

Proposed extension of existing Holiday Accommodation, Ty Coed, Llanidloes

LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

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mh/611

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Haire Landscape Consultants were appointed in early 2021 to assess the landscape and visual effects of the development on behalf of Mr Doug Barley
- 1.2 The assessment was carried out by Michael Haire, who is a Chartered Landscape Architect.
- 1.3 The assessment was carried out in late winter conditions in March 2021.

2. Methodology

- 2.1 The landscape and visual assessment is based on the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment *Third Edition* (Landscape Institute & Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment). This is not a prescriptive document and the assessment has been tailored to suit the scale and nature of the development.
- 2.2 Powys County Council (PCC) as the 'Competent Authority' has asked for a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment. Reference was made to the (Draft) PCC Supplementary Planning Guidance (2019).
- 2.3 This 'brief' has influenced the exact method employed by the landscape assessor. As set out in GLVIA 3rd edition (3.11) the assessment should be proportionate to the size of the development. Given the nature, extent and context of this development a relatively basic assessment was undertaken.
- 2.4 The proposals were reviewed following initial field assessments to address the issues raised by the LPA and mitigation measures proposed by the applicant. The LVIA was carried out based on these measures being implemented as part of the scheme.
- 2.5 The landscape and visual effects were assessed separately.
- 2.6 **Desk based study:** this was undertaken to establish the context of the site and an outline of the landscape character and the visual baseline.
- 2.7 The NRW LANDMAP database was consulted to establish the broader landscape context. The Visual and Sensory and Historic Landscape layers were consulted to identify any potentially important references that would not be obvious from a field visit. The comments of consultee CADW regarding the Lead Mines and Pen y Gaer camp & of the Built Heritage Officer regarding the listed buildings at Crowlwm were also considered as was the CPAT Historic Landscape Designation of the Clywedog Valley.
- 2.8 Maps and aerial photographs were consulted to confirm the 'landscape type' description identified by CPAT and in the LANDMAP database. This exercise also allowed the identification of areas from which the proposed development is likely to be visible in advance of undertaking fieldwork and the relative positions of potential receptors and screening elements.
- 2.9 The desk-based study, together with discussion with the stakeholders about the nature, extent and character of the proposed development and associated landscape mitigation together with the feedback from within the Planning Application responses allowed the **scope** of the LVIA to be established

- 2.10 **Field work:** this was undertaken to confirm the *baseline landscape character and visual baseline*. This was carried out by making field observations in good weather from locations around the site and from public footpaths and roads in the surrounding area.
- 2.11 The areas where it is expected that the development will be visible were identified during the desk study and initial site visit to establish a draft Zone of Visual Influence (ZVI) Refer Fig.1.
- 2.12 **Landscape effects.** The landscape effects were predicted and described following the desk study and the field observations.
- 2.13 The proposed scheme is modest in its extent and involves the construction of separate cabins for holiday accommodation use, together with small changes to the access infrastructure. The two existing cabins and the large agricultural building will remain, the mobile home will be removed.
- 2.14 The physical changes to the site will be limited (apart from the introduction of the cabins), comprising the construction of crushed stone surfacing, parking areas and mitigation planting. The planting will extend the partially wooded character southward from the main part of the site.
- 2.15 Potential landscape effects are associated with the intensification of an existing recreational use to an established site that is currently underused for this purpose and the extension of this use into the area to the south. This activity will be limited to quiet enjoyment of the surroundings not any 'active' use, as no other facilities will be provided.
- 2.16 **Visual effects.** The visual effects were predicted and described following the desk study and as confirmed by field observations. Consideration was given to effects during implementation and operation.
- 2.17 Observations were made from locations within the draft ZVI to refine its extent and identify typical receptors of visual effects.
- 2.18 The **significance of the visual effects was assessed** using the following criteria for each receptor identified:
- The proximity of the viewpoint to the site
 - The angle of view
 - The extent of the view
 - The frequency of use of each viewpoint
 - The viewer's familiarity with the overall scene
 - The perceived activity of the viewer
 - The sensitivity of the viewpoint receptor (refer Table 1)
- 2.19 The assessment allows for seasonal changes to vegetation cover.
- 2.20 The visual assessment compares the quality of the existing view with the anticipated view on a summer's day 10 years in the future (2031), when the mitigation measures (planting of native woodland) will have become effective.
- 2.21 In accordance with the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, the **significance of the visual effects was assessed** using the following criteria:
- The sensitivity of the receptor or viewpoint (refer Table 1)
 - The magnitude, nature, duration and reversibility of the effects (refer Table 2)
 - Professional judgement

