4. Landscape Baseline

Overview

4.1 In order to accurately define the baseline sensitivity of the receiving landscape to any type of proposal, it is important to identify and assess the specific physical elements and perceptual qualities, and assemblages of these, that are likely to be affected. These are commonly referred to as landscape receptors.

4.2 Landscape receptors are defined in paragraph 3.21 of the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third Edition as *"including the constituent elements of the landscape, its specific aesthetic or perceptual qualities and the character of the landscape in different areas"*.

4.3 The identification of these features will be informed through:

- Review of Ordnance Survey mapping, historical map data and aerial and other remote sensing imagery where appropriate.
- Review of relevant published landscape character assessment at national, regional, sub-regional and local levels as appropriate.
- Identification of landscape-based designations.
- Identification and description of individual elements, features, aesthetic and perceptual aspects of the landscape which contribute to its character.
- Assessment of the general condition of the receiving landscape.

4.4 Once a list of landscape receptors has been established, the sensitivity of each will be assessed through:

- Assessment of the relative value of each receptor.
- Assessment of the relative susceptibility of the receptor to a change of the type proposed.
- Combination of relative value and susceptibility scores to derive an overall relative sensitivity score.

4.5 A full methodology for this assessment is presented at **Appendix 2**.



Figure 6: The Site entrance

Review of Published Landscape Character Assessments

National Level Assessment

4.6 Natural Resources Wales produced a countrywide landscape character assessment in 2014 resulting in the published National Character Areas map of Wales. The map identifies 48 individual character areas, which are large tracts of countryside with regionally distinct natural, cultural and perceptual characteristics.

4.7 This National Landscape Character Area assessment places the Site within National Landscape Character Area (NLCA) 13 Deeside and Wrexham, which covers the existing industrial estate

4.8 The key characteristics of NLCA 13 Deeside and Wrexham are identified as follows, with those elements considered to be representative of the Site and its setting highlighted in bold text:

- Predominantly mature, lowland countryside.
- Some areas offer a sense of seclusion due to agricultural enclosure interplaying with trees, woodlands and small river valleys.
- A singular large river, the River Dee, traverses the landscape.
- **Mixed pasture with some arable and farm woodland cover.**
- **Strongly settled character within urban settlements in the central and southern regions of the area.**
- **Industrial character in particular areas.**
- Small settlements outside of urban areas, in particular compact villages associated with landed estates and isolated farmsteads.
- Broad floodplain adjacent to the Dee Estuary.

4.9 Based upon the above analyses, the Site and its setting are considered to be slightly representative of National Landscape Character Area 13, representing its more human influenced characteristics.

Appraisal of Site Character and Local Representation

4.10 The Site represents an area of predominantly grassland that is surrounded to the west, south and east by Wrexham Industrial Estate. Woodland is present on its eastern and southern boundaries, part of a wider ecological network that provides a natural setting to the Site in these directions, although part of the southern boundary includes an engineered channel. By contrast, the western boundary comprises steel palisade fencing that exerts an industrial character and permits clear views into the adjacent industrial land use.

4.11 Bryn Lane forms the northern boundary of the Site, beyond which lies a small farmstead and mixed farmland, although this land is allocated within the current Local Plan for employment uses.

4.12 In terms of the published character, the Site and its setting are partially representative, and they represent those characteristics that reflect a high level of human intervention within the landscape.

4.13 For the purposes of this assessment, the following physical and perceptual elements are considered to be relevant receptors in terms of landscape character:

- Site and its immediate setting.
- National Landscape Character Area 13: Deeside and Wrexham.



Figure 5: Character Map Extract

Assessment of Receptor Sensitivity

Assessment of Landscape Value

4.14 In absence of external measures of landscape value, for example designations, the value of the Site has been assessed in relation to a number of suggested indicators of value within Box 5.1 of the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third Edition (GLVIA3), considering each of the following factors:

- Natural heritage;
- Cultural heritage;
- Landscape condition;
- Associations;
- Distinctiveness;
- Recreational value;
- Perceptual (scenic); and
- Perceptual (wildness and tranquillity).

