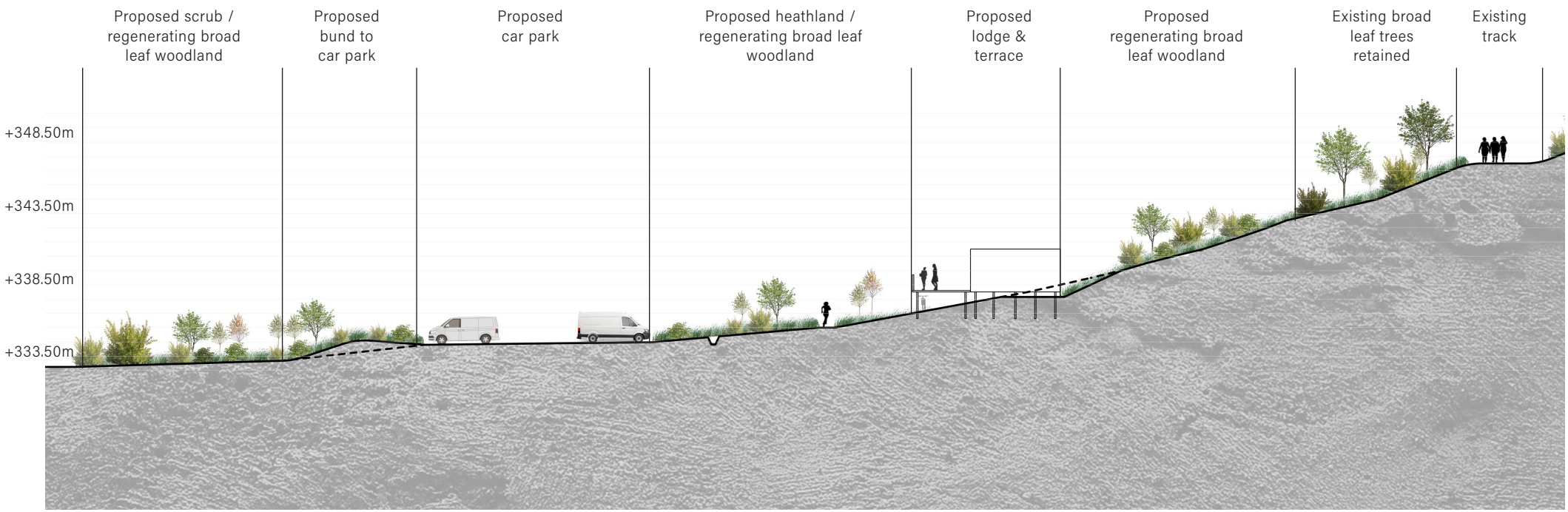
Site Section A

Location Plan



Site Section B

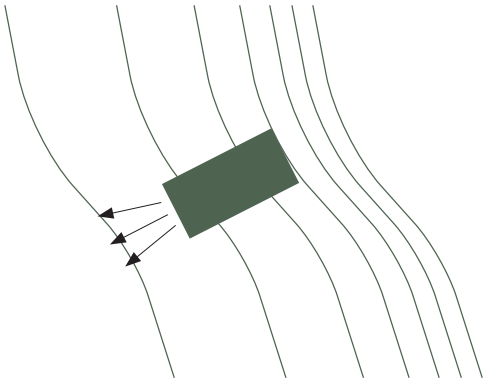
Location Plan

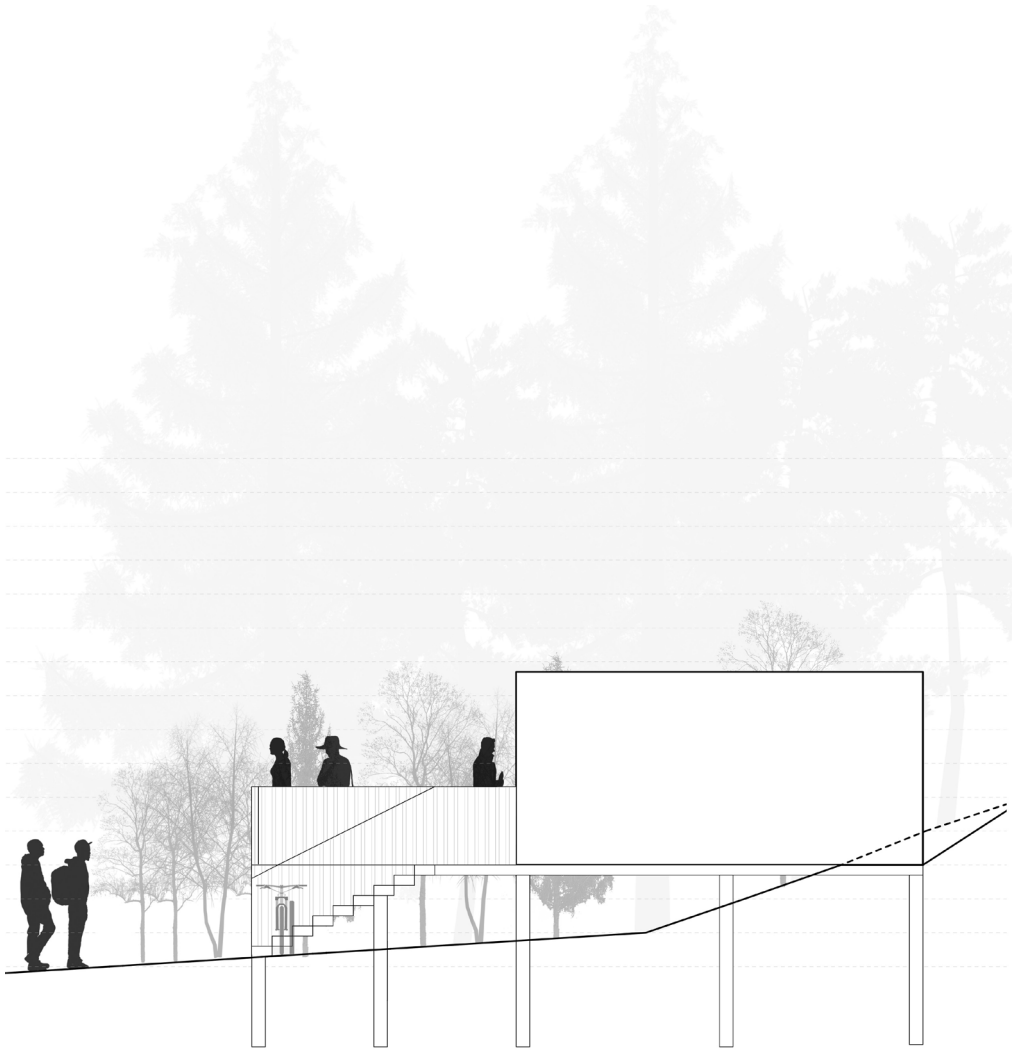


Pod Location & Orientation

The site layout proposes locating the pods so that they are sited perpendicular to the contours. Each unit would be supported by legs which offer a much lesser impact on the ground below than a traditional pad foundation, while the orientation provides the following benefits:

- Gives an elevated platform at the entrance to each pod which creates privacy.
- Orientates pods so that the gable end window faces the best views.
- Reduces amount of outward facing frontage.
- Efficient use of space in a long, thin site.





Indicative External Space Study - Single Lodge

Each lodge has it's own private external space where the users can sit outside and enjoy the qualities of the landscape. Typical provision would include;

- 4no chairs & tables - these can be stacked to one side if not required to clear space & maintain views out. Chairs can fit under threshold in bad weather
- Gas BBQ - safe provision of BBQ facilities to deter from unmanaged bbq's elsewhere on site.
- All furniture elements arranged to maintain clear access route to pod entrance
- Balustrade fins to allow views out but also create privacy

Indicative External Space Study - Double Lodge

The double lodge will also have it's own private external space, with a similar provision of facilities to cater for a larger group. This will typically include;

