

**R I C H A R D S**  
**M O O R E H E A D & L A I N G L T D**

**Proposed Holiday Park at  
Cwmhafren Field  
Ael Y Bryn, Aberhafesp, Newtown  
Powys**

**Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA)**

for

**MR J WOOSNAM**

May 2020

Ref

**RML Ref 3134**



# R I C H A R D S

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P L A N N I N G | L A N D S C A P E | E N V I R O N M E N T

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## CONTENTS

1. Introduction
2. Planning Policy
3. Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) Methodology
4. The Proposed Development
5. Baseline Conditions
6. Landscape and Visual Appraisal
7. Summary and Conclusions

### Figures

Figure 1 – Location Plan

Figure 2 – Landform

Figure 3 – Land Cover

Figure 4 – Landscape Designations

Figure 5 – Zone of Theoretical Visibility

Figure 6 – Location of Illustrative Viewpoints

### Appendices

A – Powys County Council Letter Reference: 20/0002/PRE

B – Landscape and Visual Appraisal – Methodology

C – Illustrative Viewpoints

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA)

1.1.1 This document is a Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) that describes the likely landscape and visual effects of a proposed holiday park on land at Ael-y-Bryn, Aberhafesp, Newtown, Powys SY16 3HR. The development proposals are for a new tourist development of a holiday park, the creation of vehicular access to the site, and the installation of all services and infrastructure on agricultural land off the B4568 between the village of Caersws and town of Newtown north of the River Severn.

1.1.2 Preliminary enquiries have been made with Powys County Council in March 2020 (Ref 20/0002/PRE) regarding the proposed development, a copy of the correspondence is in Appendix A of this LVA. The preliminary enquiries were based upon a proposed development presented as a sketch proposal by Mr C Wozencraft. In the subsequent correspondence from Powys CC the letter states that: -

*“On the basis of the information provided, Officers are satisfied that the principle of development is fundamentally acceptable subject to all other material considerations being satisfied”.<sup>1</sup>*

1.1.3 The correspondence makes reference to landscape and specifically Policy DM4 of the Powys Local Development Plan (2018) and the Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) on Landscape. It states that given the proposed location of the development *“officers would consider that a baseline landscape and visual impact assessment should be undertaken in support of LDP Policy DM4.”* It also states that *“Landscape planting should be considered for the proposed site along with the access road to ensure that the development is well screened to help assimilate it within the open countryside”.*

1.1.4 The Powys CC SPG Landscape<sup>2</sup> sets out a step by step process for showing how to implement Policy DM4 for development proposals outside settlements and within the open countryside. It refers to two types of assessment, an informal assessment and also a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment/Appraisal. The latter is usually required as part of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) under the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Wales) Regulations 2017.

1.1.5 It has yet to be formally determined by the Local Planning Authority (LPA) if an EIA is required. The preliminary enquiries made with the LPA and subsequent correspondence, do not refer to the need for an EIA. The correspondence also refers to the indicative layout plan and that the pre-application advice was sought for a small section of the field that would be classed as a minor development. Therefore, this LVA is classified as an informal assessment and not a full LVIA that would be required as part of a full EIA. It should be noted however, that as it stands, the proposed

<sup>1</sup> Appendix A – Letter from Powys CC to Mr Chris Wozencraft Ref: 20/0002/PRE dated 6<sup>th</sup> March 2020.

<sup>2</sup> Powys Local Development Plan (2011-2026) Supplementary Planning Guidance Landscape Adopted April 2019

development could be considered to fall within the threshold of Schedule 2 Development 12. Tourism and Leisure (e) Permanent camp sites and caravan sites – where the area of the development exceeds 1 hectare). However, this is for the LPA to determine the need for EIA or otherwise.

<b>Table 1: Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Wales) Regulations 2017 – Schedule 2 Development</b>	
<i>12 Tourism and leisure</i>	
(a) Ski-runs, ski-lifts and cable-cars and associated developments;	(i) The area of the works exceeds 1 hectare; or (ii) the height of any building or other structure exceeds 15 metres.
(b) Marinas;	The area of the enclosed water surface exceeds 1,000 square metres
(c) Holiday villages and hotel complexes outside urban areas and associated developments.  (d) Theme parks;	The area of the development exceeds 0.5 hectare.
(e) Permanent camp sites and caravan sites;	The area of the development exceeds 1 hectare
(f) Golf courses and associated developments.	The area of the development exceeds 1 hectare.

1.1.2 The LVA has been undertaken by a Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute in accordance with the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (Third Edition 2013) published by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment. The DMRB<sup>3</sup> has also been referred to and used in the preparation of the methodology. The methodology for the appraisal is set out in Appendix B of this report.

1.1.3 Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) is defined in the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Assessment<sup>4</sup> (GLVIA) as a;

*“tool used to identify and assess the significance of and the effects of change resulting from development on both the landscape as an environmental resource in its own right and on people’s views and visual amenity”.*

1.1.4 The GLVIA guidance also refers to the European Landscape Convention (ELC) and its definition of a landscape as *“Landscape is an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors”.*

<sup>3</sup> DMRB LA 107 Landscape and visual effects and Interim Advice Note 135/10 (W)

<sup>4</sup> “Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment” –Third Edition by The Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment.

1.1.5 LVA may be carried out formally as part of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) or informally as is the case here in this report, as a contribution to the appraisal of development proposals and planning applications. The principles and processes of LVIA can be used to assist in the appraisal of development and changes in land use that fall outside the requirements of the EIA Directive and Regulations.

## 1.2 The proposed development site (refer to Figure 1)

1.2.1 The site is located on agricultural land off the B4568 approximately 6 kilometres west of Newtown and 1.5 kilometres north-east east of Caersws and between the settlements of Llanwnnog (to the west) and Aberhafesp (to the east). The River Severn valley and flood plain lie approximately 1 kilometre to the south.