4.15 With regard to the individual landscape receptors listed above, the relative value of each characteristic is judged to be as follows:

- *Site and its immediate setting:* The Site currently represents an area of grassland and linear woodland, and as such it possesses a degree of conservation value, which is recognised by the inclusion of the boundary woodland strips within the Strategic Ecological Network of the industrial estate within the Local Plan. The land within the Site is in moderate condition, although human elements such as engineered drainage channels and the clear views of the adjacent industrial building to the east detract from this. The Site is located within the existing industrial estate, and therefore it is perceived as part of this land use, and the surrounding uses including the busy Bryn Lane have a negative effect upon its tranquillity. Taking these factors into account, the value of this receptor is judged to be **Medium**.
- *National Landscape Character Area 13: Deeside and Wrexham:* The Site is located within the existing industrial estate with further allocated employment development to the north. This is a detracting feature within the wider Landscape Character Area representing a very high intensity of human activity and disturbance of what is otherwise a relatively rural and tranquil landscape. The value of this receptor in the Site's wider setting is therefore judged to be **Very Low**.

Assessment of Landscape Susceptibility

4.16 The susceptibility of each receptor to the type of change proposed is judged to be as follows:

- *Site and its immediate setting:* The Site comprises an area of predominantly rough grassland, although it is encased within Wrexham Industrial Estate and therefore it is strongly influenced by this setting. Any previous landscape structure has been lost to this intensive land use. The wooded corridors on the Site's eastern and southern boundaries have been recognised as part of the strategic ecological network of the industrial estate, but these are not proposed to be directly affected by the proposed development. Taking these factors into account, the susceptibility of this receptor to the type of change proposed is judged to be **Low**.
- *National Landscape Character Area 13: Deeside and Wrexham:* Whilst this area is predominantly rural, Wrexham Industrial Estate represents a recognised area of intensive human activity and disturbance within it. The susceptibility of this receptor to the type of change proposed is therefore judged to be **Low**.

Defining Landscape Sensitivity

4.17 Based upon the judgements of susceptibility and value set out above and at Table 3 at **Appendix 2**, the overall sensitivity of the identified landscape receptors to the type of change proposed is judged to be as follows:

- Site and its immediate setting: **Low/Medium sensitivity.**
- National Landscape Character Area 13: Deeside and Wrexham: **Low/Negligible sensitivity**.

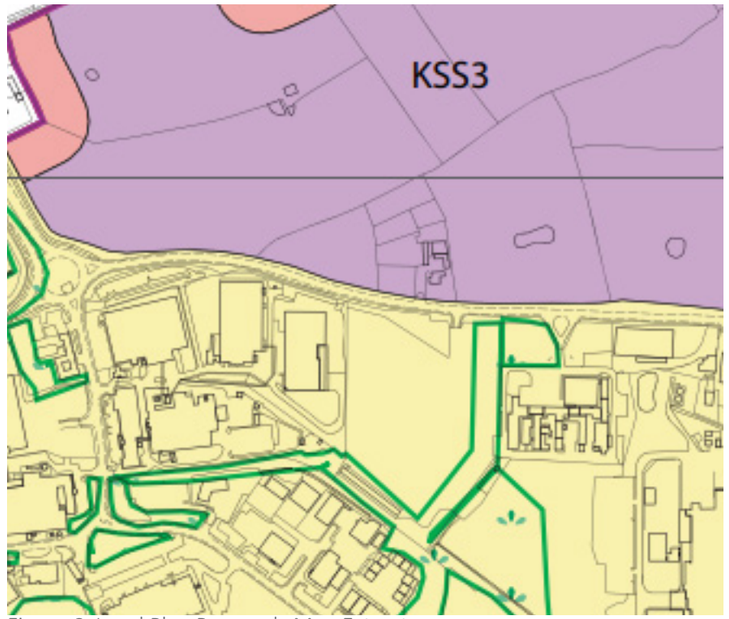


Figure 6: Local Plan Proposals Map Extract

6. Visual Baseline

Overview

5.1 The visual baseline study commences with a process of desk study to generate a Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) using 3D terrain modelling software, which shows the 'bare earth' visibility of the proposed development based upon local topography, i.e. devoid of structures and vegetation. The extent of the visual envelope is then refined through field investigation. The ZTV is shown on the adjacent plan.

5.2 The baseline assessment is used to identify the likely visual receptors of the proposals. These are defined as individuals and/or defined groups of people who have the potential to be affected by a proposal.

5.3 The draft list of visual receptors and corresponding viewpoints was agreed with the Local Planning Authority. Whilst the Local Planning Authority suggested that the users of Ridleywood Road should be considered as a potential receptor, fieldwork revealed that views towards the Site are filtered by existing industrial structures and vegetation to the extent that this can be scoped out as a receptor because signfiicant effects are highly unlikely.

