

PLANNING, DESIGN, ACCESS, DRAINAGE AND GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STATEMENT

FULL PLANNING APPLICATION FOR VIRGINIA PARK LOCAL CENTRE DEVELOPMENT

1 Introduction

This Planning, Design and Access and Green Infrastructure Statement has been prepared by Highlight Planning on behalf of GHR Developments Ltd. It supports a full application for the construction of the Virginia Park Local Centre, comprising commercial floorspace at ground level and 18 affordable apartments above, together with access, parking, servicing, cycle and refuse storage, landscaping, drainage and associated works.

1.1 Proposed development

Applicant	GHR Developments Ltd
Application	Standalone full planning application
Use	Mixed-use local centre: commercial (A1/A2/A3/D1) ground floor with apartments above
Amount	480 m ² commercial floorspace and 18 apartments
Housing mix	12 × one-bedroom apartments and 6 × two-bedroom apartments
Tenure/quality	100% social rent; RSL management; designed to WDQR standards
Access/parking	5.5 m access road, new 2 m footway, 16 residential spaces and 32 shared spaces

1.2 Site and surroundings

The application site occupies the local-centre parcel within the wider Virginia Park development in Caerphilly. It lies immediately south of Caerphilly Leisure Centre, east of Small Meadow Court and close to the former golf-club clubhouse, now in use as a youth centre. The approved Virginia Park residential phases extend to the east and south, and the rugby ground lies to the west.

The parcel comprises the former driving-range buildings and associated car park. Those buildings have been demolished. The application therefore reuses previously developed land within the settlement and within a parcel long identified for development as the neighbourhood local centre.

The site is generally level, with a gentle fall to the south-east. Its context is transitional: established leisure and youth facilities to the north-west, completed housing at Small Meadow Court, and the emerging residential neighbourhood beyond. This makes the parcel an appropriate focus for local services, activity and tenure-diverse housing.



Figure 1 Existing site plan and immediate context. Source: C2J Architects, AL(00)11

2 Planning history and consenting route

The following history has been checked against Caerphilly County Borough Council's planning register. It demonstrates a consistent planning strategy: a local centre forming part of a new neighbourhood, served by a distinct access beside the leisure centre, with residential phases delivered around it.

Reference	Decision	Proposal and relevance
17/0804/OUT	Granted 5 Dec 2019	Up to 350 homes, open space, a local centre and community building, new vehicular/cycle/pedestrian accesses and associated works; access approved. The foundation permission for the site.
21/0477/RM	Granted 16 Mar 2022	Phase 1 reserved matters for 174 homes and associated infrastructure.
21/1129/LA	Granted 23 Jun 2022	Change of use of the former clubhouse to a youth centre and office. This confirms the established community use directly benefiting from the proposed footway.
24/0393/NCC	Granted 25 Mar 2025	Extension of the period for submitting reserved matters under 17/0804/OUT.
24/0882/NMA	Granted 14 Apr 2025	Non-material amendments to the outline conditions, retaining general accordance with the approved Access and Movement Plan and wider framework.
25/0464/RM	Granted 12 Sep 2025	Revised Phase 1 details for 174 homes and associated works.
24/0416/RM	Granted 15 May 2026	Phase 2 reserved matters for 163 homes, landscaping and associated works.

2.1 The local-centre access is already approved

The outline application expressly sought approval of access. The approved Access and Movement Plan 22205-9601 Rev E identifies the existing route beside Caerphilly Leisure Centre as “vehicular access to local centre and emergency access”. The outline officer report describes the same route as an emergency access which would also serve the local centre, and records no objection from the Council’s Transportation Engineering Manager subject to conditions.

The principle, location and function of the vehicle access from the leisure-centre route to the local-centre parcel are not new. They were approved through 17/0804/OUT. The full application supplies the detailed road, junction and footway design needed to deliver that approved strategy.

2.2 Standalone full application

The residential phases comprise 174 homes in Phase 1 and 163 homes in Phase 2, a total of 337. Adding the 18 apartments proposed here gives 355 homes across the wider Virginia Park land. Early correspondence considered whether the outline description and masterplan condition should be amended. Subsequent discussions with officers confirmed that the local centre should instead proceed as a standalone full application.