1.2.2 The proposed development site boundary covers an area of approximately 9 hectares and lies north of the B4568 opposite the farmhouse and property Ael-y-Bryn. The site is roughly square in shape with the northern boundary defined by woodland plantation and the southern boundary defined by the A4568. To the west the site area is defined by an existing field boundary with hedgerow and some woodland plantation and to the east by a steep incised river valley and ancient semi natural woodland on the valley sides.

1.2.3 A full description of the proposed development is set out in Chapter 4.



## 2 PLANNING POLICY

### 2.1 National Planning Policy

#### ***National Planning Policy: Planning Policy Wales (PPW) (10<sup>th</sup> Edition)***

- 2.1.1 PPW aims to deliver the vision of Wales as set out in the Well-being of Future Generations Act and plays a significant role in promoting the improvement of well-being as defined by the statutory well-being goals.

*“The primary objective of PPW is to ensure that the planning system contributes towards the delivery of sustainable development and improves the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, as required by the Planning (Wales) Act 2015, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and other key legislation. A well functioning planning system is fundamental for sustainable development and achieving sustainable places.”*  
Planning Policy Wales 10<sup>th</sup> Edition para 1.2

- 2.1.2 Planning Policy Wales (PPW) sets out the land use planning policies of the Welsh Government. It is supplemented by a series of Technical Advice Notes (TANs), Welsh Government Circulars, and policy clarification letters, which together with PPW provide the national planning policy framework for Wales.

- 2.1.3 Landscape policy considerations and guidance are included in Planning Policy Wales (PPW) Edition 10 (December 2018) under the theme “Distinctive and Natural Places”. PPW identifies that places which are distinctive and natural, can contribute to the seven goals of the Well-Being of Future Generations Act. It recognises the contribution that landscape can make to the seven goals and that through collaboration, landscapes can be protected and enhanced as well as achieving well-being through placemaking and creating as ‘sense of place’.

*“Individual places can take many forms and interpretation of what makes a good place will vary. Each place will have its own unique characteristics, history and identity, based on how people have and will interact with the landscape and townscape. This ‘sense of place’ varies, from the rural countryside which provides an economic and environmental base for agriculture and tourism to thrive, to urban areas which are continually evolving and providing the focus for major social and economic development.”*  
Planning Policy Wales 10<sup>th</sup> Edition para 2.4

#### ***Technical Advice Notes (TAN’s)***

- 2.1.4 TAN’s relevant to the LVA and the environmental design of the proposed development scheme include the following;
- TAN 5 – Nature Conservation and Planning;
  - TAN 6 – Planning for Sustainable Rural Communities;
  - TAN 11 – Noise;
  - TAN 12 – Design;
  - TAN 13 – Tourism;
  - TAN 18 – Transport
  - TAN 23 – Economic Development

## 2.2 Local Planning Policy: Powys Local Development Plan (2018)

2.1.1 Preliminary discussions have been had with Powys LPA as referred to in the introduction. The subsequent correspondence from Powys LPA lists the national planning policies and guidance considered relevant to the proposed development together with policies of the Powys Local Development Plan (2018) and other legislative considerations. The local planning policies highlighted by the local planning authority following the preliminary discussions are as follows: -

- a) SP7 – Safeguarding of Strategic Resources and Assets;
- b) DM1 – Planning Obligations;
- c) DM2 – The Natural Environment;
- d) DM4 – Landscape; and
- e) DM5 – Development and Flood Risk.

### **Policy DM4 – Landscape**

2.1.2 The most relevant local planning policy to this landscape and visual appraisal is Policy DM4 Landscape. The Policy states that:

*Proposals for new development outside the Towns, Large Villages, Small Villages and Rural Settlements defined in the Settlement Hierarchy must not, individually or cumulatively, have an unacceptable adverse effect, on the valued characteristics and qualities of the Powys landscape. All proposals will need to:*

*1. Be appropriate and sensitive in terms of integration, siting, scale and design to the characteristics and qualities of the landscape including its: topography; development pattern and features; historical and ecological qualities; open views; and tranquillity; and*

*2. Have regard to LANDMAP, Registered Historic Landscapes, adjacent protected landscapes (National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty) and the visual amenity enjoyed by users of both Powys landscapes and adjoining areas.*

*Proposals which are likely to have a significant impact on the landscape and/or visual amenity will require a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment to be undertaken.*