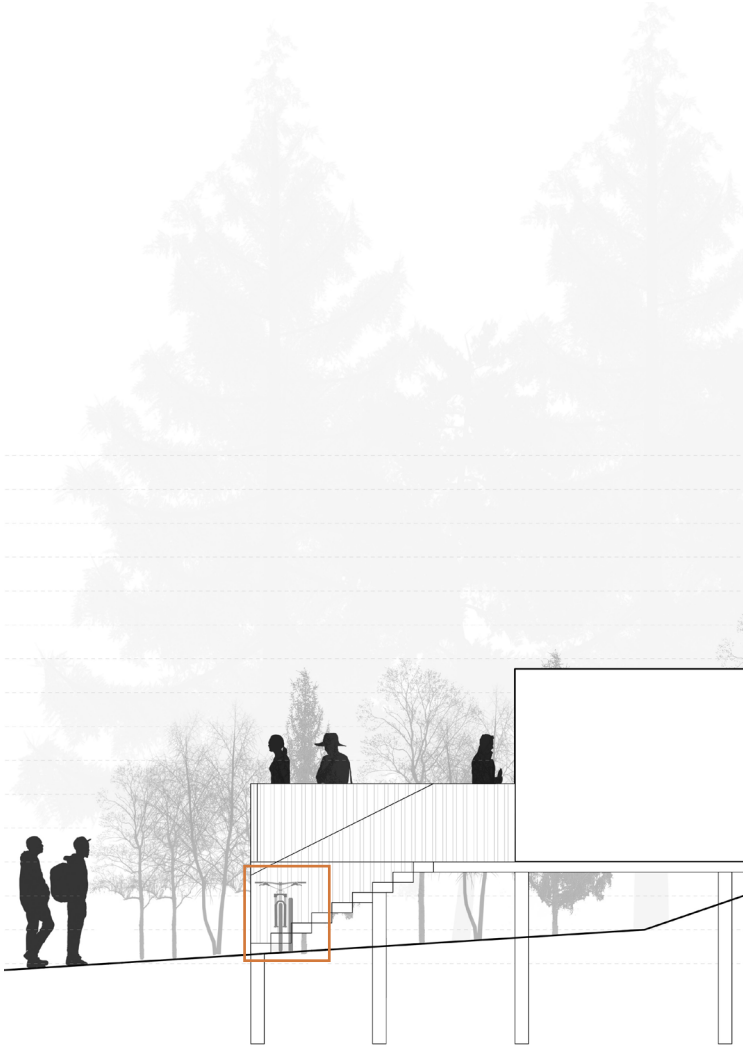
- 6no chairs & tables - these can be stacked to one side if not required to clear space & maintain views out. Chairs can fit under threshold in bad weather
- Gas BBQ - safe provision of BBQ facilities to deter from unmanaged bbq's elsewhere on site.
- All furniture elements arranged to maintain clear access route to pod entrance, and to create uninterrupted views out of glazed door
- Balustrade fins to allow views out but also create privacy

Cycle Storage Options

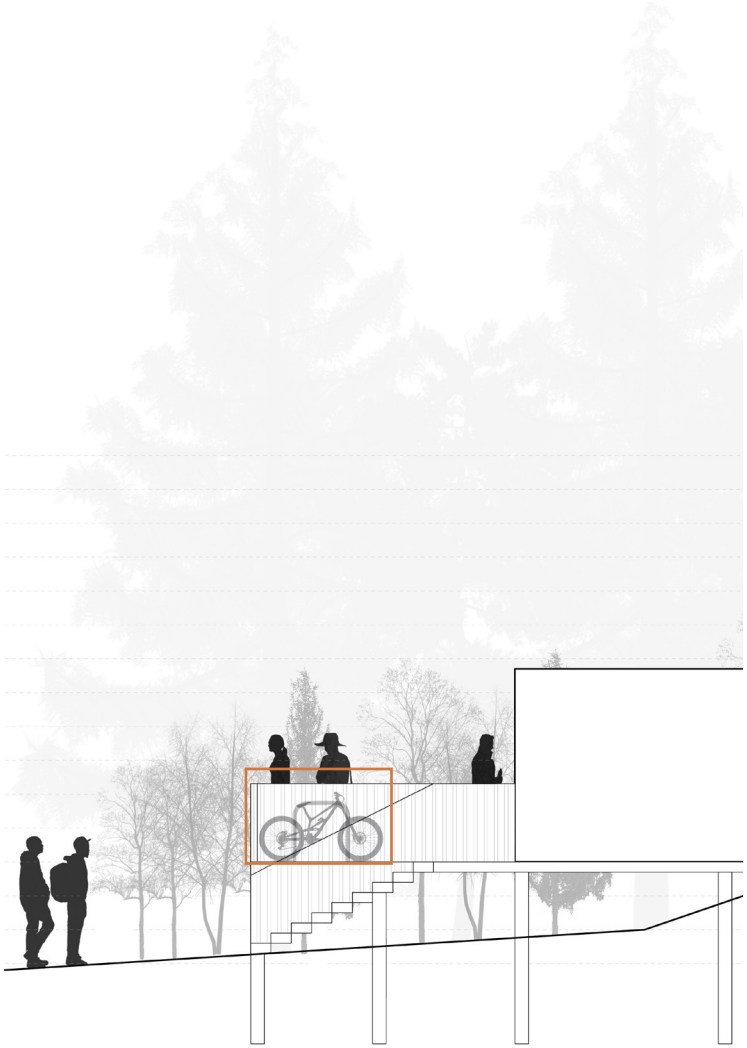
Each lodge will provide one cycle storage space per bedspace, located in the immediate vicinity of each lodge to help maximise security. The following options for the location of the cycle stands have been considered;

- Option 1: Secure storage at ground level either beneath the decked external area to the lodge (where topography allows), or adjacent to the lodge. Provision under the deck would provide an integrated storage solution that takes advantage of the cover provided by the deck, and would be visually recessive.