The application does not purport to vary or enlarge permission 17/0804/OUT. It seeks its own full permission for the local-centre parcel and its access. At the same time, the proposal remains physically and functionally compatible with the outline masterplan: it delivers the identified local centre in the identified location, uses the approved local-centre access and does not obstruct either approved residential phase. It therefore avoids practical inconsistency with continued implementation of the outline scheme.

3 Planning policy context

3.1 National policy and guidance

- Future Wales: The National Plan 2040, particularly Policy 2 (shaping urban growth and regeneration), Policy 7 (delivering affordable homes) and Policy 9 (resilient ecological networks and green infrastructure).
- Planning Policy Wales, Edition 12, including the sustainable-places and placemaking outcomes, preference for efficient reuse of previously developed land, sustainable transport hierarchy, green-infrastructure requirement, step-wise approach and net benefit for biodiversity.
- TAN 2: Planning and Affordable Housing; TAN 5: Nature Conservation and Planning; TAN 12: Design; TAN 15: Development, Flooding and Coastal Erosion (March 2025); TAN 18: Transport; and TAN 23: Economic Development.
- Welsh Development Quality Requirements 2021: Creating Beautiful Homes and Places, which establish minimum functional quality standards for new general-needs affordable homes.

3.2 Development plan

Future Wales and the adopted Caerphilly County Borough Local Development Plan form the development plan. The site lies within the Caerphilly settlement boundary and the Southern Connections Corridor. Caerphilly is a Principal Town and the highest-order settlement in the LDP hierarchy. The proposal is therefore directed to the borough’s most sustainable spatial tier.

- SP3: Development Strategy in the Southern Connections Corridor—supports previously developed land, efficient use of infrastructure and strengthened social and economic function.
- SP4: Settlement Strategy; SP5: Settlement Boundaries; SP6: Place Making; and SP7: Planning Obligations.

- SP10: Conservation of Natural Heritage; SP14: Total Housing Requirements; SP15: Affordable Housing Target; SP17: Promoting Commercial Development; and SP21: Parking Standards.
- CW1: Sustainable Transport, Accessibility and Social Inclusion; CW2: Amenity; CW3: Design Considerations—Highways; CW4: Natural Heritage Protection; CW5: Protection of the Water Environment; CW6: Trees, Woodland and Hedgerow Protection; CW11: Affordable Housing Planning Obligation; CW14: Use Class Restrictions—Retail; and CW15: General Locational Constraints.

3.3 Emerging plan and supplementary guidance

The Second Replacement LDP is at the Preferred Options / Pre-Deposit stage and can carry only the weight appropriate to its preparation and unresolved representations. Its direction nevertheless reinforces the proposal: compact growth, placemaking, green and blue infrastructure, affordable housing, sustainable transport and modal shift. Relevant themes include Preferred Strategy policies PS2, PS3, PS6, PS8, PS9, PS12, PS13, PS14, PS15 and PS16.

The Council's Affordable Housing Obligations SPG, Car Parking Standards SPG and Building Better Places to Live SPG are also material. The design has been developed with those standards in mind, alongside the more recent national placemaking, biodiversity and flood-risk requirements.

4 Design and access statement

The design creates a legible mixed-use landmark at the point where the completed and emerging parts of Virginia Park meet the leisure and youth facilities. It combines an active ground floor with efficient affordable housing above, while separating residential access, commercial servicing and refuse movements.