### **Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) Landscape – Adopted April 2019**

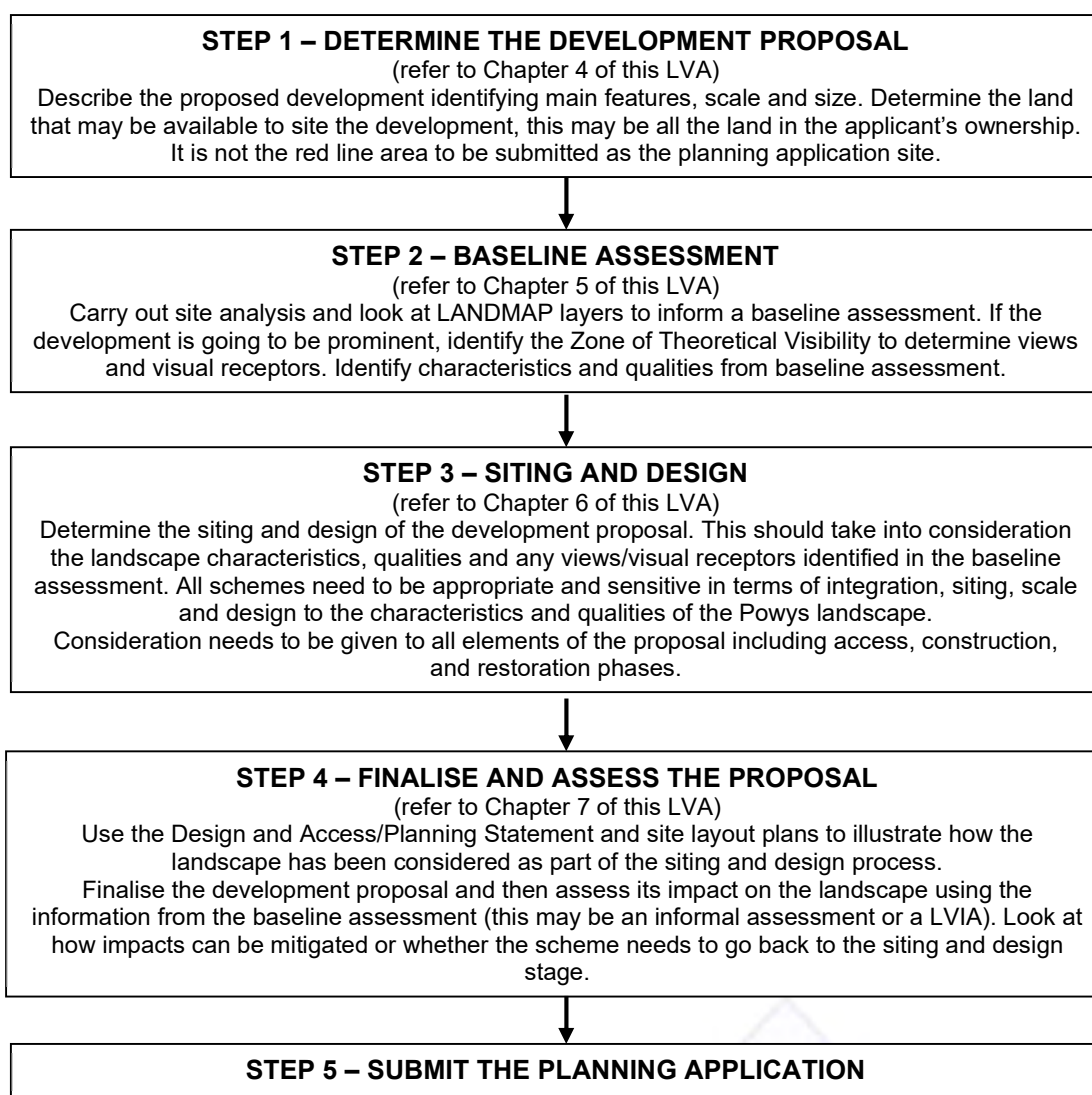
2.1.3 Policy DM4 refers to the Powys County Council SPG Landscape and this SPG has been referred to and followed in the preparation of this landscape and visual appraisal as described in the following Chapter 3.



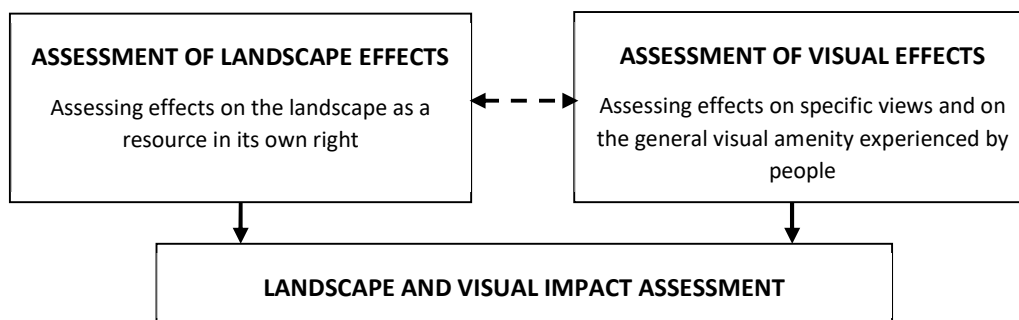
### 3 Landscape and Visual Appraisal Methodology

#### 3.1 Introduction to the LVA Methodology (refer to Appendix B)

- 3.1.1 The primary aim of this LVA, is to undertake a baseline and visual impact assessment in support of Powys LDP policy DM4 as requested by Powys CC following preliminary enquiries regarding the proposed development in March 2020 (refer to Appendix A). In preparing the LVA, the steps set out in “Powys LDP Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) – Landscape” has been followed and is been extracted from the SPG Landscape below: -



- 3.1.2 The LVA has also been undertaken with reference to 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (Third Edition 2013)' by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment. In addition, reference has also been made to the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges LA 107 Landscape effects and the IAN 135/10 (W) Landscape and Visual Effects Assessment (Wales Only). The latter has been superseded by LA 107 in 2019 but the guidance remains useful and has influenced the basis for the methodology.
- 3.1.3 An assessment of the existing baseline conditions will provide a record at a point in time against which potential landscape and visual impacts can be assessed. It is generally accepted that the two criteria that combine to determine the significance of the effect are the scale or magnitude of impact and the sensitivity of the location/ receptor.
- 3.1.4 The assessment of landscape and visual effects are two separate but related processes. Landscape and visual appraisals address two separate but related issues and should be clearly distinguished between each other as highlighted below:
- Assessment of Landscape Effects: assessing effects on the landscape as a resource in its own right; and
  - Assessment of Visual Effects: assessing visual effects on specific views and on the general visual amenity experienced by people.



- 3.1.5 Details of the methodology and significance criteria used for undertaking the LVA is set out in Appendix B of this document.