- Option 2: Secure storage located on the deck itself. This would occupy valuable deck space, however may provide additional security being elevated and in close proximity to the lodge entrance.



Option 1 - Below deck storage



Option 2 - On deck storage

Indicative Lodge Layout

The proposed layout for the lodges locates them on the flattest part of the site and aims to retain existing broadleaf trees, such as the wet woodland to the North West corner of the site, and along the embankment to the site boundary to the South.

The lodges themselves are positioned perpendicular to the contours as explained in the previous diagram and each has an area of private external space.

The indicative layout employs a minimum 6m offset between each unit in accordance with the 'Caravans, Chalets & Camping' Supplementary Planning Guidance document published by Denbighshire County Council. This ensures safe separation distance between each lodge but also creates privacy for the end user.

The areas between the lodges will be managed to regenerate towards broadleaf woodland to restore an ecologically rich wooded backdrop to the development.

Integrating The Lodges Into The Landscape

Gable ends front facing

The orientation of the lodges minimises the amount of outward facing frontage to reduce the visual impact when looking towards the site.

Pods following contours

The pods are placed perpendicular to the contours. This results in an organic appearance to the layout which is governed by the underlying landform.

Screening by proposed woodland

Proposed tree planting to the north helps to screen the lodges when looking towards the site.

Car park bund

A low bund is proposed to the north of the car park to allow the loss of any cut material on site, and to help screen the car park.

Site entrance location

The proposed site access point has been carefully chosen to avoid the loss of broadleaf trees within the site and because of the screening effect of the bank of existing regenerating woodland immediately to the north of the site.

Habitats & Vegetation

The proposed development seeks to improve the diversity of habitats and vegetation types across the site. The existing plantation woodland will be replaced through both planting and natural regeneration, with greater species diversity better fitted to the locale.

Key

- Proposed broadleaf woodland
- Existing wet woodland retained
- Proposed wet woodland
- Natural regeneration of moorland/heath woodland vegetation
- Natural regeneration of broadleaf woodland
- Scrub vegetation to site boundary
- Grass verge to boundary

Restoring Broadleaf Woodland

The majority of the site at present is plantation coniferous woodland, planted by people as a crop to harvest timber.

The woodland block that occupies most of the development site is in relatively poor condition with a large number of windblown trees. Given that the trees are planted in a dense stand, when some trees are removed or blow over others inevitably follow, as they have lost the shelter provided by other trees that they have grown with.

The intention therefore is to harvest the crop of coniferous trees, and through replanting and vegetation management, restored broad leaf woodland which pre-dates the coniferous plantation woodland. This will create a far more ecologically rich site than seen at present.

A sustainably managed broad leaf woodland will create an attractive green backdrop to the development that is rich in wildlife to create a place where people want to come and stay.

Short term

1-5 years

Select areas planted with whips to kick start regeneration and allow for the introduction of select tree species.

Some areas left to regenerate naturally from the seed bank in the soil, with species that are well fitted to the locale and of local provenance.

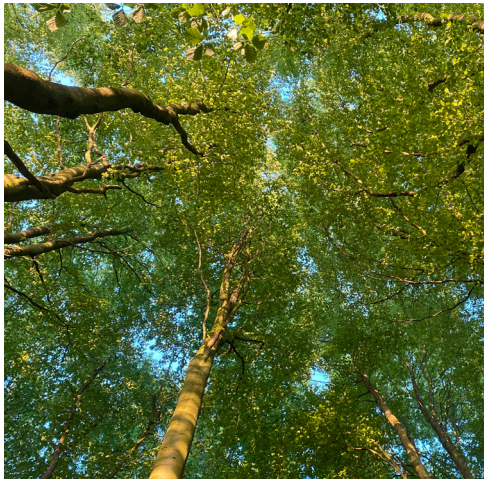
Areas of scrub / heathy woodland established through the sowing of locally collected seed.

Medium term

5-15 years

Young trees, particularly pioneer species become well established.

Species mix carefully managed. Thinning required to achieve the desired spacing.



Long term

15+ years

Further thinning and species selection required.

A mix of species left to include some pioneer species but also to allow climax species such as Oak to fully develop.

Access & Circulation

Circulation for pedestrians and cyclists within the site is provided by a series of sinuous pathways that provide access from the lodges and car park, up to the main visitor centre and trail head, and also to each individual lodge. These would be surfaced in site won stone and timber board walks used where the paths cross existing streams and ditches within the site.

