

10 VISUAL IMPACTS

10.1 INTRODUCTION

10.1.1 This chapter concerns the visual impact effects of the proposed development of industrial units on land at Rover Way, Cardiff, and has been prepared by Southgate & Sarabia Architects.

10.1.2 The chapter describes existing landscape conditions and the predicted visual impacts associated with the erection industrial units at the site. The assessment provides an assessment of the baseline condition and residual impacts of the development based on 8 key viewpoints from the wider area, including the view from the Bristol Channel.

10.1.3 Whilst assessed afresh, this element of the scheme proposals is common to, and consistent with, the previous (approved) development for the site. The principal conclusions drawn and set out in the consideration and determination (approval) of the previous (bio-mass and related development) scheme for the site record the following:

- In considering the visual impacts of the proposed development the neighbouring heavy industrial uses to the north and west form an important context;
- As a result of the development the removal of fill material will facilitate the creation of a development plateau at approximately 12 – 14 metres AOD. The indicative site plans show the formation of bunds along the southeast and northwest boundaries to screen the development and provide enhanced landscaping features. The bunds would be a maximum of 22 metres AOD, thus creating approximately 8 to 10 metres screening to the development.
- the final development would likely be visible above the landscaped bunds. However, this in itself is not considered to be an issue as the final building designs and the landscaped bunds will be subject to detailed reserved matters approval. It is considered that these bunds have the potential to provide significant screening to the proposed development, subject to their detailed design.
- It is considered that the proposed development, whilst being visible from various viewpoints in the locality, is likely to have a negligible visual impact, mindful that the detailed design has not yet been finalised and the site will largely be viewed in the context of the existing heavy industrial operations immediately north and west of the site; and
- Views will also be possible from the Wales Coast Path, which will be upgraded as a result of this development. It is considered that through the sensitive landscaping of the site, any views from this Public Right of Way would not be significantly harmful.

10.2 CONTEXT

10.2.1 This assessment has been carried out with regard to the following relevant policies and guidance:

10.2.2 Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3rd Edition, Landscape Institute

10.2.3 Cardiff Local Development Plan, Adopted Plan, January 2016, specifically:

- KP5 i: *"Responding to the local character and context of the built and landscape setting so that layout, scale, form, massing, height, density, colour, materials, detailing and impact on the built and natural heritage are all addressed";* and
- EN3: *"Development will not be permitted that would cause unacceptable harm to the character and quality of the landscape and setting of the city."*

10.2.4 LANDMAP Guidance Note 4: LANDMAP and the Cultural Landscape 2016, NRW.

10.3 METHODOLOGY

10.3.1 The following methodology has been followed in preparing this statement:

- Site visit and baseline conditions assessment, in consultation with an Ecologist (Sturgess Ecology);
- Viewpoints (both near and far distance) established;
- Images prepared showing the existing landscape; and
- Indicative sketches produced from a 3D model showing the relative impact of the proposed development compared to existing development in the area.