## 4. DETERMINING THE DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

### 4.1 Description of the main features

4.1.1 The proposed development is for a holiday park with accommodation provided in around fifteen timber cabins and twenty static caravans. The cabins are likely to be from a reputable holiday home manufacturer such as Willerby Homes or Abi. The lodges would have pitched roofs and be finished in timber effect cladding with graphite grey UPVC windows and patio doors. Outside each lodge there would be decking for outdoor living and car parking for up to two vehicles. To the rear of each lodge would be an outdoor shed and room for gas cylinder storage.

### 4.2 Size

4.2.1 The proposed development would cover an area of approximately 4.6 hectares over one main field currently used for agricultural land and means of access off the B4568.

### 4.3 Scale

4.3.1 The proposed holiday park lodges and static caravans would be sited around the perimeter of the site in a number of clusters organised around a central field. Each lodge would measure approximately 12.8 x 6 metres and be around 3.6 metres high. The lodges would be positioned on footings that would be as close to the existing ground levels as possible and respond to the localised topography.

### 4.4 Topography

4.4.1 The topography of the site slopes at an even gradient from approximately 160 metres (AMSL) on the boundary of the north field to 145 metres along the southern boundary adjacent to the B4568.

### 4.5 Access

4.5.1 Access to the site would be off the B4568 to the north opposite the property and farmhouse Ael-y-Bryn. Visibility splays would be created to ensure clear visibility for vehicles approaching and leaving the site. The mouth of the access road would be surfaced with tarmac and appropriately signed, away from the entrance off the B4568, the access track would be surfaced with a bound/compacted stone.

4.5.2 The access track would run north along a field boundary and pass through an area of woodland plantation before entering the main field. The access track would divide into two with one arm accessing the western side of the field and the second accessing the east. The access track would be approximately 5.5 metres wide allowing two vehicles to pass each other.

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## 4.6 Utilities

- 4.6.1 The holiday park would be served by mains electricity and drinking water, gas for each holiday lodge would be provided in gas cylinders. The current proposals are for two package sewage treatment plants to manage the foul water discharge from the lodges, one for those located in the eastern section of the site and the other for those located to the west.

## 4.7 Existing Vegetation

- 4.7.1 The existing woodland to the east of the site and woodland plantations created as part of the Glastir scheme approximately 8 years ago would be protected and retained. One small section of woodland plantation would be removed for the access road and the hedgerow along the B4568 would be removed and translocated further north in order to form the required visibility splays.

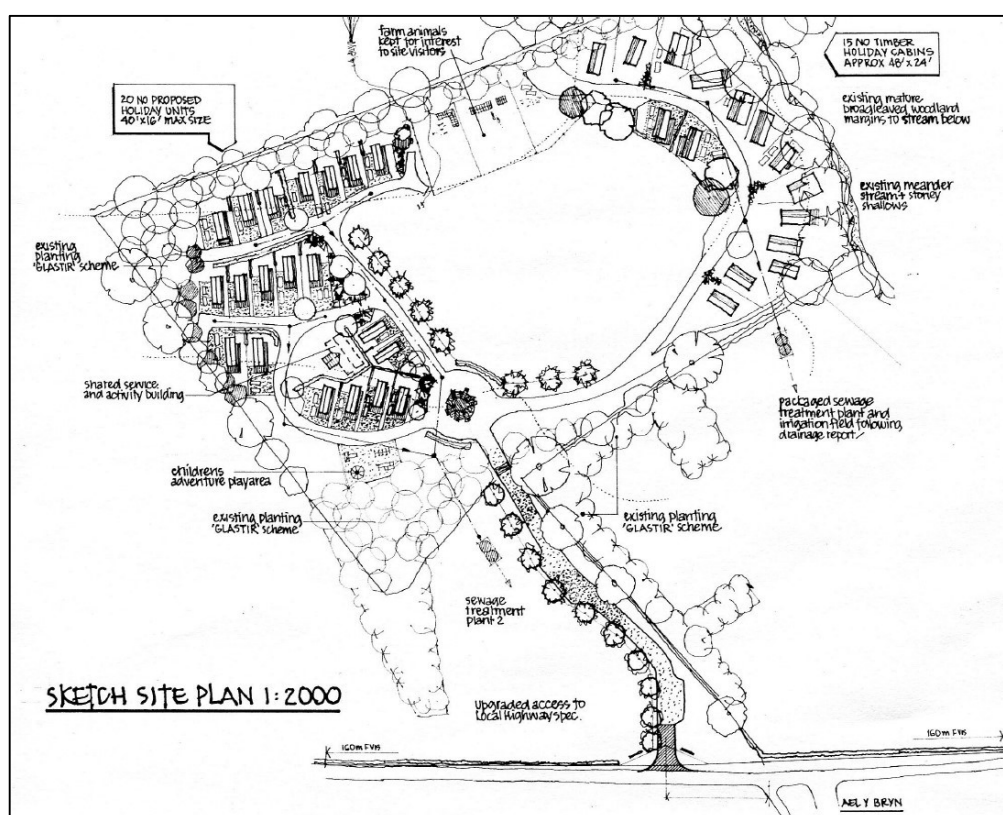


Figure 1 – Proposed Site Layout

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## 5. BASELINE ASSESSMENT

### 5.1 Landscape Baseline (refer to Figures 2 and 3)

5.1.1 The initial process in undertaking the assessment of landscape and visual effects is to establish the baseline landscape conditions. The information collated forms the basis for the assessment of landscape effects as a result of the development proposals. The assessment of the landscape baseline within the study area considers the following:

- Review of landscape designations, National and Local Authority Character Areas and Assessments including LANDMAP;
- A description of the existing landscape elements that contribute to the landscape character including physical components of the landscape such as man-made features, topography, watercourses, existing vegetation and field patterns;
- Establishing the value of the existing landscape including references to statutory and non-statutory designations, landscape quality, amenity and recreational value;
- Identification of landscape receptors that could potentially be affected by the scheme proposals.