Vehicle access is provided by a track linking to the main access road to the OnePlanet Adventure visitor centre to the north. The generous bell mouth allows for the turning in of a fire tender or bin wagon. There is a slight impact upon the existing passing place, but the length lost has been re provided to ensure it remains the same overall length. Access to the car park is controlled using a rising arm barrier. The turning head within the site allows for servicing, and the turning of a fire tender without the need to reverse more than 20m in line with Part B building regulations.

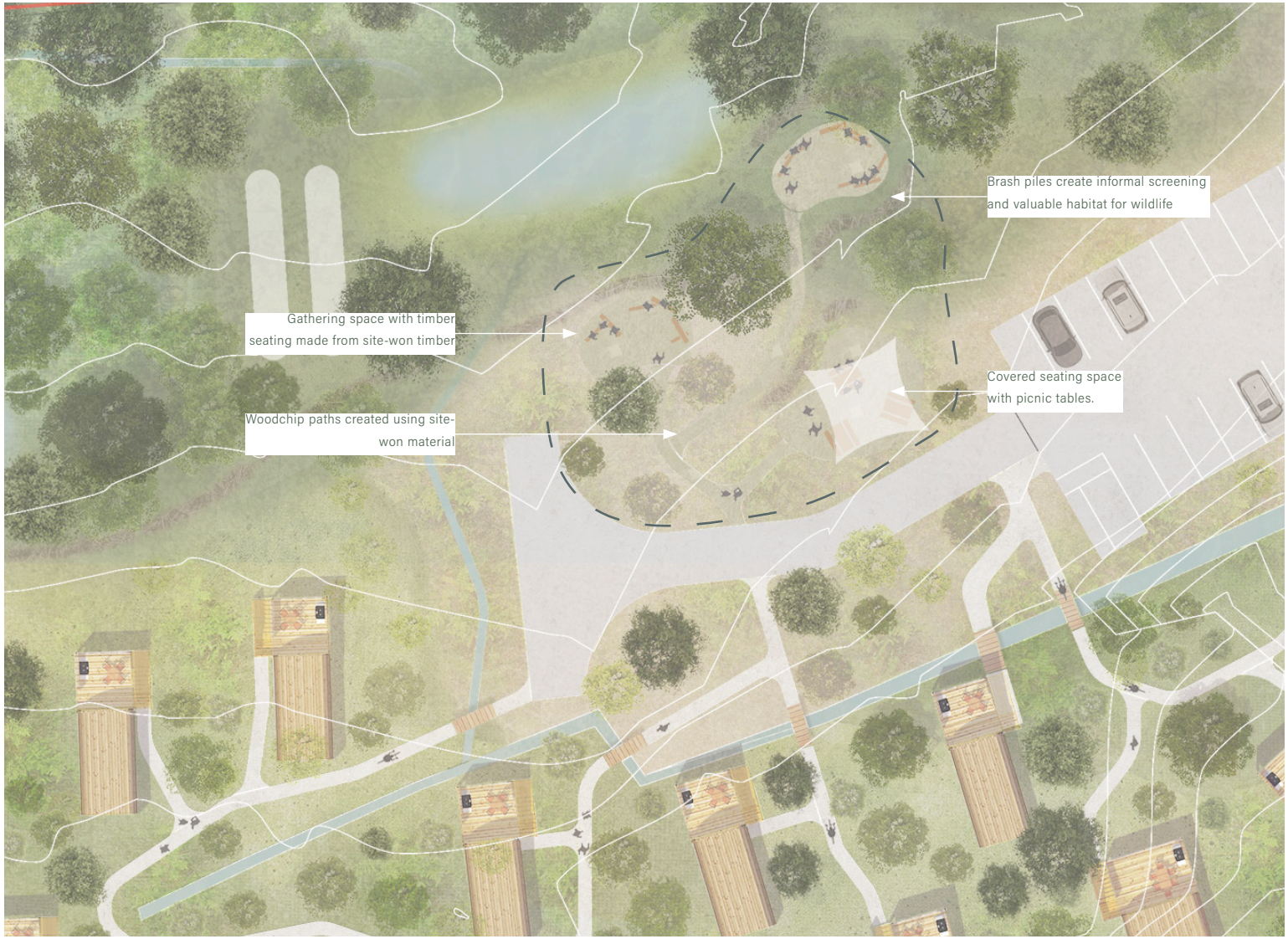
The proposed car park includes 20no spaces, including 1no accessible bay. 4no electric vehicle charging points are proposed with infrastructure for a further 4no installed.