10.4 BASELINE CONDITIONS

- 10.4.1 The site is shown in Figure 1 (below); the boundary of the planning application is shown on drawing 129-A(P)-01-rev- - Location Plan. The site is in Tremorfa, to the east of Cardiff City centre. The site is immediately bordered to the east and south by the Severn Estuary, to the west and south west by a waste processing site and sewage treatment works and to the north by a disused water treatment site. In the immediate vicinity, across Rover Way, is the Celsa steelworks to the north west and Pengam Green to the north. Further west and south is the commercial industrial zone comprising the Pacific Business Park and East Moors Industrial Estate as well as Cardiff docks. To the north and west are Willows High School and the residential streets of Tremorfa and Splott. The Wales Coastal Path passes through the site, although currently this section of the path, from the Rhymney River to Cardiff Docks, is somewhat hostile and under-used.
- 10.4.2 The site has previously been used for landfill, waste disposal and waste soil placement, and most recently as a motorcross track. It has been disused since around 2010.
- 10.4.3 The site is elevated above its immediate surroundings due to the previous activities mentioned. It is currently mounded up to approximately 31m above sea level (compared to Rover Way which is 8m above sea level) and covered in rough scrub vegetation and numerous paths / tracks formed by the motor-cross usage. There are no buildings on site and is in effect derelict.
- 10.4.4 There is an extremely large flue at the steelworks, several other flues in the adjoining industry parks, and a very tall flue further west at the Viridor waste to energy plant.
- 10.4.5 Neither the site nor adjacent land is subject to any National or Local designation in landscape terms. It does not fall within an AONB or an Area of Special Landscape. Using LANDMAP, a GIS system developed by the Countryside Council for Wales in conjunction with other partners, the nearest classified areas for 'Visual & Sensory' are an area of the Severn Estuary adjacent the mouth of the river Rhymney (evaluated as 'Outstanding') and for 'Cultural Landscape', the Rhymney Valley Corridor (evaluated as 'Low').
- 10.4.6 The Severn Estuary aspect area (shaded red below) is described as having attractive views "out from the area to the rest of the estuary, with long view to England and islands".
- 10.4.7 The Rhymney Valley Corridor aspect area is described as having 'low' value in 'poor' condition.
- 10.4.8 There are no other aspect areas within 10km where likely significant effects are anticipated.