5.1.2 The baseline landscape represents the 'Do Minimum' scenario and is defined in DMRB IAN 136/10 (W) <sup>5</sup>“as that which exists immediately prior to the start of construction of the proposed project (including existing roads and other infrastructure elements, together with any known or likely changes (other consented development proposals for instance) which will take place before the projected completion of the project.”

#### Landscape Designations (refer to Figure 4)

5.1.3 The proposed development site does not lie within a National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. There is one landscape designation (non-statutory) within the 2 kilometres of the proposed development site and three Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAM's); -

- Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest in Wales (Caersws Basin)
- Gwynfynydd Camp SAM;
- Roman Earthwork north of Caersws SAM;
- Caersws Roman Site SAM;
- Caersws Roman Fort and Vicus SAM.

<sup>5</sup> DMRB Interim Advice Note 136/10(W)



## The Caersws Basin - Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest in Wales

- 5.1.4 The Register of Historic Landscapes is a non-statutory, advisory register. Its primary aim is to provide information and raise awareness of an initial selection of the most important and significant historic landscape areas in Wales in order to aid their protection and conservation. This information is intended to help owners, Government, statutory bodies, Local Authorities, developers and all those who are involved with land management and protection to make better-informed decisions about areas on the Register. Planning Policy Wales sets out the general principles for the use of the Register in the planning process, stating that information on historic landscapes included in the Register should be taken into account by local planning authorities in preparing Local Development Plans, and in considering the implications of developments that are of such a scale that they would have more than local impact on an area on the Register.
- 5.1.5 The proposed development site lies within the Caersws Basin Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest in Wales and towards the eastern limit of the area. The area designated in 2001, encircles the town of Caersws and includes the settlements of Little London, Llandinam, Wig and Llanwnog. The area centres around Caersws and the crossing point of the River Severn and has been heavily influenced by the Roman period as described below in an extract from the Register.<sup>6</sup>

*“Topographically, the Caersws Basin presents a striking natural arena in the centre of Mid Wales. Visual prospects out of the basin are confined in almost every direction by the surrounding, seemingly unbroken, rim of low hills and ridges between about 300m and 400m above OD. The apparently enclosed but wide basin floor is essentially flat, rising only 20m in 5km, from 115m to 135m above OD, east-west. This remarkable, albeit shallow, natural arena has made the basin an area of exceptional strategic and historical importance in Wales, while the confluence of the Rivers Carno and Trannon with the Severn has also made Caersws in the centre of the basin a natural focus for communications. This was most clearly evidenced during the Roman period when a network of roads emanated from the Roman fort there, leading along the valleys and over the hills to the north. The remains of some roads are still visible in places. The combination of natural topography and evidence of man’s determination to control access and communication routes has thus created a landscape high in historic interest and integrity.*”

- 5.1.6 The Caersws Basin Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest is further divided into Historic Landscape Character Areas. The proposed development site lies within the Maesmawr character area that is described as follows: -

*“1183 Maesmawr character area. Fieldscapes predominantly of large irregular fields along the floodplain of the river Severn and its margins, some of which appears to represent enclosure of meadow land associated with the a group of high status estate centres which came into being in the 16th and 17th centuries.”*

<sup>6</sup> The Registered Landscapes of Outstanding and of Special Interest in Wales - CADW



## **Landscape Character Areas**

- 5.1.7 The landscape character of the proposed development site and surrounding area is recorded at a national, regional and local level. It forms the basis for establishing the landscape baseline. There are 48 National Landscape Character Areas (NLCA's) defined at a broad landscape scale throughout Wales. The descriptive profiles for each area highlight what distinguishes one landscape from another, with reference to their regionally distinct natural, cultural and perceptual characteristics.

### **National Landscape Character Area (NLCA) 19 Severn Valley**

- 5.1.8 The proposed development site lies within the NLCA 17 Severn Valley and also close to NLCA 17 Montgomeryshire Hills and Vales that lies to the north of the site.
- 5.1.9 The summary description of the area NLCA 19 Severn Valley describes the area as follows: -

*"This is major river valley and mid-Wales transport corridor for road, rail, and once canal. The area includes the rich farmland of the flood plain as well as valley sides. It includes the expanding towns of Welshpool and Newtown. Together with the road and rail route, the these towns create localised areas of noise and activity amidst the wider, generally quiet and rural landscapes adjacent to the north and south. A further and smaller town, Llanidloes, lies further up river, which together with Welshpool are noted for their historic townscapes. Welshpool lay at the navigable head of the Severn, and exported ore and timber. Llanidloes and Newtown were both important 19th century textile towns. The area includes hill forts, a Roman fort, Welsh and Anglo-Norman castles.*

*The area has Silurian slate, shale and mudstone bedrock, with Silurian Sandstones evident to the northern end of the character area. The broad vale was shaped by glacial action. Today the meandering course of the River Severn, (the longest in Britain) receives waters from a number of lesser rivers within this character area.*

*Land cover is predominantly lowland pastoral farmland and wetland rush pasture associated with the river, and is occasionally interspersed with broadleaf and wet woodland. There is a rich diversity of avian and flora habitats. The valley sides are often well wooded, with both deciduous woodland and coniferous plantation evident, giving a sense of containment.*

- 5.1.10 There are several references within the description that are relevant to the localised landscape character of the site and surrounding area. For example, the area is described as predominantly lowland pastoral farmland with the valley sides being well wooded with evidence of both deciduous woodland and coniferous plantation. It states that the landscape has *"a patchwork character which is formed by the interplay of woodlands and farm buildings. The area includes lush lowland pasture interspersed with rush pasture on the floodplain, and some arable land, in addition to the areas of wet woodland and a network of fields bounded by hedgerows with trees"*. This description is highly relevant and appropriate to the site and surrounding area.