Social Spaces

Each lodge has an individual terrace space to allow for private external dining.

In addition to this the proposed scheme includes a series of informal social spaces where users of multiple lodges can gather. These spaces are located to the north of the car park and turning head to provide a degree of separation from the lodges themselves and are clearings within the regenerating broadleaf woodland.

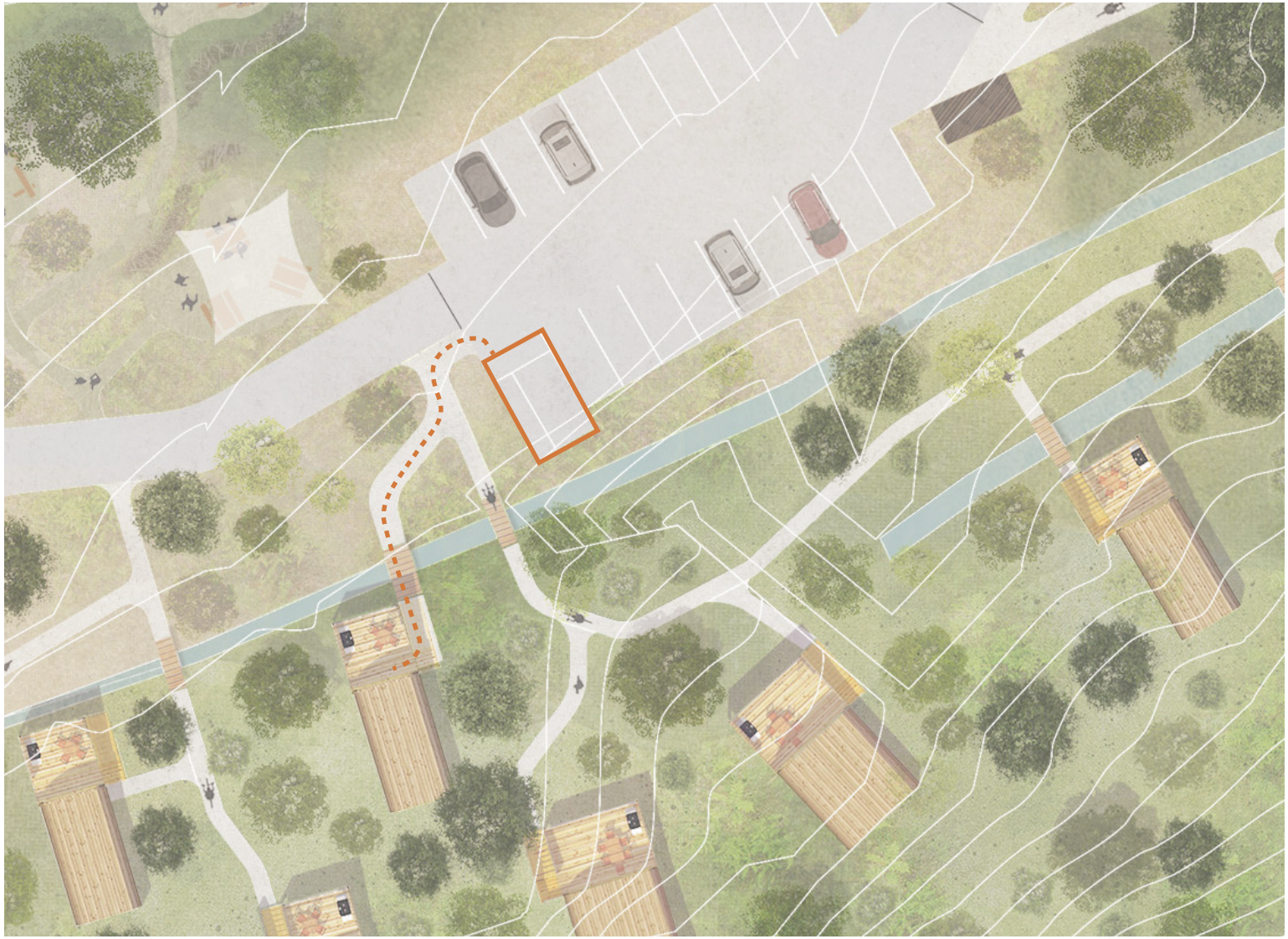
Informal timber seating will be provided, potentially using site won timber, and surfaced with timber chippings to ensure that the social spaces blend seamlessly into the surrounding greenery.



Accessibility

The indicative layout includes 1no accessible parking bay and 1no accessible lodge.

The parking bay includes the relevant offset zones around it, and the lodge would be adapted to sit close to the ground, removing the need for steps or an excessively long access ramp to gain entry.