- 2.22 The overall **significance of the visual effects was judged** by combining the assessments of sensitivity and magnitude following a recognised format, as set out in Table 3

3. Landscape Context

- 3.1 The site is an existing holiday accommodation complex in an area of land that has been subject to a range of historical uses. It is accessed from the Bryntail Lead Mine access road, which also gives access to the Clywedog Dam complex to the north and to Crawlwm Farmhouse.
- 3.2 The site does not lie within or close to any formally designated landscape such as a National Park, AONB, or Registered Historic Landscape. It does lie within the Clywedog Valley Historic Landscape (a non-statutory designation). The description by CPAT makes no specific reference to the site.
- 3.3 National Landscape Character Areas (NLCAs) have been defined at a broad landscape scale throughout Wales by NRW. Using LANDMAP data 48 NLCAs have been identified across Wales with descriptive profiles highlighting what distinguishes one landscape from another. Within each profile reference is also given to regional distinct natural, cultural and perceptual characteristics. The site lies within the 'Cambrian Mountains' NLCA.
- 3.4 The site lies within the 'Upper Severn Valley' Landscape Character Area as described in LANDMAP. This aspect area extends westward from Llanidloes up the Severn valley and north westward up the Clywedog valley as far as the dam. These valleys are separated by a ridge and this, together with the upland on either side of Llyn Clywedog lies within the 'Clywedog Upland Grazing' LCA.
- 3.5 The LANDMAP description makes reference to *'a relatively steep sided valley complex containing the upper Severn and Trannon rivers. The valley sides are generally well wooded with a well-defined network of field patterns running at right angles to the river course. Woodland is a well-balanced mix of broadleaf and deciduous species with Oak dominant. Settled and domestic setting acting as a contrast with the upland grazing and open farming of the upper slopes and Llyn Clywedog reservoir above'*.
- 3.6 It is said to be an attractive landscape of medium scale, settled, sheltered and of high quality *i.e. 'Well wooded with small-scale well defined field patterns, unusual to see a valley complex this well wooded within the study area'*



View (from above the dam viewing platform) down the Clywedog valley. The 'Upper Severn Valley' LCA in the valley and 'Clywedog Upland Grazing' LCA in foreground and left hand side. Note lead mine in base of wooded 'gorge'. The site lies within the wooded area (centre right of this view) and is not visible

- 3.7 The field pattern is most clearly defined in the lower slopes of the Clywedog valley and becomes less distinct close to the dam, which occupies a steep-sided 'gorge' that appears 'wooded'. The land becomes steeper and the landform more irregular in this upper part of the valley and the enclosures are smaller, their shape influenced by local topography and the presence of bedrock. The site lies within this landscape and contributes to the wooded feel.
- 3.8 The application site lies on the western side of the valley of the Clywedog and comprises two relatively level areas that form 'terraces', the westernmost being several metres higher than the eastern one as the land falls generally towards the river to the east. These features appear to be at least partly 'artificial' with a raised, mounded landform to the east and west of the terraces. This northern part of the site is roughly rectangular in plan, running north to south with the access at its highest point at the northern end. There is an established access track through the site along the upper terrace and this runs out at the southern end to provide access to another level area to the south. The track formation then runs down southward to join the public road. The highest point of the site is at roughly 247m aod and the lowest part roughly 230m aod.
- 3.9 There are several existing buildings on the site and an established infrastructure of access tracks and parking. There are two cabins, a mobile home & a large agricultural building. The cabins and the agricultural building will be retained and the mobile home will be removed as part of the proposal.