## LANDMAP

5.1.11 LANDMAP is an all-Wales resource that is administered by Natural Resources Wales. It records and evaluates landscape characteristics, qualities and influences on the landscape in a nationally consistent data set. The data set is composed of five nationally consistent spatial datasets covering the following elements: -

- Geological Landscape
- Landscape Habitats
- Historic Landscape
- Cultural Landscape
- Visual and Sensory

5.1.12 Of the five datasets, the visual and sensory dataset is considered to be the most relevant to a landscape and visual appraisal, although some elements of the others can also be relevant such as the cultural landscape dataset.

5.1.13 The proposed development site lies within the following LANDMAP areas :-

Table 2 - LANDMAP five datasets				
Dataset	UID Reference	Name	Region	Classification
Geological Landscape	MNTGMGL528	Caersws	Montgomeryshire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lowland hills and valleys</li> <li>• Undulating lowland hill terrain</li> <li>• Undulating lowland hill terrain</li> </ul>
Landscape Habitats	MNTGMLH094	Not named	Montgomeryshire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dry Terrestrial Habitats</li> <li>• Grassland &amp; Marsh</li> <li>• Improved Grassland</li> </ul>
Historic Landscape	MNTGMLH820	Penbedw	Montgomeryshire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rural Environment</li> <li>• Agricultural</li> <li>• Irregular Landscapes</li> </ul>
Cultural Landscape	MNTGMCLS130	Caersws River Bowl	Montgomeryshire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lowland</li> <li>• Flat/Lowland Levels</li> <li>• Flat Open Farmland</li> </ul>
Visual and Sensory	MNTGMVS865	Caersws River Bowl	Montgomeryshire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lowland</li> <li>• Flat/Lowland Levels</li> <li>• Flat Open Farmland</li> </ul>

- 5.1.14 The proposed development site is located within the Caersws River Bowl aspect area (MNTGMVS865) as defined by LANDMAP and is characterised by *“an extensive area of lowland agricultural land - and the upper level of the River Severn (Afon Hafren) valley, enclosed by a ring of higher ground giving a 360 view of upland encircling the viewer. The area is formed by the meeting of the three valleys carrying the Afon Carno, Trannon, Cerist and amalgamation into the Afon Hafren (River Severn) hence its broad flat bowl liked shape... Transport corridors are dominant in the area with the A489(T) and A470(T) meeting at Caersws. Wide angled views prevail with open skies and mid distance views to the surround higher ground.”* The overall evaluation for the area regarding visual and sensory is moderate and the justification for this is given as follows; *“Although the area is unusual in its topography it does not possess a particularly significant aesthetic or scenic quality it is an area that is travelled through rather than a destination functional rather than aesthetic = Moderate.”*

### **Landscape Elements - Physical, Perceptual and Cultural and Social Characteristics**

- 5.1.15 Landscape elements combine and contribute to the landscape character of a particular site or wider area. They can be a combination of characteristics that are summarised in Table 3 below. These all contribute to the landscape character areas described above.
- 5.1.16 The site and surrounding area is characterised by the gently sloping pastoral land and mature oaks within the former hedgerows and nearby wooded valley. The woodland plantations implemented as part of the Glastir Woodland Creation scheme are also significant landscape elements that contribute to the wider pastoral landscape.
- 5.1.17 The property and farmhouse Ael-y-Bryn lies opposite the site and is a traditional farmhouse building in appearance with a number of outbuildings to the rear. The property has far reaching views south across the valley and floodplain of the River Severn and sits on a low crest along the B4568.
- 5.1.18 The B4568 is also a significant man-made landscape element in the area and is a particularly straight section of road where it passes the site and flanked by mature hedgerows with mature oaks for much of its length.
- 5.1.18 The steep sided river valley to the east of the site and mature woodland beyond to the east is another distinctive landscape element in the area.

### **Summary of Landscape Baseline**

- 5.1.19 LANDMAP identifies this area of rural Powys and lowland agricultural land as being of moderate value. In applying the sensitivity criteria set out in the methodology (Appendix B) the judgement concurs with LANDMAP in that the landscape is of medium sensitivity and would be able to partly accommodate change of the type proposed.

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Table 3 - Landscape Elements		
Physical Characteristics	Settlements and Built Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The site lies within a predominantly rural area with farms and farmsteads set within a largely pastoral landscape;</li> <li>Historic sites and Scheduled Ancient Monuments within the wider area indicate strong Roman influences;</li> <li>The B4568 defines the southern boundary and is a significant man-made and linear element in the area being particularly straight as it passes the site to the south.</li> </ul>
	Landform, Geology and Hydrology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Topography of site falls gently from the north at 160 metres to 145 metres along the southern boundary of the site;</li> <li>East of the site is a small but deeply incised river valley that is heavily wooded with ancient semi natural woodland</li> </ul>
	Land cover, vegetation and land use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The site is currently agricultural land and grazed by sheep on a cyclical basis;</li> <li>The northern and western boundaries of the site are defined by woodland plantation created circa 8 years ago as part of the Glastir scheme. The woodland plantations are planted with mixed deciduous woodland planted as strips and regimented blocks and form a dense screen;</li> <li>Within the plantations are several mature oaks that presumably lie on former field boundaries and are strong landscape features of the area;</li> <li>The southern boundary is defined by a hedgerow that runs along the northern verge of the B4568;</li> <li>The eastern boundary is defined by a small and deeply incised and heavily wooded river valley.</li> </ul>
Perceptual Characteristics	Scale and Appearance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The site is open and of medium scale with an open aspect to the south across the River Severn valley and floodplain;</li> <li>The site is clearly defined around the perimeter and contained by woodland plantations and existing mature woodland</li> </ul>
	Scenic Quality;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Open views from the centre and elevated southern sections of the site to the south across the River Severn Valley to hills beyond;</li> <li>Scenic quality is generally good with no visual detractors;</li> </ul>
	Tranquillity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The site is generally tranquil with little or no background noise;</li> <li>Noises include sheep and livestock and birds</li> </ul>
	Discordant/Intrusive Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Distant views towards caravan park Gelli-dywyll;</li> <li>Glimpsed views of wind turbines on hills towards the south-west</li> </ul>
	Night-time light sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Occasional traffic using the B4568.</li> </ul>
Cultural & Social Characteristics	Historic Features and Elements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The area is traditionally pastoral agricultural land;</li> <li>There is evidence of a strong Roman influence with nearby Roman Roads and Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAM's) dating back to that period.</li> </ul>
	Human Interaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The woodland plantations undertaken as part of the Glastir scheme around 2012 are evidence of human interaction;</li> <li>Farming activity in the area is the main form of human interaction.</li> </ul>