Accessible parking bay

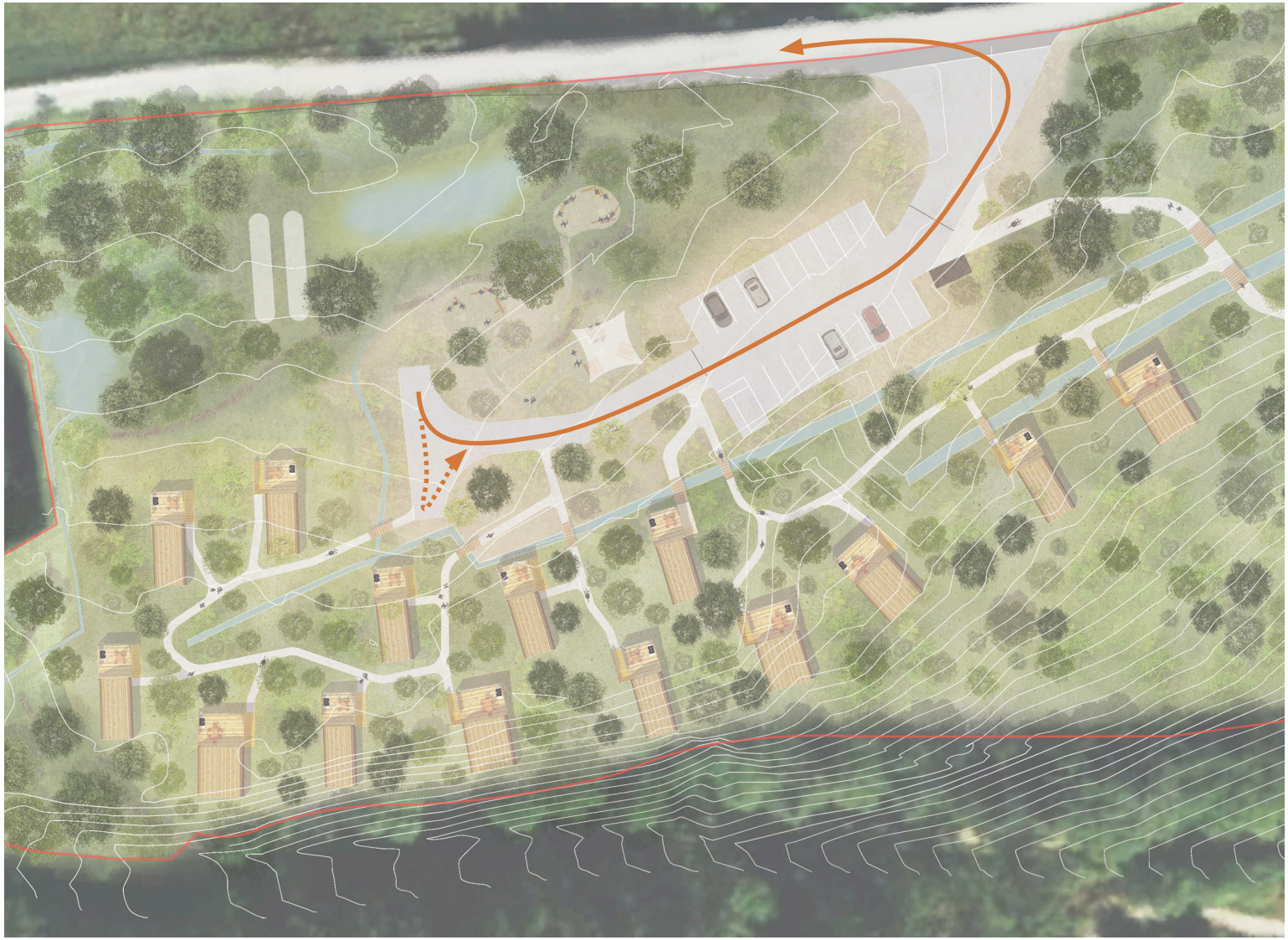
Level access route to lodge

Fire Access

Fire access has been a key consideration in developing the indicative site layout and the below considerations mean that the site design complies with Part B (Fire Safety) Building Regulations.

A wide bell mouth at the site entrance allows a fire tender to turn into the site in a single movement, and a turning head within the site ensures that a turning movement can be made without the need to reverse (20m maximum reversing distance under Part B).

In addition all lodges have been positioned so that all points of the footprint sit within 45m of the hard standing accessible by the fire tender.



Fire access route

Reversing turning head

Bins & Recycling

A centralised bin store is proposed for use of all lodge users staying at the development.