View south from centre of site showing agricultural building (to be retained) and mobile home (to be replaced by a cabin). This shows the transition from the wooded (enclosed) northern part of the site to the more open southern part, linked by the track, which runs to the right of the mobile home

- 3.10 The level areas of the site are well established and appear to have been used for some considerable time. The overall configuration appears to be at least partially agricultural in origin but was possibly modified as part of the dam construction infrastructure. There are mature (mainly Oak) trees growing in the raised mounds and slopes that define and contain the terraces in the northern part. This part of the site has an enclosed, secluded feel, with views out from the main part being limited by the enclosing landform and trees.



Left image: View south along the upper terrace showing access track and mature Oak trees to the perimeter.
Right image: View north along the lower terrace. The steep valley that contains the dam is visible beyond

- 3.11 The isolated level area to the south is not contained in this way, being more open in character, and sloping gently to the south east. The land between the site and the public road to the west comprises rough grassland (with Bracken in the summer) and the proposal site itself is only partially contained by remnant hedgerows to the north and south east. The track that runs through the site appears to be the original road that ran up the valley from the south to serve Crowlwm Farm. This was presumably downgraded by the construction of the Clywedog Reservoir Perimeter Road. The perimeter road runs north, past the site before swinging away to the west in a long 'sweep' to ascend the steep topography.
- 3.12 The remains of Bryntail lead mine lie to the north of the site on the opposite side of the river. Access is via the Bryntail Lead Mine Road, which also gives access to Crowlwm Farmhouse and to the bottom of the dam. There is a car park at the end of this road, close to the river, where there are also two further houses. Glyndwr's Way National Trail runs along the public road for a short section adjacent to the site. This trail crosses the river footbridge to the remnants of the workings on east side of valley. There are coniferous plantations on the very steep slopes above the ruins with views of the dam to the north (see 6.13 below). The land above the dam is exposed upland.
- 3.13 The western side of the valley is dominated by the dam and its infrastructure. There are access roads, a viewing platform and a small visitor centre. The very steep landform between these features is heavily wooded. Crowlwm Farmhouse is located at the base of the slope but it is barely visible.
- 3.14 A number of public footpath run across the area to the west and south.

4. The proposed development and mitigation (refer Proposed Block Plan)

- 4.1 The proposed development is the extension of the established holiday accommodation use. This will involve the construction of an additional 16 cabins on the site, together with (internal) modifications to the existing agricultural building. The lodges will be timber clad with felt shingle roofs and will be similar in size and appearance to the existing ones but will have steeper roofs.
- 4.2 The existing crushed stone track will be extended to serve the cabins on the lower terrace and each unit will have an area of hardstanding for parking.
- 4.3 The landscape mitigation proposals comprise the planting of native trees and shrubs. Some of this work has been done with bare-root or container grown native species planted in protective tree shelters (2021). This is in the form of structural planting to the perimeter and internal hedgerows to provide screening and privacy for the various cabins.

5. Landscape Effects

- 5.1 The landscape effects are as follows:
- The construction of 16 new cabins (with minor regrading in some locations)
 - The construction of a crushed stone surface to allow vehicular circulation and parking
 - The extension of native tree and woodland planting around the perimeter of the site
 - The introduction of parked cars and low-level human activity (mainly in the summer months)
 - Improved management of the existing woodland