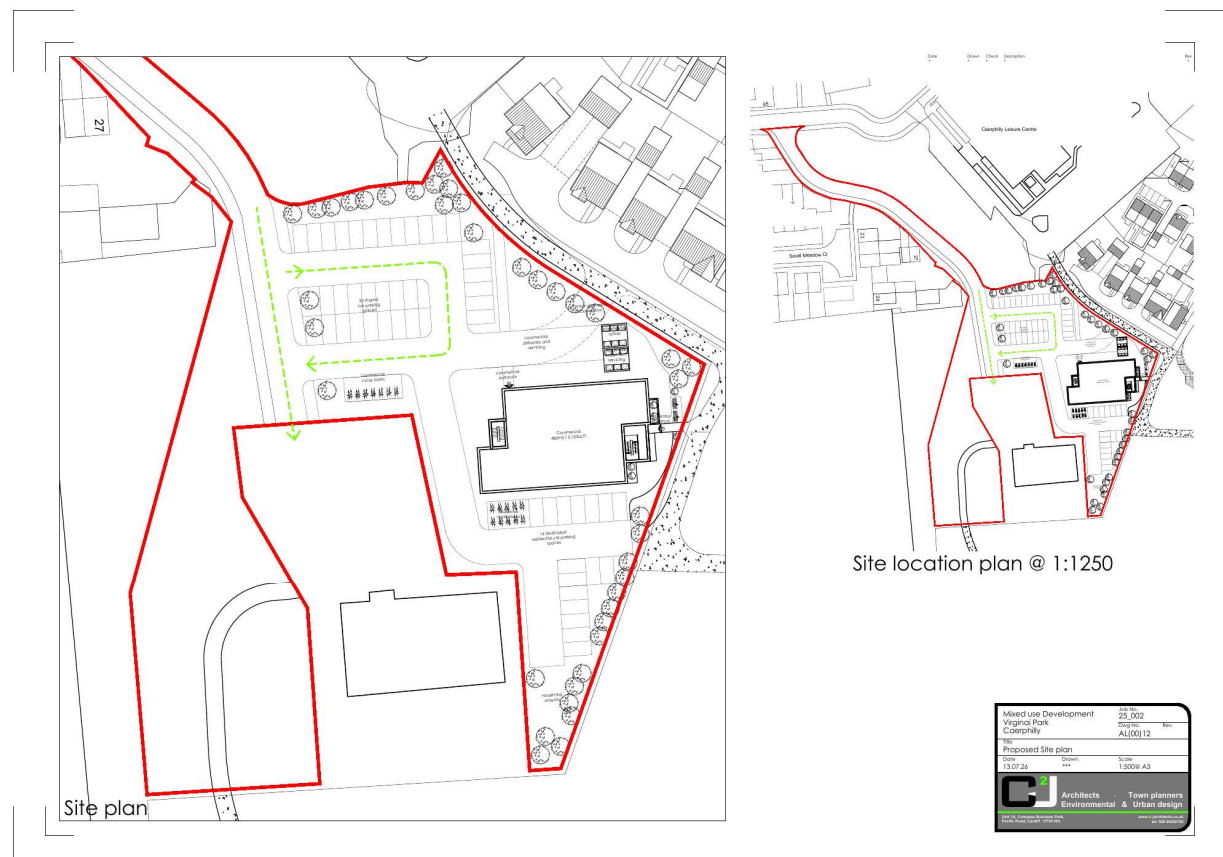


Figure 2 Proposed site plan. Source: C2J Architects, AL(00)12.

4.1 Use and amount

The ground floor provides 480 m² (approximately 5,150 sq ft) of commercial local-centre floorspace. A flexible A1/A2/A3/D1 use is proposed for the commercial ground floor to allow flexibility and adaptability dependent on occupier interest and demand. The upper three floors each contain six apartments, producing 18 homes in total.

Home type	Number	Indicative area	Tenure / standard
One-bedroom apartment	12	50 m ²	Social rent / WDQR 2021
Two-bedroom apartment	6	63 m ²	Social rent / WDQR 2021
Total	18	—	100% social rent

4.2 Layout and movement

- A principal glazed commercial frontage and canopy address the local-centre arrival space and make the ground-floor use visible and inviting.
- The main residential entrance is distinct from the commercial entrance, giving residents a secure, legible address and direct access to the lift/stair core.
- Six homes on each upper floor are arranged around a compact central core. Corner and projecting windows provide varied outlook and passive surveillance.
- Sixteen residential parking spaces are grouped close to the residential entrance; 32 shared spaces serve the commercial/local-centre function.
- Commercial deliveries, residential and commercial refuse stores, and servicing areas are clearly identified and separated from the principal pedestrian entrances.
- Dedicated residential and commercial cycle stores support everyday active travel.
- Landscaped resident amenity space and perimeter planting soften the parking areas and create usable outdoor space.