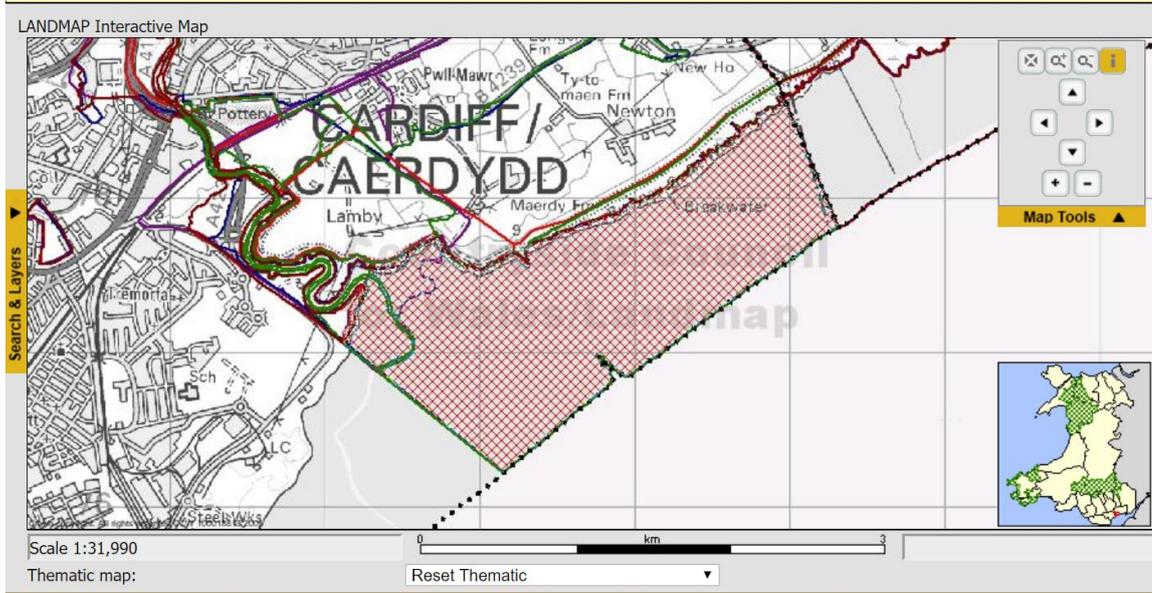


Figure 1

10.5 POTENTIAL IMPACTS

- 10.5.1 The site is currently reasonably prominent in the immediate vicinity due to the elevated earth mound. It is clearly visible from Rover Way both from the NE and the SW (see viewpoints 1, 2 & 3, below), and can be seen from the Severn Estuary (viewpoint 8). It can also be seen from the rear of a few houses in Tremorfa, primarily those to the south of Hind Close. However it is screened by planting and buildings from the majority of Tremorfa, and is significantly screened from Splott and the rest of the city by the Celsa steel works. Due to the relative flat topography of the city and the orientation of streets there are few distant views of the site from within further afield in the city, although the existing steelworks can be glimpsed from a few locations, such as Splott and Moorland parks, from the A4232 flyover and Robert Street to the north in Cathays (viewpoints 4, 5, 6 & 7). Only from the east is the site distinguishable from the steelworks.
- 10.5.2 Any visual impact of development on the site has to be viewed in the context of the other industrial uses in the site's vicinity.

Sensitivity

- 10.5.3 Views from within industrial areas are not considered to be sensitive. Views from dwellings are normally considered to be sensitive though this has to be tempered with the understanding that there is no right to a view in planning law. Views from roads are not normally considered to be sensitive as they are transient in nature. Views from public footpaths are considered to be sensitive if they are used for recreational purposes or are part of the civic realm.

Impact Assessment

- 10.5.4 The only significant views will be from domestic property located to the south of Tremorfa and from the Wales Coastal Path. Given the context, the change in visual impact from these viewpoints would be the addition of 4 industrial units within an already industrialised setting. The scale of the buildings is significantly smaller than those associated with the steelworks. The proposed units will have an estimated height of 16m (variable depending on which roof style is proposed for the most efficient way to place photo-voltaic panels facing a southern orientation to increase sustainable energy generation for the site) from the new proposed level of 12m above sea level.
- 10.5.5 The impact of the development on the Severn Estuary aspect area shown above is likely to be negligible, given the distance and orientation of the view towards the site. The described views from the aspect area are out to the estuary, and the existing view from the aspect area towards the site is of a heavy industrial area, of which the development would form a small part.

10.6 PROPOSED MITIGATION AND ENHANCEMENT

- 10.6.1 It is proposed that the existing mounding on the site be reduced by approximately 16-18m to form a table at around 12-14m above sea level. Surrounding this table will be raised bunds rising to around 20-22m above sea level, having the effect of screen the development on all sides.
- 10.6.2 Where mitigation measures rely on water, it is expected that only sufficient water will be applied to damp down the material. There should not be any excess to potentially contaminate local watercourses.