This is located near to the main vehicular entrance, away from individual lodges, and passed by the inhabitants of all lodges on their way into and out of the site.

The proposed location is also easy to service by the bin wagon which can empty the bins without needing to enter and turn round within the heart of the development, which would be seen as potentially disruptive to visitors.

Key

- Vehicular route
- Vehicular pull-in position
- Pedestrian route - bins wheeled by hand
- Proposed bin store

Water Management

A sustainable water management scheme is proposed for the scheme that comprises the following:

A surface water attenuation basin. This will contain water that has run off from vehicle areas (semi permeable) and roofs of the pods. The existing ditches that run east to west across the site are used to transport surface water, before being connected by a new ditch into the basin. A proportion of water can then leave the basin via a new ditch linking to the existing stream that runs along the western edge of the site. Both the attenuation basin itself and the drainage ditches will create a range of growing conditions to support plant communities that favour wet conditions, contributing to the site's biodiversity.

Two new water treatment tanks , sunk into the ground are proposed to treat foul water both from the lodges, but also the existing visitor centre.

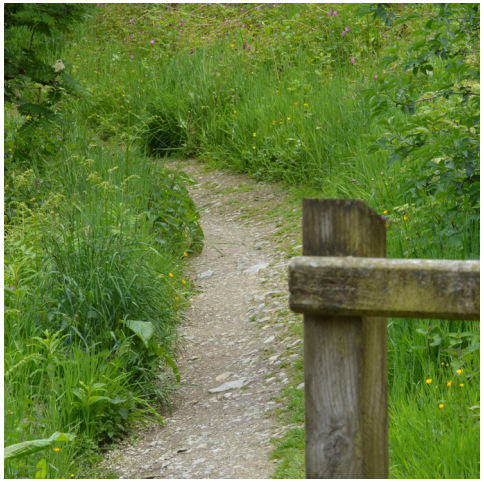
Due to their siting in the low point of the site, all of the water management systems are gravity fed and will therefore not require any pumping apparatus.

Materiality

Vehicle areas

Compacted site won stone

The use of compacted site won stone is a practical and sustainable option for vehicular areas. Given the material is sourced directly from the site it is of the place and feels perfectly at home. It also matches the existing access track to the main visitor centre contributing to feeling of one coherent development.



Footpaths

Compacted site won stone

As per vehicular areas, the material is of the place, is appropriate to the intended use of the development and ties in with the existing trail network around the forest.

Stream crossings

Timber boardwalk

Tanalised softwood, FSC certified. Given the forest setting the use of timber feels entirely appropriate and will help the development blend in with it's surroundings. Untreated timber will naturally silver to become even more recessive as per the image above.

Wire mesh overlays will be used to provide additional grip in wet weather.

Social gathering spaces

Site won wood chip

Existing windblown trees or those of low commercial value chipped on site to create wood chip. This recessive material works well in the wooded setting and is a suitably informal material for use in low footfall social gathering spaces.

It is permeable, of value to invertebrates and fungi, and can easily be topped up in the future.

Lighting

The lighting scheme has not yet been developed in detail but the proposed scheme will be designed in accordance with the Planning for Dark Night Skies SPG document.

The dark skies designation will be one of the qualities of the development that users will be able to enjoy and the development will ensure that the lighting scheme does not detract from this experience.

Table 2: Clwydian Range and Dee Valley general lighting principles

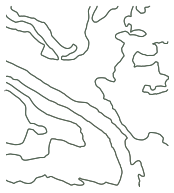
New lighting should not degrade the night sky quality or night-time tranquillity of the AONB

- Direct light to the place of need, not in a direction that disturbs neighbours or wildlife
- Angle lights downward, no unnecessary light above or near the horizontal
- Lamps of 500 lumens or less are enough for most domestic purposes
- Installation of lamps above 500 lumens should always be in dark night sky friendly fixtures that prevent upward light
- Switch lights off when not needed, use proximity sensors and timed circuits
- Light to the appropriate illuminance, do not needlessly over-light
- Avoid bright white and cooler temperature LED's of over 3000 Kelvin
- Install fixtures at the lowest possible height to achieve lighting levels
- Extinguish or dim external lighting after 2300 hours (curfew time)

Within buildings:

- Use and shut curtains and blinds at night
- Limit the size of picture windows, or add louvers to reduce the extent of night time illumination, where these are visible from beyond the site
- In new builds and replacement buildings, recess and shield internal lighting within ceilings or walls in rooms with picture windows

Note: Lighting design should comply with the obtrusive light limitations set out in Table 5



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