Figure 3 Typical upper-floor plan: four one-bedroom and two two-bedroom homes per floor. Source: C2J Architects, AL(00)14.

4.3 Scale and massing

The building is four storeys overall: a commercial ground floor and three residential storeys. Its apparent scale is reduced by a composition of staggered volumes, upper-level setbacks, contrasting cladding and lower elements at the edges. The massing marks the local centre without presenting a single monolithic block.

The height is appropriate to the building's neighbourhood-centre role and is balanced by generous separation from existing homes, surrounding roads and landscape. Active ground-floor glazing and canopies retain a human scale at the pedestrian level.

4.4 Appearance and materials

Warm buff/brown brick provides the principal material and relates to the surrounding residential development. Dark standing-seam metal cladding distinguishes the upper and recessed elements. Deep window reveals, projecting bays, textured brick panels and changes in plane add depth and rhythm. Dark window frames, slender canopy supports and a simple parapet line give the building a contemporary, durable character suited to a civic local-centre position.

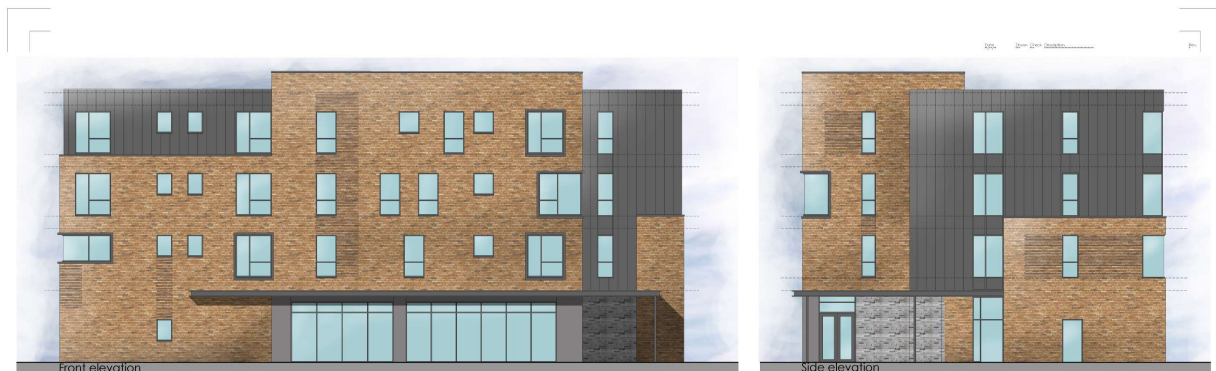


Figure 4 Proposed elevations and material composition. Source: C2J Architects, AL(00)17.



Figure 5 Rear arrival, parking and residential entrance. Illustrative CGI.

4.5 Inclusive access and safety

The approach is founded on simple, direct and overlooked routes. The residential and commercial entrances are step-free from the adjoining paved areas; upper floors are served by a lift and stair core. Final gradients, thresholds, door clearances, lighting, tactile information and accessible parking provision will be coordinated through detailed design to meet Building Regulations, WDQR 2021 and Equality Act duties.

The scheme places windows and active entrances towards movement routes and parking, supporting natural surveillance. Refuse and service areas remain convenient but do not dominate the frontage. Landscape design will maintain sightlines at entrances and along the footway, using low planting where visibility is important.



Figure 6 Step-free entrance frontage, canopy and planting. Illustrative CGI.5 Planning assessment

5 Planning Assessment

5.1 Principle and local-centre delivery

The site lies within the settlement boundary of a Principal Town and on previously developed land. The principle of the local centre was established through 17/0804/OUT. The proposal therefore accords with the spatial strategy and makes efficient use of land and infrastructure already committed to development.