10.7 RESIDUAL IMPACTS

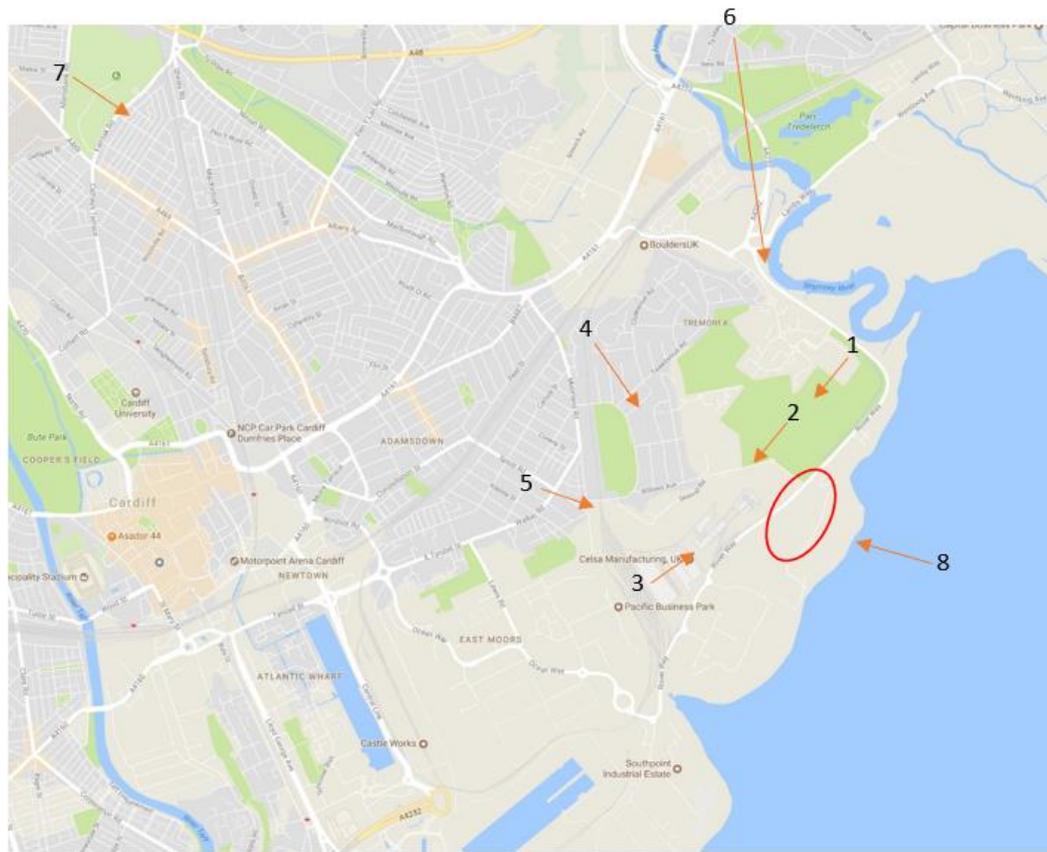


Figure 2: Site and Viewpoints

Sample Viewpoints

1. Rover Way looking SW
2. Rover Way, opposite proposed entrance
3. Rover Way, looking NE
4. Splott Park
5. Moorland Park
6. A4232
7. Robert Street
8. Severn Estuary

10.7.1 In the assessment below the site location is keyed in red on the render images.

10.7.2 Note that the sketch images below, while generated from an accurate, OS-derived, three dimensional model of the context and proposed development, are not intended to be perfect replications of the photographs. They are provided to allow the relative scale of the proposed development to be assessed in the context of the existing landscape.