- 5.2 The significance of the landscape effects is assessed using the following criteria:
- The sensitivity of the affected landscape
 - The perceived value of the landscape
 - The magnitude, nature, duration and reversibility of the effects
 - Professional judgement
- 5.3 The effect on the 'Cambrian Mountains' NLCA. This a very extensive area and the scale and nature of the proposed development is such that any effect on it must be negligible.
- 5.4 The effect of the proposed development on the 'Clywedog Valley Historic Landscape' will be negligible. This is confirmed in consultee responses.
- 5.5 The site lies within the LANDMAP 'Upper Severn Valley' Visual and Sensory Aspect Area and displays many of the characteristics that are consistent with the description of this Area.
- 5.6 The proposal includes new buildings but these are temporary, theoretically reversible features. The use made of the site is relatively benign and low key, with limited additional activity and its associated movement, light and noise. The mitigation planting will extend and perpetuate the mixed woodland character of the area.
- 5.7 The landscape trend is described as being '*constant*' with '*generally appropriate*' existing management. The database recommends '*maintain ratio of woodland to small grazed field parcels*' be conserved and that enhanced '*mixed woodland parcels in upper valley*' would be a positive measure as would be the '*replenishment of broadleaved woodlands*'.
- 5.8 The proposal will ensure the longevity and sustainability of the characteristics of enclosure in the landscape by increasing the woodland cover in a way that enhances the existing pattern. The proposed management regime will strengthen and protect the landscape character.
- 5.9 This is a landscape of medium sensitivity and the proposed landscape change is of low magnitude. Based on accepted criteria (table 3) the significance of the change to the 'Upper Severn Valley' Visual and Sensory Aspect Area can be said to be '**slight adverse**' at implementation and '**slight beneficial**' at year ten.

6 Visual Effects

- 6.1 The visual effects resulting from the proposed development are as follows:
- The introduction of cabins into an undulating area of woodland and grassed clearings (main, northern part) and into a relatively open area to the south
 - The extension of a crushed stone access track
 - The use of the site for holiday accommodation accessed principally by car
 - The extension of the planting blocks and the introduction of woodland into an otherwise open area around the southern part of the site
- 6.2 The visual effects of the proposed development were assessed by making field observations from publicly accessible places and from locations that are visible from the site. The Zone of Visual Influence (ZVI) generated is illustrated in Fig. 1.

Receptors

- 6.3 The potential receptors of visual impacts are residential properties in the surrounding countryside and people using the nearby roads and public footpaths.
- 6.4 The sensitivity of receptors is defined in Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (3rd edition). This guidance has been used in determining the magnitude of the visual effects which are defined in Table 2.

Views from residential properties

- 6.5 There are no residential properties that are sufficiently close and appropriately located to be receptors of visual impact. Because of the topography and the distribution of hedgerows, trees and woodland, views are obscured from surrounding dwellings. These include those nearby *i.e.* the two dwellings close to the Lead Mine car park, and Crawlwm Farmhouse. To the south views from Upper and Lower Ty'n y Fron and Upper Cefn Pennarth will be limited because of intervening landform and or vegetation.
- 6.6 A view of the southern part of the proposed development is likely to be possible from the farm known as Cwm Dieldre (although not directly from the dwelling because of its orientation). This dwelling (H1) is 500m to the south west and at 240m AOD as compared with the relevant part of the site which is at 230m AOD. From this location the group of five cabins at the southern end of the site would be visible at construction. The proposed mitigation planting will be effective in reducing the visibility in time. The sensitivity of a residential receptor is 'high' but in the absence of a direct view the significance of the visual effect on this receptor can be said to be '**negligible**'.

Views from highways

- 6.7 The public roads that would be affected are the minor road that passes close to the western edge of the site, the Clywedog Reservoir Perimeter Road (R1) and Bryntail Mine Road (R2), a short section of a minor road some distance away to the west (R3) and the gated road that climbs valley side to south east (R4).
- 6.8 The land slopes upwards between the Clywedog Reservoir Perimeter Road and the site, with a raised 'ridge' along much of its length, particularly at the northern end. At the southern end, the landform is also 'convex' and this limits views towards the proposed development. The slope is Bracken covered in the summer and mitigation woodland planting has been implemented at the southern end.
- 6.9 Views from this receptor (R1) are likely to be limited to glimpses of the apexes or ridges of the roofs. Given the sensitivity of the receptor and the magnitude of the change, the significance of the effect can be said to be '**slight adverse**' at construction and '**negligible to slight adverse**' after 10 years.
- 6.10 Views from the Bryntail Mine road (R2) into the site are already possible. This will change slightly in that parts of more cabins will be visible (beyond the one that is currently visible). A hedge has been planted along the road boundary and this will be effective in screening the development in time. The change in this view can be said to be '**Negligible**'



View into the site from Bryntail Lead Mine Road (R2). Note the existing cabin. Parts of proposed cabins will be visible beyond this. Mitigation planting evident along fenceline