The mixed-use form materially improves deliverability. Eighteen occupied homes above the ground floor support day-to-day footfall, expenditure and natural surveillance. The commercial frontage gives the growing Virginia Park community a visible focus and reduces the need for every local trip to be made outside the neighbourhood. The residential component does not displace the local-centre use; it helps secure and sustain it.

5.2 Affordable housing and local need

All 18 apartments will be affordable homes for social rent, managed by a Registered Social Landlord. They will be delivered in addition to the 7.14% affordable-housing requirement agreed through the outline permission. The proposal is therefore a genuine uplift in both the number and proportion of affordable homes across Virginia Park.

The Council's April 2024 Local Housing Market Assessment identifies a net need for 218 affordable homes per year over the first five years: 160 social-rented homes and 58 intermediate homes. Within the social-rented requirement, one-bedroom homes form by far the largest component (138 per year), alongside a need for two-bedroom homes. The proposed 12 one-bedroom and 6 two-bedroom apartments therefore respond directly to the type and tenure of need identified by the Council.

That modelled annual need is reinforced by the live register. The Council's Corporate Plan reports 6,223 people on the Common Housing Register as at January 2026. Against that context, 18 secure social-rented homes are a substantial public benefit. Their location beside planned services, leisure provision and a youth facility is particularly suitable for households who may have lower access to a private car.

The homes are designed to WDQR 2021, including the objectives of high-quality, flexible, secure and energy-efficient accommodation. The 50 m² one-bedroom and 63 m² two-bedroom formats create practical general-needs homes.

5.3 Transport capacity and trip generation

The approved residential phases total 337 homes. With the 18 local-centre apartments the wider number is 355. The Transport Assessment supporting the outline application included a sensitivity test for a site capacity of up to 420 homes. The present combined number is therefore 65 homes—approximately 15.5%—below the tested scenario.

In addition, social-rented apartments in an accessible mixed-use location are typically associated with lower car ownership than an equivalent number of open-market family houses. The proposal is consequently not expected to generate impacts approaching the worst-case outline sensitivity.

The parking layout provides 16 dedicated residential spaces (0.89 spaces per home), 32 shared local-centre spaces and separate cycle stores. This strikes a proportionate balance between operational demand and the national objective of avoiding car-dominated development. Final management, accessible-bay and electric-vehicle details can be secured through the application's transport and detailed-design information.

5.4 Direct access and youth-centre betterment

The detailed access design retains a 5.5 m carriageway and introduces a continuous 2 m footway on its western side. Minor changes at the junction mouth provide a 5 m western radius while retaining the eastern radius. Part of the upper footway lies within the existing carriageway/adopted-highway area; the remainder lies within Council land and the existing access-road corridor.

The additional footway is a clear betterment over the outline arrangement. It separates pedestrians from vehicles along the direct route and connects with the existing footway near the youth centre. Its benefit is therefore shared: residents, customers and staff gain a direct active-travel route to the local centre, while children, young people, families and staff visiting the existing youth centre gain a safer and more legible walking connection.

A possible pedestrian connection through Phase 2 remains shown for network permeability, but the application does not rely on it as the primary route. The direct leisure-centre access allows the local centre and public footway benefit to come forward independently of Phase 2 build-out and occupation timescales.