5.4 For each confirmed visual receptor, a viewpoint photograph or series of photographs was taken from the point or points of greatest visibility. A description is provided below each viewpoint, along with a plan showing their location.

5.5 This description will then be used to assess the sensitivity of each receptor, in line with the criteria presented within Table 6 at **Appendix 2**.

Description of Representative Views follow:

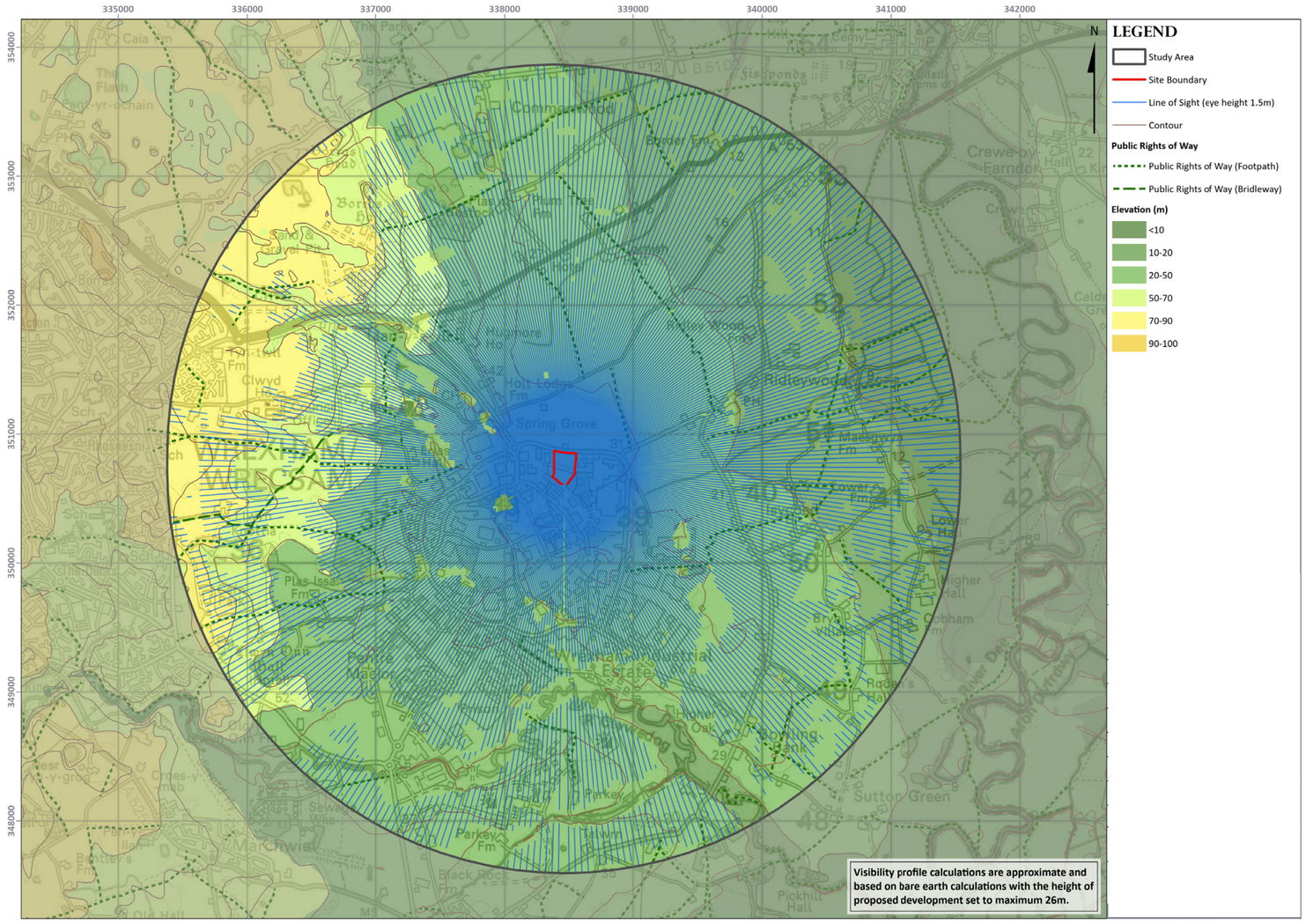


Figure 7: Zone of Theoretical Visibility