- 6.11 The minor road to the west (R3) is at a much higher elevation. It is a very minor road (it is gated further north west) and is very lightly trafficked. The view is from 1.0 km distant and 330m aod. The southern group of cabins is likely to be discernible at construction from this location, although this effect will be less noticeable in the summer and will reduce with time. This is a receptor of low sensitivity and the predicted change to the view will be low. The significance of the effect would therefore be **'slight adverse'** at construction and **'negligible'** after 10 years.
- 6.12 The road that descends the valley side to the south east of the site is the historic continuation of the track that runs through the site. This road is also gated and very lightly trafficked. The southern group of cabins is likely to be discernible at construction from this location (typically 600m distant), although this will be mitigated by roadside vegetation, and by the existing remnant hedgerow close to the site. The proposed tree planting will also reduce the visibility of the units in time. This is a receptor of low sensitivity and the predicted change to the view will be low. The significance of the effect would therefore be **'slight adverse'** at construction and **'negligible'** after 10 years.
- 6.13 The development will not be visible from the roads that serve the visitor centre or viewing platform or from the perimeter road except for from the area very close to the site.



Left image: View from Dam viewing platform area



Right image: View from the Glyndwr's Way National Trail showing the dam

Views from public rights of way

- 6.14 The proposed development will be visible from the Glyndwr's Way National Trail as it passes the site along Bryntail Lead Mine Road and from two public rights of way in elevated locations to the south west.
- 6.15 The view from Glyndwr's Way National Trail is the same view as from Bryntail Lead Mine Road and the proposal will result in little change from the baseline. Mitigation planting is in place (roadside hedge). The users of this National Trail (P1) would be

receptors of high sensitivity but the magnitude of the change is negligible. The significance of the visual effect can therefore be said to be **'negligible'** (refer photo at 6.10 above).

- 6.16 A view towards the development will be possible from parts of the paths that descend the valley above Cwm Deildre (P2) although these will be limited by distance and intervening vegetation and landform. From this location (600m distant) the group of five cabins at the southern end of the site would be visible at construction. The change to the view would be of low magnitude and the proposed mitigation planting will be effective in reducing the visibility in time. The sensitivity of these receptors is 'Medium' and the significance of the visual effect on this receptor can be said to be **'slight adverse'** at construction and **'negligible'** after 10 years.