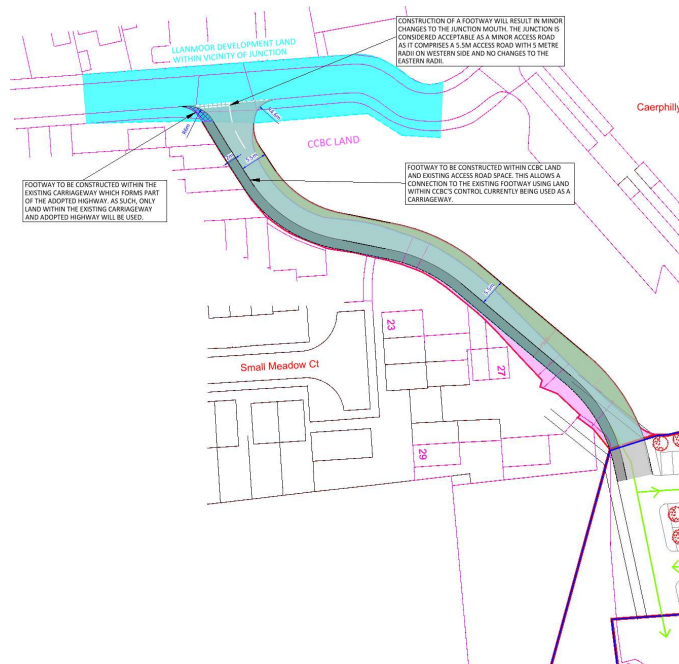


Figure 7 Indicative 5.5 m access road and 2 m western footway within the existing route. Source: Apex Transport Planning, C25112-ATP-DR-TP-004 P02.

5.5 Residential and neighbouring amenity

The building's compact footprint, set-backs and varied massing provide appropriate separation from existing and approved homes. Windows are arranged to secure outlook and surveillance without creating an unacceptable direct relationship. The local-centre use is positioned and serviced so that deliveries and refuse are distinct from principal residential entrances.

The site has always been allocated within the outline scheme for a local centre, so a degree of activity is an anticipated part of the neighbourhood. Conditions can appropriately control delivery hours, external plant, lighting and any future commercial extraction equipment. With those normal controls, the mixed use is compatible with the surrounding residential and community context under policy CW2.

5.6 Flood risk and drainage statement

The site lies mainly within Flood Zone 2 on the Flood Map for Planning owing to overland flow associated with the Nant yr Aber. Under TAN 15 the commercial ground floor is less vulnerable and the apartments are highly vulnerable. Crucially, no residential accommodation is proposed at ground-floor level, consistent with TAN 15 guidance for redevelopment of previously developed land in Flood Zone 2.

JBA's site-specific 2024 hydraulic modelling found very shallow water across the development platform: typical depths below 30 mm in the 1% annual-probability plus climate-change event and below 50 mm in the 0.1% event, with peak depths of 15 mm and 30 mm respectively where built development and infrastructure are proposed. A finished-floor uplift of at least 100 mm would place the building above the modelled 0.1% plus climate-change flood level without increasing third-party risk.

The modelling identifies a localised depression on the north-west access route, outside the building platform, with greater depths.

Surface water will be managed through a sustainable drainage scheme agreed with the SuDS Approval Body. The design should mimic natural drainage, control discharge at source and use planted components where practicable so drainage contributes to biodiversity, amenity and climate resilience as well as hydraulic performance.

6 Green Infrastructure Statement

Planning Policy Wales requires a proportionate Green Infrastructure Statement with all planning applications. This section records the site's green-infrastructure context, applies the step-wise approach and identifies how the proposal can secure a net benefit for biodiversity and ecosystem resilience.

6.1 Baseline and opportunities

The development parcel is previously developed land comprising the site of former driving-range buildings and car parking. It is not an intact semi-natural habitat parcel. Its main opportunities arise from converting hard and disturbed surfaces into a connected network of planted edges, resident amenity, tree canopy and sustainable drainage, linked to the wider Virginia Park landscape framework.

- Retain and connect with green space and planting around the parcel and wider Virginia Park masterplan.
- Create new native tree and shrub structure around parking, boundaries and pedestrian routes.
- Use diverse, pollinator-friendly groundcover and herbaceous planting to provide seasonal resources and visual quality.
- Combine surface-water management with planted SuDS components where technically appropriate.
- Integrate durable bird and bat features into the building and provide long-term landscape establishment and management.