## 5.2 Visual Baseline

- 5.2.1 Baseline studies for visual effects should establish the area in which the proposed development may be visible, the different groups of people who may experience views of the development, the nature of the viewpoints where they will be affected and the nature of the views at those points.
- 5.2.2 The baseline visual conditions of the site and surrounding area have been established through a combination of desk-based studies and observations made in the field. A field visit was undertaken in May 2020.

### ***Mapping Visibility (refer to Figure 5: Zone of Theoretical Visibility)***

- 5.2.3 A Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) has been prepared using a Ordnance Survey Terrain 5 digital terrain model that plots the potential area from where the proposed development may be visible. The digital terrain model takes no account of surface obstacles or features such as buildings or vegetation. However, in this instance and as they are significant features in the localised landscape, the existing woodland to the east and the woodland plantations to the north and south have been added to the model using approximate heights estimated during the field visit.
- 5.2.4 The ZTV illustrates that there are likely to be limited views of the proposed development from the surrounding area and from sensitive visual receptors. Views from the north are screened by localised topography and woodland plantation. There may be glimpsed views of the lodge's roofs and eaves from limited locations within the fields to the north.
- 5.2.5 From the east views are screened by the existing woodland along the steeply incised river valley. There may be glimpsed views of the proposed development from the long-distance path of the Severn Way that passes the site and adjacent woodland to the east. Views would be more prevalent during the winter months when the mature trees, primarily of oak, shed their leaves.
- 5.2.6 Views to the south are contained by a combination of localised topography and hedgerows. There are views of the site from the property and farmhouse Ael-y-Bryn (owner of the proposed development site) within 1 kilometre of the site. Further south and beyond 1 kilometre of the site, the ZTV suggests that the site would theoretically be visible from the A489 and the hills and uplands to the south.
- 5.2.7 The ZTV indicates that there would be potentially more widespread views of the proposed development from the north-west, south and south west. This potentially includes sensitive receptors such as the residential properties of Llwyn-y-gog and properties on the eastern fringe of Caersws. The Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM) of Gwynfynydd also has a theoretical view of the proposed development and could affect the setting of the SAM. Users of the local road network to the south-west (B4569) south (B4568) and the west (minor road) also have theoretical views of the proposed development.
- 5.2.8 Overall the site and surrounding area is highly scenic with no significant visual detractors. Views to the south are open and expansive with distant views to the Cambrian hills. Elsewhere the views are distinctly rural, with gently sloping topography and lowland farmland with hedgerows and mature hedgerow trees.

## 6 LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL APPRAISAL

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## 6.1 Landscape Appraisal

- 6.1.1 The baseline landscape conditions indicate that the proposed development site and surrounding area do not lie within any statutorily designated landscape area but that it does lie within the Caersws Basin of Outstanding Historic Interest in Wales.
- 6.1.2 The site is currently agricultural land and the ecological value of the site is considered to be low with no evidence of protected species found during the ecological field survey.<sup>7</sup>
- 6.1.3 The landscape character of the site and surrounding area is considered by LANDMAP to be of medium sensitivity and therefore would be able to partly accommodate the change of the type proposed.
- 6.1.4 The proposed development has little adverse effects on the landscape elements that combine to create the landscape character and would be easily reversible back to agricultural land should the need arise. The topography of the site would remain largely intact apart from the formation of an access road and minor earthworks for the siting of the cabins and static caravans. The woodland to the east, an important landscape feature would be retained and unaffected by the proposed development. The woodland plantations would also be retained and protected with a small section being lost to form the access road.
- 6.1.5 The proposed development is located in one single field and contained by the existing woodland and woodland plantations. The plantations themselves are man-made features and can be seen to be an evolution of the agricultural land-use of the site and surrounding area. The proposed development is also likely to be phased, so any adverse landscape effect would likely to be incremental as the site develops to the scale that is proposed.

### **Magnitude of Change**

- 6.1.5 The resultant change to the baseline landscape as a result of the proposed development is therefore considered to represent a **negligible adverse** effect. There would be a slight loss of the existing landscape character of the site that is generally of an open and gently sloping field, and the addition of new and uncharacteristic features and elements.

### **Significance of Landscape Effects**

- 6.1.6 The resultant landscape effect combines the landscape sensitivity with the magnitude of change and is reported as significant effects. With the landscape sensitivity adjudged to be of **moderate** value and the magnitude of change as being **negligible adverse**, the overall significance of the proposed development on the landscape is considered to have a **neutral/slight adverse** effect on the landscape baseline and landscape character of the surrounding area. It would not quite fit with the character of the surrounding agricultural land and be at variance with characteristic features and elements through the introduction of cabins and static caravans into the landscape.