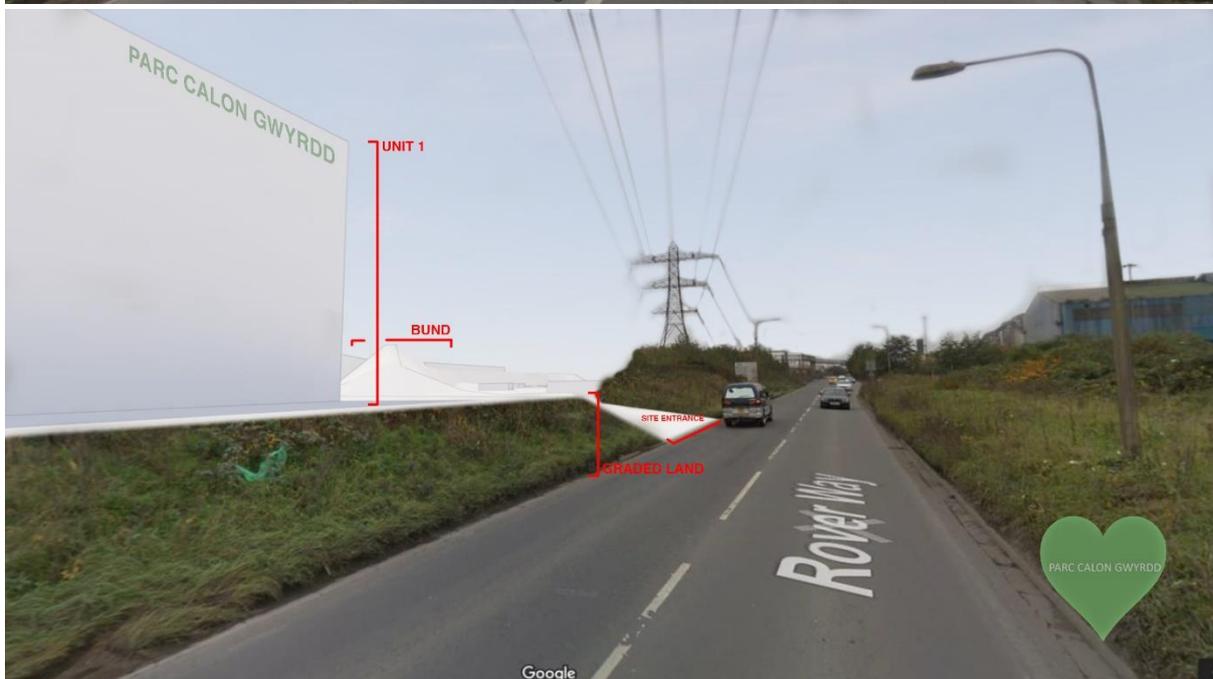
Viewpoint 1. Rover Way, looking SW



- 10.7.3 Approaching the site from the east along Rover Way, the current view is dominated by the existing Celsa steel plant, and the high voltage electricity transmission lines. The site is currently visible as a large, obviously artificial, mounding to the left of the road that blocks

any possible views of the estuary. The development would likely be just visible from this location. The residual impact is assessed to be minor / neutral.

Viewpoint 2. Rover Way, opposite proposed entrance



10.7.4 As the entrance is approached the development Unit1 1 would be visible from the road, however the majority of the site is screened from view by the proposed landscape bunds. The residual impact is assessed to be minor.

Viewpoint 3. Rover Way, looking NE



- 11.1.5 Approaching the site from the west along Rover Way, the steelworks highlights the industrial nature of the area. The development would be visible from this location beyond the proposed landscape bunds. The residual impact is assessed to be minor / neutral. Please note the existing telephone masts are in the foreground of the site, therefore of no relation to the proposal.

Viewpoint 4. Splott Park



10.7.5 This viewpoint is on Muirton Road adjacent to Splott Park. The Celsa plant can just be glimpsed between gaps in the houses as the road is driven along. The proposed development would not likely to be visible from this location. The residual impact would be negligible / neutral.

Viewpoint 5. Moorland Park



- 10.7.6 Moorland Park is another recreational area in the east of the city. Again, the Celsa plant can be glimpsed in views between existing office buildings, but the development is unlikely to be visible. The residual impact would be negligible / neutral.

Viewpoint 6. A4232



10.7.7 Approaching the city from the east on the A4232 affords a distant view of the site. The development would be barely perceptible from this distance. The residual impact would be negligible / neutral.

Viewpoint 7. Robert Street



10.7.8 Generally the existing Celsa plant is not visible from further afield in the city, due to the lack of elevation change, and the orientation of the street layout. Occasionally it can be glimpsed however, such as from this viewpoint on Robert Street in Cathays to the north of the city centre. The proposed development is likely to be completely screened from this location. The residual impact would be negligible / neutral.

Viewpoint 8. Severn Estuary



- 10.7.9 The view from the estuary to the site is of an overgrown brownfield site in the foreground with heavy industry uses in the background. The foreshore edge of the site is heavily eroded and of poor quality, and the previous uses of the site have left ugly scarring on the landscape. The proposed development would be highly visible from this location, but is likely to be a significant improvement to the current view, as it would screen the unsightly steelworks, repair the foreshore boundary and present a much higher quality of architecture than the current developments in the area. The residual impact would be moderate / positive.

10.8 CONCLUSION

- 10.8.1 The proposed development is unlikely to be prominent from the vast majority of the city. The impact on the few viewpoints can be seen from ranges from negligible to moderate (positive), as such, the proposal is not considered to have any adverse impact in this respect.
- 10.8.2 Moreover, the development would result in the remediation of an abandoned brownfield site, and therefore in terms of visual impact, the proposal is considered to create a betterment to the existing site.