Views from other areas

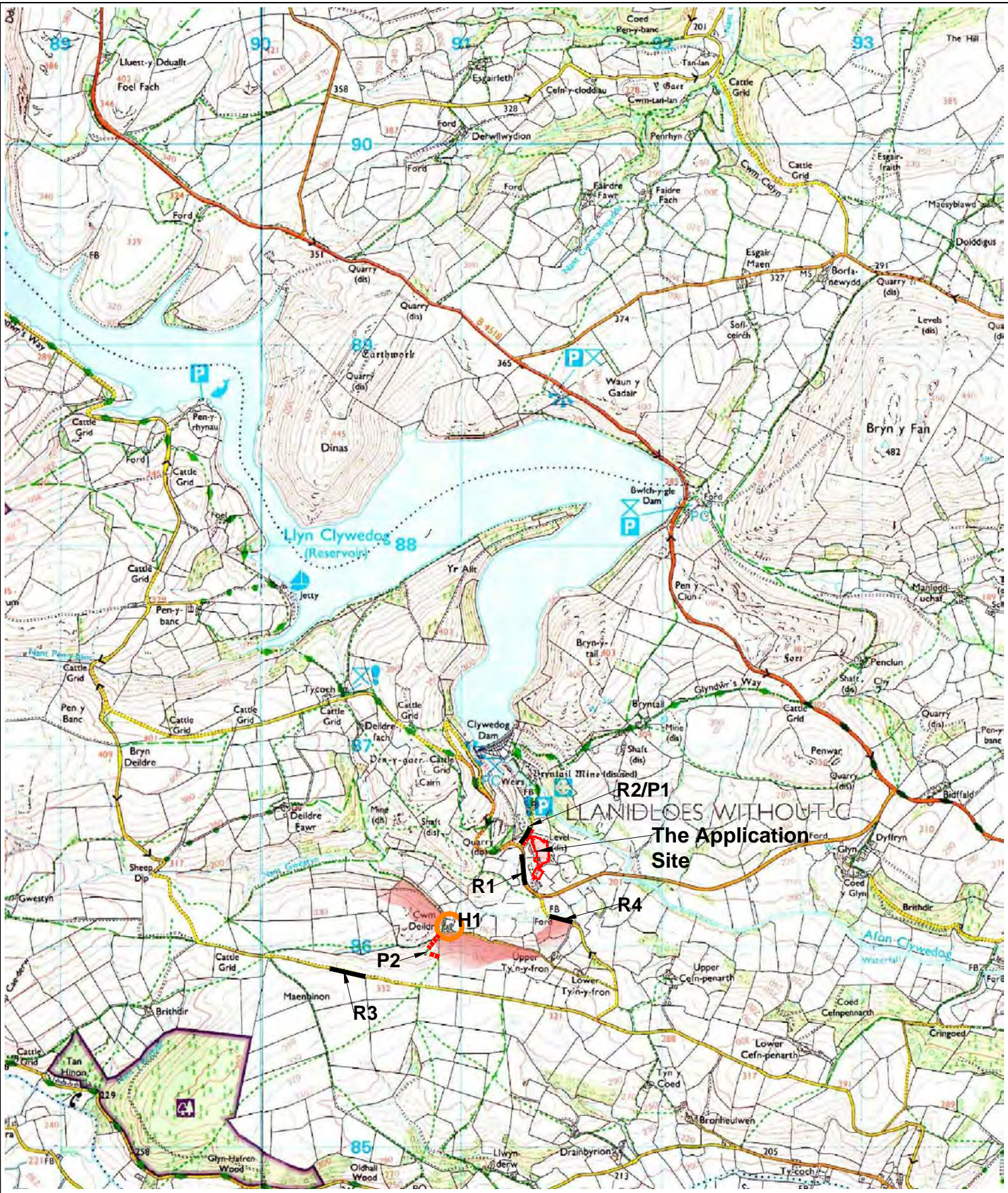
- 6.17 There will be a theoretical view of the proposed cabins at the southern end of the site from agricultural land in elevated locations on the southern side of the valley of the Nant Gwestyn. The mitigation planting will result in this area appearing to be more wooded in due course, reducing the visibility of the proposed scheme.

Views during construction

- 6.18 The construction phase will be short and given that the scheme does not require significant earthworks or construction works the visual impact will be negligible.





7. Conclusion


- 7.1 The proposal site is well-established and is an important component of an attractive landscape at the transition between the ordered farmland of the Clywedog valley and the wooded gorge in which the dam is located. It exhibits some of the qualities that have been identified in planning guidance as contributing to the character and quality of this Landscape Character Area.
- 7.2 The proposal is for a low impact holiday facility that extends an established use of a site that is well suited to this function given its layout and setting.
- 7.3 The proposal includes native woodland planting to mitigate the landscape and visual impact of the scheme. These changes will fulfil recognised management objectives for this landscape character area and will provide visual, cultural and biodiversity benefits. The effect on the wider landscape structure and quality will be minimal.
- 7.4 The assessment has concluded that with regard to visual effects, although elements of the scheme will be visible at first implementation, the proposed management works will be effective in reducing any visual effects to 'negligible' within ten years.



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KEY:

-  Dwellings - referred to in text
-  Public Rights of Way referred to in text
-  Roads - referred to in text
-  Zone of Visual Influence (ZVI) close to the site



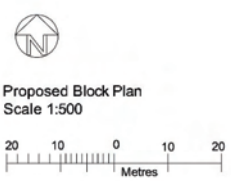
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Proposed Holiday Accommodation, Ty Coed			
Zone of Visual Influence (& reference plan)			
1:25,000@A4	March '21	KH	ch/br
Figure 1			

Arrows to show direction of vehicle movements on site. Majority of site to have one way system implemented as shown.