6.2 Step-wise approach

Step	Design response	Outcome / commitment
1 Avoid	Reuse the former buildings/car-park parcel and keep the mixed uses in one compact footprint.	Avoids taking a separate greenfield housing parcel and focuses works on land already committed to development.
2 Minimise	Concentrate parking and servicing, maintain planted margins, protect retained features and control construction.	Limits fragmentation, lighting spill, soil damage and unnecessary vegetation loss.
3 Mitigate / restore	Provide native trees and shrubs, pollinator planting, landscaped amenity, soil improvement and planted SuDS.	Restores habitat structure and ecosystem services on currently hard/disturbed land.
4 Compensate	Not required in this instance due to limited biodiversity value of site.	Compensation is a last resort and must be additional, deliverable and managed. Not required in this instance.
5 Enhance	Integral bird/bat features, increased canopy, diverse planting, connected routes and long-term aftercare.	Secures a measurable net benefit for biodiversity and a more resilient green-infrastructure network.

6.3 Landscape, biodiversity and management

The illustrative design uses tree planting to define parking and soften the building, with lower planting around entrances and cycle stands. The final landscape schedule (to be agreed via condition) will prioritise locally appropriate native trees and shrubs, supplemented by climate-resilient and pollinator-rich ornamental species where these improve year-round performance. Species selection will maintain highway sightlines and avoid conflict with drainage, utilities and building maintenance.

A proportionate ecological specification (to be agreed via condition) will confirm the number, type and location of bird and bat features; construction safeguards; soil handling; planting establishment; replacement of failed stock; and a long-term management regime. External lighting should be warm-spectrum, directional and limited to operational requirements, protecting planted margins and flight routes from unnecessary spill.

SuDS features should be designed as multi-functional green infrastructure wherever ground and drainage constraints allow. Rain gardens, tree pits, filter strips and permeable surfaces can intercept runoff, improve water quality, add habitat and reduce summer heat. The drainage and landscape drawings will be coordinated so these functions reinforce one another.



Figure 8 Landscaped edge, resident route and cycle stands. Illustrative CGI.

6.4 Green-infrastructure conclusion

The site comprises a low-value, previously developed parcel and the proposal introduces new tree canopy, layered planting, amenity space, sustainable drainage potential and building-integrated habitat. With the final ecology, planting, lighting and management details secured, it will leave biodiversity and ecosystem resilience in a demonstrably better state than the baseline and will connect visually and functionally with the wider Virginia Park green network.

7 Planning balance and conclusions

The development plan directs growth to sustainable settlements, supports efficient reuse of previously developed land, requires high-quality placemaking and seeks significantly more affordable housing. The proposal meets each of those objectives. It delivers the local centre already planned for Virginia Park, secures new social-rented homes above it, and completes the access strategy approved at outline stage.

7.1 Principal benefits

- Delivery of the approved Virginia Park local-centre function through 480 m² of active commercial floorspace.

- Eighteen additional social-rented homes, over and above the 7.14% outline requirement, with no substitution or double-counting.
- A need-led mix of 12 one-bedroom and 6 two-bedroom apartments designed to WDQR 2021 and managed by a Registered Social Landlord.
- Efficient brownfield redevelopment within Caerphilly's settlement boundary and highest-order settlement tier.
- Use of the local-centre vehicle access already approved by 17/0804/OUT, with detailed road and junction works.
- A new 2 m segregated footway giving a direct safety and accessibility benefit to the local centre and the existing youth centre.
- Transport demand well within the outline Transport Assessment's 420-home sensitivity test.
- A contemporary, tenure-neutral building with active frontage, natural surveillance and clearly separated entrances and servicing.
- New planting, SuDS opportunities and building-integrated habitat delivering a net biodiversity and green-infrastructure gain.

7.2 Overall conclusion

The scheme is justified by the development plan, the extant Virginia Park planning framework, the Council's affordable-housing evidence and its own design, transport and green-infrastructure merits.

The local-centre use and vehicular access from the leisure-centre route are already approved in principle. The additional segregated footway improves that arrangement and extends its benefit to the youth centre. The 18 apartments take the wider Virginia Park total to 355, comfortably below the 420-home transport sensitivity, and all are social rented in direct response to acute local need.

The proposal is sustainable development with substantial social, economic, placemaking, accessibility and biodiversity benefits. Full planning permission should be granted, subject to the normal detailed conditions and completion of any necessary property/highway arrangements.