<sup>7</sup> Oakwood Ecology – Preliminary ecological appraisal of land at Ael-y-Bryn, Aberhafesp, Newtown, Powys SY16 3HR



## 6.2 Visual Appraisal (refer to Figures 5 and 6 and Appendix C)

6.2.1 The ZTV that has been prepared and verified in the field, indicates that the proposed development is likely to be visible from within 1 kilometre to the west and south-west. It also indicates that the development could theoretically be visible from further afield up to 2 kilometres away and from the outskirts of Caersws and to the south of the River Severn Valley. The illustrative photographs (Appendix C) demonstrate that, in reality, this is highly unlikely, and this has been further verified during the site visit.

### Visual Receptors

6.2.2 Potential visual receptors have been identified together with their sensitivity. The most sensitive visual receptors that may experience views of the proposed development are set out in the Table 4.

Table 4 - Potential Visual Receptors and their Sensitivity	
Potential Visual Receptor	Sensitivity
Users of the Severn Way long distant footpath	High
Residents of Ael-y-Bryn	High
Residential property of Llwyn-y-Gog	Medium
Non-motorised users of the B4569	Medium
Non-motorised users of the B4568	Medium

### Magnitude of Change

6.2.3 A combination of desk and field study has established that the proposed development would represent a **negligible change** in the view for all the visual receptors identified above except for the property Ael-y-Bryn and users of the Severn Way.

6.2.4 It should be noted that the property Ael-y-Bryn is currently owned by the family of the applicant Mr Jack Woosnam. The frontage of the property faces north and would have some interrupted views of the proposed development with the access road visible in the foreground. The magnitude of change to this property would therefore be considered as **moderate** as the proposed development would form a noticeable change in the view.

6.2.5 For users of the Severn Way there would be some glimpsed views of the proposed development through the woodland to the east of the site, particularly during the winter months. However, only a small part of the proposed development would form a noticeable feature or element in the view but would not alter the overall balance of the view. Therefore, the magnitude of change is considered to be **minor** to this sensitive visual receptor.

6.2.6 The illustrative photographs in Appendix C demonstrate that the other visual receptors identified in Table 4 would experience a **negligible** change in the view, particularly during the summer months when roadside vegetation and woodland plantations are in leaf.

- 6.2.7 For potential visual receptors further afield and to the west and south, it is considered that no part of the proposed development would be discernible due to distance and the intervening topography, mature trees and hedgerows and woodland plantations.

### ***Significance of Visual Effects***

- 6.2.8 The significance of visual effects is appraised by combining the visual sensitivity of the receptor with the magnitude of change likely to be experienced by the receptor. The table below summarises the anticipated visual effects of the proposed development on the visual receptors using the significance criteria set out in Appendix B.

<b>Table 5 – Significance of Visual Effects</b>			
<b>Potential Visual Receptor</b>	<b>Sensitivity</b>	<b>Magnitude of Change</b>	<b>Significance</b>
Users of the Severn Way long distant footpath	High	Minor	Slight/Moderate
Residents of Ael-y-Bryn	High	Moderate	Moderate/Large
Residential property of Llwyn-y-Gog	Medium	No change	Neutral
Non-motorised users of the B4569	Medium	No change	Neutral
Non-motorised users of the B4568 (east bound only)	Medium	Negligible	Neutral/Slight

- 6.2.9 The potential visual effects of the proposed development on nearby visual receptors is not considered to be significant. The field on which the site is located is well screened by the localised topography, nearby hedgerows, woodland and woodland plantations implemented as part of the Glastir scheme approximately eight years ago. These woodland plantations will continue to establish and mature and to further integrate the proposed development into the adjacent landscape.

## 7. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 The Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) of the proposed holiday development at Ael-y-Bryn has been undertaken based on a sketch proposal prepared on behalf of the Applicant by Mr. C. Wozencraft (refer to Figure 1 - Proposed Site Layout).
- 7.2 The LVA has identified that there would be a slight/adverse effect on the landscape character of the site and that this is primarily due to the change in use of the land from agriculture to a holiday park. Although this is considered to have slight adverse effects, these effects are localised and would not have any significant effect on the overall landscape character of the area.
- 7.3 The landscape of the surrounding areas is primarily pastoral and can be considered as being of high scenic quality and is generally tranquil. Notwithstanding these qualities, the landscape character of the area is not considered by LANDMAP to be particularly sensitive and is an area that *“does not possess a particularly significant aesthetic or scenic quality”* and *“is an area that is travelled through rather than a destination functional rather than aesthetic”*.
- 7.4 The site and surrounding area is also designated as a Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest in Wales, primarily due to the features that remain as evidence of the Roman occupation. The Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM) of the Gwynfynydd Camp lies within 1 kilometre of the site but is not considered to be directly or indirectly, nor its setting affected by the proposed development from a landscape and visual perspective.
- 7.5 The anticipated visual effects of the proposed development are not considered to be significant. The site is located in an elevated position that has extensive views to the south and south-west yet is sufficiently distant from potential visual receptors for visual effects to not be significant, or is well screened by localised topography, existing woodland and woodland plantations.
- 7.6 The proposed development incorporates additional planting around the perimeter of the site, and along the western and eastern boundary to lessen any potential views of the development from users of the local road network (B4568) and the Severn Way. The additional planting would combine with the existing woodland plantations implemented as part of the Glastir scheme, to further integrate the development into the wider landscape and provide biodiversity benefits and an attractive setting for the holiday lodges and static caravans.
- 7.7 The proposed holiday development is part of a diversification scheme proposed by the Applicant in order to provide an economic and environmental base for agriculture and tourism to thrive. The evolution of the landscape from agricultural land to a sustainable leisure and tourism development is required to ensure the livelihood of the Applicant and wider economy of the area. It does not have adverse significant landscape and visual effects on the wider landscape and is reversible so that the underlying landscape would not be affected in the long term.

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