Ty Coed



Proposed Block Plan
Scale 1:500

Lodge 4 - Previously Approved Timber Lodge Ref: M2007/0025. Has not been built yet.

Bat and bird boxes to be provided & located in existing mature native trees as per recommendations within Ecology report.

Existing Septic Tank to take wastes from all Lodges (except Lodges 15-19)

Rainwater to be collected from Barn Roof & stored in underground tanks for use in Laundry & cycle washing facilities.

Existing Storage Barn to have Laundry & Secure Cycle Storage Areas formed within existing footprint. South facing roof slope to have Solar PV panels fitted.

Fenced compound to front of Barn to provide Bin Storage Areas for separated recycling, refuse & composting bins.

Proposed Native tree planting screening

Proposed treatment plant location for foul wastes for Lodges 15-19

Gate fitted across track to prevent vehicle access.

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Leisure development

Proposed Block Plan

1:500 @ A1 LF
July 2020 Crowl GB

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Appendix

Table 1: The Sensitivity of the Landscape Character and Views

SENSITIVITY	LANDSCAPE CHARACTER	VIEWS
HIGH	Landscapes of recognised national or regional value (e.g. AONB), in good condition, distinctive and cohesive, with strong and attractive landscape features. Landscapes which are visually open and which may be intolerant to change or susceptible to small changes	Dwelling houses with a view of the development - this can reduce if the view is oblique. Users of outdoor recreational facilities including public rights of way, national trails, historic parks and gardens whose attention or interest may be focused on the landscape
MEDIUM	Moderately valued landscapes with some attractive features and characteristics of local significance, but also some detracting features. A pleasant but unremarkable landscape which may be reasonably tolerant of change	Outdoor active recreation users where the main objective is purposeful action such as sport, golfers, mountain bikers, theme park visitors. People travelling through or past the affected landscape on roads, trains or other transport routes
LOW	Landscapes of moderate to low attraction, which lack distinctiveness and cohesion. No landscape features worthy of conservation and frequent detracting features. Landscapes which are enclosed and are potentially tolerant of substantial change	Travellers to work or for day to day purposes in cars. People in commercial buildings and other locations where people's attention may be focused on their work or activity

Table 2: The Magnitude of Predicted Change to Landscape Character and Views

MAGNITUDE	CRITERIA FOR ASSESSING CHANGE TO LANDSCAPE CHARACTER	CRITERIA FOR ASSESSING CHANGE TO VIEWS
HIGH	The proposals would be largely inconsistent with the existing landscape baseline and would result in extensive alterations to the landscape pattern and features within it	The proposed development would occupy a large proportion of the view and would become a prominent feature. There would be a substantial change, where the proposals would have a defining influence on the view. The works would be very noticeable
MEDIUM	The proposals would be partially inconsistent with the existing landscape baseline and would result in a weakening or strengthening of the landscape pattern and features within it	The proposed development would occupy a moderate proportion of the view and would become a readily noticeable feature. Changes would occur where proposals would be an important new element in the view and would be readily noticeable
LOW	The proposals would be largely consistent with the existing landscape baseline resulting in some, but minimal change to the landscape pattern and features within it.	The proposed development would occupy a small portion of the view and would become a minor but visible feature. The proposals would be partially visible, fleeting or from some considerable distance resulting in limited or minor changes to the view
NEGLIGIBLE	Little or no effects on the landscape characteristics. Negligible changes to a landscape are considered to be insignificant	The changes to views are barely discernable or completely unseen. Negligible changes to a view are considered to be insignificant

Table 3: Significance of Landscape and Visual Effects

		MAGNITUDE			
		HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW	NEGLIGIBLE
SENSITIVITY	HIGH	Substantial beneficial or adverse effect	Substantial to moderate beneficial or adverse effect	Moderate to slight beneficial or adverse effect	Negligible effect
	MEDIUM	Substantial to moderate beneficial or adverse effect	Moderate beneficial or adverse effect	Slight beneficial or adverse effect	Negligible effect
	LOW	Moderate to slight beneficial or adverse effect	Slight beneficial or adverse effect	Slight beneficial or adverse effect or negligible effect	Negligible effect